

The background of the cover is a scene from the Harry Potter universe, specifically Diagon Alley. Three women with vibrant pink hair are the central focus. The woman in the foreground is wearing a purple top and a dark purple cape, looking directly at the camera. Behind her, another woman with pink hair is seen in profile, wearing a red and black patterned garment. To the left, a third woman with pink hair is dressed in a grey school uniform. The street is lined with stone buildings, and various signs and shopfronts are visible, including one for 'Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes'.

The Collected Works of  
Sasporilla Bucket

Free of Charge

VOLUME 3

A Harry Potter Universe Fan Fiction  
By Darren Kelly

*For Donna*

# Sasporilla Bucket - The Girl with pink hair

I want to thank the 1600+ people who have come to my website (at the time I'm writing this) for your love and support. You inspire me everyday to continue writing these stories because of how much you love reading them. As we now move away from the childhood innocence of the girl with pink hair and into her teen years, I promise that this will be one wild ride!

Originally Warner Brothers Games was creating a Harry Potter online MMO. As a huge Harry Potter fan I was following this very closely. A Harry Potter MMO was the game I planned not only to play but to live in. I created the character of Sasporilla Bucket to be my character in game. Over time I created a family tree & history for her and her relatives. As a failed author, never able to get a story read by any company anywhere, I wrote several short stories on the events in their lives that shaped them into who they were. In time I found my creations were as alive as any in the Harry Potter universe.

After years of prodding by friends & family I chose to create this website to share my creations with other fans of Harry Potter. This site contains some of my stories & artwork dealing with Sasporilla Bucket, her family & her time at Hogwarts & after. It is a work in progress so please be patient & enjoy. Check the menus above for the areas you want to peruse.

I am in no way affiliated with Warner Bros. or with J.K.Rowling. My work is purely that of fan fiction & do not ask for, nor accept money, gifts or other compensation for my work. If you really feel you must do something, research which charities J.K.Rowling donates to, then donate to them as such.

Thank you for coming & ENJOY

*Darren Kelly*

Darren Kelly

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# The Trial of Sasporilla Bucket

A Harry Potter / Sasporilla Bucket Fan Fiction  
by Darren Kelly

The Wizengamot, the high criminal court of law, gathered in court room seven, in the tenth level lower sub-dungeon of the Ministry of Magic.

The fifty members of the Wizengamot wore plum-covered robes with the elaborate silver initials "W" on them. The prosecutor, deputy Minister Advanish stepped into the prosecutors box followed by his assistant Hermione Granger. Kingsly Shacklebolt recused himself from prosecution as he was witness to the events.

"Please bring in the accused!" Deputy Minister Advanish asked of the bailiffs.

Sasporilla Bucket was lead into the court room, her hands and feet shackled. It had been a week since Sasporillas arrest and she had been held in solitary confinement in the Ministries dungeon cells. She'd had no access to conversation, clean clothes or a shower. Sassy looked up at the gallery to see who showed up.

Karry and Zac Curtiss sat next to Karrys family in the gallery. Mr. and Mrs. Curtiss watched with genuine concern. Kate Curtiss waved then though the better of it. Korry sat there holding Madrigal Neelanders painfully tight. Sassy's god father, Nick Owlmore, the aurer who had been forced by duty to place her under arrest sat next to her friend and his partner Lyra Lee-Ashwolf, who accompanied Katelynn as her family guardian. Myron Wagtail was ordered to "Sit Down!" by the bailiff or leave the court. Professor McGonagall, professor Sprout and Rubius Hagrid were all in attendance Representing Hogwarts. It was of no surprise to see Rita Skeeter in the galleries front row. Perched like a vulture primed to be the first to pick at her unwashed carcass.

The bailiffs lead her to a chair in the center of the court room. She forcefully placed into the accused seat and magically bound, much to the protests of members of the gallery.

"Silence!" The deputy minister commanded. "This is the only warning that I will give to the gallery. Any further out bursts will see the lot of you tossed out on your ears!"

The crowd went silent.

"That's better." The deputy minister said. "Sasporilla Bucket. You stand accused of the murder of wizard Salizar Slytherin. As unbelievable as these charges sound I understand they are well founded. Who represents this witch?"

"I do." A strange flamboyant older man said walking into the court. "Sorry I'm late but as this kangaroo court is such a farce I thought I'd have an extra bagle at breakfast."

"Do you want to start this trial with charges of contempt Mr.???" Deputy Minister Advanish said angrily.

"Barrister Hilask Wolfharr; RcoA" The man said giving Sasporilla a wink. "and I apologize for my statement Deputy Minister I withdraw it."

Some of the women of the jury, which sat on the right of the prosecutor, giggled at the older mans charms. He was tall and thin with a drawn face with sharp severe features and a shock of white hair. The RocA after his name meant he was a Barrister of the royal court of Avalon. That meant this trial had caught the eye of the royal court.

"How does your client plead?" The Deputy Minister asked.

"No idea." The man smiled looking down at Sasporilla.

"If I hadn't turned him to stone he'd have killed everyone who wasn't pure blood." Sasporilla said.

"She pleads Guilty!" The Barrister smiled making everyone in the court gasp. "Justifiably guilty."

"Justifiably?" The deputy minister asked.

"Yes." Sasporilla's barrister smiled walking over to the jury box. "After you here what the witness and my client have to say, you will see that you have no choice but to acquit this sweet, noble, young woman."

"Thank you Barrister. " The deputy minister said. "Sasporilla Bucket. This is not the first time you have taken a life. You brutally took the life of William Bombaduck, a young Death Eater, during the battle of Hogwarts. This has been over looked as it wasep0Remove the prisoner back to her cell until we have need of her testimony!"

The dungeon guards entered the court room and helped Sasporilla out of the chair and out of the court room.

"Call your first witness Barrister Wolfharr." Deputy Minister Advanish.

"Thanks Cecil," the barrister smiled playfully, "I mean Deputy Minister of course, my apologies. I call my first witness, Mrs.Karry Curtiss."

Karry stepped down from the gallery and was shown to the witness seat by the bailiff.

"Karry Curtiss." Hermione Granger said being given the chance to swear in witnesses. "You have been called before the Wizengamot as a witness for the defence. Do you solemnly swear that your answers will be the truth and actual to the facts of the matter?"

"I do." Karry Curtiss said. "Moving up in the world Hermione Granger?"

"Indeed." Hermione smile politely embarrassed. "How have you been Karoline?"

"Been better." Karry said coldly, absolutely contemptuous of this whole procedure against her friend.

"Mrs.Curtiss." Sasporillas Barrister smiled. "May I call you Karry?"

"If you like." Karry said.

"Wonderful." The Barrister said. "Karry is Sasporilla a cold blooded psychotic killer like the death eaters that murdered her mother and your friends at Hogwarts?"

"No!" Karry answered surprised at the cavalier form of the question.

"No!" Barrister Hilask Wolfharr said. "I turn her over for the Wizengamots review."

"Yes well," Deputy Minister Advanish said ,"Mrs.Curtiss how long have you known the accused?"

"The 'ACCUSED' has a name!" Karry said crossly, "It is Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket! She is my best friend, and I love her like my own sister."

"Yes very well." The deputy minister cleared his throat nervously. "How long have you known Sasporilla Bucket?"

"We've been in Hufflepuff house together for seven years, but we didn't really get to know each other untill second year. So six years."

"Would you say Sasporilla follows the rules?" The court asked.

"The ones set down that are fair and just yes." Karry answered Honestly. "Not like the ones set down by the death eaters that the ministry placed in Hogwarts like Umbridge, and Snape!"

"Were you witness to the murder of William Bombaduck?" The deputy asked.

"No." Karry said. "I was fighting for my life and was a bit busy."

"It is said that the boy death eater was subdued and unable to defend himself when Miss Bucket Blew his head off with an explosive spell." Deputy Minister Advanish said smugly.

"I hurt and killed death eaters too." Karry said with quiet anger. "When it's a war, it's you or them."

"Yes indeed." The deputy minister turned his papers over. "You discovered references to the chamber of secrets in the papers of Albus Dumbledore that you had been assigned?"

"Yes." Karry said.

"You first suspect after they were stolen was Sasporilla Bucket was it not!" Advanish grinned.

"We checked everyone's rooms!" Karry protested.

"Yes but you started with Sas-po-rilla-Buck-et! Did... you... not?" The deputy minister attacked.

"Yes but...." Karry stammered honestly.

"Next question. You were married at sixteen?"

"What does that have to do with the bloody price of tea in China?" Karry asked.

"Let the record show," Hermione Granger said, "the witness is hostile."

"Really Hermione Granger?" Karry Curtiss yelled. "Yes I met the love of my life, Zac Zarcazzian and married him as soon as we could do so legally! Why? Because he asked me, I love him, and we learned how fast the actions of evil stupid people can take it all away from you! So we got married while we were still alive to do so! Does that answer your bloody question?"

"Yes." The deputy minister smiled as if a little mouse had wandered into his trap. "Would you like yo redirect Mr.Wolfharr?";

"Mrs.Curtiss." the Barrister asked. "Do feel in anyway harassed or intimidated by the series of useless questions the prosecutor has asked."

"I never!" The deputy minister protested.

"Oh come on Cecil of course you have!"

"I've warned you once about contempt Hilask! Deputy Minister Advanish yelled on frustration.

"That's Barrister Wolfharr to you deputy minister. Let's try to keep things professional and on point shall we?" The barrister smiled and gave Karry a wink see that he clearly unnerved the Ministry Lackey as much as he had unnerved the witness. "No further questions."

Karry stood up and walked back up to the gallery shaken. She was welcomed by Zac's loving arms that held her tight.

"Your next witness." Deputy Minister Advanish growled.

"For my next witness," the barrister flourished like a circus ring master, "I call the Hufflepuff Head Girl Hufflepuff at Hogwarts school for witch craft and wizardry ,and recently revealed blood heir of Helga Hufflepuff, Miss Blossom Kowalski."

Blossom straightened her outfit as she walked down the gallery steps to the Wizengamot floor. She politely smiled and said "Thank you" to the bailiff which showed her to the witness chair. Hermione Granger swore her in and the Barrister began. "How are you today Miss Kowalski?"

"I'm quite nervous actually." Blossom smiled, nervously.

"Just try and relax, I'll try to make this as quick and pleasant as I can." The barrister smiled reassuringly. "Did you know you were a descendant of Helga Hufflepuff?"

"No." Blossom beamed with pride. "It came as very much of a surprise when her ghost appeared and called me forward as her heir. There were rumors that my great grand father was actually the son of a squibb that had chosen to have his memories of the wizarding world obliterated and chose the muggle life."

"That was the Kowalski side I assume?" Hilask smiled.

"Yes." Blossom said proudly.

"What was it Helga Hufflepuff, your ancestor asked you to do?" The Barrister asked.

"She said that I," Blossom said, "and the other heirs were to carefully cast a spell that would release Salazar Slytherin from his prison. To save Zac Curtiss from a fate worse than death."

"Why?" The barrister asked in mock-shock. "What was it Helga Hufflepuff said Salazar Slytherin was going to do?"

"He, Salazar Slytherin that is, was going to transfer his consciousness into Zac's body, and Zac's into his! Then he would walk free to fulfill his master plan!"

"Were you told what that plan was?" The barrister asked a bit more seriously.

"Not by Helga Hufflepuff." Blossom said.

"Then by who?" The barrister asked with deathly seriousness.

"Salazar Slytherin announced it bold as brass to everyone!" Blossom said. "He intended to kill all the half-bloods and muggles and leave only pure blood wizarding families."

"Well that is most of us!" The barrister smiled playfully so where's the harm?"

"I highly disagree!" Blossom said stiffening. "Muggles and half-bloods, elves and beasts all have the right to share this world with us and we have the responsibility to see our power is not perverted to harm them!"

The gallery, some of the jury and some of the members of the Wizengamot itself, including Hermione Granger, applauded Blossom's words.

"Not to mention we saw Slytherin's records." Blossom continued. "He had quills taking records of births and deaths. Following blood lines in volume after volume. There was only one book left with very few pureblood families left. Billions of people would have died at that mad man's hands."

"Thank you miss Kowalski." The barrister winked and 'noded good job'. "Your witness Cecil!"

"Fmfff!" The deputy minister cursed under his breath. "I have just one question miss Kowalski. Knowing of the plans of Salazar Slytherin to destroy 'BILLIONS' of lives as you've alleged, would you have brutally murdered him?"

"No." Blossom answered honestly. "I would have turned him stone to stop him, and not concerned myself further with his well being."

"Any redirect barrister?" The deputy minister scowled.

"Not one bit!" Hilask Wolfharr chuckled as the youngest bailiff, John a Hogwarts graduate from Gryffindor house showed Blossom back to her seat.

"If you don't mind me saying miss." John said to Blossom, "I think you're quite wonderful and wondered if you might like to go out with me some time?"

Blossom simply could not believe the utter cheek of the young man. How forward! How inappropriate. How...  
 "Ya, alright." She smiled shyly.

"My next contestant on "Burn the witch" is Katelynn Ashwolf." The barrister laughed.

"This is your final warning Barrister." The deputy minister said.

"And this is your first Cecil!" Hilask Wolfharr shouted. "You just remember who your talking too."

Many on the Wizengamot wondered just what the history was between the two wizards. If nothing else it was extremely entertaining.

Katelynn Ashwolf was lead from the gallery by her cousin Lyra who held her hand. The Bailiff sat her down and Hermione swore the girl in.

"Auror Lyra Lee-Ashwolf." Hermione said. "To confirm for the record you are the legally recognized guardian for your niece Katelynn during these proceedings?"

"Yes." Lyra said in a tone do serious and professionally respectful it unnerved everyone who knew her.

"Katelynn," the barrister began, "you are American?"

"Yes." Katelynn said. "And you're a lawyer?"

"A barrister yes." The man smiled. "You seem more like a game show host."

The court erupted in laughter. Barrister Wolfharr blushed.

"Quite right!" The barrister smiled. "Why did you help Ms.Jasmine Lee steal the documents from Mrs.Curtiss?";  
 "Ms.Lee said we were family." Katelynn hung her head ashamed. "And she promised she'd get me into Slytherin house."

"But you're a Hufflepuff recently revealed as an heir of Rowena Ravenclaw! Did you want to be a slytherin?" The barrister asked. "I thought I did," Katelynn's lower lip quivered. "I was wrong. I'm not a Slytherin. I want nothing to do with them!"

"Not all Slytherins are bad people Katelynn." The barrister smiled. "Why, Mr.Zac Curtiss there is a nice young man and he's a Slytherin. I myself was a Slytherin! I'm not a bad sort am I?"

"Well..." Katelynn said feeling Lyras hands tighten a bit on her shoulders. "You are a lawyer!"

Laughter erupted in the Wizengamot again. The girls innocent sence of sarcastic comic timing was spot on. When asked why she helped release Salazar Slytherin her answer was almost identical to Blossom Kowalski's.

"One last question." The barrister asked calmly. "Why did Jasmine Lee want to free Salazar Slytherin?"

"She wanted to kill him." Katelynn said. "He cursed her family line. A maladictus curse that passed from mother to daughter down through the years. A curse that made them both human and snake. She knew that to kill him would break the curse. But he killed her before she could kill him."

"Your witness Deputy Minister Advanish." The Barrister stepped back and took a drink of water.

"Miss Ashwolf why did you go back to the chamber of secrets secret opening?" The deputy minister asked.

"To try and Rescue a missing classmate that I knew was down there." Katelynn said defensively. "Poppey Rosegarden."

"Why not just tell your house matron?" The deputy asked.

"Ms.Lee said if we told anyone she'd blame it all on us." Katelynn said.

"Why did you not rescue the girl when you had the chance?" The deputy minister asked.

"Ms.Lee commanded we come with her." Katelynn ssid. "We had no choice."

"The Maladictus serpents are known for their hypnotic control powers sir." Hermione Granger added.

"Thank you miss Granger." The Deputy Minister said. "One last question Miss Ashwolf. If I were to tell you I intended to murder Billions of absolutely innocent people for nefarious reasons, would you kill me?"

"In a heart beat." Katelynn Ashwolf said. "And anyone who shared your ambitions or was sympathetic to your cause!"

The court gasped at the girls frankness.

"No further questions." The deputy minister said turning to his assistant and telling her quietly. "I believe miss Ashwolf should have court mandated psychiatric evaluation and counseling."

"Yes Minister." Hermione took note.

"Any redirect Barrister Wolfharr?" The deputy minister asked.

"A point of clarification if I may?" The barrister asked politely.

"Proceed." The deputy minister said concerned.

"Katelynn, by your accounts and your beliefs, do you believe that Sasporilla Buckets actions against Salazar Slytherin were justified?"

"You bet I do." Katelynn said.

"Nothing further." Barrister Wolfharr said.

"The Wizengamot will now take a thirty minute break to address two issues." The deputy minister said. "May I see Barrister Wolfharr, Auror Lee-Ashwolf and young Katelynn in my chambers please. This court will reconvene in thirty minutes at approximately eleven am."

The Wizengamot broke for thirty minutes. Many went for water or a pumpkin juice in the cafeteria. There was a quick meeting in the back chambers about counseling for young Katrlynn's aggressive attitude. There were good arguments to made that was seen as overtly aggressive behavior was common American behavior. Sasporilla sat alone in her cell humming tunes and thinking of Melvin.

It was in the cafeteria that Barrister Hilask Wolfharr found the Minister of Magic and the Hogwarts Headmistress enjoying a cup of tea.

"Wonderful!" The Barrister yelled excitedly running over to the table. "I was hoping to find you two together."

"Would you care to join us barrister?" Kingsly Shacklebolt asked.

"Ah that's most kind." Hilask Wolfharr smiled. "But no. I just wanted to warn you that I've been playing fast and loose to throw your deputy minister off his game. After the break I shall be acting much more serious and will be a bit rough on the two of you."

"I see." Minerva McGonagall pursed her lips.

"Good!" The barrister smiled at the old witch. "Keep that rigid stick up your back side Minerva! I'm counting on it being there when I need it!"

Hilask Wolfharr walked away bowing to colleagues and stopping to flirt with the old woman behind the cafeteria counter who looked like Mad-eye Moody in a hairnet.

"You never liked Hilask Wolfharr." Kingsly smiled.

"I always found him to be a preening popinjay." Headmistress McGonagall frowned. "Full of himself, with little concern for others. Frankly I'm amazed he is regarded as the best Barrister of the Royal Court!"

The Wizengamot reconvened at about five minutes after eleven. Barrister Hilask Wolfharr always had the most negative of effects on Deputy Minister Advanish's nervous stomach and irritable bowel syndrome.

"If it pleases the court," Barrister Wolfharr smiled. "I would like to call, for my next witness, Headmistress of Hogwarts School for witch craft and wizardry, Minerva McGonagall."

Professor McGonagall walked down from the gallery and took a seat before the court.

"Headmistress." Wolfharr asked. "How was the disappearance of Katelynn Ashwolf brought to your attention?"

"Our Hufflepuff Head Girl discovered Miss Ashwolf missing at bed check. She in turn went to her house matron Professor Sprout who brought her to me with the disturbing note that was found."

"I would like, at this time, to enter into evidence the note left by Katelynn Ashwolf, begging for help to be sent."

The barrister handed the letter over to the barrister who used an engorgio spell to increase its size so that all may read it clearly. Then reducing it back to size to be handed in, to be entered into evidence.

"Headmistress McGonagall." The barrister asked. "Who's responsibility was it to form a search and rescue party?"

"That responsibility was solely mine." Minerva scowled.

"And your first instinct was to form a party of professors and professionals?" The barrister asked.

"Yes." The mistress said. "But we had few who were suited to the task. My staff is aging. It would be time before the minister could bring a team from London."

"So what did you do?" Hilask Wolfharr smiled.

"I sent word around the school asking for seventh year volunteers." The headmistress said.

"Ah!" Hilask Wolfharr grinned. "And it was from this call for help that Miss Bucket and her friends stepped up?"

"No." Minerva lowered her head knowing where his line of questioning lead. "We went into Hogsmead..."

"Could you specify who the 'WE' were for the record, Headmistress." Hermione Granger asked.

"The WE were myself, Professor Sprout and Blossom Kowalski. The three of us went into Hogsmead to find Karry Curtiss, Zac Curtiss and Sasporilla Bucket, at the Curtiss home. We awoke them and told them what had happened. Karry Curtiss was working on the documents of Albus Dumbledore and had some idea of the chamber of secrets back entrance. She volunteered to help as did her husband Zac."

"And what of Miss Bucket?" The barrister asked seriously.



"She was dressed and ready to go before the others." Minerva McGonagall said. "Sasporilla was concerned because it was her friend's cousin, a fellow Hufflepuff and a young student in a very dangerous situation."

"Were you concerned when Sasporilla Bucket volunteered?" Hilask Wolfharr asked.

"I was relieved!" Headmistress McGonagall said looking sharply at the barrister which unnerved him as much now as when she'd done it to him all those years ago in transfiguration class.

"Relieved!?" The barrister asked surprised. "Why?"

"Sasporilla Bucket is by and far the most powerful witch of her generation. I'm sure the ministries files have revealed that! There could be no one who was more suited to take on the magical horrors of Salazar Slytherin than her. Because of her involvement, and sheer knowledge of Karry Curtiss and Blossom Kowalski, we stood a very good chance of rescuing the girls and seeing everyone return."

"Indeed." The barrister said. "But you did not go yourself... chicken?"

"I beg your pardon?" Minerva McGonagall asked as the gallery gasped. "I may be many things Hilask Wolfharr, but a coward is not one of them. I was asked to stay behind to coordinate a secondary rescue effort should the first team not be heard from in twenty four hours, by the Minister of Magic."

"My apologies Minerva." The barrister said.

"So the next time you saw Miss Bucket was when?" Barrister Hilask Wolfharr asked.

"The next day, in the corridor by the Slytherin common room, at Hogwarts." The headmistress said. "She was placing the stone form of Salazar Slytherin at the end of the hall, to block the new entrance to the Chamber of Secrets."

"So you didn't actually see her turn Salazar Slytherin to stone?" Hilask Wolfharr asked.

"No." The Headmistress conceded.

"When you discovered Sasporilla Bucket turned Salazar Slytherin to stone, what did you do?" The barrister asked.

"I tried reversing the spell but it was of no use." Headmistress McGonagall said. "Sasporilla had used elven magic."

"Oh dear." Barrister Hilask Wolfharr remarked. "Elven magic! No witch or wizard can undo elven magic! But wait, elves can. Does Hogwarts have any elves on staff?"

"Yes of course." Minerva McGonagall said surprised. "We have a full cooking and cleaning staff of house elves."

"Did you ask any one of the elves to undo the turn to stone spell?" The barrister asked.

"No." The headmistress said. "It never occurred to me."

"I have no further questions." The barrister said.

Deputy Minister Advanish turned to his assistant. They quietly discussed something between themselves, then he turned to the witness. "Headmistress, in your opinion, is Sasporilla Bucket guilty of the charges against her?"

"I object!" The Barrister slammed his hand on the banister. "The witness opinion is irrelevant in a court of fact."

"Yes but the question is allowed." The Deputy Minister smiled.

"Do I feel her reasons were just and sound, yes!" Headmistress McGonagall said. "Do I think Miss Bucket is as good and honest a human being as she is a powerful young witch, yes!"

"The witness will answer the question!" Deputy Minister Advanish sneered.

"As I didn't actually see her cast the spell," Minerva McGonagall said defiantly, "for all I actually know this could all be a statue of Salazar Slytherin and a most elaborate hoax!"

"Yes!" Barrister Hilask Wolfharr smiled.

"No further questions." The deputy minister of magic sighed. The bailiff showed the Hogwarts Headmistress back to her seat.

"I would like to call my next witness, arresting officer Senior Detective Nick Owlmore of the Magical Justice Division." Barrister Hilask Wolfharr called.

Nick Owlmore stood and buttoned his suit jacket. He headed down to the witness chair and took a seat. Once sworn in the barrister attacked.

"Why did you arrest your God daughter?" Barrister Hilask Wolfharr asked.

"Just doing my job?" Nick said.

"Just doing your job." The barrister said. "Just...following...orders. The cry of the yellow bellied beurocrat."

"Excuse me?" Nick asked as the barrister turned and peppered him with questions.

"Did you see Sasporilla Bucket turn Salazar Slytherin to stone?"

"No"

"Why arrest her?"

"She confessed to turning Salazar Slytherin to stone."

"Confessed?"

"Yes."

"You interrogated her?"

"No she just told me." Nick frowned.

Barrister Hilask Wolfharr backed off for moment, turning his back and walking to the jury box. "So you're saying Sasporilla Bucket admitted to you that she turned Salazar Slytherin to stone."

"Yes she did."

"What sort of spell is that?"

"A curse."

"Was a curse breaker called?"

"No."

"Was it an unforgivable curse?"

"No."

"Ah!" The barrister smiled and turned back towards Nick. "Then may I ask you a question?"

"I would be surprised if you didn't." Nick sighed.

"If the curse was not UNFORGIVEABLE then why arrest her?" Barrister Hilask Wolfharr asked.

"Because she killed Salazar Slytherin." Nick said.

"Dead?"

"Yes Dead!" Nick said.

"Ah!" Barrister Hilask Wolfharr said. "Is he dead?"

The court room went silent.

"I would like to enter into evidence the stone form of Salazar Slytherin." The Barrister smiled. "Who will also be a future witness!"

The court audibly gasped and murmured much to the barristers delight. "Your witness deputy minister."

"Thank you barrister." Deputy Minister Advanish said. "Senior Detective Inspector Owlmore, in your professional opinion as an aurer, did you view the admission of guilt of casting the curse that turned Salazar Slytherin irreversibly to stone, just cause for your god daughters arrest?"

"Yes." Nick said. "Unfortunately the laws of the department of Magical justice are clear."

"The witness may return to the gallery."

"I'd like to call my next witness." Barrister Wolfharr said. "An expert witness in dealing with mad despots who would enslave or kill those of us deemed unworthy. Harry Potter."

Harry Potter was escorted into the court room. He looked around and acknowledged those he knew as he was sat in the witness seat and sworn in by Hermione Granger.

"How are you Hermione?" Harry asked.

"I'm very well Harry, and you?" Hermione smiled.

"Ya I'm all right." Harry smiled.

"Wonderful!" Barrister Hilask Wolfharr said spreading his arms. "Everyone's ok, and do you know why? Because this young man, Harry Potter stood up to you know who and fought him at every step!"

The Wizengamot erupted in applause.

"That's right ladies and gentlemen!" Hilask Wolfharr said. "Applaud the selfless act which saved billions from Lord Voldemorts tyranny or worse. All it took was to turn the dark lord to ash!"

Deputy Minister Advanish rolled his eyes at the blatant manipulation of the court. "Yes we are all aware of the similarities of your clients case and the Heroic actions of this young man Barrister Wolfharr. You forgetting your own argument that it was an act of war, kill or be killed."

"On the contrary." Harry Potter said. "It may have been an act that ended a war, but killing Tom Riddle was very personal to me! If I had to face him off again I'd kill him straight off and avoid the pain and suffering of everyone else."

"No further questions." Barrister Hilask Wolfharr said.

"Mr.Potter." Deputy Minister Advanish said sitting forward. "Are you telling this court you a guilty of the murder of Thomas Morvollo Riddle?"

"Absolutely!" Harry Potter said. "As guilty as he is of killing my mother and hundreds more."

"What if we through you in Azkaban for your confession?" The deputy minister asked.

"Then that would be your choice." Harry said firmly. "The same choice most of you buocrsts made to hide your heads in the sand rather than pick up your wands snd stand up to Voldemort and do what had to be done. The acts of cowards standing behind laws, letting the children fight for you. Then, historically, that has always been war, hasn't it?"

Many witches and wizards of the Wizengamot hung their heads in shame. They knew the young wizard was right. Many of them got out of England and hid elsewhere rather than joining the fight. Others just kept their heads down and ignored the evil around them. Some even had a hand in the hainous acts of Voldemort and his death eaters. Justifying their actions by claiming 'just following orders' or claiming 'I was just doing my job.'

"Thank you Mr.Potter," Deputy Minister Advanish sneered. "That will be all."

Harry stood and walked up into the gallery to sit beside Headmistress McGonagall.

"For my last witness." Barrister Wolfharr smiled playfully, "I call none other than Salazar Slytherin himself."

"Alright Barrister Wolfharr enough!" The deputy minister said as a rather small elf walked in to the court room carrying some metal circlets on his stumpy arm. "I have enough of your games and you making a mockery of this court. This is not a joke Hilask!"

"And I assure you Cecil I am not joking." The barrister smirked. "In fact, I'll ask that you all put the circlets, found under your seats, on to your heads! Deputy Minister Advanish, Jury foreman Mrs.Bloomsberry, and Chief Magistrate of the Wizengamot, Mr.Vernan Pennywhistle, please step down to the court room floor please."

"This is preposterous!" Deputy Minister Advanish yelled.

"Is the innocence of my client preposterous?" The barrister shouted. "Have minds already been made up?"

Rolling his eyes the deputy minister joined the others on the floor of the Wizengamot by the stone form of Salazar Slytherin. The small elf handed each of them a circlet.

"Now if you would all be so kind as to put the circlet on your heads like this." The barrister said placing the silver circle carefully over his hair.

The others followed suit as directed. The barrister slipped the last circlet onto the head of the stone cursed old wizard.

"These circlets will hopefully protect us all." The barrister said.

"Protect us from what?" The deputy minister asked.

"From the wrath of Salazar Slytherin." The barrister smiled nodding at the small elf who snapped his fingers. The stone began to turn to flesh and cloth. Salazar Slytherin took a deep breath and hissed the word "FREE!"

"Salazar Slytherin!" The deputy minister said. "He lives."

"Of course he lives!" The Barrister said. "He was never dead, this great wizard was preserved in stone!"

"This is some sort of trick!" The deputy minister scoffed as Salazar Slytherin pulled his wand from within his robes.

With a silent wave a book appeared in the old wizards hands. It was the single volume from his library of names of pure blood families. He placed his wand tip on the cover of the book and cast "MalaPerdere!"

All but the deputy minister fell dead before the power of Salazar Slytherin.

"What have you done?" The deputy minister screamed.

"Cleansed the world of the impure." Salazar Slytherin said. "Those worthy and pure of blood have been spared. You and your line will serve me as we burn the world and rebuild it in my image."

"You're bloody mad!" Deputy Minister Advanish said drawing his wand. "By the power vested in me by the ministry of magic I here by..."

"Avada Kedavra." Salazar Slytherin cast killing the deputy minister in a ball of green death. The ancient wizard left the ministry to walk amongst the billions of Dead that lay across London. Slytherin waved his wand in large circles casting flames which expanded in wide rings immolating the bodies, burning down the muggle buildings and scorching the earth. Salazar Slytherin laughed as he walked off, alone through the smoke and flame.

Circlets were pulled from the heads of the members of the court but was left on the statue.

"What was that?" Deputy Minister Advanish asked.

"A few minutes inside the very living mind of Salazar Slytherin." Barrister Wolfharr said. "As you experienced, he is quite evil and will not be stopped from killing everyone and destroying everything. The questions are, having seen this, do you still believe Salazar Slytherin is dead? And do you believe Sasporilla Buckets actions were not justified? I rest my case."

The jury needed very little time to deliberate. Sasporilla Bucket was lead back into the court shackled and chained. She stood before the Wizengamot, dirty and disheveled.

"Sasporilla Bucket." Mrs.Bloomsbury, the jury foreman stood. "We the members of the jury have taken all evidence and testimony into account and have unanimously agreed on our recommendation."

The bailiff took the written decision from the jury foreman and carried it to the chief magistrate of the Wizengamot.

"The jurys recommendation on the charges of the murder of Salazar Slytherin," Chief Magistrate of the Wizengamot, Mr.Vernan Pennywhistle read, "is NOT GUILTY. All those in favor of the recommendation?"

All but three raised their hands.

"Opposed?" The magistrate asked.

The three who raised their hands felt vindicated and just, but should have felt more worried for their future careers.

"The Wizengamot has ruled." Chief Magistrate Mr.Vernan Pennywhistle said. "Not guilty."

The courtroom erupted in cheers. Sasporilla Bucket smiled as the chains fell from her hands snd feet. She held out her hand until a bailiff handed Sassy her wand. Karry ran to her friend and hugged her.

"I've never had any doubt." Karry smiled.

"Glad you didn't." Sasporilla said. "I thought I'd have to plan a break out from Azkaban!"

"Hi kid." Nick Owlmore said stepping up to his God Daughter. "Look I hope there's no hard feelings?"

"Oh there are a ton of hard feelings." Sasporilla said. "But nothing I won't get over and forgive you for eventually you fascist prig!"

Nick found the words hurtful but knew they were well enough deserved. For now he'd take the hug from her and leave it at that.

Myron grabbed Sassy and hugged her tight. "I'm glad you're going to be all right."

"Thanks Myron." Sassy smiled. "I need to talk to you after. I need to know everything you know about Melvin losing his memory."

The Deputy Minister adjourned into the hall outside the court room. There he met up with the minister of magic Kingsly Shackbolt.

"Fine job Cecil." Kingsly said shaking the mans hand. "I'm happy with the way you handled that whole mess. If I hadn't been witness to it all, I would have had to deal with it."

"I'm just glad things worked out for the girl." The Deputy Minister smiled as Barrister Wolfharr came around the corner. "And why do you have to be so bloody playful all the time?"

Barrister Wolfharr came up and kissed his husband with a smile. "Because that's how you love me you stodgy old poop!"



# Of Love & Boffles

A Harry Potter / Sasporilla Bucket Fan Fiction  
by Darren Kelly

Snow fell gently on an abandoned children's play ground. Three cloaked figures stepped through the early morning mist, between the loose chains from broken swings and around the rotted wooden teeter-totter. The old merry go round was the target. Once a device which brought joy to the muggle children of Essex, now a desolate rusting hulk in the center of a forgotten, over grown play park.

Sasporilla Bucket lowered the hood of her purple cloak, breathing in the crisp morning air as she looked around.

"Looks like the coast is clear." Sasporilla said as Karry and Zac Curtiss lowered their hoods.

"Good." Karry smiled. "This was kind of a public place to put a portkey."

"Yes but no one uses this old park anymore." Zac laughed. "Not even many muggles even walk past here."

"What time is the portkey set to use?" Karry asked.

"Five am on the dot." Sasporilla smiled. "Two minutes."

"Best get at it then!" Zac said.

"What time will it be when we arrive in Sydney?" Sasporilla asked.

"Seven p.m." Karry smiled.

The three friends reached out and grabbed a rusty handle of the merry go round as Zac counted down. "Six... five.... four... three... two... one...HERE WE GO!"

Everything started to spin as they grabbed on even tighter. This was by no way any of their first time using a port key. They squealed with youthful delight as they took the ride of their lives.

"Ok let go in three... two... one... let go!!!" Zac called out as they fell back to earth. Zac jogged his way down. Karry landed like an Olympic gymnast winning a gold medal. Sasporilla landed squarely on her feet, lost her balance and fell forward. Karry and Zac laughed as they helped their friend to her feet.

"Shut up." Sasporilla laughed. "I haven't used a port key in ten bloody years."

"Better than any amusement park ride." Zac smiled.

Sasporilla looked around to get her bearings. They had arrived in a parking lot between strategically parked buses and trailers.

"Who are you?" A large man with long dark hair asked.

"We're friends of Myron." Sasporilla said.

"Oh are you now?" The large man asked skeptically as he grabbed a small black box from his belt. Holding the small box up to his face he pushed a small button on its side. "Found three intruders in lot 'D' they say they're friends of Big M."

An unintelligible voice crackled and mumbled from the box.

"Ya pink hair." The man said. "With a tall guy and fair haired stacked girl."

"Oy!" Karry protested.

"That's my wife mate." Zac said getting his back up.

"Ya I'll bring them up." The man said clasping the box back on his belt. "No offence meant. Follow me."

The trio followed the man who called himself "DOG" to the back stage security point.

"All right." Dog smiled handing each of them a lanyard with a pass on it. "Hang these round your necks. Don't take them off. Don't lose them. You can go anywhere in the show with these. Mr.Wagtail is waiting for you, through that door, room at the end of the hall."

Sasporilla Bucket stepped through the door into the stadium followed by Karry and Zac. The hall was alive with roadies moving equipment, people with last minute jobs to do pushing past hurriedly, and rich fans enjoying the back stage experience before the show. A young lady stepped out of green door and ran for a washroom looking conspicuously sick from excess. As the door closed Sasporilla saw Vinny Lazar sitting on a couch, leaned back playing guitar, a girl snuggling into his side, her head on his shoulder. Her sad eyes locked onto his for just a second as the door shut.

As they walked on down the hall the green door burst open.

"Hey???" Vinny Lazar called to them. "Don't I know you?"

Sasporilla turned her face filled with hope.

"You're Karry Curtiss!" Vinny pointed with a struggled look of remembrance on his face. "And you're..... Zac! From Hogwarts!!!"

"Yes." Karry smiled politely seeing Sasporillas heart sink. "Thought we'd all pop by for the show."

"Nice." Vinny smiled. "Who's your friend?"

"I'm no one." Sasporilla said feeling very down.

"Oh?" Vinny said taking Sassy's hand and kissing the back of it. "Everyone is someone. Especially you. You're... the most beautiful woman I've ever met."

Sasporilla blushed and took her hand back.

"Yes." Sassy said. "You told me that a long time ago when we met on the Hogwarts express. I'm Karry's friend Sasporilla."

"Really?" Vinny said surprised. "I have a good memory for names and faces and I would have remembered yours!"

"Vinny," a sweet young voice cooed from the doorway of the green room. "Come back."

"Rock and roll." Vinny said heading back into the room.

"I'm so sorry Sasporilla." Karry said.

"So am I." Sassy said.

The trio made their way to the door at the end of the hall. Sasporilla barely got one knock out of her before the door flung open and Myron grabbed her in a big loving bear hug.

"Glad I didn't knock." Zac laughed.

Karry elbowed him gently in the sides with a playful smirk.

"It's so good to see you my Sasporilla." Myron said not wanting to let her go. "It's been too long."

"Every day away is too long." Sasporilla smiled.

"All of you come in." Myron smiled.

Sasporilla walked into the large office and sat on one of the couches next to one of Myron's guitars. Karry and Zac sat down next to her with Myron sitting on the coffee table before them.

"Ok so tell me what you need me to do?" Myron asked. "What's the plan?"

"If our information is correct." Sasporilla said. "Mrs.Lazarus watches the show from stage left."

"Yes that's correct." Myron nodded.

"When Melv..." Sasporilla stopped to correct herself, "When Vinny starts playing the song he wrote for me, Zac will stand up from his seat in the front row. Karry will appear stage right. Wendy will keep her eye on Mrs.Lazarus and will stop her if she tries to go through the back of the stage. I will come up from behind her so we can... chat."

"What do you need me to do?" Myron asked.

"We need you to distract security." Karry said. "When the third song starts."

"I think I'll have my hands full with Mrs.Lazarus." sassy said. "She's probably tougher than she looks."

"Ya well so are you." Myron smiled clasping Sasporilla's hands.

"Yes well let's hope she's underestimated me." Sasporilla grinned.

The opening band "CORNOCOPIA" took their bows and vacated the stage. A funny looking little man dressed as a janitor came out onto stage and started to sweep. The audience paid little attention to the man until he accidentally hit one of the guitars, knocking it over from its stand, sending it crashing to the stage with a loud feedback whine. One Amplifier blew in a puff of smoke. Then another, and another as the explosions cascaded across the stage. Flames shot up, sparks flew and smoke rolled across the stage. The old cleaner cowered in fear until the smoke rolled over him. The audience yelled with concern and protest.

As the smoke cleared, the old man was now young. It was Vinny Lazar! His wand tucked up the sleeve of his jacket he cast "ACIO GUITAR." His faithful electric six string flew from stage right into his hand, and he started to play. The rest of the band took their cue and appeared through the quickly dissipating smoke, and started to play.

The crowd was amazed. The entire stage had been cleared and the set changed in a puff of smoke. Just like magic. Mrs.Lazarus stood with arms folded, pursed lips and raised eyebrow as she watched for mistakes in her sons performance. Making mental notes to address with him later.

At the end of the second song Vinny always took a moment to introduce the band. Myron picked up the walkie-talkie from his desk. "Chippey come in."

"Ya Boss." The crackling voice of an older man growled from the speaker.

"Suspicious bunch at the west gate. ALL security hands on deck."

"10-4" the voice said.

Myron smiled as the third song started to play. "Good luck."

The trio put their hoods up and headed out to take up their positions. Zac apparated to the front row taking his seat. Only one person noticed his strange arrival and a quick obliviate took care of ten seconds of his memory and all was forgotten. Karry Apparated stage right and hid in the wings. Sasporilla nonchalantly walked into stage left, showing her badge to the roadie taking securities place at the door. She grabbed a jumbo shrimp from the food table and took a swig from a bottle of water. Trying to look like any other bored hanger on.

The third song ended. Vinny approached the mic as he exchanged guitars. "Of all our songs, I absolutely love this one. It makes me think of the colour pink. I have no idea why."

Vinny started to play as Sasporilla took her place at Mrs.Lazarus' shoulder.

"But we know," Sasporilla said, "don't we Mrs.Lazarus."

Melvins mother turned to look at Sasporilla with unbridled hate in her eyes. "You, What do you want?"

"First I want to know why?" Sasporilla asked.

"I took Melvins dreams of being a rock star for years." Mrs.Lazarous said. "Every time he fostered new ideas about music I would pull them from his head. Then YOU come along. Foster his dreams. Help him get noticed before I could hide it all away again. Now my son is 'In the Arts'! How embarrassing."

"Yes I'm sure the money he's making is an embarrassment to his and your Gringots accounts." Sassy said sarcastically. "I couldn't take the dream away this time because there were too many people to obliterate, but I could remove you." "Did you really think I'd just accept what you've done and crawl away with my tail between my legs?" Sasporilla said coldly.

"Isn't that what a beaten bitch is suppose to do?" Mrs.Lazarus sneered. "Melvins memories of you are long gone. Obliterated beyond reversal."

"I don't believe you." Sassy smiled lowering her hood. "You see we've figured out you've harvested the memories like Dumbledore did for his pencieve. So we searched your home, your office, even paid off goblins who searched your private vault. Great creatures goblins, not cheaply, but easily bought."

"The violation!" Mrs.Lazarous hissed.

"Ya." Sassy sneered. "The nerve of some people trying to take something that doesn't belong to them."

"Well you'll never find them clever girl." Mrs.Lazarus said.

"It's in the little glass bottle hanging by a chain around your neck." Sasporilla said making Melvins mother grasp the bottle through her shirt. "And if you're really clever you'll hand it over to me, all peaceful like."

"Never!" Mrs.Lazarus screamed grabbing hold of Sasporilla and kneeing the young pink haired witch in the stomach and pushed past.

Sasporilla grabbed the older witches leg and hung on tightly, bringing her to her knees. Mrs.Lazarus thrust her hands forward to hrlp break her fall, inadvertently ripping, the bottle from its chain and sending it crashing to the cement floor. The bottle shattered. Melvins memories, all that was his love for Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket spewed forth like a tightly braided glowing blue worm that wringled and died on the floor, then burst in a puff of sparkling blue powder.

Sasporilla burst into tears, while Melvins mother burst into delightful laughter. Karry apparated to her friends side. Myron ran in as if surprised.

"What's going on here?" Myron asked as if innocent in the plot.

"This beastly girl attacked me." Mrs.Lazarus said.

"I saw it all Myron," Karry said, "Sasporilla was talking to her and she elbowed Sassy in the side."

"You little liar." Mrs.Lazarus hissed.

"It doesn't matter now." Sasporilla said weeping. "It's all gone."

"Yes." Mrs.Lazarus smirked. "Melvins love, your hopes and dreams to twist my brilliant boy from a life of academia to one suited to your lower class dreams! People like you don't belong in royal families, you belong in prisons. I want the police! I want her charged."

"For what?" Karry protested.

"You want me charged?" Sasporilla growled. "I'll give you damn good reason!"

Sasporilla leapt forward onto Mrs.Lazarus and started slapping and smacking the older witch screaming wildly. Wendy Murphy missed a beat throwing off the song. Vinny looked at her questioningly and saw the drummer staring stage left. The girl who was with the kids from Hogwarts was beating up his mother! Vinny through off his guitar and rushed off stage.

Myron and a roadie pulled Sasporilla, a flailing and screaming ball of fury, as Vinny Lazar ran to his mothers side.

"Are you ok?" Vinny asked his mother who wiped blood from her nose.

"I'll be ok." Mrs.Lazarus smiled weakly.

"What the hell did you think you were doing?" Vinny screamed at Sasporilla.

"She stole me from you Melvin." Sasporilla wailed. "She stole your love for me!"

"What are you talking about you psycho?" Vinny Lazar screamed. "Get this girl out of here. I never want to see her around here again!"

Zac arrived and took Sasporilla from the roadie. Karry held Sasporilla from the other side as the pink haired witch succumbed to her outrage and sadness and went limp. Security burst into the room diverting everyone's attention just long enough for Zac and Karry to disappearated with Sassy in tow.

Security dealt with Myron and Mrs.Lazarus as they waited for police to arrive. Melvin saw the blue dust on the ground. He touched his finger to the dust and rubbed it between his thumb and fingers, wondering just what it was? The crowd started to chant restlessly.

Vinny stood and returned to the stage with a cheer.

"Sorry about that." Vinny Lazar apologized to the fans as he picked up his guitar. "Bit of a scuffle back stage. I never tun from a good fight!"

The Fans cheered. Sweat ran down Vinnys brow and into his eye as he prepared to play. The salty liquid burned and without thinking he rubbed his eye. A flash of blue and swirl of the mind as a single memory returned.

Melvin kissed her. He kissed the girl with pink hair. Sasporilla was her named. Not a the warm gentle kiss of a child, but the wildly passionate kiss of a man in love. Sasporilla melted in his arms. He didn't know if they kissed for seconds, minutes or hours. As there lips parted Melvin looked deep into Sasporillas eyes. Sassy stared back and bit her lower lip.

Vinny Lazar stood on stage before his audience stunned lost in memory of the perfect kiss, with the perfect girl and wondered what else had been taken from him.



# Owl's of Dreams & Regret

A Harry Potter / Sasporilla Bucket Fan Fiction  
by Darren Kelly

As many had feared would happen, Sasporilla Bucket shut down after the incident with Melvin's mother back stage at the Dead End Oddity Shop concert. She through herself coldly into her school work, no longer allowing herself the luxury of love. Allowing only Karry and Zac inside her tight little world where she existed alone, but safe from pain.

A letter arrived by owl from the Ministry of Magic, justice division.

Dear Miss Bucket;

Re: Your Assault on one Mrs.Beverly Lazarus in Australia, Saturday last.

Though the evidence provided proves without a shadow of a doubt that Mrs.Lazarus did indeed throw the first blow which started the altercation, she has applied for and been granted a restraining order against you.

You are hear by ordered to be no closer to Mrs.Lazarus or her son Melvin Lazarus (aka Vinny Lazar) than 100 meters at any time in any venue for the next twelve month period. This restraining order also includes no contact by you, to the afore mentioned parties, by & including but not limited to, Owl post, magical or muggle forms of contact.

Thank you for your cooperation

Hermione Granger.

Assistant to the under secretary for the Deputy Minister of Magic.

Several owls had arrived from DEOS ENTERTAINMENT, The bands management company. Sasporilla tore them up and burned most of the pieces in the Hufflepuff common room fire place. The few she sent back never made it to Vinny Lazar they were ordered held back by Myron Wagtail who didn't want any further problems on the tour he'd personally invested so much money in.

Sasporilla glanced at the last letter to arrive from DEOS ENT.

Dear Sasporilla;



I'm so very sorry for everything that happened. I truly don't remember you but I at least know why. I know that my mother stole my memories of you from me and I know your struggle with her was in hopes of restoring those memories, and in turn my love for you.

Some of the memory that had turned to dust got into my eye and returned one single memory to me. The kiss. I remember my fear, my passion and love for you, the taste of your lips, the look in your violet eyes framed by your pink hair.

I know I can never get those memories back, but I hope that if we can talk things through, maybe we can make new memories.

Vinny Lazar.

Sasporilla's response was a simple copy spell cast upon the restraining order placed upon her. She stuffed the copy angrily into an envelop addressed to Melvin Lazarus with only a Hogwarts crest as a clue to its place of origin. She never heard from Vinny Lazar again.

It had been a solid six weeks since anyone had heard from Nick and Lyra. Then suddenly two letters at one arrived in the morning owl post.

Dear Sasporilla

It's your Uncle Nick. It's been a busy few months chasing down the master vampire. We lost all sign of the creature in the Carpathian mountains. I'm being pulled off the case by the ministry and called back for reassignment. I'll be back at home again soon and will be able to attend your graduation in a few months. I hope you will write back soon. I miss you.

Uncle Nick

Hey Kid;

I saw a pair of pants in Romania that reminded me of you. They had a size three waist and a size sixty butt, so of course I thought of you.

Look I screwed up, I nearly got your uncle Nick killed while chasing that stupid vampire. No matter what he tells you, it was my fault. I got cocky and because of it some muggle farmers were taken and killed. There was a whole inquiry thing and now I'm out of a job.

I've decided to go back to America. I've been offered the defence against the dark arts professor job at Ilvermorny. Those who can't do, teach after all. Am I right?

See ya in the funny papers Sassy.

Lyra

Dear Lyra;

I'm happy those pants reminded you of me. I had similar thoughts of you when I saw the Hogwarts Express Caboose at Christmas. Nick has told me very little of Romania. You know how lock lipped he can be when it comes to a case. I'm sad to hear your going back to America but I know you'll do what's best for you.

Maybe the great and wild Lyra Lee-Ashwolf will finally settle down, Get married and have a family. Wouldn't that be spectacular!!!

Go get 'em Professor.

With the biggest Hugs

Sasporilla.

It was a few days before Sassy wrote back to Nick Owlmore. After that arrest business she had been keeping her Uncle at arms length. Not that she was really all that mad at him anymore, but she needed to keep all those who loved her just that much farther away. Love only brought pain. Though Sasporilla didn't find loneliness that much better.

Dear Uncle Nick;

I'm happy you'll be at my graduation in June. I'm really happy you'll be home this summer. It will give us a good chance to catch up and get some things straight between us. I'm curious to hear your side of what happened concerning Lyra.

See you soon

Sasporilla

The next letters every seventh year waited on with both anticipation and dread were the results of their N.E.W.T's. Sasporilla and Karry's letters were left on the center of their beds.

Upon entering the room Karry Curtiss squealed with delight and jumped on her bed to open the letter. Sasporilla sat down quietly on her bed and held the results in her hands trepadaciously.

"O-Levels across the board!" Karry chirped quite proud of her achievement. "Sasporilla? Open yours."

"I'm honestly a bit scared too." Sassy smiled nervously. "We've faced death eaters, mad ancient wizards, tyrannical bureaucrats but nothing as big as this... the future."

"What are you worried about?" Karry smiled. "You've been nose deep in your books all year!"

"Ya but what if I did great?" Sassy asked. "Will I get into the University of Avalon or will they say no to my application. What will I do if....?"

"OPEN IT!" Karry insisted.

Sasporilla broke the official ministry seal and pulled the parchment from inside. Sassy read the results silently put the letter on the bed beside her and sighed.

"What?" Karry gasped and bit her lip.

"O levels in everything!!!" Sasporilla yelled.

The next day saw the first owls from the most prestigious of Colleges and Universities begin to arrive. Zac and Karry got their letters for the Hogwarts teachers college by owl first thing. Blossom Kowalski received acceptance letters from a slue of schools including the muggle universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Sasporilla hadn't applied to more than one school. She knew that the best place to learn wand making was the oldest magical university. Known as "THE SEVEN SPIRES" to some she referred to it by its official title "The Avalon University of Higher Magical Learning". If she didn't get in there she would rather study with a master wand maker for a year and apply again.

Sasporilla quietly sipped her pumpkin juice as others around her celebrated their success and achievements. It was the audible gasp of the student body that drew her attention. Everyone looked up as a brilliantly lit fiery phoenix flew down over the Hufflepuff table and dropped a silver letter into Sasporilla Buckets shaking hands.

The envelope was made from silver foil and sparkled as if encrusted with diamond dust. Sasporilla flipped the letter over. It bore the seven pointed star seal of Avalon university. With great anticipation mired in nervous trepidation she cracked the seal. The letter sprung to life from her hands forming an origami mouth which floated before her. The sound of bells and trumpets sounded as the letter spoke in a deep male voice.

"Dear Ms.Bucket;

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted into The Avalon University of Higher Magical Learning Wand maker program which begins September fifteenth this year. A kit is to follow containing all of the information you will need with regards to class schedules, housing, and materials you will need to purchase. Avalon University looks forward to making your continuing education a worth while experience.

Herschel Winston Umbridge; PhD, Order of Merlin Second Class

Dean of Admissions - The Avalon University of Higher Magical Learning"

The letter floated down to the table and became a regular piece of parchment.

"Uh oh." Karry said, a look of surprise, and concern crossed her face.

"What's wrong?" Sasporilla asked looking down at the puddle forming beneath the bench.

"My waters have broken." Karry said. "The baby's coming."



# Motherhood is a Miracle

A Harry Potter / Sasporilla Bucket Fan Fiction

by Darren Kelly

Mrs.Ramschackle lived at number three Hogsend lane in Hogsmead. She was a jolly middle aged widow with a mop of graying red hair and smiling friendly green eyes. She had a penchant for floral frocks to drape over her ample rubinesque form and big floppy flowery hats. She loved her three cats, Topsy, Topsy and Turvey as well as her small but very lush garden.

Most important to her though was her work. Every morning before tea she hung out her shingle. "Mrs.Emily Ramschackle; Mid Wife." Mrs.Ramschackle had delivered every baby in a fifty kilometer radius Hogsmead for the last thirty-five years. She knew every one of the expectant mothers and was expecting the Curtiss child to arrive any day.

Emily stood on her front stoop and took a deep breath of the warm summer air. She saw a broom coming in fast from the direction of Hogwarts. From the precision of the rider, Mrs.Ramschackle knew just who it was. "Madam Hooch!" The midwife gasped as the professor of broom flight, care and maintenance landed quickly beside her. "What's the matter? Is it the Curtiss Girl?"

"Yes." Madam Hooch smiled. "Her waters have broken and her contractions are six minutes apart."

"Fine." Mrs.Ramschackle smiled. "I'll fetch kit and my broom."

The one thing the midwife had learned, over her many years of practice, was to always keep her kit handy the door. A small brown leather satchel contained everything she needed to see a new life brought into this world. Taking her broom in hand she waddled onto the path and mounted her broom side saddle, as all proper witches of her day were taught to do. With a firm but gentle push off, Mrs.Ramschackle took of skyward and headed for Hogwarts.

Madam Hooch flew very fast and it was impossible for Mrs.Ramschackle to keep up. She flew above the tops of the trees focused on the school. This would not be the first baby delivered at Hogwarts, though she was sure Minerva McGonagall would like her children to think so.

The headmistress stood at gates to the Hogwarts grounds waving to Mrs.Ramschackle. The midwife brought her broom in for a landing beside Professor McGonnagal.

"Emily." The Headmistress smiled. "Good of you to come so quickly."

"Of course Minerva." Mrs.Ramschackle said. "I can't miss this! Where is Mrs.Curtiss?";

"In the infirmary." The headmistress said ushering her inside.

It had been a while since the midwife had walked these halls. Long before she was a midwife or even Mrs.Ramschackle. In those days she was just miss Emily Kirkland. An average student, with unsure dreams, sorted into Gryffindor house. Go, go, Gryffindor. The sounds of the chant still filled her ears from years gone by.

The Headmistress held the infirmary door open for Mrs.Ramschackle. She could hear the Curtiss girl before she could see her. The screams were very loud indeed. All new mothers felt pain differently, but something in the young woman's tone alerted the midwives old ears to a problem.

"How far apart are the contractions?" Mrs.Ramschackle asked taking up position, gently edging Madam Pomfrey.

"Four minutes." The hospital wing matron said a bit tersely.

"Dilation?" Mrs.Ramschackle asked.

"Nine centimeters." Madam Pomfrey said.

"Everything sounds fine." Mrs.Ramschackle said with a touch of concern at the grimace on Karrys face.

The midwife reached into her brown leather bag and pulled out a pair of Revelation goggles. Slipping the quickly over her eyes she adjusted the lenses until she could see the baby clearly in her mothers womb.

"Ah!" Mrs.Ramschackle said pulling out her wand. "The baby is breach, I'll need to turn it."  
Mrs.Ramschackle slowly traced a circle along Karrys belly. The midwife watched as the baby turned and repositioned to enter the birth canal. Zac held his wife's left hand and Sasporilla held Karrys right.  
"There now that should make it a bit easier on both baby and mother." The Midwife smiled. "We're just about set. "Now let's see about that pain shall we?"  
With a quick flick of her wand, Mrs.Ramschackle reduced Karrys pain, and returned to the young witch, a sense of calm.  
"Now Mrs.Curtiss," The midwife smiled taking up position, "push!!!"  
Within minutes Mrs.Ramschackle placed Karrys first born baby boy into his mothers loving arms.  
"Mr. and Mrs.Curtiss I present to you your son." Mrs.Ramschackle smiled.  
"A boy!" Zac said excitedly.  
"We decided that if it was a boy," Karry said, "we were going to name him Kameron Zarkhov Curtiss."  
Sasporilla looked down at the cute red little bundle of joy. Zac put his finger close and little Kameron held it.  
Mrs.Ramschackle cut the cord, finished the rest of her job and packed her things away.  
"This is your daddy." Karry smiled. "And this is your auntie Sasporilla! Who is mommy's best friend and your God Mother if she'll accept the honour?"  
"Of course!" Sasporilla smiled down at little Kameron.  
"I know she is in good hands from here." The Midwife smiled at Madam Pomfrey and Headmistress McGonnagal as she turned and walked away.  
"Mrs.Ramschackle!" Zac called after her. "Thank you."  
Mrs.Ramschackle smiled and waved as she left the infirmary to head home to Hogsmeade, another job well done.



# The Graduation of Sasporilla Bucket

A Harry Potter / Sasporilla Bucket Fan Fiction

by Darren Kelly

The Hogwarts Express pulled into Hogsmead station at precisely nine thirty am on Sunday morning. Having made it's customary journey to London, returning the students home for summer holidays, it had made a return journey with friends and family that would be in attendance of the seventh years graduation ceremonies.  
Karry and Zac met Karrys parents at the station. Karry held her new born son, tightly swaddled, in her arms.  
"Karry!" Mrs.Curtiss yelled and rushed over to see her first grand child.  
"Hello Mum." Karry smiled.  
"Oh look at him." Mrs.Curtiss beamed with excitement. "He's beautiful Karoline! Good job!"  
Mr.Curtiss walked up and put the bags down beside them. He had a quick look at the baby and shook Zac's hand.  
"Hello son-in-law." Andrew Curtiss said stiffly.  
"Hello daddy-in-law." Zac said stiffly back.  
The pair burst into laughter like silly first years.  
"Good to see you Zac you old sod!" Mr.Curtiss said mussing Zac's hair. "And there's my baby girl!"  
Mr.Curtiss kissed Karry on the cheek.  
"Hello dad." Karry smiled.  
"Look at you!" Mr.Curtiss said. "Not yet graduated and already a married woman with a baby of your own."  
"Yes almost all in the correct order." Mrs.Curtiss laughed.  
"Mother!?! " Karry said surprised.

"Oops we've reached the 'MOTHER' point already." Mr.Curtiss said picking up the bags, Zac insistently taking them off his father-in-laws hands. "Right, time to get up to these bags up to the house ya?"

A coach awaited the friends and family of the seventh year students who were graduating this year. Fifth year students, who elected not to return after having successfully passing their O.W.L.'s received diplomas by owl post. Those who chose to complete all seven years and successfully completed their N.E.W.T's were honoured with a graduation ceremony. The coaches whisked the special guests away to Hogwarts. Sasporilla Bucket had joined the graduation committee. She was set up organizer and logistics coordinator. A fancy term for party planner without a doubt but a job she took very seriously.

Hagrid moved and stacked tables and stacked them against the back walls of the great hall. Professor Flitwick levitated decorative banners with Hogwarts heraldry onto walls and hanging from the ceiling. House elves setup five rows of comfortable chairs for the friends and families of the graduates. A row of chairs were set up for the twenty four graduates themselves.

Professor Sprout and Head Girl Blossom Kowalski brought some lovely Singing ferns and Jollup rainbow bushes with glowberrys on to add some life and colour to the event.

Sasporilla had to smile as she watched Professor Sprout very discreetly straighten herself up before she approached Hagrid.

"Excuse me Hagrid?" Professor Sprout said tapping him on the lower back.

Hagrid turned with a bright excited smile. "Yes? Ah professor Sprout! Fine day fer a graduation!"

"Oh yes indeed." Professor Sprout beamed. "Rubeus I was wondering if you had time this evening to help me repot my mandrakes?" Professor Sprout asked with coy hope.

"If it's flesh eaten slugs, er repottin' mandrakes, I'm yer man professor." Hagrid smiled.

"You two are so cute together!" Sasporilla said as she passed. "I think you make a great couple. By the way Karry and I figured out your code in third year. Repotting mandrakes... priceless."

Hagrid and Professor Sprout stood there flushed, mouths hanging agape. They looked at the young pink haired witch in shock.

"We didn't think anyone knew?" Professor Sprout said.

"Well technically only me and Karry know." Sasporilla said. "Don't think she ever even mentioned it to Zac. No ones business really not even ours. Just happy to see you've found love in each others arms."

Headmistress McGonnagal walked in a clasped her hands in delight. A broad smile beamed across her face.

"You've all done a beautiful job!" The headmistress smiled. "People will be arriving soon. Miss Bucket, Miss Kowalski, you'd best go get ready!"

The Coaches pulled up to the front of the school and were met by the head mistress and staff. Friends and family were lead into the great hall and seated. The Curtiss' arrived just after the others but were sat in saved seats down front, with Zac's guardian Cabbie Patel. Mrs.Curtiss rocked her grandson peacefully to sleep. Sassy and Blossom joined the other graduates in the seats off to the side. All graduates wore their house robes and those ghastly pointed caps with no brim. Karry had always referred to them as the dunce caps and was happy they were only brought out at special occasions.

"Where the hell have you been?" Karry laughed.

"Easy mum!" Sassy smiled, "Little ears learn everything from you, so watch the potty mouth!"

"You are a brat!" Karry said.

"Just like my best friend." Sassy laughed. "Bloss and I were on the organization committee. So we were working setting all of this up! We only finished ten minutes ago."

With wave of professor Flitwick's wand, a fine quartet of self playing stringed instruments began to play. Headmistress McGonnagal stepped up to the podium and gently cleared her throat, to get everyone's attention.

"Welcome everyone to the Seventh year graduation ceremonies."

The crowd responded with bright smiles and polite applause.

"I have watched these children grow," the headmistress continued, "from novice first years into the brilliant and capable wizards and witches that sit before us today. Each one of them filled with great potential and who from we expect to see great things."

The crowd applauded politely. Sasporilla looked past Karry into the audience. She saw Karrys parents and several faces she recognized but the one person she didn't see, was her Uncle Nick. Something big must have come up for him to be this late.

"As is customary before we hear from our guest commencement speaker, the class valedictorian will say a few words." The headmistress led the applause as Blossom Kowalski stood and smiled as she approached the podium.

Blossom placed her notes on the podium and smiled with bright, beaming enthusiasm.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, parents and professors, fellow graduates and esteemed guests.

The great and curious truth of the human experience is that selflessness is the best thing you can do for yourself. Never have I learned any greater lesson at Hogwarts than that. It has been my terror and my pleasure to stand shoulder to shoulder with these wonderful friends and class mates who taught me as much in the face of adversity as our professors did in the class room.

I am reminded of something Professor Snape hissed at me angrily after my first potion failed explosively.

If you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right."

When you are free from self-doubt, you fail better, because you don't have your defenses up, you can accept the criticism. You don't become so preoccupied with that failure that you forget how to learn from it, you forget how to grow. When you believe in yourself, you succeed better. Hours spent questioning, doubting, fearing, can be given over to working, exploring, living. Make interesting mistakes, make amazing mistakes, make glorious and fantastic mistakes. Break rules. Leave the world more interesting for your being here. Make good magic. Make light. Make Art.

Err in the direction of kindness. Do those things that incline you toward the big questions, and avoid the things that would reduce you and make you trivial. That luminous part of you that exists beyond personality — your soul, if you will — is as bright and shining as any that has ever been.

Fear is going to be a player in our lives, but we get to decide how much. We can spend our whole lives imagining ghosts, worrying about our pathway to the future, but all there will ever be is what's happening here, and the decisions we make in this moment, which are based in either love or fear.

So many of us choose our path out of fear disguised as practicality. What we really want seems impossibly out of reach and ridiculous to expect, so we never dare to ask the universe for it.

Every story you've ever connected with, every leader you've ever admired, every puny little thing that you've ever accomplished is the result of taking action. You have a choice. You can either be a passive victim of circumstance or you can be the active hero of your own life.

It doesn't matter that your dream came true if you spent your whole life sleeping. So get out there and go for it, but don't be caught waiting. It's great to plan for your future. Just don't live there, because really nothing ever happens in the future. Whatever happens, happens now, so live your life where the action is — now.

One of the greatest gifts you can give yourself, right here, right now, in this single, solitary, monumental moment in your life— is to decide, without apology, to commit to the journey, and not to the outcome.

For this is not the end of our journey but the first stop on a long path ahead. Follow your passion, stay true to yourself, never follow someone else's path. Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Go forth and live, love and make this world a better place tomorrow than it was for you today."

Everyone applauded wildly for Blossom as she returned to her seat smiling.

"Thank you for those inspired words miss Kowalski." Headmistress McGonagall smiled proudly. "Now I would like to thank our Ms.Bucket for arranging this years special guest commencement speaker. Please welcome, artist, producer, impresario and music sensation.... Myron Wagtail."

Myron stepped up to the podium straightening his suit jacket and pulling out the reading glasses he was becoming more and more dependant on. Myron looked over at Sasporilla and smiled.

"If everybody followed their first dreams in life, the world would be ruled by quidditch champions and princesses. I believe that there is a way to have a very, very satisfying, enriching and creative life, but it depends on what criteria you use to look at that. But I would say that if you're being creative, with happiness, satisfaction, all that—you're succeeding. Very few plans work out exactly the way you expect them to. Life, for the most part, is just one, big improvisation.

It was so important for me to lose everything because I found what the most important thing is. The most important thing is to be true to yourself.

So how do you know what is the right path to choose to get the result that you desire? And the honest answer is this: You won't. Knowing who you are will help you when it's time to fight. Fight for the job you want, fight for the people who mean the most to you and fight for the kind of world you want to live in. It will help when

people say that's impossible or you can't do that. If you take the unexpected opportunities when they come up, if you know yourself, and if you fight for what you believe in, I can promise that you will live a life that is rich with meaning.

It doesn't matter how far you might rise. At some point you are bound to stumble because if you're constantly doing what we do, raising the bar. If you're constantly pushing yourself higher, higher the law of averages not to mention the Myth of Icarus predicts that you will at some point fall. And when you do I want you to know this, remember this: there is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in another direction.

What I regret most in my life are failures of kindness. Those moments when another human being was there, in front of me, suffering, and I responded... Sensibly. Reservedly. Mildly.

I did a lot of silly, unconventional, spontaneous, and seemingly irrational things, and guess what? With the exception of the FEATHERED COLLARED jacket, it was the most satisfying and fascinating year of my professional life.

This is your time and it feels normal to you but really there is no normal. There's only change, and resistance to it and then more change.

Don't let complexity stop you. Be activists. Take on the big inequities. It will be one of the great experiences of your lives.

As I get older, the only thing that speeds up is time. But as much as it's true that time is a thief, time also leaves something in exchange. With time comes experience - and however uncertain you may be about the rest of the world, at least about your own work you will be sure.

Try to treat everyone as you wish to be treated. Walk down crowded streets with a smile on your face. Be thankful you get to walk so close to Muggles. It's a privilege. Don't let your fellow humans be alien to you, and as you get older and perhaps a little less open than you are now, don't assume that exclusive always and everywhere means better. It may only mean lonelier. There will always be people hard selling you the life of the few: the private schools, private plans, private islands, private life. They are trying to convince you that hell is other people. Don't believe it. We are far more frequently each other's shelter and correction, the antidote to solipsism, and so many windows on this world.

If you are one of those lucky people who are exceptionally good at an endeavor you're passionate about, if you possess tireless ambition and keen direction, congratulations! You will go far and do well. Your successes will come early and rapidly.

If you are not one of those lucky people — if you are bewildered and confused and clinging tenaciously to some course you love — be patient. Work hard. Hold your dream tightly to you and do everything you can to realize it, within reason. Take a step that will lead you toward the realization of your dream, and then take another, and another, and another.

When you are deciding on next steps, next jobs, next careers, further education, you should rather find purpose than a job or a career. Purpose crosses disciplines. Purpose is an essential element of you. It is the reason you are on the planet at this particular time in history. Your very existence is wrapped up in the things you are here to fulfill."

The crowd gave Myron's speech a standing ovation. He bowed and waved theatrically and returned to his seat. The headmistress stood and waved her wand. Silver bats appeared and flew around the great hall in celebratory loops. They passed over the crowd and each grabbed a scroll from the pile and flew up to form a swirling circle above the stage.

"Now ladies and gentlemen may we present this year's graduating class." Professor McGonagall smiled.

"Sasporilla Bucket."

Sassy stood and stepped up onto the stage. A silver bat swooped down and placed a scroll in her hand then flew up and landed on the tip of her hat. The headmistress pointed her wand at the silver bat and cast

"Commencement!" The silver bat burst into a shower of silver dust that rained down over Sasporilla. The Hufflepuff badge converted back to a Hogwarts one. The yellow trim returned to its original black. Blossom's heart sank as she looked on. To no longer be a Hufflepuff! That was her nightmare.

"Poor Sasporilla." Blossom whispered to herself.

"Your house does not define you." Minerva McGonagall smiled. "Now reveal to us all your true colours!"

The silver dust began to shine. First as specs of bright white light, then in rainbow colours. Sassy's robes swirled and fluttered as they black blossomed into purple with pink accents. The thin pointy hat became longer with a slight flop to its point. A large crisp brim sprouted around the now purple witches hat with a pink band. Happiness bubbled up deep from within her and turned to pleased and amused laughter as she spun around and left the stage.

"Karoline Curtiss." The headmistress called.

Karry Curtiss found her robes changed to Green with Gold filigree. Zac's changed to the same. Blossom, whose entire world revolved around being Hufflepuff, was visibly heart broken as all shred of Hufflepuff markings left her robes. Her face brightened when her robes became bright yellow with black argyle diamonds on the sleeves and trim. Her hat a tight crisp black witches hat with black and yellow argyle band. Truly the most Hufflepuff of coloured robes for the most Hufflepuff of former Hufflepuffs. She joined her other colourful graduates on the other side of the stage.

As the last student was unsorted and saw the results of the commencement spell the Headmistress turned to the students and applauded them. Myron was the first to jump to his feet and whistle and hoot. Leading the crowd in a raucous standing ovation.

"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, Wizards, witches, family and friends," headmistress McGonagall smiled, "I proudly present to all of you and the world, this years Hogwarts graduating class!"

The graduates pulled off their hats and through them into the air. Colourful light beamed from inside each one filling the great hall with rainbows.

Family's and friends gathered for photos as Hagrid and Professor Flitwick made an early attack on the buffet. "I swear the little one can eat more than the big one can!" Drooble grumbled at them as he brought out more jumbo shrimp.

"Yer house elves make the bes' jumbo shrimp in all th' world Drooble!" Hagrid smiled.

"And how dare you call me the little one!" Professor Flitwick said. "I'm a full inch and a half taller than you!"

"Oh Drooble meant no offence." Drooble smiled. "Shorty."

All three laughed heartily as a small elf walked by carrying a small box, roughly wrapped in an old Daily Prophet and tied with twine.

"Greeble?!" Sassy smiled as the house elf approached her.

"Yes!" Greeble smiled brightly. "It makes Greebles heart sing that you remember me?"

"Well of course I do." Sasporilla said hugging the elf.

"Greeble brings you a gift." Greeble smiled handing her the box. "All elves decided it was best gift for Sasporilla Bucket."

"Thank you Greeble." Sasporilla said starting to pull at the twine.

"No, no, no!" Greeble protested. "Miss Sasporilla must not open it now. She must wait until the days end when she has forgotten it."

"I see." Sasporilla said slipping into her robes inner pocket. "Your wish is my command Greeble."

"Oooooooo." Greebles ears straightened. "Thank you Miss Sasporilla. Thank you!"

Greeble ran off, disappearing between the legs of the crowd.

"Sasporilla!" Karry called getting her attention. "Come join us!"

Karry was standing with Zac and her parents. Mr.Curtis had his camera and had been keen to take as many photos as he could. He loved magical photos! How they captured more than just the still image.

Sasporilla stepped up beside Karry.

"Dad want's to get a photo of all three of us together." Karry smiled.

"Ok arms around each other and smile!" Mr.Curtiss said.

The bright flash blinded them for a few seconds. They didn't see Nick Owlmore walk into the hall. He was clearly battered and bloody. His clothes were tattered and torn. The crowd gasped and went silent. Sasporilla turned to see the crowd part as Nick walked up to her trying to smile through broken and missing teeth. "I made it."

"Uncle Nick, what happened?" Sassy asked concerned.

"You should see the other guy." Nick said as he collapsed into his god daughters arms.

Nick was rushed to St.Mungos. The Curtiss' stayed over in Hogsmead. Blossom returned home on the Hogwarts express with her family. Sasporilla had a car all to her self.



They were somewhere just outside of Manchester when Sasporilla remembered the gift the house elves had given her. She reached into the pocket inside robe and pulled out the roughly wrapped box.

"I'd forgotten all about you." Sasporilla said as she unwrapped the package.

The box itself was probably once just part of a packing crate produce had come in. The elves had tried there best to make a container that was presentable enough to hold what ever was contained within. Sassy pulled off the top of the box. Inside were some slightly browned leaves of cabbage. She lifted the leaves from the box feeling something contained within the folds. As she pulled the leaves apart she found card which sat on something wrapped in tissue paper.

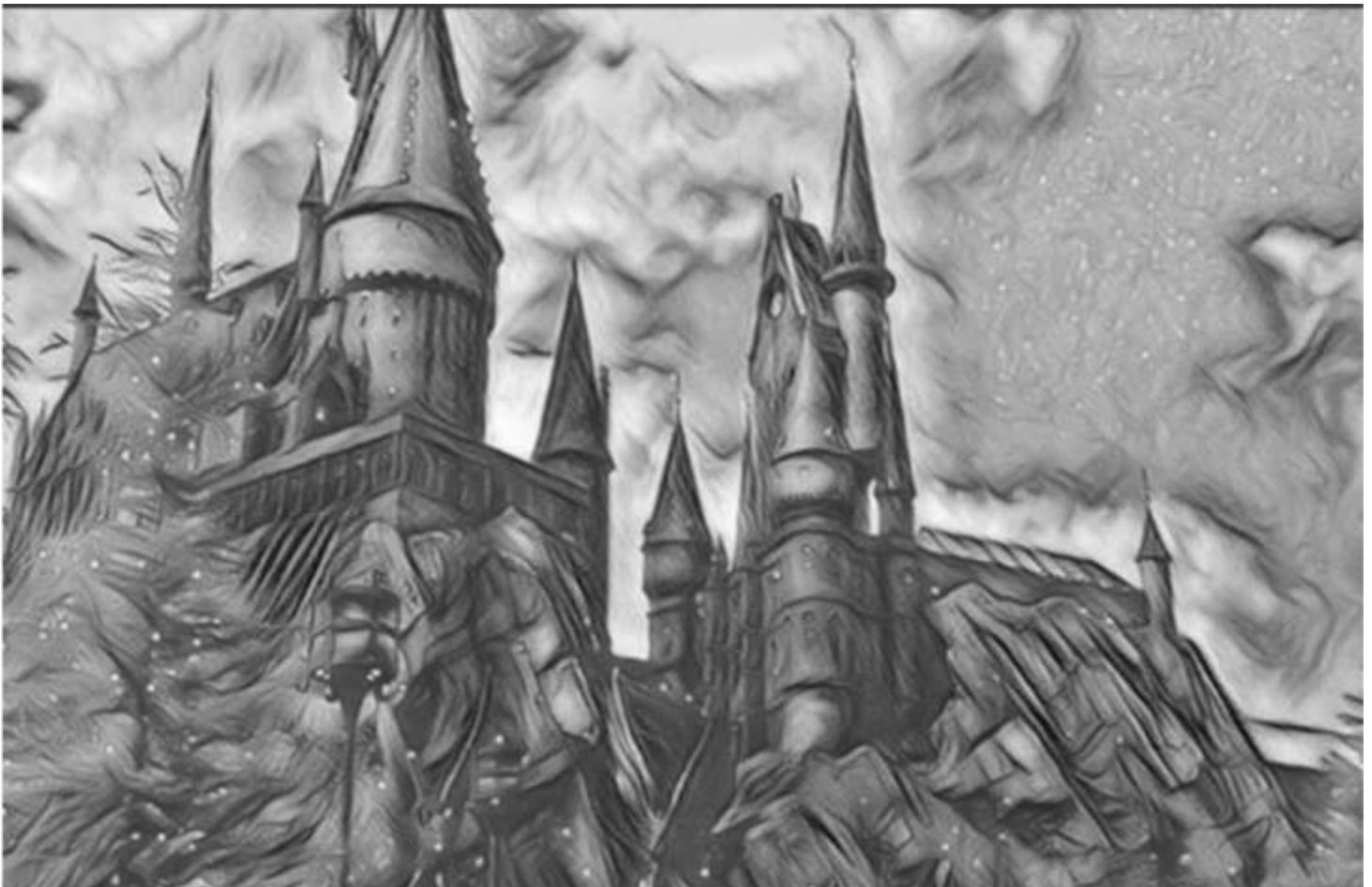
Sasporilla read the card. "A challenge for your future deserved by no one greater."

Now Sasporilla was intrigued. This was clearly not a trinket of endearment from the elves but something they believed precious. As she unfolded the tissue she was first presented with a necklace. It's chain was obviousy very old as it highly detailed silver and very tarnished. So much so that Sasporilla couldn't imagine a team of house elves being able to polish it within a year. On the end of the chain was a red eight sided stone mounted in a tarnished silver setting.

"How lovely." Sasporilla said, and continues to unwrap the tissue.

Inside was a wand, broken into four pieces. Sasporilla knew this wand. It had belonged to Albus Dumbledore. It was the elder wand.

\*Many of the speeches were inspired by famous commencement speeches throughout history.



**Sasporilla Bucket**

**The Girl With Pink Hair**

# **Carnival du Mystique**

**By Darren Kelly**

**A Wizarding World Fan Fiction**

# Carnival du Mystique

A Wizarding World / Sasporilla Bucket Fan Fiction  
by Darren Kelly

## CHAPTER 1

Sasporilla Bucket awoke in her own bed for the first day of summer vacation. This was the last summer she'd have before everything changed. No more Hogwarts. No more Hufflepuff house. No more seeing her best friends Karry and Zac every day at meals and in classes. The memories of Sassy, Karry, Blossom and a bunch of others coming out of their O.W.L exams singing...

"We are the K.I.D's from Hufflepuff.

Our O.W.L's are done and we have had enough!

We're going to wave our wands and apparate, won't hesitate.

We're Hufflepuff K.I.D's!"

Sasporilla couldn't help but sing along as she made her bed and walked off to the bathroom for her morning scrub and polish. Sasporilla waved her wand as she entered the bathroom. It was always wise to use ones wand to turn on the shower. It could be quite explosive first thing in the morning and ice cold to boot. She set her wand on the sink as she looked at her sleepy reflection in the mirror. The wild pink haired girl stuck her tongue out at her reflection.

"You may be a graduate with your NWT's!" Sassy sighed, "but your still a sassy brat!"

Morning ablutions put behind her Sasporilla worked her way down stairs. Tea and toast awaited her magically as by her muggle timed appliances. Brilliant these muggles. Sasporilla pulled her mothers old black leather phone diary out of the kitchen drawer. Somewhere within she would find the phone number of the woman she required. Taking a bite of toast Sassy tossed the book on the table and drew her wand from her purple robes.

"Invenieto Mrs.Porquis!" Sasporilla cast. The book flew open and it's pages flipped until it lay flat, the name and phone number of 'Mrs.Porquis- Real estate agent' circled in a glowing pink light.

"There you are." Sasporilla smiled. "Accio telephone."

The telephone receiver flew across the room into her hand. Sassy waved her wand clockwise over the number highlighted in the book then counter clockwise over the telephones key pad and placed the phone to her ear.

"Yes hello Mrs.Porquis I wonder if you might remember me..." Sasporilla said. "Yes, how did you ever remember? Call what? Display? Incredible inventors muggles.... any way I'd like to set up a meeting with you as soon as is convenient to discuss putting my house on the market. Lunch? Splendid! Gypsum and Gaelis Tea House 12:30. I will see you there."

Sasporilla allowed the phone to hang itself up as she munched on her last piece of toast, grabbed her bag and was out the door.

"Colloportus." Sasporilla cast locking the front door. The warm summer morning was overcast and promised a proper English summer rainy day. Sasporilla grabbed her broom and ran across the street to the Curtiss household. She waved her wand and the brass "C" door knocker, knocked its customary three times. Sassy could hear Porridge and Buster barking inside. She was so happy that Mrs.and Mr.Curtiss took Buster into their home. Sasporilla's mother had bought Buster as a pet for their home but now that her mom was gone, Buster spent more time at the Curtisses than anywhere else.

"Shut it you two!" Mrs.Curtiss shouted as she approached and opened the door with a surprised bright smile and a hug. "Sasporilla dear! So good to see you."

"Great to see you too." Sassy smiled kissing Mrs.Curtiss on the cheek. "I just thought I'd drop this off envelope off for Busters up keep."

"Oh dear." Mrs.Curtiss said placing the envelope on the side table. "You don't have to do that. We're happy to have him here."

"I know, thanks." Sassy said. "You're very sweet. I just wanted to let you know I'm putting the house up on the market later today. Without my mom I see no reason to stay."

"You have just as many happy memories as sad in that house Sasporilla Bucket." Mrs.Curtiss said. "But I understand. You're a young strong woman at the start of your lifes journey. A house is something that can add stability to that road. A stable end of a road to come back too!"

"Yes." Sassy smiled. "But to me that's just a house. It was never really my home. I need to find my own road and my home."

"Fair enough." Kolleen Curtiss said hugging her good friends daughter. "I'll miss you so much Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket daughter of my dear Wysteria. You promise me that when you move away and become a well traveled famous wand maker, that you'll think of us once in a while and stop in for tea."

"As long as I'm welcome?" Sasporilla smiled with a small tear in her eye.

"You," Mrs.Curtiss said intensely, "Will always be welcome in my house Sasporilla Bucket!!!"

Sassy mounted her broom, cast cloaking, and flew off into the warm morning air. Mrs.Curtiss smiled as she shut the door. As much as she'd miss the girl it was fortuitous that number four castle road would soon be on the market. She had calls to make.

Sasporilla landed in broom parking on the roof of St.Mungos Hospital. Not the cheapest place to park ones broom in London by and far one of the safest as it was run by ministry workers and contracted out to one of the broomer gangs. Claim ticket placed safely in her wallet, Sassy took the lift from the roof down to the tenth floor.

Sasporilla stepped off the lift and stood before the nurses station. A small stout woman with curly ginger hair smiled up at her. "Can I help you dear?"

"Yes." Sasporilla smiled. "Can you tell me which room detective Nick Owlmore is in?"

The chunky nurse checked her room roster. She seemed to check a note. "May I ask who you are Miss?"

"Sasporilla Bucket." Sassy ssid. "He is my god father and Guardian."

"Yes." The woman smiled. "I see you here. He is in room 10-F. You may go right in."

As Sasporilla walked down the rather quiet hall, listening to the heavy clop of her heels on the old wooden floors, she became painfully aware that she was coming to visit her favorite god father rather empty handed. But what does one bring to the man who really likes very little and has even less? She waved her wand and produced a large pink Chrysanthemum in a vintage quart bottle of Merlin's Beard Stout that was now used as a vase. As she turned the corner into Nicks room he was lying in his bed, unlit cigar firmly between his gritted teeth as he read the events in the Daily Prophet.

"Knock Knock." Sasporilla said as she entered. "You have a visitor you grumpy old piss tank."

"Sasporilla!" Nick's eyes brightened as he put the paper down and set his glasses and cigar on the night stand, hugging his god daughter.

"I brought this for you." Sassy smiled handing him the flower.

"Ahhhh." Nick smiled slyly. "A flower."

"Ya." Sasporilla smiled. "I know how much you hate flowers so I put it in a nice big empty bottle from your favorite stout!!!"

"You shouldn't have." Nick said chuckling setting it on the night stand. Sasporilla pulled up a chair to Nicks bed side and took a seat.

"So Sassy you're a full fledged graduate of Hogwarts now." Nick said taking her hand. "Still planning on going on to get your M.E.R.L.I.N's at Avalon University?"

"Yes I am." Sassy smiled. "To first class if I can."

"Full on Doctorate of magic ay?" Nick said proudly. "Your mum and da would damn proud."

"I hope in some ways they are." Sasporilla said.

"Well, I sure am." Nick said.

"Thank you Uncle Nick." Sasporilla said. "I've worked hard to get here, but I know there's a lot more hard work ahead. It's a struggle but then all of life is, isn't it?"

"I wouldn't have you struggle a day of your life if I could Sasporilla." Nick said squeezing his god daughters hand.

"If only that were possible for anyone." Sassy said. "Now, are you going to tell me what happened to you this time that put you in here?"

Nick sat himself up straight in bed, wincing a bit from the pain in his side, of his healing but still tender six broken ribs.

"I was following this lead on this cold case." Nick said. "Around the time of the attacks on London. The case itself is now officially closed ya see, because they caught the death eater that attacked this innocent girl. Few days ago one of my informants tells me that he was acting on orders from you know who. Well ya I knew that. Well what he told me is that there Voldemort took orders a polite requests from people of position. I followed a trail right through into the royal court."

"The muggle Royal court?" Sasporilla asked hopefully.

"No." Nick shook his head. "Questions lead me straight to the Royal Palace in Avalon. I actually had a brief and informal meeting with her majesty the Witch Queen."

"Did she do that you?" Sasporilla said out raged.

"Nah." Nick smiled. "This was eight fella's who worked for some one in the royal house who wanted to stop me noseying about. I don't know why exactly Sasporilla but someone, for some reason, in the royal court of Avalon saw your mother as a threat and you as a threat."

"I know a bit about my link to the royal court of Avalon Uncle Nick," Sasporilla said, "but frankly I don't know why anyone would care??? I have no political aspirations. I'm no threat to anyone???"

Nick Owlmore took Sasporillas hands in his.

"I know I've said this a hundred times since your dad passed but I'll say it again. We have to figure out how to reactivate the protection spell he put on you as a baby."

"You've tried." Sassy smiled. "Frankly I've been thinking about it. I'm not sure it needs to be recast because I'm not sure it's gone."

"What do you mean?" Nick said curious.

"Well what are the two things we knew the spell did for sure?" Sassy asked.

"Gave anybody in your family Bucket or Bent a crippling head full of pain if they got within a half mile of ya!" Nick laughed.

"And?" Sassy raised her eyebrow questioningly.

"Turned your hair pink." Nick said.

"Exactly." Sasporilla said. "My extended family can get close to me again though the choose not to, which is in fact ok by me, but my hair is still pink. There fore it stands to reason that as I was in Hogwarts and learning to defend myself..."

"That you might might be as in need of protection as you had been when we all thought you were a squibb like yer mum?" Nick finished the sentence.

"So it's possible the spell is still active inside." Sasporilla smiled.

"And may have a few surprises that old Donk has yet to reveal if they pull some shady nonsense." Nick mused.

"Precisely." Sassy laughed.

"That crafty old dodger!" Nick laughed.

"It's also possible that the spell has died, and much like Harry Potters scar, I've been left with pink hair as a reminder of a long forgotten spell cast on me as a baby."

The discussions became lively and stories were bandied back and forth. Even a few games of Orlocks, a wizards card game similar to the muggle card game poker, were played between Nick, Sasporilla, an older nurse who had an obvious fancy for DI Owlmore and a dodgy orderly named Vance who Sassy suspected had a slight problem with games of chance.

After a good long visit and having cleared about twelve galleons in profit Sasporilla decided it was time she was off.

"I have a luncheon appointment to keep with Mrs.Porquis, the realtor."

"Ah." Nick said sadly. "So you've decided to sell the house then?"

"Yes." Sasporilla sighed dreading a long discussion on the matter.

"Best thing." Nick said. "You were always more at home in that old book case over the pub than on the Castle Road."

"I hoped you'd understand Uncle Nick." Sassy said kissing the old Auror on the cheek and scooting out of the hospital room.





## CHAPTER 2

The streets of London were alive with the muggles of summer. Tourists and royal watchers blended with the regular faces on every London street corner.

Sasporillas feet moved to the beat of some distant tune that played in her heart and echoed in her ears. She half danced her way down the street past the Leadenhill Market on her way to Gypsum and Gaelis Tea House.

A small stout man dressed in a red waist coat and black top hat and a rather odd pair mismatched red and green glasses, walked about casting up posters on to walls and handing out flyers to those who may find what he advertised of interest.

It was a funny site as the two blissfully unaware and happy individuals turned the same corner a tripped over each other landing hard on the side walk. Sassy's glasses flew from her face and disappeared into the blur of the crowd. The stout mans flyers flew into the air and scattered.

Wands were drawn. Before concerns could be raised or apologies made, Sasporilla cast and collected the poor mans fliers placing them in s neat pile at his side. The stout man rescued Sasporillas glasses from the heavy foot of a large man unaware of their presence below his boot. The glasses skittered across the pavement and back onto Sassy's face with a straightening wiggle.

"Oh!" Sasporilla said. "Thank you very much."

"No, no, no my dear!" The stout man said. "Thank you! You saved me quite the job collecting these all up again."

"Well it was my fault." Sasporilla said getting to her feet and helping the older fellow up. "I was simply not paying attention."

"You're young and it's summer!" The man mused. "Likely in love, just graduated.... Hogwarts? Head full of dreams."

"Yes I did just graduate Hogwarts." Sasporilla said very impressed. "How did you know?"

The man straightened the odd red and green lop-sided glasses. He tapped the outer pokadot rim.

"These little beauties are Gofunda Glasses." The man smiled. "Not especially rare nor expensive BUT very useful for someone like me. You see, these glasses, which were given away in an issue of the quibbler many years ago, come in quite handy to a show man like me who hands out fliers to wizards and witches only! You see they can show one the difference between someone magical and muggle!!!"

"Indeed?" Sasporilla said fascinated.

"Oh but where are my manners!" The stout man said handing Sasporilla a bright yellow flier. "I am Arious Extravigonzo! Master showman and maître de bague of the Carnival du Mystique!"

Sasporilla gave the flyer printed in mystical black ink depicting magical moving rides, clowns, jugglers, games and acrobats. "The Carnival du Mystique this Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday Piccalilli Circus."

"Mind if I keep this?" Sasporilla asked

"No of course not mademoiselle!" The showman said delighted. "I will look forward to seeing you at the show!"

"It will be a welcome distraction after a full week of researching housing optoons in fir University in Avalon." Sasporilla sighed.

"My highest admiration's miss." Arious Extravigonzo said with a wide eyed smile. "It is not often one meets someone going for their Merlins! In what subject?"

"Wand craft." Sasporilla said modestly.

"AH!" The showman said. "Perhaps I stand before the next great wand maker. The next Olivander!"

"I hope to be." Sasporilla said.

"Well I must be off to spread the word of our show of shows!" Arious Extravigonzo said.

"Have a wonderful day Mr. Extravigonzo." Sassy smiled and waved as the small stout man danced away.

The Gypsum and Gaelis Tea House was a small shop that had graced the Leadenhill Market area of London since the early sixteen hundreds. Well known for their tea leaf and tarot card readings they also had the most unique blends of teas and delicious lunch sandwiches and small faery cakes.

Mrs.Porquis sat at one of the curb side French style cafe tables the Gypsum and Gaelis Tea House placed on the side walk every summer in an attempt to appeal to the hipper, trendier, younger witches and wizards of London. Muggles walked past not even seeing the shop. All the better for everyone involved really. Muggles, who were not inherently involved in the magical world, never did well when they came in contact with magic. Even if it was just to see a pot of tea pour itself or a spoonful of sugar stir itself in.

"Sasporilla!" Mrs.Porquis waved.

Sassy walked over to the table and sat down.

She was quite happy Mrs.Porquis had chosen the more professional hand shake greeting to the more intimate cheek kiss, as she really had only met the older witch once or twice.

A pair of menus floated over to their table. "Have you ordered?" Sasporilla asked placing her bag on the back of her chair.

"No." Mrs.Porquis insisted. "It wouldn't have been proper to order before the client had arrived."

"I do apologize for my momentary tardiness." Sassy smirked. "I quite literally bumped into a stout little show man who gave me a flyer for a carnival."

"I see." Mrs.Porquis said politely disinterested. "What should we order?"

"Well I had only a quick bite of toast and a sip of tea as I was out the door this morning do I may enjoy a proper lunch sandwich."

"They have a lovely watercress sandwich." Mrs.Porquis smiled.

"Oh my dear Mrs.Porquis." Sassy smiled. "Though that is a lovely polite sandwich it is in no way a proper lunch. I'm hungry and not worried about looking like a human being who needs to feed properly three times a day. Think I'll have the roast beef sandwich with a cup of lobster bisque. Bit of surf and turf."

"Think I'll have the watercress plate." Mrs.Porquis said lips pursed. "Oh and we'll share a pot of tea?"

"Lovely." Sasporilla smiled. "Your choice."

"Splendid." Mrs.Porquis smiled. "A pot of Grizzeldas green chai."

The menus whisked away into the tea house leaving the two women alone at the outside table.

"I thought by those clouds it would have started raining by now." Sasporilla made small talk.

"Oh I believe we may yet see it." Mrs.Porquis said looking up. "Let's hope it's not until after lunch."

"Fingers crossed." Sassy smiled.

"So you want to sell your house?" Mrs.Porquis smiled getting down to business.

"Yes." Sasporilla said. "I have no plans to live there after school is over and it will only cost me money to keep it up over the next few years. I feel it's better to cash it in now."

"Very wise." Mrs.Porquis said. "Bank it, invest it, collect interest. Use your money to make you money while your away at school rather than allowing the house to be an albatross around your neck, weighing you down."

"Well I am happy you approve." Sasporilla said.

"Well I actually have news for you on the sale of your home." Mrs.Porquis grinned. "There were two offers minutes after you called me."

"Really?" Sasporilla asked.

"Oh that's just the start." Mrs.Porquis smiled excitedly reaching into her briefcase and pulling out both a small envelope and file folder. "Those two offers have been outbidding each other all morning."

"A bidding war for my little house?" Sasporilla asked. "Who are they?"

"I can not by law and by professional ethics tell you that but I can tell you that as of my leaving the office they were at four times the recommended asking price!"

"What?" Sasporilla could hardly believe her ears but she could quite imagine who the two parties were! "That's amazing considering you wouldn't have had the opportunity to list it?"

"Word of mouth spreads fast." Mrs.Porquis said opening the file. "If you are prepared to sign the papers in the places I have marked you can take the cheque I have in the envelope for you."

Sasporilla opened the envelope. It was indeed a very large number. She didn't recognize the company name under which the cheque was issued but she was sure it was either Zac or Myron behind it. Myron might want the house as a memory of her mom. Zac might have been asked to buy it for Karry's brother, A wedding gift for Korry and Madrigal. They would be tying the knot in a less than two years as soon as Maddy turned eighteen.

Sasporilla took a pen from Mrs.Porquis and signed in one hundred and thirty-seven and a half places. The papers slid back into the folder which slid back into the folder and sealed itself in. Sasporilla folded the check and placed

it into her wallet in her bag. Sassy placed her bag on her lap and with a snap of her fingers sealed it magically and securely to her.

"So what are you going to do about housing when you're away at school in Avalon?" Mrs.Porquis asked.

"I was thinking of just getting a room in the dorms." Sasporilla said as the tea and food arrived. "I expect anything else will be far outside my budget.

"Avalon is quite expensive." Mrs.Porquis reassured her client. "Why you can take the cost of any house or flat, rental or purchase and times the asking price by ten."

"What about a vacant lot to set up a caravan?" Sassy asked.

"Like a common gypsy?" Mrs.Porquis asked surprised.

"Yes." Sasporilla said dunking her sandwich into her lobster bisque and munching it down like hippogriff on a ferret.

"I would have to look into it dear but I'm sure there are laws to prevent..." the Real estate agent was aghast at the suggestion.

"I'm sure there are." Sasporilla said daintily lifting her tea with her pinky extended and guzzling it back like a pint at pub on ladies night.

"Miss Bucket!" Mrs.Porquis gasped.

"I know." Sassy said. "Manners of a common gypsy. As per the agreement I'll be out of the house by September 1st. Anything I leave behind becomes their property."

Sasporilla dipped the rest of her sandwich in her soup and stuffed it her mouth like a wild animal.

"F-anks f-r unsh MissssPorkis" Sassy said spraying bits of soggy sandwich from her over stuffed gob as she shook Mrs.Porquis hand, grabbed her bag and left.

Sassy hoped she left Mrs.Porquis with just as bad an impression of her manners as Mrs.Porquis had with that comment about common gypsy's. That sort of classist crap really turned her stomach and got the young witches back up.

The skies of London began to open up that early afternoon. Rain fell like tears on the end of an era. Sasporilla Bucket was no longer at Hogwarts. The pink haired witch quickly shuffled into the leaky cauldron and then out the back where she opened the passage to Diagon alley and cast an umbrella spell.

Witches and wizards used all manner of magical spells and devices to thwart the rain. Sasporilla tucked in tightly as the rain started to team down around her. The pink haired witch headed straight for Gringots.

The wizarding bank had long stood at the heart of Diagon Alley. A shining beacon of financial stability in the center of the UK's hub of magical commerce.

Sasporilla walked in and stowed her wand at her side. She walked up to the main reception goblin who, as always ignored customers as they came in. Paying more attention to the book in front of him than those who required it.

"Excuse me." Sasporilla said, her call falling on deaf ears. "Excuse me!"

The goblin raised his gaze and looked at Sasporilla with a gaze of interrupted annoyance.

"I would like to cash a cheque and deposit the funds into my account." Sasporilla said.

"And does madam have said cheque and her... key?" The goblin asked snidely.

Sasporilla held up the cheque and her vault key. "I do."

Nothing made the Gringots goblins angrier than prepared customers who refused to be intimidated by them. The cheque cleared quickly and a cart of four large carts of galleons were presented to Sasporilla and the goblins took the young witch to her vault. Sassy added the four carts of galleons to the already substantial piles of coins that were collecting.

"If madam is going to continue to accrue such wealth may we suggest you acquire a larger vault?" The goblin smiled politely.

"I will take it under advisement." Sasporilla said in a very professional business like manner.

Sassy took a quick accounting of her funds and weighed them against her lifes plans and options. With the money she had, Sasporilla Bucket could live a comfortable life out of her caravan or even a small house in any muggle or magical community anywhere in the world. Without work, with out purpose, just living out her days following whatever interests floated by her. That was the dream for some, but not for Sasporilla Bucket. The pink haired witch had her sites set on one thing. To be the best, at making the best wands in any world witches and wizards walked upon.



The rains had lessened but still sprinkled down upon Diagon Alley. Sasporilla Bucket walked below her wand which cast an umbrella spell. She casually window shopped until she came to Olivanders. Elves hung a bright red banner reading "GRANDE REOPENING!" Sassy tried the shop door which was unlocked.

Sasporilla took a deep breath and with a wide hopeful smile on her face she stepped inside the wand shop that had a new more modern look while still paying homage to its classic beginnings. A flamboyant young man in bright red robes sporting wild curly brown locks and thick side burns rode a rolling ladder along the shelves from the back.

"Hello!" The young man said hanging from the ladder like a swashbuckling pirate. The shop's light glinting off his wide bright white smile. "I'm afraid that door should have been locked for you see we are not quite open yet."

"I'm sorry to be a bother but I would like to enquire about summer employment," Sassy smiled, "I was just wondering if I could speak with Mr. Olivander."

"Well you are my dear!" The young man said jumping from the ladder and walking up to Sasporilla's side. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Moloch Olivander, grandson of the greatest wand maker ever to grace the magical world with his presence, Garick Olivander! My grandfather. Founder of this shop and the man from whom I have inherited everything I now own and know!"

"Oh!" Sasporilla said sadly. "I'm sorry for your loss."

"Nooooo!" The young man laughed throwing his head back. "He hasn't passed you silly goose. No grand father sadly never really recovered from his kidnapping ordeal by the death eaters and the family has placed him in a retirement home so he might live out the rest of his days free from pain and strife."

"I see." Sasporilla said getting the impression Mr. Olivander had very little to say about his forced retirement.

"And I as his most qualified and natural heir have taken over the family business to see to the family interests." Myloch Olivander smiled patronizingly. "So if we can be of help to you in any way, be it with a new wand or with any of your wand care needs, please feel free to stop by after our grand reopening in two days!"

"Thank you." Sasporilla smiled politely. "It's good to see Olivanders reopening. I can't wait to see good quality wands back in the hands of young witches and wizards again. I used to apprentice under your Grand Father."

"Indeed Miss." Myloch Olivander said ushering the pink haired witch to the door.

"When you do go to see your grand father next at, I'm sorry silly headed me, where did you say he was again?" Sassy asked smiling like a bubble headed young girl.

"Madame Forwinkles Home For Bewildered and Befuddled Wizard and Witches, in Dover." The young man said proudly.

"Of course." Sasporilla said. "It sounds so prestigious. Well anyway when you see your grandfather next tell him Sasporilla Bucket stopped in to say hello."

"I will indeed." Myloch said ushering Sassy out the door and slamming it, and locking it behind her. "Good day."



## Chapter 3

The realities of summer employment rarity were hitting home with Sasporilla as she had spent the better part of every day this week chasing down leads to jobs. Any small job would do to fill small financial voids. Sasporilla she knew she didn't really need the money but the responsible young witch was not the type to sit around and live off insurance funds or other monies put away for a rainy day.

Sassy found herself near Piccadilly Circus on Friday night finishing off a bacon, cheese and onion butty from her Uncle Nicks favourite food cart. Hidden just down an alley way, outside an after hours club, an older elf named Orlix had run this food cart for decades. Every time she was in the area Sassy was sure to stop in. Sasporilla reached into her bag and pulled out a slip of paper and an couple of coins. Three knuts, two sickles. Exact change for the sandwich and a drink off the cart. Sasporilla looked at the paper. It was the circular for the carnival she'd been handed the other day.

Piccadilly Circus was alive with the hustle and bustle of muggle traffic as the sun set on the purple horizon. Sitting in the center of the of side walk was a box office surrounded by a wave of barred turn- style. muggles walked around the brightly coloured and brightly lit object, unseen and unperceived.

"Step right up young witch and get your ticket to the finest carnival this side of Europe. Win fabulous prizes in tests of your magical skill! See feats of magical prowess undreamed of! See rare magical creatures the likes of which you thought you'd never see in your life time! Ride the fabulous magical thrill rides of the great wizard engineer Nikos Tesoracto! Your journey starts here with an admission ticket for just one knut!"

"Well just one knut is a bargain only a fool would turn their noses up at!" Sasporilla laughed.

"Right you are young miss!" The ticket taker laughed noticing the young witch not digging into her purse for admission money.

"And only a fool would believe that everything inside is free for that one low price?" Sasporilla mused.

"Well there are some further fees once inside of course." The ticket taker shrugged. "Not every one wants the same carnival experience. Pay as ya go gives ya a better chance to get the show that's right for you!"

"I see." Sasporilla said. "And how much more do you think that might just cost me?"

"That's completely up to you mum." The tick master smiled. "Go in for a knut. Look around. See the show examples, watch the rides and the light shows. Leave. Your our no more money. Play some games. Have a ride or two. Buy yourself a treat, well there's a couple galleons well spent easily."

"Well since you put it like that." Sasporilla said pulling a knut from her bag and exchanged it with the man for a ticket.

"Go right in." The ticket master smiled through his baked bean teeth.

Sasporilla stepped into the turnstile that went around the back of the ticket booth. The muggle world seemed to darken and fade to silence as carnival music and light swelled before her eyes.

Sasporilla exited the turnstile on the right side of the ticket booth. Piccadilly Circus as muggles knew it, was gone. The street was alive with the Carnival du Magique.

A calliope played as clowns danced and juggled. A Siamese monkey cat, a creature with the body of a monkey and head of a cat, danced with a cup of sickles and knuts. A small stage was set-up by a tent on the far side of an alley way of games of skill and of chance. A woman scantily clad in silken robes danced to the music of the far east played of exotic instruments. She cast wielded fire from her wand and manipulated it as a living serpent through the air around her. Intricately she interwove it through its own coils and high into the sky then exploded it in a shower of coloured sparks which pleased the patrons of the carnival.

Sasporilla inspected the games as she passed. Knock the cans down with a knock down jinx for a knut and win a doll. Knock them down three times, win a Niffler for the kiddies. Take it home, it will rob you blind and return here. Water spray jinx into a balloon. First to burst it wins a teddy bear for a galleon. Do it three times, win a Niffler... it was all pretty standard Carnival scam stuff.

Sasporilla found a small tent with an all seeing eye painted on it. A small sign sat outside saying fortunes told, 1 galleon. Sasporilla didn't really like knowing her future. Quite frankly if she had known all the bad things that had happened, were going to happen, and she could nothing to stop them, she'd have been a worse mess than she'd been when she' been in them!

Sassy chuckled to herself, silly thing, as she stepped inside the tent to see a young woman born with no eyes, or place for eyes, only forehead, sitting on the far side of a table. The table had a crystal ball at it's center, a deck of Tarot cards to one side, a pot of tea and a cup to the other and a palm readers poster on the back of the tent.

"You aren't sure if you'd like your fortune told?" The young woman said.

"I am trepadacious." Sassy smiled.

"Can't say as I blame you." The young woman said. "Those of us who have seen more than our fair share of life's mysteries, don't really want to know when more are coming our way."

"You took the words right out of my mouth." Sasporilla said.

"Join me in a cup of tea while you decide." The young woman smiled, pulled her wand and conjured up a second cup. "No charge. I would most enjoy the pleasure of your company."

The tea she poured was exotic but quite lovely. It seemed a mix of early grey with hints of lavender and lemon grass.

"Agnes." The young woman said.

"I beg your pardon?" Sassy asked surprised.

"You were about to ask me my name." Agnes smiled. "It's Agnes Moorthead."

"I was indeed Agnes," Sassy said tersely setting down her cup, "though such shenanigans, real or otherwise, I'm sure impress your usual clientele, I personally find the answering of my questions before I've asked them quite presumptuous and rude."

"Do forgive me." Agnes said placing her hand on Sasporillas. "It's a force of habit. Showbiz and all that. I did not mean any offence. I'll try not to do that anymore."

"Thank you." Sasporilla said. "And my name is Sasporilla Bucket."

"It is very nice to meet someone as uniquely free spirited, yet well mannered as you Sasporilla." Agnes smiled holding out her hand.

"Like wise Agnes." Sassy smiled shaking her new friends hand politely. "I do believe I would like you to tell me my fortune."

"Excellent." Agnes said. "How would you like it read?"

"Do you actually need any of the conventional tools of the trade?" Sasporilla asked. "After all you have no eyes. How do you see?"

"Much clearer than most." Agnes said.

"That was rude of me." Sasporilla apologised. "I am sorry, I don't know what I was thinking?"

"It was a common enough mistake." Agnes said. "You see I was born without my terrestrial eyes like normal witches like yourself, but my third eye is very powerful and sees the mystic truths revealed in the tools set before me. You are correct though. There are times when a persons fortune is so strong it defies the tether of the mystic vortex and comes forward to reveal itself to me whether I like it or not."

"Well perhaps I'll stick with tea leaves." Sassy said finishing up her tea and slipping a galleon into Agneses hand. Agnes picked up the cup and saw the swirl of brutality and pain that had flowed through Sasporilla Buckets young life. The loss of loved ones, so tragic. The young loves that brought bitter sweet short joy. A smile rose upon her lips, then a look of concern and out of no where Agnes Moorthead began to chuckle like a woman gone mad!

"Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket, thank you!" Agnes said handing Sassy back her Galleon. "Your fortune is full of such joy, pain, strife, shock, glory and love! I could never have been told a story and been so entertained!"

"I don't understand?" Sasporilla said.

"I will not tell you of the great things that await you. The choices you will face. The decisions, hard decisions for some, that you will make. The great things you will accomplish but I will tell you one thing in two parts."

"What?" Sassy said amused and confused.

"You HAVE found love in the past." Agnes smiled. "And when that love circles back like a fully matured rose, he will give himself to you, your love will blossom and be he will yours, forever."

Sasporilla gulped. "I've enjoyed our tea."

"It's my special blend." Agnes said. "I sell bags of it if you're ever interested, but you're always free to stop in any day Sassy."

Sasporilla walked out into the midway. She turned back to see the tent flap shut and the sign down.

"Last client of the day." Sassy laughed and walked on.

A tall thin man, with wild black hair and buck teeth stood next to sign encircled in flashing lights depicting a terrified wizard riding a white knuckle roller coaster through a fiery depiction of the nether world, much to the sinister delight of a red skinned, horned devil laughing in the background.

"Dare to take a ride on the DEVIL'S FORK!" The thin man barked. "Designed by the great magical thrill ride engineer Eldor Coffschtedtter this roller coaster guarantees you more than just the ride of your life! It promises a death defying trip through the nether realms, past the dark things that seek to poison our world and destroy all life. Through the pits of fiery souls where you'll hear the screams of the damned and within the reach of the icy claws of the prince of darkness himself."

"Sounds delightful." Sasporilla chuckled. "How much?"

"One Galleon." The thin man smiled. "But I do not accept cash."

"I beg your pardon?" Sasporilla asked.

"You see all rides on the midway only accept ride tickets." The thin man smiled pointing at a lonely thin ticket booth across the way. "You can purchase ride tickets at the ride ticket booth, over there."

Sasporilla looked at the ride operator a bit bewildered. She had yet to go anywhere, where money was not accepted in place of ticket???? Oh well if that's what they wanted, Sassy walked over to the ride ticket booth and placed a galleon on the counter.

A young woman filing her nails and blowing a bubble with her bubble gum sat inside unconcerned with her customers presence.

"One please." Sassy asked.

"You want to spend two galleons." The girl said popping her bubble.

"No I believe I just want one." Sasporilla insisted.

The young girl sighed, frustrated by the witches inability to grasp this basic fact that everyone seemed unable to grasp.

"One ride ticket costs one galleon," the girl cracked her gum with contempt as she chewed, "but you can get three ride tickets for two galleons. It's a better deal. Everyone wants to ride more than one ride so might as well get a deal right?"

"You make sense." Sasporilla said. "I was looking at the ferris wheel as well so, why not?"

Sasporilla dug into her bag and pulled out another galleon.

"Two galleons, three tickets." The girl said handing the long thin ride tickets over to Sasporilla. "Enjoy your rides." Sassy stood for a moment looking between the Devil's Fork roller coaster which hid, cloaked behind a magical sign, and the large ferris wheel that was of equal distance away. Perhaps the peaceful gentle ride of tje ferris wheel is where she would start her midway ride journey this evening.

Along the way Sasporilla stopped at a cart with a giant clear blue spider hanging from a candy web above it.

"Web candy miss?" The elf asked.

"Oh ta, yes please!" Sassy smiled as the elf passed her a paper cone filled with a loose puffy ball of fine blue sugar webs. "How much?"

"Just one knut miss." The elf smiled.

"For real Glucuastronomia web candy floss that's a bargain!" Sassy smiled handing over the coin.

Each gossamer mouthful was a unique sweet flavour experience. One bite tasted of blue Or-berries. The next tasted of rainbow song grass. One bite even tasted like an old butter scotch candy from the bottom of miss Daisy's hand bag, complete with the bit of fluff on it! That spider-floss vendor had old Bertie Botts beat hands down.

The ferris wheel was gigantic. It stood hundreds of feet high and leaned decidedly to the left. Hence the name the "LEANING WHEEL". The ride glowed blue in against the night sky with specks of yellow and red light interwoven in its struts and spokes.

Sasporilla handed the ride operator, a stout little man dressed like a train conductor, one of her three ride tickets. The man rotated the wheel one stop and brought a fresh car into place. The ferris wheels cars were quite large. Big enough for six to eight people. The funny little man slid the car door open and yelled "All aboard!"

Sasporilla stepped on and took a seat. There were three other people in the car. An older wizard who seemed excited at a night out and a young witch and wizard who were so in touch with each others company, the rest of the world might not as well exist at all.

The door to the car slid shut and the giant wheel began to turn. The car creaked and groaned as it lifted into the air. It wasn't long before Sassy realised that unlike muggle ferris wheels, this car did not just rotate with static to the motion of the wheel. It rotated on three axis! The outside world around her spun but Sasporilla felt very little motion. In fact, the foam on the old wizards fun cup of butter beer was barely moving from side to side. Likely some sort of stabilisation spell.

As the wheel climbed to the top the car came to a grinding halt. The car stopped its spinning in all directions and all but the floor and safety rails disappeared. Sasporilla stood and gasped in amazement. She looked at the out at lights that lined the city at night. It stood a beautiful testament to the muggles ability to build such grand homes as these. Seas of brick and mortar awash across the land, a light at night with the magic of muggle technology. The cool night summer air washed over Sasporilla as the old wizard walked over to her.

"This is my favourite part of the ride." The old wizard smiled looking out at the city. "So peaceful and tranquil above the city. Above the rush of it all where it's just the peace and you."

"So wondrous." Sasporilla said.

"When I was your age I preferred the thrill of the roller coasters. Now, I like the peaceful feeling I get from riding the big wheel all day."

"Surely you don't mean you ONLY ride the ferris wheel all day?" Sasporilla asked surprised and amused. "You must do something more?"

"Oh well I do still take care of some day to day things around here," The old wizard said. "but the rest of the day I like to ride the ferris wheel."

"Oh!" Sasporilla said coming to the realisation. "I didn't realise you were part of the Carnival."

"Oh my yes." The old wizard smiled turning to shake Sassy's hand. "This is my carnival! I am Ferdinand Beauxchamps, and you are?"

"Sasporilla Bucket." Sassy smiled shaking the old mans hand. "Pleasure to meet you but I was under the impression that this was Areus Extravagonzo's carnival?"

"Yes he certainly does like to give that impression." The old wizard chuckled. "Though I assure you he is not. The Carnival du Magique has been passed down through my family for seven generations. I have seen the great days of the show come and I fear go. I believe we may be in the last days of the Carnival. Modern wizards and witches are pulled away by other forms of entertainment. Even muggle entertainment has greater pull than ours."

"That's terrible." Sasporilla said concerned.

"That's showbiz!" The old wizard smiled casting a small bust of gold confetti from his wand much to Sasporillas delight. "No one wants to run away and join the carnival any more, I'm afraid."

"Well I would if I thought there was a job for me," Sasporilla sighed, "but there is simply no summer work this year."

"Can you juggle?" The old wizard asked?

"No." Sasporilla answered.

"Can you dance?" the old wizard asked hopefully.

"Not very well, no." Sasporilla said apologetically.

"Ah can you..." the wizard looked Sassy up and down. "... no you look far to honest the type for that. Perhaps it would be easiest to ask what it is you CAN do?"

"I'm a student of wand making." Sasporilla said. "I've apprenticed under Mr.Olivander. Ran my own wand maintenance stand one summer."

"Really?" The old wizard asked surprised. "How much did you charge?"

"One galleon for full polishing, basic maintenance, and repair." Sassy said. "Olivanders charges Five galleons usually."

"HMMMMMM." The old wizard said. "Perhaps we could use a wand service technician. I don't believe anyone takes pride in their wand any more."

Ferdinand Beauxchamps pulled his wand from his robes and held it up before him. Sasporilla politely took the wand from the old wizards hand.

"Willow eleven and one third inches very springy. You keep it nicely polished. It could use a touch of straightening. It has a Unicorn hair core, in dire need of a tuning."

"Sounds like you know your stuff." The old wizard Beauxchamps smiled. "Can you repair mine?"

"Of course." Sasporilla said pulling her wand. "Accio wand kit."

It was a moment for her small leather case to find it's way to Piccadilly Circus in, around the turnstiles and up the ferris wheel to arrive in her hands. Sasporilla caught it and walked over to the bench to set up. She polished, straightened, tightened and tuned the wand. Sassy had been so focussed she hadn't noticed the ferris wheel car walls had formed around them, and had begun the wild decent back to the ground.

"There you are good as new." Sasporilla said. "I even fixed a crack that you've had for a very long time by the looks of it. My educated guess would be it happened in a duel."

"Yes, that was a long time ago, back in Hogwarts." The old wizard chuckled. "It was over the affections of a girl. I lost the duel but won her heart. Unfortunately her father wanted better for her than a life of that of wife of a carnival show wizard."

"In the end, what did she want?" Sasporilla asked.

"Not to disappoint her father." The old wizard placing his wand into his robe and pulling out two galleons. "You do most excellent work Ms.Bucket. If you so choose to join our travelling company for the summer be here Sunday night before the stroke of midnight. I can promise you two galleons per company wand serviced. You must supply your own food, lodging and mode of transportation. If I can find any other small paying jobs for you around the show throughout the summer, I'll send them your way."

The ferris wheel stopped, the doors slid open, and the old wizard showman Ferdinand Beauxchamps stepped out in the hustle and bustle of the carnival night air.



## Chapter 4

Sasporilla could not believe her luck! It probably wouldn't pay much but it would be a great bit of experience to add to a CV. Wand technician for the Carnival du Magique! She would have to sleep on it of course. One did not commit to such a decision lightly.

Sassy tucked her leather satchel tightly into her bag. It would have to do for now. She really had no other place to store it until she got home.

The delighted roar of the crowd drew Sasporilla's attention. Excited shouts and whistles came from a tall thin tent, which reminded Sassy of changing tents at the beach, across the way. A man stood at a rickety ticket counter in front of the tent entrance.

"Third last shows almost done love." The little fellow said. "Ah, I'll give ya a break on the price. Four sickle s'll do er, rather than a full galleon."

Sassy pulled the loose change out of her bag and handed it over to the little man who handed her a ticket then ripped it and said "Go right in!"

Sasporilla stepped into the thin tall tent. About twenty witches and wizards with children sat on wooden stands around a large sawdust ring. The small crowd cheered the fire caster as she blew a dragon from her mouth that circled above their heads and around the tent.

Sasporilla took a seat down front. The fire caster danced her way out of the ring. The lights dropped and a light bell played a lilting tune as a spot light found a crib in the center of the ring. A small elf clown stood up in the crib. A distant cry of a woman in the darkness, a flash of green, and a tall bald clown Voldemort with a big red nose.

The crowd booed the clown. With a vicious turn the bald clown Voldemort hissed at the crowd, a ridiculously long forked tongue rolling out of his mouth and flapping at them. With the most comical of evil looks the tall bald Voldemort clown drew his wand and turned on the baby elf clown Harry Potter in the crib.

Playfully the clown Voldemort rushed the crib. The little clown Harry Potter laughed which angered the dark lord of clowns! Voldemort stuck out his long tongue at the baby Harry and made a scary face. The little clown Harry laughed and stuck his tongue out in return frustrating the clown Voldemort.

A light bulb appeared above the tall clown's head and shone brightly indicating he had an idea. He grabbed it and chewed it both to

signify his being mean enough to eat broken glass and crafty enough to want to hide the fact that this muggle technology was a tie to his half muggle lineage. Voldemort turned and grabbed Harry by the nose, pulling away quickly and sticking his thumb up through his fingers to indicate he'd grabbed the little clown's nose!

The baby Harry Potter clown laughed ecstatically as he reached out and grabbed hold of Voldemort's large red nose with a loud honk. So pleased with himself the little clown did summersaults in his crib as the tall clown Voldemort drew his wand with a sinister smile. Simultaneously the little clown honked the large clown's nose as the large clown's wand exploded in green light and blew the faux Voldemort back into darkness. A little glowing lightning bolt glowed on the forehead of the little clown as he crawled out of his crib, honked Voldemort's large red nose, chuckled and waddled out of the spot light into the darkness.

A crowd of clowns of all shapes and sizes flooded the ring. The hilarious visages of death eaters and well known dark figures in league with you know who. With hoots of laughter they ran amongst crowd checking noses, harassing patrons and looking up robes. Every so often a young small clown in Hogwarts Gryffindor robes appeared behind them, honked Voldemort's large red nose and ran off laughing. The clowns chased the boy around the tent, in and out of spotlights but to no avail. Eventually the boy disappeared and the clowns scattered into the growing darkness looking for him.

An evil, rat like clown pulled the young Harry Potter clown behind him. The small clown struggled but occasionally waved Voldemorts nose to the crowd and honked it. The crowd laughed wildly and applauded.

The ratty clown cast the boy up into the arms of a death clown statue.

The crowd booed and hissed as the ratty clown searched the boy for Voldemorts nose.

A honk here, and the ratty clown searched here. A honk there and the ratty clown searched there. Finally the snide evil clown pointed his stubby clawed finger in the Harry Clowns face. When he tapped Harrys nose, the young clown honked Voldemorts giant hooter. The Ratty clown tapped it again and again with the same results. Reaching in his old brown coat the clown pulled out a quite floppy knife and went to cut off Harrys nose.

The Young wizard clown held up his hand and shook his head obviously objecting to the plan.

The ratty clown was perplexed. What was he to do? Harry reached over and grabbed the ratty clowns nose as if in a game of babies got your nose. It obviously did not honk so he put it back. The ratty clown played along. He grabbed the young clowns white made up nose and slipped his own thumb through his fingers giving young Harry a haughty look of derision. When the ratty clown touched the nose the boy wizard honked, and again and again much to the delight of the dim-whited servant of the dark lord who now concentrated on pulling in a large cauldron and paying very little attention to the boy who slipped easily from the statues grasp and dropped to the ring floor. As the ratty clown held his hand up with the pseudo nose between his fingers, the floppy knife poised and ready to cut, high above the cauldron the boy wizard jumped into a large tea cup and spun away.

The ratty clown cut off his hand which dropped into the cauldron, the distant honks of the dark lords nose echoed his silly failures as the crowd erupted with laughter. The pot glowed with green light and spun as the Voldemort clown reformed and stood before them. The crowd laughed even harder. The ratty clown placed his one good hand over his mouth. The dark lord couldn't quite figure out was wrong with his new incarnation as he spun around trying to figure it out, until it hit him! His head was sticking out of his behind.

Sasporilla had never quite laughed so hard. She knew the show was rife with historical inaccuracies and that some might find it may fly in the face of the memories of those who'd died at the hands of the dark wizards. However Sasporilla found it refreshing s long past time that someone said let's begin to heal and make fun of the pathetic evils that she herself as a child had helped to beat back.

Flames rose up encircling the ring. The crumbled, broken and burning silhouette of Hogwarts appeared on the tent walls. Drums rolled as two combatants took thier places on either side of the ring. The Voldemort clown turned and faced the crowd, his face still sticking out of his behind. The crowd booed and hissed. Voldemort looked angry and just a little hurt.

The boy wizard clown shot the crowd a coy smile and they cheered. He gave a little wave and they turned up the volume. He took a bow and they went wild! With unabashed arrogance he took a victory lap around the ring. Running with his hands above his head, clasped together shaking them from side to side in celebration, stopping only to do the odd back flip or cart wheel.

Harry stopped in front of the clownishly backwards Voldemort, who could not see him for the most embarrassing placement of his head. Harry tapped the evil wizard clown on the shoulder and he turned. The young wizard clown ran around behind as he turned and tapped him again, and again, and again. The dark wizarding clown kept spinning around and around until he got dizzy and fell over. What great fun. Finally The boy wizards clown doppelganger grew tired of the games and spoke for the first time in the act as he helped the Clown Voldemort to his feet, placing the stolen large red nose on the face sticking out of his rear end. "Come on Tom, let's finish this like we started it. Together."

With a honk of Voldemorts large red nose, the Voldemort Clowns head pulled back through his behind and popped up between his shoulders.

The clowns took their places on either side of the ring across from each other, drew their wands and pointed them at one another. Spells were cast and light flashed between wands, clashing in the middle of the ring in the flow of the unmistakable plasmatic flourish of priorincantatum. Sasporilla couldn't help but think of the stress and damage that was doing to those wands! How many performances were those clowns doing every day? It's s miracle either of those wands didn't explode.

The magic beam of Good energy pushed the evil energy back and blew the wand from Voldemorts hand.

The spotlight singled out the Voldemort clown as he looked up towards the sky, amazed that he'd been beaten.

The greatest dark wizard clown of all time beaten by a boy clown. A long flatulent break of inappropriate wind



fluttered as the body of the Voldemort clown deflated and turned to dust leaving only a wand and a slightly charred large red nose. With a honk, the lights cut to black and the crowd cheered!!!

The master showman himself, Areus Extravagonzo, dressed in brilliant blue with a four foot tall top hat stepped into a single brilliant spotlight.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls, the last act of the night is the most unique act in the wizarding world. An act you can not see at any other wizarding carnival anywhere in the world! May we present to you the amazing illusions and slight of hand tricks of the completely NON-MAGICAL MUGGLE MAGICIAN, the great Rudolfo!"

In a puff of smoke the great Rudolfo appeared in the center of the ring. He was an average sized man with a thin black moustache and thin beard, dressed in a tuxedo with a tall black top hat and red satin lined cape.

With a wave of his hand a black wand with a white tip appeared in his hand. With a fast flick it became a cane and with another a lovely bouquet of flowers. A lovely, scantily clad young lady, shuffled into the ring on high heels so high Sasporilla was amazed she wasn't standing tippy toe. The young woman pushed a cart of tricks into the spotlight and exchanged it gladly for the beautiful bouquet.

"My lovely assistant Alana!" The great Rudolpho smiled.

The great Rudolpho made pigeons disappear into pans of flame. He made solid steel rings pass through each other as if made of air. He pulled a rabbit out of his empty top hat. He sawed his assistant in half! Still witches and wizards slowly took their children and bit by bit shuffled from the tent for no one really believed any muggle could do such feats with out magic.

"I'm sure that's ol' Jimmy Gurtz who got kicked out a Hogwarts in second year fer settin' ol' Snapes eye brows on fire." Were the kind of excuses you'd here as they'd leave.

"For my final trick," the great Rudolfo said whipping off his cape turning it to a large blue cloth. Alana encouraged a large shy elephant to walk into the spotlight. "I will make this Gigantic creature disappear before your very eyes! Without the use of magic! Using only muggle ingenuity and trickery!"

"Impossible!" Someone in the audience yelled.

"Can't be done!" Another person yelled.

"I knew you would doubt a humble muggle like myself and that is why I will invite four witnesses," the great Rudolfo smiled, " random volunteers to come from the audience to watch as I fool the lot of you!"

Sasporilla was intrigued and shot her hand up eagerly!

The assistant walked around and looked at the volunteers. She chose a girl about nine years old, an old man, a mum who was embarrassed because she never thought she'd actually get picked and last but not least the pink haired witch.

The great Rudolfo and his assistant Alana escorted them around the elephant. One stood on each side of the gigantic beast as the great Rudolfo threw the large blue cloth over it. The cloth settled over the beast taking it's form.

"As our witnesses have seen," the great Rudolfo announced, "the elephant has been gently covered from head to toe with a simple piece of blue cloth. Unlike witches and wizards muggles use no silly incantations or do any foolish wand waving."

The great Rudolfo grabbed the edge of blue cloth as did Alana.

"All we say is ELEPHANT BE GONE!" The great Rudolfo yelled as the blue cloth deflated and went flat as the elephant disappeared from beneath! With a flick the blue cloth turned back into the red lined black cape of the muggle magician which Alana tied around the great Rudolfo's neck. All four witnesses stood silently in disbelief until Sasporilla let out a squeal of delight and began to applaud wildly. The small crowd jumped to their feet for standing ovation.

The great Rudolfo and Alana took three bows before exiting the ring. In a whirlwind entrance Areus Extravagonzo appeared center ring.

"Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen that is it for our show for this evening." The great showman smiled. "The midway rides, games and food stands remain open for your enjoyment until midnight. Thank you!"





## Chapter 5

Sasporilla pondered the trick of disappearing elephant as she walked out of the big show tent. She had watched the fabric of magic closely as the great Rudolfo performed his trick. At no time was magic used. So how in the world did he make a giant pachyderm vanish before her very eyes? For a muggle to this was inconceivable.

It was getting late but Sasporilla still had two things she wanted to do before go home. She wanted to play a carnival game and ride the roller coaster. Sassy walked down the games arcade of the midway. Barkers tried to pull her in to play their games.

Children sprayed water from wands attached to small hoses into the mouths of dragons, knocking back their flames until it was extinguished in the beasts belly and a winner was declared with a flurry of bells and fire works.

"Cast a spell, knock over the bottles, win a giant stuffed Banana!" The barker called.

Sasporilla smiled politely no as she walked past.

A tall pedestal with a large bell atop stood by a games barker who cried out, "Ring the bell, win a prize. Are you wizard enough to impress your young witch sir?"

A tall wizard cast a spell to turn his wand into a giant hammer. A young witch that stood beside him looked hopeful as he lifted the hammer high above his head. The barker smiled as the wizard brought the hammer down with all his might and struck a lever which sent a weighted metal dinger up the pole about half way. The games barker laughed and mocked as the wizard got angry and the witch tried to show him some sympathy.

A young Ravenclaw fourth year that Sasporilla recognized was busy whacking away with a large rubber mallet at a game of Whack-a-leprechaun. Aptly name for a devious Irish imp would run around beneath a counter, with several holes drilled into it, and randomly pop its head up through and taunt the player with a barb or insult.

"What's wrong?" The leprechaun laughed

WHACK!

"Ya couldn't hit.."

WHACK!

"...Yer own head..."

WHACK!

"...wit dat ting!"

WHACK!

"Ya poser hahahaha!!!"

WHACK! WHACK! WHACK!

Quidditch fans gathered around the "Throw the Quaffle through the moving Goal game. Young and old witches and wizards threw quaffles by the dozens but few seemed to even get close. Life most carnival games Sasporilla assumed there was some sort of trick to it or they were out right fixed.

Sasporilla came across a game booth where the barker sat reading the daily prophet. The sign read SHOOTING GALLERY. A large glass wall sat like a blackened window behind him.

"Test yer skill." The barker sighed. "Stupify six targets in six shots and win a prize."

"How much?" Sasporilla asked intrigued.

"A sickle!" The man said putting down his paper and paying attention to the first person all day who had shown interest in his booth. Sasporilla pulled a sickle out of her bag and drew her wand.

The man smiled and nodded as he took the sickle and cast lumos at the glass wall. The back lit up and came yo life with fluttering Cornish pixies.

"Cast STUPIFY only and stun a Cornish pixie you win a point. You get ten shots. If you stun five out of ten you win one of these lovely "DEAD EYE" badges. If you stun six in six shots you win one of these lovely stuffed Niffles!" The game barker smiled.

"What if I get ten out of ten?" Sasporilla smiled playfully.

"Then you would be the best shot I have ever seen!" The man said. "And you would win the coveted Beauxchamps Carnival Sharp Caster Cup!"

A once brilliant gold and silver cup, now very dusty and covered with cobwebs was motioned to on an upper shelf.

"Right!" Sasporilla said.

"You have thirty seconds when I say go," the barker said as Sasporilla readied herself. "... and.... GO!" Sasporilla reached out with her feelings touching the fabric of magic. She saw the Cornish pixies making a well planned run for hiding spots that would make hitting them impossible. Their moments slowed to an almost dead halt before her eyes. Sasporilla moved like lightning casting stupify. Ten shots, ten Cornish pixies fell. A magical counter to the side of the case rolled over and when it clicked ten confetti and streamers shot from the top of the game booth and spiraled down around Sassy. Large megaphones popped out counter and blared congratulatory music!

A crowd began to gather around Sassy as the game barker levitated the cup down from its shelf. The old wizard himself, Ferdinand Beauxchamps, came over to see who had won the old cup after all this time. Sasporilla graciously accepted the cup with a smile and a sneeze as the dust blew up her nose. "I have never seen casting like that!" The barker said. "Are you an auror?"

"No!" Ferdinand Beauxchamps. "She is a student of wand making and hopefully will soon be our new wand maintenance technician!"

"How did you cast that fast?" The barker asked.

"I fought at the battle of Hogwarts." Sassy said.

"You must have killed a lot of death eaters." A person in the crowd laughed.

"I lost a lot of friends that day." Sassy said sadly.

"That's Sasporilla Bucket!" A young man said. "I have her battle of Hogwarts chocolate frog card! She's a hero! She blew a death eaters head clean off! That's why she's so good."

"I'm no hero." Sasporilla said. "Dueling for points or casting at targets is easy. Safe. Dueling against a living wizard trying to kill you is very different. So please don't celebrate war and killing."

Sasporilla took her cup and walked away from the crowd suddenly ashamed of her achievement. People murmured behind her as she left.

"What's wrong with her?" The shooting gallery barker asked.

"People who have seen war understand true horror, few others understand." Ferdinand Beauxchamps said. "Let's all get back to having fun!"

Sasporilla wondered through the midway as she stuffed the sharp casting cup into her bag until it was lodged in tightly but still stuck out awkwardly. Just past the deep fried chocolate frog on a stick stand and to the left of the Butterbeer and Pumpkinjuice slushee stand was Sassy found herself back at the spider floss kiosk. Across the way was the DEVIL'S FORK roller coaster.

Sasporilla rooted in her bag past the cup looking for the two ride tickets that remained. The thin blue slips of thick paper hid just past Sassy's small makeup bag. Though she didn't wear much make up, she did wear some, though she rarely ever got seen applying it or fixing it.

Sassy tore off one ticket and carried it in her hand as she approached the ride operator of the Devil's Fork.

"Ready for the ride of your life then miss?" The thin man smiled and took the ride ticket from Sasporilla's fingers.

"Welcome Miss to the wildest roller coaster anywhere in the wizarding world!" The ride operator said turning and heading for the Devil's fork sign. With a tap of his wand against the sign the large 'E' opened up to reveal a space behind. A car rolled in on a track, enveloped in a devilishly red light.

"Beauxchamps Entertainment Unlimited takes no responsibility for lost or damaged items, limbs, life or riders as one in seven hundred twenty eight brave souls are never seen again."

The tall thin man offered Sasporilla a hand climbing aboard the car. For the first time she noticed the scattered burn scars on his hands and fore arms. As he did up her safety belts and lowered the safety cross bar.

"I'd secure your bag miss." The ride Operator smiled showing his stubby baked bean teeth. "Unless of course you'd like me to hang on to it for you?"

"No thank you." Sasporilla said drawing her wand casting 'Reductio' and shrinking her bag down small enough to put in her robes inner pocket.

"Ok." The ride operator said quietly. "Seriously, keep your arms and hands in the ride and what ever you do, don't cast spells at the big fella, it really ticks him off."

"Wha...?" Sassy began to ask as the car lurched forward into the darkness.

The wheels clacked and squeaked ever faster as the car moved forward on its track through the darkness. The track took plunge and with a scream Sasporilla found her car hurtling downwards. She could see the track, running

thin in the distance like a string through a small light, which quickly grew in the blackness. The light was hole into a world of dry cracked earth, blowing harsh dust on hot winds and bubbling lakes of acids and pools of erupting lava.

As the ground rushed towards her Sasporilla closed her eyes. She remembered being a little girl and begging her mother to go to the carnival to ride the roller coasters.

"No Sassy." Wysteria would tell her daughter. "You're to small."

The car shot out across and up the track curved to the left and turned over in a corkscrew. Sasporilla Bucket screamed as the car rolled down over a lake of acid. Arms of melting flesh reaching up to grab at the pink haired witch as she passed.

The roller coaster car straightened and shot upwards up a track into a large loop as Sassy found herself flying head over heels.

Sasporilla Bucket screamed and closed her eyes. Once again she remembered herself, around ten pleading with her mum to take her to the muggle carnival across the highway in Essex to ride the roller coaster.

"Sasporilla!" Wysteria said. " You know very well we can't afford it!"

The loop came rolling around in a corkscrew back around and down over the lake then back into wide loop up then down into tunnel filled with undead, chained to the walls screaming at Sassy as she flew past.

The car rocked violently from side to side as it shot out of the tunnel. Sasporilla was alarmed at the sight of the track splitting into three directions. With a small bump, then a large thump the car flew up off the track and up into the air.

Once again Sasporilla's mind turned to that of her mother. Thinking just before she got on how she could have said to her mother "I am now old enough, big enough and have enough of my own money to ride the roller coaster MOTHER!"

She could hear the wise words of Wysteria Bucket in her mind... "How are you enjoying it dear?"

"What was I bloody thinking!!!!!" Sasporilla screamed as the car landed heavily on the track and dropped down off the side off a cliff. The car spiraled down around a pillar of flame and in to a small turn and into a series of small hills through pools of spewing fountains of lava.

The roller coaster car came to a crashing halt as it slammed into a burning red rock. Sassy didn't know if it was the loud cracking and grinding or the deafening roar that made her look up into the face of a roaring lava giant reaching for her car. Sassy didn't know if it was the words of the ride operator "what ever you do, don't cast spells at the big fella, it really ticks him off" or the fact that she seemed to be paralyzed with fear that stopped her from drawing her wand. Whichever Sasporilla screamed as the creature lifted the car in its lava dripped claw, high above its gapping firey maw where he dropped the car in and swallowed the pink haired witch, roller coaster car and all, whole.

When Sasporilla opened her eyes the ride operator was unfastening her safety belts.

"Thank you for Riding the Devil's Fork." The thin man said. "Come ride with us again any time."

He took Sasporilla's hand to help her off the ride. Sassy had Smokey cheeks. Her eyes were wide and she her long pink hair was standing up in all directions. She pulled her bag from her robes pocket and it increased to normal size. She felt around absent mindedly, still half in shock, for her other ride ticket.

A young boy fought adamantly with his mother. "But we can't leave! I haven't ridden the roller coaster!"

"I don't have enough money Daniel I'm sorry." His mother said.

"Here." Sasporilla said blankly stuffing the ride ticket into the woman's hand as she walked past. "I won't be using it."

Sasporilla just wanted to go home now. Where did she live? Oh yes, Number 4 castle road Essex. How could she get there? Oh yes she remembered. If only she could remember that spell to remove embarrassing stains from ones delicates???



## Chapter 6

\*The character of Nancy Nightingale was created by Daisy Dürr- used with permission.

It was a long weekend for Sasporilla packing up the caravan not just for summer living but for storing the things that she wanted to keep from the house. There really wasn't that much. The Buckets hadn't been a rich family and therefore had never really been material people.

Her mothers guitar and framed photograph of Sassy with her mum and dad, taken in the door way of the Dog and Pony Pub. Most of the things in the house were new and had no sentimental value. By the end of the boxing most of it went to the charity shops. Sasporilla kept her Dad's old cap and her mom's favorite poncho as well as a few small things. It came to just over half a box which she stored away with her own things in the caravan.

By Sunday night the house was mostly packed up, emptied and ready for the new owners to do with as they would. Sasporilla walked into the back yard, with a quick cast the caravan returned itself into her Triumphant twelve-hundred X.

Sasporilla called her broom to her hand and climbed aboard. She smiled refusing to look back at the house.

"Just move on Sassy." She heard her dad say. "Make your own way in life my girl."

Sasporilla set her brooms invisibility option and took off into the warm evening air.

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Sasporilla Bucket was not one for being late. She arrived at the Carnival du Mystique nearly thirty minutes before they were to move out to the next town. She carried her broom through the unmanned turn style.

A crowd of carnies gathered outside the hall of mirrors. What ever was holding up the Carnival du Mystique moving on to the next town was obviously happening here.

"Every darn time." Alana, the muggle magicians assistant sighed, throwing her hands in the air as she walked away from the fiasco shaking her head in utter frustration.

"What's going on?" Sasporilla asked.

"What goes on in every city and every town we have visited for two years." Ferdinand Beauxchamps smiled. "A young woman has locked herself in the hall of mirrors and refuses to leave."

"How do you usually deal with it?" Sassy asked.

"Alohamorah the door, try and talk her into leaving peacefully." Ferdinand Beauxchamps sighed. "And when that fails we have to stupify her and carry her off the grounds and leave her at the nearest authorities."

"I see." Sasporilla said sadly.

"Then as soon as the gates open in the new location," Areus Extravagonzo said throwing hands in the air, "She's the first through buying tickets for all four days!!!"

"Well at least she's honest and pays her way." Sasporilla said.

"So you see good in her." Ferdinand Beauxchamps smiled. "As do I. The others see only wanton madness and obsession. Everyone here has spoken with her. Everyone but you. Perhaps you can get through to her where others can not."

"I'd be happy to try." Sasporilla said drawing her wand and pointing it at the hall of mirrors door. "Alohamora." Sassy pushed the door open and walked in. The hall of mirrors really was very much just as advertised. Just a long room full of different mirrors mounted on walls. Some mirrors made you look short and fat, some made you look tall and thin.

Sure enough a raven haired rubenesque woman stood staring into a mirror at the end of the hall.

"Be careful of the mirror with red velvet ropes." The woman said bringing to them to Sassy's attention. "If you get any closer to them you'll regret it."

Blackened fiery arms reached out from the mirror and grasped at the air. Finding nothing to drag with them back to the nether realms they returned back into the depths of the glass.

"Thank you for the warning." Sasporilla said.

"Have you come to ask me to leave or to knock me out?" The woman asked.

"I'd prefer to talk first." Sasporilla said approaching the woman. "Do you have a name?"

"Nancy Nightingale." The woman smiled not taking her eyes off the mirror. "And you are?"

"Sasporilla Bucket." Sassy said. "I'm new to the Carnival. Do I detect a hint of a German accent?"

"Yes." Nancy said. "Though I have not been home for a long time. I follow the mirror to be with my love."

Sasporilla looked into the mirror. Sassy saw Nancy and no one else.

"I'm sorry." Sasporilla said. "I only see you in the mirror. I don't see anyone with you."

"No." Nancy said. "This mirror was made as an early work by the same maker as the mirror of errisad. It can only show one persons true love at one time. For me it is my darling Severus."

"Severus?" Sasporilla asked. "Not professor Severus Snape?"

"Yes." Nancy said stiffly with a hint of defencive pride. "I have always loved him. From the first time I saw him as a girl in Flourish and Blots. We reached for the same book on potions and our hands touched. I knew we were meant for each other. I felt it in my heart. His heart was already another's."

"I had no Idea Professor Snape loved anyone." Sasporilla said. "He always seemed incapable of loving anyone."

"You're just like everyone else!" Nancy yelled. "Judging my Severus when you never really knew him at all!!!"

"I do know that when a group of boys were merciliously beating up a Slytherin friend of mine, Professor Snape gave him a safe place to sleep a set a trap to catch them." Sasporilla said.

"The Zarcazzian boy." Nancy gasped. "I heard about that. I was in teachers college when that happened. Wait, the Zarcazzian boy is your friend?"

"Yes." Sasporilla smiled. "His last name is Curtiss now. He took his wifes last name when they got married. It's s long story."

"Are you a Slytherin?" Nancy asked.

"No." Sasporilla sighed. "I'm a Hufflepuff."

"Then how were you friends with a Slytherin?" Nancy asked.

"I don't believe in judging people by their house." Sasporilla stiffened defencively. "I pick my friends based on them being good people, despite their house, colour, sex, blood line, nationality, religion, or anything else."

Nancy Nightingale gave the strange pink haired witch a long hard look.

"Good for you." Nancy smiled and turned back to the mirror stubbornly. "Have you ever been in love Sasporilla Bucket?"

"Yes." Sassy said quietly.

"I don't mean puppy love," Nancy said, "a crush. I mean really in love from your heart to your bones. So in love that you ached for him, longed for him. Could not bare to be out of his presence for a second of your life? And then have someone or something take it from you?"

"I lost my first love to a girl under going the Asensionmorphosus Ritual." Sasporilla said.

"That's horrible." Nancy frowned still not looking away from the mirror. "I understand he would have had no choice if he was her soul mate but the odds of it being your love are astronomical."

"Honestly for the amount of bad things that happen to me," Sasporilla sighed, "I'd say the odds were a safe bet."

"You said FIRST love?" Nancy asked?

"Yes." Sasporilla said. "I did fall in love again. A different boy, a bit younger and very different from the first. He actually perused me. Wasn't there ever a boy who showed interest in you?"

"Yes." Nancy sighed. "Narwel. A Hufflepuff boy a year younger than me. He was very big. In his first year he was well above six and a half feet tall and brawny, brutish. Though he was a gentle soul. He wouldn't harm a butterfly, but if someone hurt him or he saw someone being hurt he would become very aggressive. He could become quite frightening. His grasp of magic was atrocious but he worked do hard. He was very sweet and would write me poetry. Leave me candy and flowers. Eventually I had to explain that I was not interested in him. At best we could be friends."

"He must have been heart broken?" Sasporilla asked.

"I honestly don't know." Nancy said. "He was expelled the next day for fighting. He put nine Slytherins in the infirmary and broke two limbs on the whomping willow. You fell for your peruser?"

"I was going to tell him the same thing." Sasporilla said. "Your not my type, just friends, and he laid a kiss on me and I melted. I knew."

"Oh my." Nancy said with sad surprise taking her eyes off the mirror for the first time. "That is so beautiful. I hope you will be very happy."

"All his memories of me were stolen from him by his mother." Sasporilla sighed. "They have been irreversibly erased and destroyed."

"Perhaps of all the people sent to pull me from the mirror you will be the closest to understanding why I will not leave." Nancy smiled. "My love Severus, loved another. Like you, like me, he loved one who loved him but not as much as the person who stole their heart away from him. I never gave up hopes that our friendship, no matter how distant would blossom into love. Especially once she had passed on but he refused to let her love for Lily Potter go."

"Lily Potter?" Sasporilla asked surprised. "Harry Potters mother?"

"Yes." Nancy said sadly. "He had loved her since they were children. They grew up together. James Potter stole her heart and broke my dear Severus' heart. It left a whole in his sensitive heart that he would let no one else fill. Not even me. When I look into this mirror, it allows me the honour of seeing my life as it should have been with him. I have seen our joys and sorrows. Our children and grand children. A long happy life of love in each others arms. I will not walk away from it. I will have to be ripped away from the loving arms of my Severus unconscious!"

"The other boy brought you flowers?" Sasporilla asked.

"What?" Nancy asked confused.

"The other boy? Narwel?" Sasporilla asked. "You said he brought you flowers. What kind?"

"Daisys." Nancy said her gaze breaking from the mirror for just a second again. "Narwel always said most women wanted Roses because they thought themselves like Roses. He thought Roses the most stuck up of flowers. Over priced, hard to raise, thorny and only pretty for a short time. He brought me Daisys because he said Daisys were the most beautiful of flowers. Hardy, beautiful for a long time, always there and nicer smelling than Roses. His logic was you always saw more bees on Daisys than on Roses."

The women chuckled as Sasporilla quietly snapped her fingers and cast Nancy Nightingale to sleep, catching her as she fell.

Sassy drew her wand and cast levicorpus to carry the woman out of the hall of mirrors as gently as she could.

"What took so long?" One of the carnies yelled.

"I wanted to find out why she didn't want to leave." Sasporilla said.

"It's ok." Ferdinand Beauchamps said. "We still have three minutes to midnight. Ms.Bucket if you would be so kind as to carry her off the grounds. Take your broom and this flyer for the shows next location incase you can not make it back inside in time for the port jump."

Sasporilla levitated Nancy Nightingale through the turnstiles and out into the night air of Piccadillycircus. Much to her surprise a giant of a man stepped in her way.

"I will take her." The man said.

"Who are you?" Sasporilla asked?

"I am Narwel." The giant smiled gently taking Nancy into his arms. "I come and get Nancy every Sunday night and take her to a local police station, fire house or hospital after the Carnival closes. I watch over her until she awakens, then I leave. She never knows I'm around."

"You still love her." Sasporilla smiled. "After all this time."

"Always." Narwel said turning to carry his unconscious love away.

"Narwel." Sasporilla said. "When Nancy wakes up, stay and tell her you've never given up your love for her. Before she can tell you anything.... kiss her. I'm not saying it's the right move, or the safe move but it worked gang busters for someone I know."

With a nod and a one sided smile Narwel walked off into the night. A giant of a man carrying his rubenesque love. Spending the few minutes a week he got to hold her in his arms.

Sasporilla thought for a moment of when she glimpsed herself in the mirror and it showed her standing next to the person that was to be her one true love. A tear ran down her cheek. In a flash the carnival box office disappeared.



## Chapter 7

Southampton was the next lucky city on tour of the Carnival du Mystique. At a hard ride it had taken Sasporilla a bit over an hour to arrive at an empty parking lot by an old castle wall. A very popular land mark and tourist attraction for both muggle and magical folk alike.

Agnes Moorthead, the carnivals blind fortune teller stood up from a concrete parking curb and walked over as Sassy touched down.

"You found us first try." Agnes smiled holding up a very plain looking brass ring. "An impressive feat without a ring."

"What does the ring do?" Sasporilla asked.

"The best way to explain it is to show you." Agnes smiled taking Sassy by the arm. "But we'd best step just a few feet over to the right."

Sasporilla chuckled as they stepped one, two, three steps side ways. It was like they were doing a funny dance in an empty parking lot in the middle of the night.

"Now," Agnes said, "Slip the ring on your finger and don't worry, it won't cripple your magical abilities or leave a brand on your finger like the one on your wrist."

"For a woman with no eyes," Sasporilla said. "You see everything don't you?"

"The cosmos act as my eyes." Agnes smiled. "All of the universe reveals itself to me."

"Hard to hide from that." Sassy said as she slipped the brass ring onto the ring finger of her right hand.

A glowing golden ribbon of energy formed on the ground. Sasporilla followed the golden glow with her eyes in both directions as it encircled the Southampton old castle wall area.

"What is it?" Sasporilla asked.

"That is the border of the Carnival grounds." Agnes smiled. "Everywhere we go, the Carnival du Mystique has set areas, like this one and the one in Piccalilli Circus, that exist as pocket worlds just beyond our own. The only way you can find your way in is through the turnstile or through the door way where the turnstile is placed."

"But to find the door way," Sassy said realizing the pair of them stood less than a meter from a large gold square in the Carnivals border, "you need the ring!"

Sassy and Agnes stepped through the golden gateway into the chaotic grounds of the Carnival du Mystique.

Carnies waved wands and helped to raise the giant wheel on the far side of the carnival grounds. Others set up their own booths or personal tents in the camp.

"Did you bring a tent?" Agnes asked showing Sassy over to an empty spot in the camp.

"Actually," Sasporilla said trying to gauge the size of the space. "I have a caravan."

"You do?" Agnes said surprised, checking around her.

"It's a feature of my broom actually." Sasporilla smiled.

"That's brilliant!" Agnes gasped. "I've never heard of such a feature. It would make the lives of so many carnies so much better. You'll have to tell me the make and model!"

"Of course." Sasporilla said agreed cheerfully. "It's a Triumphant twelve-hundred X."

"Well there won't be space in the tent camps for a caravan." Agnes mused. "But we should be able to squeeze you in comfortably just behind mine."

The young women walked to the west side of the midway where the blind fortune teller had her attraction tent set up just in front of her own Caravan. The girls walked around back. There was a large empty space big enough to comfortably fit Sasporillas Caravan as well as her wand stand.

"Will this do?" Agnes asked.

"Oh my yes." Sasporilla smiled. "It's perfect. It has enough room for everything comfortably."

"Splendid!" Agnes said. "Then I'll leave you to set up. Mr.Beauxchamps expects everyone settled by sunrise. First meeting 6am by the big wheel."

"Meeting?" Sasporilla enquired.

"Every morning, rain or shine, so to speak." Agnes smiled. "Never rains in here. Mr.Beauxchamps hands out daily assignments, introduces new people, sets daily tasks or punishments for infractions of rules the day before. You know, usual things."

"No." Sasporilla sighed as it was all so new to her. "But I'm sure I'll catch on soon enough."

With a quick cast, Sasporillas broom cap opened and her caravan sprang forth setting itself up next to Agnes' leaving a comfortable space between. Sasporilla set up her booth at the end of her steps and ran the tie-dye cloth up to the roof of her caravan. It joined her home and work together in a way that made her feel comfortable. By three am Sasporilla was set up and quite frankly ready for a well earned nap. She went inside and set her alarm for five forty five. That would give her plenty of time for quick kip on the couch before this big meeting at six am. Sasporilla barely closed her eyes before the clattering jangle of the alarm roused her from a much deeper slumber than intended.

A quick glance at the clock confirmed her fears.

"Five Fifty Five!" Sassy gasped.

She had fallen so deeply asleep that the alarm had rung for ten minutes and she'd slept straight through it. Next time she'd get the alarm with function that slapped your face if you slept five minutes past. She always thought that may be a bad idea as she just might slap back, being a bit moody when just awakened.

Finding no time for such debates she grabbed her purple jacket with the pink frilled cuffs and headed out the front door of the caravan.

Sasporilla was one of the last to wander up to the back of the crowd that gathered at the ferris wheel for the morning meeting. Mr.Beauxchamps stood just inside an opened ferris wheel car smiling out at everyone.

"Good morning my carnival family." Mr.Beauxchamps said. "Here we are again, another town to prepare for our show. Setup was a success as always. I would like to invite our newest member, Ms.Sasporilla Bucket up to the front???"

Sassy waved and stepped up through the crowd to join Mr.Beauxchamps.

"Ms.Bucket volunteered to rid us of our weekly nuisance this week."

"Poor woman." Sasporilla sighed.

"I beg your pardon?" Mr.Beauxchamps asked.

"She lost love before it could truly find her." Sasporilla said. "Now she tries to recapture it in the reflection of a mirror. It's sad."

"Indeed." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled. "But there are real loves out there."

"And if she chooses them we may not see her again when the gates open." Sassy winked.

"We can only hope." Beauxchamps grinned. "Friends, Ms.Bucket has been hired by the carnival to maintain company wands. Each of you will be given a chit."

The old wizard pulled a blue and gold chit about the size of a ticket on the hogwarts express and held it up over his head.

"This chit can be redeemed with Ms.Bucket for one full cleaning and full servicing of your wand, courtesy of the Carnival du Mystique!"

The carnies erupted in applause as the old wizard cast a pile of the chits into the air and one each landed in the hand of a carny.

"Ms.Bucket," Mr.Beauxchamps said quietly, "you will of course receive two galleons per chit brought to the office as per our agreed upon price."

"Thank you Mr.Beauxchamps." Sasporilla smiled. "That is more than fair."

It amazed Sasporilla how many jobs there were to do in a carnival before opening. There were fresh food stocks to go buy. Posters to hang. Mr.Beauxchamps even asked for volunteers to help put up one of the children's attractions, "The Bubble World" stand, as the carny who ran it had fallen victim to case of wine someone had left behind on their last stop. All those days of drinking, was going to take the company doctor, days to dry her out again. Sassy volunteered to help set up the booth.

So many people stopped by over the next few days. Some, who desperately needed their wands cleaned, cracks filled and cores tuned. Most just wanted to see the new face and meet the new girl. Especially some of the braver of the lonely hearts amongst the carny men, who began circling in their best hawaiian shirts, like sharks at a feeding frenzy.

Sasporilla stood sheepishly at her booth on Wednesday night, as eight young men with slicked back hair all carrying flowers and candy stood there grinning at her hoping to win her attentions.

"Gentlemen please." Sasporilla begged. "I'm really not interested in looking for anyone right now but thank you. I'm flattered."

"Why not?" One of the carnies asked. "What's wrong with any of us?"



"Nothing." Sasporilla said. "I'm just not interested."

"Well maybe we could make you interested?" One of the carnies wagged his eyebrows.

Sasporilla could see Agnes watching from the flap of her booth. Sassy sighed, she knew that she owed them no explanation but for whatever reason it looked like she was going to have to get stern with them.

"Right." Sassy said stiffening. "Now you lot just listen here! I have been in love twice and had my bloody heart broken twice. I will choose another man when I am bloody well good and ready and he will bloody well be whom I choose and no one else. Do... you... understand?"

"Yes mam" the carnies apologized scattering. "Sorry to have bothered you mam. I'll stop by for a cleaning tomorrow."

Agnes clapped and laughed as Sasporilla Bucket took her first official bow of the Carnival du Mystique.



## Chapter 8

Thursday morning Sasporilla awoke bright and early at five am. She had her shower, made some toast and tea and grabbed an apple from the bowl of fresh fruit she kept on the caravans kitchen counter. By ten to six she stepped out the front door into the bright sunny summer dawn.

"Good morning Sasporilla." Agnes the blind fortune-teller said stepping up along side Sassy's front steps.

"Morning Agnes." Sassy smiled taking her friends arm in hers.

"Thought we might stroll leisurely to this mornings meeting." Agnes said in an upper class accent.

"Oh what a perfectly delightful idea." Sasporilla chuckled with false upper crust amusement. "Perhaps we could stroll through the park after, and go have our hair done."

"After we luncheon at the Royals of course." Agnes insisted. "Watercress and cucumber sandwiches perhaps?"

"Oh god no!" Sasporilla gasped.

"Pizza and cheese burgers then?" Agnes smiled.

"You know it!" Sassy laughed.

The carnies gathered at the foot of the Ferris wheel. Ferdinand Beauxchamps, owner of the Carnival du Mystique, took his place before the crowd to hand out the days assignments. He was quite the sight in long flowing green and gold robes with his beard braided into three sections. A series of carousel horses bobbed up and down as they spun around the wide brim of his high pointed wizard's hat.

"Good morning everyone!" Ferdinand Beauxchamps smiled broadly looking out over the crowd over his half glasses as he unrolled a rather small scroll. "As everything is just about ready my list is rather small this morning. As you know this is opening day. Setting up the turnstile gateway is a job for four. As I and Jonas will be present as always I will require one volunteer. Also Ms.Bucket, I ask that you come along to learn the process."

"Yes Mr.Beauxchamps." Sasporilla said rather surprised.

"Excellent." Beauxchamps smiled. "Also I am looking for a volunteer to help Alana bathe the elephant and I need someone to run the children's Bubble World Booth as Mrs.Dumbleshire has not yet recovered from her illness." Sasporilla looked over at Alana. She was the young woman who assisted the muggle magician the Great Rudolfo. She looked a lot different out of her costume. She was very petite, just above five feet tall, with long fair hair and bright eyes behind large glasses above a large bright smile.

"Would it be possible for me to volunteer?" Sasporilla Bucket asked.

"Yes of course!" Mr.Beauxchamps said. "You are a member of the company. Mrs.Dumbleshire has agreed to pay 20% of all monies earned by the booth to the volunteer."

"The only thing is I don't really know how to run the booth." Sassy admitted.

"I can help you there." Alana said. "I've helped out at the bubble booth a bunch a times. If you give me a hand washing Jumbo, I'll teach ya how to run the booth."

"Ok!" Sasporilla smiled.

"Great!" Alana's broad smile always brightened everyone's day.

"Wonderful." Mr.Beauxchamps said. "Ms.Bucket will help with all our problems today. Please head with Alana from here and meet up with me at the gateway at nine forty five am. Thank you everyone have a productive day. Remember, once the gates open, sell them fun!!!"

Alana took Sasporilla by the hand and lead her away from the crowd. "This way."

Past the show tent was a great caravan almost fifty feet in length. Its once bright blue and gold paint was now chipped and faded but you could still clearly read 'Ferdinand Beauxchamps presents... the Carnival du Mystique' on the side.

"Wow." Sasporilla said. "This must have been quite the site in its day!"

"I'm told it was." Alana's smile, Sasporilla mused, covered a good forty percent of her face in happiness. It was perhaps the biggest smile she'd ever seen. "Before the show had its own areas between worlds, the carnival travelled through the muggle world, like a normal show. Most of it got rolled up and stored on top of the caravan, and a small mule name Edgar hauled it all from town to town."

"That's amazing." Sasporilla gasped.

"Ya." Alana agreed walking Sassy around the far end of the old show caravan. "Now Mr.Beauxchamps just uses it for his private quarters and the office."

"Oh!" Sasporilla smiled. "I was wondering where the office was?"

"Yep, just back here." At the back of the show caravan was a door with a caged window. A long thin rope hung from somewhere above inside and a sign hung from it reading 'Pull Rope for Business' "If you need to do any carnival business you just pull that there rope and either Mr. Beauxchamps or his assistant will see to ya."

"Lovely thanks." Sasporilla said. "Your accent. It's very subtle but it's Irish isn't it?"

"Yep." Alana said walking Sassy past the utility shed. "Born and raised in Dublin."

"Very nice." Sasporilla said. "I spent some time at Drurlily, in Galway."

"Really?" Alana asked rather shocked. "You struck me as a Hogwarts girl."

"Well I am, was..." Sasporilla stammered, "I was at Drurlily for half a year on an exchange."

"Oh I see." Alana chuckled. "Ya I remember those. Did ya get the mickey taken put of ya for being English?"

"Wait!" Sasporilla stopped. "You went to Drurlilly?"

"Ya?" Alana said. "So?"

"So?!!!" Sasporilla laughed in disbelief. "You're suppose to be a muggle!!!"

"No! I'm not!" Alana insisted. "My cousin is the muggle. My whole family are muggles in fact. When the inquisitions started they hid me away here so the ministry couldn't find me. A muggle born witch to torture and kill."

"I didn't realise." Sasporilla said. "Sorry."

"Apology accepted." Alana smiled.

"So you do the magic? Sasporilla asked.

"No." Alana insisted coming to a halt between two outer sheds with a large canvas tarp stretched between. "My cousin, Lester is his real name, he does all the magic. Real muggle illusions. Brilliant they are! Would have fooled old Dumbledore himself!"

Alana pulled back the tarp to reveal a small area with a muggle made, modern caravan and the elephant standing on a silver plate in the yard.

"Lester you've gone and left her out again!" Alana yelled at the caravan.

"I thought his name was Rudolfo?" Sasporilla asked following Alana inside the canvassed courtyard, giving the elephant a wide berth.

"His Stage name is the Great Rudolfo." Alana said opening the front door to the caravan and seeing her cousin sprawled out on the living room couch asleep. Snoring with a half-finished bottle of whisky in his hand. "People wouldn't stay for the show If I introduced him as Lester the lazy lump!"

The elephant started to get a little uneasy at Seeing Alana do upset.

"Easy my big girl, easy." Alana said turning to Sasporilla. "Alright I was hoping he'd have put her back in her pen but he didn't. Which means I'm going to have to expose some of the mechanics of the disappearing elephant trick to ya, so we can give her, her bath."

"Wow really?" Sasporilla asked. "Cool! I'd love to see how Muggle magic works."

"All right." Alana said. "She's used to strangers being around her, but even still, walk up slow and give her a soft pat on the hind quarters."

"Jumbo won't mind?" Sasporilla asked a bit concerned.

"Not in the least." Alana smiled.

Sassy took a deep breath and walked up behind the pachyderm slowly, softly lulling the large animal with her voice. "Hi Jumbo. Who's a good girl?"

Sasporilla gently patted the elephant but her hand passed right through the animal's flesh as if it were a ghost.

"What the???" Sassy gasped.

Alana burst into laughter. "The first rule of muggle magic is nothin' is ever what it appears to be."

The young magician's assistant bent down underneath the elephant and called Sassy's attention to a small area she hadn't noticed before.

"Look here Sasporilla." Alana said pointing at what looked like a piece of domed glass on the silver plate the elephant stood on. "This is a lens that makes a simple mirrored illusion look bigger."

Alana pulled the lens off. Jumbo and the large silver disc disappeared. What was left appeared to be an upside down black bowl with a tiny silver plate and a tiny elephant standing on the flat bottom of it, resting on a similar black bowl beneath.

"Try touching her now but be very gentle." Alana insisted.

Sasporilla was terrified but as she reached out to touch the small beast she realised it still wasn't there!!!

"This is amazing." Sasporilla said.

"Like I said the lens increases the size of mirrored illusions. What you're seeing is the real Jumbo," Alana said gently lifting up the two bowls and pulling them apart to reveal their mirrored interiors and the tiny elephant standing patiently at the bottom. "Her name is Lily, short for Liliput, from the Gulliver's Travels stories. She's a South Indian Microphant."

"Amazing." Sasporilla said looking in as Alana held in her hand for Lily to walk onto. "I've never seen anything like her."

"They're almost extinct as a species." Alana said taking Lily over to her small pen and putting her in so she could get some food. "My cousin won her by cheating rare animal dealer in a card game. Nearly killed by mistreating her."

"That's horrible." Sassy said. "Poor little thing."

"When I came to help I nursed her back to health with some tips from the mirror lady, Nancy." Alana chuckled.

"She's knows her animals. I've give her that."

"Well that's something." Sasporilla said. "But what I don't understand is if she is so tiny, why do you need assistance washing her?"

"Ah!" Alana said pulling out a small plastic pail and a soft bristled toothbrush. "You see she's very delicate, a bit of a wiggle worm, and very ticklish."

"Oh I see!" Sasporilla laughed.

"Besides," Alana said quietly, "the only other one besides me and Lester who know about Lily being a Microphant is Mrs.Dumbleshire and now you of course. It's all part of the magic you see. People have to believe what they see is real even if it is just a big reflection in a mirror."

"Wow." Sasporilla laughed. "Who knew muggles were so crafty!"

"Devious devils they are!" Alana laughed. "Shall we get started?"

Alana put on a record that played through speakers in their compound. It played a couple of old muggle rock songs she liked and the occasional trumpet from an elephant. Just enough to remind the carnival it was Jumbos bath day and to stay away.

Sasporilla held Lily gently cupped in her palms as Alana scrubbed her hide with the soft bristled tooth brush and gentle soap. Lily trumpeted and chuckled as the bristles tickled her tummy.

There were stories where once the elephant had kicked poor old Mrs.Dumbleshire clear out of the muggle compound, all the way back to the Fortune-tellers Tent! It was no wonder no one wanted to volunteer!

"So I accept that what I saw with the elephant right before my eyes was a reflection. Mirrors and lenses and all that." Sasporilla said. "But I stood right there as the cloth went over her! Landed on her solid form!"

"Did it?" Alana asked playfully. "You know it was a reflection. You know she wasn't there. So how it's not at all possible for that cloth to land on anything solid."

"So did you cast magic?" Sassy asked.

"No!" Alana laughed taking her squeaky-clean microphant and placing her in her pen. "It's ALL muggle trickery I assure you."

"The cloth wasn't there either!" Sassy said.

"Oh no!" Alana shook her head. "The cloth is very real."

"I'm stumped." Sasporilla said. "Muggle magic is way harder than anything taught at Hogwarts."

"Well it sure does take a lot longer to learn." Alana agreed. "The cape has four folds. When flicked open it turns into the cloth. When Lester throws it into the air as if to come down to cover the elephant he pushes a button on the corner of it. That activates small air bladders that push air into tubes that take an elephant form in the cloth. You think it's fallen on the elephant, when it is the form of the elephant. When Lester pushes the button again it releases the air and it falls to the floor over the mirror illusion covering it and refolding the cloth back into the cloak where the illusion has been tucked away, with Lily inside, safe and sound."

"Oh my god." Sasporilla said. "That's so simple yet so bloody complex and amazing."

"Now comes the worst part of the day." Alana said.

"What's that?" Sassy asked.

"The part where we make it look like Jumbo got the best of you."

Most of the carnies had been mulling around, minding their own business, when that all too familiar angry trumpeting, accompanied by the rattling of heavy chains and cage bars echoed through the muggle side of the camp followed by the unmistakable sight of a lone figure being thrown high into the air, over the Ferris wheel and hurtling down towards the fortune-telling tent.

"Aresto momentum." Sassy cast quietly. Landing with a soft thud before anyone could really see.

"Very convincing." Agnes whispered from inside the tent.

"Thanks." Sassy giggled.

Alana ran to Sasporilla's aid and helped the pink haired witch to her feet. "Oh Jesus Sasporilla I'm so sorry! I should have warned you to stay away from Jumbos back right side. She's got a mean kick!"

"My fault." Sassy said. "That's what I get for volunteering."

"Perfect." Alana whispered. "That is exactly what they all wanted to hear you say."

"Well you owe me big time!" Sassy said holding her ribs. "Show me how that bubble booth works."

The Bubble World booth was little more than four padded steel poles pounded down into the ground with about twenty feet of brightly painted board tied between them. Netting made up the highly flexible walls which stretched up about twenty feet towards the open blue sky. The floor was clean white beach sand that Mrs. Dumbleshire always kept clean and pristine! Alana lead Sasporilla up to the front of the booth, reached in and flipped a secret switch on the front panel. A secret door swung open.

"There's a small switch just here." Alana said taking Sassy's hand and placing it on the secret button.

"Ok got it." Sassy said.

"This opens the booth up for the day and opens the bench." Alana turned to the left just inside and opened a wooden bench which unfolded into a rack of wands with large rings on the end and a ticket box for taking event tickets. "So it's as simple as this. Open the booth. Try and get the parents to bring their little darlin's in. Take the ticket. No ticket, no play. Once you take the ticket, hand them a wand."

Alana handed Sasporilla a wand and took one for herself. "Now you have to show them how to use them if they haven't been before. They hold the wand up and say BUBBLEY!"

Sasporilla held out the wand and said "Bubbley"

A small bubble formed in the circle on the wand tip, broke free and floated off.

"No offence Sasporilla," Alana laughed, "but that was the most pathetic bubble I've seen in the bubble pit, EVER! BUBBLEY!!!"

A large bubble formed from the tip of Alana's wand. Light that passed through it formed rainbows that criss-crossed inside it. The bubble danced around them then slowly settled to the sandy floor and burst.

"One word of warning." Alana said. "You can never quite tell just what the bubbles are going to do, so be ready for anything."

"Gotcha!" Sassy laughed.

"So do you think you'll be ok to run everything from here?" Alana asked.

"Just let me do one test run on my own." Sasporilla insisted, closing up the booth then opening it up again, pretending to take a ticket and show how the bubble wand worked.

"Ok I've got it, but I've got one question?" Sasporilla asked.

"Sure what is it?" Alana asked.

"How long does each child get in the booth?" Sassy asked.

"Good question." Alana smiled. "The wands run out of bubbles when they've stayed to long."

"About how long is that? Sasporilla asked.

"Don't know." Alana shrugged. "Don't think it's ever happened."

Alana waved goodbye as Sasporilla locked the booth back up until the carnivals official opening in a few minutes. Sassy made her way to the front gate where she awaited the others assigned to putting up the turnstile.

It wasn't long before Mr.Beauxchamps, followed by the small stout man who spent his days in the turnstile, Jonas and a young man Sasporilla had not met before. He was in his early twenty's. Tall and rather muscular with shaggy ginger hair and freckled tanned skin. Sassy gulped hard when he smiled at her.

"Ah Ms.Bucket." the old Wizard Beauxchamps grinned. "Always best to be a bit early and see the welcoming smiles, than be late and face the frowns."

"Indeed." Sasporilla agreed.

"I believe you have met Jonas?" Mr.Beauxchamps asked.

"Yes sir." Sasporilla said shaking the mans hand. "Once or twice."

"But I don't believe you've met my great nephew?" The old wizard asked.

"No." Sassy smiled, absentmindedly pushing her hair back over her ear. "I don't believe I've had the pleasure."

"Merlaxn Beauxchamps." The young man smiled as he shook her hand.

"My only great nephew and sole heir to the Beauxchamps name and fortune." The old wizard said pulling his wand from his green robes. "When I pass on to the great and show beyond all of this will be his!"

"Hopefully that won't be for a long time great uncle." Merlaxn said.

"Shall we begin." Mr.Beauxchamps said pulling out a scroll and handing it to Sasporilla. "Follow these instructions and follow along with us. You'll do just fine."

The four participants took up positions on the corners of the gateway. With their wands stretched out before them they each drew the four corners of a square along their side of the gateways edge casting "Um diese Wände!"

They then touched their wand tips together in the gates center and cast "Von diesem Punkt!"

Sasporilla tried to read the next instructions as she followed along with the current part of the complex ritual. The four of them had to next walk along the outside of the gateway while still touching wand tips while casting "Umkreisen."

Sasporilla recognised the language of the spell as German. She had no idea what the spell actually said or how it worked. Inter world gateway spells were complex at the very least.

The last part of the spell was to raise their wands high then low and cast "Das tor öffnen wir!"

Like a tornado in the center of the gateway the turnstile formed, a spinning mass of painted wood and metal. Coming to a sudden stop to the applause of the casters.

"I now officially proclaim the Carnival du Mystique open" Ferdinand Beauxchamps laughed most amused. "Jonas you may take your place."

It had been less than a minute that Jonas had taken his place inside the ticket turnstile than Nancy Nightingale came charging through the gate. Head down, bag clutched tightly under her arm, she was as determined as ever to get to the mirror to see her dear departed Severus.

"Ah." Ferdinand Beauxchamps sighed. "I see your gambit bared no fruit, Ms.Bucket."

"Apparently not." Sasporilla sighed. "I wonder what went wrong?"



## Chapter 9

Sasporilla Bucket opened the Bubble World booth. It was very unlikely there would be any customers in the first few minutes, Sassy thought, so she took that time to familiarise herself with every nook and cranny of the booth. Sassy checked on each wand in the rack. Checked the netting that made up the safety walls. She even opened the ticket box to make sure it was empty. After all, she didn't want to turn in any tickets to the office and claim her share of something she didn't work for. Mrs.Dumbleshire was of course entitled to her fair share! This was her booth. Sasporilla was of course, just lending a helping hand. Much to her surprise, there was an envelope inside simply marked 'In Case of Emergency'.

Sasporilla found the booth solidly in ship shape. Just in case of periods of where there were not many people interested in bubbles, Sassy brought with her all of the literature she had on housing options open to her for her stay at that University of Avalon. She had to many choices. The dorms, sororities, rooming houses, apartments, even vacant lots to set up her caravan on. Everything was expensive, and she had limited resources from her scholarship when it came to housing. The worst thing was her dead lines were coming up quickly to send in her applications and conformations. Life as an adult it seemed was less about freedom and more about forms. How she longed for the days when she was little and things were ever so much simpler.

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Layla was a big girl now at four years old. She'd saved up a bit of money finding a sickle here and a knut there, putting it all away for a rainy day or better yet a bright sunny one when there was something fun to do. A day when she could show her mum just how big a girl she was by treating them both to a wonderful day out at the carnival!

Layla and her mother took the flew network South Hampton Castle. Though the muggles walked by the bright red and white ticket booth, it stood right out to Layla who pulled on her mother's hand excitedly pointing.

"There mummy there!" Layla insisted.

"Welcome to the Carnival du Mystique." The little man in the ticket booth said. "How many ladies?"

"Two please." Layla said holding two knuts up and putting them on the counter making the man lean out to look over and down into the girls smiling face.

The man handed down two tickets to Layla. "There you go Miss. You ladies have fun today."

Layla's mom picked her up and carried her through the stiff metal turnstiles. As they passed through, the outside world faded to purple and the Carnival faded in.

The sound of the calliope's flutes, horns and whistles echoed as it played "The Greatest Show!" A song from a muggle movie that Layla just loved to listen to.

"What would you like to do first?" Her mother asked with broad smile. "You're treating. Remember you only have just so much money, so make your choices wisely if you want the fun to last."

Layla opened her small bag and, with the help of her mum, counted up her coins. After the small price of admission Layla still had almost seven galleons. Layla thought long and hard for a moment.

"Mummy." Layla said. "Let's look to see what's fun first."

"A wise decision my girl." Her mother smiled.

There were rides, and games, shows and food but there was one event booth Layla knew she wanted to play at, but would save for the very last.

"I have made my decision mummy!" Layla announced.

"Have you?" Her mother smiled.

"Yes." Layla insisted. "We will both need three ride tickets, as I would like to ride the rides with you."

Layla's mother was touched and put her hand to her heart with a smile. Choking back tears of joy. "You make me so very happy my big girl. I do believe the ticket booth offers a deal, three tickets for the price of two. Children's tickets are half price. So that would be three galleons. That's almost half of what you have! You'll have much more left, if you go on rides without me."

"But then you won't have any fun." Layla said. "And I would be lonely on the rides. No, better to spend that bit extra I think!"

The first ride Layla chose was ALADIN'S CAROUSEL. Rather than horses that went up and down on a silly pole, this carousel had magic carpets that went up and down, in and out and some times right over top of the carousel itself! Layla sat comfortably and securely in her mother's lap, wrapped in her loving arms as they flew on the wonderful magical adventure the carousel presented.

The next ride was the spinning magic cauldron ride. Layla and her mother climbed inside the big iron pot and took their seats holding tight to the handle that fell inside rather than out. The cauldrons spun with a large spinning outer plate. Layla laughed with her mum as they went around. Then, her mother grabbed the center of the cauldron handle and the large pot began to spin on its own. Layla screamed with delight as she grabbed her mum tightly. They spun and they spun until Layla thought they would spin right off the ride. Then the spinning slowed and the cauldron came to a halt. Layla and her mum laughed wildly as they waddled and staggered away their heads not yet ready to stop the spin.

There were several rides that Layla was not yet big enough to ride on, as much as she wanted to, her mum had to say no as it was for her own safety. There was a ride however on the far side of the children's midway she wanted to try, but something else caught Layla's eye first.

"Look mummy," Layla pointed towards a small booth with a big cup on top filled with light icy goodness, "Icicy Butterbeer!"

"Oh my yes." Layla's mother smiled.

"We'll get one." Layla insisted. "With two straws, too share!"

"That sounds nice." Her mom smiled.

The frozen butterbeer slush was sweet and cold and everything wonderful about a day at the carnival. Layla and her mum both tried to drink up as much as they could before the other got more. They laughed as they slurped and shoved at each other playfully. The only regret was that momentary cold head pain both got after they finished, from drinking just a bit to fast.

The Magic Caterpillar was a small simple round track ride with tiny hills about as high as the livingroom couch. Layla and her mum climbed into to the caterpillar car and snuggled in together as the safety bar locked down in front of them.

The car rolled forward and began to build up a bit of speed as it rolled up and over the low rolling hills. Layla and her mum hung on to the safety bar tight but would, occasionally, throw their hands into the air as they went over a hill yelling "Weeeee!"

The caterpillar car came around a bend in the track tipping just a bit to the left, pushing Layla tightly against her mother as they went into a dark tunnel.

"Oh mummy!" Layla said holding her mother tight as the dark gave way to bright rainbow lights all around them. As the caterpillar car left the tunnel Layla realized it had changed to a butterfly!

The butterfly car leapt from the track and with a mighty flap of its large new wings took off into the skies above the carnival. Layla and her mum squealed with delight as the butterfly swooped and fluttered around the rides and games. It buzzed just above the heads of the crowd. The butterfly circled the carnival then fluttered down back onto the track where they started, turned back into a caterpillar car and tolled to a stop.

"Oh what fun that was mummy!" Layla laughed.

"Yes it was." Her mother agreed. "I believe this is just about the most fun I've ever had at a carnival."

"Me too." Layla smiled looking up at her mother, taking her hand. "I think it's just about time for lunch."

"Are you hungry Layla?" Her mother asked. "What would you like to eat?"

"Hot Dogs!" Layla smiled.

"At a carnival?" Her mother asked with a playful look of concern. "Do you think we can find HOT DOGS here?"

"Mummy! Really?" Layla said putting her hands on her hips in playful irritation.

As it turns out, hot dogs were rather easy to find at just about every food booth. Hot dogs in buns, on sticks, deep fried in batter on a stick, served chopped up in beans, small hot dogs, big hot dogs, foot long hot dogs even hot dogs a full meter long!

For four sickles and three knutts Layla and her mum got two hot dogs, a packet of salty crisps and two small fizzy burpey pops to drink. They had a wonderful lunch at a small picnic table. Giggling about funny things and telling





"Thank you Miss Pinky Bubbles." Layla said handing the young witch the now spent wand. "I had the most wonderful time!"

"You're very welcome." The pink haired witch said smiling.

"I see your looking at housing for Avalon University." Layla's mom said to the young witch. "The best affordable deal is the dorms. What are you taking?"

"Wand design." The pink haired witch said.

"Ah you'll been in the arts then." Layla's mom laughed. "My friend Dina is head of arts and design there. You'll have one or two courses with her. She's amazing. She'll change the way you see shape, form, colour and chocolate frogs."

"Come on mummy!" Layla said anxious to get to her very last target.

"Linz." The woman smiled.

"Sasporilla Bucket." The pink haired witch said shaking the young mother's hand. "Thanks for the tips."

Layla pulled her mum to a booth not far from the front gate where the calliope still played joyfully. The booth was bright white and had a big swirly rainbow coloured ice cream atop it.

"This is the very last thing I want to do today mummy." Layla smiled.

"Ice cream?" Her mother said surprised. "After all that butter beer slush, hot dog, crisps, and fizzy pop, aren't you full?"

"No." Layla said with a quiet burp. "I just want a small one. We can share it!"

Those big wide eyes pleaded in that way that Layla knew her mum just couldn't say no too.

"Ok!" Layla's mum gave in with a sigh. "Just one! A small!"

"Ok." Layla said. "I do it by myself!"

Layla ran over to the ice cream booth as her mum sat at a near by table and admired her big girl. She was growing up so fast. She saw Layla reach up to put her money on the counter. Not many mothers can say their children treated them to a full day put at the carnival.

Layla's mothers eyes went wide when Layla turned with an Ice cream that stood nearly three feet high! The rainbow ice colours of the ice cream shifted and changed as it shifted and jiggled.

"You little monkey!" Layla's mother gasped. "I said a SMALL ice cream!"

"Well I thought about it," Layla explained, "today is our special day and a small ice cream isn't very special is it?"

"No I guess it is not!" Layla's mum smiled at her daughter's naughty attempt at logic.

"And we don't have to eat it all." Layla said. "Though as Daddy says, not to finish it would be a waste of money."

"Is that what daddy says?" Her mother said.

"Oh yes mummy." Layla said very seriously but with that touch of cuteness. "You say it often too mummy!"

"Yes I do." Her mother said the smile fading from her face. "I also said a small ice cream. Monkey!"

"Mad?" Layla pouted a bit.

"No." Her mother smiled. "You bought it with your money. This is a day of treats. We'll have a go at it."

The best part of magical ice cream is that it neither melted easily nor fell over to hit the ground easily. Layla and her mum each took a lick of the ice cream. It was smooth and creamy.

"Mmmmmm Chocolate." They both said and laughed and had another lick.

"Mmmmmmm blue berry." Laylas mum said.

"Mmmmmmm vanilla." Layla said.

Mother and daughter looked at each other curiously and took another lick.

"Strawberry." Layla laughed.

"Butterbeer!" Laylas mum laughed.

The rainbow ice cream didn't just shift its colours but it changed its flavours with every lick. Besides all of the standard flavours, they found such surprises as pistachio, bog nut, wozzen berries, Beef gravy, sweet spaghetti, yarmelon, and dog fruit!!!

No matter how hard they tried, Layla and her mum just couldn't get much farther than about the first foot of ice cream. They were just so full they thought they would bust.

"I full mummy." Layla said.

"Me too." Her mum smiled taking her daughters hand as they walked away putting the rest of the ice cream in the bin.

"Carry me mummy." Layla said.

"You carry me!" Her mum said.

Layla and her mum laughed all the way home. Layla could hardly wait to tell her daddy about the wondrous day her mum and her had at the Carnival du Mystique!



## **Chapter 10**

It was a very busy day at the Bubble World booth. There had been many children, though none with the talents of the first little one of the day. Sasporilla picked raked the sandy floor, trying to get it nice and even, finding the odd dropped token, ticket and toy.

The rake passed effortlessly through the sand until it came to a spot on the far side of the booth. The rake seemed to get caught on something in the sand. Sassy pulled on the rake but the metal tines were firmly wedged in something.

Sasporilla got down on her hands and knees and wiped some of the sand away from the rake head which had slipped into a space between a floor board and a hatch? A hatch in the floor of a booth?

"Hello?" A man's voice called out.

Sasporilla freed the rake, covered the hatch with sand and stood up. It was Alana's cousin Lester, the great Rudolfo!

"Hello." Sassy smiled. "Can I interest you in the wondrous world of bubbles?"

"No." Lester laughed politely. "I'm Alana's cousin Lester."

"Yes I know." Sassy smiled. "The great Rudolfo."

"Not so loud!" The young man cringed. "Must maintain the illusions! I just thought I'd come and lend a hand in closing up the booth. You go cash out, I'll clean up and shutter the booth. Least I can do after you helped out with Jumbo."

"Well thank you kind sir." Sasporilla smiled. "You don't have an Irish accent like Alana. That's a Liverpool accent. You're from the north."

"Yes." Lester said. "Our mom's are sisters from Dublin. Alana's mom married an Irish man. My mother ran off with a boy from London but they settled in Liverpool. Not a very glamorous story but that's us. Just poor hard working families from Ireland and Liverpool trying to get by, day by day."

"Nothing to be ashamed of!" Sassy smiled.

"But one always hopes for better." Lester said with a bit of scowl.

"I guess." Sasporilla agreed politely.

"You best get to the office before the rush." Lester smiled.

Sassy handed Lester the rake collected up the event tickets from the box and headed off for the carnival office.

Lester watched the pink hared witch walk out of sight. He wondered if she found the hatch and just how smart she was?

Sasporilla was the first to arrive at the carnival office window. No one was there. Sasporilla reached up and pulled the rope, which hung slackly by the sign which read "PULL FOR CARNIVAL BUSINESS". A bell rang inside the caravan. A small round older woman with thinning blue white hair and coke bottle thick glasses waddled into the office and struggled with much effort onto the short stool.

"Asendio!" She wheezed as the stool spun up into position at the counter. "What can I do for you love?"

"I have the tickets to turn in for the bubble world booth." Sasporilla smiled sliding them towards the bars.

The old woman's small hand grabbed the tickets counted them out, stamped each one, entered it into an ancient adding machine stapled them together counted out two parcels of coins and placed them in envelopes and pushed one forward to Sasporilla with a receipt and a quill.

"This is your cut dear," the old woman said, "thank you for assistance sign here!"

"My goodness you're very efficient." Sasporilla said signing. "Mrs???"

"Ms.Copelinzki" the old woman said. "Never married dear. To busy running the business of this show for sixty-seven years! Any other business?"

"Oh yes." Sasporilla said pulling two dozen wand repair chits from her bag. "Been meaning to turn these in."

"I was wondering when we'd see some of these start to come in." Ms.Copelinzki smiled. "You're the wand technician. I must stop by and see you. My wand has not seen professional care in a decade or more."

"Please do." Sasporilla smiled. "Or if you're to busy with office work I can bring my travel kit and stop by the office. I'll make a house call, just for you."

"I certainly would appreciate that my dear." Ms.Copelinzki said as her hands sorted, stamped and counted out coins in a flash. "There you are Fifty four galleons." Ms.Copelinzki smiled. "Don't spend it all in one spot."

"Not really doing this for the money truth be told." Sassy said putting the coins away in her bag. "It's more about the experience with wands and with people. I want to make wands. Hopefully have my own shop one day."

"That's a solid dream young lady." The carnival clerk said proud of the pink haired witch. "What kind of school and experience do you plan to have?"

"I apprenticed for a short time under Mr.Olivander." Sasporilla said enthusiastically. "I learned so much. I learned a lot in Hogwarts and I'm going Avalon University in the fall."

"That's an impressive start young lady." Ms.Copelinzki said. "I have a good feeling about your future."

"Perhaps you could go into fortune telling!" Sasporilla laughed.

"Oh no." Ms.Copelinzki laughed heartily, her round belly shaking and jiggling. "That's Miss Mooreheads area." Carnies started to line up in behind Sassy. The line grew fast and people were impatient to cash in.

"Hey what's the hold up?" Someone yelled from the back of the line.

"I think I better move along." Sasporilla said.

"Natives are getting restless." Ms.Copelinzki agreed. "Stop by anytime love."

Sasporilla couldn't help but think over her choices for housing at university. It was an important choice to make and possibly a huge financial one. It really came down to privacy over affordability. She was guaranteed a shared dorm room with a common room adjoining four other dorm rooms, as a free part of her scholarship to Avalon University. A private dorm room upgrade would be one hundred galleons more a month but that also came with a broom landing balcony and private owlry. Over three years that's three thousand galleons just for the convenience of a bit of privacy and freedom.

"It's not like I don't have the money." Sasporilla told herself. "There's a hundred times that in the bank from all the horrible things that happened. Then with the house sale on top of that? What are you saving it all for Sasporilla??? Spend a bit on yourself to give yourself a bit of a life girl!"

"I'd listen to her if I were you." The voice of Merlaxn Beauxchamps said stepping out of the shadows. "Sounds like she knows what she's talking about!"

"Oh!" Sasporilla shouted at the sudden appearance of the muscular, handsome young ginger. "Merlaxn, you startled me!"

"I'm sorry!" Merlaxn apologized. "It wasn't my intention to frighten you."

"Not frightened," Sasporilla said laughing putting her hand on her racing heart, "just startled."

"I heard you talking to yourself and thought I'd add my two cents to the conversation so people didn't think you were..." Merlaxn was hesitant to finish the statement.

"Think I was what?" Sassy asked.

"Nuts!" Merlaxn laughed. "Batty. Loony. Off your nut for walking around the carnival after closing yattering away to yourself like you were chatting to an old friend."

Sasporilla blushed. "I guess one could come off as a bit of a nutter talking to oneself."

"One could." Merlaxn laughed. "But I don't think you are. I get it. When you have a tough decision to make and your on your own, sometimes you just have to hear the arguments aloud to make your decision."

"That is just about the gist of it yes." Sasporilla said starting to walk away more than just a bit embarrassed.

"Wait up," Merlaxn said, "I'll walk you back to your caravan."

"You don't have to." Sassy said.

"No I don't," the handsome young man smiled taking Sasporilla's hand in his, "but I want to. If you don't mind." Sasporilla was shocked at just how forward and familiar the young man was being with her.

"I thought it was pretty cool of you to help out with the elephant and the bubble booth." Merlaxn smiled.

"It was no trouble." Sassy said. "Just trying to do my part."

"Nothing unusual gave you any trouble?" Merlauxn asked.

"No." Sasporilla asked curiously. "Well there was that one thing."

"What?" Merlauxn asked concerned.

"A little girl who cast this huge bubble that carried her and her mother away." Sassy laughed. "I had to use the emergency blow gun!"

"Oh!" Merlauxn laughed. "That happens occasionally. You get used to it. So you're going to be a wand maker like Mr.Olivander!"

"Ya." Sassy smiled politely not distracted from his ham fisted changing of the subject. "I love wands. Everything about them. I see them as they're designed now and feel they can be so much more. So much better! I have big Ideas and big plans, but I need the education to see if my ideas can be joined together to work."

"Wow." The ginger boy smiled. "Such passion!"

"How about you Merlauxn?" Sasporilla asked.

"My future is set in stone." He smiled hesitantly with a hint of distant sadness. "When my uncle dies I'll inherit the Carnival du Mystique and be the Beauxchamps in charge! The grand showman of the show of shows. Here in the Carnival, for the rest of my life."

"You sound less than excited." Sasporilla said a bit concerned.

"Not at all." Merlauxn said regaining composure and putting on a wide fake smile. "I'm grateful for the opportunities life has given me."

"Oh." Sassy said. "I see."

"Did you know that my uncle and Garrek Olivander were friends in Hogwarts?" Merlauxn asked.

"No!" Sassy smiled. "I didn't know that!"

"They were!" Merlauxn smiled. "They were the best of friends from the day they were sorted into Ravenclaw. They were room mates and did all their classes together. From some of uncles stories, they got into no end of trouble together."

"Somehow I can't imagine either your uncle or Mr.Olivander as trouble makers." Sassy smiled.

"Well." Merlauxn smiled. "Everyone grows up and gets responsible, don't they?"

"I suppose we do." Sassy said not wanting to reveal much about her wild trouble making moments. "How often do they get together these days?"

"Oh!" Merlauxn shook his head. "No, they haven't spoken for decades."

"Why?" Sasporilla gasped shocked and dismayed.

"A girl." Merlauxn sighed. "Pandoria Drumund to be precise. You see Pandoria was a very beautiful young witch and caught the attentions of both my uncle and Garrek Olivander. There was a fight."

"A duel." Sasporilla said. "I fixed the cracks in your uncles wand and he told me a bit of the story."

"Yes a duel with his best friend Garrek Olivander! Did he tell you he won the duel?" Merlauxn asked.

"Yes." Sassy nodded. "He won the duel but still lost the girl. In the end it is always still the woman's decision who she goes with."

"It was a financial decision." Merlauxn said sharply. "She went where the money was."

"That's a very cynical out look." Sasporilla said. "But in all truth I don't know all the facts. There would be more financial security in the Olivander family than a traveling carnival."

"You're all the same." Merlauxn sneered as he let go of Sasporilla's hand, depositing the young pink haired witch at her door. "There you are young lady. Safely home."

With out as much as a by your leave Merlauxn Beauxchamps grabbed Sasporilla Bucket by the waist and pressed his lips against hers in a passionate good night kiss. One that Sasporilla did not enjoy, nor did she appreciate. As he pulled away he smiled. Though his smile wasn't kind. It was aggressive and conquering. "See ya around Sasporilla Bucket."

There was a flash and a loud bang on the west side of the Carnival grounds. People in line at the show caravan office saw a fire ball fly through the sky and crash into the ground near by. A comical, pathetic figure rolled in the dirt putting out the flames. When he stood up Merlauxn Beauxchamps ginger hair stood straight up singed. His skin was smoked and his clothes full of burn holes. He wildly patted out stray flames that plagued areas of clothing until they were all out much to the amusement of the carnies in line.

Angry he turned to the west and yelled. "See if I ever try and kiss you again Sasporilla Bucket!"

## Chapter 11

Sasporilla Bucket had to admit that Bombarda Inframari may have been a tad harsh of reaction to a stolen kiss but the aggressive nature of the incident was all brought to light at the morning meeting.

"So you're saying you did nothing to encourage, nor invite this action?" Mr.Beauxchamps asked.

"No." Sasporilla insisted.

"Ah you bloody loved it." Merlauxn smirked.

"I'll show you assign how much I loved you..." Sassy said drawing her wand.

The old wizard held out his hand and gently pushed down on Sasporilla's wand as he shook his head. With his other hand he swatted his nephew in the back of the head.

"Oy." Merlauxn protested.

"You my dear nephew need to learn how to treat a young lady properly." Mr.Beauxchamps began. "This incident is of course most unfortunate and can not go without fine. Ms.Bucket. You will be fined five galleons for using a spell in an aggressive manner on an unarmed member of the company with good reason. Please pay at the office within twenty four hours."

"Yes sir." Sasporilla sighed. "I need to pay Ms.Copelinzki a visit any way."

"Merlauxn." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled. "You will be fined ten galleons for insulting a young lady in the company and another five for taking unwanted liberties!"

"That's rubbish!" Merlauxn protested. "I took her hand and walked her home. She owed me a kiss. She was lucky that's all I tried to take. I won't pay your stupid fine."

"Are you saying my twenty five galleon fine is unfair?" Mr.Beauxchamps growled.

"It's fifteen by my maths old man." Merlauxn smiled.

"Keep it up you ungrateful pup and it will be fifty." The old wizard spat.

"Fine." Merlauxn said. "I'll pay the twenty-five galleon fine."

"Splendid!" Mr.Beauxchamps smiled as his bratty nephew stomped away. "I'd like to welcome back Mrs.Dumbledore who is feeling much better and ready to resume running her Bubble world booth."

Sasporilla wove through the crowd up beside the older stout matronly Mrs.Dumbledore.

"Well hello Ms.Bucket." Mrs.Dumbledore smiled. "I am happy you came over. I wanted to thank you for helping out at my booth. You did a very good job and an honest one, unlike most."

"Thank you Mrs.Dumbledore." Sassy smiled humbly. "I'm not sure I understand though? The others?"

"Most carnies try to run some side scam or skim off the top of the receipts." The old woman sighed. "You just honestly did the job and handed them over. You're a rare one here Ms.Bucket, believe me."

"Thank you Mrs." Sassy smiled. "I was happy to help out. I'm just happy you're feeling better."

"Yes well..." Mrs.Dumbledore turned her eyes away. "I'm afraid I've been under the weather quite a bit lately."

"Is there anything that can be done to help?" Sassy asked as Mr.Beauxchamps dismissed the meeting.

"Not really." Mrs.Dumbledore said walking away, Sasporilla walking beside her. "You see just between you and me, and everyone else around here that has their nose in my business, I like the drink just a bit to much. I try to stay away from it. I really do, but these days it seems to find me!"

"How do you mean?" Sasporilla enquired.

"I have a secret admirer." Mrs.Dumbledore blushed. "In some cities, after we set up, I find a lovely note and a rose attached to a case of wine left just outside my caravan door."

"Oh my." Sassy gasped.

"Indeed." Mrs.Dumbledore giggled. "The note writer professes his undying love for me but... the wine."

"The wine does you no good." Sassy sad sadly.

"No." Mrs.Dumbledore shook her head. "I take it inside and just can't help but drink it. If I can't get my life under control soon enough Mr.Beauxchamps will be forced to start fining me then deal with my behavior if I can't run my booth."

"Forgive my bluntness Mrs.Dumbledore but does that sound like the kind of position a person who loves you would put you in?" Sasporilla asked.

The old woman stopped a looked at the young witch for a moment. Sasporilla didn't want to shatter her illusions but she suspected someone may be trying to hurt the old woman. She just didn't know why?

"No my dear," Mrs.Dumbledore stiffened, "it most certainly does not. I feel like an old fool."

"No Mrs." Sassy said hugging the old woman as tears welled in her eyes. "You're a woman, with hopes and needs. Someone made you feel wanted, needed. Took advantage of a problem you have. One we can get you help for if you want help."

"Thank you my dear." Mrs.Dumbledore said. "Your words are of great comfort."

Sasporilla walked Mrs.Dumbledore back to her caravan. Sassy was careful to pay attention to the eyes that watched them. Everyone was curious but looked away, attempting not to appear as nosey as they were. Oddly enough Merlauxn and Lester turned up in three different locations just hanging out talking, but their eyes never leaving the two women.

"Mrs.Dumbledore I meant to ask you about a wooden hatch I found in the booth?" Sassy asked.

"Ah yes." Mrs.Dumbledore nodded. "That is there from the war dear."

"The war?" Sassy asked confused. "The wizarding war?"

"World War two dear." Mrs.Dumbledore laughed. "You see, back in the day before we had our own pocket world to travel in, we traveled and set up the show in the muggle world. During the war, there were horrible bombings! Muggles built underground places to escape down into. We helped to build some of them. Long large tunnel systems to help hold and protect hundreds, sometimes thousands of muggles. The hatch opened into those old tunnels."

"Oh I see." Sasporilla said. "So the hatch no longer functions."

"Oh no!" Mrs.Dumbledore smiled. "Some places have built over and under the tunnels and in those places the hatch doesn't work. In some places we never had tunnels connected so once again, nothing. However in most spots, like in old Piccadilly Circus the hatch still connects to the old tunnels. For safety reasons more than any other really. I imagine they're dirty, dusty and full of old cob webs. Have always wondered what they're like. No one ever goes down there."

"I would imagine no one would ever have reason to." Sasporilla said.

"No." Mrs.Dumbledore laughed. "You have cheered me up young lady. Stop by any time for tea."

"I will indeed Mrs.Dumbledore" Sasporilla smiled and waved as she walked off to take care of her morning chores. Sasporilla wasn't very hungry. A quick slice of toast and half an apple with a half-cup of reheated tea from yesterday's breakfast would suffice. A quick rummage through her small refrigerator found a couple of left-overs and a juice box which she stuffed into her bag along with her Wand care travel kit.

Sassy's first stop was the house of mirrors. Nancy Nightingale, the corpulent raven haired beauty, infatuated with the image of Severus Snape she found in the sibling mirror of the mirror of Arriset, was already awake and sat before the mirror smiling at the images that revealed themselves to her.

"Hello Nancy." Sasporilla said digging in her bag pulling out a slice of cold pizza wrapped in foil and a box of orange juice. "I thought you may be hungry so I brought you this."

"How thoughtful." Nancy said taking the food with an amused smile. "Pizza and orange juice? Two of my favourite things!"

"Do you mind if I stay and talk to you a while?" Sasporilla asked.

"If you like." Nancy said not really caring one way or the other but not wanting to insult the young witch who brought her breakfast.

"To be honest I was surprised to see you walk through the gates when we opened." Sasporilla said.

"I don't why?" Nancy said taking a bite of pizza.

"I thought..." Sassy hesitated, trepidacious at letting on just how much she knew. "...perhaps something more real would have captured your attentions?"

"There is nothing more real than my love for my Severus." Nancy Nightingale said touching the cold glass of the mirror. "What did you think could ever lure me from him?"

"What about Narwell?" Sasporilla asked.

"That gigantic oaf?" Nancy laughed. "What do you know of him? Did you know he has been the one taking me to safety after your people eject me from the carnival every week?"

"Yes." Sasporilla nodded.

"The great ox professed his undying love for me last week and kissed me!" Nancy said incensed. "The unmitigated gaul. As if I could ever love a boy such as him over a man such as Severus Snape!"

"Snape is Dead!" Sasporilla said. "Narwell is alive! He loves you. YOU! He is flesh and blood not a mirror!"

"You're just like all the others." Nancy said jumping to her feet drawing her wand and pointing it at Sasporilla.

"You just didn't understand. Please leave... and thank you for the breakfast."

Sasporilla sighed and left the house of mirrors. She resigned herself that she had lost this battle had not given up the war. There must be some way to get through to Nancy Nightingale that there is a real world of love and life around her, that she is missing by looking into that stupid mirror.

Sasporilla wound her way through the midway. The first smell of deep fried foods was wafting through the early morning air as the food booths offered morning fry ups for hungry carnies willing to pay for breakfast. Sassy passed the rides and games until she came upon the large show caravan. The young pink haired witch couldn't get over the ornate faded paint that covered every square inch of the Beauxchampion behemoth. If you looked hard enough you could still see clowns and dragons and wand wielding wizards casting all sorts of magical delights. It must have been quite a glorious sight in its day.

Sassy walked around back to the barred office window. Mr.Beauxchamps sat patiently as Paxti Minxx, the generally disinterested young blonde woman, her hair dyed blue and red tied in pony tails on either side of her head, from the ride ticket booth counted out her coins on the counter.

"Fortythree, forty four, forty five." She said blowing a bubble and cracking it loudly. "Yes it's all there."

"Did you imagine for a moment that I would short change you?" Mr.Beauxchamps asked.

"Trust no one but yourself in the carnival." The young woman said. "You taught me that."

"Yes." Mr.Beauxchamps chuckled. "Sad but wise words Miss Minxx. Good day."

"Mr.B." the young woman said scooping up her galleons and putting them into a small velvet coin bag, which she slipped into her purse.

Sasporilla approached the carnival office window. Mr.Beauxchamps smiled politely.

"Ms.Bucket! Come to pay your fine?"

"Yes." Sasporilla said politely reaching into her bag and placing five galleons on the counter. "Worth every penny."

"I regret having to doll out the fine but discipline must be maintained equally and without favouritism." Mr.Beauxchamps said.

"You don't need to explain your decisions to me sir." Sasporilla said. "All though I do appreciate it and I do understand. My reaction was... overly defensive?"

"A good description." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled. "Frankly I do not know what gets in that boys head some times. One moment he seems ok, then he's very worked up. Like someone has put 'ideas' in his head."

"That was he was like that night." Sassy frowned. Started off nice then he got aggressive and almost insulting."

"I just don't know what's getting in to him these days." Mr.Beauxchamps said shaking his head.

"Is Ms.Copelinzki about?" Sasporilla asked. "I promised her I'd stop by to work on her wand."

"Oh yes, of course!" Mr.Beauxchamps said. "Step around to the side door and ring the bell three times. She will answer."

"Thank you sir." Sassy waved as she ran around the side of the caravan to the door. A bell hung on a coiled spring with a long chain. Sasporilla pulled the chain three times, ringing the bell. Little foot steps could be heard coming down a long set of stairs, then across a short carpeted hall. Sassy waited patiently as the little feet got closer thumping up and down steps. Opening and closing doors until finally the door opened before her revealing old Ms.Copelinzki dressed in red and gold dressing robe, her thin whitish blue hair still in curlers.

"Ms.Bucket! What a pleasant surprise!" Ms.Copelinzki said. "What brings you here this fine morning?"

"I promised you a house call?" Sasporilla said surprised the old woman didn't seem to remember the conversation they had only hours before. "For your wand?"

"Oh yes!" Ms.Copelinzki smiled. "Come in! Please come in!"

"Thank you." Sasporilla said stepping into the caravan.

A dusty stuffed mule wearing a top hat stood in the carpeted hall. Sassy assumed it was the fabled Edgar who use to haul the show caravan between towns back in the day. Several clocks kept different times accurately. Sasporilla looked at years of vintage carnival prizes which sat on shelves lining the hall.

"That is Mr.Beauxchamps personal collection

" Ms.Copelinzki smiled proudly. "Not only has he collected them from their various booths, he has taken pride in actually WINNING each one!"

"Really?" Sasporilla asked surprised. "That's a very impressive feat."

"I was just about to start on the paperwork for our next venue." Ms.Copelinzki smiled. "You can join me in the office."

Sassy followed Ms.Copelinzki up one hallway and down the next. Through doorways and up and down staircases. She loved the size of some magical homes. Finally they reached the office. A large mahogany desk sat amongst heaping piles of journals and ledgers. Filling cabinets lined the walls with boxes labeled old tickets, new tickets, used tickets, unused tickets piled on top.

Ms.Copelinzki disappeared into a cupboard and came out with her hair done, her robes changed and her best hat on for the day. The old witch carried a file and placed it on the desk then climbed up onto the stool.

"I have a lot of permits to fill out for the next venue that are getting timely you see." Ms.Copelinzki said. "The Carnival du Mystique will be joining up with several other shows in one large festival. It will be quite grand! But a lot more paper work!"

"Speaking of paper work Ms.Copelinzki I wondered if I might use an owl to send off my University paper work?" Sasporilla asked.

"Company owls are for company business but can be rented at standard rates." Ms.Copelinzki said dryly. "Where are your documents going?"

"University of Avalon." Sasporilla said stiffly.

Ms.Copelinzki pursed her lips and whistled, then tuned to the adding machine. She pressed a bunch of keys and pulled the lever five maybe six times causing the old paper tape to fly up and out.

"Surprisingly not as much as you might think. Six galleons three sickles." Ms.Copelinzki held out her bony hand as Sasporilla handed over the documents and the coins. Ms.Copelinzki quickly drew up an official receipt whistled for a strong black owl named Nigel who took the rolled papers and flew off. "Nigel will get them there for you by early afternoon. He knows all the interdimensional gateways, short cuts and fast tracks. He's never let us down."

"Thank you." Sassy smiled. "It's my future he carries. My papers for all my choices for classes and housing at university."

"Please take a seat Ms.Bucket." Ms.Copelinzki said drawing her wand and shifting a chair over for the young witch to sit in on the other side of the desk. Sasporilla placed her travel wand maintenance kit on the desk and opened it.

"That's a handy little kit to have." Ms.Copelinzki smiled.

"It was a gift." Sasporilla said taking up the old witches wand. "From Mr.Olivander, the summer I interned with him in his shop. sequoia nine and three quarters inches with rose wood inlay and three ruby garnets inset in the handle. Zouwu hair core! How unusual! And in desperate need of tuning!"

"You are a lucky young lady to have interned with Garrik Olivander." Ms.Copelinzki said.

"I learned a lot in a very short time." Sasporilla said setting up her portable tuning table. "But of course I've also learned as much and more since from teachers at Hogwarts, Drurlily and other Wand makers."

Sasporilla placed the wand in the tuning cradle and had Ms.Copelinzki strike the harmonics fork and touch it lightly to the wands handle. Sasporilla adjusted the core until its resonance was back in tune with wand and its witch, as it once was.

"That's perfect." Sassy smiled. "Now just a few cracks to fill in and smooth out and a good polish and your wand will be as good as new!"

"And you're doing this entire service for us for just two galleons a wand?" Ms.Copelinzki asked amazed.

"Yes mam." Sasporilla smiled debating between Orange oil and Linseed.

"I think you've undercut yourself my dear." Ms.Copelinzki chuckled. "Mr.Olivander should have taught you a better business sense."

"Yes well he did charge five galleons for a similar service." Sasporilla sighed. "But then he was Garrek Olivander. People would pay it to have their wand serviced by such a trusted name! Who would pay that to have it done by me?"

"Yes I see your point." Ms.Copelinzki as she watched the young witch polish and care for her wand like she had seen no other ever do so before.

"There." Sasporilla smiled handing the old witch back her wand. "Good as new!"

"Remarkable!" Ms.Copelinzki. "Your work is out standing! My wand hasn't looked this good since the day I bought it from Olivander more than fifty years ago. I would gladly pay five galleons to have you care for my wand



Ms.Bucket! I'm very sure word of mouth would travel very fast about your talents. You should be in a shop some place!"

"Yes well I tried to get a summer placement in Olivander's now that it's reopened," Sasporilla sighed, "but as Mr.Olivander has been placed in Madame Forwinkles Home For Bewildered and Befuddled Wizard and Witches in Dover by his family I'm afraid they simply weren't interested in accepting my CV."

"They've done what to Garrek?" Mr.Beauxchamps voice boomed as he stormed into the office. "Tell me everything you know. Please, Ms.Bucket, I beg of you."



## Chapter 12

The full moon couldn't break through the thick cloud cover above the black of the English channel and the dark night cliffs of Dover. Madame Forwinkles Home For Bewildered and Befuddled Wizard and Witches, a grand Victorian manor sat silent in the wee hours as Garrek Olivander's eyes fluttered open around three a.m.

Something twitched at his senses. Called to him from beyond. Garrek Olivander reached for glasses, then he fumbled for his wand. Then he realized that they had taken his wand. The staff took everyone's wand here. He was in the home.

Olivander's fingers found his glasses and placed them before his eyes. The old wizard peered into the dark corners of the room but saw no anomalies. No one was there. Nothing moved.

Garrek Olivander slowly moved the covers aside and lowered his feet to the chilly wooden floor. He shuffled for his slippers not daring to take his eyes off the room. Something 'WAS' here, he could feel it, down to his bones.

"Garrek." A voice touched his mind giving him a start.

"Who's there?" Mr.Olivander whispered not wanting to alert the staff. Not yet.

With a slow deliberate step back Garrek Olivander bumped the night stands outer front left leg and a very rough, make shift wand fell from just under the night tables bottom. Olivander turned and grabbed the wand before it hit the floor with surprising reflexes for a man of his age. Hazel wood 12 1/2" with a pixie spine core. Make shift at best but the best he could do with out his tools.

"You can take the wand out of a wand makers hand." Garrek Olivander chuckled to himself. "But you can't keep him from making a new one!"

"Lumos!" He cast flooding the room with light. It was empty.

"Outside, old friend." The voice said.

"Knox." Olivander cast the room back into darkness as he shuffled to the window.

Garrek's old eyes scanned the inky darkness for signs of life. Two forms emerged from the bushes that swayed in the nights breeze.

"Who?" Garrek asked as a spark of recognition passed his tired old eyes. "YOU!"

"Yes old friend." Ferdinand Beauxchamps sighed. "It is me. I was hoping you no longer harbored any of the resentments of youth. In our starlight years, we can hardly afford to waste time and energy on petty grievances. Do you not agree, Garrek?"

"Yes Ferdinand, you're right." Mr.Olivander sighed. "Damn it you always were. Who is that with you?"

"This is Miss Sasporilla Bucket." Mr.Beauxchamps said.

"Miss Bucket!" Mr.Olivander perked up. "My how you've grown! Still interested in becoming a wand maker?"

"Yes sir." Sasporilla smiled.

"It is because of Miss Bucket that I learned of your predicament Garrek. I have a proposition for you old friend." Ferdinand Beauxchamps smiled devilishly. "It will involve a bit of adventure, a bit of law breaking, a bit of self sacrifice and a bit more patience on your part but it will lead to your ultimate liberation from this... geriatric gulag."

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Sasporilla Bucket held tight to the robes of Ferdinand Beauxchamps as they apparated to the new location of the Carnival du Mystique. It was still very early and the carnival was very dark. Too dark really.

"You're wondering why it is so dark Miss Bucket, yes?" Mr.Beauxchamps mused whimsically.

"Yes sir." Sasporilla said looking around. "It's almost as if the Carnival is shrouded in darkness?"

"Fifty points to Hufflepuff." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled. "You see we have indeed arrived on site but do not officially join the festival for a full day yet. So we remain under this magical 'shroud' to block us from view until we are open. This will give everyone a days rest, maintenance, and or resupply if necessary."

"I understand sir." Sassy smiled. "I may take advantage of a resupply myself."

"Good Idea." Mr.Beauxchamps agreed, "Though if I may suggest, you should take someone with you when you go into town

The streets here are not to be traveled lightly."

"I'll find someone who knows the town then." Sasporilla said. "Where are we again?"

"Dingle! This is the great port town of Dingle." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled. "All the muggles see is the small port of Dingle Ireland but I assure you it so much, much more!"

Sasporilla returned to her caravan and curled up on the couch for a quick kip around four am. She dreamed of her mum sitting on the couch, playing guitar, in their apartment over the pub in Avonshire. They sang songs as Ms.Daisy made Cocoa for them in big mugs. They tickled each other and laughed until they heard dad coming up the steps. The door burst open and a dementor burst through and grabbed her mum. Sassy reached for her wand but she was too small. Too young. She didn't know any magic! She tried to scream but couldn't! She looked at her fingers, held them up at the dementor and snapped.

Sasporilla jolted awake as a powerful patronus elephant rampaged around her caravan looking for any kind of Dementor it could find, eventually dissipating into bluish white smoke. The clock on the kitchen counter said nine-thirty.

It was closer to ten by the time Sassy had straightened herself up and grabbed her things. She stumbled out the front door, still a bit sleepy and yawned.

"Didn't think you'd ever wake up." Agnes laughed sitting on Sasporilla's front steps. "Been listening to you snore for the last half hour! Lazy girl."

"Had a late night." Sasporilla said.

"I heard." The blind fortune teller laughed. "Out all night, with strange old men, doing lord knows what."

"Guilty as charged." Sasporilla sighed placing her finger to the side of her nose. "Top secret mission. Very hush-hush."

"Gotcha." Agnes said standing up and extending her white cane.

"Were you waiting for me for something?" Sassy asked.

"Yes." Agnes said taking Sasporilla's arm as she stepped off the caravan stairs. "I am to accompany you into town at Mr.Beauxchamps request."

"Ah yes I see." Sasporilla giggled. "The streets here are not to be traveled lightly."

"Indeed they are not!" Agnes said. "You will need my experience with the city streets and I will need your eyes. Things can... change. We are a pair made for each other today Ms.Sasporilla Bucket!"

"Then let's be off!" Sassy smiled. "It's nice we get this day before the carnival opens."

"We join this festival every year." Agnes smiled. "Everyone's prepared for it, for the most part. It's nothing special."

"Why?" Sassy asked surprised.

"Don't get me wrong." Agnes said as they walked along. "The festival is huge! There are many fairs, carnivals and circuses from many worlds that all join together here in and out over the period of the summer! We are here for a ten day period, sometimes longer, but unlike some we are on the far outer edge of the festival. In an inconvenient corner that few come to!"

"Oh I see." Sasporilla chuckled.

"We'll still see two to three times the amount of people we usually do," Agnes smiled, "but carnivals closer in will see one hundred to a thousand times the traffic per hour. Millions of galleons a day."

"Oh my." Sasporilla gasped. "How did they get in there?"

"Politics, glad handing, favours, you name it." Agnes said. "There is a waiting list but we've been passed by before. Beauxchamps keeps a close eye on it!"

"I imagine he would." Sasporilla agreed.

"One time 'SOMEONE' circulated a 'RUMOUR' that the Carnival du Mystique had topless dancers at ten pm."

Agnes smiled coyly.

"Really?" Sasporilla said surprised.

"Oh yes." Agnes laughed. "We had curious men as far as the eye could see buying butterbeer and spiderfloss, putting there kids off on rides looking for these dancers."

"What happened when none turned up?" Sassy asked.

"If there hadn't been any topless dancers," Agnes said, "there would have been a riot! So we charged one Galleon each for what we called the "TOPLESS COMEDY EVENT OF THE SUMMER"!!! Old Beauxchamps, Extravagonzo, and the late Great Greggoff all came out in boxer shorts and danced to a snake charmers flute!"

Sasporilla laughed so hard at the thought of the site of it that she thought that she just might pee herself! "Oh my god! That must have been hilarious!"

"It was." Agnes said. "I honestly wish I could have seen it with my own eyes, but I see it as you see it, with my minds eye."

As Sasporilla and Agnes passed the borders of the Carnival du Mystique the shadowy veil lifted and they stepped into the bright sunshine of the Dingle Morning. Sasporilla saw a large rusted hulking machine on the festival lot next to the carnival.

"The Marvelous Mechanical Menagerie!" Agnes smiled. "The greatest steam powered invention of the 1883 Industrial Worlds Fair. A full factory, housing and entertainment complex capable of moving anywhere across the land it's on! Quite brilliant for it's time."

"What's happened to it?" Sasporilla asked.

"Time." Agnes sighed. "Time and obsolescence."

"It's still beautiful in it's intricate castings." Sasporilla said of the rusted behemoths animal heads and flamboyant decoration. "Yet so sad and lonely."

"They always get some parts of it working for the festival." Agnes smiled. A ride, or maybe the driveable slot cars. My favourite is the steam symphony. Eighty steam automatons that play the most wonderful music."

"It sounds beautiful." Sassy smiled as they walked past.

"Everything can be beautiful." Agnes smiled. "If looked at with more than just your eyes. Which reminds me, You're going to need these!"

Agnes opened her bag and felt around for something. She pulled out a very odd looking pair of pink rimmed sun glasses with blue and pink swirled lenses & odd wings off the edges. Sassy remembered an older girl at Hogwarts, Luna Lovegood, having a pair just like them. Agnes handed them to Sasporilla.

"Just my style." Sassy laughed putting the glasses on. "How do I look?"

"Oh!" Agnes laughed. "A wise guy!!!"

"Oh Agnes, I'm sorry!" Sasporilla apologized. "I didn't mean..."

"It's ok!" Agnes laughed. "I'm happy you don't think of me as the blind one! The fact that you forget makes me happy! Believe me! Now there is a reason I've given you those Spectrespecs."

"They don't match your shoes?" Sassy chuckled.

"Actually, I think you'll find they do!" Agnes said.

Sasporilla looked down to see Agneses pink shoes with a round blue swirled buckle on one side and a round pink swirled buckle on the other. The wings on the back were a nice touch.

"I stand corrected." Sasporilla laughed.

"The Spectrespecs were intended to allow wizards to see certain invisible creatures," Agnes said, "not normally seen by the naked eye. It was discovered they were useful for showing other invisible magical anomalies. Have a look up!"

Sasporilla half heartedly looked up into the sky expecting to see a flock of invisible birds or perhaps even a pod of sky whales but what she saw made her gasp! A large wooden ship with propellers and sails flew in just above the mechanical menagerie and headed toward town.

The skies over Dingle were filled with different kinds of sky ships. From old wooded boats that were steam powered or tied to dirigibles to ultra modern, high tech craft that looked like something from a muggle science fiction film. Ships came and went through gateways which open and closed in the sky, as if by magic.

"This is amazing." Sasporilla said.

"Welcome." Agnes said. "To the dimensional port city of Dingle. Hub of many worlds."

"I never knew a place like this even existed!" Sasporilla smiled delighted and amazed as they walked quickly into town.

"I came here on a steam pirate ship called the Inappropriate Wind." Agnes said. "They had raided the orphan transport I was on. We were being shipped to a world to be used as slave labour. The pirates freed us. Some of us stayed and joined the crew. They had no use for a blind little girl so they brought me here and left me in the care of a school where I got a bit of an education."

"That's horrible and wonderful at the same time." Sasporilla said.

"Once I began to blossom I developed the abilities my mother and grand mother had had. "

"You knew your parents then?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." Agnes said sadly. "They were taken by an illness. A deadly fever that took many in my world. There were many of us left orphaned."

"I'm sorry." Sasporilla said.

"You are no stranger to losing those you love Sasporilla Bucket." Agnes said. "We'll speak no more of the pains we share. Come along. Let me show you the Dingle Interdimensional Market."

The colourful old buildings that lined the streets of Dingle were the heart of its muggle charm, but quietly hid the fact that they were little more than a front for something much greater. Something the Chamber of commerce of the Aligned worlds had built here a millennia ago. A grand bazaar greater than any seen on any other world.

"There are many entrances into the market." Agnes said. "However we must be careful which one we take."

"Aren't they all the same?" Sassy asked. "Like doors into a mall?"

"Yes and no." Agnes said. "We can go through that entrance through the wool shop. It goes into the market, but into the past, seventeen or eighteen hundreds."

"I thought 'Time Travel' was frowned upon under ministry law!" Sasporilla asked.

"Oh it is!" Agnes said. "But once there you can't get back."

"What?" Sasporilla gasped.

"Time gates only go backwards." Agnes smiled. "I'd of though you'd know that?"

"Um well." Sassy blushed.

"Most who take it go accidentally and end up going off world." Agnes said. "Forced by the ministry. They usually live the rest of their lives in greater adventures or living better lives then they would have had."

Sasporilla and Agnes stopped at a large open doorway in Murphy's Bed and Breakfast and Pub.

"Are you sure this is our entrance?" Sasporilla asked.

"Smell of a breakfast fry-up, Guinness and drunk who needs to see a doctor about his blood sugar, from last night relieving himself four feet to our right. This is Murphy's B and B right?"

"Yes." Sassy chuckled. "Spot on."

"Then yes." Agnes smiled patting her friends arm. "This is our entrance. Meant for us witches and wizards to come in and out of."

Sassy looked inside into the dark garage like area stocked high with empty kegs and boxes. She slid her Spectrespecs down and saw that the door way itself had a blue glow to it, and the air before them sparkled with a magical barrier no muggle could see.

"Right then Ms.Bucket." Agnes said. "What is the time on the clock across the street?"

Sasporilla turned, always amazed at how the blind woman saw so much more than she did. "Almost Eleven."

"When my watch chimes the second chime of Eleven," Agnes said holding up an ivory and silver amulet watch which hung around her neck. "The barrier will change to gold for four chimes and we may pass through. I won't be able to see it but I'll know by the chimes. Still sometimes the timing is off so I will need to rely on your eyes and those Spectrespecs you're wearing."

"Gotcha." Sasporilla said holding her friends arm tight. "Just a few seconds."

The second hand of Agneses watch seemed oddly limp to Sasporilla. Most watch hands were mechanical and solid but this seemed almost like a small branch weighted by gravity. Suddenly it snapped up to Eleven O'clock. A small hammer struck a tinny bell beneath the watch sounding a pleasant chime.

Sasporilla readied herself as the bell chimed twice. The doorway changed to a sparkling gold and revealed the wonders beyond. Street upon street of tents which changed daily between permanent shops. Some having stood here for hundreds of years. This was Dingle Multidimensional Market.

Sasporilla urged Agnes forward as they passed through the great gateway into the busy ways of inter world commerce. Some shops were little more than an individual wizard's boot sale. Selling old junk they've had sitting around the house for far too long. Others had booths with home crafted goods, products, foods or services. Some young witches and wizards desperately looking for that big break to get their particular uniquely new and improved vial or cauldron recognized. Then there were the others. The ones who had devoted their lives to their craft and found nothing but failure. All of the joy was gone from their eyes as they stood hollow and sun burned over their dusty stock. It was here that Sasporilla saw and realized for the first time that there was so much competition in business. She had just wanted to make wands. Was she ready to be like these older sad looking crones who now obviously hated the craft they had devoted their lives to?

Agnes bumped a table of scented sea life bath bombs and soaps, knocking some over.

"Sorry." Agnes said cringing. "My fault."

"Watch where you're going cloth eyes!" The bitter old woman grumbled straitening up her wares.

"Excuse me!?" Sasporilla shouted.

"Just because she's blind doesn't give her the right to bash around like a bloody buffalo!" The woman snapped.

"Why you rude old ... witch." Sasporilla said.

"Don't mind her Sassy." Agnes said. "Madame have I broken anything? If so I will purchase anything I am responsible for."

"Well um.. yes." The old woman lied. "Quiet a lot of damage was done actually."

"You're out right lying now!" Sasporilla gasped. "How bloody dare you try to take advantage? "

"Take it easy Sassy." Agnes said remaining calm. "Karma has a way of coming back around. Now you were saying Madame?"

The old woman pursed and twisted her lips holding in the curse words she had for the young pink haired witch who was prepared to ruin this pay day for her.

"Never mind." The old lady sighed. "On your way."

"Apologize for the rude comment!" Sasporilla insisted as Agnes pulled her friend away.

"Pick your battles girl." Agnes hissed. "You won a big one! Don't push it! The reason I bumped the table is because the street layout has changed again. I need to find a large blue building with two towers, and gold onions on top. Do you see it?"

Sasporilla looked up and around. It was about two streets ahead but the stalls of vendors cut across their path.

"Yes I see it." Sassy said. "Looks like we'll have to walk around to get to it."

"Get me their." Agnes said. "That's my destination. "

The path through the stalls and tables was very much a maze. Street after street of stalls, booths, tables or piles of boxes filled with things for sale. They had to turn around and ask for directions more than once but eventually found their way to the large blue building with two towers and gold onions. A large golden eye was carved into the building's blue marble. However there was no obvious door to get inside.

"This is your building." Sasporilla said. "But I think we're on the wrong side. There's no door."

"No." Agnes said. "This is the guild of Seers and Mystics. The all seeing eye above us marks it."

"How do we get in?" Sassy asked.

"I'm afraid 'WE' don't my friend." Agnes frowned sadly. "I must enter alone. I recommend you stick to this street to shop and we'll meet back in a few hours."

"You'll be ok?" Sassy asked.

"I'll be fine." Agnes said. "Will you be ok?"

"Shopping?" Sasporilla laughed. "Let the shops beware! Can I ask you something?"

"Of course." Agnes said.

"This is suppose to be an interdimensional market?" Sassy said.

"Yes." Agnes agreed.

"So where is all the stuff from other worlds?" Sassy asked. "All the cool stuff I've never seen before?"

"All the things from muggle movies and comic books?" Agnes laughed. "All the strange devices or powerful items that the ministry would seize from you in a heart beat and toss you in Azkaban just for carrying in your pocket? You can purchase them, but you have to go through other gates to get them or buy them from dodgy types down dark streets."

"Oh." Sasporilla said.

"There are some shops on the main street here with ministry approved cross dimensional items for sale." Agnes said. "I do not recommend the food products however. Trust me. Our gastro systems are often quite incompatible. Anything not approved however will only get you into no end of trouble."

"I understand." Sasporilla said. "I'll try and make wise choices."

Agnes turned and walked towards the solid blue marble wall. The golden eye glowed and formed a golden framed doorway before her in the solid wall where one had not been before. Agnes stepped inside and the doorway closed behind her. Sasporilla stood alone and wondered to herself, 'Where shall I go first?'



## **Chapter 13**

Sasporilla Bucket browsed the windows of various shops as she meandered up the main street of the Dingle inter-dimensional market. The Three Sisters potions shop had a most impressive selection of pre-bottled potions, ingredients and supplies. Zyzabell's was the primary maker of quality robes in any world, any where, not to mention it's selection of hats.

It was a used wand shop that caught Sasporilla's attention first. Dents, bents and spents wand repairs and sales. A rather modest looking small basement shop that sat at the bottom of a set of old basement stairs below the Grumfield and Grobb's Magical Games Emporium.

Sassy, ever curious of wand shops, wandered down the rather dirty old brick steps holding on to the rusty iron railing. The old door latch took some effort to move but the door, though heavy, swung open easily enough. The dusty shop was stuffed to the rafters with boxes of wands. Cobwebs made over some areas of stock made it self evident that this was not the most popular wand shop in the Dingle Market.

"What do you want?" The gravelly voice of a small older man snapped.

"Pardon me?" Sasporilla asked.

"Wand business?" The man asked. "Repair, cleaning, selling or buying?"

"Browsing." Sasporilla said.

"Of bloody course." The man snapped murmuring some verbal expletives.

"I'm interested in wands." Sasporilla said looking at some of their unique wand styles. "I really want to be a wand maker."

"Why?" Another even smaller old man asked popping out of the wand stacks.

"Wands are my passion." Sassy said. "They're my life."

"Bent!" The new man yelled. "Get out here!"

A rather large man wandered out from the back knocking over a few stacks of wands as he went.

"Lummox!" The little man said throwing a block of wood at the large mans head.

"Ouch!" The big man said as the wood block bounced off his thick skull. "What?"

"This kid wants to be a WAND MAKER." The little man laughed making a silly voice. "It's her passion."

All three men started laughing.

"I don't see what's so funny?" Sasporilla asked.

"You're naive." The first little man grumbled. "I am Spent, that is my brother Bents and the big one is our little cousin Dent. We're the proprietors of this money pit we inherited."

"So you don't love wands?" Sassy asked.

"No." All three me said.

"Then why not sell the shop and get out?" Sasporilla asked.

"Because it's all we know!" Bent insisted.

"Without this we'd have..." Dent started.

"... Only each other." Spent said.

"It seems like business is very slow here." Sasporilla said. "Perhaps if you had a better sign?"

"It wouldn't matter." Spent said.

"Why not?" Sasporilla asked.

"Most people have always bought from Olivander's and soon they'll all buy from Bu..."

"Spent!!!" Dent yelled. "You can't reveal future information.

"You've stopped me from making an error cousin." Spent said. "Now go back to work you big oaf!"

"You know the future?" Sasporilla asked.

"You from the ministry?" Bent asked.

"No." Sassy insisted.

"Then what's it to you Nosey Noesnsten?" Spent growled. "There are lots of doors in Dingle that will take you to times and places you might not mean to go to. Whether you mean to or not."

"I thought time gates only took people back in time?" Sasporilla asked.

"You just keep believing what you're told." Bent said. "You'll be better off."

"Look," Spent growled, "there are ways. There are always... ways. Now, if you're not buying or getting a wand serviced, get... OUT!"

"I can see the main reason your sales are so poor." Sassy said. "Perhaps if you were nice to your customers they mind actually want to spend money in your shop."

"Perhaps if people who came into our shop were customers, and not bloody browsers, we wouldn't waste our valuable time!!!" Spent yelled. "GOOD DAY!!!"

Bent slammed the door behind Sasporilla hitting her solidly on the behind, as Spent locked it.

"Do you know who that was brother?" Spent asked Bent.

"More importantly do you know who that is going to be?" Bent asked Spent.

"Yes and you both did just fine." Dent said coming from the back. "She is solidly on her path. Seen the good and bad sides of bring a wand maker and the seeds of her future have been solidly planted."

With a wave of a wand Dents appearance shifted into shadow and changed into that of a woman in long black and gold robes. Her face was once young and beautiful but was now showing a touch of age despite the spells she used to bolster her vanity. Her long braided blonde hair was streaked with strands of silver and interwoven with gold wire and leaf. The gold crown upon her head was unmistakable.

"You've done well." The Witch Queen smiled.

"Thank you." The two small men said taking a knee before their queen proudly and too late seeing Dents body lifeless on the floor in the back room. They turned to face her Black Ivory wand.

"Avada-Kedavra!"

Sasporilla Bucket could have looked through the high technology technomancy shop for hours. Any muggle with these devices would seem to have the same abilities of any witch or wizard! No wonder they kept such strict regulations on who went where and who bought what.

The next shop over was Pandora's Pet Parlour. A litter of chocolate brown three headed tea-cup Ceribus puppies romped and played in the window.

Seven bells that hung over the door chimed 'How much is that Doggy in the Window?' as Sassy entered through the door.

"Good afternoon Miss!" The rather cheery plump proprietor greeted. "Welcome to Pandora's Pet Parlour! I am of course the worlds famous Pandora Podagast. No autographs please. Feel free to browse our extensive twelve floor show room of furry and feathered to scaly and armoured pets just waiting to go home with you to day and share with you their boundless love! For the right price of course! So what will it be? Can I interest you in a Toranian Trumpet Toad or perhaps you're in the market for something a little more... off world?"

Pandora pulled a small furry purple puff ball, which reminded Sasporilla something of a pygmy puff but it had no discernable face. The creature sat peacefully in the stout woman's hands and quietly cooed. Sasporilla petted it softly as it trilled and warbled joyfully.

"It is sweet." Sassy smiled.

"And a steal at only twenty nine galleons." Pandora Podagast insisted with a catbird smile.

"I was actually looking for something more in the way of an owl?" Sassy smiled.

"Postal birds twelfth floor." Pandora Podagast said disappointed, pitting the creature back into her robes secret pocket. "Far side of the shop see Mikus."

At the center of the shop floor was large double circular wood and brass staircase which criss-crossed itself. One staircase went to even numbered floors and the other to the odd number floors. At it's heart sat a tarnished gold

bird cage with high ornate bars. A sign hung over its open door way which read "UMBREALLAVATOR". A smaller sign read "RING BELL FOR UMBRELLA."

Sasporilla looked around but saw no bell. She looked up the stair case and thought twelve floors was a long way up.

"Moooo." A small sound caught Sassy's attention. Standing with her tiny head hanging over the little white fence of the "OLD MacDONALD'S FARM" display was Bossy, the miniature cow. Hanging around her neck was little cow bell. With a wave of her wand Sasporilla made the little bell tinkle. A large green umbrella lowered from high above. Sasporilla reached up with and grabbed the umbrella's handle.

Sassy stood in the center of the cage holding the umbrella, going no where. It slowly became obvious that she was being looked at with much amusement by other patrons of Pandora's Pet Parlour.

Sasporilla looked around for further signage or instructions. It wasn't until she heard the Wallace Warblers start to titter that she looked up and saw printed under the umbrella "SAY ALLOWED THE HEIGHT TO WHICH YOU DESIRE TO RISE."

"Of course." Sasporilla said laughing to herself half embarrassed. "FLOOR TWELVE"

The umbrella lifted Sassy weightlessly passed floors of creatures as mundane as puppies and kittens to as exotic as lions and rhinoceros. Floors filled with water containing fish, Grindylows and hippocamps. Floors with Doxys and Nixies, Bowtruckles and Billywigs! Murtlaps, Occamys, Nundus and Erumpents. Blast Ended Scroots, Horntail Dragons and Zouwus! So many creatures Sassy thought, not all of them suitable nor safe as pets! Then who was she to judge? Perhaps the creature not right for her was the perfect pet for someone else.

The umbrella shifted the pink haired witch out of the cage and placed her gently onto the twelfth floor landing. A bell tinkled distantly and the umbrella disappeared leaving her to find her way.

FLOOR 12 AVIARY... The big sign read. The many huge cages filled with every kind of flying bird imaginable would have given any customer a clue to the nature of the floor.

Smaller signs pointed towards specific areas.

SMALL, MEDIUM AND LARGE STANDARD BIRDS RIGHT SECTION 1.

LARGE AND EXTRA LARGE STANDARD BIRDS RIGHT SECTION 2.

SMALL, MEDIUM AND LARGE MAGICAL BIRDS LEFT SECTION 3.

LARGE AND EXTRA LARGE MAGICAL BIRDS LEFT SECTION 4.

SPECIAL ORDERS DESK SECTION 5 STRAIGHT AHEAD.

POSTAL BIRDS SECTION 6 STRAIGHT AHEAD TO THE LEFT OF SPECIAL ORDERS DESK, BACK OF STORE.

Sasporilla couldn't help but smile at the beautiful songs of the birds that twittered and tweeted as she passed. The colourful plumage of small song birds and strutting peacocks were almost hypnotic. A brazen honk of a goose followed by the snap of its beak on Sasporilla's rear end brought her around.

"Excuse me Madame," Sasporilla said rubbing her rear end, "but that was very rude."

"I don't like witches." The goose said.

"And why not?" Sasporilla asked.

"Because one made me as this more than a century ago!" The goose hissed.

"What?" Sasporilla said pulling her wand and casting, "REVELIIO!"

The goose slowly transformed into a middle aged stout blonde woman who was in dire need of clothing. Sassy looked around for anything.

"Accio Blanket!" Sasporilla cast.

An old blue blanket flew from a chair and across the shop floor. It wrapped itself around the woman covering her modestly.

"Thank you." The woman said. "You are clearly a white witch. One of different caliber to that of she who plagued our village."

"I'm sorry that happened to you." Sasporilla asked. "What year was it when she did this to you?"

"It was the year of our lord seventeen eighty-three." The woman said proudly. "I must return to my village. My family."

"I understand, of course." Sasporilla said knowing what had to be done. "Oh my that is a strange bird?"

The woman turned and Sassy pointed her wand with great regret at the back of the woman's head.

"Obliviate." Sasporilla cast with much regret.



Sasporilla walked the stunned woman to the special orders desk and left her with the clerk who was tending to a special ordered cockatrice.

"Excuse me." Sassy said.

"You here for the Cockatrice?" The clerk asked.

"No." Sasporilla said seating the muggle woman at the desk. "This muggle was transfigured into a goose and you were trying to sell her!"

"Not another one!" The clerk sighed. "Did you Oblivate the muggle?"

"Yes." Sassy said sadly looking into the woman's blank eyes.

"Good! I'll call the ministry." The clerk said handing her a ten percent off coupon. "Sorry for your inconvenience. Please accept this handy dandy coupon with our apologies and have a nice day."

Sasporilla headed off to the postal birds section. As it seemed to be the area least valued in the shop she expected it to be the smallest with the least selection but this was not the case.

There were not just row after row of every type of owl available but other types of birds trained for postal delivery as well. Pigeons, doves, storks, pelicans all sorts of birds Sasporilla had never seen used but in many ways made sense to her to be used.

It was either the subtle tapping of the footsteps or the muted horns and thumping of the conga beat that caught Sassy's attention as she rounded the aisles corner.

Jorge was like no other bird Sasporilla had ever seen. He was a rather small flamingo, as flamingos went, but bright pink with close crossed eyes. His feet danced and hips swayed as he listened to Latin music blaring from an old muggle walkman sitting loosely on his feathery head. His wings flapped and swayed as he turned and shuffled dancing his versions of the salsa and the rumba. Other birds around him looked on embarrassed.

"Come on chake your body baby do da conga." Jorge sang as he shook his tail feathers.

"Can I help you." A very mono toned voice droned from behind Sasporilla startling her. She turned to see a small thin man with feathery black hair and sharp bird like features. "Are you looking for a postal bird?"

"Yes." Sasporilla smiled. "I am in the market for an owl. I take it you're Mr.Mikus?";

"Just Mikus." The man said. "It's my first name. I am a postal bird specialist. I can match you with the right bird for your specific postal needs."

Sasporilla looked back at the funny flamingo who continued to dance like no one was watching, The name on his tag read JORGE.

"George." Sasporilla miss pronounced.

"No miss." Mikus droned. "It's pronounce HOR-HAY. It's a Latin name you see."

"Meringue!" The Jorge yelled dancing and laughing as he bumped into some of the cages and purchase.

Jorge!" Mikus' cries falling on headphone deafened ears. With a quick lift of one foam side Jorge froze. "Jorge please stop while we have a customer!"

"Sorry boss." Jorge said fumbling to find the off button on his walkman with his wing and stepped back behind the purchase to his nest.

"So what are your needs?" Mikus asked.

"Tell me about that flamingo." Sasporilla said.

"Jorge?" Mikus asked amazed. "No you don't want Jorge. He's half blind and music obsessed! He was shipped here by accident. No one wants him. He eats nothing but peanut-butter shrimp and sushi. I'd pay you ten galleons to take him!"

"Done!" Sasporilla said grabbing Mikus by the hand and shaking in official agreement. "It's a deal."

"What?" Mikus said. "No, I..."

"You've made a deal." Sassy said. "We've shaken on it. You have to by wizarding law, stick to it! I'll take my ten galleons and my flamingo please!"

"You really want me?" Jorge asked.

"You can do the job?" Sassy asked

"I can't see very well miss." The flamingo said and hung his head.

"What if we could do something about that?" Sassy smiled.

"Really?" Jorge asked.

"There's a chance." Sasporilla said. "I have an idea."

\*\*\*\*\*

It was later in the day when Sasporilla met up with Agnes back at the Seer's guild. The Blind Fortune Teller was sitting on a bench outside waiting for her friend to arrive.

Sassy sat down on the bench next to Agnes and put her bags from the days shopping down beside her.

"Did you get your business done?" Agnes asked.

"Yes I did." Sassy smiled. "You?"

"Yes." Agnes said. "Paid my dues, bought some supplies, and logged my reports on important things I've "seen" that may come to pass."

"Cool." Sasporilla said. "I picked up a few things I needed, especially my new postal bird... Jorge."

"You bought an owl named Jorge?" Agnes said.

"Oh he's not an owl." Sassy smiled. "Would you like to meet him."

"I'd be delighted!" Agnes smiled.

Sasporilla pulled out Jorge's walkman from her bag and placed her wand against it. With a quick cast of "Amplifier!" she pushed the play button and conga music filled the afternoon air.

Jorge's pink winged body circled down out of the blue afternoon Dingle sky and landed close to Sasporilla and Agnes in the Seers guild square. The new prescription goggles he wore slowed him to see clearly for the first time in his life and the new leather satchels Sasporilla had bought him would allow him to carry just about anything anywhere. Jorge started to Cha-cha joyfully.

"Sasporilla Bucket." Agnes said. "You always make the most unique amazing choices."



## Chapter 14

It took a bit of last minute convincing but Mr.Beauxchamps and the midway council approved Sasporilla's wand cleaning and repair booth to be incorporated as an official midway booth for the extent of the festival. Sassy agreed to a twenty percent kick back, Ten percent to the midway council and ten percent to the Carnival du Mystique, as spot rental for her booth.

It was still two hours before the show opened. Sassy set up her full booth at the end of her caravan next to Agnes' fortune telling tent. She doubted she'd see much business but every galleon helped. Jorge was still asleep in his nest next to the kiddie pool she'd gotten him to stand in. After all, he was a water bird. It was a quiet moment. The perfect opportunity to catch up on a bit of letter writing, now that she had her own personal postal pet.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Karry;

It feels like a hundred years since we've spoken. How are you and Zac and my darling little Kam doing? He must be as big as Hagrid by now? Ha ha.

Selling the house wasn't as hard as you might think. As you now live in Hogsmeade, and my mom is no longer there, i felt no real emotional attachment to it. Thought I'd make the clean break.

The Carnival du Mystique is a fascinating experience. I'm the wand technician so I'm getting experience fixing and cleaning wands. As expected I love doing it. I've set up my booth to open up my services to a festival crowd for the next week or so. I hope to make a bit of dosh but who knows.

I do have a question for you?

We have a mirror here that attracts a customer wherever we go. I'll with hold her name for now as it might affect her professional reputation. It seems to have mirror of Erised like qualities but she won't let anyone else near it! She sees Professor Snape in it. I mean we all do when she's looking into it. The carnival owner says it's a failed prototype of the mirror of Erised but there is something about it? Can you look into the mirrors history in the Hogwarts library if you get the chance? I've taken a photo of it and have included it.

Oh this is Jorge my Flamingo. If he seems hungry he likes sushi and peanut-butter and jelly shrimp.

Will see you at summers end  
Love  
Sasporilla

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Uncle Nick;

I hope this letter finds you well. You better not be doing anything dangerous or stupid! Now that I've fully forgiven you, I don't want you to even slip on a banana peel and bang your bum!

I have put in all of my applications and paid my fees to University. I am very much looking forward to learning everything I can on making wands. Even if it means working in the back of someone else's shop or going unrecognized in a small shop of my own for the rest of my life. As long as I'm doing what I love!

The carnival is a different sort of life. Up early, to bed late. Some days I have a lot of wands to service and others there are very few or none at all. Mr.Beauxchamps, the carnivals owner, often asks for volunteers for jobs around the carnival that pay. I volunteer to do them. Posting flyer around town. Helping out in other booths, Cleaning up around the grounds, etc. It's busy work and every galleon counts after all.

I'm trying to solve a bit of a mystery here. A lovely old woman named Mrs.Dumbleshire, who runs the Bubble World booth, keeps getting cases of wine gifted to her in different cities from a "secret admirer." She has a problem with drink and has to be replaced in her booth. I have a feeling it has something to do with a hatch I found in the floor of the booth but I don't know what or why???

I hope we can see each other before I go to school in the fall. I'll be stopping over in Hogsmeade end of August then heading to London to catch the shuttle to Avalon.

I Love you my darling Uncle;  
Sasporilla

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Lyra;

Not sure where you are what you're doing these days but I'm almost certain you're doing loudly with flare! As I find myself out in the real world between simpler school life of Hogwarts and the unknown school life of University in Avalon, I find myself missing my friends. Especially you and Karry. If I tell Karry she'll drop her responsibilities and be here in a heart beat. I know you'd just tell me to "Suck it up, wide butt!"

I know what you're going to ask before you write back. Yes. I do still have feelings for him. No. I probably never will act on them. Oh and for what ever insult you said... SHUT IT!!! Ha ha!

By the way, this delivery bird is my flamingo Jorge. Play him some Latin music and get ready for the dance party. He's a riot!

Love as Always;  
Sassy

\*\*\*\*\*

At the stroke of ten am the dark cloak withdrew from the Carnival du Mystique which finally joined the Grande Dingle All Worlds Festival. People started to enter the grounds and take advantage of the rides, foods and services. Sasporilla worked on the broken wand the elves had gifted her between the very few customers who came her way. The original woven nature of the wand required her to take great care reweaving the core. In a normal wand she would just pull the broken core and replace it with a new one. However this one was part of the weave of the wand as a whole. A very unique design, unlike anything else she'd ever worked on.

Jorge was a bit bored, standing in his pool, his tummy full of California rolls. He slid his goggles down over his crossed eyes bringing everything into focus. He pushed the play button on his walkman and filled his head with

lovely Latin music as he soared into the air high above the festival taking in the sights of the shifting crowds, the rides and games, the colourful tents, the clowns and animals on parade. Jorge couldn't believe the size and scope of the festival. Circle upon circle of shows all closing in on each other culminating in one giant crowd surrounding a stage.

"Hello Dingle." The voice of Vinny Lazar called out to the crowd. The sound of his voice traveled across the festival grounds and finally found Sasporilla's ears, bringing a smile to her face. "We are The Dead End Oddity Shop. Maybe you've heard of us?"

The band started off by playing one of their greatest hits. Followed by another. Sasporilla was happy Melvin was near by. Even if he didn't remember her anymore, in some weird way she took comfort in his presence. She tapped her foot and hummed along with the song.

"Excuse me miss." An older witch interrupted Sassy back to reality. "I'd like my wand cleaned please."

"Yes mam." Sasporilla smiled taking the woman's service booth ticket and giving the older witch's wand a good service.

"This is a new song." Vinny said to the crowd. "From our new Album CANTATA INFANATIA. It's called 'I MISS YOU' It's for someone I'm struggling to remember but I can never forget."

The words of the song touched Sasporilla. Called to her. Sassy handed the woman back her wand then closed the shutters of the wand booth with her wand as she took off running across the carnival grounds. A sign hung itself on the booth saying back in thirty minutes.

Sasporilla found the crowds got thicker as she followed the songs closer to the festival center. Every new turn she made Sasporilla found herself blocked by another show that she had to wind her way through.

"I want to thank the Grande Dingle All Worlds Festival for inviting us to play for you today as this is the Dead End Oddity Shops last album and final tour." Vinny said much to the shock and dismay of the crowd. "I have other passions I've chosen to follow in life. Maybe one day you'll all understand. This is another song from our new album, it's called 'OH LOVE!'"

The applause was thunderous as the Dead End Oddity Shop finished their set and walked off stage. The next band up was 'Maria's First Wand' an all girl pop band out of Spain that was very popular with the nine to twelve year old witch crowd.

Myron Wagtail waited backstage with a witch with dark caramel coloured skin and long black curled hair with a whit stripe through the right side, dressed in long red robes with a heart shaped raised collar. Vinny Lazar walked up to them with a hopeful look on his face.

"Vinny Lazar," Myron said, "this is Madame Lorelei Amare."

"Pleased to meet you Madame." Vinny said.

"I understand you are need of my particular skills." The witch said. "Let us set up some place private. I must inspect him."

By the time Sasporilla reached the gates of the festival stage Dead End Oddity Shop had long since passed off stage. Parsons Wand Shop had Played and now Orwell was kicking up the heavy sound with their hit "Hangman's Knot!"

"Excuse me! Hello!" Sasporilla called to the guard standing inside the gate but her words seemed to fall on deaf ears. "Hey you! Can you get Vinny Lazar? Tell him Sasporilla's here! I'm a friend!"

"I'm a friend too." Another girl yelled. "Tell him Becky's here!"

"And Ramona!" Another girl laughed. "I'll do things his other friends won't!"

"Yes I know." The guard chuckled. "You're all friends of Vinny's."

Sasporilla hung her head in exasperation.

Myron lead Madame Lorelei Amare followed by Vinny into a private meeting room off of the bands green room. It was small and a bit dark but had a few seats and was big enough for the work that needed to be done.

The witch pulled out her wand. Its handle was carved from rose crystal and its mother of pearl hearts and flower inlay spiraled up to the cherry wood tip. The witch pulled down on Vinny's cheeks and looked into his eyes. Tipped his head back, opened his head back and pointed her wand inside. "Openbaar liefde" the witch cast revealing only the faintest of glows. "Hmmm."

"Is it bad?" Myron asked.

"Hush!" The witch insisted as she took her wand and began drawing a glowing red circle on the floor around Vinny Lazar. "I am a love witch of the first order. What has been done to this young man is inconceivable and

unconscionable! I have been trained by the masters of love witchcraft! I carry an Amortentia core wand designed and hand crafted by the one and only Dina Splatterpalette of Avalon herself! However I need time and room to assess the boy to see if the effects can be reversed."

She ran the wands tip along the floor forming a glowing red circle around Vinny Lazar.

"Stay very still." Madame Lorelei said as she blew a handful of shining silver dust into the circle which swirled around the young wizard.

"AMOREVELIO!" Madame Amare cast throwing sparks and colours of light flying in all directions making Myron jump to take cover behind the sofa.

The dust swirled and lifted Vinny Lazar into the air. His eyes glowed with a peaceful blue as his body glowed in a shadowed blue. A tiny spot of bright pink started to glow in the corner of the boys eye. A similar spot formed in the brain and in the heart tethered by thinnest of strands of love energy. The witch looked and followed the strands until she saw it. The love that sat withering but refusing to die deep within his heart. Not only it's tether to the memories no longer there, but the memories that fed the love, were gone as well.

"The boy is in a very bad way." Madame Lorelei Amare said. "If the Love can not be restored to be rekindled or released it could fester in the boys heart and leave him unbalanced and full of malice."

"If there's anything at all you can do?" Myron pleaded. "The girl he loved is a dear friend to me. I loved her mother secretly for years. Those two kids were perfect for each other."

"Time will tell." Madame Amare said. "Cover your eyes. RESTORAMORE MAXIMA!"

The dust burst into swirls of rainbow light and poured into Vinny's eyes and into his mouth. His skin glowed with the pink glow of love. The heart felt love that refused to die held the memories that mind had lost. Though they could be replaced there was still no way to connect them. Vinny dropped back down to his feet and coughed out a bit of silvery dust.

"How do you feel young man?" Madame Lorelei Amare asked.

"The same pretty much." Vinny Lazar said.

"So it didn't work?" Myron sighed.

"On the contrary." The love witch smiled looking into Vinny's eyes. "The first part of the spell has worked perfectly. The love in your heart is no longer like a dried rotting apple in the sun. It is now much more like a flower pre bloom."

"But I still only feel the one bit." Vinny said. "I just have the fragment of the one memory. The kiss."

"And in a kiss you will find that which will bloom the flower of love in your heart!" Madame Lorelei Amare smiled.

"What?" Vinny asked confused.

"Oh for Merlin's sake!" The love witch said exasperated. "Go find the girl and give her a good kiss! It will complete the spell, reconnect your restored memories to the restored love in your heart. What you do with that love, rekindle it or release it? That's up to you!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Sasporilla found her way back to the Carnival du Mystique. She through herself into her work at the wand booth over next few days of the festival. She was sad that she'd missed Melvin but honestly she didn't know what she'd expected. She had no gate pass, no back stage pass. No one from the band was around and festival staff would have no clue who she was. To everyone involved she was just another obsessed fan looking for mote than an autograph from her favourite rock star.

It was bright and early Sunday morning when the first owl arrived bringing mail.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Sasporilla;

Kameron and Zac are great. Yes Kam has grown so much! He's a very happy little man and seems very alert and curious. Hogsmeade is alive these days with archeological teams from the ministry coming and going. Everyone wants a look at GrazaKadabrass.

We recently found a vault filled with items that were pretagged with names, and addressed to witches and wizards alive in our world today! There was a book of instructions left, like a will of sorts, by the founding four to distribute these items to the people listed once the vault was opened! Zac received a ring. He was hesitant at first to even have it in the house but I insisted as it is from antiquity! Now he won't even take it off he loves it so much!

So Ms.Sasporilla Bucket, please find enclosed 1 small leather pouch marked with the ancient house crest of Hufflepuff, containing eight mummified elven fingers in their entirety. Why? I have no Idea, but it was quite at Helga Hufflepuff's instance that you have them! You lucky girl!

I looked into your question of the mirror. There were no prior mirrors. No prototypes or experiments that I could find in legend however, according to Mr.Filch that mirror is actually Hogwarts property! Missing from the boathouse and presumed destroyed during the battle of Hogwarts. He said it's an ordinary mirror BUT Sassy I looked at the picture. I saw, in the reflection professor Snape peeking out from around a distant corner. Something odd is going on with that mirror!

Can't wait to see you come Augusts End.

Love and big Hugs;  
Karry

\*\*\*\*\*

My Dearest Sassy;

Ya, you know me all to well. Your old Uncle Nick is off living the life of danger defusing magical traps with his teeth and killing vampires and werewolves with my big toes!

To be honest I'm on a team doing some weird but boring work investigating whatever is setting off break-in alarms at Gringots. The problem is, nothing is missing, nothings been stolen and no thief has been found. Probably a loose bloody niffler had pup's in caves again! Happened a century ago and caused no end of havoc! No ones taking it as to serious as it's always in the muggle paper money vaults. The cash they use for galleon exchange.

It's hard for me to see the little pink haired girl I knew who always had a hug for her Uncle Nick, all grown up and no longer needing me to help her up onto her chair any more. Guess that's all part of the circle of life ay? Ay? Going to start singing those muggle cartoon lion songs you used to love now.

I will catch up with you in London before you go.

Big Hugs you little monkey;  
Uncle Nick

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Jorge returned tired with Sasporilla's letter for Lyra, seemingly unopened and unread. A large red scrawl across the front read...

RETURN TO SENDER - RECIPIANT UNKNOWN AT THIS ADDRESS

but in the corner was a small message. "Suck it up, Wide Butt!"



## Chapter 15

Sasporilla Bucket slid a single knut into the slot of the old wooden coin push game. The knut ran down a thin ramp into the slot of one of seven wheels that rotated in different directions against the back wall of the game. The coin rotated from the slot of one wheel and dropped into the slot of another, then another and another, until it finally dropped with tinkle onto a pile of other knuts, sickles and galleons.

The whirl of gears and pulleys came from the machine as a section of the back wall moved forward, pushing the coins forward towards a ledge. Galleons, sickles and knuts dropped over the edge down to the back of the next

level. Small magical explosions blew some of the coins up and off of the back plate and on top of the coin pile where they would have no pushing effect. A large pile of coins mixed with small potion vials, jewelry, magical treasures, and even a key to one of ten super secret surprise prize boxes, teetered on the edge of pay off.

Sassy dared not even breathe to hard. The sign on the machine said it best, 'ANY MAGICAL OR PHYSICAL INTERFERANCE WILL RESULT IN THE GAME BEING NULL AND VOID. ALL PROCEEDS BEING SIEZED AND THE GAME BEING RESET!'

"Why are you wasting yer time and money on that thing?" Alana asked. "It's all fixed. Yer just wasting yer money!"

"I find it relaxing." Sasporilla said dropping in another knut. "Zen like."

"Well if wastin' money is relaxin' to you, give me twenty galleons and I'll set ya right at ease!" Alana laughed.

"I don't think so." Sasporilla smiled. "What's up?"

"Afternoon off." Alana said. "Got a couple' a tickets to a SPHARX match. Wondered if ya wanted to go?"

"Spharx?" Sasporilla asked watching her coin push to no advantage and drop another.

"YA!" Alana said. "Haven't you ever seen a Spharx match? It's a sport. Don't tell me yer a Quidditch or nothin' girl!"

"No I know there are other sports." Sasporilla insisted dropping another knut in. "I've just never really seen any."

The coin dropped in bounced from its wheel, pushed into its ledge which dumped a huge flow of coins down to the next level. Coins banged, bounced, exploded, danced and quivered as so many had fallen there just weren't enough magical rube traps to take care of them all. The lower wall pushed forward and the whole ledge of coins pushed forward, and teetered. Sasporilla and Alana stood back breathlessly holding each other as the ledge fell in to the scoop and poured out of the machine lighting up the 'BIG WINNER' sign.

Sasporilla started scooping up the coins and putting them in her bag. Alana held off the well-wishers who all wanted to grab a few hand-fulls of wealth.

"Alana don't worry so much." Sasporilla said. "Take some for yourself."

"Don't be silly Sassy." Alana laughed. "That's funny. Silly Sassy, silly Sassy. No I couldn't."

"Well there's plenty here." Sassy insisted. "Grab some for yourself."

"What's going on here?" Lloyd Ablecross, the roly-poly carnivals arcade man yelled.

"I guess I've won." Sasporilla smiled.

"Impossible." Lloyd said frowning. "You cheated! Return the coins! I'm closing the machine."

"How dare you!" Sasporilla said standing outraged. "To make such accusations without first casting even a simple REVELIO or a more appropriate EXPONAM DOLUM!"

Lloyd stood looking sheepish. This witch knew her investigative spells. Probably had family in the aurors office which could be problematic... all things considered.

"You're right." Lloyd smiled with a Cheshire grin. Pulling his wand he cast EXPONAM DOLUM! The entire event replayed as if Sassy herself was a patronus. It showed she was innocent of any fraud.

"Well young lady." Lloyd sighed. "You are indeed the winner."

"Yes she is!" Mr.Beauxchamps cried raising the cheers of the gathered crowd. "In the Carnival du Mystique, all are winners, but some rise to greatest of heights! I understand you won, one of the ten great and secret keys?"

"Yes!" Sasporilla smiled pulling the old iron skeleton key from the pile of coins. "Here it is."

With a wave of his wand the coins and treasure on the ground gathered up and was packed into a tight heavy leather sack bounced along the ground behind them as they walked to the ten ornate iron locked prize box.

"Which number key do you have Ms.Bucket?" Mr.Beauxchamps asked.

"Number six." Sasporilla smiled.

"The come forward Sasporilla Bucket," The old showman cried with flair, "and claim your most wondrous prize!" Taking a deep breath Sassy stepped forward and walked up to iron box number six. It was only about two feet square. Not like box ten that was a full six feet square at least. She noticed the slot, unlike the other boxes, had no cobwebs on the keyholes. Sassy slid the key inside. The key turned easily to the right and clicked. The small iron door swung open. Everyone in the crowd peered into the boxes dark interior.

Sasporilla knew something was off and drew her wand as a long ashen claw in dark cloak reached out of the box.

"DEMENTOR!" Lloyd screamed, wetting himself as he ran off.

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!" Mr.Beauxchamps cast as the creature pulled itself from the box looking down at Sasporilla.

Sassy looked at the creature that lazily avoided the butterfly Patronus. This was not a dementor. Even though it look just like the one she killed in Hogwarts. She looked into the iron box. There was a small plastic box inside no bigger than a box of mints. Sasporilla reached in and grabbed the plastic box and placed it in her bag.

Sasporilla pointed her wand at the creature and cast "RIDICULOUS!" The bogart changed into the funniest thing Sassy could picture. The old wizard Beauxchamps, in his boxers, dancing topless to a snake charmers flute.

"Ah." Mr.Beauxchamps said looking over his glasses. "I see Miss Moorsehead shared that story with you."

"She did." Sasporilla laughed casting the creature back into the iron box, shutting and locking the door. "Accio key!"

"How did you discern so quickly it was a Bogart?" Mr.Beauxchamps asked.

"It reacted to slowly to your patronus," Sasporilla said, "and I recognized it. It took the form of not just any dementor, but what I fear most. My father became a dementor. I fought him. Killed him. Freed him from the curse. I still fear that it could some how happen to me, as it happened to him."

"Very wise young lady." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled. "What was in the box?"

"Oh!" Sasporilla gasped. "I almost forgot!"

Sassy dug into her bag and pulled the small plastic box out. Printed on the top read 'HIDE-A-KEY'. Sasporilla tried several ways to open it, but found finally that body of the box,slid in half. Inside, was a blue key. The key was inscribed with the word 'CUBIC' and the number 2\*18.

"What is this?" Mr.Beauxchamps demanded outraged. "This is not a proper prize! Someone has absconded with the original prize and replaced it with....with..... this! Lloyd! Lloyd! I demand answers!!!"

"Sasporilla!" Alana said. "We have to go if we want to get to the Spharx match. It's clear across the festival grounds."

"Ok but I have to get this sack of coins back to my caravan." Sassy cringed not wanting to hold up her friend.

"I think we have time but let's hurry!" Alana smiled.

Alana helped separate the crowd for Sasporilla, as they passed through shifting masses, levitating the sack of winnings. Sassy quickly stowed it just inside the front door of the caravan.

"I can get us to the festival field quickly." Sasporilla said. "I've been there."

"Brilliant." Alana smiled widely grabbing on to Sassy as they spun off, disappearing into thin air.

The two young witches reappeared at the back of the music festival crowd. MUGGLER was on stage playing their hit 'Dibbly the Dog'.

"Ok that saved us at least an hour." Alana smiled. "We still have a way to go though, come on!"

The crowds only thickened as Sasporilla and Alana moved towards the stadium that sat dead center of the Dingle inter-dimensional festival grounds. Alana pointed towards a domed building, whose dome was very slowly opening, revealing the brightly coloured lights and odd shapes within.

"That's where we're headed." Alana pointed.

"We need a faster way in this crowd." Sasporilla said.

"Need a ride ladies?" A young man asked sitting atop his Thestral drawn open carriage. "I can get you two, to the stadium in a couple of minutes. For twenty galleons."

"Yer feckin mad." Alana laughed and turned to moved off but Sassy grabbed her hand.

"Five galleons." Sasporilla said.

"That'll not even pay my parking fees!" The cab man insisted. "Twenty."

"Eight."Sasporilla said.

"Your killing me lady." The cabby said. "Look, your nice girls. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go sixteen for the pair of you. Final offer."

"Twelve." Sasporilla said. "Or we walk."

"Deal." The cabby sighed. "Get in."

"I can't believe you." Alana laughed. "You can really negotiate!"

"My mum would have got it for ten!" Sasporilla laughed.

With the crack of his whip the Thestral's pulled the cart up into the skies above festival. They made great time as they headed towards the Dingle Festival Sports complex. The lights were criss-crossing in the sky announcing the impending Spharx match, to begin in under an hour. Fire works exploded over the stadium in celebration of the Irish and English teams that were competing.

"Now about my payment?" The cabby asked.



"Yes of course!" Sasporilla said digging the coins out of her bag with one hand her wand discretely held in the other.

Sassy placed some coins in the hand of the cab driver who tipped the carriage upside down.

"This is your out ladies!" The cabby laughed as Sasporilla and Alana dumped out over the stadium.

Alana screamed as she fumbled for her wand. She drew it but it got away from her in the rushing wind. Sasporilla cast Accio and brought Alana's wand to her. Then Sassy caught up to her friend just in time to wrap her arms around Alana and cast ARESTO MOMENTUM. They halted inches above the concrete outside the stadium.

Sasporilla and Alana dropped into a pile on the ground. Sassy laughed but Alana was outraged.

"How can you laugh?" Alana asked. "He'd have killed us? And he took yer money!!!"

"I'm just relieved we're ok," Sasporilla laughed, "and he only got about seven knuts!"

"It's about bloody time." A young woman with short fair hair, wearing the white and red robes of the English Spharx team, said as she stepped from the side of a stadium pillar. "Been waiting for you nearly a half hour Alana!"

"Sorry Cody." Alana said. "We got held up."

"Ya I saw you get dropped off." Cody laughed. "What was that all about?"

"We'll catch you up after the match." Alana said. "Oh. Cody, this is my friend from the carnival Sasporilla Bucket. Sasporilla, this is England's premier Spharx Forward Cody Parsons."

"Pleasure." Sasporilla said shaking the rather tough looking young woman's hand. "Parsons. Any relation?"

"I don't know?" Cody laughed. "What was your mums name? My dad got around!"

"Stop it Cody." Alana chuckled. "Sassy's a friend."

"Ya." Cody said. "Billy Parsons, of the Wand shop, is my big brother."

"Awesome." Sasporilla smiled. "I'm friends with Myron Wagtail."

"And her boyfriend is Vinny Lazar." Alana said.

"Oh my god." Cody gasped. "Are you the girl he's pining over?"

"I guess so." Sasporilla said. "I tried to get to him the other day but no luck."

A loud gong sounded and echoed low and steady through the festival grounds.

"Five minute warning." Cody said handing Alana an envelope. "Here are the tickets. Enjoy the match. I'll catch up with you after right here ya?"

Cody took off through the gate and inside. Alana opened the envelope and pulled out two silvery tickets flashing the white and red colours of England.

"She's a nice girl." Sassy said. "How do you know her? School?"

"She used to date Lester." Alana said. "She had to break it off with him."

"Because he's a muggle?" Sassy asked.

"No." Alana said surprised. "Because he's such a miserable begger!"

The pre game show was well under way by the time Sasporilla and Alana found their seats. A tattooed woman danced center stage, in the middle of the stadium, to the celestial melody of a Lumophonosphere. Woman's body swayed to the music. Her movements drew you in, entwined with the hypnotic music. The tattoos that covered her body flowed and moved as if alive. Snakes tattooed upon her limbs slithered. Fabric tattooed on her skin fluttered. Wings tattooed upon her back burst forth and flapped as the fabric and serpents extended far beyond their natural reach. Snakes stretched and entwined through flowing silks that neared the crowds. Vines sprouted and thorned, then blossomed with beautiful rainbow roses. A wolf jumped off followed by its pack and howled at a rising moon which shifted, to a blackened sickening green dark mark. The skull with serpent slithering from its mouth caused many in the stands to gasp. A tattoo of a young man in glasses flowed from her thigh and cast a bright spell dispersing the dark mark, much to the crowds delight.

The music began to fade, the dance slowed, and the tattoos withdrew. A fat man in a tuxedo and a witch in referee robes joined the center stage. The fat man placed his wand to his neck.

"Let's have hand for the charming LYDIA, THE TATTOOED LADY and ARDWIWEIL Mistress of the Lumophonosphere!"

"That instrument is most fascinating." Alana said. "A Sphere of light with strands of light and magic and inside is an elf that plays them harmonically, like a harp. Amazing."

"Really?" Sasporilla said. "That's amazing. Sounds really complex."

"I guess that's why only elves can play it." Alana said.

"Now witches and wizards, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls," the fat announcer cried, "LET'S.... PLAY.... SPHARX!!!"

The referee pointed her wand skyward and cast "CONGREGAMINISPARX!"

A rainbow of energy shot from the witches wand skyward and burst into a cloud of swirling light that quickly formed a spinning colourful ring at the center of the stadium.

"First our challengers." The announcer cried. "From the far off desolate regions of England, may I present the LONDON LUMOS!"

The ring of light pulsed with the colours of white and red as the witches and wizards of the English Spharx team rose up through the center stage to the song HIGH HOPES by PARSONS WAND SHOP. The ring started to hum and spit out large bubbles, Sassy estimated were about twenty meters in diameter, with a loud SPHARX sound.

"I hear where the sport gets its name!" Sasporilla said.

"Yep." Alana laughed.

The bubbles formed in a horizontal square above the vertical ring. The English team waved and bowed to the crowd. Team Captain Cody Parsons called the team into a last minute huddle for some final tactical instructions. The team stepped back into a circle, pulled their wands, and touched them tip to tip. The London Lumos raised their wands high above their heads and cast "ASCENDIO!" The team shot up into the air and into their assigned zones.

"And the home team!" The announcer called. "From the Emerald Isle!"

The crowd went wild as the ring spun around and started to pulse green white and orange as the center stage opened up and began to rise through the pulsing light to the song WILDCATS OF KILKENNY by the POGUES. Alana was on her feet cheering wildly as the announcer continued.

"The DUBLIN CLÁIRSEACH!"

"That means harp!" Alana said to Sasporilla clapping as the Irish team took the stage, linked arms and started to river dance.

"Alright!" Alana said sitting down in the seat next to Sasporilla. "I'll explain the game to ya as best I can."

"Ok." Sasporilla said. "But I'm not really a sports person, so be gentle."

"Right." Alana laughed. "The basic point of the game is to score points by putting the ball into the goal. Simple."

"Sounds simple enough." Sasporilla said as the center ring started humming and spharxing as it spat out more bubbles forming four new bubbles under the upper four.

"Those eight bubbles are called zones." Alana said. "The teams play the game by moving the ball through the zones trying to get it to the goal. The spinning ring in the center Zone."

The ring spharxed out one last bubble that formed around it. The ring glowed and took on the red and white colours on one side and the green white and Orange on the other."

"Now both teams have twelve players." Alana said. "One Forward who can move to any sphere, transport the ball between zones, cast gate spells and score goals. Four Hunters that can move between two zones only! They can't transport the ball between zones though, and of course they can cast gate spells. Three Backgaters who can cast gate spells and defend the team. Three Havocs that cause zone wide anarchy against the other team to help advance their team. Last but not least is one Goal Tender who tries to stop the other team from scoring on our side of the goal ring."

"So some can cast some spells, got it." Sassy said.

"No." Alana sighed. "And yes. They can all cast spells. Any spell is fair, except for the unforgivable three of course."

"Of course." Sasporilla agreed trying to follow.

"Only certain players can cast GATE SPELLS to move the ball or a player from zone to zone." Alana said. "The HAVOC spells anyone can cast, but the Havocs are especially GOOD at casting them. Oh their getting ready for the tip off!"

The referee floated up to center field on a disk of magical energy. The captains of the English and Irish Spharx teams joined the referee on the platform. Captain Cody Parsons, five foot seven inches, English Forward, stood toe to toe with Captain Donnel O'Rielly, the Irish Goal Tender, that toward over her by two feet. The referee balanced the Gunnel, a trefoil shaped ball with shifting internal weights, on the tip of her wand.

"Ready?" The ref asked Cody?

"Ready" Cody Parsons smiled.

"Ready?" The ref asked Donnel O'Rielly."

"I'm gonna crush yer little head." Donnel growled.

"Are you still upset I dated your brother over you big guy?" Cody asked.

The referee placed the thin brass ships whistle between her lips...

"No offence meant to you..." Cody smiled. "... but there are other sizes on a man more important than height!"

The referee shot the Gunnel ten feet into the air and blew her whistle. The giant Irish Captain drew his wand and cast stupify at Cody who had already leaped into the air and stepped on his shoulder and leaped off his head. The Irishman stumbled and knocked into the referee. With a flick of her wand the referee cast a wall which blocked them from falling off. Captain Cody Parsons grabbed the Gunnel and cast "ASENDIO" lifting her up and casting "PORTA!" opening a gate into zone two. The match was on.

The Irish had only put one Backgate in zone two. An Irish hunter gated in from zone six below to join him as Cody Parsons formed up with the English Backgate, Havoc and Hunter.

"Why are there different amounts of players in each bubble?" Sasporilla asked.

"Zones!" Alana insisted. "The bubbles are called zones! Remember???" The team Captain assigns players to different zones in each half of the game. The half's run thirty five minutes each with no stoppages. It's a fast sport. The reason the Captain puts the players in the zones he does is for tactical plays they run. To try and beat the other team. You can only have one of each kind of player per team in each zone at any one time. It's not like Quidditch where everyone just flies willy-nilly all over the pitch on their brooms!"

The referee took up position, floating in the air above zone two, for a clear view of the action. The backgates for both teams cast "PORTA". The Irish to Zone six where their Forward was taking up position to intercept and the English to zone nine, the goal zone.

The Irish hunter cast a spell at Cody who deflected it off with ease, despite the Gunnels strong shifting pull up. The gravity of zone two was currently flowing up. Not conducive to tossing the ball through a gate. Cody knew she'd have to do a Bombarda play.

"Scrapps," Cody called to the English Havoc, "GuyFox!"

"Oh ya!" Scrapps, the rather skinny havoc with one side of his head shaved and blue shaggy hair on the other side said as he wildly waved his wand casting a Bombarda Maxima that blew everyone in Zone two wildly in all directions. Cody took advantage of the shifting gravity to manipulate her blast angle and fly through the gate into zone nine.

The spinning goal ring was just starting to spin to the Irish side. Allura McNemara was a tough one. Cody had known her at school. Never got along with her. Allura had always been a bully. Cody thought maybe she'd just needed a hug, but then any one who tried she'd punch in the stomach and spit on. Lovely girl.

Donnel O'Rielly the Irish Forward was stuck in zone six as the English Backgate cast "INTAGLUMAXIMUS" and surrounded him in vines. The other Irish players were busy trying desperately to free him as the English cast every spell they could think of to deter them. Cody was free to throw.

"Yer not getting the Gunnel past me Parsons." McNemara growled.

Cody felt the weights inside the ball shift. She knew every position of every weight in the ball and how they effected her throw in every shifting gravity. Her favorite was the reset. That moment when the Gunnels shifting mechanism reset itself. In this static gravity it had her favourite effect. All she needed to wait for was a small click. The Irish Havoc took the form of an emerald dragon and ripped the vines from Donnel O'Rielly. The Irish Backgate cast a gate to zone nine but the English hunter cast a wall spell across it blocking access.

"CLICK!"

Cody jumped left and Allura didn't move refusing to be deked. Cody stepped right but Allura was an unmovable unfoolable tower. Cody through the Gunnel to the far right side of the ring Allura moved right. The Gunnels internal mechanism reset and shifted and it took a ninety degree turn left. Allure dived left as the internal mechanism shifted again and turned right and passed the Irish goal tender. The final mechanism shift pushed the Gunnel through the Goal.

Allura looked at Cody with disdain as Cody smiled. "Some one need a hug?"

"SCORE!" Alana yelled! "That's one point for you guys! I know I should be cheering Ireland but Cody's my friend so I don't care who wins really! Plus I just like the game when it's well played like this."

"How do they fly without brooms?" Sasporilla asked?

"The robes are enchanted with a spell that lets them stay a float in air. They need to use spells or push of or pull to go up down or move."

"Makes sense" Sasporilla said.

"The cool thing is the zones all have different rotating gravity's!" Alana smiled. "Doesn't effect the players but it can effect the Gunnel or the spells!"

"That's interesting." Sasporilla mused. "That must make the passing of the ball difficult."

"The Gunnel." Alana corrected her. "The ball is called the Gunnel."

"Right." Sasporilla nodded feeling just a tad overwhelmed and truth be told a bit lost already.

"Don't worry." Alana laughed. "It'll come to ya time. Just remember, ball in ring scores a point!"

And score they did! It was a battle of English tactical genius and Cody Parsons raw athletic ability versus Donnel O'Rielly's brute strength and size, as well as the Irish team's sheer love for mayhem. After every goal a gate open-end in a random zone and the Gunnel dropped in. Players from both teams in that zone scrambled for the Gunnel and play continued.

Some plays were as simple as the Backgate sneak. A time-honoured play where the back gate holds the Gunnel while the forward distracts several zones. At some point the Backgate sneaks the Gunnel to the forward into the goal zone. Other plays were very complex, involving multiple tactics over each zone involving every player performing their task perfectly. When the whistle blew to end the first half the score was...

ENGLAND -3- IRELAND -2-

The players lowered from the zones and disappeared into their team locker rooms. A stage rose up beneath the Spharx field. The fat announcer in the tuxedo was back.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. I have an announcement. Our previously scheduled halftime entertainment canceled on us at the last minute due to unforeseen circumstances. Luckily we have got some wonderful volunteers. Old friends who stepped up just when we needed them most."

"Oh great." Alana said. "Probably the best friends of some ones cousins aunts kids."

"Everyone needs their big break somewhere." Sasporilla said positively. "Maybe they'll be great?"

"So ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you Orpheus Manxx, Timpany Munchausen , and Myron Wagtail THE CHOCOLATE FROGS!"

"Myron!!!" Sasporilla yelled and clapped excitedly as the simple trio took the stage.

"Hello Dingle!" Myron said as instruments were cast in. "We are the Chocolate Frogs. We got together tonight just for you and so like a real chocolate frog we might just have one good jump in us."

The music rose out of the stadium speakers was lilting and mystical. The guitars had an almost Middle Eastern sound to them. The keyboards and drums made one sway. The sounds entranced the senses yet reminded Sassy of something, like the pulse of the Inter-Dimensional market streets. The song was the Bazaar, a tale of a woman in the market. Sasporilla knew it was written by Myron and was one of the most beautiful he'd ever written. By the time the song was over she was in tears at it's complex beauty.

Sassy cheered louder than anyone else in the stadium, still after all these years, Myron Wagtails biggest fan.

Sasporilla spent more time watching the sides of the stadium for Myron than the match like Alana. However Sassy never saw Myron or the other members of the Chocolate Frogs leave.

It was in the final minutes of the match when something grabbed her attention. Cody Parsons wrestled the Gunnel from the hands of Donnel O'Rielly in the middle of an open gate between zones eight and nine. Donnel pointed his wand in Cody's face. Cody bent back, like a reed in the wind, an the "SUFFOCATUM" spell flew past her but struck Mirvish Lymron the English Backgate, covering his face with a magical metal mask. Hot riveted onto his face as the young man screamed.

The score was tied at

ENGLAND -5- IRELAND -5-

but if Cody didn't act fast Mirvish Lymron would die. That mask was not just suffocating the young English Backgate. Metal bands shot out the sides and wrapped around the back of his head joining up and began to tighten.

Cody let go of the Gunnel and kicked off Donnel O'Rielly by pushing off her boots from his crotch. She flew with the gravity pull towards Mirvish. Her wand at the ready Cody aimed and cast "NEVIS MALUM SUFFOCATUM!" The blast of blue energy flew from her wand and blasted the mask but it refused to let go. The rivets popped and the bands broke but it hung on to Mirvish's face like it was alive!

Cody flew into the young man and grabbed hold of him, wrapping herself around him as tightly as she could. Cody began to help him tug and pull at the mask which fought not to be removed. It wasn't a bloody spell! They'd been tricked! It was some kind of creature from another world stuck inside an old modified death eater mask! Bloody cheek!

"Thank you." Mirvish coughed and gagged as Cody took the mask and headed off angrily.

"GOAL!"

The whistle blew. The match was over. Ireland had won. The referee had to get between Cody and Donnel as the English Forward was likely to tear the big mans head clean off.

"You'd put a mans life at risk to win a game?" Cody yelled.

"We've all done it." Donnel said.

"What is this creature?" Cody demanded. "Is it safe? What world does it bloody come from? It looks like a hand with a bloody tail!"

"Relax." Donnel smiled. "It's just a bit a fun."

"I've not seen the creature before," The referee said, "but the maneuver is well within the rules and deemed legal." The crowd cheered.

"Fine." Cody smiled. Throwing the mask at Donnel O'Rielly and cast "SUFFOCATUM!" The mask attached firmly. "Fair is fair then."

In the stands Sasporilla and Alana were walking out with the excited crowd.

"That was the most amazing Spharx match I've seen in my life!" Alan exclaimed.

"It was good." Sasporilla said. "I enjoyed it."

"Just enjoyed?" Alana said amazed. "It was exciting! It was magical! It was... was... SPHARX AT IT'S BEST!"

"It was the best Spharx match I've ever seen!" Sasporilla smiled enthusiastically.

"You better believe it." Alana agreed. "Wait! It's the only Sph..."

"Where do we have to meet your friend Cody?" Sassy laughed.

"Oh right!" Alana said. "In front of the stadium where we met her."

It took almost twenty minutes for the girls to get out of the stadium and back to the place where they were to rendezvous with the captain of the English team. They waited patiently at the large cement pillar, by gate C as the crowds passed by. An old security guard checked to see that there weren't any large groups of fans about and opened the gate a small crack for Cody to sneak through.

"Cheers Mike." Cody said slipping on a simple blue jacket over her white button down top. In a pair of old comfortable jeans she fit in with the other young ladies around. No one recognized her as the popular Captain of England's Spharx Team.

"Hi guys." Cody smiled as she walked over.

"Hey Cody!" Alana waved.

"Where are we gonna hang?" Cody asked.

"I thought we could hit Pixie's Pepperoni Palace?" Alana mused.

"That sounds like an adventure." Sasporilla smiled.

"Best pizza in the festival grounds." Cody said. "And wait 'til you meet pix! You'll bloody love her!"

Pixie's Pizza Palace was a four spired pavilion with a blue and bronze roof and walls. It's old fashioned round tables with checked table cloths still had a very modern vibe. It was just after seven when the girls arrived and the dinner rush was waning.

"Peter!" Cody smiled as she walked up to the sloth matradee with a dark mullet and mustache.

"Mmmmssssss.....Coooooooddddddyyyyyy." the sloth slowly smiled back.

"We'll save you the time old friend." Cody said grabbing three menus. "Table for three, you give us a number and we'll seat ourselves!"

"Rrrrrriiiiiiggggghhhhhhtttttt!" The sloth said turning painfully slow to look at the house, then painfully slow back to reach into his greeter podium and get out his glasses to put on.

"Ttttttaaaaaaaabbbbblllllleeeeeee..... sssssdiiiiixxxxxxxxxxxxx.....ttttttteeeeeeeeeennnnnnnnnn." Peter the sloth said.

"Cheers mate." Cody said.

"Thank you Peter." Alana said.

"Thank you very much." Sasporilla smiled politely as she walked by, found their table, hung up their coats and bags on the magically secured private coat hanger, and sat.

"What a unique matradee." Sasporilla said. "A clumber sloth."

"Oh no he's a muggle." Alana said.

"What?" Sasporilla gasped shocked.

"Indeed he is!" The bright smiling, pale caramel skinned face of Pixie herself! "He's my cousin, three times removed."

"How can you do that to him?" Sasporilla said outraged.

"Now, now." Pixie said pulling up a chair, sitting down and folding up her white cane. Sassy hadn't noticed her eyes were a bit off. "Let's not get all judgey! He's happier that way and he sure works faster."

"True that." Cody laughed.

"Really?" Sasporilla asked.

"He always dreamed of being an animal of some kind." Pixie smiled.

"And we'd still be standing there, tenth in line while he finished reading his comic book." Alana said.

"My apologies for jumping to conclusions." Sasporilla said holding out her hand.

"A witch with a social conscience, who can admit when she's wrong!" Pixie smiled taking Sassy's hand. "I accept. Now wait, pink hair... are you? No. Sasporilla Bucket from the battle of Hogwarts chocolate frog card?"

"Yes." Sassy blushed rather embarrassed.

"That she is!" Alana smiled.

"No kidding?" Cody said.

"Well then I've found my table for the night!" Pixie said pulling over a chair and taking a seat at their table. She lifted up her discreet white cane and folded it up, slipping it into her apron. For the first time Sasporilla noticed Pixie's eyes were a bit off.

"Do you like them?" Pixie smiled looking at Sasporilla who didn't realize she was staring rudely.

"I'm so sorry." Sassy apologized.

"Don't be." Pixie laughed. "I'm just taking the piss. I'm partially blind but I can see well enough to see that Jimmy had better serve table three soon or he'll have my foot in his butt!!!"

"Sorry mam!" Jimmy called.

"I may be handicapped, but I never let it stop me from doing what I want to do in life! Anyone who does, is just making up excuses!" Pixie called over her favourite waiter, "Benny! We have A Famous carnival performer, a Spharx Athlete and a famous veteran of the battle of Hogwarts! The parties over here tonight! What can we get you? Your meal is on Pixie's Pizza Palace... please don't eat me out of house and home. I should formally introduce myself, I'm Rhianna. People call me Rhi, Pixie or Pix."

"Nice to meet you Rhi." Sassy said. "Sasporilla Bucket, friends call me Sassy."

"Sassy it is then!" Pixie smiled brightly. "I heard Myron Wagtail made an appearance at game tonight...."

The girls talked for hours like the dearest of old friend. They ate more pizza than was comfortable but laughed most of the calories off. They danced to songs on the juke box and were amazed when at one point Jorge showed up and took the dance floor to a Latin tune.

"Jorge!?" Sassy said surprised.

"You know that bird?" Pixie asked. "He dances here every night."

"Yes." Alana laughed watching Jorge shake and shimmy. "That's her owl."

"A flamingo is her owl?" Cody asked.

"Yes." Sasporilla said stiffly and proudly then all burst into laughter.

"You are one of a kind Sasporilla Bucket." Cody Parsons said as they all joined in a conga line.

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It was late by the time the time Sasporilla, Alana and Cody wandered back to the Carnival du Mystique. Alana had invited Cody to spend the night but the talented Spharx captain was understandably trepidacious given her previous relationship with Alan's cousin.

"Look Alana I'm not saying that he's pure evil incarnate." Cody said. "I'm just saying he's unredeemable fekker that will never change and your better off getting as far away from him as you can! Now that the troubles are over."

"No Cody, I think he's turned it around." Alana insisted. "He's worked hard to build this act and he's keepin' it all above board. I think Lester's gone honest."

"I think you're to trusting." Cody said. "If he's making it look like he's honest over here then just like his act he's making something else disappear that's not legally his over here. He's a fekker and he'll never be any good!"

"So you won't stay over then?" Alana asked.

"No." Cody said hugging her friend good-bye. "Nice seeing you again Alana. We'll get together again next time we're near each other."

"Send you an owl." Alana smiled widely.

"Nice to meet you too Sassy." Cody said holding out her hand.

"Bring it in." Sasporilla said taking Cody's hand and pulling the girl in for a hug. "It was lovely to meet you Cody."

"It was great to meet you to!" Cody smiled. "Well I best get back. Early morning training and I want to look in on Mirvish. He had a touch of a tummy ache."

Cody waved as she disappeared back into the festival crowds. Sasporilla and Alana walked into the Carnival du Mystique. People were rushing towards the Devil's Fork. Some where in the gathering crowd a woman was screaming. Sasporilla and Alana ran towards the commotion.

A woman holding a small child and a torn back pack stood inconsolably frantic next to the Devil's Fork Ride operator. Mr.Beauxchamps ran up demanding answers. "What has happened?"

"My child is missing!" The mother screamed.

"Did the child fall off the ride?" Beauxchamps asked?

"A monster took my sister." The little boy started to cry.

"Not again." Mr.Beauxchamps said.



## Chapter 16

Mr.Beauxchamps quietly pulled the distraught mother and her surviving child back to the Carnivals office caravan for a cup of tea. The skinny ride operator of the Devils Fork stood to one side nervously chewing his dirty nails. Another missing rider! This was not something he needed.

Ms.Copelinzki rolled in a slightly tarnished tea service cart with the good china, a fresh pot of tea and a nice plate faery cakes and biscuit's.

"There we are." Mr.Beauxchamps said. "A nice cup of tea while we sort all of this out."

"Tea?" The mother asked. "Tea? My child is in danger!"

"No, no, no! My dear I assure you, your child is fine." Mr.Beauxchamps tried to reassure her. "I'm sure the child is perfectly safe, and the monster your other child saw was just one of the special effects."

Sasporilla was shown inside by Merlaxn, Nancy Nightingale reluctantly in tow.

"Uncle." Merlaxn said. "The Bucket girl and the Mirror woman have arrived."

"Thank you Merlaxn." Mr.Beauxchamps said. "Thank you for coming at my request Ms.Nightingale."

"Ms.Bucket said it was a matter of some urgency?" Nancy Nightingale asked.

"Yes. One moment." Old Beauxchamps said looking at the distraught mother who was now fast asleep. Her child sleeping comfortably in her arms. "Wonderful job as always Ms.Copelinzki!"

"Sleeping draught in the faery cakes always works." Ms.Copelinzki said wheeling out the tea service.

"Yes Ms.Nightingale am I to understand you are a magizoologist?" Mr.Beauxchamps asked.

"I am a professor of care of magical creatures at Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry." Nancy said proudly. "As well as a fully trained and magizoologist with a class "B" ministry license awaiting my class "A" which they claim is in the owl post!"

"Wonderful." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled. "You see, we have a small SPIDER problem."

"A spider?" Sasporilla gasped.

"Ms.Bucket informed a child was missing inside the Devil's Fork." Nancy Nightingale said seriously. "You suspect an Acromantula?"

"Not exactly." Mr.Beauxchamps said handing the Raven-haired, rubenesque magizoologist the torn backpack. Nancy investigated the tears in the fabric. Nancy pulled a tape measure from her bag to check the bite radius versus what she knew of the Acromantula standard mandible

"Odd." Nancy said pulling a small vial from her bag and slipping a strand of the torn nap sack fabric inside. "ZEIGEMIR!" Nancy cast. Wisps of gray with subtle brown and green intertwined spun forth until they filled the tube. "Outrageous!"

"What have you discovered Nancy?" Sasporilla asked. "What kind of Giant spider is it?"

"Linyphidae" Nancy scoffed. "A common money spider that someone has placed a growth spell on. Very irresponsible! The spider is not poisonous but should be returned to it's original size."

"In there lay the rub don't it?" The Ride operator snorted.

"What do you mean?" Sasporilla asked.

"The Devil's fork, Ms.Bucket," Mr.Beauxchamps began, "is actually a very finely built scale model inside the cabinet. You see, one must pass through a miniaturization spell to ride the ride and then is returned to normal size at the end."

"Here!" The ride operator protested. "Them's my trade secrets!"

"Shut up!" Mr.Beauxchamps said tersely. "I grow tired of your whining! I don't see you first in line to volunteer to help this child?"

"So how did the spider get in?" Sasporilla asked. "I mean, wouldn't it have been shrunk down?"

"Not if the ride cabinet is in poor repair." Nancy said looking at the operator with callous judgment. "It could slip in through a hole or a crack anywhere! Very careless!"

"Well we're so glad that we have an expert such as yourself to head up this rescue team!" Mr.Beauxchamps smiled at Nancy Nightingale.

"Do you really think I can be so easily manipulated or charmed into doing what you ask old man?" Nancy smirked with amusement raising one eyebrow.

"One could only have hoped." Mr.Beauxchamps sighed.

"Buy a can of muggle bug spray and spritz it in the hole." Nancy chuckled. "Your pest problem is solved."

"It could kill the child too." Beauxchamps said.

"Possibly." Nancy sighed in agreement.

Sasporilla checked her wand and double her checked her bag to make sure she had everything she would need for the hunt ahead.

"What do you think you're doin'?" The ride operator asked.

"Frankly I don't think that spider will wait while you popinjay's argue! For goodness sake a child's life is in danger and none of you are being of any help!" Sasporilla hissed. "I'm going in to the Devil's Fork to get her out! Are anyone coming with me?"

"I didn't say I wouldn't help. I simply will not be forced to, nor coerced, charmed or fooled into anything." Nancy Nightingale said turning to Scrutinize the young witch like she hadn't before. Nancy's pursed lips and squinted eyes soon smiled as she realized she liked the brash bravery driven not by ego but by deep caring and kindness. Something very rare indeed. "In fact I insist on helping! You may fail without my knowledge of arachnids. Even those most common."

"Wonderful!" Mr.Beauxchamps said. "Now the we just need one more volunteer for the rescue party???"

Everyone looked at the thin dirty ride operator who smiled nervously through his baked bean teeth. "Don't look at me!"

"I'll go." Merlauxn Beauxchamps said.

"What?" Mr.Beauxchamps asked. "Are you sure?"



"I'm the only other person who knows the inside of the Devil's Fork and how to drive the four-seater. I'll volunteer." Merlaxn insisted.

The four-seater was a unique cart on the track of the Devil's Fork track. As well as having four seats it had both a break and a booster. Its purpose was supposed to be for regular inspection and maintenance but the dust on it suggested it was rarely used for anything less than what it was being rolled out for today, rescue.

"The boy said the spider grabbed her near the big bump." Mr. Beauxchamps said.

"That'll be the fork." The ride operator said. "That's the flat at the bottom of the cabinet. That's where the track uses the enchanted switch to change tracks based on the rider."

"Then that is where we start our hunt." Nancy said climbing aboard followed by Sasporilla. "Driver, if you please." Merlaxn climbed into the back of the cart, the driver's seat, just behind Sasporilla.

"Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen to the wildest roller coaster anywhere in the wizarding world!" The ride operator said turning and pointing to the Devil's fork sign.

"SHUT IT!" The three of them said in unison as the cart began rolling forward into the dark interior of the ride.

"Beauxchamps Entertainment Unlimited takes no responsibility for lost or damaged items, limbs, life or riders as one in seven hundred twenty eight brave souls are never seen again." The ride operator cringed as Mr. Beauxchamps' wand sparked off the side of his head.

"Idiot!" Mr. Beauxchamps growled.

Sasporilla was much more aware of the shrinking spell as she passed through it this time mistaking it for that small quick drop in the dark that made you close your eyes and cringe with anticipation of the big hills to come. The ride down was quite controlled and pleasant. It didn't have that same out of control feel as the wild roller coaster ride she had taken before. For his many faults, Merlaxn Beauxchamps was quite skilled at driving the four-wheeled cart.

"Here we are." Merlaxn said bringing the cart to a stop before on the great flats by the lava lake.

"Is it safe to stop here?" Sassy asked.

"No safer, nor more dangerous than anywhere else." Nancy said. "As far as the spider is concerned."

"What about the lava?" Sasporilla asked. "It tends to go off in geysers!"

Just then a series of geysers erupted from the lake. A spray of lava struck Merlaxn who screamed in agony until he simply couldn't take it any more and started to laugh.

"It's all illusion of course." Merlaxn laughed waving his wand and dispelling the illusion of the floor leaving nothing but deep rutted rock covered surface. "Welcome to the dusty floor of an old wooden cabinet."

Sasporilla picked up a rock and realized for the first time it was indeed a grain of dust, from a different perspective.

"If this is the place the spider attacked then we should find some sort of clue." Nancy said.

"Like blood or bones?" Merlaxn asked.

"No." Nancy said looking. "The spider will not kill the child. Right away. It took the child, but it wants to age it, like a steak, or fine wine, before eating it."

"Her." Sasporilla insisted. "We are talking of a human being, not an it!"

"No offence meant Ms. Bucket." Nancy said. "But you would do the child a better service helping us look for clues than showing outrage on her behalf."

"Yes." Sasporilla huffed. "I suppose you're right."

Sasporilla found the first clue, a scrap of torn knapsack about two hundred meters from the track. This led Nancy to what she needed, tracks!

Nancy Nightingale took detailed measurements of the size of the tracks and the distance between legs and strides. A quick check against her slide ruler confirmed what she had feared.

"We are roughly one millimeter tall." Nancy said matter-of-factly. "The spider is not small as I'd hoped. It is almost five millimeters long in the body. With a ten millimeter radius leg span. This means we are looking for a cupboard spider, and they like nooks, crannies and hidey holes."

"Great." Merlaxn said. "So we have a big spider that's probably above us in the corners?"

"Doubtful." Sasporilla said. "Those tracks lead off to those mountains over there. How much do you want to bet there are caves in those mountains?"

"Good deduction." Nancy smiled. "Those MOUNTAINS though, are not actually mountains. They are, if I am correct, wood splinters, shavings and rough edging from a cheap patch job from an earlier hole. Probably near where the spider came in, in the first place."

"There's no way we can take the cart there with out a track." Merlaxn said.

"Impractical anyway." Nancy said. "The cart on a track would hinder our freedom of ability to follow the spiders tracks back to its layer."

"So we're walking." Sasporilla sighed.

"Hiking!" Nancy smiled casting VALDAREE changing her wand into a walking stick as the three of them set off across the dusty plains.

The walk was long and seemed to take hours though Sasporilla knew they were only traveling a few meters at the very farthest. The mountains were spikey and sharp splintered wood. The rush of warm summer air blew in from around the back of the mountain side.

"The hole to the outside is behind there." Nancy pointed.

Sasporilla pulled her wand and headed carefully around the side, Merlaxn Beauxchamps close behind her. Keeping one eye on the nooks and crannies of the rocks above them they found the hole where the spider came in. It was likely only the size of a knut but it seemed big enough for a giant riding a dragon to fly through.

"CABINET REPAIRO!" Sasporilla cast but with little effect. Sasporilla looked at her wand curiously. "CABINET REPAIRO!"

"The miniaturization spell has had a negative effect on the wands." Merlaxn said. "I was afraid of that."

"We're in for a tough time without our wands." Sassy said.

"Don't be scared." Merlaxn smiled with that uncomfortable Cheshire grin. "I'll protect you."

By the time they returned to Nancy Nightingale, the raven-haired witch had set up her telcaspotater, a large telescope which twisted to weird rounded curves as it extended and climbed the mountain side.

"We've found the hole that was most likely the point of entry." Sasporilla said.

"Very good." Nancy said. "If you could repair it with a repairo spell I'd be amazed. Our minimization would have had an effect on our wands. At least on certain kinds of spells. I should have anticipated this. Oh well to late now. All spells cast as Maxima to get any result at all."

"Good advice." Merlaxn said. "Of course you wouldn't have had to if you'd protected your wands with a simple "PRAESIDIA" spell.

Sasporilla nudged Nancy, who took her eye off the telcaspotater, and saw Merlaxn Beauxchamps standing twenty feet away pointing his wand at them menacingly.

"What is the meaning of this?" Nancy Nightingale demanded. "We've no time for games! We have a child to find!"

"I couldn't care less about the brat." Merlaxn said. "All I know is you keep getting in the way. Putting your nose where it doesn't belong!"

"Me?" Nancy asked surprised.

"Not you," Merlaxn rolled his eyes looking to Sasporilla, "Her!"

Sasporilla stood wand at the ready.

"What you gonna do with that silly girl?" the over confident young man belly laugh. "Avada Ked..."

Sasporilla snapped her fingers and blasted Merlaxn back through the air knocking his head hard into the wood mountain, and falling to the floor unconscious.

"Taking a cocky jerk by surprise." Sassy huffed with relief.

"Nicely done Ms.Bucket." Nancy laughed amused. "A bit of elven magic. That is something they couldn't minimize in you."

"You'd be surprised Nancy." Sassy said rubbing the scar on her arm. "Help me tie him up."

The telcaspotater found spiders cave far up the mountain side. To far up the steep wooden cliff for either Sasporilla or Nancy to climb. Sasporilla wished she'd brought her broom. The Triumphant twelve hundred X would make short work of getting her up there.

"Any Ideas on how to get us up there?" Sassy asked.

"My dear what exactly did you bring in that rescue bag of yours?" Nancy asked.

"First aid kit, chocolate bars, ball of string, chalk, a knife. Things, incase we need them." Sasporilla said.

"Yes." Nancy smiled. "All of which are good in certain situations. When rescuing a damsel from a minatour in a maze or a diabetic hiker on a muggle hiking path."

"I was really counting more on my wand." Sasporilla said.

"That is the problem with Hogwarts." Nancy shook her head as she dug into her bag rummaging for two small vials of orange liquid. "My Severus used to say Hogwarts taught the children to be to reliant on their wands and not reliant enough on their other skills! Here."

Nancy shoved a bottle of orange liquid into Sassy's hand. "What's this?"

"FLUITO potion." Nancy Nightingale said. "The distilled essence of dirigible plums that will get us, hopefully, all the way up to that cave. Shake the vial, pull the cork, and drink it fast. The effects are sudden and don't last long."

"Bottoms up!" Sasporilla said as both women shook the vials, pulled the corks and drank down the rather sweet viscous liquid. The potions effects made Sasporilla a little giddy and light headed, but she wasn't expecting it to turn her skin bright orange. The two women grabbed onto each other as they floated up the mountain side. Accelerating quicker and quicker as they ascended. Nancy pointed to the cave as they approached. There was no mistaking the web covered surfaces near the entrance.

The women showed no sign of slowing as they started to pass by the caves mouth. Sasporilla drew her wand and cast "FLAGELLO MAXIMA". Her wand turned into a whip and lashed out catching hold of a shard of wood near the entrance. Sasporilla and Nancy pulled each other onto the cliff side by the cave opening as the orange colour drained from their skin, they settled to the wood beneath their feet as the potion wore off.

"I don't feel we have much time." Nancy Nightingale said digging out another small vial from her bag. "If my theory is correct that spider didn't come into the safety of this cabinet to feed but to lay its eggs."

"You think there may be more of them?" Sasporilla asked frightened by the thought of hundreds of giant baby spiders.

"Not yet." Nancy said. "and that is a very good thing. That is why I believe the girl is alive."

"Why?" Sasporilla asked.

"The spider didn't intend to eat the girl." The Magizoologist said. "Arachnids intent is to save it for her young, as sustenance for after they have eaten her."

"Eaten her?" Sasporilla gasped.

"Yes." Nancy said. "The mother spider offers herself up as the first food source for her newly hatched young."

"That's horrific!" Sasporilla shouted alerting the spider to their presence.

"Indeed." Nancy said drinking down the vial of CHAMELIUM VANISHESSIUM. A camouflage potion that worked not unlike that of the Chameleon and the cuttlefish.

"What?" Sasporilla gasped. "What are you doing.?"

"Hoping that your reputation to speak with natural beasts included insects." Nancy said. "So you might distract the creature while I retrieve the girl."

The rocks began to shudder and roll as the long spiked legs of the spider stepped out of the cave onto the ledge.

"Who is there?" The spider hissed.

"I am there." Sasporilla Bucket said. "Here, I mean, I'm here."

"And who are you." The spider asked pulling itself fully into the light of day. The sheer size of the monster was terrifying to the pink haired witch.

"I'm just a tiny witch." Sasporilla stammered, "come to look for the child you took."

"More food for my children." The spider said. "Thank you for coming to me, rather than me having to hunt you down."

"Before you decide to take me for food." Sasporilla said, "please just hear me out..."

Nancy Nightingale scanned the inside of the web filled cave for any signs of the girl. Everywhere she moved were clusters of egg pods supported in gossamer bags high above. Nancy was extra careful not to get stuck on a web. The slightest trip or pull would alert the spider to her presence in the cave. Something in the web moved. A sack shaped like a hammock wiggled above.

"Banko!" Nancy smiled. "There you are! I will have to make this very quick and precise."

Nancy dug out a small knife, a length of rope and three different vials of potions from her bag. She just hoped that Sasporilla could hold the attention of the spider long enough.

"...and that is why we need to bring that little girl back to the mother who loves her." Sasporilla said.

"Perhaps you could bring her mother and brother here for my babies to feast upon." The spider hissed. "Well, I doubt you would. If I allow you to leave with the promise to bring back the mother you would likely never return."

"If I asked you to take your eggs and leave here," Sasporilla asked, "Would you? Peacefully?"

"No." The spider answered honestly.

"I can't allow you or your babies to present a threat to my kind." Sasporilla said. "But I don't want to harm you, or your children."

"Then we are finished talking tiny witch." The spider said as it leaped forward.

Sasporilla cast a petrification spell but it had no effect. The spider grabbed Sasporilla in its mandibles and held her with its front two legs.

"You talk well little witch." The spider hissed. "But did you think you could distract me while the other one stole my babies food?"

The spider slammed her back leg down, pinning Nancy against the cave entrance, the girl slung over her shoulder.

"Let us go!" Sasporilla demanded struggling.

"Or what?" The spider asked. "In nature, tiny witch, there are only predators and prey."

The air began to swirl around the cliff. The spider sensed something changed around her.

"There is much more to nature than predator and prey. There is wind!" Sasporilla said blowing the spiders leg free of Nancy Nightingale. Nancy tossed a vial to the ground which cracked open and a mist flew into the air forming a barrier over her and the child. Sasporilla let go of the spiders front legs and opened her hands to reveal natures flame. "There is also FIRE!"

The spider fought. Tried to bite the tiny witches head off with its powerful mandibles, but the pink haired creature floated in the air in a storm cloud, like a micro thunderstorm pushing the arachnid back with gale force winds.

"You may rescue the child," the spider laughed, "but my children will feed on your kind for generations."

"NO!" Sasporilla screamed blasting the spider, the cave, the eggs and the back side of the cabinet into firey splinters. Nancy Nightingale dispelled the barrier and carried the child, slung over her shoulder in the spider silk cocoon, over to Sasporilla who floated upon the air her eyes glowing with flame.

"Ok Mutter Natur," Nancy said, "time to calm down and get this child to safety."

"I didn't want to harm the spider or it's children." Sasporilla said the fire beginning to with draw within her.

"It was never my intent to harm it either." Nancy said. "I wish there had been a way to capture it and move it and its eggs out. Peacefully."

"I could have." Sasporilla said. "I should have. The spider made me very angry. When it threatened to continue the killing for generations, I lost my temper."

"You chose a side." Nancy said. "Like you did in the battle of Hogwarts. You did what you felt had to be done. Do what has to be done now, harness some of that immense power and get us down."

Sasporilla and Nancy road the winds down the cliff side lime leaves on the wind. They touched down softly to the rocky floor. Merlauxn Beauxchamps sat up, still bound and very confused.

"Please help me." Merlauxn pleaded. "I'm not sure where I am or how I got here, but my name is Merlauxn Beauxchamps. I was on my way to join my uncles carnival and someone must have jumped me."

"What?" Sasporilla asked. "You joined the carnival months ago. You don't remember any of it?"

Merlauxn searched his thoughts. "No."

"So you don't remember trying to kill us?" Nancy asked.

"I what?" Merlauxn ask shocked. "I could never? Would never!"

"Convenient." Sassy said with reserving doubt as she pulled the small knife from her bag.

"What are you going to do with that?" Merlauxn asked. "Please don't hurt me!"

Sasporilla cut the bindings on the young mans feet, leaving his hands bound behind his back.

"The cart is that way. Start walking." Sassy said to Merlauxn as she turned to Nancy. "How is the girl?"

"She's fine." Nancy said. "I gave her a healing potion that will make her good as new by the time we get back. My Severus taught me to brew potions for any event."

"Yes." Sassy smiled. "I remember his class. There will be no foolish wand waving in my class!"

"I can teach you how to bewitch the mind and ensnare the senses." Nancy smiled doing her best Severus impression.

"I can tell you how to bottle fame, brew glory!"

"Even put a stopper in..." Sasporilla cut herself off. "We should get going."

The walk back was very revealing about the true nature of Merlauxn Beauxchamps. He did not seem like the same over confident jerk he had been all summer. He seemed younger, less worldly, more innocent, just different. The cart was where they had left it, on the track at the junction. Nancy cut the girl from the spiders web and sat her in the seat next to her. Sasporilla sat Merlauxn in the far back seat next to her.

"I don't suppose you recall how this contraption works?" Sassy asked him.

"No." Merlaxn said. "Did I know how before?"

"It's a good thing I paid attention." Sasporilla said. "I have some idea how it works. I do recommend everyone strap in though."

Sassy new the thrust and knew the break. She was unsure at what some of these other things did. As it was the track at the fork was not shifting tracks. There were four levers on the control panel of the cart. Sasporilla took the chance and pulled back one. The right fork shifted over.

"Got it." Sassy smiled resetting the lever and pulling the left lever.

Sure enough the left fork track shifted over. That left two levers. One should smoothly connect the center track. Sasporilla knew she should go with her first instinct, so she pulled back the lever on the right.

The ground began to shake and rumble. Rumble. Rumble. Rumble. Rumble. The sound started to get louder. A thunderous boom. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! Then they saw it. The lava giant roared, reached down and grabbed the cart and lifted it high into the air.

"What did you do?" Nancy yelled.

"I pulled a lever!" Sasporilla said pulling her wand and dropping it in the shaking cart.

The behemoth carried them quickly across the landscape and placed them onto the upper track, giving them a brisk shove up and out. The riders closed their eyes as they hit the wall of black. When they opened them they were safely outside the ride.

The girls mother ran to the side of the cart and scooped her daughter into her arms.

"Mommy!" The girl cried.

"I told you." Mr.Beauxchamps said. "All would is fine."

"I think you will find a cricket ball sized hole in the back of your cabinet." Nancy Nightingale said grabbing her bag and heading back to the house of mirrors.

"Mr.Beauxchamps." Sasporilla said handing over Merlaxn still tied up to his uncle. "You have a problem with your nephew. He tried to kill us in there, but claims now that he remembers nothing."

."What?" Mr.Beauxchamps asked shocked and dismayed. "I shall summon the aurors and I promise we WILL get to the bottom of this. Something very crooked is going on around here."

Sasporilla returned to her caravan tired, battered and bruised. It had been a hard long day that became an even harder and longer night. The sun was just starting to break on the golden horizon. Sasporilla stopped to watch the colours through the fog of her own exhaustion. It was a beautiful image in this last morning of the festival.

"I really must get going." A mans voice said quietly from just inside the front of Agneses tent.

"I'll miss you." Agnes said.

"We'll see each other again soon." The familiar male voice said.

Sasporilla, now curious stood on her front stepped to see who it was. There was a sound of a very passionate kiss and Agnes stepped out into the morning air in her silk robe. She knew Sasporilla was standing there and smiled.

"All clear." Agnes said quietly.

"Good." Myron Wagtail said tip toeing out. "Don't want to have to explain to..."

"Sasporilla why you're sleeping with a girl much younger than you?" Sassy laughed with mock judgment, "or why your sleeping with one of my friends?"

"I thought you said it was all clear???" Myron asked.

"Really?" Agnes laughed. "You would trust a blind lookout?"

"Sasporilla let me explain." Myron said.

Sassy walked over to her friend and gave him a big hug.

"Myron you don't owe me an explanation." Sasporilla said. "You are wonderful, Agnes is wonderful. You have my blessing. I'm dead tired. I love you both. Good night!"



## Chapter 17

The Carnival du Mystique opened its gates in George Square, Glasgow Scotland. As always, the first paying customer through the front gates was Nancy Nightingale. The rubenesque, raven-haired witch shuffled across the carnival grounds in her flowing green robes. She had plenty of food, drink and other supplies to last the weekend. Sasporilla Bucket waited for Nancy on the front steps of the hall of mirrors. The Magizoologists standard weekend destination. A big sign hung on the locked door behind her reading "CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE."

"What is the meaning of this?" Nancy demanded.

"I've been waiting for you." Sassy said. "I need to take you someplace. We need to talk."

"What you need to do is let me in there!" Nancy Nightingale insisted, her tone starting to take on a hint of panic.

"Please Sasporilla I'm begging of you. I must see my Severus."

"I know." Sasporilla said. "But he's not in there any more. The mirror has been sold."

"WHAT?!" Nancy cried. "WHEN? WHY? TO WHO?"

"Don't worry." Sasporilla said realizing she was doing nothing to calm the distraught woman. "It's with friends. Safe. I'll take you too it now, if you'll come with me?"

Nancy clutched her bag tight to her chest and nodded trying hard to hold back her panic and tears.

"Take my hand." Sasporilla said to Nancy. "Hold on tight."

In a flash the two young witches disappeared from the carnival and reappeared outside a small farming cottage with an old style thatched roof, on the outskirts of Hogsmeade.

"I know this cottage." Nancy said. "Why are we here?"

"This is where the mirror is, for now." Sasporilla said opening the front door and offering the first entry to Nancy Nightingale. "After you."

Nancy stepped inside. The entire cottage was visible from the front door. The kitchen was no more than a stove and cupboard with a table. The smell of fresh baked apple strudel was a pleasant surprise. A friend had worked very hard to bake it for her, knowing it was her favourite. He'd wanted to make her feel comfortable as soon as she walked through the door. The fire place, a book case and oversized chair was The entirety of the living room. Narwell sat in the chair with a look of concern on his face, the mirror beside him covered with a blanket.

Nancy ran over to the mirror and ripped the blanket off. It showed only her reelection. She placed her face against the glass, as if to hug it.

"It is all right mine liebchen." Nancy said. "I'm here Severus. You're safe."

"Yes professor Snape." Sasporilla Bucket said. "You are perfectly safe here. Please come out."

In the mirrors reflection, professor Severus Snape walked into view and stood before them.

"How did you know?" Professor Snape asked.

"There was no history of a precursor or prototype to the mirror of Erisad." Sasporilla said.

"I knew it was inevitable that some insufferable know- it-all would figure it out." Professor Snape said. "Who was it? Miss Granger I suppose?"

"Karry Curtis actually." Sasporilla said proudly.

"Ah yes," Professor Snape snuffed, "and who figured out I was... alive?"

"That would be me professor." Sasporilla said.

"You Ms Bucket?" Nancy Nightingale said surprised. "How did you figure it out?"

"The first year speech." Sasporilla said doing her best professor Snape impersonation. "There will be no foolish wand-waving or silly incantations in this class. As such, I don't expect many of you to appreciate the subtle science and exact art that is potion-making. However, for those select few who possess, the predisposition... I can teach you how to bewitch the mind and ensnare the senses. I can tell you how to bottle fame, brew glory, and even put A STOPPER IN DEATH. Those words started to echo with me. You see Nancy and I had to save a child from a spider recently, she carried all kinds of potions in that bag of hers. Told me 'HER SEVERUS TAUGHT HER TO BREW POTIONS FOR EVERY EMERGENCY.' Always be prepared, right Nancy?"

"Yes." Nancy said reaching into her bag and pulling out a vial containing a black liquid swirling with gold rivers of fluid. "The Nolite Mortem potion. The potion that puts a stopper in death. I carry a vial everywhere at all times."

"And it was not by chance you had one the night Professor Snape lay dying in the Hogwarts boat house." Sasporilla said. "As I remember you were never more than five meters behind professor Snape at all times, you must have saw the snake attack him?"

"I got there to late to stop it." Nancy said. "I arrived just after he'd passed out from the pain and loss of blood. Potter and his friends ran off thinking Severus dead. Children. I activated the potion and forced it down Severus' throat. I stopped his death seconds before passing but he needed a safe place to hide him. To heal him. The future of Hogwarts, of the Wizarding world was in doubt. I couldn't heal him in the hospital wing or apperate him to St.Mungos! I needed to put him someplace where he could heal and the dark lord couldn't find him. So I used SPECULLO TERRUM."

"You turned the mirror into a mirror world." Sasporilla said. "A safe place for the professor to heal."

"Indeed Miss Bucket." Professor Snape said. "I was overjoyed to hear that the dark lord was defeated and that Hogwarts still stands. I know you will find that hard to believe."

"No professor." Sasporilla said. "We know the part you played to stop Voldemort. You are looked upon as a hero sir, by some."

"Indeed?" Severus Snape said surprised. "I always assumed Nancy was trying to cheer me with such stories."

"Oh Severus." Nancy chuckled.

"Now that you're healed Professor and the wizarding world is clear of Voldemort," Sasporilla asked, "Why stay inside the mirror?"

"He can not leave." Nancy said.

"I'm afraid Ms.Nightingale is quite correct." Professor Snape sighed. "You see as I lay there healing. Taking potions, eating food reflected in the mirror from things brought by Nancy. Slowly healing in a mirror, hidden in a house of mirrors by a girl with a crush on me. A girl who used a simple memory charm to convince others they had always had the mirror in their carnival. A girl who loved me more than anyone or anything. A love I understood so well. A love I thought I could never return to her. Until that day."

"You do love her?" Narwell the giant young man asked standing from his chair ducking near the roof.

"Very much." Severus Snape said. "You see, the only way for me to leave this mirror world is for someone to exchange places with me. However the act must be done not just as an act of selflessness..."

"But as an act of pure love." Nancy said.

"I had to place a barrier spell on the gateway between this world and yours to stop Nancy from sacrificing herself for me." Snape said. "I lost one love in my life. I will be damned if I lose another."

"My Severus." Nancy said touching her hands to the glass against his. A green barrier glowed between them. "I love you so much."

"And I you. Nancy Nightingale." Severus Snape smiled.

"As do I Nancy." Narwell said shoving the raven-haired witch away from the mirror, reaching into the glass and pulling his large form inside as Professor Snape was thrown out into our world.

"Narwell!" Sasporilla cried. "What have you done?"

"An act of love." Narwell smiled, a small tear rolled down his cheek. "I'd rather live in here alone knowing my Nancy has found her true love out there, than us both living miserably out there."

"No Narwell I never meant for you to do something like this!" Nancy cried.

"You brave stupid boy." Severus Snape cursed.

"Just promise you'll come visit me once a week. Maybe on Mondays, after Dinner." Narwell said. "I've left the cottage and the farm to you Nancy."

Narwell walked out of site in the mirror world. Nancy Nightingale cried both tears of sadness and tears of joy in the arms of her Severus.

A knock came to the front door of the cottage. Sasporilla answered the door and showed in the party Karry Curtis had brought from Hogwarts. Head Mistress McGonagall gasped at the site of Professor Snape alive and well.

"Ah ha!" Mr.Filch said. "I knew someone'd nicked the boat house mirror!"



## Chapter 18

Sasporilla wished she could have spent more time with Karry and her precious god son. A short afternoon visit in Hogsmeade simply wasn't long enough. Unfortunately, Sassy had responsibilities back at the Carnival du Mystique. Wands to repair, polish and maintain. People who depended on her services and skills. Some returning every week, others never needing them again. The last stop on Sasporilla's carnival tour was where she had joined, Piccadilly Circus.

Sasporilla Bucket yawned as she sipped a cup of strong coffee. The hot liquid trying to take the chill out of cool morning air. Sassy joined the others at the early morning meeting. Alana and Agnes were already there by the time Sasporilla wandered over.

"Good morning sleepy head." Agnes said.

"Good morning ladies." Sasporilla yawned.

"Good morning Ms.Bucket." The Great Rudolfo, Alana's cousin Lester smiled.

"Can ya believe Lester the lazy lump made it out a bed fer a morning meeting?" Alana laughed.

"It's truly a magical moment!" Sassy smiled.

"Good morning everyone!" Mr.Beauxchamps smiled. "First off I'd like to ask for a volunteer to run the Bubble World Booth. It seems our dear Mrs.Dumbleshire is incapable of running her booth at this time."

A murmur went through the crowd of carnies. Everyone knew just why Mrs.Dumbleshire was unable to perform her duties. The drink was always going to come between her and her responsibilities.

"I would of course be more than happy to look after the Bubble World Booth." The Great Rudolfo offered. "At least until it's time for me to perform!"

"I could always look after the booth." Sasporilla offered. "I've done it before."

"Perhaps Ms.Bucket could Spell me off at show time?" The great Rudolfo asked. "Get it? Spell me off? I love magical humor!"

"That's my cousin Lester everyone." Alana clapped. "The Great Rudolfo, not just an amazing magician but a great comedian! Look out Tommy Teirnan and Giggles the Goblin, you've got stiff competition here!"

"Well if that is good with you Ms.Bucket?"; Mr.Beauxchamps asked as Sassy nodded politely. "Then Lest... um... The Great Rudolfo will take over duties at the Bubble World Booth until six p.m., when Ms. Bucket will take over. Ah yes that reminds me, being this is Ms.Bucket's last weekend with us as she goes of to the University of Avalon next week, please see to it you get your wands serviced by her before she leaves!"

Mr.Beauxchamps continued on with the meeting taking little notice of Lester slipping away through the crowd.

"Cold morning." Agnes said snuggling up beside Sasporilla.

"Indeed it is." Sassy said. "Think the day will heat up soon enough."

"Things are going to be do different around here after tomorrow." Alana said. "With you leaving and all I mean."

"Awww you're sweet." Sasporilla said putting her arms around both her friends, being careful not to spill what coffee she had left. "I'll miss the pair of you, but think of the great things to come, ya?"

Sasporilla had many visitors to her wand booth that morning. She had made only a couple of friends in the Carnival du Mystique, but it seemed she had gained a certain amount of respect amongst the carnies. Some for her loyalty to the Carnival.

Some for her willingness to help out and work hard like everyone else. Mostly it was for her skills at wand repair and maintenance. What ever the reason people found themselves stopping by for one last wand cleaning, tune up or just to out right say their good-byes.

A few of the older ladies brought cookies they'd made. Invites to tea 'Before you leave dear' came in droves and of course a couple of job offers from a few booths who felt they would be better off keeping Sasporilla Bucket in the carnival than allowing her to get away.

The best part of sitting out at her booth all day greeting people was that Sasporilla watched The Great Rudolfo open and close the Bubble World booth no less than two dozen times. Sassy saw all of his comings and goings throughout the day. The most curious of these times were those where he closed up the booth from the inside, leaving just a sign saying 'BACK IN 5' hanging outside. Usually it was more like fifteen to twenty minutes before he unlocked and reopened the booth. No one really seemed to notice or care. No one except the one poor mother he kept waiting with a very anxious four year girl who was eager to get to the bubbles.



"Pinky Bubbles?" The girl asked.

"No dear." The mother said sadly. "It doesn't look like the young lady with pink hair is here today."

"No my dear." The great Rudolfo smiled to the young lady. "But I assure you, that you shall have as much fun bubble casting with the booth in my care."

"I WANT PINKY BUBBLES!!!!" The little girl demanded.

"And you shall have her!" Sasporilla said appearing at the side of the booth. "Hello Layla!"

"Pinky Bubbles!" Layla smiled and ran over to hug the pink haired witch.

"You might as well head off now Rudolfo." Sassy smiled. "I've got you from here."

"Thank you Ms.Bucket." The muggle magician said with a flourish. "I shan't forget your generosity, nor your wondrous sense of timing. I bid you adieu."

Lester was away to get ready for his show. Layla was so excited to get to her bubbles that she was already selecting her wand from the rack.

"Here is the ticket." Lindsey, the child's mother, Lindsey smiled. Interrupting Sasporilla watching Lester as he disappeared off into the carnival crowd.

"Yes of course." Sassy smiled taking the ticket. "You will be my last customer of the day. I'm so happy it's you Layla as you've been my favourite all summer."

"Why are you closing the bubble booth so early?" Lindsey asked.

"Afraid we have found a fox sneaking into our hen house that must me sorted out." Sasporilla said with a small smile touching her finger to the side of her nose.

Lindsey understood. The carnival had a problem with one of its own and they had to sort them out.

"I know it's not my place," Lindsey asked, "but is there anything I can do to help?"

Sasporilla bent down to the floor and uncovered the hatch. "MULTASCOMA" the pink haired witch cast, sealing the hatch with more than a dozen magical padlocks.

"It Wouldn't be fair to put you or your child in harms way." Sasporilla insisted shaking her head.

"I can drop Layla off with her Dad." Lindsey smiled. "And be back in a flash."

"What area of magic are you best trained in?" Sasporilla asked.

"Well I was never that good at anything anyone considered all that useful." Lindsey said a bit embarrassed leaning in to whisper to Sasporilla.

"Perfect!" Sasporilla Smiled . "I might have an Idea."

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It was five minutes to show time. Alana stood in the back with her cart dressed in costume awaiting the always just on time Great Rudolfo. The young magicians assistant checked on the mirrored bowl illusion and Jumbo inside.

"Are you doing ok my darling?" Alana smiled at the tiny elephant giving her a rub behind the ears. "It's just about time."

The music swelled and the clowns came rushing past. It was time.

"Where the hell is he?" Alana said.

A puff of smoke appeared in the center ring. The lights went black. An unfamiliar click and hum quietly filled the air as coloured light swirled around the tent.

"Witches and wizards." A disembodied voice said. "Ladies and gentlemen, and all of you here today. I am... The GREAT RUDOLFO!"

The magician appeared, as if out of thin air, in the center of the ring.

Alana pushed the cart out waving and smiling cursing him under her breath. "Lester what are you playing at?"

"You've come to see a show." The Great Rudolfo only smiled and looked out at his crowd. "To ponder how a muggle could do magic as proficiently as one of you? Or even better???"

The crowd was starting to gasp. Some were confused and others were becoming offended. Alana was becoming very uncomfortable standing out there.

"I'm sure you are growing tired of my words." The Great Rudolfo chuckled. "As am I of your entire stinking wizarding world! Entertaining you like a trained monkey day in, day out. A servant. A jester here for your amusement!"

"Lester!" Alana growled. "Please stop."

"Well I am not amused!!!" The Great Rudolfo yelled!

All went black.

\*\*\*\*\*

The investigators had gone over every inch of Gringotts for months. Every time an alarm went off they'd search for the reasons it went off but never found one. The niffler litter hypothesis was looking more and more credible every day.

The goblins had looked in on so many vaults and saw nothing missing. Why would anyone break into a vault and take nothing. The alarms of many vaults containing muggle paper money, that was used by people who needed to shop between the muggle and wizarding worlds, had been set off. Stacks of paper bills sat there untouched. The Goblins were at a loss as to why. Even nifflers wouldn't be attracted to paper money.

Aurors had started to show a lot more apathy when the alarms sounded recently. There was obviously something wrong with the alarm magic or something trivial was happening but they were obviously were wasting their time at Gringotts. Every one of them believed that except one.

Nick Owlmore was at Gringotts. He had been playing cribbage in security office with Gringotts Goblin Security Chief Grangknott.

"Fifteen - two, fifteen - four, fifteen - six, fifteen - eight," Grangknott smiled, "and twelve is twenty and the jack for one is twenty-one and I win!"

"Again?" Nick laughed. "You've got to be cheating!"

"If I were an auror wouldn't know it." The security officer laughed.

"You miserable little goblin bugger." Nick laughed. "Another game?"

"I think I have time to beat you again before we make another sweep." Grangknott said.

He was wrong. The alarms sounded. Nick and Grangknott weren't far from the source of the alarm.

## **Vault number 3769**

Of all the vaults that had alarms set off, this one had never had its set off before. Though every vault around it, all smaller vaults with little inside, had theirs set off, sometimes more than once.

"You were right." Grangknott said to Nick as the goblin opened the vault. "But I don't know why anyone would want to steal this?"

Inside the vault sat stacks and stacks of muggle paper money. Standing behind was a man with dark hair, dressed in a tuxedo and top hat.

"Freeze!" Nick Owlmore said pointing his wand at the man. "You're under arrest."

"Under arrest." The man said. "You pathetic fools. Your 'MAGIC' has no effect on the likes of me."

Nick Owlmore cast a full petrification and binding spell on the thief but it had no effect. The spell had no effect. Nick took a step forward to enter the vault.

"No!" Grangknott grabbed Nicks arm pointing at glowing red gems in the walls. "The Verillium gems are activated. If you enter you will be vaporized. It's an anti theft measure."

"You see?" The thief laughed. "You're feeble wizard minds and magical abilities are nothing compared to that of the GREAT RUDOLFO!"

The stacks of paper money flared with flame and were gone in a flash. Leaving only a silvery puddle on the floor. Alarms started to go off in vaults all through Gringotts.

"The show has begun." Nick said. "She was right. Follow me."

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While every auror in the UK was descended upon London, no really noticed a rusty old green Lada motoring its way out of the city. Just another old beater of a car driven by a unremarkable muggle down the A3 towards Portsmouth. A light summer rain fell as classic rock crackled on the old car radio.

Lester sang along with 'Riders on the Storm' as he reveled in his in own brilliance. The perfect crime and it had all been done over months and months. The money was long gone now, safely stored in a safe secret spot. Right in plain site. The ministry would be looking all over The Great Rudolfo. They would be lead to the Carnival du Mystique. They would find those who helped him like Merlauxn Beauxchamps and Lloyd the arcade operator. Of course evidence he left would incriminate his cousin Alana. That would tie up a lot of auror resources as he quietly slipped away.

Lester O'Dorful no longer existed. As of today he was Johnathen Kenneith Rowling the third, of the Yorkshire Rowling's. He'd spent months and no small amount of money setting up his new muggle identity. With muggle documents to prove who he was, some of the money stored safely in muggle banks in off shore accounts and properties bought to live out his life in comfort and freedom.

The careful, crafty thief had even taken advantage of his family ties to the magical community. His properties had been cloaked in spells to hide them from the aurors search. He would be rich and free.

Lester pulled into Portsmouth around dusk. Much to his surprise the gates of the Cubic storage facility were locked. Usually the place stayed open until about ten but there were always exceptions. Lester pulled out his pass card and slid it through the security reader. The little light blinked red. He tried it again, and again with frustratingly similar results. Lester pushed the call button on the security box. It took a moment before a very bothered voice came over the intercom.

"What do you want?" The voice a very displeased lady guard asked.

"My access card doesn't seem to work." Lester said trying to keep his temper. "I've a unit inside I must get to and..."

"Gates broke." The lady guards voice said. "Can't you read the bloody sign?"

Lester looked around but saw no sign. His patience was wearing thin.

"I'm afraid there isn't any sign." Lester said tersely.

"What!" The guard yelled in the intercom.

It was only a matter of seconds before a dark haired woman, in a slightly to big yellow uniform came walking out.

"Well this is just bloody wonderful!" Lindsay said doing her best Portsmouth impression. "I just put a new sign out not twenty bloody minutes ago! Bloody kids! It's that little Layla an' her gang o' degenerates again you mark my words! If I get my 'ands on'em I'll..."

"I'm sorry to be rude but I am in a bit of a hurry." Lester poured on the charm. "And I know and lovely lady like yourself must understand my need to get to my unit?"

"Of course sir!" Lindsay said pulling her keys from her belt and turning to open the pedestrian gate. "I do apologize. I lost my head. I'll get you in, in a jiffy."

"No." Lester smiled. "I need to drive in."

"Sorry sir." Lindsay smiled. "Gates busted. You'll need to walk in from here love!"

Lester cursed under his breath, carrying a large duffel bag the whole way down to building two. He turned the corner following the numbers towards unit eighteen. A gang of children played hopscotch in front of his unit. Number eighteen.

"Hey you kids." Lester said. "Bugger off. That's my unit. I need on there."

"Oh yeah?" A roughian about nine stopped and walked over to him. "We're playin' here. You bugger off."

"Look kids." Lester said. "I've had a pretty good day up till now. So you bunch go away and give me a break and I'll go easy on ya."

"Maybe you pay us to go away." The child thug smiled. "OR we don't go so easy on you?"

"Why you little..." Lester growled as the young tough kicked him in the shin as the others knocked him to the ground, grabbed his duffel bag and ran off laughing.

Lester tried to catch up with them but children were to fast and knew the area too well. The magician limped his way back to storage building two, unit eighteen.

Lester reached around under the back of his jacket and small pulled out a pair of bolt cutters.

"That Bucket girl may have gotten her hands on my key." Lester said. "but that's what I get for letting Lloyd talking me into hiding it in the arcade prize boxes."

Lester placed the lock into the bolt cutter and squeezed. It's steel shaft split like butter and fell with a clank to the pavement below. He rolled up the door to reveal a Nineteen fifty-eight Rolls Royce Silver Cloud sitting under a clear tarpaulin, next to a wardrobe.

Lester stepped inside and rolled the door closed. He flipped on a light switch to illuminate the storage unit.

"Everything ran perfectly." Lester laughed. "One quick change of clothes and Lester O'Dorful disappears forever! Just have to drive the car out of the city dressed like a chauffeur. No one will notice. No one will care. No one notices the muggles. Muggles with power don't question rich muggles or those who work for them. A flawless plan." Lester opened the wardrobe as a wand pushed forward and lodged itself in his left nostril.

"I wouldn't say FLAWLESS Lester." Sasporilla Bucket smiled.

Lester slowly raised his hands in surrender. "How did you find me?"

"Unlike the others," Sasporilla said carefully stepping forward out of the wardrobe, "I recognized the storage unit key for what it was the day I pulled it from the prize box."

"How could you?" Lester asked. "You a witch who grew up in a magic town, not a muggle?"

"Yes." Sasporilla said. "One so poor we spent most of our time shopping amongst muggles. You see things. Hear things. Learn things about muggles that way. You see, we're really no different."

"We are so very different." Lester scoffed. "You think your kind are do superior to mine. Well I've news for you, you're not. We are the superior beings! We are the smarter! The greater skilled! Why I robbed your billions from Gringots and they couldn't catch me. They had no clue. They were looking for a litter of stray Niffler pups!"

"I caught you." Sasporilla grinned. "I figured you out. Figured out it was you who was posing as Mrs.Dumbleshires secret Admirer. Sending her a case of wine to keep her just drunk enough that you could have access to her Bubble World booth in the towns where the hatch still connected to the tunnels you needed. Tunnels you discovered that lead behind the walls of Gringots vaults. Walls that, in their hubris, the Goblins believed no muggle would ever breach. You probably found a missing brick, a niffler hole! You just couldn't resist. You knew you couldn't enter the vault, but you didn't have to! Just use some reaching device. As long as it was muggle design and NOT magical. You could cover your tracks by leaving mirror illusions behind. Goblins, aurors, ministry officials, vault owners all saw full vaults. When they were empty. If they tried to touch their money 'POOF!' The mirror bowl illusion went up in flames, leaving only a silver puddle."

"You did figure it out didn't you?" Lester hissed. "Clever, meddling woman."

"Do you think I did it alone?" Sasporilla sneered as Alana stepped out from behind the wardrobe.

"Hello cousin." Alana scowled her cousin angrily. "I can't believe I gave you the benefit of the doubt when everyone else said you were just a gobshyte."

"I'm never meant to disappoint you Alana." Lester said. "I would have sent for you after the heat died down."

"What makes you think I'd want any part of your dirty money?" Alana yelled.

"Don't be that way." Lester tried his most charming of smiles. "We are family after all. Didn't I look after you this far?"

"Don't you even!" Alana yelled. "I do most of the work around the place. I look after everything but the show. Especially you."

"And you've done a lovely job." Lester said placing his hand on the wall.

Neither of them had seen the crafty devil slip back but he was now standing close enough to the far wall to touch it.

"Not another step Lester." Sasporilla insisted.

"Of course not." The poor muggle smiled. "Lester O'Dorful is no match witches such as you."

In a flash of light and puffs of smoke the light of the storage unit shattered and the room went black. The door rolled up and the dim purple twilight flooded in from outside. Lights began to strobe all around. The great Rudolfo in full costume appeared outside.

"And you two witches are no match for THE GREAT RUDOLFO!"

The smoke burned bitter and acrid in the nose and throat. It stung the eyes of Sasporilla and Alana causing their eyes to tear and blur. The dark form of the Great Rudolfo made a sudden lunge out the door. Spells fired and rebounded off storage units as the girls coughed and choked. Trying their best to keep up with the dark form as it disappeared around the far corner of building two.

"All to easy." Lester said stepping from a hidden compartment he'd built into the wall. "Plan B."

Lester stepped behind the wardrobe. He stood against the wall and pushed open a secret door into a passage heading down into the storage facilities long term parking garage. A fine enough place for any common vehicle. That was just what he needed and just what he left here. A simple small nondescript blue compact car.

Lester had left it unlocked. After all, locks finely kept out honest people. He reached up and pulled the keys from the sun visor and slipped them into the ignition. The car kicked and sputtered a bit but finally, after some encouragement and harsh language, came to life.

Lester drove the car quickly through the dimly lit garage, up the ramp and out the southern exit. He was away before the two witches had realized he'd given them the slip.

Lester drove as far as the docks and pulled up by an international freighter. He slipped a knit cap on his head and pulled a duffel bag from the cars boot and slipped it over his shoulder. He proceeded up to a rough looking middle-aged man with a clip board.

"You Christoff?" The man asked.

"Da." Lester said. "Chreestoff Leevoneschekov"

"Yer late." The man growled. "You almost missed the ship. Yer fined a days pay. Get on board."

Lester nodded. His knowledge of Russian consisted of Da, Dosvidania, and Vodka. Just enough to get him on board. The only Russian on who did understand English but spoke none of it. A great cover.

It was hours after they were out to sea Lester decided to step out onto deck and look out across the open ocean as they steamed off towards the Caribbean in the moonlit summer night. A small yellow bird fluttered down to land on the rail next to him. "You're a long way from shore song bird." Lester said quietly, not daring let any of the crew hear him speak English.

The little yellow songbird tipped its head and pleasantly chirped its song so sweet.

"Your stuck here now I'm afraid." Lester said. "You can make a new home in the tropics with me! Someone would likely want to put you in a cage, like me. I'll let you in on a secret though. I'm smarter than them. They'll never catch me. I took Billions from their biggest wizarding bank over a few years. Slowly, patiently. Paid off a few people here or there to look the other way. Like that idiot Lloyd at the arcade. Paid him to use the prize box. He assured me no one would ever win the loot I stashed in that machine, some of it the most priceless of what I stole! And the key to my unit! The first of maze of units that make up my stashes and caches! Anyone with half a brain can figure out where the next one is and where all the money is."

The songbird sang and sang it's beautiful song.

"I just wish that idiot nephew of Beauxchamps had finished the job." Lester growled. "It took a lot to hypnotize him. To brake his will and get him fully under my control and bend him fully to my will. If he had killed the Bucket girl, I wouldn't be here now. Talking to a bird."

"It's ok." The little yellow songbird said smiling as the scene around Lester changed and he found himself paralyzed standing next to the pretty young security guard Lindsey dressed in yellow, her wand pointed at his temple. A crowd of aurors, his Cousin Alana and Sasporilla Bucket standing close by. "You'll be a jail bird soon enough."

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Nick Owlmore placed Lester in stupify shackles. No less than three aurors guarded him. Not since Grindlewald had a prisoner garnered such vigilance. His muggle trickery was something the wizarding community simply didn't understand.

Nick walked over to Lindsey, the young witch in yellow who had volunteered to help. "I wanted to thank you for your assistance."

"Oh it was no trouble." Lindsey smiled brightly. "I've always been rather good with TRUTH CHARMS."

"Lord help your little one if she ever tries to put one over on mum, ay?" Nick smiled.

"Indeed!" Lindsey smiled.

"Perhaps you could find a spot for her in the aurors office?" Sasporilla asked. "After the little ones old enough for school and such of course."

"I could ask." Nick smiled, put a bit on the spot. "If you're interested."

"Well," Lindsey smiled devilishly, "I have always fantasized of working for the ministry."



## Chapter 19

It was a perfectly beautiful summers Sunday morning. The warm late summer sun shone down through the open window of Madame Forwinkles Home For Bewildered and Befuddled Wizard and Witches, on to the rather pale motionless face of Garrek Ollivander.

The old man hadn't moved much for almost two months now. Had some sort of episode in the middle of the night where attendants found him talking to himself. Since then he'd shut down. The old wand maker had become near catatonic. He just sat in his wheelchair, dressed in his night shirt, left sitting on a bed pan in attempts at a morning make.

The door opened to the room. A large pleasant witch named Margaret waddled in.

"Good morning Mr.Ollivander." the lilt of her voice like that of a crow. "Have we been a good boy?" She levitated the old man with her wand and was very pleased with the results found. A quick cast clean up and disposal and she placed Mr.Ollivander back down gently into his chair.

"You've got family scheduled to visit today." Margaret smiled. "We'd best get you dressed to receive! Or would you rather I sent in one of the younger prettier nurses?"

Margaret got the old nightshirt off of him and wondered just when it had been washed last? She sent it off to the laundry with a few other questionable pieces of the old mans apparel. With a wave of her wand a porcelain pitcher filled a decorative basin with luke-warm water. She warmed it a touch with an USTIO spell, then levitated a big sponge and dipped it in.

"Let's give you a nice sponge bath first, yes Mr.Olivander?" Margaret smiled.

Garrek Olivander just floated in the air seemingly unaware and uncaring.

"Poor man." Margaret sighed. "Used to be so full of life. His eyes always had the sparkle. I remember when he sold me my first wand "

Some how Margaret expected him to say Hawthorn, ten and a half inches, Unicorn hair core. However Garrek Olivander said nothing as the sponge scrubbed him clean.

Cleaned and dressed, Margaret wheeled the old man down to the common room for breakfast and then off to the lobby for visitor reception. Many of the residents of Madame Forwinkles Home For Bewildered and Befuddled Wizard and Witches, gathered there on weekends. Strangely few ever seemed to make the time to visit. Of course the residents always made excuses for them, to hide their own heartbreak and disappointment. Most of the staff played along, made life easier for everyone if the patients were calm.

Margaret parked Mr.Ollivander by the big fern at the bottom of the staircase. A picturesque setting for his visitors to find him sitting in peacefully awaiting their arrival.

"There you go Mr.Olivander." Margaret smiled. "I'm sure your family will be along in a tick and you'll have a fun, wonderful day together!"

The front doors of Madame Forwinkles Home For Bewildered and Befuddled Wizard and Witches flew open and in walked Ferdinand Beauxchamps, accompanied by Agnes Mooreshead, the blind fortune teller and The little round showman Arious Extravigonzo.

"I am here to see Garrek Olivander!" Mr.Beauxchamps demanded.

"Name?" A small thin man with a clip board said stepping over from the front desk.

"Ferdinand Beauxchamps!" The old wizard smiled flourishing his robes brushing a couple of young nurses, carrying their brooms and lunches, coming in for their shift. "I beg your pardon."

"No worries." One of the nurses smiled going over to sign in.

"I don't see your name on the expected guests list." The thin man said. "Let me check the big book. One moment."

"One moment?" Ferdinand Beauxchamps boomed. "Why this is an outrage! I'm the greatest wizarding showman of all time! I am not to be kept waiting!"

A young nurse walked up to Mr.Ollivander and took the breaks off his wheelchair.

"It's getting a bit intense in here Mr.Ollivander." the witch nurse smiled. "How's about I take you for a little walk out in the garden?"

The young nurse rolled Mr.Ollivander out the garden door into the bright morning sun. The warm fresh air filled his lungs. The sunshine caressed his skin for the first time in two months. They headed down through the garden past the animal topiaries to the fountain. The nurse turned to look around.

"The coast is clear Mr.Olivander." Sasporilla Bucket smiled.

"Thank you Ms.Bucket." Mr.Ollivander's voice rasped as he stood from the wheelchair, pulling a newly made makeshift wand from underneath the left armrest. "I almost didn't recognize you in that bark haired wig, nurses uniform and hat. Did you bring it?"

"Yes sir." Sasporilla smiled pulling out her wand. "Accio bag!"

Sassy's bag flew from the bushes and into her hands. She reached inside and pulled out the small leather wand maintenance kit Mr.Ollivander had gifted her years before. "Here you go Mr.Ollivander." Sassy said as she handed the kit to the old wand maker.

"I'm so happy I left this in your care Ms.Bucket." Mr.Olivander said placing the kit open on the ground and pointing his wand into it. "ACCIO EMERGENCY BAG!"

The little leather case rumbled and spun on the ground then belched forth a small leather satchel which flew into the old wand makers hands.

"I put this away many years ago." Mr.Ollivander said opening the bag and pulling out a finely crafted wand. "Just in case I should ever find myself in just such a predicament. VESTIMENTA!!!"

Mr.Ollivander spun like a whirlwind as, clothing flew from the bag and replaced the old ones he'd been dressed in. The new clothes were quality made and of fine design.

"Good to see they still fit." Mr.Ollivander smiled.

The Bushes rustled as people burst around the corner. Mr.Ollivander was quick on the draw and cast 'STUPIFY' before looking to discern who the targets were. Luckily Sasporilla was faster and tipped the old mans wand up, causing the spell to fly off into the air.

"It's us!" Ferdinand Beauxchamps Protested. "Save your spells for security. I'm sure they'll be coming soon enough."

"Yes." Agnes Agreed. "I heard them send off a portrait messenger when you 'Weren't on the list' Mr.Beauxchamps."

"Yes I'm sure my useless grandson has already arrived and any other family members eager to pillage my vaults and ruin our families good name!" Mr.Ollivander growled.

"We must make haste." Arious Extravigonzo insisted. "The grounds of the Madame Forwinkles Home are quite large, and it's impossible to apperate in and out during visiting hours."

"Yes." Garrek Ollivander sneered. "Only after bed check and lock down do they lower the grounds defence spells."

"Is everyone in place?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled curiously. "Why?"

"Because here they come!" Agnes said hearing the outraged voices of Moloch Ollivander echoing through the garden.

"If anything has happened to my dear grandfather I will sue! Find him!"

"Ok!" Sasporilla said as she tipped over the wheel chair and closed her eyes. "Hit me."

"CUFERRUM!" Mr.Ollivander cast with regret. The blast of magical energy striking Sasporilla Bucket hard in the face and knocking her to the ground unconscious, her nose bloodied.

"Oh no." Mr.Ollivander cried. "I've killed her."

"She's fine." Ferdinand Beauxchamps reassured. "We must go. Come old friend!"

It was less than a minute before the Home staff found Sasporilla laying by the toppled wheelchair.

"Was this my grand fathers wheel chair?" Moloch Olivander asked kicking at the unconscious nurse attempting to wake her. "You! Where is he?"

"Stop it!" The home director demanded. "I will not have you treat my staff in this manner! Can't you see this poor young woman is hurt?"

"This mess is your responsibility director!" Moloch Olivander hissed. "I pay you personally a lot of money to keep my grandfather here. To keep him safe. To keep EVERYONE but family AWAY FROM HIM!!!"

"You don't need to remind me Moloch Ollivander." The home director growled.

"Then may I suggest," a scowl formed on the young mans face as he started to yell, "YOU PUT THE ENTIRE STAFF ON THE MATTER OF FINDING HIM NOW BEFORE HE ESCAPES!!!"

"You." The director said to an orderly. "Put this nurse in that wheelchair and take her back up to the house. Have her seen to."

"Yes sir." The orderly said picking the unconscious young woman up from the ground and placing her in the wheel chair.

"I see them, Follow me!" Moloch commanded pointing his wand forth as he allowed the others to charge past into action.

A small group of people skulked awkwardly past old dry fountain at the gardens center. The House staff fired spells at the culprits who fell and rolled almost comically aside. Some dove into bushes while others took cover behind rocks. Though at no time did anyone fire any spells back. Another group of people took off faster away to the south.

"Look!" One of the staff shouted. "There they go!"

Then another group dressed the same appeared and ran to the north, and another to the east, and another to the west.

"Oh ho, think your clever do you!" Moloch Ollivander said. "It's a diversion! Split up! Find them! Well old man you're not as clever as I am! I will get your book of secrets!!!!!"

Moloch turned and stood nose to nose with small clown Harry Potter, sitting upon the shoulders of another small clown. The clown Harry smiled and placed a large red nose on Moloch Olivander's nose and gave it a cute honk. The clowns laughed with silent exaggeration. Moloch was not amused and kicked them over, the Harry Potter clown grabbing the red nose as he fell, tumbled and rolled.

"Cursed creatures." Moloch said realizing he sounded decidedly different. "What?"

The grandson of Garrek Ollivander felt his face only to find his nose was missing! The Harry Potter clown held up the red nose and honked it.

"Got your nose." The clown said drolly in a surprisingly deep voice.

With an exasperated wail Moloch Ollivander began casting attack spells wildly. Blasts of green energy flew threw the air making staff members dive out of the way for fear of the their lives. Bombarda spells blew large chunks of earth into the air and rained dirt back down over the burning topiaries and shattered fountain.

"The wonderful thing about a ugly old utility shed," Mr.Beauxchamps whispered as the staff broke off into smaller groups and took off into different directions, "is that no one wants to look at it. So they cast a CAECUS charm on it to hide it from view."

"You don't have your nose and you don't have this!" Garrek Ollivander smiled holding up a small thick leather bound journal.

"What is so important about that book Garrek?" Ferdinand Beauxchamps asked.

"It contains all of the wand making knowledge and secrets of the Ollivander family." Garrek Ollivander said. "But most important it has the true secret to our success! The "magic" that is unique to our craft! Without that, he is nothing."

"He's your grandson Garrek." Mr.Beauxchamps said. "Don't you want him to succeed?"

"If he was a good person? Yes. He's not." Garrek Ollivander scowled. "He's an arrogant, evil, self serving opportunist. He's proven himself to be nothing more than a lazy, useless liar, and bully. The kind of wizard who's best spell is ACCIO and is willing to put his grandfather in a home when in a hopes to kill him off faster and get his hands on the family journal."

"That's horrible Garrek." Ferdinand Beauxchamps said.

"That's life old friend." Garrek Olivander sighed. "How will we know when and if Ms.Bucket lowers the homes defences?"

"The blue sunny afternoon." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled.

"What about it?" Garrek Ollivander asked looking out the shed window at the sunny afternoon sky.

"Sunny summer sky." Agnes chuckled. "Every day in England? I'm blind and I can see the bole in that logic."

"ABSCONDITUM REVELIO!" a voice cast as the shed door opened. Wands pointed in at the men hiding inside. Garrek Ollivander and his companions raised their hands as Moloch Olivander grinned noseless. "Got you."

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Sasporilla Bucket came to as she was being wheeled into the infirmary of the Madame Forwinkles Home For Bewildered and Befuddled Wizard and Witches. She could see from her image in an infirmary mirror that her nose was swollen and bloodied. Her eyes were bruised and blackened. The spell hit her hard enough to convince the staff she was one of them. She sat there limp as if still unconscious, as not to let on that she was now awake and aware."



"I'll just leave you here," The intern said, " and I'll go find the Doctor. He should be around here somewhere." Sasporilla was left alone in the infirmary. With her least swollen eye Sassy looked around the room. The coast was clear. The young witch slipped from the wheelchair and stepped over to the door way. The halls were uniquely calm as most of the staff were either putting residents back in their rooms or out in the gardens, on the hunt for Mr.Olivander.

Sasporilla walked down the hall looking in open doorways as she passed. Her goal was to find the office of magical security for the home. It was made clear from the few secret visits they'd made that Madame Forwinkles Home For Bewildered and Befuddled Wizard and Witches anticipation charm was cast each day by an imbued magical device. One which could be raised and lowered on command. One kept in the security office. The one office Sasporilla had not been able to find.

It was perhaps the strange sound of snoring mixed with yipping or perhaps the fact that there was a distinct cool breeze passing through what should be a solid wall beside her that gave it away, but Sassy stopped and smiled as she raised her wand. "REVELIO"

The wall disappeared and revealed a short corridor into a small room with an open door. A gnoll, a dog man, leaned back in his chair asleep. His security guard cap down over his eyes. He snored loudly, yipping and barking. His paws would occasionally move or his tail wag.

How dog like he was, Sassy thought. However gnolls were not to be trifled with. They were cunning vicious creatures known for their love of hurting humans.

Sasporilla looked around the security office quietly. Besides some dusty old journals and binders on a shelf there was little in the room other than the desk and chair and a crumpled up bunch of blankets and two old cracked ceramic bowls on the floor. A thin jacket hung on what Sassy had at first assumed was a hook on the wall, but after a closer look she realized was the lever to turn the homes magical defence field off..

"Please don't touch that." A voice begged. "If you turn off the magic the Master of the house will beat Rathos."

"Are you Rathos?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." The gnoll said wagging his tail. "Me am Rathos. How you know my name?"

"You told me." Sasporilla said.

"I did?" Rathos asked confused.

"Yes you did." Sassy insisted.

"Did what?" Rathos asked.

"Told me your name!" Sasporilla said rather aggravated.

"Me Rathos." The dog man smiled waging his tail. "I'm a doell."

"A doell?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." Rathos said standing proudly, revealing the chain which held him to the leg of the desk. "My a dog-man. Friend to human, not like gnoll. They thought me a gnoll when they bought me slave. I like people. Like play ball and snuggle."

Sasporilla pulled her wand and the doell cringed.

"No misses witch please no hurt Rathos." The dog man begged.

"Alohamora." Sassy cast softly. The small padlock on the chains that bound the Doell popped open freeing him.

"You free Rathos?" The Doell asked.

"Yes." Sasporilla said. "I must pull this lever. I wouldn't see you beaten for my actions and I hate slavery."

"Thank you!" Rathos howled licking Sasporilla's face as he ran past and down the hall.

Sasporilla pulled the jacket off the lever and tossed it to the floor. She pushed it down hard until it made an audible click. A hum she hadn't really noticed before, began to slow and grow silent deep within the walls.

"BOMBARDA!" Sasporilla cast blowing the lever to bits.

"That should stop them from starting the defences back up again any time soon!" Sasporilla said. stumbling back into the corridor and pulling the alarm.

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Garrek Olivander stepped from the garden shed, the tip of his grandsons wand firmly placed under his chin.

"Keep your wands on his friends." Moloch instructed the house staff. "They are a crafty bunch."

"Sir." One of the nurses said. "The young woman is clearly blind."

"A ruse!" Moloch insisted "I assure you."

"I might not be able to see with my eyes." Agnes Moorthead frowned. "But I assure you I see so much more than you ever will until you learn to open your heart and your mind."

"Yes." Moloch scowled. "I'll bake cookies for deaf orphaned house elves. Now grandfather, give me what is rightfully mine."

Garrek Ollivander slapped the young man hard across the cheek with the journal.

"There are you are." Mr.Ollivander smiled. "Was it everything you thought it would be?"

Moloch's eyes glowed with hate as the tip of his wand glowed with green death but glowed dark again as the young wizard regained his temper amongst the large number of witnesses.

"The Ollivander Family Journal!" Moloch's eyes widened as they set upon his prize. "Ever since I was small I've heard the tales. All the secrets to our family wands are in that book. All the secret magic's. All the formulas. All the secrets to success. All I need to do is read the incantation on the first page and it will all transfer into my head. I will know it all! I will be the next great Ollivander!"

Garrek Ollivander started to giggle like a mischievous elf. The giggle turned to a chuckle then to a heart guffaw!

"Is that what you believe my boy?" Garrek laughed handing his grandson the journal. "Oh my. Please be my guest and read the great secret which is the incantation on the first page!"

Moloch Olivander took the journal. He didn't like being laughed at in his moment of triumph, especially as some of the people around him were his own people. Subordinates he paid to take his orders with out question.

As he opened the journal he saw the many names of the Ollivander's who had owned it from Oliver Ollivander in 382 BC to his grand fathers now. There was room for his name which he assumed which would be magically inscribed upon reading those words on the first page which read...

"Read the book, learn from its knowledge, add to its pages, work hard." At the bottom of this most infuriating message was written simply "You must Love wands."

"What nonsense is this!?" Moloch yelled pushing the journal back into his grandfather's chest. "Are you telling me it's just a book?"

"Not just a book!" Garrek smiled. "The book that can teach you to do things the Ollivander way. If you're willing to take the time to learn! To work hard! I would be willing to teach you if..."

"I don't want to learn it!" Moloch spat venomously. "I want it all! Now! As is my right as your grandson."

Four wizard statues in the outer garden slowly lowered their wands. The sky grayed as a drop of summer rain fell on Moloch's cheek.

"You've taken my shop and my name Moloch Olivander but the family craft must be earned." Garrek Ollivander said. "You've put me here to die to get your hands on a book that you now know will do you no good."

"It will allow my staff to do things the Olivander way." Moloch said. "Hand it over."

"I grow tired of your childish vitriol grandson." Garrek Ollivander sighed. "I will go where I can live out the rest of my life doing what I love in the presence of friends, where I am welcome."

"And just how do you plan to get away?" Moloch grinned evilly.

With a wave of his wand Mr.Olivander apparated away.

"The house defences are down!" One of the staff yelled.

"Moloch." Agnes said holding up the red clown nose. "Got your nose."

Mr.Beauxchamps grasped the blind fortunetellers arm as they apparated away. Green death energy killed everyone in the garden. Only Moloch Ollivander remained.

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Sasporilla walked out of the main entrance of the Madame Forwinkles Home For Bewildered and Befuddled Wizard and Witches carrying her broom. Staff assisted residents out onto the front lawn as the alarm sounded. The administrator tried to regain some sense of order. He had hold of Rathos by the ear and was tugging at the Doell very harshly as if this entire thing was his fault.

"There they are!" Sasporilla pointed pointing everyone's attention towards the gardens as she cast a stupify spell on the horrid administrator. She ran over to doell and grabbed him by the paw.

"Why didn't you run?" Sasporilla asked.

"This bad place." Rathos said. "But Rathos home."

"I can find you a new safe & loving home." Sasporilla said. "If you'll trust me and come with me?"  
"Yes." Rathos panted as they climbed aboard Sasporilla's Triumphant 1200x broom. "Hang on tight."  
"What your name?" Rathos asked as they lifted off into the air.  
"Bucket." Sassy smiled pulling off the wig and nurses cap revealing her natural pink hair beneath. "Sasporilla Bucket."



## Chapter 20

Rathos hung on tight to Sasporilla Bucket as they soared over London on her broom. His tongue flapped excitedly in the wind as they swooped down into the alley in Piccadilly Circus.

"That fun ride Missus Paserilla!" Rathos laughed excitedly. "More? Again?"

"Yes Rathos, very soon." Sassy smiled. "I'm afraid we have to make a stop here first. I have to say goodbye to some friends and pick some one up to come with us. Oh and..."

Sasporilla dug down into her bag looking for an old dog leash she had from years ago, when they had Buster. It had been a while since she had even thought of old Buster. Sassy wondered how her mother's dog was doing? She should make a point of seeing him some time.

"I hate to ask you Rathos but could you please just hold an end of this in your mouth and walk on all fours until we get into the Carnival?" Sasporilla asked pulling the long blue rope lead from her bag.

"Why?" Rathos asked?

"To fool the muggles." Sasporilla said. "So they think your an ordinary dog. So they don't hurt you."

"Ok!" Rathos said taking the leash in his mouth and wagging his tail. "Read ron."

Sasporilla walked across to the ticket booth, broom in one hand Rathos pulling at his tether in the other. In the hustle and bustle of Piccadilly Circus no muggle gave them a second glance.

The box office sat alone in the center of the side walk brightly coloured and brightly lit but unseen and unperceived by the muggles that passed it by. The ticket taker perked up at her approach.

"Step right up young witch and get your ticket to the finest carnival..." the ticket taker stopped abruptly, "Oh! Ms.Bucket! Welcome back. Who is this little big fella?"

"Rathos." The Doell smiled standing and shaking the mans hand. "You know shake a paw! Good boy!"

Sasporilla started laughing as they walked through the turnstiles into the Carnival du Mystique. Rathos' eyes widened at the colours and lights. His ears darted at the sounds. He spun around not knowing what to look at next.

"What is this place?" Rathos asked.

"This is a magical carnival." Sasporilla said. "A place where wizards and witches come to have fun."

"Fun!" The dog man jumped and romped. "Rathos like fun."

"Yes." Sasporilla said. "It's also a lot of hard work. Stay close to me."

Sasporilla found Mr.Beauxchamps, Mr.Ollivander and Ms.Copelinzki gathered by the Carnival du Mystique show caravan with Agnes the blind fortune teller, Myron Wagtail and Alana.

"You'll find it's all there." Mr.Olivander smiled handing Alana a small velvet bag.

"I hope you'll enjoy your new caravan." Alana said. "Oh! Sasporilla! You've made it!"

"I'm glad to see everyone got out ok." Sasporilla smiled as the pink haired witch shook Mr.Ollivander's hand.

"Thank you Ms.Bucket." Garrek Ollivander smiled. "Because of you I have a chance to live out the rest of my life with dignity, doing what love."

"Fixing wands for the Carnival du Mystique!" Ferdinand Beauxchamps proclaimed.

"I'm happy your free of that horrible place Mr.Ollivander." Sasporilla said.

"You are such a brave selfless young woman." Mr.Ollivander said, a tear ran down his cheek. "I would ask one last thing of you."

"Anything sir." Sasporilla smiled.

"Would you take this journal?" Garrek Ollivander asked. "Keep it safe. Hang on to it for an Ollivander who IS worthy of it."

"Won't you need it sir?" Sasporilla asked. "To reference?"

"No my dear." Garrek smiled with that impish smile. "He was right you see. Those words are magic. The book WILL magically transfer everything into your head once you've studied it, learned it, then and only then IF you love wands it will transfer the journal to you... and so much more. I would pass these gifts to you my dear but alas you must be an Ollivander."

"If a worthy Ollivander comes along," Sasporilla said, "a Bucket will see to it they are given the journal. No matter how long it takes."

"Thank you." Garrek Ollivander smiled hugging the young witch and kissing her gently on the cheek. "Thank you for what you do for my family, and for giving me back my dignity."

"No Mr.Ollivander." Sasporilla smiled warmly. "Thank you for giving me my start, and instilling in me the love of wands. I have a gift for you."

Sassy pulled a long thin box from her bag. Mr.Ollivander opened it and gasped.

"Is... it?" Garrek Ollivander asked.

"Yes." Sasporilla whispered. "Both halves of the elder wand. In need of your skills to repair."

Sasporilla turned next to Mr.Beauxchamps and Ms.Copelinzki.

"Thank you for a wonderful summer Mr.Beauxchamps." Sassy smiled.

"The honour was entirely ours Ms.Bucket." Mr.Beauxchamps smiled. "And please, call me Ferdinand. Ms.Copelinzki I believe you have something for our departing company member?"

"Yes!" Ms.Copelinzki smiled pushing her heavy coke bottle glasses up her nose. "Ms.Bucket, it is with much sadness we see you go because quite frankly, we all rather liked you. You worked hard, you were honest, and you were willing to go above and beyond when no one else would."

"No surprise there." Myron Wagtail smiled. "Traits she got from both her mum and dad."

"So with no further adieu we would like to present to you this gold plated wand plaque in memory of your service to the Carnival du Mystique! We hoped to get a photograph?"

"Extravaganzo!!!!" Mr.Beauxchamps yelled. "Where is that man with the camera???"

"Coming sir." The short fat man said waddling out from the far side of the show caravan carrying a very old camera on a very heavy wooden tripod. "I'll have it set up in just a moment."

Sasporilla turned to Agnes and Myron who stood arm in arm. Sassy hugged them both. Myron's hugs always felt like going home, war, warm and welcome.

"How did you find each other?" Sasporilla asked.

"I was beside myself when you were arrested." Myron said. "We were at the festival when the news reached us. I walked around in a fog for hours until I found a fortune teller. For what ever reason I went in and she put my mind at ease."

"I just told Myron what he needed to hear." Agnes said. "The truth."

"So you told him I'd be ok?" Sassy asked.

"No." Agnes said honestly. "I told him you'd be found innocent. Told him you'd... well I won't tell you the things I've seen. To tell you may alter your future. Let's say I put Extravaganzo in your way the day you bumped into him by suggesting he paper the area he did with flyers at that exact time."

"Why you crafty so and so." Sasporilla smiled. "Why?"

"We needed you here this summer as much as you needed us." Agnes smiled.

"And this way," Myron said, "I knew Agnes could keep an eye on you for me. Not that you need watching, but I worry."

"I appreciate it Myron." Sasporilla smiled. "Really!"

"The best part of the reading I had with Myron is that I had never been able to see love in my own future." Agnes smiled. "In that I really was blind."

"I'm happy for both of you!" Sasporilla smiled hugging her friends.

"Ok the camera is ready! Places everyone!" Extravaganzo called as he set the timer and joined the group! Sasporilla stood between Mr.Beauxchamps and Ms.Copelinzki holding the gold plated wand plaque smiling. Everyone stood perfectly still and as the flash went off they flourished, waved, or cast spells. Clowns appeared from no where and rolled away. The picture would be one to remember.

Alana stood with a suitcase and a shoe box. The some total of her worldly possessions beside the shoulder bag she carried and the clothes on her bag.

"Is that everything?" Sasporilla asked.

"This is it." Alana smiled. "I've never been one who believed in travelling heavy. I appreciate you doing this for us."

"It's the least I can do," Sassy cringed, "since I kind of helped to break up your act."

"Do not blame yourself for the greedy thieving acts of my horrid cousin!" Alana insisted.

"Are you ready to go?" Sasporilla asked? "I've arranged a private port key."

"Yes I'm all set." Alana said.

"Ok." Sasporilla said. "We are off everyone! Thanks for the great summer! Goodbye! Come on Rathos!!!"

Rathos ran over to Sassy's side. Everyone waved as the girls walked away from the Carnival du Mystique for the last time.

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Sasporilla and Alana walked Rathos by leash up the side walks of London to from Piccadilly Circus to Golden Square. No one had noticed the new statue amongst the myriad of statuary that filled the square. The question was which one was the port key?

"We're cutting it pretty close." Alana said. "Which statue do you think is the portkey?"

"I've got a feeling it's the one off to left there." Sasporilla said pointing at one that looked like professor Severus Snape holding up a potions bottle with noble attention. "As it was Nancy who arranged the portkey I'd be willing to bet that's it. Let's go."

Sasporilla and Alana walked Rathos over to the statue of Snape. Alana looked at her watch. "Ten seconds."

"Rathos," Sasporilla said. "Put your paws on the statue and hang on. It will get very spinney and fun scary. I'll hold you!"

"Ok!" Rathos panted as the statue began to shake and rattle.

A small bird shot out of Alana's watch chirping "CUKOO!" as the statue began to spin the world. Rathos howled with delight, his tongue waving in the breeze. Sassy and Alana laughed.

"Ok it's time," Sasporilla said. "Let go!"

Running their way down to the surface, the young witches and the doell arrived at a small farm in the shadow of Hogwarts. The cottage door opened. Nancy Nightingale stepped outside a bright smile on her face. She was followed by a short thin woman in khaki shorts and a pith helmet.

"Sasporilla!" Nancy beamed hugging the pink haired witch, much to Sassy's surprise. "How wonderful to see you my dear friend."

"I'm glad to see you Nancy." Sasporilla smiled. "I don't think I have ever you seen you quite do happy?"

"I have never been as happy as I am now with my Severus." Nancy said holding out her hand. "We were married last week. We are so very happy together."

"I am glad." Sasporilla said. "Is this your friend Dr.Bolderforth?";

"Yes!" Nancy gasped. "Oh my, excuse my rudeness. Dr.Bertha Bolderforth, this is Sasporilla Bucket and her friend Alana who is in need of your help."

"Hello Alana." Dr.Bolderforth said shaking Alana's hand. "May I see her?"

Alana pulled the lid off the shoe box. Lily, the microphant trumpeted her disapproval of having been cooped up in the dark for so long.

"I know Lily." Alana said. "It's just fer a while longer. I promise love."

Dr.Bolderforth reached in and picked Lily up firmly but gently. The magizoologist checked the microphants pulse and breathing. Looked at it's colour and sniffed its behind.

"She seems very healthy!" Dr.Bolderforth smiled. "Well done young lady!"

"Thank you?" Alana said finding the doctor just a little more than odd.

"How long have you had her in your care?" The Doctor asked.

"About four years." Alana said. "She wasn't well taken care of when she came to me. I saw to it she was shown plenty of love."

"Well you did indeed." Dr.Bolderforth smiled. "They are a very hard species to care for. I am most impressed. You're a natural!"

"So Sasporilla said you run a reserve for microphants." Alana said.

"Yes I do." Dr.Bolderforth said. "Specifically South Indian Microphants like your Lily in South India. Might I ask why you named her Lily?"

"Lily is short for Liliput, from the Gullivers Travels stories." Alana said.

"I'm not familiar with those stories." The Doctor said .

"Their muggle fantasy tales." Alana said.

"Oh I see." Dr.Bolderforth said. "I'm not a fan of muggle literature. I simply can't relate. My older sister Pamona always loved it!"

"Pamona?" Sasporilla asked. "Pamona Sprout?"

"Yes!" The magizoologist beamed. "Do you know her?"

"She was my professor and house mother!" Sassy smiled.

"What a wonderful coincidence!" The doctor smiled.

"Will you be able to give Lily a home in your reserve?" Alana asked.

"Oh yes indeed dear." Dr.Bolderforth said. "I feel she will fit in very well eventually but I fear that without you she'll have a rough time transferring. I would like to make you a proposition. I'd like to offer you a job. A one year trial as my assistant at the reserve. I have a feeling about you young lady. I think you be a natural with Microphants."

"Really?" Alana asked.

"Yes." The magizoologist insisted. "These wee ones need someone just like you to look after them. I need an assistant of your caliber and talents. What do you say?"

"I say yes!" Alana smiled.

"Wonderful!" Dr.Bolderforth laughed. "We shan't waste any time them. We must be off!"

There were quick good-byes and Alana was away off with Lily to their new home in Southern India. Sasporilla climbed aboard her broom with Rathos and waved goodbye to Nancy as they flew off to Hogwarts.

Sasporilla landed on the green between the school and Hagrid's hut. Rathos jumped off the broom and danced around happily.

"Me have so much fun." Rathos said. "Best dream of Rathos life. Can't be real!"

"I assure you Rathos this is all very real!" Sasporilla smiled. "And, if all goes well..."

Hagrid opened the door to his hut and stepped out onto the front step.

"Well my word! It is!" Hagrid smiled through his big bushy beard. "Sasporilla Bucket! Wha' brings ya ta my door step th' day b'for school starts?"

"I've brought a friend in desperate need of a new home." Sasporilla said. "Hagrid this is Rathos. Rathos this is Hagrid."

"Hello there Rathos!" Hagrid smiled. "Yer a doell aint'cha?"

"Yep." Rathos said rather shyly. "Your a wizard?"

"Well ya, sorta." Hagrid said. "Don't really do much magic. Strictly speakin' I'm not allowed to! I look after the grounds here at Hogwarts an' look after th' animals. I loves animals an' creatures. Sometimes more an' people t' tell the truth."

"Really?" Rathos smiled.

"If you'd like ta live here at Hogwarts I can find ya place of yer own to stay with people or on yer own. Which ever ya like. But ya are welcome ta stay here as long as yer friendly an' willin' t' help out a bit?"

"Does Rathos have yo be chained in room?" Rathos frowned.

"Wha?" Hagrid gasped surprised and outraged. "Never! Why any one'd do that t' any... why I'd....!"

"No Rathos." Sasporilla smiled softly. "Here you will be free, amongst friends. I promise. And they have great food!"

"Food?" Rathos drooled.

"Three times a day." Sasporilla whispered.

"Yessssssssssss!" Rathos howled happily.

"Ah!" Hagrid smiled. "A stomach after my own heart!"

"You stay here?" Rathos asked Sasporilla.

"No my friend. "I'm away to a far off land. That's why I brought you here. To a place where there are friends I love and trust. People I know will look after you, and that you will look after for me!"

"I will Sasporilla Bucket." Rathos said hugging the pink haired witch. "You count on Rathos."

Sasporilla decided to walk. One last time to walk the road from Hogwarts to Hogsmeade. To listen to the late summer breeze rustle the trees amongst the echoes of her memories. All those days with Karry and Korry, Karry and Zac, just Karry. Laughing or crying they'd shared so much on the road to Hogsmeade.

Lost in thought Sasporilla hadn't seen the small woman with fair hair approach her on the road, wand raised.

"No this will never do." The woman said with a Spanish accent surprising Sasporilla as she cast a spell into the young witch's face. "PROBOSCIMENDIO!"

Sasporilla felt a small burning in her nose then the pain and pressure went away.

"What have you done?" Sasporilla demanded drawing her wand.

"I do beg your pardon miss." The young woman smiled checking Sassy's face. "I didn't mean to startle you. Your nose had clearly been broken and I thought you were in shock."

"I was just deep in thought." Sasporilla said. "My nose was broken?"

"Oh yes." The young woman smiled. "But it's healed now. Forgive me, I'm nurse Angela. I'm on my way to Hogwarts to start work tomorrow."

"Oh I see." Sasporilla smiled putting away her wand. "My name is Sasporilla Bucket. Thank you. I guess that spell hit me harder than I thought earlier."

"Well you're all healed now." Nurse Angela waved as she walked off towards Hogwarts carrying her bags. "Please try to take care of yourself! And don't sneeze for twenty minutes or so! Have a nice day!"



## Chapter 21

The day before the students arrived at Hogwarts was a busy day in Hogsmeade. All of the shops were alive with customers picking up last minute items. Large orders were coming in for the school and being picked up by staff members and elves alike. Most of the locals knew enough to stay away from main street and the shops on this day. Sasporilla strolled leisurely into Hogsmeade whistling and smiling brightly.

"Hello Mrs.Honeyduke!" Sasporilla called cheerfully. "Wonderful day."

"Very busy day." Mrs.Honeyduke smiled exasperated. "But it is nice to see you Miss Bucket!"

"Sasporilla!" A small voice called.

Sassy looked around but saw no one. Finally her nose followed the smell of old socks and cherry wood tobacco back to Drooble, the head of House Elves, perched atop a pile of crates marked for transport to Hogwarts, smoking his pipe.

"Drooble!" Sasporilla waved excitedly as the elf hopped down off the boxes and walked over to his favorite young witch. "How are you?"

"Old and tired my dear." Drooble smiled taking the liberty of giving Sassy a welcoming hug. "But feeling younger and lighter of heart for having seen you!"

"Yes my friend you are a sight for sore eyes." Sasporilla said.

"Yes my face does tend to have that effect those who look upon me." Drooble laughed.

"Now don't you dare talk about your self that way." Sasporilla said. "You were not only one of my teachers, you are my friend! And I will not have anyone talk about my friends that way!"

"Thank you Sasporilla." The old elf smiled. "What brings you to Hogsmeade?"

"I've come to visit Karry Curtiss." Sassy smiled.

"Oh I see." Drooble cringed pointing the tip of his pipe towards the far end of town. "Then if I were you I'd best hurry, before you miss her."

Sasporilla looked up and could see Karry storming out of the front door of her home carrying her child in one arm and moving out suitcases with her wand with her free hand.

"Oh no." Sasporilla said breaking into a run. "What is this all about?"

Even though Sasporilla was too far off to hear what her best friend was saying, Sassy could clearly see Karry was upset and angry with Zac. The young woman's tears flowed down her cheeks as she yelled at her young husband, standing defiantly smug in the doorway.

"If you want us out of your life Zac Zarcazzian then fine!" Karry screamed. "I'll take the baby and you'll never see me again!"

"Probably run back to your half muggle roots, and your muggle home back in muggle town!" Zac sneered "How dare you!" Karry yelled at her husband who stood tall on the front step of their house rubbing his ring.

"Karry! Zac!" Sasporilla yelled as she ran over and grabbed her friend. "What is this all about?"

"Sasporilla!" Karry wailed. "He's just become a beast. I can't stand him any more."

"Has he hit you?" Sassy asked.

"Of course not." Zac huffed. "No matter how foolish a girl she may act I'd never lay a hand on her, nor the child."

"Your child!" Karry yelled.

"So you insist." Zac said to Sasporilla's surprise.

"Ok." Sassy said. "I don't know what started this but I feel you two need a bit of time apart."

"I'm going to my mothers." Karry said.

"Are you sure?" Sasporilla asked. "It's easier for Zac to go for a few days."

"No." Karry insisted. "Please Sasporilla. Let's just go."

Sasporilla hated apperating with both her upset friend, her baby, all of her luggage, and her own broom. Amazingly they made it to Essex without being splinched. They appeared in front of the Curtiss home on Castle Road. Karry's bags fell to the side and scattered on the sidewalk with a thump. The crying baby summoned a concerned grandmother from her cookie baking. Mrs.Curtiss opened the front door of the house with a look of concern as Karry ran to her mother, crying with her baby in her arms.

"What's happened?" Mrs.Curtiss asked hugging her daughter.

"Mom-my" Karry cried.

For the first time Sasporilla saw her friend Karry as she saw herself. A child, trying her best in an adult world to play big girl. She married at sixteen! Was this bound to happen? Were the adults right? Was this something else? For now Sassy would leave Karry with her mom. She felt that at this time that who Karry needed most.

It was a familiar giggle that made Sasporilla turn around. A young couple was carrying in some boxes of things into her old house at number four Castle Road. As she had expected, it was Madrigal Neelander and Karry's twin brother Korry Curtiss. Sassy took a deep breath and walked over.

Sassy stood in the open doorway remembering the very few good times she had here and even worse all the tragedy. Sasporilla couldn't help but think the house looked the same but somehow felt different. It didn't belong to her any more. It was someone else's.

"I'll fetch the other box." Korry said suddenly appearing in the doorway bumping into Sassy. "Oh! Excuse me. I didn't see you the... Sasporilla?"

"Hello Korry." Sassy said. "I was pretty sure it was Zac over paid for the house. Future wedding gift?"

"Yes." Korry blushed. "Two yearsish in June. What are you doing here?"

"Just dropped Karry and the baby off at your mom's. Her and Zac have had a big row. Karry's left for a while. She needed to see her mum."

"I best leave her alone for a while then." Korry said.

"That's what I'm doing." Sasporilla smiled shyly. "Let them talk."

"Where is that box?" Madrigal said laughing coming to the door. "Oh! Sasporilla?"

"Hello Madrigal." Sassy waved. "Getting the house in shape?"

"Yes." Maddy smiled proudly. "It's a lot of work to bring this house up to my tastes."

"Well you have time." Sasporilla smiled politely seeing the uncomfortable look in Korry's stance. "I can't hang about unfortunately. Korry would you do me the service of telling Karry I had to be on to catch the shuttle to Avalon."

"I will." Korry said walking the pink haired witch down the short walk to the road. "Sassy are you ok?"

"Yes Korry." Sasporilla said looking into her exboyfriend's eyes. "There was a time when I thought perhaps that I would never get over you. That we were meant to be together, but it seems the fates have chosen different for us. Love has found me twice and fate has cruelly ripped it from me. Strangely enough I'm not bitter like I think I should be. I'm hopeful that I will find love again. Maybe this time for good. Are you happy, Korry?"

"Yes Sassy I am." Korry Curtiss smiled. "We are."

"Good." Sasporilla smiled mounting her broom. "I am glad. Bye you two. Have fun redoing my old house!"

As Sasporilla flew off into the late afternoon sky, a single tear rolled down her cheek.



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BANG!BANG!BANG! Sasporilla awoke to something pounding loudly on the wall of her caravan. Her caravan? Why was she in her caravan? Sasporilla remembered taking Karry to Essex to see her mother and running into Korry. That upset her enough that she left and flew to London crying about lost loves.

'BANG!BANG!BANG!' someone pounded on the caravan.

"Coming!" Sasporilla said yawning as she crawled out put on some clothes. Jorge looked at her concerned. "Don't worry. Just stay in here. You'll be safe. I'll bring you out in Avalon."

Sasporilla through on her purple jacket and grabbed her bag as she stepped through the door. A police officer stood very unimpressed at the bottom of her caravan steps, truncheon in hand.

"Well, well, well." The officer said, "do you gypsy's think you can just set up camps anywhere you want in London now?"

"No sir." Sasporilla said calmly looking around for witnesses. None really.

"You think Hyde park is a bloody camp ground young miss?" The officer sneered.

"No." Sasporilla cast the caravan back into a broom which landed in her hand. "But it will do in a pinch. OBLIVIAE!"

Sasporilla walked the officer over to a bench and sat him down. "Now you wait right here until you remember a bit of your duties or what if you see someone you remember. Ok constable?"

"Oh ok?" The officer smiled.

"You have a nice day." Sassy smiled.

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Karry was not surprised to find her mother had the baby in the kitchen with family, when she dragged herself from bed for breakfast. Karry's eye's were dry and her head ached. The young witch found herself dizzy and stuffy after a full day of crying.

"Good morning butterbeer, did you sleep?" Mrs.Curtiss asked her daughter.

"Some." Karry forced a smile walking over and picking up her boy. "How's my big beautiful boy?"

"He's a good little man." Mr.Curtiss smiled. "He's a true Curtiss!"

"Yes he is dad!" Karry said lip quivered proudly. "Yes... he... is."

Karry broke down crying again making her father cringe and shrug. Mrs.Curtiss passed the baby to her husband and took her crying daughter in her arms.

"There, there, Karry." Koleen Curtiss said as she looked out the window and saw the strange young man walking up to number four castle road. "I know it hurts now, but all young couples fight. It will all blow over. You'll see. Alexander? There's a strange young man at the kids house."

"We'll look into it." Mr.Curtiss said looking at the baby. "Won't we mate?"

The young man stood at the front door looking in the side window. He tried knocking and knocking again but no one seemed to be home.

"Were you looking for someone young man?" Alexander Curtiss asked.

"Oh yes sir." The young man said politely waving as he walked over. "I was looking for the young woman who lives here, Sasporilla Bucket."

"And you are?" Mr.Curtiss asked suspiciously.

"Melvin!" Korry called running over. "What are you doing here?"

"You know him son?" Mr.Curtiss asked?

"Yes." Korry smiled shaking Melvin's hand. "This Vinny Lazar the rock star! His real name is Melvin Lazarus, he went yo Hogwarts with us."

"Oh I see." Mr.Curtiss said not letting the young man get a word in edgewise. "He's here looking for... Sasporilla."

"This is her house isn't it?" Melvin asked.

"Not any more." Korry said. "The house was sold at the beginning of summer. She's gone away to university now."

"Actually you just missed her son." Mr.Curtiss said. "She was here just yesterday, but she didn't stay."

"Melvin?" Karry's voice sniffed from behind. "You've finally come looking for her?"

"I thought I'd catch her before she went off to Avalon. Apparently I'm to late."  
"She'll be catching the ten a.m. shuttle out of Heathrow." Karry said. "If you hurry, you might catch her."  
"I can't apparate yet." Melvin said.  
"I've got you friend." Korry smiled grabbing hold of Melvin's arm. "Hang on tight Melvin."  
"Good luck." Karry smiled.

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Sasporilla Bucket sat down to breakfast at the Winged Chariot in Terminal two at Heathrow. A large pub that offered buffet breakfasts and lunches. Sasporilla was a bit hungry this morning, so she got a full English breakfast. "That looks good!" The booming voice of Nick Owlmore said as he sat down across from his god daughter. "Uncle Nick!" Sasporilla covered smile half full of sausage. "You made it!" "You didn't think for a second I was going to let you go away to school without seeing you off did ya?" Uncle Nick smiled. "I certainly hoped you wouldn't." Sasporilla smiled. "Are you going to get some breakfast?" "Might get a cupa." Nick said. "Already eaten." "Best get at it then." Sassy smiled. "Don't dawdle." "Yes mam." Nick smiled getting up to fetch himself a cup of tea. Nick would dawdle about doing many things, but when it came to spending time with his god daughter, he wasted little time. Besides he had important things to discuss with her and wasn't sure just who's eyes were on them or for that manner, how many. "Sasporilla." Nick said as he rejoined her at the table, setting his cup down. "Me first, please Uncle Nick." Sasporilla interrupted him putting her fingers across his lips and fuzzy face fur to silence him. "I just wanted to say thank you for everything you've done for me. Not just for being there for me since mom died but for being there for us when dad passed and before, when he got sick. And for always being there when We needed you most. You're an amazing man, an amazing wizard, an amazing human being Uncle Nick. Thank you, I love you Uncle Nick." Sasporilla hugged her Uncle Nick like she hadn't done since she was little. With an intensity and purity of love that is reserved for special moments and the honesty of small children. Nick Owlmore did something he'd never done in his life. The large tough auror shed a happy tear as he hugged his god daughter. "I love you very much Sasporilla." Nick smiled sitting his God daughter back down. "You're very special to me, as were your mum and dad. They were my friends, but you're the light in my eyes! Like my own daughter, only I try to give you a bit more freedom. Though you may not know it, I do keep tabs on you." "Yes it has come to my attention that people have had others 'WATCHING' me!" Sasporilla sighed. "Keeping an eye on you." Nick Owlmore said taking her hand. "For your protection, I assure you." "I'm always caught up in some sort of trouble so no offence but your protection people are crap." Sassy laughed. "Yes well", Nick laughed, "most of those things were not the kind of Dangers they were looking for. You attracted those on your own. Bloody trouble magnet you are! Like your dad!" Sasporilla bounced a croissant off the top of Nick's head and onto the plate of a rather snooty older lady at the next table who didn't seem to notice where it came from. "Richard?" The Snooty lady asked. "Is this your croissant?" "No Hyacinth." Her small bald husband smiled politely. "I could have sworn I finished mine." The snooty woman said. "Well I had a bran muffin that you picked out for me. Remember?" Richard smiled. "Ah yes." Hyacinth said a bit to loudly in her sing-song voice. "Good for your digestive system. Lots of fiber. Well then it must be mine." The snooty woman was most put off however when she discovered a greasy long brown hair on the bottom of her croissant. Not unlike the ones on the head of the strange man sitting with the pink haired girl at the table behind them. "Sasporilla you're going to Avalon for a few years." Nick said. "I won't be able to watch you there. The danger comes from your own family. From your mothers family. Your father knew this. That is why he cast that protection

spell on you as a baby. The spell made your hair pink and caused anyone who would try and harm you excruciating pain."

"I know that my mothers family is in the royal court." Sassy smiled. "I don't want anything to do with it so I don't see why they should want to harm me?"

"Because Sasporilla you are a woman of title." Nick said. "You haven't claimed your title as no one has come to you to tell you about it, but if you chose to, you could be a very big threat to them. The way you think, they way you treat people, your ideas, your way would be a huge threat to their way of life. That is why you're in danger. In Avalon you will be in their world, at their mercy, under their laws. I won't be able to help you."

"Uncle Nick please don't worry." Sassy smiled. "I'll be fine. If it concerns you so, I'll send a message to my aunt the witch Queen and tell her that I have NO eye on her throne! Ok? I just want to go to school in peace and go on with my life making wan..."

"Excuse me my lady." The Snooty woman from the next table bowed unstably to Sasporilla. "I did not mean to eavesdrop but I did over hear that you are of Royal lineage?"

"Um..." Sasporilla stammered. "Yes but..."

"It is an honour for you to make my acquaintance!" The snooty woman smiled. "Might I introduce myself. I am Hyacinth Bucket (pronouncing it as Bouquet) and this is my husband Richard."

"Sasporilla Bucket." Sassy Smiled. "This is my God father Nick Owlmore."

"Bucket?" Hyacinth Bucket asked. "Surly not dear. For one of Royal birth such as yourself it is pronounced BOUQUET as do we?"

"No." Sassy said. "It's pronounced Bucket, like old rusty, milk or piss... BUCKET."

"Oh." The snooty woman gulped. "I see."

"It's my fathers family name." Sasporilla said standing. "And one I carry with pride. My mothers family is the Royal side and it's their name that carries the respect. That name is Bent. They also have first names of flowers. You'd fit right in. Well if you'll excuse me, I must catch my shuttle."

"I'll walk you." Nick smiled. "I think it behooves you to bow as my lady leaves."

"Oh!" Hyacinth Bucket said bowing as they walked out into Terminal two.

"Hyacinth?" Richard asked. "Was that pink haired girl carrying some sort of broom?"

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Korry and Melvin appaerated onto a runway as a large muggle jet took off above them blowing them over with a deafening roar. Melvin ran over and grabbed Korry helping him to his feat.

"We have to get out of here." Melvin insisted. "Muggles don't like people out here by there airplanes. We better find a way inside."

"There's a door." Korry said pointing to a door clearly marked no admittance. "Follow me."

\*\*\*\*\*

A lonely out of order photo booth in a dead end corridor of Terminal two was the gateway to the Avalon Shuttle boarding area. A tall shapely witch in muggle clothes stood nonchalantly by the photo booth.

"Tickets?" She asked with a smile.

"How did you know we weren't muggles?" Nick Owlmore asked as Sasporilla handed the woman her boarding pass.

"Muggles see the sign and turn around usually." The witch smiled. "If it's a couple interested in a private place for amore then I tell them the repairman will be here in two minutes."

"Clever." Sasporilla smiled taking back her tickets. "He's not travelling he's just seeing me off."

"Then I am sorry sir but this is as far as you can go." The witch said.

"Oh?" Nick said flashing his aurors badge. "How about now?"

"I'm sorry detective of course you can go through, but I will warn you they will be more stringent once you reach... royal security."

"We're still in London." Nick said. "Ministry jurisdiction. I'll be fine love, thank you."

"Please step through single file, and have a wonderful journey with Royal Avalon Shuttles."

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ALOHAMORA opened the locked door, allowing Korry and Melvin to slip inside the terminal. Muggles rushed around hurriedly dressed in yellow safety vests and hard hats. Many mechanical belts crisscrossed the inside of the giant building running in all directions, carrying luggage to air craft traveling all over the world.

"Hey!" A burly bearded man called out making the young wizards jump. "What are you doin' in here? You the new guys?"

"Uhm." Korry said cleverly.

"I thought there were suppose to be three of you?" The bearded man questioned.

"Other ones a girl." Melvin said. "In the lou. Ladies issues I believe."

"Right, right." The man said holding up his hand insisting on hearing no more. "Grab a safety vest and helmet and report to belt number forty seven."

"Got it boss." Melvin said shoving Korry towards the vests.

"Ya." Korry said giving a thumbs up.

"Moron kids." The bearded man spat. "What's this girl look like? So I can catch her up to ya?"

"She's about six feet tall." Korry smiled. "With a green stripe in her hair. Strong as an ox. You can't miss her."

"Great." The man said lumbering off.

"Ok." Korry said. "Let's find the Avalon Shuttle."

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The Royal Avalon Shuttle boarding area was quite beautifully decorated. It was very opulent in its gold and royal blues and purples. Sasporilla was most impressed though she thought it nothing more than over the top showmanship for namesake.

"Quite something ay Sassy?" Nick said.

"Bit ostentatious for my tastes." Sasporilla said. "Simple girl me. Not into all this opulence and bother. More at home in an old book case than a palace I'm afraid."

"That's our Sasporilla." Nick sighed. "Modest to a T, like her mum... and full of crap like her dad."

"Oy!" Sassy laughed smacking her Uncle Nick. "The nerve on you!"

The line through security was long but fast and efficient. Royal guards were quick and well regimented. Anyone not in compliance was pulled aside for inspection or worse.

"I'll stay with you in the que right up to security but I can't go past I'm afraid." Nick smiled.

"Why not?" Sassy asked.

"Technically that's Avalonian soil." Nick said. "Under their embassy. So they're in control. Their laws past that gate."

"Got you." Sasporilla hugged her uncle tight as the person ahead stepped through the gate ahead of them.

"Next." The guard commanded. "Come on. You with the pink hair, you're holding up the line."

"No need to be rude." Sasporilla said handing the guard her boarding pass.

"Place wand and luggage on the belt." The other guard said.

Sassy was hesitant to relinquish her wand but rules were rules and she had seen everyone have to do it. She placed her wand and broom on the belt.

"No luggage?" The royal guard asked suspiciously.

"Everything I own is stored in my brooms caravan." Sasporilla said. "Clothes, books, guitar, owl... well flamingo."

"Step through and prepare to open your caravan for royal inspection." The guard demanded.

"Is that really necessary?" Nick asked making his badge casually seen.

"This is Royal jurisdiction." The guard sneered. "Not ministry."

"I have nothing to hide." Sasporilla said stepping through the gate.

The guards drew their wands as Sasporilla moved to pick up her wand and broom.

"Look," Sasporilla said, "if you want me to open my broom's caravan I'll have to move it off your belt and away from your gate. Unless you want them broken? Also I can't exactly cast the spell to open the bloody thing without my bloody wand can I? So do you mind?"

Sasporilla picked up her wand and took her broom over to an area clear enough to open her Caravan. She laid the broom on the floor and pointed her wand at it.

"Occasum Sequor!" Sasporilla cast. The golden broom tip popped open and the caravan sprang out. The broom hung itself politely by the front door.

"There you are." Sasporilla said.

The first royal guard stormed up the steps to enter as if there was someone to surprise inside.

"Wait you'll need my permission to enter." Sasporilla said.

"We don't need anyone's permission girl." The guard insisted trying to force the door.

A blast of magical energy blew him back off the top step and onto his behind with a bewildered look on his face.

"Have it your own way." Sasporilla smiled. "But it's a Triumphant 1200X with anti theft system. You can try and break in all day or you can let me give you permission."

"I'm just surprised they have the nerve to treat a member of the royal house this way." Nick shouted turning the guards pale.

"What?" The guard asked.

"Ignore my Uncle." Sassy said. "He's just referring to my family being in the royal court."

"I don't recognize the name?" The guard gulped as Sassy walked up the caravan steps and unlocked the door.

"What is the royal name?"

"The Bent family." Sasporilla sighed.

The guard checked the boarding pass and realized it was a private royal coach.

"My apologies miss." The guard bowed handing Sassy back her boarding pass. "I feel suddenly the fool. I should have realized. We weren't informed of your arrival today. We won't need to search you."

"Alright fine, but I'll just fetch my guitar and my Flamingo then shall I?"

"Of course miss." The guard said.

Sassy had to chuckle as she grabbed her guitar and brought Jorge out after her. A quick cast and her caravan reset itself back into her broom tip. Sassy waved goodbye to her Uncle Nick as she was escorted off to her private shuttle compartment.

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Luggage and boxes rolled quickly along belts and rollers rising and dropping from level to level through the maze of muggle machines that filled the secret areas of Heathrow terminal two. Korry and Melvin wound their way up stairs and ladders, across cat walks and down dead end corridors. Often being forced to turn back. It was by blind chance that Melvin heard what he swore was a strum of a guitar and turned to see a flickering red light by an old set of steps against a far wall. Painted letters that were half dust covered, worn and long faded read

## **"Av on S ut le"**

"There!" Melvin pointed. "That's it!"

"There they are!" The voice of the bearded man boomed, and he was not alone. The big man was joined by three security guards and oddly a six foot tall girl with a green stripe in her hair. "Get them."

"It's near time for Sassy's shuttle to leave." Korry said pulling his wand. "I'll take care of these muggles, go get your girl! She deserves a true love like you mate."

"Thanks Korry." Melvin smiled. "Your a true friend."

"Not true enough." Korry sighed as a bullet rang off the metal railing next to him. "Oy! To many American movies John Wayne! STUPIFY MAXIMA!"

Melvin fought the urge to stay and fight but one spell and it was over. Korry was quite good at what he did. Within minutes the muggles would be obliterated, and no one would remember they were there. Melvin bound up the old creaky wooden steps to a locked door.

"ALOHAMORA." Melvin cast.

The door unlocked and swung open into a side hallway of the boarding area of Royal Avalon Shuttles, behind the security check area. Melvin walked down the hall toward the boarding lounge.

"Would you like something from the trolley dear?" A voice asked. Melvin turned to see an old woman with a large cart selling all manner of magical oddity. "Something sweet for your journey or something to keep you occupied?"

"No." Melvin said distracted looking for Sasporilla, not meaning to be quite so terse. "I'm seeing someone off."

"A girl?" The old woman smiled through her cracked skin and broken rotted teeth. "How about one of these."

The old woman showed Melvin a box full of Pygmy Puff's in all colours. They were small and cute and just the thing to bring to his darling Sasporilla.

"How much for the pink one?"

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Sasporilla's shuttle was a single private pod with windows on both sides and double golden gilded royal doors that lead to it's lavish interior. The Royal guard opened the doors for her and stood attentively as she boarded.

"Step in Jorge." Sassy said to her flamingo who couldn't hear a word through the Latin music playing loudly in his head phones. Sasporilla lifted one side of the headphones and raised her voice, much to her birds surprise.

"Jorge! All aboard!"

"Right!" Jorge said dancing into the shuttle.

Sassy carried her broom and guitar on board and sat them on the floor of the rather large compartment. One of the guards stepped in.

"May I stow your things?" The guard asked.

"No." Sasporilla said. "I can deal with it myself. Thank you."

Sasporilla put her broom in the over head compartment and made sure Jorge was well secured in a seat as the royal guard closed the shuttle doors. Sassy sat down in her seat and reached into her bag.

Sasporilla pulled out a small box she picked up in the interdimensional market. Sassy opened its top and a small microphone popped up and an arm with a red button sprung out.

"This is a nice quiet place to record something." Sasporilla said as she set her guitar on her lap and pushed the red button. "Dear Myron, I'm on my way to Avalon to start university. Thought I'd try this recording box. I rather like this muggle song and it's how I'm feeling today."

Sasporilla started playing a song called "Love Hurts."

It wasn't so much the words that caused the tears to well in her eyes.

"I'm young, I know, But even so. I know a thing or two, I learned from you. I really learned a lot, really learned a lot. Love is like a flame, it burns you when it's hot. Love hurts." It was the feelings. The truth behind the words that made the tears flow. Sasporilla let the last chord trail off as she turned off the recorder. She looked up to see Melvin come running into the boarding area carrying something pink and furry in his hands.

A small happy cry burst across Sasporilla's lips as she dropped her guitar. Two strings snapped with a loud SPROING sound which drew Melvin's attention. Sassy got up from her seat kicking the guitar aside and rushed to the shuttle door as it locked.

"Passengers welcome to Royal Avalon Shuttles." A voice said across all shuttles and through the boarding area.

"All shuttles will be leaving in one minute. Please be seated, and enjoy your travels with Royal Avalon Shuttle."

Sasporilla placed her hands flat against the glass window panes in the inside of the shuttle doors. Melvin touched the glass with his free hand to the glass against hers.

"I need to see you." Melvin yelled to her but Sassy couldn't hear him.

"What?" Sassy asked Melvin heard her muffled voice.

"I need to see you." Melvin annunciated his words so Sasporilla could read his lips, holding up the Pygmy Puff he'd bought for her. "I can't stop thinking about you!"

"Melvin I..." Sassy said as the shuttle began to fade in a swirling purple fog.

The Pygmy Puff started to shiver and shake. A strange glow emanated from deep within the small furry creature. Melvin held the wide eyed Pygmy Puff, which squealed in painful distress, up to his face. Something was spinning wildly inside of the poor beast. The flash was brilliant but cloaked by that of the shuttles own departing flash. Except for a whisp of smoke, and a bit of pink fur, there was no sign of Melvin Lazarus.



## Epilogue

Narwell's mirror had been placed back in the boathouse where it belonged. Nancy Nightingale had brought his favourite chair and placed it near the old captain's desk, despite Mr. Filche's objections. Narwell liked to sit in that chair, even if it was just a reflection of the real one a mirror world. It was late that Monday. School had started and it was quite possible with all she had to do tonight, Nancy might not get the chance to make her weekly visit. After all, sometimes other responsibilities must come first.

There was a sound. It was a rustling of grass, far and distant, somewhere in the blackness off to the side of him. The place where light didn't go. A place Narwell always assumed were nothing.

A soft warm summer breeze wafted in across him. A pretty young fair haired woman in a Victorian blue dress stepped free of the darkness looking at Narwell with delight.

"Hello." Narwell said. "Who are you?"

"I'm Ariana." The young woman smiled shyly. "I've not seen you here before?"

"No." Narwell said sadly.

"Don't be sad." Ariana smiled. "You don't have to stay here!"

"What?" Narwell asked amazed.

"The black edges." Ariana pointed. "They're the connectors to the next frame. They're how we travel from painting to painting, picture to picture, mirror to mirror."

"So I can go anywhere?" Narwell asked.

"Yes." Ariana smiled. "You don't have to sit here alone anymore. If you like you can come with me. I've been very lonely for a very long time."

It was that day Narwell met Ariana Dumbledore, his true love.



# THE END

# TIME BOMB

A Melvin Lazarus & Dr. Who Cross-Over Story  
A Harry Potter / Sasporilla Bucket Fan Fiction  
by Darren Kelly

Melvin's scientific and magical minds struggled to quantify his experience. It had been an explosion he was sure of it. Something, some sort of device had been inside of the pink pygmy puff he'd bought as a gift for Sasporilla Bucket. Thank goodness it hadn't harmed her. Had it harmed him? He didn't feel harmed?

There had been a sudden rush of light and wind. There had a feeling of stretching as one foe when apperating then darkness. A sense of calm and stillness. The calm before the storm. Everything around him began to churn and buffet. He was caught in the powerful pull of some form of energy vortex. It's discharges of bolts and plasma jets coming far to close for comfort. A noise screamed loudly in his ears. It sounded like a mechanical baby elephant crying for it's mother. Then suddenly Melvin Lazarus hit a solid floor. All went black.

Melvin Lazarus came to and sat up suddenly hearing the echo of a distant explosion. A man with curly dark hair, in a long coat and very long multi-coloured scarf sat cross legged on the floor before him.

"Hello." The man smiled. "Would you like a jelly baby?"

"Where am I?" Melvin asked taking a candy. He was always rather partial to the orange ones.

"Ah!" The strange man said his eyes widening. "You are in fact on the floor of my Tardis, stuck in the middle of dome sort of temporal explosion in the center of the time vortex! Pressing questions at hand are how did you get here and why are you still alive when you've absorbed as much Artron energy as you have?"

"Who are you?" Melvin asked.

"Forgive my manners." The man said hopping to his feet. "I am the Doctor."

Melvin noticed console the man stood next to was some sort of technology far ahead of what he'd seen in the muggle world. This was very advanced. It stood in the center of a relatively square room with white walls with inset holes in them.

"You're a doctor?" Melvin asked.

"Yes." The Doctor smiled with a broad wide smile as the the man shook his hand. "But not just 'A' Doctor, 'The' Doctor. I'm a time Lord. May I now ask who you are?"

"Oh yes, sorry." Melvin blushed, "Melvin Lazarus. I'm a fourth year wizard at Hogwarts."

"Wizard?" The Doctor scoffed. "Hogwash."

"No sir." Melvin corrected. "Hogwarts."

The Tardis shuddered as that same whining mechanical baby elephant sound echoed. A set of blue double doors formed on each wall as the Tardis went still and a bell began to ring deep from within it's infinite halls.

"Oh dear." The Doctor said. "This is very bad."

"What's happened?" Melvin asked.

"You must tell me the last thing you remember wizard." The Doctor demanded grabbing Melvin by the shoulder with a panicked sense of urgency.

"I was at Heathrow in terminal two." Melvin began. "I was trying to catch Sasporilla..."

"Sasporilla?" The Doctor asked.

"Sasporilla Bucket." Melvin smiled. "Most beautiful girl I've ever seen. She was leaving for university on the Avalon Shuttle. I bought her a Pygmy Puff from the old woman. Something was wrong with it. I, think it... exploded."

"Avalon, pygmy puff's, old women." The Doctor scoffed. "Your talking gibberish!"

"Not at all!" A young good looking man in a long brown coat said bursting trough one of the doors, holding up a strange wand with a glowing blie tip that made an odd pulsing whine. "Awe yes! You're a wizard! Seen you're kind before, not for a while though. Hello! I'm the Doctor!"

"Popycock!" The large man with curly brown hair and the long scarf said. "I'm the Doctor!"



"Oh come on Doctor!" The Doctor smiled cheerfully. "You're the fourth Doctor! I'm the tenth Doctor and unless I miss my bet we've crashed together with a couple of more because of what ever's happened here!"

"Crashed together?" Melvin asked. "What exactly has CRASHED TOGETHER?"

"Our Tardis' the fourth Doctor smiled, eyes wide with what Melvin couldn't distinguish between genius or madness. Perhaps it was an equal amount of both.

"The question is," a rather grumpy white haired old man said walking in through another door.

"Mr.Filch?"; Melvin asked confused.

"What?" The old man said. "No. I'm the Doctor. THEE Doctor! The original and as I was asking what caused this explosion in time?"

"I have a theory!" A young woman in a beige coat smiled bursting in from the last door. "Ah hello everyone. Nice yo see me all again."

"A woman?" The first Doctor scoffed. "Impossible."

"Well not impossible." The tenth Doctor smiled and rubbed his hair.

"Hello." The fourth smiled trying to exert a certain creepy charm. "Would you like a jelly baby."

"Oh yes please! Love these!" The newest Doctor smiled grabbing a green one and taking a big gobby bite. "Awe... just heaven!"

"You were saying you had some idea what caused the time explosion young lady?" The old Doctor said tersely.

"I did?" The young Doctor said.

"Yes." The fourth Doctor said. "I do believe you did."

"You said you had a theory." The tenth Doctor said taking more readings with his sonic screw driver and checking them against instruments on the Tardis console. "You really do have to update these."

"Don't touch that!" The fourth Doctor said. "It's very Delicate advanced technological equipment."

"Yes I know." The tent Doctor smiled.

"WE ALL KNOW!" the first Doctor barked.

"Excuse me," Melvin asked the strange young woman who now stood with a crumpled nose trying to search her memory, "but I think the explosion had something to do with the pygmy puff I bought?"

"Yes!" The lady Doctor smiled. "Of course! You! Where a wizard is and time issues happen...?"

"A time turner is involved!" The tenth Doctor said. "We are brilliant!"

"Bloody things are a menace!" The fourth Doctor said. "But what caused the time turner to explode and how did you figure it out?"

"You said a what exploded?" The newest Doctor asked Melvin very seriously.

"A pygmy puff." Melvin said. "I bought it off a trolley in terminal two in the Avalon Shuttle area for a gitl I wanted to see off to University."

"I'd say the devise was inside the Pygmy puff." The old Doctor said. "An act of terrorism most likely."

"Or a targeted assassination attempt." The fourth Doctor mused.

"Me?" Melvin gasped. "Who would want to kill me?"

"Any number of people possibly!" The young woman smiled. "You're very famous."

"Is he?" The first Doctor asked?

"I can't believe I didn't recognize you!" The tenth Doctor said. "But without that beard of yours."

"Well of course." The fourth Doctor said. "You were older and I was younger when we met but yes of course!"

"Did I have a girl in my life in the future? A wife maybe? With pink hair perhaps?" Melvin asked dismissing the recognition of fame. He'd gotten quite use to being seen as Vinny Lazar these days.

"Future, past, present." The fourth Doctor mused. "It's all relative, isn't it?"

"Right now we have two problems, to resolve as I see it, before we return our guest to his proper time." The first Doctor said. "One, we have to separate our Tardis' and two, we have stop this explosion in time."

"What is a time turner made from?" The fourth Doctor asked.

"A series of gold plated magnetic Ferris gyroscopic rings, interconnected at ninety degree angles." Melvin said.

"With a magical hour glass inside a balanced center piece."

"You've a sound scientific mind it seems?" The first Doctor said both surprised and impressed at the boys knowledge. "Do you know much physics and engineering?"

"I have a basic working knowledge sir." Melvin answered honestly. "There is so much more I need to learn though."

"Good answer." The fourth Doctor smiled.

"A lot more humble than I remember him?" The young tenth Doctor smiled.

"I remember!" The young woman shouted happily catching everyone by surprise. "If was a time turner that caused the explosion then a time turner thrown into the center of the blast should be able to, in theory, reverse it!"

"But I haven't got a time turner!" Melvin said.

"Then we will build one!" The old Doctor smiled. "Tell me more about the center. I suspect that is our true active bit."

"Yes." The Doctor with long scarf smiled. "The rest is likely show, flash and window dressing. Hmmm????"

"Well," Melvin began, "the center of the one I saw once was a gold plate with cut out stars and moons balanced on either side and a small hour glass in the center. In the hourglass was sand of some kind. It glinted like crushed glass and glowed a bit with a bluish energy. Does that help?"

"Does that help?" The fourth Doctor asked with angered seriousness and broke into a wide smile shaking Melvin's young hand. "I think you've solved our problem."

"Alright we need to build an active time turner. We need, one, an our glass, smaller the better! Think I have one in my pocket!!!"

"Two," The female Doctor said, "Xion crystals like the ones from a tardis time rotary column! Have some in the bin from after the accident. Don't ask."

"Three a ready supply of Artron energy." The first Doctor smiled placing his hand on Melvin's shoulder. "We have someone radiating it right here."

"I'm irradiated?" Melvin asked.

"Yes my boy." The old Doctor said sadly. "But unlike those on your planet who die of nuclear radiation, painfully and quickly, yours is a different fate."

"You were blown into the time vortex." The wild eyed fourth Doctor smiled as he pulled some wires from the bottom of his Tardis console. "It's only by the miraculous wizards physical constitution that you poses that you survived at all!"

"Found it!" The tenth doctor grinned placing a small egg timer wood and glass three-minute timer hourglass on the console. "You absorbed so much Artron radiation that you will regenerate wounds and live in very good health for a very long time."

"That doesn't sound so bad?" Melvin smiled.

"Some think it blessing my boy." The old Doctor smiled.

"Ya well," the blonde doctor in the pale trench coat frowned as she walked in with a small brown paper sack, "I knew a fellow named the face of Bo that'd argue that point!"

"Ya well a million years or more will tend to wear on you." The tenth doctor smiled as he cracked opened the top of the egg timer and poured out the sand.

"I always wondered how his head got so big?" The fair haired Doctor asked as she poured in crushed Xion crystal that was fine as sand.

"What did you do to my Tardis?" The old Doctor gasped?

"Oy!" The young female Doctor protested. "It's my Tardis! Things happen! You stole it! You lot crashed it how many times? You have the nerve to ask me what 'I' did to it? BWAH!"

"ENOUGH!" The large curly haired doctor with long scarf yelled. "We need to free our Tardis' from each other and the time explosion and your Bickering isn't helping! Boy stand here by my door. You, tenth me, Give him the time turner. Each of you pull your secondary temporal redundancy circuits and couple them to lines running between the boy and your dimensional energy in-flow capacitors. NOW!"

The Doctors pulled wires from their consoles as Melvin stood by the front doors of the fourth Doctors Tardis. With a twist of a knob and flip of a lever the doors opened. Melvin found himself standing on the threshold of the time vortex. Looking into it's depths and mysteries from the relative safety of the Tardis. A spark filled ball of energy and flame sat still at its spinning heart.

"That is your target." The Doctor said wrapping a large insulated cable around Melvin's waste and tying it off while handing the boy the small egg timer filled with Xion crystal dust.

"You don't expect me to jump out there carrying a time turner do you?" Melvin protested as the tall curly haired Doctor walked away.

"What?" The fourth Doctor stopped suddenly shocked, "Obviously not! Though that would be an immense help to us, it would do nothing for positive for your situation! No what I expect you to do is stand there, draw your

magic stick, staff, wand or what ever you have and wait for my order. When I tell you too, empower that device with some of the Artron energy you absorbed from the time vortex with some sort of spell or incantation. Some mumbo jumbo."

"I can't just make something up?" Melvin laughed.

"You're the greatest wizard who ever will or has ever lived," the Doctor said grabbing the boy by the shoulders and looking him in the eyes, "FIGURE... IT...OUT!!!"

Three Doctors came back carrying cables from their own Tardis consoles. The fourth Doctor, the most technologically adept of the lot, connected them into his central console. All was interconnected and just awaited the right moment for Melvin to do his thing. Melvin Lazarus, the greatest wizard that would ever be? Melvin couldn't seem to get that through his head. Who was he? He was just a third rate rock star, and fifth year Hogwarts student! He was just a kid. Ya a kid being forced to grow up fast. Time did fly.

"Now!" The Doctor yelled.

"Time flies!" Melvin said pointing his wand at the egg timer casting "TEMPEST FUGIT!"

Blue energy flowed from Melvin through his wand into the make-shift time-turner. The crystal dust absorbed the energy and pulsed with temporal life as the figure eight, infinity shaped glass began to glow.

"Throw it into the blast Me.." the Doctors were yelling in tandem, "... lin."

The young wizard, engulfed in a glow of blue Artron energy, his eyes burning with blue flame through the time turner out the open Tardis door and watched it fly towards the heart of the temporal explosion, as the Doctor closed the Tardis doors.

Energy flowed through the wires into the Tardis consoles as all four Doctors attempted to power up their drives, as the time-turner reached the blast. Chaos and violent turbulence turned to a sudden stillness and calm took hold of Melvin as he floated like a null point in time and space. Peace. Melvin saw himself standing before the shuttle holding the Pygmy puff. Saw the explosion. He saw the old woman's laughter turn to anger when she realized she had missed her target. The old woman transformed to reveal that she was really the witch Queen of Avalon. The witch Queen had planted the bomb but hadn't meant to kill him. Her target was his precious Sasporilla Bucket. Sassy?

The thought of the pink haired witch pulled him back across time and space where he found himself flying from one Tardis and thrown through the doors into another Tardis as the four time capsules ripped free of each other. Melvin struck the floor hard as he landed.

Melvin Lazarus caught a look of the old Doctor smiling down at him as consciousness faded.

"Don't worry lad." The first Doctor smiled. "I know just where to drop you."

It was a mixture of cool fall air, the smell of an early autumn forest, and the sound of children yelling that woke Melvin Lazarus from his unconscious state. The boy wizard sat up beside a dirt cross road just inside a colour changing forest. A boy no more than eight stood before a bushel basket of apples on a cart, another boy, possibly just a bit older lay knocked to the ground injured. A tall thin young man, dressed in fine clothes with a rapier stood, before the boy. The tip of the thin bladed sword precariously close to the child's throat.

"Give me the apples." The young man insisted.

"Go to hell Vortigern." The young boy said defiantly. "They're a surprise for our father. Auri and I worked hard to pick them!"

"And he will get them." The young man smiled. "Only Constans and I will give them to your father. They will find you murdered and that unlucky traveler over there will be executed for your deaths!"

Melvin had heard enough. With a quick draw of his wand he cast "EXPELIARMUS!" knocking the sword from the young mans hand. "FLIPPENDO!" Through the young man through the air landing hard on his behind.

Like most cowards he didn't wait for a third spell. The young man picked himself up and ran off over the hill. Another boy, hiding in the rocks. A stout boy, a bit younger than the young man ran after him. Melvin walked over to check on the two boys. Hungry he picked up an apple and took a big bite.

"Are you alright?" Melvin asked, his mouth full of apple.

"Yes." The younger boy said grabbing the fallen rapier and holding it up to defend his brother. "We are fine wizard and I ask you do not harm us. I warn thee I will not hesitate to defend my brother or my apples."

"I won't harm you, I promise." Melvin laughed taking another bite. "I'm not a dark wizard. My intent was to protect you and your brother, not harm you. Who was that?"

"That was my brother Constans friend and adviser Vortigern." The boy said.

"Don't tell me." Melvin smiled. "The chubby boy hiding in the rocks was your older brother Constans?"

"Yes." The boy said. "He doesn't like me or my brother very much."

"Why?" Melvin asked.

"He see's us as a possible threat to his claim to our fathers throne." The boy said hanging his head.

"Throne?" Melvin asked. "What are your names?"

"This is my brother Aurelius." The boy smiled helping his slightly older brother to his feet. "And I'm Uther."

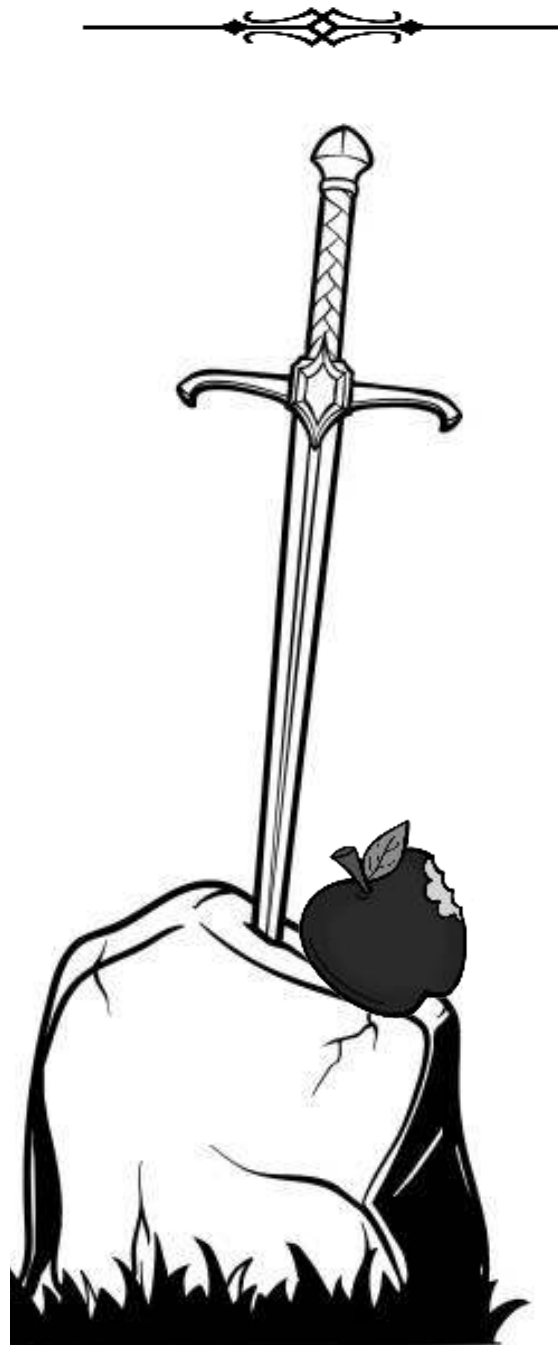
"Uther?" Melvin asked.

"Uther Pendragon." The boy smiled. "Son of Constantine the third, King of Britannia, year of our lord eleven thirty six. And what is your name kind wizard?"

Melvin looked around for the old time lord and realized he'd been left here in the past. In a place he was obviously always meant to be. A place where he would be come the most powerful and famous wizard that would ever live.

"Merlin." The young wizard gulped.

And all he could think of was the face of the girl with the pink hair.



**Sasporilla Bucket**

**The Girl With Pink Hair**

# **The University of Avalon**



**By Darren Kelly**

**A Harry Potter Universe Fan Fiction**

# The University of Avalon

A Harry Potter Universe / Sasporilla Bucket Fan Fiction  
by Darren Kelly

## PROLOGUE

### *Exerpt from the Encyclopedia Americana*

Avalon (/ˈævə, lɒn/; Latin: Insula Avallonis, Welsh: Ynys Afallon, Ynys Afallach; literally meaning "the isle of fruit [or apple] trees"), sometimes written Avallon or Avilion, is a legendary island featured in the Arthurian legend. It first appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's 1136 pseudo-historical account *Historia Regum Britanniae* ("The History of the Kings of Britain") as the place where King Arthur's sword Excalibur was forged and later where Arthur was taken to recover from his wounds after the Battle of Camlann. Avalon was associated from an early date with mystical practices and figures such as Morgan le Fay. It is traditionally identified as the former island of Glastonbury Tor.

### *Exerpt from Encyclopedia Magica*

Avalon (/ˈævə, lɒn/; Latin: Insula Avallonis, Welsh: Ynys Afallon, Ynys Afallach; literally meaning "the isle of fruit [or apple] trees"), sometimes written Avallon or Avilion, is an alternate world, thought to be the originating world of magical power and mystic arts. Much older than that of our world it is home to many magical races. Home to the Royal court of the Witch Queen an Wizard King of our political hierarchy. They rule with impunity. Those witches and wizards who refused to live with muggles removed themselves from Earth after Merlin gifted the muggles with an ultimate protection spell. Though that spell is now long lost. Avalon is a beacon of higher technology, advanced magic and is especially coveted for its Education at it's University.

"Ok this is all very interesting," Lyra Lee-Ashwolf sneered shoving the book back across the desk at the fat chief of the International Bureau of Magical Investigation, "but what does it have do with me?"

"We want you to go in to that University undercover." The fat bald man said leaning forward in his chair looking the spiky haired red head in the eye. "We need you to infiltrate the underground."

The fat man slammed a couple of punk style zine news papers on the desk called "CAMELOT". The 'A' a crossed anarchy style A. The paper showed photos of protests and royal guards beating young wizards and witches. There were allegations of use of forbidden spells, torture and atrocities to great to believe.

"Why me?" Lyra asked. "You must have more qualified?"

"You're a loose cannon." The fat man said unconvincingly. "You can carry yourself convincingly enough as a Professor but you'll fit in great as a whacked out underground leftist protestor."

"I'll take that as a compliment." Lyra smiled sitting back. "But tell me the real reason or I walk. You need me here, I don't need you. I don't work for you anymore remember? To bloody unstable. Remember chief?"

"Your friend Sasporilla Bucket." The fat man said. "The Witch Queen wants her dead. She's the true heir to the throne of Avalon, and she's attending the University this year."

"Why didn't you bloody say so!" Lyra said taking up a quill. "Fetch me a contract, where do I sign?"



# Chapter 1

The sun's golden rays pushed through the deep red sky as they peeked over dawn's horizon. Golden Spires and Ivory walls of the Avalonian city skyline glimmered in the morning sun. A weave of the ancient architecture of millennia past and the hyper engineered creations of today's technomancers. The shining jewel in the Royal crown of the magical world. Home to the throne of the Witch Queen and the Wizard King. Avalon, the mystic world of the Magi.

Majesty Station stood in the very center of Avalon City. The hub of travel like a great tree house built into and around the gigantic tree of life itself. Golden paths stretched out in all directions like sparkling golden branches of fairy dust that ran throughout the city. Magi trains ran along those lines with exacting schedules.

This morning the station platforms were especially alive with extra porters and greeters willing to take new students and their baggage to the University, for a fee of course.

The air at the end of the platforms began to waver as it does in the heat, like a water curtain that suddenly split by magical star fire, as the first of the Avalonian shuttles broke through the dimensional barriers and arrived on schedule.

Sasporilla Bucket, a rather plain witch of average build and striking pink hair stood at her window hand still raised from where, seconds ago, she had seen Melvin Lazarus standing outside her shuttle. Once again they had missed each other. There was something in their fates that stood between them. Perhaps it was in hers, she thought, or perhaps it was in his? Which ever, fate seemed determined to keep them apart and it was indeed ticking her off to no end.

Sasporilla gathered her bag, her broom and took hold of the thin leash holding her mail flamingo Jorge, who danced along behind to Latin songs playing on his old walkman. The shuttle came to a slow and gentle settling at the platform side. A voice came over the interior communications system accompanied by the sound of royal trumpets. "Your shuttle has arrived at Majesty Station in the City of Avalon. Thank you for taking Royal Avalon Shuttles. It is now safe to disembark."

The shuttle door slid open. The fresh crisp early morning air flowed in. It occurred to Sassy for the first time that there was a four and a half hour time difference between London and Avalon, even though they were different worlds. Sasporilla stepped off onto the ornately carved marble platform. The royal warrant hung proudly on the station wall guards on either side, watching her. Of all the business people, dignitaries and rich children disembarking to attend university, why were they eyeing just her they wondered? Then it hit her. She wasn't one of the rich or powerful or their progeny that started to mill about the platform. In an average pair of denim jeans and a Primark jumper she looked like any muggle off the London streets not like one of these aristocratic snobs like...

"Draco Malfoy?" Sasporilla called to a finely dressed young blond man walking past her.

His sudden turn seemed to be one of nervousness rather than one of curiosity. His brow furrowed in for a moment then relaxed as he recognized the young witch. "Miss Bucket." Draco Malfoy said politely. "I apologize, I didn't recognize you. It's been a few years since Hogwarts."

"Yes." Sasporilla said. "I'm surprised to see you here, Mr. Malfoy."

"I'm in my final year at the University." Draco said. "I assume this is your first year?"

"Yes it is." Sasporilla said.

"I am walking to the campus now," Draco said, "would you care to accompany me Miss Bucket?"

"No Mr. Malfoy I would not." Sasporilla said. "I guess it's slipped your mind all the nasty things you and helped Billy Bombaduck do to me and my friends?"

"No miss Bucket I have not." Draco sighed hanging his head. "I owe you an apology for my actions towards you back in the day. I was raised to hate. I make no excuses for anything I did and lay no blame on anyone but myself for anything I did."

"Then if that's true, I accept your apology." Sasporilla said. "In principal, to help clear your conscience if nothing else."

"Thank you." Draco Malfoy said managing a stiff shy smile. "Might I offer a piece of advice, as you won't walk with me."

"If you insist." Sasporilla agreed.

"This isn't London." Draco said. "And the University isn't Hogwarts. Keep your head down and just mind your school work. Don't get involved in things here."

"I'll take it under advisement." Sasporilla said sarcastically.

"You do that." Draco snapped as he walked off the platform into the terminal.

There was that bit of bitter fire Sassy was used to from a Malfoy. Then again hadn't she just rung out the snake like a wash-up sponge until it spewed a drop of venom? Perhaps she could have been a bit nicer. After all Draco Malfoy seemed to honestly want to make amends for his slights and crimes of the past. Perhaps this was to big an internal struggle for the first day of university? Which way was the campus?

Sasporilla had barely taken a step towards the terminal when a rather dodgey looking unkempt thin man with scruffy face and baked bean teeth stepped in her way smiling .

"On your way to the University Miss?" The man asked raising the small hairs on the back of Sasporilla's neck. "I'd be willing to help take you and your baggage there in my vehicle for a small fee. Allow me, Jumble Gormbean to be your humble servant and shoulder your burden."

"I can shoulder my own burdens, thank you very much." Sasporilla said as she pushed past the man and walked into the terminal.

"That's my girl." Jumble Gormbean winked as he put his hands into his pockets, and shuffled off nonchalantly following her.

The inside of the Majesty Station terminal was ivory white marble with polished gold gilding all working within the natural form of the natural form of the branches of the tree of life. Witches and wizards mulled around carrying bags, levitating cases , and some even using carts like normal people.

New university students looked at terminal maps trying to find their way through the labyrinth of the station proper to the street below. The guides stood by like the vipers they were waiting to strike. Most were simply over priced for their services but some were out right thieves or worse.

"All right." Sasporilla said stepping up to the map. "Let's figure this bad boy out shall we people? I take it we're all looking for the way out to the University? With all of our heads put together we should be able to figure it out, yes?"

"All right!" The students smiled happy to see some that seemed confident and in charge of the matter.

Sasporilla could see why they were all so confused. There was no way to tell where they were or where they wanted to go. It looked more like a beautifully crafted piece of Celtic knot work than a map.

"Ok has anyone been able to discern on here where we are now?" Sasporilla asked looking around.

Most people just hung their heads ashamed.

"No." One large Red headed girl with glasses and a German accent said smiling. "I even tried REVELIO but nothing worked. Oh, I'm Christin by the way."

"Sasporilla." Sassy said shaking the girls hand smiling. "Ok maybe we're making this harder than it has to be. OY MAP! HOW DO WE GET TO THE UNIVERSITY FROM HERE?"

The map came to life and started to light up with a bright pink dot where Sasporilla was standing currently. The path to through the terminal to the street below illuminated itself amongst the tangled knot-work of halls and paths. Sasporilla studied it carefully attempting to commit it memory.

"Sasporilla look." Christin said tapping the pink haired witch on the shoulder and pointed her in the direction of a magical path lighting up on the floor. The sparkling pink path flowed forward through the terminal and took a turn to the left down a cross hallway. Sassy and Christin looked at each other and smiled.

"Alright everyone follow path." Sasporilla said as the students cheered. Much to the chagrin of the exploitive guides who'd lost their marks this day.

As the jubilant group of students made their way through hallways, down staircases to the central elevator. The large crystal bubble with gold struts and floor was large enough to hold the entire group of students and then some. Sasporilla thought it's design was similar in many ways to that of the art nouveau period of her home but she new it to be elven. One of the students nearest a crystal panel tapped it with her wand and the and a red arrow pointing down lit up.

"Going down" the elevator said, "destination?"

"Street level?" Sasporilla asked everyone who sort of had to agree.

"Street level." The elevator said. "Stand clear of the doors."



The bubble slid closed and began to magically descend. Free of cable or tube like most elevators Sasporilla had been in, the crystal bubble flowed down the trunk of the tree of life showing the older teens a view of the Royal city of Avalon like no other.

"Look!" Christin pointed at a seven spired building of Ivory and Gold in the center of a great square surrounded by other various buildings. "That's the University!"

"How wonderful!" Sasporilla gasped. "It's even more spectacular in person."

"The seven spires," a small quiet voice said from behind, "represent the seven schools of magic taught at the University. Natural Magic, Ritual Magic, Necromancy, Technomancy, Divination, Alchemy and Life which teaches Arts and design, politics and the like."

The shy young lady, a small thin Philippina girl who was quite pretty with her tied back long black hair, blushed when she realized she'd spoken aloud and worse... everyone in the elevator had heard her.

"Hi!" The girl mustering up the courage to smile. "I'm Kathleen. I'm in the Technomancy program. I read all that in the updated History of the Royal Avalon University."

Sasporilla had to laugh. What a wonderful young woman. "Hi Kathleen. I'm Sasporilla Bucket, call me Sassy."

"Hello Kathleen." The German witch smiled warmly tipping her slightly. "I'm Christin. Very pleased to meet you."

The entire elevator of students introduced themselves. Not just to Kathleen but to each other. Kathleen had never felt so welcome or so at home, so far from home.

The elevator slowly came to a stop as it reached the ground floor. The Elevators crystal bubble opened right onto the sidewalk at the base of the great tree of life. Right across the street was the entrance to the university campus. The students cheered at their success in finding it. No one noticed Jumble Gormbean getting off the next elevator and stepping back into the shadows to watch.

The sidewalks were as alive with the hustle and bustle of magi in various states of dress. Some dressed in robes finer than any Sasporilla had ever seen at home. Others were dressed rather shabbily showing a definite separation in those who had, and those who had not, amongst the Avalonian Magi.

A small group of young people with arm-fulls of folded pamphlets tried to capture the attention of passers by.

"New issue of Camelot!" One of the young people would say trying to hand one to a person.

"Royal Guard beat up innocent protestors!" Another cried waving a copy in the air.

"Extra, Extra, read all about it!" A young man about Sassy's height with short brown curly hair, glasses and a bandana over his lower face said. "ROYAL TIME BOMB KILLS BOY WIZARD!"

"What is all that about I wonder?" Sasporilla mused.

"The Camelot," Kathleen smiled proudly, "is a underground fifth column news paper attempting to present "NEWS" not normally printed in the main stream media about so called corruption within Avalonian political hierarchies and the royal court."

"Oh." Sasporilla gasped. "I see."

"Take this." The young man with the bandana covered face said shoving a copy of Camelot into Sasporilla's hands.

"Read it. Maybe it will help you open your eyes and your mind."

"How rude." Sasporilla protested as the young man turned and walked away.

Sassy glanced at the full colour cover of the Camelot Free Press. It had a decided black and white wavy background stripe with a picture of who she assumed were the Witch Queen's eyes, looking very angry and shifty above something she couldn't really make out. It looked almost like a wibbly wobbly time-turner and a shivering pink pygmy puff? That would be absurd! Above was the publications name in what looked like letters cut out of a news paper but the A in CAMELOT was decidedly the symbol for Anarchy. A capital "A" sloppily drawn within a circle. A large blast of flame exploded within the page repeatedly behind it all for emphasis. So this was the political dissident side of University life she'd heard so much about.

It was a common honk of a vehicles horn that drew Sasporilla's attention to the road way. Magi vehicles were in many ways like classic rounded muggle vehicles of the nineteen forties and fifties. However they had no wheels, no tires nor did they use anything as crude as a gasoline engine! The area usually slated as wheel wells were smoothed over with small glowing crystal plates below. Sasporilla was very curious as to what kind of magic made them go. She'd probably understand it no more than she understood a muggle engine.

A small transport carrying half a dozen royal guard parked itself at the side of the road. The guards stepped off in formation and approached the young people handing out the copies of the Camelot.

"Here we go people!" One of them yelled.

"Look at this everyone!" The boy with the bandana covering his mouth cried. "The royal guard silencing the truth!" A large purple bus pulled up to the side of the road in front of the students. On the side read "Official University Shuttle". The side door creaked open loudly. A rather calm looking bus driver with a salt and pepper beard took and a big cap, took sip from his thermos.

"Ok people." The Driver smiled. "Get in."

Students started to climb aboard carrying their things. Sasporilla watched in horror as the royal guard marched up to the young people, took the issues of Camelot, and started beating them with night-sticks.

"You can't do that!" Sasporilla screamed pulling her wand. "STOP!"

Jorge squawked as two royal guard came up from behind Sasporilla. Sassy turned her head to see they were the pair that had been up on the arrival platform that had been watching her. Had they been following her? The royal guards reached in to grab the pink haired witch.

"Pintillo!" A gravelly voice cast as a puff of red chalky gas exploded in the faces of the guards and the skinny dirty hands of Jumble Gormbean grabbed hold of Sasporilla Bucket and shoved her and her flamingo up into the bus.

"Let me go!" Sasporilla insisted.

"Hurry it up Jumble man." The driver said. " your roots are showing."

The big purple bus sped off as a more guards arrived and arrests ensued. Some young people lay broken and bloodied, others stood up against the wall in bindings. The few, the smartest had escaped. This was becoming all too common a scene on the streets of Avalon on any given day.

"Who are you?" Sasporilla demanded pointing her wand at Jumble Gormbean who's hair was shifting to a spiky red and who's face bubbling and changing from the affects of a polyjuice potion wearing off.

"Cool your jets wide butt." The person said shoving Sasporilla back into a front seat and stuffing a half-eaten apple in the pink haired witch's mouth.

Jumble Gormbean's face shifted to that of a young woman in her mid twenties with spiky red hair. Sasporilla recognized her oldest friend Lyra Lee-Ashwolf immediately.

"I'm professor Zevo and this is Professor Jacobi. Sorry about the rough introduction, but we try to keep new students as safe as possible and out of as much trouble as possible. At least until we get them safely to the campus. Then you're all on your own."

Lyra was an Auror, a type of magical police officer, and if she was impersonating a professor then she was undercover, Sassy thought.

"Nice to meet you Professor Zevo." Sasporilla said spitting out the apple defiantly. "Professor Jacobi? The same Professor Jacobi who teaches Enchantment at Hogwarts?"

"I did." The bus driver smiled taking another swig from his thermos as he darted the bus in and out of traffic. "But I don't stick around to long in places man. Life's gotta flow, like a river. Ya know? I go where the next bit of life takes me. Where I find myself needed most. Today, that's here. Driving a bus. Tomorrow, who knows?"

"Yes Mr.Jacobi very deep." Ms.Zevo smiled. "Ladies and gentlemen please allow me to introduce myself properly. I am Ms.Zevo one Avalon Universities Political History professors and welcome wagon coordinator. Our gracious bus driver today is Professor Jacobi."

"Retired." The bearded man said proudly holding up his thermos. "Put out to pasture by the ministry of magic! So now I drive a bus and collect a fat pension cheque every month. Cheers!"

"We'll be arriving at the Universities new student welcome center at the north campus in a few moments." Ms.Zevo said. "There'll be a short presentation to introduce you to the University then we'll get you to your dorms before lunch."

"Excuse me mam." A young man Sasporilla recognized as Jeffrey Leadfellow, a Gryffindor that graduated with her. "What time will the sorting ceremony be?"

"Sorting Ceremony?" Ms.Zevo asked with a curious smile.

"To sort us into our houses?" Jeffrey Leadfellow smiled. "I just know I'll get what ever the equivelent of Gryffindor is."

"My dear boy." Ms.Zevo said walking up to him. "IF you had bothered to do a bit of summer reading, as suggested in your acceptance package, you'd have read that no where within the University are you sorted into HOUSES!"

"That's true mam but," Kathleen added quietly not looking up to meet the rather scary young woman's firey gaze, "we are actually separated by school of magical learning instead. As represented by the seven spires."

"Well!" Ms.Zevo said, her eyes widening, a big smile broadening across her face. "I see at least ONE OF YOU has done her reading! Ten points to Ravenclaw."

"I was a Hufflepuff mam." Kathleen smiled.

"Really?" Ms.Zevo said.

Sasporilla turned and looked at the small Phillipina girl, but didn't recognize her. She thought she'd known every Hufflepuff in the seventh year girls dorm.

"I was still in the fourth year dorm when I finished all my Newt classes." Kathleen said a bit embarrassed.

"Ah!" Ms.Zevo said. "A smart cookie, ay? Well then, glad your with us!"

Ms.Zevo walked back up the aisle and leaned into the bus driver. "Have we any interested parties following?"

"All clear, mam." The driver smiled.

"Right then." Ms.Zevo announced. "We're less than five minutes out. Let's enjoy the rest of the ride."

Ms.Zevo sat down gracefully next to Sasporilla. One butt crowding the other. Casual hip checks shoved each other playfully but discreetly.

"Jumble bloody Gormbean?" Sasporilla whispered.

"Name of an old Dungeons and dragons character." Lyra smirked.

"You crack me up." Sasporilla giggled.

The Bus turned down the main boulevard that ran straight into the northern campus. An old wizard in long blue robes sat on an even older stone bench smoking a long pipe, stroking his even longer snow-white beard. He peered at the bus over top of his crescent shaped glasses and smiled at the sight of a young pink haired witch sitting in one of the busses front seats. With a creaky stretch of old bones he stood happily and turned to the young man with short curly brown hair and bandana covering his lower face.

"It appears you are quite correct." The old wizard said happily. "Sasporilla Bucket has finally arrived at the University of Avalon."



## Chapter 2

The Universities Northern campus was alive with students carrying their bags, trunks, brooms and books to their various new homes for the year. Huge marble towers loomed over the smaller surrounding buildings like streetlights amongst parked cars Sassy thought.

"The marble towers are the dorms." Kathleen, the young Phillipina witch smiled with knowledgeable pride until she realized she spoken allowed again and everyone was looking at her again. "Oh boy."

"Tell us more about this side of the campus please?" Christin, the large red headed German girl asked enthusiastically. "Like what is that Greek looking building over there?"

"Yes Kathleen," Sasporilla insisted, "please tell us."

"That Greco-Roman style building, not unlike the architectural style of many muggle Greek temples as well the muggle United States Supreme Court building in Washington DC, is the greatest repository of magical knowledge. The Royal Library of Avalon."

"Really?" Christin said amazed.

"Wow!" Sasporilla exclaimed. "That's the biggest library I've ever seen then! It goes on for forever!"

"It is three point two five three kilometers long by one kilometer wide and three hundred meters tall on the outside." Kathleen smiled.

"On the outside?" Christin asked.

"The inside is said to be immeasurable." Kathleen whispered. "Some kind of magic."

"Soceric-Engineering!" Ms.Zevo said. "Dimensionally designed by trained engineers to be larger on the inside than out. Engineered magic, something you can learn here at the University of Avalon."

The bus swung around the west end of the library to a Tudor style building that Sasporilla thought sort of resembled the old Globe Theater in London. Its light and dark woods a stark contrast to the ivory marbles and old brick

works of the University buildings. The bus came to a stop in front of the main entrance. A banner hung above the large double doors read "Welcome New Students."

Everyone shuffled off the bus and stood at the base of the steps up to the front doors. Ms.Zevo walked up the front steps and stood by the big double doors. The bus drove off leaving them to their own devices.

"All right everyone!" Ms.Zevo smiled standing before the eager group of young people. "If you will collect your things and follow me inside we will get you checked in at reception. There you will receive your welcome package, your housing assignments including keys. Do not lose them. Then you will be shown a spell to send your things safely and securely on ahead to your dorm room, "if" you so choose to do so! Then we will make our way into the auditorium for a short presentation. Any questions?"

"Yes?" A young man in the back held up his hand. "What if you've made private Residence arrangements as opposed to public dorms?"

"Then I'm amazed you ended up on my bus and didn't get a limousine here!" Ms.Zevo sneered.

"I was did take a private lift service from the shuttle." The young man sneered back. "I just folded into the back of your motley crew upon arrival."

"Well then," Ms.Zevo smiled, "the answer to your question is thus, those of privilege need not worry about such pedestrian things as housing assignments in your welcome package as you've obviously made other private arrangements in advance. Thank you for singling yourself out to everyone as the rich self important one in the crowd, please go ahead of the peasants to your velvet throne sire."

The young man was clearly not amused as he stepped forward. "I don't appreciate your sarcasm."

"That's because it was free." Ms.Zevo smiled. "If you'd had to pay for it I'm sure you'd value it greatly. Now, everyone as this young man has kindly stepped up and opened the door... "PETRIFICUS TOTALOUS" he can hold it for everyone else until we've all gone in. Thank you young man, you're a gentleman and a scholar."

Sasporilla could not make out the guttural cursing coming out of the petrified young man holding open the door as she passed but she was quite certain it wasn't polite.

The young people lined up by last initial at tables marked with letter of their last names. The young man ahead of Sassy was named Barnaby, Kenworth Barnaby.

"I'm afraid I don't see your card here Mr.Barnaby." the young woman who manned the table smiled politely.

"No my first name is Barnaby." The young man smiled.

"Oh I see." The young ender witch, with sharp features and dark hair said. "Then, Mr.Kenworth, I will give you some advice, listen to instructions given to you. Go to the table marked by the initial of your Last name. You'll find few of us suffer fools lightly here Mr.Kenworth. Good day. Next!"

"I think you were rather hard on him." Sassy said stepping forward.

"Name?" The young witch asked clearly irritated.

"Sasporilla Bucket." Sassy said stiffly.

"Good." The young woman said pulling a badge from the pile and pushing her book forward, the quill standing too. "Please sign in. You will be in row C - Seat seven, you will find your welcome package there. Here is your course schedule. Welcome to Avalon University."

"Thank you." Sasporilla smiled politely. "Your name is?"

"Burberry Bastage" the young witch said a bit surprised. No one usually cared enough to ask. The young witch pulled Sasporilla's name badge from the pile and handed it to her. "Here you are Ms.Bucket."

"Pleasure to meet you Ms.Bastage." Sasporilla said sticking to her proper manners.

"Pleasure is mine Ms.Bucket." Burberry Bastage smiled. "To be honest, just nice to meet some one polite, who can follow a basic instructions... for once!"

"OK!" a young wizard called. "Once you have your badges step over here with your things please."

Sasporilla carried her broom and lead Jorge by his lead over to the glowing magic circle. The young man encouraged others to place their things in circle, place their badge on pedestal with a clear crystal plate, then tap their wand to it. In a swirl of energy trunks, bags, cages with pets and owls were whisked off to dorm rooms. By the time it was Sasporilla's turn she'd seen everything she needed to see of the spell. She set everything up in the center of the circle, and handed her broom to Jorge.

"Don't Worry Jorge." Sassy smiled to her trusty flamingo. "You'll be in our new home in a tick."

Sasporilla turned back around to the wizard giving instructions and placed her ID badge on the pedestal.

"You've been paying attention, miss?" The young wizard asked.

"Bucket," Sassy smiled, "Sasporilla Bucket."

"Ok, Miss Bucket." The wizard said. "Tap your badge three times and say your name last name first, first name last."

Sasporilla drew her wand and tapped it thrice upon her badge and said her name, "Bucket, Sasporilla." The crystal glowed with a golden glow as did the circle. The magical energy swirled around Jorge that seemed quite amused by it all as the spell suddenly whooshed her things away off to her dorm room. Of course there was just one question? Sasporilla turned to the young wizard with questioning eyes.

"Your Dorm assignment and key is in your welcome package in the auditorium." The wizard smiled. "It's unlocked by your pass."

Sasporilla followed the flow of young witches and wizards into the grand auditorium. In the center was a modest oval shaped stage surrounded by stadium style seating that raised up and surrounded it on all sides. However rather than crude benches there were rather plush, comfortable chairs. Each had a row number and letter assigned and a name inscribed.

"Row C, Seat Seven." Sasporilla Repeated to herself as she walked down the auditorium steps.

"Sasporilla!" Christin called from down below. "You are down here! Next to my seat!"

Sasporilla smiled and made her way down to row C. As promised her name was indeed on her chair as was her personalized welcome package. Complete with housing assignment. Sasporilla touched her pass to the package and lifted free of the seat.

"Look!" Christin smiled. "We are both in The Avonshire Tower! What dorm are you in?"

Sasporilla opened her package and scanned for the information. Christin knew just where to look, pointing her finger in politely.

"Oh!" Sasporilla laughed. "Thank you! Dorm one twenty three, Suite A."

"Oh mine Gott!" Christin cheered. "I am in one twenty three, Suite C! That means we are room mates!"

"That's amazing!" Sasporilla smiled. "This will be the best year."

"I was afraid of being away from home." Christin frowned. "Away from my family and my good friends. At least now I will know you."

"Exactly. You'll have me to room with and You'll know Kathleen." Sasporilla looked around the auditorium.

"Where is our walking encyclopedia anyway?"

"She is across the way," Christin pointed catching Kathleen's attention who waved to them. "She's in the technomancy school section."

"It has it's own section?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes, of course." Christin said surprised. "Just like ours, we are in the Life magic school because of our majors."

Christin said. "I'm here to study ART also as I love to draw and paint but specifically my major is Science as in I want to study the biological enzyme-substrate pairs we use as the base of incorporation of other biocatalysts in the paints we use in our magical portraits. I have ideas on extending their life span and other areas we might find untapped resources!"

"Wow!" Sasporilla gasped. "That sounds fascinating and so very different from mine."

"Yes." Christin smiled. "But as ours both touch on art, but cross over other areas, we are placed in the very 'CATCH ALL' Life School."

"I get you." Sasporilla laughed. "They used to say the same thing about Hufflepuff!"

The auditorium lights lowered as a single spotlight filled the center of the stage. An ancient looking wizard, bald on top with long stringy white hair flowing long from the sides, mingling with a long white beard walked slowly into the spotlight from the darkened stage. The night blue robes he wore were covered in stars and moved as real as if they were the universe itself.

"Welcome Scholars of higher learning to the University of Avalon." The old wizard said in a quiet scratchy voice causing everyone to go very silent and very still to hear him. Sasporilla found him strangely familiar though she knew she had never met him. "I am Merlin, or at least I was. I come to you from another time and place with this message of welcome to the University that I helped to found, in hopes that one day you would find your way here to me."

Sasporilla was amazed that the old man looked straight at her when he said it, with a familiar rye smile.

The old man lifted his staff and cast "OSTENDE!"

Merlin burst into crows and flew off into seven different directions as a ball of blue energy expanded in the center stage.

The next twenty minutes was filled with a delightful presentation filled with images and information about the history of the university, and its founders the wizard Merlin, the Witch Grizwelda and the Elf King Er'lorien. Fast forward fifteen hundred years to the modern campus and all of the things the university of Avalon had to offer its students. A wealth of knowledge beyond that which most wizards and witches of the normal world dare to peruse and only with dedication, hard work and singular focus would each student reach their goal and learn that which they came to learn.

Starlight sprinkled into center stage as the images faded. The lights clustered to create a young witch in bright white robes. Her long blonde hair framed her heart shaped face and her ice blue eyes penetrated one's soul when they looked at you. A kind smile spread across what Sasporilla thought must be the most beautiful face she had ever seen another woman.

"Hello students." The young witch smiled. "I am professor LaDéesse, and would like to give you my personal welcome to Avalon University. I am a professor Technomancy and look forward to teaching some of you. Now if all of you would pull your dorm room keys from your package and hold them up in front of you with the crystalline pattern of your pass pressing on the gold side of the top of your key and your thumb pressed firmly against the silver side of top of your key. Just like this."

An image of just what she wanted them all to do magnified around her, center stage for all to see clearly and repeated several times for the lions share of students to copy.

"Is everyone ready?" Professor LaDéesse asked with a rye smile. "Repeat after me. CLAVIS."

"Clavis." The crowd repeated

"VESTIGIUM!"

"Vestigium!" A small spark between the pass and key left a pinching shock in the finger of each student. Most dropped their keys, embarrassed, quickly retrieving them with an accio spell.

"Each of your key's is now imprinted for your use and your use only!" Professor LaDéesse smiled. "A handy security spell you'll find used in some products such as locks and brooms. You will find a second key inside your package please repeat the process now to imprint your spare. This way if there are any problems I can fix them now and don't have to leave my beautiful wife and children later this evening."

A light highlighted Ms.Zevo sitting in a seat across the way with two toddlers. The spiky red haired witch waved a tad embarrassed. The older of the two children, a boy about three with hair as blonde as Professor LaDéesse's, laughed and waved. His sister of two was obviously much shyer than he.

Sasporilla wondered just what all this was about? Was this all a huge under cover assignment? Was this part of a real relationship for her friend? It had been so long since she'd been able to talk to Lyra. Did this Professor LaDéesse even know Professor Zevo was indeed the Auror Lyra Lee-Ashwolf?

After everyone had duplicated their keys the assembly came to a quick end. There were shuttles organized to take students to their dorm towers. Kathleen had grabbed hold of Christin with an excited exchange. Sasporilla tried to get through the crowd to Ms.Zevo, but with no avail. She was whisked off by Professor LaDéesse into the back with a couple of students having problems with their keys.

"Another time then." Sasporilla Sighed.

"Sasporilla!" Kathleen shouted. "Come on! The shuttle for the dorm will be leaving shortly!"

"You don't want to miss it do you?" Christin asked.

"No." Sasporilla said distantly turning around to meet them. "No, of course not. Wait? Kathleen? Are you in the Avonshire Tower too?"

"Yes! Kathleen smiled and laughed holding up her dorm assuagement paper excitedly. "Avonshire Tower, Room one twenty three, Suite D! Right next to Christin!"

"This is so wonderful!" Sasporilla laughed. "It seems fate has truly thrown us together."

"Let's hope it's for good reasons." Christin cringed.

"I'm sure it is!" Kathleen smiled getting between the two girls and taking both their arms. "I can just feel it! Let's catch that shuttle."



## Chapter 3

The shuttle to the dorms was the same large purple bus that brought them from Majesty Station. When the doors swung open Sasporilla was surprised to see the driver was different. An older woman with frizzy blue hair, wearing a white uniform and cap with a name tag that read Carmalita smiled, "Good morning. If I could have everyone one in the Alexis tower on first please, then the Avon tower... thank you. Next the Avonshire Tower? Lovely!"

This went on for some time until everyone was arranged by drop off. This made it so much easier for Carmalita and this way she knew if someone wasn't getting off, they weren't far from where they belonged.

The bus drove through the campus and turned down the curved street of dorm towers that circled the university campus, known as "The Henge."

Each tower had its own unique architectural style but much to Sasporilla's surprise they weren't alphabetically placed to arrive at.

"Mordridium Dorm," Carmalita called out, "First stop!"

There were at least half a dozen students getting off at each dorm. They disembarked with both the excitement and trepidation that a new place brings.

"Next stop Avonshire Tower." Carmalita called out as the bus pulled away.

Sasporilla gulped trepidaciously as she saw the tower they approached. Some how she pictured the Avonshire tower, being much like the town of the same name in which she grew up, Small and under stated. This tower was everything but. The Avonshire tower was perhaps the tallest of the tower dorms. It's walls looked to be carved from one single piece of polished ivory, but from what?

"Did you know," Kathleen smiled, "that the ivory used in the construction of the Avonshire tower was actually donated from the leg bone of a giant Drodakorn!"

"A what?" Christin asked.

"Drodakorn's, or Drodakornum Gigantus, are extremely rare creatures akin to flying fire griffins. They have ten legs and four wings and can travel amongst the stars." Kathleen said proudly.

"That's incredible!" Sasporilla said. "And it donated this bone?"

"Legend says the poor creature had an infection and the leg needed amputation." Kathleen frowned. "Magi took the leg and healed the wound then grew the creature a new leg. From the bone they built this tower. It's actually one of the most ancient structures in Avalon."

"Brilliant." Sasporilla smiled as the bus pulled up in front.

"Avonshire tower." Carmalita called. "All out who's going."

"You know I grew up in a small town called Avonshire near Essex." Sasporilla said.

"That's a weird coincidence." Christine mused.

"Perhaps the university felt you'd feel at home here? Kathleen smiled. "Was it a nice place."

"Small, but it was home." Sassy sighed. "But then home is where you make it. Shall we?"

The young witches headed up small carved steps through the big intricately carved golden doors that swung open as if as light as paper. Above The lobby of the towers entry hall hung a grand vaulted ceiling covered with paintings.

"Look at the art!" Christin gasped. "These were painted by various masters over time. Castora VanBeek! Mandragora Thorne! Haordrag The Red, during his blue period! All depicting great moments in the history of the Magi, but more specifically, Magi that have lived in the Avonshire Tower!"

Sasporilla drew her wand and posed next to Kathleen. "Then it's a good thing we met you Christin. You can start painting us now! You'll just have to paint yourself in!"

"Oh my no!" Christin said humbly. "I am no where near there level of mastery."

"Perhaps they are no where near yours?" Sasporilla mused. "Beauty is on they eye of the beholder."

Steps circled their way up the sides of the towers round walls and disappeared far above.

"Looks like we've got quite a climb ahead of us." Sasporilla said.

"En con trear." A voice said.

The young witches looked around to see that it was a wizard, dressed in bright yellow robes and a floppy pointy hat, in a painting that hung at the base of the steps that addressed them.

"Our dorm room is quite a way up." Sasporilla said. "Do you know of a quicker way up than the stairs?"

"Well you can of course always take a broom up if you have a private landing." The wizard in the painting said. "You can't apperate in and out of course. That sort of thing is blocked to stop all sorts of nefarious activities. No my stairs are still the best way up and down."

"Your stairs?" Kathleen asked. "Are you Cranston Marsters? The architect of the Avonshire tower?"

"And many more of the grand buildings of Avalon, my young witch." The old wizard bowed, losing his floppy hat which fell out of frame. Cranston Marsters chased after it with some choice words. He reappeared replacing the hat back on his head. "Now, where were we? Ah yes! The steps! Who wants to have the first go?"

Sasporilla looked at Christin, who looked at Kathleen, who looked at Sasporilla. Sassy stepped forward with a nervous sigh. "I guess I'll volunteer."

"Wonderful!" The wizard in the painting smiled. "All you need to do is step up onto the first step. Take out your ID card and touch it to the crystal on the banister and hang on to the rail..."

Sassy did as she was instructed. She stepped up on the solidly carved Ivory step. She pulled out her ID card and touched it to the finely carved crystal globe on the banisters end. It Glowed with a bright golden light. The steps jerked forward as Sasporilla grabbed for the railing and her balance. The steps carried her up along the wall like a muggle escalator, but at a very high rate of speed. She saw the door ways and landings to floor two, three, four, five, six, ten, twenty, thirty go past. As Sasporilla gained her balance she really began to enjoy the ride. She looked down to see Kathleen and Christin coming up not far and fast behind her.

Level one hundred and twenty three Sasporilla found herself rerouted from the steps and pulled onto a slowing platform which ended at a large wooden door. The numbers one two three hung in gold in the center of the door. A crystal latch was the obvious point of entry for the door. Sassy took up her key card as Kathleen arrived in behind her followed closely by Christin.

Sasporilla touched her key card to the latch and the door opened. Much to Sasporilla's surprise latin music poured out loudly onto the landing.

"Oh no." Sasporilla gasped rushing in fearing the worst.

Sassy, Kathleen and Christin stood shocked in the foyer of the large dorm common room. The open semi-circular sunken living room was lined with couches. A very pretty and tall Eurasian girl tipped her head back over the headrest of the couch and waved. The stereo boomed the next track, "Do the Conga".

"That's my song!" Jorge squawked from the kitchen! "Dance party!"

The raised area was the kitchen and dinning area. Pots bubbled on the stove, spoons floating above mixing. A pretty, rubenesque Latina witch danced with Jorge joyfully.

"Woohoo!" The witch laughed as she danced.

"Jorge!" Sasporilla yelled casting, "Silencia!"

The stereo went quiet.

"Hey!" The dancing witch protested. "That was my jam! Is this your flamingo?"

"Yes sorry about him." Sasporilla said. "His name is Jorge. He's my mail bird. He really likes music and loves to dance. I'm sorry if he was any trouble."

"Trouble?" The rubenesque witch with lightly curled brown hair, cherubic face and beautiful smile said. "He's a hoot! I love him! We're going to be the best of dance buddies!"

"What?" Sassy asked surprised.

"Sure." The witch smiled. "I'm Corina. I'm a third year Natural major, Herbology. I love to cook so I pretty much am always in the kitchen. If you're a cooking major, I'll gladly share."

"No I'm arts, wands." Sassy stammered and laughed. "Umm Hi I'm Sasporilla Bucket."

"Pleased to meet you." Corina smiled looking at Sassy's out stretched hand with a coy smile. "Nope, bring it in girl!"

Corina shot in quickly, much to Sasporilla's surprise, for a welcoming hug. Sasporilla had to admit she liked this young witch, and felt welcomed. Kathleen and Christin felt very much at home with Corina's warm welcome to them.



The tall witch came up from the living room with flow and grace. Her long black hair flowed at the sides of her face, framing her beauty like an ancient master piece. The rather large text book in her hands was entitled "Principals of Advanced Herbology in Modern Organic Medicinal Potions... Volume Seven".

"Pleased to meet you." The young witch held out her free hand . "I'm your other room mate, Jessica. Thank you for silencing the din."

"Party pooper!" Corina smiled sticking out her tongue playfully. "Pay her no mind Jorge. Jess is lots of fun. She just likes to seems dark and dower."

"I'm here to learn first." Jessic said with a side wink. "Play second. You ladies had best check out your rooms and check out when your interviews are with the heads of your departments."

"Interviews?" Kathleen asked.

"Oh ya!" Corina smiled. "The head of your department majors want to have personal one on one meet and greets with all new students."

"They want to get a feel for you." Jessica smiled. "Want to see how much you think you know? What your level of passion and commitment is? That sort of thing."

"Also they want to see how compatible you are with them." Corina said rushing in to check on her cooking. "They may change your course schedule based on your personality. Thinking you may respond better to some professors than others."

"That sounds sensible." Christin agreed.

"Are our things already in our rooms?" Kathleen asked.

"Yes." Jessica said. "Your Key will let you in."

"I'm going to guess my room is the one with the door that's open Jorge?" Sasporilla asked.

"I heard music." Jorge said hanging his head. "I couldn't help myself. I'm sorry."

"Ah, it's ok you knuckle head." Sasporilla laughed. "Come on. Let's go check out the room."

"Ok!" Jorge agreed just happy he wasn't in trouble.

"You feel free to come out and dance any time boi!" Corina pointed.

"You know it girl!" Jorge squawked.

Sasporilla walked anxiously across the hall between kitchen and sunken living area. The smell of whatever Corina was cooking made Sasporilla's mouth water and stomach rumble. She hadn't smelled such good home cooking since her before her mom had passed. Her best friend Karry Curtis always tried so hard on their Sunday suppers, but she was just no match for Sassy's mom..

As Sasporilla approached the door to her dorm room it seemed to sense her approach and the door swung shut. Sassy sighed at the futility of a security measure that kept out it's own occupant as she reached into her bag for her key.

The key leapt into her hand as if it knew she was searching for it. Perhaps it was as anxious to be used as she was to use it? Sassy pulled the key from her bag and inserted it in the doors lock. She turned it smoothly and the door unlatched and swung open.

The room was well lit from sun streaming in windows on the far end. The curtains having been drawn wide open. "I thought the room could use a bit of sun when I arrived." Jorge said.

The room was larger than Sasporilla had imagined. It was at least eight meters long by eight meters wide. It had a small sitting area with a small plush couch and rocking chair, a large desk and study area as well as a work bench and work shop area. A set of steps lead upstairs to a loft bedroom with a queen sized bed and huge private bathroom! She had her own tub and shower! No more sharing the loo with the girls of the Hufflepuff dorms!

Back down stairs, by the windows, was a sliding door that led out onto a huge wrap around terrace. The terrace was more than big enough to set up Jorge's pool and even a nesting area for him to sleep in with enough room left over to land her broom and set up her caravan and still hold a barbecue for twenty or so friends.

"This is so spacious." Sasporilla said. "No wonder it's so expensive. I'm not sure anyone needs all this room?"

Sassy looked out across the city of Avalon. How it sparkled in the height of the noon day sun. Noon! Was it getting that late already? She had best check her schedule.

Inside, on her desk, sat her full course schedule. Beside sat her invitation letter to her meeting with the head of the Arts and design department in the main Arts building. Professor Dina Splatterpallette requests your presence Today at one P.M!

"Oh bugger!" Sasporilla sighed.



## Chapter 4

The Arts and Design building of Avalon University was the easiest to find in all of Avalon City! Of all the grand buildings of Avalon, with their ornate classical architectures the Arts building stood out with its simple ultra modern glass and steel box design. Like a modern sky scraper in any muggle city from home.

Sasporilla Bucket set her broom down gently on the walk way of Arts and design building. A large modern statue, hewn from marble, flowed in form. Shifting from something angular to something more rounded of form with holes in it. Sasporilla thought it sort of looked like an ocean wave.

Magical art was something that fascinated Sasporilla. The way painters captured not just the image but the essence of the subject, bringing it seemingly to life as if by magic!

Sasporilla headed up the intricate stonework path way. She had little time to stop and appreciate the intricacies of the mosaics or its inlays. Sassy stepped through the big double doors into a huge marble lobby of the arts and design building. A very official looking security guard sat at a very uncomfortable looking small desk in the lobby's center.

"May I help you miss?" The guard asked.

"I have an appointment with professor Splatterpalette?" Sasporilla said.

"May I see your letter please?" the guard asked holding out his hand.

Sasporilla handed over the letter happily. The guard read the letter, placed it on the table and rubber stamped it. With a smile he handed it back.

"Welcome Miss Bucket." The guard said. "The professor is expecting you. Go right in."

"Go right in where?" Sasporilla asked.

"Who are you talking to?" A voice asked from behind Sasporilla.

Sasporilla realized she was no longer standing in the large open marble lobby. She was now in an office, filled with paintings and sculptures. A statue of a frog sitting in a lotus position with its hands stretched up above its head stared her in the face. Strange lilting guitar twisted the air around her. The smell of a butter beer candle burned some where in the room. Sasporilla turned to see a small pretty woman with long dark wavy hair sitting in a wicker rain bow basket bubble chair suspended in mid air. Her eyes shut and head back listening to the music playing.

"Miss Bucket I presume?" The woman asked.

"Um yes." Sassy stammered. "Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket, professor."

"I am professor Splatterpalette." The woman said. Holding out her hand. "I am the head of the arts and design program here at Avalon University. Let me see your portfolio."

"Portfolio?" Sasporilla said surprised. "I don't have one professor."

Professor Splatterpalette hopped down out of the chair and padded her way across the floor in what appeared to be pink niffler slippers. "WHAT?" The professor shouted in disbelief. "You came to a first meeting with out a portfolio?!? What kind of artist are y--"

That's when the professor stopped and grabbed Sasporilla. She looked at the girls pink hair. Turned Sassy left, then right. A bright smile came across her face and the professor gave Sasporilla a big hug!

"Of course!" The professor said. "You're Pinky Bubbles! "

"Excuse me?" Sasporilla asked standing there not knowing what was going on or quite how to respond.

"Pinky Bubbles from the Carnival! A little yellow songbird told me you were coming." professor chuckled. "Oh my yes, I've heard so much about you from little Layla. You and the bubbles are all she can talk about when I go over for tea! It's Pinky Bubbles this, and Pinky Bubbles that... bubbles, bubbles, bubbles."

"My name is Sasporilla Bucket miss," Sassy said stiffening a bit.

"Really?" Professor Splatterpalette asked. "Well that is much less interesting than Pinky Bubbles I must say. Bucket, that's a name as common as chips with fish but Sasporilla? That's unique!"

"I'm quite proud of my family name thank you very much." Sasporilla snapped a tad offended.

"Now, now dear I didn't mean to be rude or to offend." The professor said. "I apologize if I came off wrong."

"I'm sorry Miss..." Sasporilla apologized.

"Mrs!" Professor Splatterpalette corrected. "That's Mrs. If you please! I am married! With a husband and everything, two beautiful children and a strange man who lives in our front bushes. He keeps the stray cats warm, but enough of that.... you're here to study wand making that's why you don't have a portfolio?"

"Yes professor." Sasporilla said.

"Let me see your wand." The professor asked holding out her hand.

Sasporilla pulled her wand out and handed it to the professor who began to look it over very closely and carefully.

"Interesting." Professor Splatterpalette said. "Where do you get it cleaned and serviced?"

"I do all my own cleaning and maintenance mrs." Sasporilla said. "I apprenticed for a time under Mr.Olivander."

"Garrek?" The professor asked.

"Yes professor?" Sasporilla thought the question odd.

"What do you know about the wand?" Professor Splatterpalette asked turning and hiding it behind her back.

"It's a conciliator wand." Sasporilla smiled. "Very rare. Made for people like me who need to learn to harness power from other spectrums of magic as I am an Elf blood. It's

10 3/4" Butterfly wood with a brass handle. Its core is what makes it special. Basilisk Venom and Phoenix tear encased in a rose quartz vessel. Its name is "Hobnobb"

"Very good." The professor said. "But all technical qualities. What can you tell me about its form, its flow, its colour... its art?"

"These are the things I have really come to learn honestly." Sasporilla said sadly. "I know the wands handle is a series of curved bumps that fit my hand well and flows down towards the wood shaft of the wand. The Butterfly wood is brown."

"Disappointing." The professor sighed. "I honestly hoped you knew more about the magical art flow."

"I know how our wands rip the fabric of magic like twirling candy floss or a spiders web on its tip. How the wand helps twist and change the fabric we've ripped and through a merging of our own mystical and physical attributes and the cores tuning, to utilize it to our own ends."

"Fascinating insight." Professor Splatterpalette said surprised. "And what would some meager wand polisher from Essex like you do to change that when she knows nothing of form of art?"

"I want to make wands that allow the fabric of magic to flow through them." Sasporilla said. "A wand that is in tune with the wizard and doesn't require us to rip magic from the fabric. No longer requiring weaver elves to reweave the fabric of magic constantly because of the damage we do. I need your help professor, the help of this university, to put me on the path to creating a wand that will harmonize wizard, magic, and wand without needing to harvest living creature parts for cores. My greatest ambition a wand that anyone can be fitted for. That once you choose it will be attuned to you!"

"What?" Professor Splatterpalette asked. "The wand has always chosen the wizard!"

"If my ideas can be made real," Sasporilla said, "the Wizard will not only ALWAYS choose the wand... no one will be able to take it from you!"

"Heresy!" Professor Splatterpalette cried throwing her hands in the air. "I love it!!!"

"Excuse me?" Sasporilla asked?

"There are 3 important things that tie art, life and magic together. Can you tell me what they are?" The professor smiled her eyes sparkled with just a hint of madness. Sasporilla opened her mouth to answer but was quickly silenced. "You can't possibly know because I haven't told you yet! The 3 most important things are colour, form, a good mattress and bacon! Walk with me Ms.Bubbles."

"Bucket." Sasporilla corrected her.

"No it's chair." Professor Splatterpalette corrected Sasporilla who stepped along side her. The professor took the pink haired witches hand tenderly as they began to walk. "But every piece of art is open to some personal interpretation. Now tell me Pinky, as we stroll leisurely around my office, taking in each piece of exquisitely crafted piece of art created by former students of mine, as well as some of my own pieces, tell me what do you see?"

One painting was of an Erumphant mulling about the plains of its home calmly. Its horn glowing with happiness. A nettle sparrow flew in and landed momentarily on the beasts large rump then flew off again.

The next was a very large portrait of the professor herself wearing bright rainbow coloured robes of light. She lifted her wand within the painting cast Lumos and spun around, her dark wavy hair cascading around in lush

circles swirling in with light of the Lumos spell and the rainbow robes until the canvas turned brilliant white. Then as it faded, as a flash fades to out blue, the portrait of professor returned.

Third was a statue. A figure of clown that Sasporilla knew all too well. A clown in dark robes bent down to pick up a ball from the ground and placed it on his flat face. The ball fell off and as he bent to pick it up again the clown accidentally kicked it and began a comical cycle of chasing it around the shelf. Sassy chuckled as she remembered the show with the noseless Voldemort clown.

"Life." Sasporilla said. "In each piece I see life."

"Good, but?" The professor asked.

"Nothing is of course really alive." Sassy said. "The art channels magic to simulate life."

"Yes!!!!" Professor Splatterpalette cheered! "Fifty points to Hufflepuff! You're the first student to get that before I teach it!!! That is what, in many ways, what wizards do when we use wands. We use the wands to channel the magic."

"But that's just it professor!" Sasporilla protested. "We don't! We rip it from the fabric!"

Sasporilla turned and looked at the paintings. She could see the fabric of magic around them and within them. How the fabric of magic was mixed into the paint, the frame, and surrounded the air. The paintings, the sculptures, the mirrors, all were connected!

"The way the art is done." Sasporilla said. "It is connected to the fabric of magic. The fabric of magic and magical energy flows through them! Our wands are different. Our wands are as magical muggle tea cups without the cores we have to rip from living beasts! And for what? So we can damage the magical environment! Did you know that many weavers have been enslaved over the centuries, in towers around the world, reweaving the fabric of magic? So that our kind can cast spells to enchant brooms to sweep our floors and to make chocolate frogs?"

"And you would change all that?" Professor Splatterpalette asked.

"Yes!" Sasporilla shouted passionately.

"Good!" The professor cheered. "Then I shall teach you myself Pinky Bubbles! Your first class with me is tomorrow morning at nineish a.m. sharpish."

Then came the scream.

Sasporilla turned to see a painting on the far side of the office. It was a series of coloured cubes, shifting around each other in a tight pattern, suspended in a swirling blue vortex.

"Ah yes." The Professor said. "Fascinating painting. Shall we have a closer look?"

The professor shuffled the pink haired witch over to the painting which hung swirling and shifting before them. Sasporilla looked closer at the image. The cubes shifted and side to side and up and down. As the blocks shifted Sassy saw them forming a face of sorts. An its right eye was a bit high, its left a bit low and to far left. Its nose was crooked but when the faces mouth slid into place it screamed again. The sound was ear splitting and soul piercing.

"I can never understand what he's screaming?" The professor yelled over the din until she realized it was once again quiet. "Oops. Sorry."

"He? The painting seems in pain? Who would paint such a horrid thing?" Sasporilla asked.

"I did, thank you very much!" Professor Splatterpalette said, "I remember planning to paint it as a realism piece. Thought I had. Would swear to it. Then this morning, when I woke up I remembered... differently. I remembered painting the subject in a kinetic cubist form."

"Who was the subject?" Sasporilla asked.

"Merlin." Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "Same as the statue I carved out in front of the building."

"The shifting blob?" Sassy asked.

"Exactly." The professor said. "My dear Ms.Bubbles, I fear something is desperately wrong in the world of magical art."

"I fear you may be right Professor." Sasporilla said. "May I be excused?"

"Of course my dear. Until the tomorrow."

Sasporilla left the classroom hurriedly and found her way down stairs and back outside. The scream echoed in her head. Though the professor could not make it out, Sasporilla understood exactly what it said when it cried out.

"Help me," the painting had cried out, "Sasporilla!"



## Chapter 5

The afternoon campus streets of the University of Avalon were alive with activity. Students rushed about coming to and from meetings with professors and getting last minute details sorted in their yearly schedules. All a very normal sight in Avalon for the first day of University. However the one lone pink haired witch, carrying her broom at her side, walking deep in thought aimlessly down a suddenly lonely side walk... was not.

"Help me Sasporilla?" Sasporilla Bucket muttered to herself as she walked along. "Why would a painting of Merlin want my help? Has all of the art work of Merlin suddenly gone mad I wonder? And how in the world does it involve me?"

Sasporilla stood before a small pile of old boxes and a bag of trash. She looked up to realize she stood in front of a wall, with walls to either side of her, and started to chuckle.

"Sasporilla Bucket you silly girl," she laughed at herself, "you were so lost in thought you've gone and walked down a blind alley!"

"My lucky day" a gruff voice said as something heavy struck Sasporilla hard in the back, knocking her to the ground, and forcing her to drop her broom.

Sasporilla rolled over to see a dusky man in tattered black and white striped clothes grabbing for her broom. His salt and pepper hair was long and unkempt. He was in terrible need of a shave, with a patchy beard and mustache that was much more than a scruff but far less than full on facial hair. He was dirty as if he'd crawled through a sewer to get to the road. He picked up the Triumphant 1200x with a smile. Sassy almost warned him not to, then thought twice about it and smiled.

The broom shot a pulse of energy through the man, forcing him to drop the broom, and throwing him back against the far wall of the alley. The dirty, scruffy man hit hard with a thud and landed in the boxes and bags of garbage. When he awoke the scruffy criminal found the young pink haired witch standing over him, her Triumphant 1200x broom in one hand and her wand, pointed at his head, in the other.

"PETRIFICUS ARTUS" Sasporilla cast, immobilizing the mans arms and legs but leaving him free to answer her questions.

"Silly thing, trying to steal a Triumphant twelve hundred x." Sassy said holding her broom at him. "It has imbued security to the rider! Can't be stolen. Now why did you attack me?"

"I'm desperate that's why." The man struggled and flopped trying to get his paralyzed limbs to move. "I've been a prisoner in the tower for eight years! You have to let me go! Her monster will find me soon."

"Her monster?" Sasporilla asked pointing her wand closer discouraging further movement. "Who?"

"The Witch Queen of course!" The disheveled man protested. "I've been a prisoner of the Witch Queen! What did you think I meant when I said I'd been locked in the ruddy tower for eight years!"

"Why were you a prisoner?" Sasporilla asked concerned. If he was dangerous, a murderer or the like, she would have to turn him in to the authorities. "My name is Augustus Ramagast. I used to own the Avalon Examiner. The Largest news paper in Avalon, until Bougenvallia Bent cheated in her trials and became the new Witch Queen."

"What?" Sasporilla gasped.

"I tried to report it you see." Augustus Ramagast said. "but I was taken in the night, with out trial, with out charge and thrown in the tower. A prisoner for life. They'd have killed me but they don't know where the news paper run is... still waiting to hit the stands with the truth! If they kill me, it will appear. That's what I've told them any way."

"That's bloody awful" Sasporilla said casting "FINITE!" and releasing him.

"Thank you?" Augustus Ramagast smiled.

"Sasporilla..." Sassy said holding out her hand to shake his. "Sasporilla Bucket."

"Yes Ms.Bucket." a deep smoky familiar voice said from above as a figure in long flowing robes and a golden mask settled to the alley. "Thank you for detaining the prisoner long enough for me to follow his trail."

"Sheliza Amari!" Sasporilla gasped. "You're the monster?"

"The Witch Queen's blood hound." Ramagast spat.

"Who better to follow the scent of evil and treachery than a Wedjat?" Sheliza Amari said pulling the finely crafted gold mask from her older but still very lovely classical face. "Now if you will come with me Mr. Ramagast we can return to the tower. Or you could try to run and I could enjoy my afternoon chasing you until I grow tired of the game of cat and mouse. Then I'll eat you."

"If what he tells me is true," Sasporilla said stepping between the Wedjat and her prey wand grasped tightly at her side, "then he is a man of truth and honor. A person like that wouldn't make much of a meal for a Wedjat?"

"Blah, blah, blah." Sheliza Amari rolled her eyes. "No one is fully innocent girl. Do you think the guard he hurt to escape didn't leave scars of evil on his soul? He attacked you! Tried to steal your broom!"

"I was desperate!" Augustus Ramagast pleaded.

"Shut your mouth prisoner." The Wedjat growled. "I will deal with you in a moment. Really Miss Bucket, he simply isn't worth your effort."

"I disagree Sasporilla scowled." Ready her wand as the sound of trumpets split the afternoon air.

"No." Augustus Ramagast screamed.

A bright flash split the afternoon air leaving a schism of light from which rolled a red carpet and stepped two Royal Guards dressed in red and gold armor, each carrying long golden trumpets. The guards stepped to one side and raised their trumpets blowing them again. Sheliza Amari replaced her golden mask on her face and grabbed the prisoner roughly, forcing him to his knees on the carpet as she kneeled gracefully beside him.

"Take a knee girl." Sheliza Amari grumbled in a low smoky tone.

"Why?" Sasporilla asked.

But it was too late. A tall, thin imposing figure of a man, dressed in long black robes with shoulder pads far too big, and a hat far too tall and thin for his long thin face stepped through the schism carrying an ornately carved black wooden cane with a dark blue gem on the tip.

"Amwi!" The man said curling his mustache holding out his gloved hand to the Wedjat so that the creature may kiss his ring. "I see you were able to catch the wasclet!"

"Yes your Majesty." The Wedjat said.

"Wetu'n him to the prison and make sure he no longer escapes!" The man said looking down at the prisoner who clutched his chest. "My Queen was very upset that you got away Ramagast! Very UPSET indeed! What? What is he doing?"

Ramagast fell over to the alley floor. His eyes rolled over in his head and foam bubbled out over his lips. Sasporilla moved in to help him but Amari grabbed her and stopped her.

"Don't girl." Sheliza Amari insisted. "Sneaky little man. Somewhere he got himself a Zorzor."

Sasporilla had heard of Zorzor's. A quick acting poison that stopped one's brain function, stopped your heart, then ate your flesh away to dust within a minute. The last act of desperate people who have no access to a wand or don't want to leave a corpse. She could only watch as the body of Augustus Ramagast turned to dust and blew away on the wind.

"This is going to make my Queen very, VERY ANGRY!" the man said twirling his long black mustache.

"Just who are you?" Sasporilla asked.

"What?" The man asked taking notice of the insignificant pink haired witch for the first time. "What did you come from peasant? Why do you not kneel? A'west he'h."

The guards moved in to grab Sasporilla who didn't hesitate to point her wand prepared to defend herself. Amari whispered something to the tall thin man who showed a distant disappointment and clenched his fist.

"WAIT!" The man said. "Beware that wast o'd'a. Gawds you may stand down. I didn't realize I was dealing with family."

"Family?" Sasporilla stuttered and corrected, "Family?"

"Why yes my dear." The tall thin man said. "I am The Wawwock King! I am married to the Witch Queen! You Aunt, my beloved Bougenvawia!"

"I see." Sasporilla said. "Yes I am her niece Sasporilla Bucket. Daughter of her sister Wysteria. Let my aunt know that I would like to see her if her busy schedule ever allows for someone as simple and humble as me allows. Tell her my only interests in being in Avalon are those in learning to be a wand maker in the university."

"I will be happy to deliver your message Sasporilla." The Warlock King smiled. "I believe she will be happy to hear it!"

The Warlock King turned and returned through the schizm of light followed by Amari and the Royal guards. The light shrunk and disappeared with a pop.

Sasporilla got on her broom and rode for her dorm as fast as she could. She expected that things in Avalon were about to get very bad. However over the next few days, to her surprise, no news papers ever came out revealing any story about the her aunt having cheated in her trials to become the great and powerful WITCH QUEEN of AVALON!



## Chapter 6

Classes at the University of Avalon were very different than those at Hogwarts. In many ways these professors really didn't care if you paid attention to what they were saying. If you took notes or showed up at all. It was your responsibility to come and learn from them. If you didn't get it, it was up to you to seek out the knowledge. Ask the questions that clarified the answers in your mind. If you didn't have the passion for the subject matter like the others around you, then you would surely flunk out and have to leave the University of Avalon in shame. Large stadium style class rooms with small desks or tables to take notes at. Some so large they held as many as five hundred students at once. Chalk floated and wrote on gigantic black boards as professors used their wands, pointed towards their necks, to project their voices across the huge classes and give the lessons.

Dry classes like Arithmancy with the skinny Professor Greenbaum, A strange tall thin wizard with a bushy head of curls and thick coke bottle glasses, were more than a tad dull. In many ways he reminded Sasporilla of Professor Trelawny but with a head full of numbers rather than tea leaves.

Other Dry classes like Biorhythmics with Professor Robins, a short fat woman with thick blunt nose long wispy white hair, was no less of a snooze-fest. It was only her love in the subject matter that kept Sasporilla's interest.

The amount of reading and homework for these two class alone were greater than anything Sassy had ever experienced. So many charts and calculations.

Professor Juniffer-Pixx, a young elf blood witch with long bluish hair, and small pointy tipped ears, taught Biology of the magical world. A fascinating but very hard scientific class which taught the in's and out's of all things natural concerning plants and creatures, a wand maker needs to know. Woods, plant fibers, rocks, crystals, creature feathers, fur, hairs and heart strings.

Classes like Necromancy 101, Study of the magic's of death school arts was a requirement all students had to take. Sasporilla, like many students, decided to get it out of the way sooner rather than later. Professor Foxx, the dark haired witch with a smoldering intensity and underlying darkness that oozed from behind her light eyes was the Head of the School of Necromancy. Many of the boys, and of fewer than half of the girls, found her beauty comparable to that of the Goddess Aphrodite. Sasporilla found the Professor creepy and unnerving as she slithered through the class in her dark green robes, like a snake amongst her students until she took her place, sitting on her desk in the front of the class.

Professor Foxx's smile had a warm welcoming innocence. The kind one would expect from reptile just before it strikes, Sasporilla thought.

"Welcome everyone to the school of Necromancy." Professor Foxx said. "I know that only about ten percent of you, in this class, are here because Necromancy is your chosen school. This is your requirement and your getting it over with."

Some of the students chuckled nervously. Professor Foxx smiled brighter.

"It's ok." Professor Foxx said picking up a real human skull from the desk beside her. "Necromancy isn't for everyone! Blood magic. The power to go beyond death!"

"There is no way to bring someone back from death." Sasporilla protested.

Professor Foxx Rushed at Sassy in a blur. "Are you sure? Is that what they taught you in Hogwarts? Ms.Bucket!"

"Yes." Sasporilla said looking straight a head. Refusing to allow the professor to bully her.

"Is she right?" Professor Foxx asked the sheepishly silent class harshly. "IS... SHE... RIGHT?"



"Yes." one young man, some where in the back said. His voice was familiar. Sasporilla had heard it before.

"Yes!" The professor said. "She Ms.Bucket is correct. Once a life has crossed the veil of to the other side, their is no bringing them back BUT, what if they haven't crossed? What if there are ways to block the veil? What if there were ways to communicate with those who have crossed? Would you learn those ways? Those are the ways of Necromancy."

A murmur broke out amongst the students and a pleasant smile crossed the face of Professor Foxx. So many came to her class from other schools to just get this requirement out of the way and were seduced to the dark arts by her beauty, smile and crafty sales pitch. Sasporilla Bucket would not be one of them.

Professor Foxx held up the skull in her hands high above over her head.

"Behold one the most unimportant wizards of his generation." Professor Foxx sneered. "Plorg. When he died he crossed over like most who went before him. Though he took steps needed to ensure that we could use this, his skull, as tool for communication with souls on the other side of the veil."

The gasps were audible. Students whispered amongst themselves until the whispers turned to murmurs and the murmurs audible chaos.

"Silence!" Professor Foxx yelled. "I understand that proof is called for. Is there anyone here who would communicate with someone who has passed through the veil? Know that there is a price!"

Sasporilla gulped. A chance to speak to her mum? Her dad? Miss Daisy? But at what cost? What was the price the professor spoke of?

"I'll do it." A young man said in the front of the class.

"Ah!" Professor Foxx said. "Mr.Orswell?";

"Yes Professor." The young man said stiffly.

"Who did you lose?" The professor asked feigning sadness.

"My granddad." The boy said. "He died leaving his fortune hidden. Gran has nothing. If he can tell me where, I can save her from poverty!"

"A most noble sentiment Mr.Orswell." Professor Foxx said. "Hold out your left hand."

The boy did as he was asked. Before he could react a dagger sliced deeply across his palm drawing his blood thick and red. He screamed as Professor Foxx slammed the round top of the skull down into his bloody palm and raised it up to face him.

Sasporilla saw the wand drawn from between the Professors cleavage. It was twisted ebony eight and three quarters inches with a snake skin in lay. Three deep green emeralds were inset in the handle. It was hard to tell the core at this distance but there was something about the hum of it that made her think it was basilisk fang.

"ULTRA VELUM MORTUIS COMMUNICARE" Professor Foxx cast as the eyes of the skull began to glow.

"Look into the eyes boy and talk to it." The Professor said, her voice sounding older, more gruff, crone like. "Tell Plorg who you want to communicate with and speak your message!"

"Plorg find my Grandfather Corolol Orswell," the young man yelled as mystical energy passed between his eyes to the skulls. "Where is your wealth hidden? For grandmother."

Energy pulsed and flowed in the skull the burst back through the eyes back into the boy. "Your grandmother was left everything you greedy little shit. If she chose to give you and your greedy parents nothing it serves you right. Now let me rest in peace!"

With a wheeze the connection broke. The energy faded and the skull turned to dust. Orswell collapsed into a pile on the floor as the students cheered. Professor Foxx levitated the unconscious boy into a chair and set a fan to motion to give him some air.

"Some of you may wish to learn our ways." Professor Foxx smiled enticingly. "Who amongst you will be the first to switch your major school? How about you Ms.Bucket?"

"Never." Sasporilla insisted.

"Really? Never? Why?" Professor Foxx scoffed.

"My only interest in Necromancy is to understand the needs of those who would use my wands in the ways of the dark arts." Sasporilla said.

"Just the simple dreams of a simple girl." Professor Foxx laughed. "Do any of you dream of greater things?"

The amount of hands that raised were frightening to Sasporilla and pleasingly unexpected for Professor Foxx. It was all Sassy could do to maintain her composure trough the class and leave head held high. Proud in the fact that she would never be drawn to the darker side of magic.



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## Chapter 7

Sasporilla awoke to the smell of something heavenly. She, like all girls of her common kitchen, had strict orders that if something was cooking then you were invited to share the food at the Brouja's Table! Corina, being of Puerto Rican descent rarely referred to herself as a witch but as a Bruja. Traditionally the Puerto Rican equivalent.

Sasporilla readied herself for the day and headed out to find all of the girls seated at the table feasting on a huge breakfast of Pastelillos de carne, a type of little meat turnovers. Corina de Maiz Crema, which was a very traditional corn & oat meal with her magical Bruja's touch! Each time a spoon touched the surface of the crema it swirled and bubbled then shot rainbows over the bowl. There was of course always a box of Captain Crunch with Crunch Berries for anyone not up to magical cuisine. Not that anyone at her table EVER complained! Corina's Pan de mallorca's, sweet rolls sprinkled with powdered sugar, made into breakfast sandwiches with ham and cheese were a big with girls! However it was her Huevos Revuelto con Salchicha, Scrambled Eggs Puerto Rican Style, that were Sasporilla's favorite along with some of Corina's fresh squeezed juice.

Every morning you had your choice of fresh squeezed orange juice, pumpkin juice or whatever was in season. Corina grew the fruits herself in the University greenhouses. In the plots she rented for her personal projects. Today's juice was fresh Googan Berry! Googan Berry's were very hard to grow as they only grew in the ice caves of the Himalayas every thirty years! Corina had inherited the plants from another post graduate student last year. She was ecstatic to see it bloom and fruit this year.

The nectar from the berries was sweet and rich red. Just one drop diluted with water could make a full pitcher of morning juice. Corina had enough nectar for years.

"Morning sleepy head!" Corina smiled welcoming Sasporilla to the table. "Sit with us and have some breakfast girl!"

"Thank you." Sasporilla smiled. "I'm famished!"

There was nothing like sitting down to breakfast with smiling faces of friends or family. Sasporilla looked around at the big smiling face of Christin who daintily picked at her breakfast as she drew. Kathleen who smiled, absentmindedly sipping orange juice and laughing as she ate everything in sight. Sasporilla couldn't believe such a small, skinny girl could eat so much. Jessica studied text books as she sipped her coffee and dunked her toast. This food was more than just a breakfast, it truly was a feast for the soul.

Today was the best day of all days of the week. Art and Design history and theory in the morning with Professor Splatterpalette and then Practical art and design with her after lunch in the afternoon! It was the smallest class Sasporilla had with only twelve students in it, and Christin one of them!

Christin and Sasporilla stood at the bus stop watching Kathleen eat an apple. The pretty small Asian girl munched away oblivious to her friends stares.

"Kathleen?" Sasporilla asked drawing Kathleen's gaze making her suddenly very self-conscious.

"What?" The young Phillipina witch asked covering her half-full mouth.

"How can you still eat after all that food at breakfast?" Christin asked.

"What?" Kathleen shrugged. "I'm hungry. I have a high metabolism."

"I think your secretly some kind of undiscovered food niffler, you are!" Sasporilla laughed.

"Nifflus Phillipinnas" Kathleen laughed. "More interested in golden delicious apples and gold foiled coins than gold bars or galleons!"

"I've always seen myself as a bit of a niffler also." Christin said. "But just a regular one. I like shiny things."

"What about you Sasporilla?" Kathleen asked. "What kind of creature could you see yourself being?"

"Fuzzy pink cat snake." Sasporilla said tipping her head sideways.

"That's strange." Christin said. "What makes you imagine that?"

"It's not my imagination." Sasporilla pointed at the top of the bus stop signpost. A fuzzy pink and black snake like creature, with a face and ears like a cat, slithered to the top of the poll and wrapped around the sign.

"Oh my Gosh!" Kathleen exclaimed. "What is it?"

"Hello." Sasporilla said holding up her hand to the creature, which recoiled a bit. Frightened and cold. "We won't hurt you. We're your friends. You can trust us. Please come down."

The creature hesitated. It lowered its small black nose to Sassy's fingers and sniffed then rubbed its head against her hand. Sasporilla petted the creature's scaly pink head and rubbed behind its furry ears.

"I have pink hair just like yours." Sasporilla said. "Are you hungry? What do you eat?"

The creature made a sound like quiet meow.

"You like candy?" Sasporilla checked her pocket but both Kathleen and Christin presented her with Candy before she could find any.

The little creature liked chocolate but preferred gummy bears. They were so chewy.

"Now the big question is just what are you?" Sasporilla asked.

The creature slithered suddenly inside Sasporilla's jacket and snuggled in around the inside of her collar, as the bus pulled up. The girls might not know what the little creature was or who it belonged to, but it seemed to know, NO ANIMALS ALLOWED ON THE BUS. A big sign was posted just over the bus driver's head. The girls scanned their Student I.D. badges and took a seat as the bus pulled away.

Christin asked around the bus but there was never a magizoology student present when you needed one. Sasporilla was no stranger to magical creatures as she loved them so, and spent a lot of time in the dark forest at her time at Hogwarts. Despite her having read an old copy of Fantastic Beasts and where to find them by Newt Scamander from cover to cover more than once at the side of the pond in Avonshire as a child, Sasporilla Bucket did not recognize this small fuzzy pink creature.

Christin flicked her wand and rang the bell to signal they required the next stop. The bus ride had gone by fast, Sassy was so lost in thought. The bus pulled up in front of the center for Arts and Design. Christin and Sasporilla disembarked and waved to Kathleen who continued on to her way to the Technomancy school which was, of all things, in the most traditional set of buildings.

"Did you finish your sketch Christin?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." Christin said nervously. "I hope the professor likes this one. She said my last one was 'NICE, but it looked like anything any half talented MUGGLE could do!'"

"I know." Sassy cringed opening the front door to the building letting her friend go first. "When she yelled 'BRING THE MAGIC!' I thought you'd die!"

"Me too." Christin laughed. "But she's just trying to make me a better artist. That's why I'm here! Of course when she stood over me on my desk, in that giant rainbow robe and pink bunny slippers, I saw what she wears underneath... very frightening."

"Oh my god!" Sasporilla gasped. "You don't mean?"

"Yes!" Christin said. "A pink bunny onesie to match her slippers!"

The girls laughed all the way to class. This class was small. The professor didn't like teaching huge classes any more. She was the head of the whole bloody department of Art and design and had far too many responsibilities to mark thousands of papers. So she delegated that to her staff of junior professors, some even older than her, below her. To keep a class between eight and twelve hand-picked talented artists that she could take from just mediocre talents and put on the path of rare greatness. To become the great next masters of the magical art world the Witches and Wizards the Art world looked up to with wonder and awe! It was then that professor Splatterpalette realized she was standing on a desk in the middle of class again speaking allowed.

With a bright smile, she straightened her grand red and gold robes, and stepped down lightly with aid of an *ARESTO MOMENTUM* spell.

"Now if you'll get your Masters of Magical Master Pieces texts out and turn to page thirty seven," The professor said casting a replica of the famous painting she was about to reference on her display wall at the front of the class, "we'll be looking at *Flies Over A Pile*."

Sasporilla was initially surprised by the class's reaction, until she saw the painting. It was a painting of flies buzzing around what appeared to be a reasonably fresh pile of manure in a field.

"Such harsh critics!" Professor Splatterpalette gasped. "Art students saying ewwww to a million galleon master piece that hangs in the Royal gallery of Avalon. Where are your pieces being displayed?"

There was silence in the class room until Sasporilla started to giggle. Her classmates looked at her, a wand-making student and not a REAL artist, with disdain as she burst into full-on laughter.

"Ms. Bucket control yourself!" Professor Splatterpalette insisted as she began to chuckle a bit. "I mean yes it is a bit funny but it's very mean and cruel to laugh!"

That's when the fuzzy pink creature shot out of the collar of her robes and crawled up on top of her head.

"Sorry Professor." Sasporilla said. "I'm a bit ticklish."

"Oh I see!" The professor said stepping up to see the small fuzzy creature. "I see you've made a fuzzy little friend. Would you like a jelly baby? The strange man that lives in my front hedge gave me a big bag of them!" The professor reached into her robes pocket and pulled out a strange looking gummy that she fed to the fuzzy pink creature.

"Pillar cats love sweets." The professor smiled.

"You know what it is professor?" Christen asked.

"Well of course I do!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled feeding it another jelly baby. "I am after all University level Professor am I not? With several masters in art subjects! As well as a Doctorate in Teaching! I am not just the kind of beautiful face that artists seek to sit for their portraits! For a reasonable fee of course. No seriously, a professors pay really sucks! Now then, the Pillar cats are the larval forms of Faery Dragons. Like caterpillars are of butterflies!"

"Really?" Sasporilla asked. "I've never seen one like it."

"Not surprising." The professor said. "They're native to Avalon and rarely leave the Fae lands! They stay in this form for hundreds of years feeding on sweet nectars until the time of metamorphosis. Then they transform to faery dragons! Loose the fur, get their wings and become the most beautiful of tiny creatures."

"I think she's quite beautiful now!" Sasporilla said.

"Chances are if she's ended up in the city then she's either become separated from her nest or orphaned." Professor Splatterpalette frowned. "I can recommend a good magizoologist who will take her off your hands and keep her safe in his collection if you want?"

"No!" Sasporilla gasped. "No, I'll look after her. I really think she likes me."

"Ok mum!" The professor smiled. "I'll leave you some jelly babies for your knew fur baby as we go over this wonderful masterpiece of Flies around a big pile of POOP!"

Sasporilla struggled to pay attention to the finer points on the brush strokes that added the life and motion that moved the flies in what seemed like chaos patterns. The cuteness of pillar cat kept distracting her from the importance of the lesson on the inclusion of real organic materials into your magical paints not only to add to aura of life in some cases but to their aromas. In this case the reference was in the buzzing of the flies wings and the oder of the pile animal poop the flies buzzed around. Once again making the class go "Ewwwww."

"All right sensitive sillies!" The professor said casting the painting off the display replacing it with an assignment. "Your assignment to be handed in by the end of next weeks theory class. So yes you will have the rest of next weeks class to fix all the mistakes you made when you compare notes! An essay on the painting we studied today, Flies Over A Pile by Lord Stanley Clarke, Order of Merlin Third Class and not only its magical technique but its relevance in the magical art world!"

The bell rang and the class was out the door before professor Splatterpalette could say Quidditch. Sasporilla was still taking notes on the assignment when professor Splatterpalette walked over.

"Miss Bubbles I have been working on a particular challenge I have with teaching you." The professor said. "Your sketches of wands and cores. Handles, etc have been nice. But that's it, just nice. I don't feel like I'm helping you tie it all together like you want. If anything it feels like it's forcing you to isolate areas... sooooooo...."

Professor Splatterpalette pulled a rather large pink and purple leather journal from behind her back and handed it to the pink haired witch.

"A journal?" Sasporilla asked.

"A wand journal." Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "Your practical work, rather than being split into paint and sketch and drawing etc are going to be split into sketch design in your journal, and practical sculpting. I'm also going to bring in one of those techy design unit thingies..."

"An Abbicum with a multiphasic mirroscope?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes?" Professor Splatterpalette gasped. "You speak the babble of the technomancers like my husband! I don't understand a word of it."

The professor tipped back Sassy's head and looked into the pink haired witches mouth. "Do you use some sort translation faeries?"

"No professor." Sasporilla laughed. "I knew a boy who had one back in Hogwarts. We designed some wands together on it. To be honest I had the ideas and he was the engineer that made them look like I wanted."

"Well it's time for you to learn to do that yourself, don't you think?" The professor asked.

"I do." Sasporilla agreed. "Will this count towards my technomancy school obligation credit?"

"It will." The professor smiled. "If you pass of course."

"Of course." Sasporilla said. "You'd best get to lunch."

"If it's all the same to you Professor I'm still full from breakfast, I may just stay here and work on my journal?" Sasporilla asked.

"Feel free." The professor said. "I'll just be in my office putting my feet up and listening to a bit of music. If the techy people show up and need anything... deal with it please."

Sasporilla petted her little furry friend who purred comfortably at her warm loving touch.

"What are we going to call you?" Sassy pondered. "You rather look like a small ball of candy floss when you curl up, so how about Flossy? You certainly are sweet enough!"

Flossy spun around delighted by her new name as Sasporilla tossed her another jelly baby.

Sasporilla looked at the pink and purple leather bound journal sitting on her desk. It was very nicely crafted with a rose quartz stone inset into the cover and leather braided Celtic knot work adornments. Sassy flicked open the metal clasp and opened the first page. It was so empty. Sasporilla took her quill and filled out the front page. 'The wand journal of Sasporilla Bucket. Master Wand Maker.'

"Dare to dream big." Sasporilla sighed as placed her wand Hobnob on her desk, took a pencil and started sketching away below the title absent mindedly.

Flossy took advantage of the momentary lack of attention to slither into the bag of jelly babies and help herself to feast of sweet jelly delights.

Sassy smiled at her simple sketch of Hobnob, waving in side ways "S" shaped swish motion and casting a small burst of magical stars off the page. It looked alive.

Knock-knock- knock

A knock at the open class room door startled Sasporilla back to reality. A rather handsome, nerdy young man with dark curly hair and glasses stood in the doorway levitating boxes of equipment.

"Excuse me." The young man smiled, "I have a Ponyo 3400 to set up for Professor Splatterpalette?"

"Yes of course." Sassy said standing up knocking over her chair and knocking her journal off the desk sending stars shooting in all directions and causing Flossy to duck into Sasporilla's sleeve making a "MEEP" sound.

"Where does she want me to set it up?" The boy asked.

"I believe she wants it set up at this back table." Sasporilla said. "It used to have a frog statue in a yoga tree pose."

"Professor Splatt's moved one of her FrogILama's!!!" The boy said surprised. "Wow! This must be for someone really important!"

"Not really." Sassy smiled humbly. "She's having it put in for me."

The young man set the boxes down gently on the floor near the table and began unpacking them. Sasporilla couldn't help but notice he looked rather like Melvin but a decade older, a few inches taller than herself and much more mature. He was thin, but the muscles in his forearms were corded and strong.

"And who are you?" The boy gasped laughing. "The niece of the witch queen, everyone whispers is here?"

"If I was," Sassy said embarrassed, "I'm not sure I'd admit it. Not after some of the things I've heard about the way she came to power or treats her subjects."

The boy turned suddenly with his finger over his lips. "Such words are considered treasonous." The boy whispered.

"I didn't know." Sasporilla said.

"No Royal guards popping in so we're safe." The boy smiled. "Amongst friends, such words are safe. You can count me as a friend. Angelo." The boy said holding out his hand.

"Sasporilla." Sassy said shaking his hand, sending sparks through her body. "Nice to meet you."



## Chapter 8

One of Flossy's favourite places to sleep was curled up around the base of a Sasporilla's mum's favourite old desk lamp, that Sassy kept in her bedside table. Wysteria had found it in some muggle trash behind a shop in its original box, good as new! Sasporilla had always thought the lamp ghastly as it was the size of a house elf's leg in fish net stockings and high heels as a base for a tasseled shade. However her mother saw a beauty in it and for some reason it reminded Sasporilla of the fact that her mother could always see the beauty in everything. Flossy lay asleep, wound around the lamp's base in the warm glow of its soft yellow light, just behind Sassy's Spectra specs. Sasporilla Bucket finished brushing the last of the day's knots out of her pink hair, collected her books up from her desk and stuffed them in her bag. It was half past four and she wanted to get to the University library before dinner.

She ran out the front door and down to the front of the Avonshire Dorms as quick as she could. Frankly she didn't want the questions or the inevitable comments about why she was choosing to study at the library rather than the solitude of her perfectly spacious workspace in her room.

"Excuse me Ms.Bucket?" A woman's voice asked making Sassy turn to see Professor Zevo standing by the dorm wall. "You seem to be headed somewhere in a hurry?"

"Just off to the library to study professor." Sassy said. "Midterms and all."

"Mind if I walk with you?" The professor asked. "I hate to walk alone."

"As long as you don't call me wide butt!" Sasporilla laughed.

"Well I wasn't going to mention the freshman fifty," Lyra said, "but now that you've brought it up, those purple pants of yours have some screaming seams girl!"

"I've gained seven pounds since I've been here!" Sasporilla said. "This girl in my dorm, Corina is an Amazing cook!"

"You'll have to invite me for dinner some time." Lyra said.

"You, the wife, kids and all?" Sassy asked.

"Yes of course!" Professor Zevo smiled and nodded as a student passed them.

"I figured the wife's been keeping you busy." Sasporilla smiled. "Chores and all that."

"Shut it you." Lyra said. "I haven't contacted you because I've wanted to give you space to enjoy University. Also I've been seeing who falls into traps I've set all around. Sorry that prisoner got through. Amari and the Warlock king getting so close to you is unforgivable. I'm sorry."

"It's fine Lyra." Sassy said to reassure her friend. "I sent a message back with the Warlock King that I'm not interested in the throne. So if you're right and she who must not be named was worried about me taking over, she shouldn't be now."

"Well it's not just her that sees you as a rival that worries me." Lyra said. "It's also those on the side of the rebellion that would use you to their own political ends."

"For what purpose?" Sassy asked.

"Poster girl for honesty." Lyra whispered. "True heir to the Royal throne."

"I'm not a naive little girl any more Professor Zevo!" Sasporilla said.

"No but you are still a moon eyed teenager who could be led astray by temptation." Lyra scowled seriously.

"Are you referring to a specific nice looking young man?" Sasporilla asked.

"Him or a ham and cheese sandwich considering the size of that massive wide butt if yours!" Lyra laughed.

"Really?" Sassy asked smacking her friend on the shoulder. "You still call my butt wide? You? You! The one with a butt so wide, when you bend over, werewolves turn!"

The young women burst into laughter. It seemed for a moment just like old times. Two mates having a great time in each others company. Conspicuously so, it suddenly came to Lyra.

"Well Ms.Bucket," Professor Zevo said stiffening and straightening herself in front of a popular tea shop. "This is as far as I'm going. I'm to meet my Missus here at five. Good day."

The older witch's cold and impersonal goodbye was hopefully enough to draw away suspicion from any eyes that had recognized familiarity between the two of them. Sasporilla wasn't stupid, she got it. Sassy understood Lyra's motivations but it still hurt to have her friend back for a moment then suddenly lose her again so coldly.

Sasporilla grabbed onto her bag and headed on to the library wishing a few of the pounds had found their way from her butt to her bust for a change!

The Library of the University of Avalon was a huge building resembling old greek architectures with high stone pillars atop carved marble steps in front.

Sasporilla made her way inside into the long silent polished wooden halls. Each section ran off it's own direction from the main check out desk. Seemingly never ending wooden hallways lined with shelves and stacks of books and scrolls on every thing magical ever recorded in the history of the Wizarding world.

Sasporilla found a free space at a table not far from the check out area and set up her books and notes to study. Sassy needed to focus on the one subject she had the most trouble with, Necromancy. She found the subject abhorrent and repellent but she still had to pass it. The text book, Necromantics a novice Introduction, with its cover of a happy young couple in love experimenting with dark magic, sickened Sasporilla. It was like the entire Necromancy 101 basic was venus fly trap to lure young witches and wizards into the ways of dark magic.

Sasporilla looked up from her notes to see the team from the Technomancy team working on the new magical information brain that would organize all of the information of the University Library. Kathleen was there, the luckiest of talented first years to get in on the ground floor of the project. She spotted Sasporilla and beamed with a bright smile and waved energetically. Sassy waved back. Kathleen looked around and then pointed over to a scaffold near a Tree of learning. A tree that magically grew new books as they were written, thus insuring the library was always up to date. On the scaffold was Angelo unrolling long spools of what looked like long glass braids of hair. Every few feet he stopped and cast a spell shooting coloured lights through the braids sending lights in all directions. Usually he smiled at the result. This time he cast again but didn't seem happy. He walked back about three meters and cast into the line again with more positive results. It was there he swashed his wand across and kicked the unhealthy braid of Cybro-Hyper Glass off the scaffold. As it fell it dissolved in the air into nothing. Angelo pulled the roll to the cleanly cut end and watched the two ends rebraid themselves together.

"Incredible." Sasporilla whispered to herself. "You are here to study your subjects Sasporilla, not good looking young men!"

Sassy dove back into her notes and her texts. Though she did keep peeking up at Angelo. No matter how much she studied though, she found she could not seem to wrap her head around Death magic. Perhaps the answers that she needed were purposely kept out of these texts. Perhaps these texts were designed to force students to search out answers in darker texts. The answers she would need to answer her questions would probably be found in the books of the Necromancy section on Death Magic.

Sasporilla stood up and headed off into the Necromancy section. Oddly, the section seemed darker than the other sections. The books smelled of dank mould and rank misuses. She saw a dark figure in the distant stacks and got th shivers. There were things in the deep stacks that she feared made the wirst creatures of the dark forest look like kittens. Sasporilla readied her wand, just in case.

"I shouldn't think you will need that, unless you're planning to ACCIO a specific volume." A man's voice said from behind her. "But then better safe than sorry, hey?"

"I'm afraid this section gives me a bit of the willies." Sasporilla said. "Quite frankly I just don't understand death magic's most basic problem. I know I will probably find the answer in one of these books."

"Well perhaps I could be of some assistance." The old wizard said. He was a rather dapper old man dressed in black dress robes with a white shirt, a very artsy modern scarf and a black pork pie hat.

"I don't proclaim to know a lot about the subject of Necromancy, as I am certainly no dark wizard, but I do know some things as I've been around the University a while. What is the problem?"

"What is the best spell to empower death magic's?" The pink haired witch sighed.

"Really?" The old man looked surprised turning to get a book from a shelf near by. "You are not that thick a girl Sasporilla Bucket! Think!"

"I'm sorry?" Sasporilla asked taken rather aback. She looked him up and down. His rather average height, his short white beard and tied back long white hair rang no real bells. "Have we met?"

"No." The old man said handing her the book. "And yes, but we'll get to that. Let us first deal with your question. I fear the reason why you can't comprehend such an obvious, easy answer is because it's just such a hideous option to you."

"I can't accept that!" Sasporilla said. "Avada Kedvra is an unforgivable curse. Illegal!!! To use it like a battery in a muggle child's Christmas toy! It can't be the answer!"

"And yet if you turn to page seven you'll find it is." The old man said hanging his head. "Necromancy is a very dark art. The taking of life by magic, by blade, by poison... it's all the same to a necromancer. Life can seem as ugly to them as death to us."

"You've been very helpful sir." Sasporilla said handing the old wizard the book, 'Merlin's guide to the Unimaginable Evils of Necromantic Powers. Their Importance and why they're not to be dabbled in lightly! By Merlin'. Volume one. Sasporilla couldn't help but notice the wizard on the back cover sketch highly resembled the old man standing in the aisle with her. The old man assumed the same serious pose as old Merlin on the back of the book jacket.

"Allow me to introduce myself Ms. Bucket." the old wizard said. "I am Merlin."

"Merlin?" Sasporilla gasped. "The... MERLIN?"

"Yes." The old wizard smiled rather embarrassed. That was almost always the reaction. Somehow it just wasn't the one he'd expected from Sasporilla Bucket. "Did you know that I protected all of your MUGGLES from the Death Curse a thousand years ago with a counter curse so powerful, no witch or wizard could break it?"

"What?" Sasporilla gasped. "I don't understand. Many muggles were killed in the last wizarding war! Your counter curse must be failing!"

"No." Merlin said. "The words of power still exist and almost every muggle knows them. They just don't remember why or how to use them. That's why I've come to see you today Sasporilla Bucket."

"Me?" Sassy asked. "Why?"

"You see." Merlin said taking the young witch's hand. "A time is approaching very quickly where you are going to be required to choose one of four paths. A choice between a path of responsibility, compassion, love or power. Paths which right now are entwined like a knot. Once you choose the others will fade, but from them you will walk all knowing of what has happened. And I want you to bring with you... if nothing else, the key to returning to the muggles, my protections."

"Sir I don't know what you're talking about." Sasporilla began to shake a bit nervously. "But your scaring me. I saw art of you where you screamed my name and begged for my help! Can you tell me why?"

Merlin cupped Sasporilla's head in his hands and looked deep into her eyes. His eyes burned with fire. She saw how the muggles would be forced to kneel. They touched a hand to the ground and uttered the words

"ABRACADABRA".

With burning hateful eyes wizards looking down their wands at beings they felt didn't deserve to share the air they breathed cast the lethal death curse "AVADA KEDAVRA!" Green magical energy engulfed and swirled around the muggle as they stood grabbing their sword or pitchfork or what ever they could to turn on the MAGI who was very surprised to find Merlin had given the humans the upper hand against them.

Sasporilla found herself laughing in the middle of the Necromancy aisle. A slight bluish glow circled her eyes. Whatever hid amongst the stacks feared her now.

"Sasporilla?" A voice said behind her making her cry out and jump. She turned to see it was Angelo "I'm sorry! I saw you come this way, and when you didn't come out... I wanted to make sure you were ok?"

"I'm fine." Sasporilla smiled putting her hand over her heart. "Just jumpy. Creepy subject to have homework for."

"Yes I agree." Angelo said. "I dropped it after first day. Found I could get the credit by adding their books here on this project."

"Lucky you." Sassy smiled. "You know what your missing then at least."

"I at least got to see you stand up to Professor Foxx and back you up on the Veil question." Angelo smiled.

"That was you?" Sasporilla gasped.

"Yes." Angelo rolled his eyes. "That was little ol' me."

"I was thinking then that I recognized your voice." Sasporilla said.

"I can't for the life of me think of why?" Angelo asked.



"You're just so," Sasporilla hesitated to use the word, "familiar."

"In a good way?" Angelo asked.

"Ya." Sassy smiled a bit embarrassed. "I think so. In a very good way."

"Do you want to get a Dirigible Plumb Juice with me?" Angelo asked. "I'm buying."

"I'd love to." Sasporilla smiled taking his hand.

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## Chapter 9

The Magizoology Cafe at the University Zoo had the best Dirigible Plum Juice this side of Corina's fresh squeezed. They served it in upside down goblets with bendy straws that bent up so you could sip it. Angelo carried two cups over to the table and handed one to Sasporilla.

"Your refreshment my lady." Angelo smiled.

"Thank you kind sir." Sassy laughed.

The cafe was a small mid-zoo stop for visitors who needed a quick cold butter beer or a pumpkin pasty. It stood between the Erumpent enclosure and the magical bird aviary. Home to some the last of the rare endangered golden Snidget! The original real golden snitch.

Sasporilla sipped at her juice and enjoyed its light airy sweetness. "Mmmmmm, That's so good!"

"It's very sweet." Angelo said making a face. "Not as sweet as you though."

"What?" Sasporilla said surprised.

"Sorry." Angelo said, blushing, suddenly very embarrassed. "I can't believe I just said that. It's just that from the first time I saw you...."

"What?" Sasporilla asked a bit embarrassed.

"... it's just that..." Angelo hesitated, "... you're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen."

"Me?" Sasporilla asked gulping her dirigible plum juice, which in it self is not an easy task.

Sasporilla started to giggle. Then laugh. Then she started to laugh wildly.

"What is it Sassy?" Angelo asked thinking he'd really screwed things up.

"Is that the latest line or something?" Sasporilla asked. "You're the second young man in my life who has said that exact same thing to me. Funny, I knew very little about him then too."

"You have a boy friend." Angelo said disappointed. "I should have known. I'm sorry. I've over stepped."

"Angelo!" Sasporilla said putting her hand on his. "Calm down! We're two people having a juice! Yes there is a boy I like back home that I haven't heard from since I've left but he's kind of busy. He's in a band and all."

"Really?" Angelo said surprised. "Anyone I'd have heard of?"

"Vinny Lazar." Sassy said proudly. "Though I think of him as my Melvin."

"Melvin?" Angelo said.

"Yes." Sasporilla said. "His real name is Melvin Lazarus. We went to Hogwarts together."

Angelo looked at Sasporilla with hard concern and focus for a moment. He then reached around and pulled a music disc out of his bag. It was the latest disc by Dead End Oddity Shop.

"You're a fan!" Sasporilla smiled.

"Fan enough." Angelo said opening the booklet. "Sasporilla look at the band member names."

"Stix Murphy is Wendy Murphy, yes I know that I know her very well. We met at my one semester at Droorlily! Krunk is Devon ya I know and Vinny Lazar is..." Sasporilla's face went white. "Vincent Lazaro?"

Sassy looked at the bands photos. The pictures of everyone looked right except for Vinny Lazar. That was NOT her Melvin!

"What is this?" Sasporilla demanded. "What's going on? Is this a joke? It's not bloody funny!"

"This is how the bands always been?" Angelo said. "Are you saying something's changed?"

"Yes!!!" Sasporilla insisted. "Handing back the disk. Something's wrong with Melvin if he's written out of..."

A woman with spiky red hair and a bandana tied around her lower face slammed the latest copy of CAMELOT down onto the table.



"ROYAL ASSASSINS SEEK TOP SECRET TARGET" The woman shouted.

"We're not interested." Sasporilla said. "We're having an important discussion."

"Well you better be interested wide butt," Lyra said, "You're the target!"

Angelo looked up and around them drawing his wand and pulling a bandana from his pocket. Flicking the bandana in the air it wrapped around his face. Two casts of green death came in from roof tops at a distance but were easily deflected.

"We'll deal with the bulk of the problem Lyra said waiving her wand casting REVELIO, revealing a large number of rebels prepared to fight.

"I'll take her to the council." Angelo said.

"It's time she knew."

"Good luck." Lyra shouted as the blasting started against magical shields. "Wide Butt."

Angelo took Sasporilla's hand and pulled her along behind her as he ran inside the Aviary.

Owls, fwoopers, Jobberknolls, snidgets and the zoo's one phoenix scattered through the rafters and high branches of the buildings many trees which housed them, scattering a plethora of multi coloured feathers which wafted down from above. This was a huge opportunity for wand core materials for any wand maker, Sasporilla thought as a BOMBARDA blast cracked the buildings side. Reminding the pink haired witch of the priority of haste.

Sasporilla pulled her wand instinctively from her jackets wand pocket and turned as a person wearing ornate black hooded robes and a gold mask blew of the aviary door and stepped inside. Unafraid, Sasporilla stopped running, turned and faced him and prepared for battle.

"Who want's me dead?" Sassy demanded.

"Sasporilla Bucket." A mans voice called out from beneath the mask. "Your death has been ordered by ROYAL DECREE."

"That's all I wanted to know." Sasporilla said snapping her fingers with elven magic and watching the tree beside the assassin come to life and grab him. The branches entangled and entwined around him firmly leaving him unable to cast. His wand fell to the ground. Sasporilla ran over and took great pleasure in snapping his wand in half.

"When I'm a great wand maker one day," Sassy smiled looking up at her would be killer, "come look me up. I'll give you deal on a new one."

Angelo took Sasporilla's hand again. "Sasporilla, We have to go!"

Sasporilla looked at her favourite young man, wearing the bandana across his face.

"I knew I recognized your voice that day." Sasporilla said. "You gave me that copy of CAMELOT first day here at the station!"

"Yes." Angelo said pulling at her trying to get her to follow him. "It was me."

"Have you been watching me? Following me from a distance? One of Lyra's eyes everywhere?" Sasporilla asked a bit ticked off.

"No Sasporilla." Angelo pleaded. "Please we have to keep moving. You're not safe here!!!"

"Then answer me honestly!!" Sasporilla demanded.

"No!" Angelo yelled. "I am not one of Lyra's eyes on you every where... she is one of mine. Now lets go!"

Shocked, Sasporilla grasped the young mans hand as they ran through the aviary pavilion and out through the back. A long alley lead between the aviary and Erumpent enclosure. Angelo had hoped to get out the gate but royal guards had blocked the way. The only through was the side gate through the Erumpent pens.

Angelo through open the gate and lead the way through.

"They're gentle enough creatures as long as you don't look them in the eye and don't challenge them." Angelo said.

There were three large erumpants standing around chewing grass making "humpff" sounds as the two passed at a slow but steady pace. A column of black smoke slammed into the middle of the pen. From it stepped the form of a black cloaked assassin in a black and gold mask.

"Sasporilla Bucket." The assassin called pointing his wand. "Any last words?"

"Oy!" A witch with blue and green hair, wearing khaki shorts and vest yelled as she stepped out of the Erumpent enclosure carrying two large feed buckets. "Just what do you lot think you're doing in with my erumpants? Bloody cheek!!!"

"And just who are you?" The Royal assassin demanded.

"Who am I?" The witch said dropping her buckets, clapping the dirt from her hands, rolling up the sleeves of her shirts and pulling her zoo ID and wand from her vest. "I, my dear, Professor Hannah, the head of Magizology for the University of Avalon! The woman who is going to be with you in the University hospital in an hour or so when they do the surgery to pull my foot out of your back side!!! Now WHO the hell are you?"

"He's a Royal assassin come to kill me Professor." Sasporilla said.

"Oh I see." Professor Hannah said hanging her head. "I don't get involved in Royal affairs. AGAMII CICI"

"AVADA KEDAV..." The assassin began as an erumpent sat on him and pushed him into the muddy ground.

"Now Agamii on the other hand," the magizologist smiled, "she likes nothing more than thwarting the evil plans of a corrupt dictatorial monarch."

"Thank you professor." Angelo smiled.

"Any time Angelo." Professor Hannah said. "Come on then you two. I have an odd Idea, follow me."

Professor Hannah lead Sasporilla and Angelo into the erumpent house and down a set of steps into a dark cellar. With a flick of her wand, LUMOS lit the way forward through the zoo's connecting subterranean tunnel system.

"Easiest way to run pipes, and the lot." The professor said. "We learned this from the muggles. Brilliant they can be, sometimes."

The ground above them shook as magical battle was clearly going on.

"I really hope your worth all this trouble girl." Professor Hannah sighed.

"She is." Angelo interjected. "I promise you that professor."

They came up another staircase into a windowed observation room looking out into a rocky pen.

"Where are we?" Sasporilla asked as a member of the royal guard slammed into a thick window bouncing off it's crack proof magic face.

"Damn." Professor Hannah exclaimed. "I'd hoped this way was clear. This is the nearest exit to your destination."

"We'll have to make it work professor." Angelo said.

Sasporilla looked out and saw one lone witch with spiky red hair fighting against a dozen or more Royal guards dressed in gold armour. Crowds of people were fleeing the zoo as the fighting raged on.

"Lyra!" Sasporilla yelled running out into the pavilion.

"Sasporilla!" Angelo cried.

"She's a brave one, her!" The professor smiled.

"Yes." Angelo cursed. "But what good will it do if it gets her killed!"

Lyra did her best to deflect the barrage of attack spells with PROTEGO MAXIMA while in turn casting her own return spells from cover. All focus of the Royal Guard was on the Red Haired Anarchist who fought so hard against them. The skrewts blasted in their pens aggressively. No one saw their pink haired quarry come in from behind. No one but Lyra. Sasporilla held both hands above her head, and with a smile Lyra nodded. Sasporilla and Lyra turned their wands down and cast MANUS PETRUM as they slammed their wand tips onto the ground.

Blue magical energy branched through and split the rock under the Royal guards feet, knocking them off balance causing their spells to fly in all directions. A stray blast knocked off the lock from a skrewts cage.

The ground began to sag and heave as the young witches gathered the blue magic between their hands. The rock formed around the Royal guard in the shapes of the girls hands. As Lyra and Sasporilla closed them around the blue magical ball, the rocky ground entombed the guard.

"It won't hold them long." Sasporilla said.

"Not if those meat heads try..." Lyra began as a BOMBARDA MAXIMA spell shattered the rock with grave consequences for all inside.

Sasporilla hid her gaze from the grim view of what the Royal guard had done to themselves. That's when she heard the hiss and click behind her.

"Get behind me." Angelo said stepping between Sasporilla and the twelve foot armoured scorpion like creature that stood less that ten feet from her.

"Don't know what you plan to do Angelo." Professor Hannah chuckled. "It's a blast ended skrewt! That armour reflects spells!"

The creature hissed and clicked at them and raised its stinger threateningly.

"Janey don't you dare!" The professor shouted. "You two, just back away now! Quickly. Don't speak. Don't look at her. Just back up to the other one."

Sassy and Angelo did just what the Professor said. They backed up quickly to where Lyra was.

"Now Janey!" The Professor demanded of the beast. "I know you're scared, but those people there are no threat to you. So you're not to hurt them. Got it?"

The great beast struck its barbed stinger down at the rock in front of professor Hannah.

"You bitch!" The professor said. "I know you're scared but there's no need of that! I brought you and your sisters rock cakes!!!"

The professor lifted up a burlap sack and pulled from it one chocolate rock cake.

The glow on the back end of the skrewt subsided and it seemed to settle down quickly. It stepped forward slowly and nudged the professor's hand.

"That's it." Professor Hannah smiled. "Have a good sniff. Open wide."

The beast separated two plates of armour, revealing a spot just big enough for a rock cake to fit into. The skrewt munched on it happily.

"That's my happy girl!" Professor Hannah smiled. "She'll be fine now. Just come over slowly and approach single file from directly behind me. That's how you show respect and no threat in their pod."

"That's amazing professor." Lyra said. "I didn't think skrewts could live together? I thought they'd fight and kill each other."

"Well ya." Professor Hannah laughed. "I mean they are all sisters aren't they! They tend to fight. They fell bad after they kill one another. The secret is to keep them fed in rock cakes! Before they came here, no one could figure out where their mouths were so they didn't know if they fed or what to feed them? Now we know! They eat stones, gravel and poop slag. However they have an affinity for Hagrid's rock cakes. Especially the chocolate ones! So keep them happy and they're like big loveable dogs."

"That can kill you." Angelo said.

"My dear Angelo," the professor said "even the family dog can turn on you and kill you, if you treat it badly. There's a lesson there. Now to my Idea!"

The professor led the way towards the skrewt pens, allowing Angelo to hold the bag of rock cakes. Janey the skrewt kept nudging the bag gently but insistently behind him.

"Here we are." Professor Hannah standing between the pens. The skrewts hissed and blasted, clicking wildly. Janey started to get her back up.

"Ladies!" Professor Hannah shouted. "Let's show a bit of decorum! We have guests."

This had little effect. The professor sighed. "Janey my good girl come here." The professor said holding up a chocolate rock cake.

Things went silent as the large beast rumbled forward and received its tasty treat. "Good girl. Now! The rest of you unruly bunch ready to calm down and act civilized for a moment or two?"

The skrewts all sat quiet in their pens calmly.

"That's more like it!" The professor said taking the bag and handing out the chocolatey treats.

"You really have them trained professor." Sasporilla said rather impressed.

"Don't kid yourself young lady." The professor said. "These beasts would just as soon kill you as look at you. They're aggressive, natural born killers that are immune to magic. Why Hagrid breeds them is beyond me? Of course as long as they eat just stones they act like their blessed nasty selves, but you feed them Hagrid's rock cakes, their bellies fill up. They get all happy inside and act like puppies. You just gotta know how to handle them. You can even ride them when they're like this."

"Your kidding!?!?" Angelo said surprised.

"I hope not." Professor Hannah chuckled said letting both Midge out of her pen. "For that is my plan exactly!"

"Professor," Sasporilla gaped, "are you suggesting we ride these beasts out of here?"

"Yes." Professor Hannah smiled widely handing Angelo and Sasporilla some rock cakes. "Here you go. You'll be riding Midge here. I'd feed her a couple of these first to make friends, then she'll pretty much let you do anything to her. Lyra you feed a few to Janey."

The skrewts pleasantly and eagerly accepted the rock cakes. The wild clicking and hisses of earlier had become almost cat like purrs.

"They seem so harmless now." Lyra said rubbing Janey on one of her armoured fore plates.

"Yes, until they ram their stinger through your chest!" The professor laughed. "Quite the turn coats my babies. Now, up with you Lyra and Angelo first. Grab the stinger firmly by the barb and don't let go! You'll be steering the skrewts from there! Up you get!"

Lyra and Angelo grabbed the barbs and climbed aboard with little objection from the gigantic beasts.

"Now Ms. Bucket up you go in front of your boy friend." The professor said.

"I beg your pardon!" Sasporilla protested. "Angelo is NOT my boyfriend!"

"My apologies." The professor said as Sassy climbed aboard the great beast. "One just assumes a healthy young couple making moon eyes at one another over a juice means.... but never you mind my opinion!"

"Now look professor!" Sasporilla said.

"Never mind dear." The professor said climbing up in front of Lyra tying her own hands with the cord from the rock cake sack. "If you want to toss aside a young man who clearly has feelings for you, then who sm I to say anything. Is she always this thick Lyra."

"Sorry?" Lyra said. "I wasn't listening."

"You big chicken." The professor sneered.

"Why did you tie your hands professor?" Angelo asked.

"Oh well, I can't go voluntarily or the Throne will know I helped you." Professor Hannah said. "No, no! I must be an involuntary prisoner held against my will! Help! I've been taken hostage!"

Out of no where a young tall thin wizard with greasy shoulder length black hair and sharp features jumped from the shadows.

"I'll save you my darling Hannah!"

"Not now Mylo!" Professor Hannah shouted. "I'm busy, piss off!"

"Sorry Professor!" The young wizard said putting away his wand and ducking back into the shadows.

"Who was that?" Sasporilla asked. "He look's like a young Professor Snape!"

"My Teaching Assistant Mylo. He's got quite the crush on me. It's against the rules to date a student so it's all hands off until he graduates. Then I'll be on him like a skrewt on a bag of rock cakes! Speaking of which they should be kicking in any time now."

"Kicking in?" Angelo asked.

There was a rumbling deep within the bellies of the skrewts followed by another, then another. Suddenly a blast of flame shot out of Janey's behind propelling Lyra and Professor Hannah a hundred feet straight across the compound. The professor pointed her wand, with her tied hands, and cast BOMBARDA at the fence.

"Pull on the barb to make them walk." Professor Hannah said. "Direct them by moving their tail and when they fart, expect a big boost of speed!"

"Ok Angelo," Sasporilla said. "What are we waiting for? Let's Move 'em out!!!"

The last of the Royal guard couldn't keep up as the blast-ended skrewts blew there way through the University zoo walls and slid out onto the busy streets of Avalon. Pedestrians and vehicles scattered in a cacophony of honks, screams and a roaring "WOO-HOO!" From Lyra and Professor Hannah.

The skrewts blasted there way down University Boulevard knocking small vehicles out of the way, even sending one large three rider Vroom-Broom thumping up the Museum of Witchcraft and Wizardry's front marble steps, until it came to a sudden hard stop. The Vroom-Brooms riders pitched in three different directions, end over teakettle, until they landed in the bushes.

Angelo steered the skrewt, turning past

Majesty Station and continuing down the Queens road. He looked behind to make sure Lyra and the professor were keeping up. He nudged Sasporilla with a smile.

Sasporilla turn to see Lyra and Professor Hannah having the time of their lives. The skrewt skittered and burst following close behind. Lyra hooped and hollered. Professor Hannah was laughing smiling despite saying "Help! I'm being abducted! Oh woah is me! Won't some one please help?"

Sasporilla had to smile. She hadn't seen Lyra have so much anarchistic fun in so long. The smile slipped from her face when she saw the robed figure, riding the winds flutter in behind Lyra. It's long dark robes and intricate gold mask was unmistakable to Sassy who pointed and screamed. "Amari! Lyra! Amari's behind you!"

Lyra turned to see the Wedjat pull it's wand and cast "KUMA CEVIRMEK!"

Lyra twisted the Skrewts tail and the magical blast deflected of the beasts armour striking a lamp post. The lamp dissolved into sand as they skittered past.

Sasporilla started casting spells at the old monster in an attempt to throw her off. "STUPIFY!", "FLIPPENDO", "BOMBARDA!" Nothing halted the creature from its pursuit.

"Take the wheel professor." Lyra said handing Professor Hanna the skrewts stinger and drawing her wand.

"ALTAEDHIB WATADMIR ALUWH!" Amari cast.

The blast was black as night and struck Lyra hard in the side of the chest. Sasporilla screamed, as time seemed to slow. Lyra's eyes rolled up and back into her head as her face twisted in pain. The young witch grabbed her side and slid from the back of the skrewt as Amari grabbed her and inhaled her soul like a dementor.

"Lyra!!!!" Sasporilla screamed.

Professor Hanna pulled down hard on the skrewts tail. A blast of magma like slag shot out splashed across Amari's gold masked face making her drop the withering husk of Lyra Lee-Ashwolf.

Professor Hannah brought the blast-ended skrewt to a halt amidst the honking annoyed traffic that was jammed up on the Avalon roadways. Amari pulled the molten gold mask from her twisted facial flesh. The professor struggled to undo the lightly tied bonds around her wrists.

"Thank goodness you arrived." The professor said. "I was a hostage, me."

Amari hissed and roared as the Wedjat ran towards her, the gold from her mask hardening into the twisted flesh of her bestial form, with angry ferocity. The creature towered over the professor in an imposing twisted form.

"I smell the complicity on you." Amari hissed opening its jaw wide. "I should eat your soul here and now. You've allowed them to escape me!!!"

"I'm the third cousin twice removed of the Warlock King, me!" Professor Hannah said looking the creature straight in her one good eye. "You should know how he feels about family! So I'd just watch my P's and Q's if I were you Wedjat, thank you very much! Now if you'll be so kind as to help me get my skrewt back to the zoo and help my find my other one, I'd appreciate it!"



## Chapter 10

Angelo carried Sasporilla down a dark staircase into a very old subterranean set of chambers below Avalon. Sasporilla cried inconsolably at the loss of her friend Lyra as Angelo lowered her into a plush purple velvet arm chair at the head of an ancient round table. Sasporilla refused to let go of Angelo and only tightened her arms around the young mans neck.

"Please don't leave me." Sassy wept.

"I'm not going anywhere Sasporilla." The young wizard said trying to reassure her. "I'll stay with you as long as I can."

Sasporilla picked her head up, looked through her tears into Angelo's chocolate brown eyes, and moved her lips towards his.

"No!" Angelo yelled pulling away from Sasporilla. "I'm sorry Sasporilla but we can NOT kiss."

"What?" Sasporilla wept. "Why?"

"To do so will unravel the universe as we know it today," the Voice of Merlin said as the old wizard said as he walked into the chamber followed by professor Jacobi and a struggling bound and gagged Melvin Lazarus, "that's why."

"Melvin!" Sasporilla called out trying to get to her feet as ornate knot work on the arm of the chair entwined around her forearms and bound her in place. "What are you doing to my Melvin?"

"Come now Ms.Bucket." Merlin said sitting in a chair on the far side of the table. "You can't still believe that this is YOUR Melvin Lazarus, can you?"

"What are you talking about?" Sasporilla said confused. "Of course he is! "

Professor Jacobi ungagged the boy who tried to bite him. "What's going on? What do you people want? Who are you?"

"Melvin did they hurt you?" Sasporilla asked.

"Who are you?" Melvin Lazarus demanded! "I don't know any of you! I'll tell my mother! She'll...."

With a wave of Merlin's wand Melvin went stiff and silent. "Obliviate this from his memory."

"What is going on!!!" Sasporilla screamed hysterically. This was like a nightmare from which she could not awake.

"Please try and calm down Sasporilla." Angelo begged her. "Are these bindings really necessary Merlin?"

"You know they are until she learns the full truth and calms down." Merlin said. "Until then she's too dangerous. She always was a good scrapper."

Sasporilla seethed with anger for a moment until the reality that not only her struggles but the snap of her elf magic had no effect. Sassy took a deep breath and tried as hard as she could to calm down and stop crying for a few moments. She would hear what the old wizard had to say.

"Ok." Sasporilla said. "Tell me what is going on please. I'm listening."

"Do you remember when I saw you at the station?" all three men said in unison their eyes aglow with blue energy, "You were already on the shuttle and I was on the platform holding a pink pygmy puff?"

"What do you all mean you were?" Sasporilla asked. "Melvin was."

"I am MELVIN LAZARUS." All three men announced.

The world began to spin and went black. When Sasporilla awoke Merlin, Professor Jacobi and the still petrified Melvin, and Angelo sat across the ancient round table gazing at her with compassion and concern.

"Welcome back Ms. Bucket." Merlin smiled.

"Hey man," professor Jacobi smiled as he poured himself a drink from his thermos. "Glad to see your like, conscious... man."

"Are you all right Sasporilla?" Angelo asked pouring the pink haired witch a goblet of water and bringing it to her. Placing it gently to her lips to drink. She accepted it gladly. Sasporilla found her throat dry.

"Thank you." Sasporilla said.

"Perhaps it would be better if I started the explanation." Merlin said. "Then we'll all take turns. Yes?"

"Agreed." Angelo smiled sitting in next to Sasporilla taking her hand. He truly hated her hands being bound.

"Ya man, go ahead." The crunchy old hippie professor Jacobi smiled.

"The attempt on your life today was in no way the witch queens first." Merlin said. "Everything was going wrong that morning. I was trying to get to see you off. Korry Curtis was helping me! We snuck in through the baggage area and I came up some old steps. I found an old witch conveniently selling romantic baubles and things. She convinced me to buy that pygmy puff. Just the same colour as your hair. I never suspected that the old witch was the Witch Queen. I certainly didn't think the pygmy puff was a bomb!"

"A bomb?" Sasporilla asked in disbelief. Thinking back she remembered the bright light and slight jostle as the shuttle took off but she just assumed that was a natural part of the flight.

"Yes." Angelo frowned. "A time turner that over loaded and exploded."

"But the effects of that would...?" Sasporilla couldn't even fathom.

"Blew me into the time vortex." Merlin said. "Swirling eddies of temporal energy. A constant spiral of timey-wimey stuff spinning seemingly out of control. Like a giant storm with me in center of it. Then suddenly I found myself on the floor of a time ship. A time ship that crashed together with 3 other time ships. All of the pilots were named the Doctor. All the same Doctor, but from four different times you see. The only way to pull them apart involved me. (See story TIMB BOMB)"

"Oh Melvin." Sasporilla sighed.

"I put my life on the line and what we did worked! So I thought." Merlin laughed. "When the time ships pulled apart I snapped back into the one with the oldest Doctor. I must have passed out because when I awoke he left me in medieval England. To make my way amongst a savage world and try to become the greatest wizard of all time. The rest, of course is, history."

The bonds unwrapped from Sasporilla's wrists. She lifted her arms and rubbed some feeling back into them. "I'm so sorry Melvin, that an attempt on my life did that to you. But I still don't understand how the rest of you are also Melvin?"

"Well, When the time ships separated man," professor Jacobi said getting up and walking around the room in an animated fashion. "I bounced back into the ship with the younger doctor in the long brown coat. The one they called number ten, man. He was a wild dude man. I traveled with him for a while. We had a couple of cool adventures, man. Then he dropped me off at Ilvermorny in sixty three man. NINETEEN SIXTY THREE!!!!"

Professor Jacobi took a big gulp straight from his thermos. Sasporilla suspected people were right. There was more in that thermos than coffee or soup.

"Well man, I'll tell you." Jacobi continued crunching on ice. "I've seen some life man. I've seen a muggle walk on the moon. Seen Hendrix play at Woodstock. I was there the day a muggle killed Lenon man. LENON! That wizard rocked man!!!! But beyond it all I knew I could never go home! I knew I could never be Melvin again! I knew

my Sasporilla would never want me this way??? Like a drunken, burned out, old man??? I hated myself. Wanted to ended it."

"Oh Melvin." Sassy cried.

"No tears Sassy, man." Jacobi said. "Merlin found me. Gave me purpose. Explained it all to me. Told me my purpose in all this and what I had to do. So I went became a teacher. Taught you. Cared for you the best way I could."

"I'm sorry Melvin." Sasporilla said. "For not knowing."

"When the time ships separated," Angelo said, "I was thrown into the female Doctors Tardis. I guess she got me the closest to home. She brought me right back to the estate but it was the wrong year. My parents couldn't believe their eyes. My mother rejected me, but my father accepted me! He sent me to Durmstrang. Told me to take the name he wanted to call me but my mother would not allow! Angelo. I was with the Durmstrang delegation fir the triwizard tournament."

"Why didn't you say something?" Sasporilla asked.

"Because you didn't know us yet." Merlin said. "And I got to him first. I explained what would happened if he were to talk to you. Sweep you off your feet. Fall in love and kiss you."

"What is all this about a kiss?" Sasporilla asked.

"A kiss is very powerful magic." Merlin said.

"Love magic, man." Jacobi smiled. "Most powerful and oldest form of magic."

"You see." Angelo explained. "When the time ships pulled apart they pulled your Melvin Lazarus Apart and created all of us. We are him, but we are, at the same time not him."

"Including the little one who's petrified?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." Merlin added angry with Angelo for telling the truth so succinctly. "The painting you saw and the statue would be more accurate representations of your Melvin."

"Explain?" Sasporilla insisted.

"The original Melvin Lazarus was left, abandoned in the time vortex. A shadow of reality twisted and maddened." Merlin said.

"Can I save him?" Sasporilla asked.

"You can bring him back from the vortex man," professor Jacobi said, "but he'll never be the same. If you let him go man. It'll be peaceful man."

"Shut it!" Sasporilla ordered Jacobi. "Tell my options. With rules and consequences."

"Sasporilla," Angelo said taking the young witches hand and looking into her beautiful pure eyes, "A kiss of any one of us will cement that persons timeline and destroy the others. There will be micro changes throughout history caused by your choice depending on who you choose."

Sasporilla looked around at all four of them sizing up her choices. Who would she kiss? Would she choose to kiss any of them???

"If you choose to kiss the piece of art work," Merlin said levitating a painting up and hanging onto the rock wall behind him, "that was lent to us by professor Splatterpalette, you will free your Melvin Lazarus from the time vortex. A twisted mass of flesh, driven mad by the endless eons of torture he has endured. The choice will be yours. We will now plead our cases individually with you."

With that Merlin sat back in his seat.

Professor Jacobi was first up. He poured himself a drink a took a nice sip. From the thermoses plastic cup.

"I was teacher." Jacobi began. "A roadie for the Weird Sisters for a tour, a potions assistant for a time, a bus driver, a Somalia. I a man of many talents and have value still. I'm worth consideration, though I don't think I hold up much hope man. Sasporilla, I do remember something about you and know my mom took most of it from me. Understand though dude... what were we talking about?"

Merlin stood slowly, dramatically. "I am the Merlin. Greatest of wizards. Creator magi society, laws and rules as we know them. Most powerful of all magi and leader of the table round in the absence of Arthur. You must choose me. If you don't, the witch queen will have no one to stand in the way of her reign of terror!"

"It seems to me she has no one now?" Sasporilla said coldly.

Merlin sank back into his chair waiving his wand freeing the boy from his petrification.

"Please miss." Melvin begged. "I don't what they're talking about? I'm Melvin Lazarus! Me! I'm not Merlin or some old drunk dude!!! Please kiss me and let me go. These guys are just psycho!"

Professor Jacobi stuffed a bandana in the boys mouth but allowed him to stay conscious and unparalyzed. "Now be a good little fellow and play nice, man." Jacobi laughed.

Sassy looked at Angelo who sat beside her. "Well?"

"Me?" Angelo said surprised. "No don't pick me. I'm no one important. You have to pick Merlin, he leads the Rebellion. I would gladly sacrifice myself for you and the people of Avalon."

"Ok then," Sasporilla said. "Any last words?"

"As much as my mother destroyed my memories of you. As much as time has messed with them. Even though in my reality Vincent Lazaro was Vinny Lazar I still remember being him. I remember the shows. I remember the festival where I thought for a second I saw you. Myron helped me find a love witch to help restore my love for you. It still had one step to go. I wish it could have happened because I know in my heart of hearts that I love you. That's why you must choose Merlin over me."

Sasporilla stood and did the one thing no one expected her to do. She walked towards the painting shifting and twisting. She heard the moans and screams that came from within. A tear ran down Sasporilla's face as she saw the face of her dear Melvin shift between the four of them in sliding cubic form. Knowing the statue outside the Art and design building was just as tortured and twisted. As the painting formed almost a full face it's message screamed loud and clear. The Melvin trapped in the vortex begged for release. "Death."

Sasporilla Bucket wept.

There was an explosion above them. The ancient subterranean chamber shook. Dust fell from cracks between the stone work and fell to the table top.

"It would seem the witch queen has found us!" Merlin said. "Time is of the essence Ms.Bucket. I'm afraid you must make your decision."

Voices could be heard in the upper tunnels. The sound of combat spells blasting back and forth echoed with the marching of Royal boots over running rebel positions.

"I encourage you to make haste Sasporilla." Merlin insisted.

Sassy knew she had only one choice. The one choice that was best for all parties considered. One chance to do the right thing. And with a kiss, her decision was made.

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Sasporilla awoke in her bed, in the arms of Angelo Lazarus. Her head filled with new memories. How they had met when he had come to Hogwarts with the Durmstrang students. How they made friends but lost touched after the tri-wizard tournament. How they met again in university and fell in love.

This was not the first night Angelo had slept over. Though they had never been intimate she had to admit, Sassy had to admit she enjoyed awaking in Angelo's arms.

Sassy remembered everything. The alternate versions and histories of Merlin and Professor Jacobi. She Especially remembered her Melvin who gave his life to save strangers in time to save everyone. In away she still had him. In a way.

"Good morning sleepyhead." Angelo said waking up and kissing Sassy on the cheek. "It's already quarter of eight! You've got a midterm at nine! Best get going!"

"Yes I should." Sasporilla smiled. " What do you remember about last night?" Sasporilla asked.

"There was more kissing than studying." Angelo smiled. "But don't blame me if you flunk your midterm!!!"

Sasporilla jumped out of bed as Angelo started to tickle her. Sassy walked across her room in her night shirt to the washroom.

"What test you have this morning?" Angelo asked.

"Art history, Oral exam." Sasporilla said. "With professor Splatterpalette."

"Nothing wrong with an oral exam." Angelo said.

"Dirty mind." Sassy laughed. "What's on your agenda for today?"

"I have meeting this morning." Angelo said walking over hugging his pink haired girl, "Lyra wants all cell leaders to report in today. New commander and all."

"Lyra?" Sasporilla gasped. "Lyra Lee-Ashwolf? She's alive????"

"Of course she's alive??? She's the public face of the rebellion in Avalon!"



Sasporilla danced for pure joy. Angelo wasn't sure why. Sasporilla understood so much now. Why Merlin had first made the laws and spread the taboo's about time magic. Obviously her choice had effected the timeline in some positive ways, but she wondered just what else had happened? Sassy understood why she chose Angelo when she saw Melvin's love for her in his heart. Most important that she would be the one who would who one day have to stand against her aunt Bougainvillea, the witch queen of Avalon.



## Chapter 11

Midterms passed with the last of the coloured autumn leaves and first gentle flakes of winter snow. Sasporilla Bucket reveled in high marks in every class, except for necromancy, in which she maintained a better than passing grade. Sassy was surprised at the number of students that started shuffling courses, changing majors or dropping out all together after seeing their midterm grades. As she had been warned by Headmistress McGonagall and so many others, university was not for everyone.

With midterms past, it was time to get caught up on mail of the last week, that was honestly beginning to pile up.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Sasporilla;

Kam, Zac and I are really hoping you'll come see us this Christmas break in Hogsmeade? I'm really excited to meet Angelo! You I assume you'll be ok sharing the same room? Nudge, nudge? Wink, wink?

I've been very busy at the dig. We've opened chamber vault 76-A and found the most amazing thing! There were artifacts inside that were boxed up and tagged as gifts for people ALIVE TODAY! Can you believe it? There were many strange things sent out over the last few weeks. A pair of Salazar Slytherin's Slippers left to Severus Snape. A monacle belonging to Merlin left to Minerva McGonagall. A Ziggeraut ring belonging to the ancient wizard Zallanger Zale was left to my Zac! One was tagged for your professor Splatterpalette. No idea what's in it? Could be some sort of scroll or perhaps a piece of art? In any case I thought it best to send it with your Jorge to get it there faster and safer. I've heard rumours about things shipped through "official" channels going missing. I know I can trust you to pass the package along. I left a quick note saying something similar on the package, in case you get to it first.

I sent you that article I told you about from the quibbler that I saw plus and an update from yesterdays Daily Prophet.

Great big hugs;

Karry

\*\*\*\*\*

Sasporilla picked up the parcel and slipped it in her bag. She picked up her mail and the news clippings and headed out for the arts and design building. If Karry thought it urgent enough to send in such a clandestine message through her then it must have been important enough that Sasporilla take the package to the professor immediately. Something was up.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Quibbler article was small, tucked away on page thirty two. Karry had ripped the full page out and simply circled it. It was a photo of Sasporilla's father's fraternal twin brother. A bearded man, of very small stature, covering his face trying to avoid the cameras.

"BUCKET'S OF ROYAL ELF BLOOD?"

By Luna Lovegood

In an investigative exclusive, THE QUIBBLER has uncovered a long hidden secret Royal blood tie between the House Elf Royal Line of Stilskin and the Magi blood line of Bucket. Allegations made by confidential sources of dalliances between Bucket ancestors and a servant of generations past were unconformable. However a sealed complaint within the ministry of magic, sporting division, confirmed a member of the Bucket family as having Elf blood!

Homunculus Bucket (seen here) refused to comment as he entered St.Mungo's with his team of lawyers to undergo a mandatory blood test, ordered by joint task force of the Ministry of Magic and the High Council of Elves.

If Mr.Bucket, a well-respected wizard and businessman in our community is found to be of partial elven blood, it is believed he his in position to sit the empty Throne of the Worker Elves. Will he get a crown to go with his burlap sash? Hopefully he will have a lawyer give him a sock.\

All meant in good fun  
Luna Lovegood

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The bus was full. Sasporilla had to stand, holding onto the hand rail as she read the next article. It was the front page of yesterdays Daily Prophet. The picture was very different than the last one of her uncle. Homunculus Bucket stood on a stage in front of a throne, in a purple and gold robes, wearing a crown and holding a strange elven designed scepter. House elves stood at his sides looking unhappy and nervous as he smiled and waved. Other house elves knelt before him. The headline read.

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"HOMUNCULUS REX"

By Hyldigard Anglaise

The wizarding world was rocked and shocked this week by the grand Royal Coronation of the first House Elf King in over one hundred years. The ceremony, always kept secret amongst the elves, had never been witnessed before by wizarding eyes. Respected business executive and Entrepreneur Homunculus Bucket, found to be of half elven blood of direct royal lineage, was crowned Sunday morning before God and his elven people in St.Paul's Cathedral, London.

Though the event was rumored to have been sponsored and paid for by his own company and funds, it seemed to be received well by the echo's who of the wizarding world. Though many important muggle dignitaries and Royals were present the Witch Queen did not attend the event.

When asked what his immediate plans were for dealing with policies for his people, the new Elf King replied. "Status quo for now. After all there is a most sacred of ancient agreements. However I will be looking into certain concerns of my people and the possible over stepping of Wizarding kind of the original agreement. If so there will be legal action taken and major restitution demanded. If I were wizards guilty of mistreating house elves, I'd prepare to hand over your Gringots vault key."

When asked to comment on the new House Elf Kings statements, all Witches and Wizards asked said "No Comment."

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Sasporilla disembarked from the bus outside the Arts and design building. She took a moment to appreciate the Bronze statue of Merlin wearing flowing ancient robes, with his long hair and beard, holding his wand high, as she walked past. The statue bowed to her and Sasporilla Bucket politely vowed back giving it a cheeky wink.

"I'll have to see about getting you a bronze pork pie hat." Sassy smiled. "It'd suit you."

The doors to the Arts building were locked? A small sign hung in the door reading "BACK IN 15 MINUTES". Sasporilla resigned herself to taking a seat on the bench to one side of the door and reading her next piece of correspondence.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Sassy;

I can only hope this is a quill and I haven't dipped the cats tail in the ink again! Also hope this is on parchment and not on another piece of tablecloth, I'm running out! In case you haven't guessed it's your favourite funny blind oracle friend Agnes.

My dreams of you, of late had been turbulent. There were many a night I awoke screaming, unable to remember anything but you were involved. I thank the stars Myron was there to comfort me. He sends his love by the way. He is very busy with his CHOCOLATE FROGS project and promises to write you soon. There is a letter to a professor Splatterpalette of yours from him in here if you could please pass it off. Myron says thank you.

Oddly weeks ago the dreams stopped. As if all the chaos that I sensed around you was now a clear distinct path. My dreams were at peace, until last night. I dreamed of crowns, thrones and death. I fear for your safety in Avalon Sasporilla. Please be careful.

With Love;

Agnes

\*\*\*\*\*

The locks of the front doors of the Arts and Design building doors clicked loudly as they unlocked. Sasporilla tucked her mail into her bag and stepped inside.

"I'm sorry miss," the security guard said, "I had a dodgy breakfast buritto and had to leave my desk for a moment."

"No worries." Sasporilla smiled. "Is professor Splatt's in?"

"Yes!" The guard smiled. "I believe she's just finishing up her baby hippogriff yoga."

"Ok!" Sassy smiled rather wide eyed but no longer surprised by her professor's whackadoo antics.

Sasporilla stood in the open doorway of professor Splatterpalette's office. Her professor was dressed in a black leotard and was on a mat on the floor in the downward dog pose. Hands and feet firmly on the mat her rump high in the air with a baby hippogriff perched on it. Sweet smelling incense swirled in the air mixing with music of eastern influence.

Sasporilla knocked on the open door startling the baby hippogriff who turned suddenly on the professors derriere, and the shifting balance through her over to one side with a thud.

"Oh professor!" Sasporilla gasped running in to assist. "I'm so sorry."

Professor Splatterpalette rolled and laughed on the floor. "It's ok Sasporilla. No harm done."

Sassy helped her professor up to her feet. "Ok bingo, home to your mommy now. Go, go!!!"

The hippogriff fawn waited for the professor to open a gateway with her wand and off he went, back to the zoo.

"Professor Hannah is so gracious to let me borrow him for my exercises." Professor Splatterpalette said putting on her robes. "What do you need Ms.Bubbles?";

"I've a couple of pieces of mail for you professor." Sasporilla said. "Apparently I'm a better bloody owl than most."

"I suspect a more trust worthy one Ms.Bucket." Professor Splatterpalette said with a wink touching her finger to the side of her nose. "Thank you so much. I love prezzies!!! Shoo shoo!!! "

Sasporilla left as the professor dismissed her. Professor Splatterpalette couldn't wait to dig in to the things before her.

"An envelope and a package?" The professor said placing them on her desk. "Which shall I open first? I want to open the pack age first! It will obviously have the greatest surprise for me! However if I do that, the envelope will only pale in comparison and that is hardly fair to whomever sent me whatever is in there. No, no I should open the letter first. You silly girl why are you arguing with yourself allowed? People will think your strange and put you in St.Mungo's!"

Professor Splatterpalette looked around and no one was around.

"Just my luck." The professor sighed opening the letter. "I could have used the break."

\*\*\*\*\*

Dearest Dina;

It's been many years since we've spoken. I still remember the young witch, all dressed in black with those muggle Moc Dartin's boots I think you used to call them. Seeing you with your unmistakable wild dark hair supporting us at our shows with your friends Chlorina and Wringlana Cumberbatch in the early days of my career really brings back happy memories.

When I learned that you were teaching our Sasporilla I just had to drop you a not. Sassy is very special to me. Her father was my mentor and her mother, well, the secret life long love of my life. I cherish that girl like my own daughter and would do anything for her. She is very proud and independent, and will never ask for help or support. So if she needs either please drop me an owl outlining her needs and I'll get right on it.

Yours truly;

Myron Wagtail

PS.... I have enclosed a picture from our latest project. When our new album is done, I'll be sure to get you one hot off the presses!

\*\*\*\*\*

Pulling her wand from her robe Professor Splatterpalette levitated and affixed the photo of the three members of the Chocolate Frogs, Orpheus Manxx, Timpany Munchausen and Myron Wagtail front and center. With a wink the professor saucily blew the picture a kiss and returned her attentions to the package wrapped in ancient parchments, tied with twine. A tag hung from the twine, which read Professor Dina Splatterpalette, and had a very faded ancient seal of Salazar Slytherin on it.

An official letter was tucked under twine. Professor Splatterpalette pulled it free and saw that it was a letter to her from the Ministry of Antiquities, that had first been past down to Ms.Bucket.

\*\*\*\*\*

To: Professor Dina Splatterpalette  
Department of Arts and Design  
Avalon University, Avalon City  
Avalon

Several items have been uncovered in vault 76-Z of the Chamber of Secrets that were pre-tagged as gifts for a millennia ago. One of which was found with your name on it. As all items are openable only by those for whom they are intended for we can not catalogue them until they have been opened. The Ministry of Magic Department of antiquities would appreciate any information that you could supply us on this item once you've opened your package.

Sincerely;

Karroline Curtis  
Assistant under the Antiquarian Digs Assistant 9th class

Ministry of Magic Department of Antiquities

PS...

I trusted this package with my best friend rather than your Royal mail as I've heard how things some times "GO MISSING". If someone in power there suspects you might have a powerful item... you just might want to keep it to your self and send any correspondence to the ministry back to me through Sassy. We can trust her.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Well then," Professor Splatterpalette said, "if I was Salazar Slytherin, that crafty miserable old sod, what would I be sending out to people a thousand years in the future?"

The professor poked the package cautiously with her wand. She examined the rather plain old parchment wrap. "REVELIO!" She cast knowing that if there were hidden spells or sigils a simple spell such as that would not reveal them. Not from a Wizard as great as Salazar Slytherin. The professor pulled a letter opener from her desk drawer. She sliced cleanly through the simple twine and pulled the tight parchment wrappings free of the wooden box inside.

The box was about eighteen inches long with a gold thinned area near its capped type. A gold Lions head adornment with a ring in its mouth was on the bejeweled side of the box. A small scroll tucked into the ring. Professor Splatterpalette pulled the scroll free, unrolled it and smiled as she read the ancient note.

\*\*\*\*\*

Professor Splatterpalette;

Please accept this wand as a teaching tool from my personal collection. It was the first wand of Godric Gryffindor, taken from him by me in a duel in our youth. It holds great sentimental value and I'm sure will be of great historic and artistic value.

It was hand crafted by the great Celt wand Maker Dwarwin O'Caelighie himself. It is Walnut, 13 3/4" with a Dragon heartstring core (Norwegian Horn Tail). It is bejeweled and adorned most ostentatiously with rubies and gold wire as Godric's vanity I'm sure is now legendary.

I had the case made especially to contain the wand and only you may open in it. If you should choose not to accept this gift then it will remain forever sealed.

With respects;

Salazar Slytherin

\*\*\*\*\*

The Professor pulled off the boxes wooden cap carefully. To her surprise there was no explosion, nor puff of Poisson gas.

"Oh Salazar!" Professor Splatterpalette chuckled, "Lulling people into a false sense of security by not trapping the gift box is just brilliant!"

Inside the dark wood and gold box was a wand, as described, but as she had feared, that crafty evil old wizard had sent out something a whole lot more than just a nice gift. Probably not just to her, but to every recipient of his gifts. If her suspicions were correct... but she would have to be sure.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sasporilla was very surprised to find Angelo waiting for her on the bench out front of the Arts and Design building. Her handsome young man smiled as he saw his pink haired girl friend coming through the big double doors.

"Well hello there." Sasporilla smiled as she walked over to Angelo and gave him a big kiss hello. "What brings you here?"

"You do." Angelo said. "We were going to do a bit of Christmas shopping? Remember?"

"Oh my god!" Sasporilla gasped. "I'm so sorry Angelo, it completely slipped my mind."

"I know, you probably had something important to do." Angelo said. "It's not like me or my feelings are important, no you're just a bit a sweat meat you are mate. Eye candy is all I am, me. Oh woah is my existence... the poor boy toy."

"Stop it you!" Sasporilla laughed. "I had a secret package from the Ministry of Antiquities to deliver to Professor Splatt's. It came from Karry so I thought I'd better get on it."

"What was in it?" Angelo asked quietly taking Sassy's hand as they walked away.

"No idea." Sasporilla shook her head. "What ever it is, it must of come out of the chamber of secrets. That's what Karry's working on."

"Well, shall we have some lunch first?" Angelo asked.

"Honestly," Sasporilla laughed, "are you ever NOT hungry?"

"Nope." Angelo said, "especially for your love."

"Oh your tongue drips honey it does." Sassy said cupping his chin playfully. "Ok, lunch, then shopping. I'll help you get something nice for your dad this year."

"Thanks." Angelo said. "Christmas hasn't been the same for him since my mom passed. He's still living down the shame of her following Voldemort as a Death Eater in the last wizarding war."



## CHAPTER 12

The Royal palace of the Witch Queen of Avalon was majestic series of high white marble towers surrounded by grand black marble walls symbolizing the balance of light and dark magic's between the Witch Queens house and that of the Warlock King. The Regency Tower, where all business of the monarchy was conducted, was a grand golden structure forged by the Goblins three millennia ago.

The Ivory throne room was so named for its having been carved from the solid piece of ivory. The single fragment of bone, of a creature so massive, that it could not possibly have come from this world. The floor, walls, ceiling, gem encrusted double thrones were ornately carved from the single piece of polished nether ivory.

A long table of solid onyx sat center of the room with six uncomfortable chairs crafted of pure gold. One chair for each advisor to the Witch Queen and Warlock King. The advisors filed in accompanied on each side by their own personal royal guards dressed in gold with red epaulettes. The advisors took their seats.

Jacto Lyton, hand to the Witch Queen and Warlock King sat first. A thin man with thinning white hair and mustache dressed in simple black robes with a purple sash. A gold pin of a hand, holding a wand, encircled by fire signified his position as head advisor. Most trusted above all others. The voice of balance and reason at this table.

Sheliza Amari sat next. The epitome of style and grace in her gold and red robes she pulled the golden mask from her face to reveal the aged beauty that hid the ancient monster beneath. The Wedjat. The creature from the sands the witch queen had hired as her Personal hunter and Royal Guard Captain smiled like a cat before a cage full of canaries.

Henimaxx Dimm was more machine than magi now, if he ever truly was magi at all? The product more than two hundred years of technological modifications to his own body. He now looked more like a sophisticated robot in a trench coat than a technomantic wizard. Though make no mistake, he was indeed one of the most powerful of technomancers anywhere to be found, On any world, in any universe.

Professor Jennifer Foxx sat with deliberate slowness into her seat of gold. The head of the Necromancy department of Avalon University and Advisor on all things dark arts to the Crown was neither fond of gold nor silver. Her long green velvet robes kept her corruption's protected from the metals purity. Her beauty, like Amari's, hiding things dark and sinister beneath.

With joyful glee Millicent Glindell plopped down in her chair and dropped a nine inch thick file on the table before her. The cheerful middle aged blonde witch was always so excited for these meetings. Dressed in her favourite candy striped robes the advisor on public prosperity had once again done her home work and had hundreds of recommendations to make life better for everyone in Avalon!

The Representative for the Fae affairs was a ghastly Hobgoblin by the name Gormlobim. Standing four and a half feet in height, rather tall for a hobgoblin, his jagged wart covered features reflected the corruption he harbored in his heart. This creature would gladly sell out his own people, not to mention all fae, he would even sell his own mother if he thought he could get richer by doing so.

Trumpets echoed through great room. The Royal guard snapped to attention, wands drawn and raised symbolically before them, as the council members took to their feet.

Great golden doors in the back of the room swung open wide revealing the Witch Queen Bougenvallia Bent, dressed in white, the and Warlock King Hyronimus Rodrovich, dressed in black, who entered ceremoniously

each holding one end of the scepter of power. The symbol of their joint rule of the Kingdom of Avalon. The royal couple took their places at their thrones and sat simultaneously.

"Pwease take youw seats evwyone!" The Warlock King smiled. "Guawds, at ease."

With a great mournful sigh the witch queen rolled her eyes. "As much as I dread the drudgery of all of your reports I know that we can all look forward to the joy and positive ideas of Advisor Glindell."

As the witch queen motioned to her with a polite smile the Warlock King clapped with unbridled admiration and enthusiasm.

To the outside world the Warlock Kings black robes, cloak and high collar matched with his snobbish, vain demeanor painted him as a dark wizard. This allowed the Witch queen, in her robes of white and pure as those of freshly fallen Christmas snow, to hide her true nature behind a crocodiles smile.

"Thank you your majesties." Millicent Glindell giggled tapping her file with her wand. The file separated into three similarly large files. "I have some wonderful new ideas on just how we can make life here in Avalon just so wonderful for every one of your subjects!"

"Oh! I'm so excited to he'a eva'wee Idea!" The Warlock king smiled.

"I have a wonderful Idea!" The Witch Queen smiled. "Hyronimus my love, will you accompany Advisor Glindell to the scale model room of the city and work with her personally on these projects? I will deal with the drudgery of these ones reports."

"Do you wewee mean it my dawing Bugenva'weeah?" The Warlock Kings eyes sparkled at the thought of projects that would help people. "I mean, as you command my Witch Queen."

The Warlock King ordered the royal guard to carry the files as he and his advisor skipped with delight from the Royal chamber.

The witch Queen waved her wand and slammed the large main Ivory and Onyx doors.

"That's better." The Witch Queens delightful smile faded from her face to an evil grin. "I simply can not stand that much GLEE."

There was snickering around the table from her advisors. None of them held any respect for the Warlock King. Tradition demanded that the side of Light magic be represented on one side and Dark magic on the other. So when Bougenvallia Bent passed the trials to become the Magi Witch Queen it was her responsibility to choose a Warlock King that was her opposite. She knew her dark heart well and knew that to maintain control she would need to mask it behind a kind smile and crown of white. She knew the perfect patsy to be her Warlock King. A vain Hufflepuff boy who had a crush on her all the way through Hogwarts. Heart of gold, when you could break him away from his own reflection. He was Perfect! She didn't love him, but she wouldn't allow those beneath him to belittle him either.

"You will show the Warlock King the respect that I do not." The Witch Queen hissed. "Or I will kill you all here and now and eat your liver fried in flour with mandrake leaves and onions."

Faces became more serious as the witch Queen sat forward on her throne. She had made her advisors nervous. Good. It was just those kind of small power games that she enjoyed playing. Who would the Witch Queen put on the spot first? She tapped her fingers on the arm of her throne. A bead of sweat rolled down the edge of advisor Jacto Lyton's hairline.

"Advisor Lyton," the Witch Queen sneered, "you seem the least eager to lead us off. So give me your report."

Jacto Lyton, hand to the Witch Queen an Warlock King stood slowly. The thin man with thinning white hair and mustache straightened wrinkles in his simple black robes and purple sash. The gold pin of a hand, holding a wand, encircled by fire which signified his position as head advisor glinted a quick reflection of light catching the Witch Queen in the eye making her squint uncomfortably. The point was now his and with a wry smile he began.

"Our blessed Witch Queen." Lyton said. "Highest of all Magi, Most honoured amongst witches, Most beautiful among women! Your people hate you."

"Outrageous!" The advisors protested.

"Yet we all know it to be true." Lyton said raising his eye brows and holding his hands wide apart as he faced the Witch Queen.

"Are you testing my patience today Jacto?" The Witch Queen asked raising her eye.

"Not at all your majesty!" Jacto Lyton insisted. "I simply relay the truth, that will be reflected in every other fact these sycophantic psychopaths you surround yourself with will deliver to you in their reports. Though they may keep that last fact from you."

The Witch Queen stood slowly from her throne and stepped forward. "Do you suggest that I'm incompetent? That some how I am a bad Witch Queen?"

"No your highness!" Lyton frowned. "I'm saying quite definitively that your self interests and lust for control and power over the well being of your people don't make you a BAD Witch Queen, they make you an EVIL one."

"And you are trying to tell me there is not one among them who would dare tell me this truth?" The Witch Queen said pulling her wand and pointing it at the table.

"That is what I'm saying." Lyton said taking hold of the wand up his sleeve.

"Jacto Lyton, always here to bring balance and truth to my table." The Witch Queen smiled. "Unlike these others... who are smarter than you."

With a quick snap of her wrist the Witch Queen cast "Avada Kedavra" and the hand to the Witch Queen and Warlock King fell dead to the chamber floor.

The Witch Queen walked back to her throne and sat down calmly as she motioned to the royal guard to remove the corpse.

"Now," the Witch Queen smiled, "My feelings are hurt. My subjects really don't love me with all their hearts? Well I am their Queen! I make the hard decisions to what's best and if they can't understand or accept it? Then tough! I am not in the mood for your personal OPINIONS on my character only the facts! Amari report."

"Your majesty," Sheliza Amari began as she stood, "there has been a bit of civil unrest, stirred up by rebel influence, but nothing unexpected and nothing that your Royal Guard could not handle swiftly and relatively quietly."

"Good." The Witch Queen nodded. "What of the Rebels?"

"A small group at best we feel." The Wedjat hissed her disdain. "University students and socially unacceptable dissidents under the command of that professional Anarchist from the America's!"

"Yes." Queen Bougenvallia smiled evilly. "Lyra Lee-Ashwolf, the public face of the rebellion. The voice of anarchy."

"I don't understand why you just don't let me kill her and this your majesty?" Sheliza Amari pleaded.

"Oh Amari." The Witch Queen smiled. "The people have had it far to good, for far to long. My subjects need to be taught an important lesson. I need the rebellion to 'Run it's course'. Then I'll deal with her personally. Speaking of which."

The Witch Queen motioned for the Wedjat guard captain to sit and the Technomancer to stand. The whirl of servos and shush of hydraulic fluid pressurization matched the clicks and ticks of the metal joints of Henimaxx Dimm's machine body as he stood. More machine than magi now he was the true embodiment of technomancy. Superior technology that could not be distinguished from magic, that channeled and harnessed magical energy. However not so advanced that he could take back a more human appearance. Many thought he looked like a machine version of Voldemort himself.

"Henimaxx Dimm," The Witch Queen asked, "is my gift to my people ready?"

"By your command my Queen." Henimaxx Dimm replied, his voice tinny and raspy, "It is just as you have designed."

"Excellent." The Witch Queen snarled. "Sit."

The Witch Queen stepped forward to the table standing before her advisors. This was something she very rarely did. Only in those moments when she was extremely happy or when she was wholly dissatisfied.

"Gormlobim you festering boil," the Witch Queen said spitting in the Hobgoblins face, "what news have you brought me from the Fae world today?"

"I bring you the allegiance of the Onirax Doxy of the Doxy Swamps!" The Hobgoblin smiled holding up a signed scroll. "Of course when they signed allegiance to you for Royal Guard protection of the swamp lands, they signed away their ancestral rights to those swamp lands to the crown my Queen!"

"You devious little turd." The Witch Queen laughed. "You've written in your usual fee of course?"

"Of course." Gormlobim chuckled along with the other Advisors. "I also bring news of the House elf king!"

"Oh?" The Witch Queen said curiously.

"He is in talks with the magi holders of the original treaty to extend the House elf enslavement from one thousand years to one of permanence. For a very large check cut to himself of course."

"Of course!" The Witch Queen said her brow furling which quickly changed to a grin. "I would love to be there the moment he realized that by doing so he realized his actions condemned not only every house elf, but every other elf blood magi out there including HIMSELF. Though the photo of his face at that moment of realization of



what he'd done to himself would be art worthy of my royal gallery! However, this action will also include my Niece. Though I wish to rid myself of her, to put her in to slavery is not acceptable. No this can not be allowed to happen."

"Your orders my Queen?" Gormlobim asked.

"Warn the council of Elves." The Witch Queen said. "Tell them I feel it's their problem but I fear for my niece. Be honest. I give them a chance to deal with him OR I send Amari!"

"Consider it done my Queen." Gormlobim smiled. "Best to do it now, before your expansion through the swamps over runs the Silver forest and the Elven Lands!"

"Your Majesty if I may?" Professor Foxx interjected.

"Of course Jennifer," the Witch Queen motioned, "please say what's on your mind."

"Concerning your Niece, Sasporilla Bucket." Professor Foxx said gladly standing from her chair. "I have watched her carefully at the university as you have asked. She is not involved in politics, not shown any interest in her friend Lyra Lee-Ashwolf's antics. In fact, she very purposely distances herself from them! She is only interested in her studies and quite specifically, those involved with wand making. I feel she is of no more a threat to you my Queen than an ant."

"Thank you Ms.Foxx." the Witch Queen smiled. "Then I will have to eventually step on her."

"Majesty?" Professor Fox asked a bit confused.



## CHAPTER 13

The winter snows of Avalon buried everything deep in powder white beauty. Buried deeper still were each University student in books and notes as end of semester final exams loomed near. Sasporilla Bucket found the written exams easy. It was the practical exams that she was most worried about. Sassy worked on the details of her final wand design for submission for Professor Splatterpalette's practical exam. Ten wand designs of her choice from her journal. Completed sketch, description of woods, or any other materials used. Specifications including length and core type.

Sasporilla had designed fifty-seven wands in her journal. Most of them she didn't consider anywhere close to good enough for submission. However those she considered her best ten she book marked for professor Splatterpalette's convince. They were good looking wands. In Sasporilla's eyes they looked very professionally designed. She just hoped the Professor saw them the same way.

Sasporilla closed her journal as Flossy, the pink furry pillar cat crawled off the lamp and up Sassy's arm.

"Hello Flossy." Sassy smiled as the pillar cat mewed in the pink haired witch's ear. "I guess I've been a bit remiss in playing with you today hunh? To much studying. Well come with me, I want to go get some advice about my other practical exam from an expert."

Sasporilla stepped out of her dorm room into the uncommonly quiet common room. Three wooden spoons stirred something that simmered in large pots in the kitchen. Corina had left something that smelled absolutely delicious slow cooking for dinner while she was of doing her advanced herbology final.

Sassy made her way across the common room to Jessica's door. The door was open just a crack. The soft sound of music wafted from within. Sasporilla knocked on the door.

"Come in." Jessica called out.

Flossy mewed at Sasporilla and curled in under her robes collar. Sassy peeked her head in the open door. Jess was sitting in a floating chair above a small glowing green crystal, a large text book was sitting open in her lap.

"Are you busy Jess?" Sassy asked.

"Studying for my final." Jess said, "but I can spare you a moment if its serious Sassy? What's up?"

"I need your advice on passing my necromancy final." Sasporilla said stepping into the young witches room. "I have to pass but I don't want to be made to do anything that..."

"Goes against your moral nature?" Jess asked.

"Yes." Sasporilla smiled shyly.

"That's just what professor Foxx counts on." Jessica hissed. "What ever you do, you must either do the practical task she asks or fail. Do not take her "Passing deal"!!!"

"Passing deal?" Sassy asked.

"Oh yes." Jess said closing her book and tossing it aside. She leaned forward to face Sasporilla. "Touch my face." Sasporilla did as she was asked. Jessica's skin felt cold, as if she was not, alive.

"I was once like you. I took the moral high ground. I said NO to casting the forbidden curse, to complete a death magic spell. She said she would fail me. I cried. She took "PITTY" on me... pity." Jessica laughed as she got up from the chair and walked over to the mirror. "She said that she would give me a padding grade if I allowed her to do this to me."

Jessica turned, her appearance changed to one of almost skin on a skeleton. Her pallor ashen and raven hair white as snow. Her once beautiful eyes were now hollow sunken cavities. "People think I play at being dark, when she knows not the darkness that eats away at me from the inside."

Sasporilla gasped as the creature floated back to the chair and settled back in. As it cradled into the comforting green light Jessica returned to her normal form.

"Though the Cloral Stone will help me live a normal life, I will never feel whole, never be warm as long as the beast lives." Jessica said picking up her textbook. "Professor Foxx is a monster Sasporilla Bucket. Don't let her trick you into feeding on you!"

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Candles casting long shadows that hid ancient evils in dark corners always dimly lighted the Necromancy room. Professor Foxx sat in her chair like a spider in its web awaiting the lightest tug on any strand. A thin sneer formed across her lips as Sasporilla Bucket emerged from the shadows of the class room door.

"Ms.Bucket." Professor Foxx smiled. "For all your short comings in this class, neither attendance nor punctuality are among them."

"Thank you professor." Sasporilla said coldly as she approached the table, which lay, between them.

Professor Foxx stood and carried with her a stone tray. She placed it on the table before Sasporilla. On it was the corpse of a freshly killed rat, a cup of its blood and the dagger with which it was killed. Sasporilla made a face clearly showing her disgust and disdain.

"Ms.Bucket the task at hand is a simple one," professor Foxx sighed, "the rat has been newly killed by the previous student as I know of your... objections. Reanimate the corpse please."

Sasporilla Bucket stood with a somewhat puzzled but suspicious look. "Excuse me Professor but I don't believe you ever covered that in any lesson?"

"But of course it's been covered." Professor Foxx sighed. "It's a simple enough spell! No? Are you refusing?"

"I'm not refusing professor," Sasporilla stiffened, "I am honestly insisting you have not taught me this spell. I can not perform a spell I have not been taught!"

"Very well!" Professor Foxx snarled. "A review. Dip your wands tip in the creature's blood, touch it gently to each of its eyes with the words "CESTRO" - "VESTRO". Then draw a circle of blood around the rat casting "STULTUS ILLUDET CIRCULUS VITAE" and touch your wand to the creature's forehead and cast "ZO!"

Much to Professor Foxx's surprise Sasporilla Bucket drew her wand and began the process she found sickening and morally abhorrent. Following the instructions to the letter. She dipped her wand in the blood of the poor murdered rat. She gently touched the blood to its cold lifeless eyes casting

"CESTRO" and "VESTRO". The eyes glowed red. As she dipped her wand in the blood again and drew a circle around the corpse she spoke the words she committed to memory "STULTUS ILLUDET CIRCULUS VITAE!" The blood circle glowed red and burst into a low smoldering red flame. Sasporilla touched her wand to the rats forehead and took a deep breath. She could see the shock and surprise in the eyes of Professor Foxx. Sassy closed her eyes, as if struggling for a moment.

"Can't remember the final incantation?" Professor Foxx mewed. "Oh dear. Wouldn't that be a shame?"

"No." Sasporilla said. "Just struggling with the morality of reanimating a corpse. I hate Necromancy."

"I understand dear. Many do, but you must pass this class to graduate in the end so, please," Professor Foxx waved her long thin fingers, "less judgement, more action."

"ZO!" Sasporilla cast sending a shock of magical energy through the corpse.

The rat twitched. The twitch turned to convulsions. Then the creature stood and looked around. The rats eyes glowed red and it hissed as its tail twitched and back hair bristled.

"Impressive." Professor Foxx said. "Fail."

Touching her wand to the circle she cast "FINITE NECROTANTUS" causing the flame of the circle to go out, the glow in the rats eyes to fade and its reanimation to come to an end.

"What?" Sasporilla protested. "Why was that a fail Professor Foxx? I reanimated the corpse as requested! I did so with you only giving me the most basic of descriptions of how to do so as you know bloody well you never taught me this and you even said your self, just now, my results were IMPRESIVE!"

"Yes I did." Professor Foxx smiled. "and the best part of being your Professor is I am in charge and I get to decide if you pass or fail and I... say... fail. Good day."

Sasporilla Bucket stood there stunned as Professor Foxx walked back to her chair triumphantly.

"You may leave Ms.Bucket." Professor Foxx smiled.

Sassy wiped the blood, as best as she could from her wand and slipped it back into her robes. With a sniff, as a tear rolled down her cheek Sasporilla Bucket turned to walk away. Professor Foxx's Cheshire grin was one of a spider with a fresh fly in its web.

"Wait Ms.Bucket." the pretty young Necromancy Professor said. "Perhaps we can work something out?"

Sasporilla stopped in her tracks but did not turn around. "What do you mean?"

"Perhaps I could have you for dinner?" The Professor giggled getting up. "You see many hate to eat alone. My dietary needs are unique, and few are willing to eat with me. I would love to have you for dinner. If you would allow this I would give you a passing grade."

Sassy turned to face Professor Foxx. "That doesn't sound unacceptable but to have a binding pact you need to reveal the absolute truth to me professor."

"You are a clever one aren't you?" Professor Foxx hissed opening her gapping maw full of razor sharp teeth and a long forked tongue. The pretty young woman's facade shriveled and faded to that of a grizzled old hag, boney with ashen warty skin and a thinned white rats nest of hair.

"CICLARINFLAMARI!" Sasporilla cast surrounding the Professor with a circle of high flames. "EXPELIARMUS! Sent the old witches wand flying off into the shadows."

"I'm glad you've finally shown me your true face Professor Foxx," Sasporilla said, "or should I call you Marie LaVeau?"

The grizzled witch let out a withering howling shriek at hearing her real name for the first time in a century.

"How did a common girl like you figure out who a great witch like me was?" The old witch asked.

"First of all never call any student of this university common." Professor Splatterpalette said stepping from the shadows with the real Sasporilla Bucket.

"Second of all only a very old necromantic witch uses a life leaching spell on other witches or wizards." The false Sasporilla said. "And I've suspected you for quite a while."

"Who are you?" The old witch demanded.

The real Sasporilla Bucket drew her wand and cast "REVELIO" undoing the effects of the polyjuice potion to reveal Dean Silversnow, Dean of the University of Avalon. An average man of French decent who looked like he'd have been at home as a musketeer.

"I've long suspected you were up to something Professor." Dean Silversnow spat on the floor. "Now that I know you've been feeding on students I will do everything I can to get them the help they need. You sicken me!"

With a wave of his wand the class room doors flew open. Long shuttered widows let in long forgotten rays of light. The rhythmic thump and rattle of Royal guards in full armour flowed into the class room.

"I want this witch arrested under the charges of assaulting of children!" The dean demanded.

"She will be brought before the witch Queen." The female guard captain in the gold mask said.

"Consider yourself fired Professor." Dean Silversnow said as Royal guard lead the old witch away. "Now Ms.Bucket, I will do your practical exam for Necromancy, and I can guarantee you I won't ask you to try and perform a spell from a masters exam... ready?"



## Chapter 14

Sasporilla Bucket and Angelo Lazarus walked across the snowy quad carrying their bags for their Christmas trip to Hogsmeade. Sassy had one last exam to complete and then they would be on their way.

"I can't believe Professor Foxx was the famous witch Marie LaVeau!" Angelo said in amazement.

"The dean said she was reported to have died in the 1880's but legends about her from the Louisiana swamps, continued for the next century! Even a famous muggle song! Apparently she had to escape, so she came here." Sasporilla said.

"And now the Royal guard have taken her to the Witch Queen." Angelo snorted with derision.

"I'm sure she'll be dealt with, within the law." Sasporilla said surprised. "Surely?"

"Sassy?" Angelo said surprised. "Professor Foxx, Marie LaVeau, is one of the witch Queens advisors. She may have been fired from the university, but I guaranty you she was welcomed with open arms at the palace. Nothing will be done to her."

"That's just not right." Sasporilla said. "She hurt people like Jess! She has to be held accountable!"

"A lot of people in that palace have to be held accountable." Angelo said as they turned up the walkway to the arts and design building. "One day, we just might see it that dream come true, with Lyra in charge."

"Dare to dream Angelo Lazarus." Sasporilla said kissing her boyfriend and handing off all but her shoulder bag. She pulled the pink wand journal from inside. "Wish me Luck."

"You don't need luck Sasporilla Bucket!" Angelo smiled. "You're bloody brilliant!"

Taking a deep nervous breath, Sasporilla walked inside the building and headed upstairs to arts classroom where the practical exams were held. Christin came dancing out of the classroom carrying a large painting. She was smiling from ear to ear dancing with her painting, to a tune only she could hear, lost in a world of extreme happiness, oblivious to the world around her.

"Christin!" Sasporilla laughed before her German friend bashed her painting into her. "You seem happy?"

"The professor Loved my painting!" Christin said holding the picture up for Sassy to look at.

Sasporilla tried to take in what was a very detailed and intricate forest scene. It was clearly a close up of a tree and some branches with moving leaves. Very realistic, and very pretty. Then Sassy noticed them. It wasn't the tree, but what was in the tree, on the tree, around, in and through the tree. Christin had captured the trees living ecosystem in a painting! A bird flew in grabbed one of a multitude of species of insects and flew off. A squirrel played on a distant branch. A bowtruckle stuck it's tongue out at the viewer playfully and disappeared into the leaves. A spider built her web on the lower part of the tree as sap ran down the trunk. Leaves were just beginning to show that change from green to that hint of fall colour. A few leaves turned over to signify the coming days rains.

"Christin this is brilliant!" Sasporilla cheered.

"Thank you so much Sassy." Christin smiled and bear hugged her smaller English friend. "I'm so happy you like it! I worked so hard on it! I think it is the best I have ever done!"

"I like everything you do but this is very impressive." Sasporilla gasped. "I take it the Professor gave you a passing grade?"

"She said it was the best she had ever seen in any first year final." Christine grinned proudly. "She actually asked me to display it in the lobby!"

"Good for you!" Sassy smiled. "I'm so proud of you and so happy for you!"

"Sasporilla Bucket?" A voice called from within the class room into the hall.

"I know you will do great too!" Christin said as she headed down stairs. "You'd best get in there!"

"Yes." Sassy said holding up her wand journal. "I'm next."

Sasporilla walked in to the quiet space that was usually alive with the chaos of learning. Professor Splatterpalette sat at a table smiling.

"Ms.Bubbles the bar has been raised! I am expecting you to knock my socks right off." The whacky professor said putting both feet up on the table showing that she had clearly come prepared. "As you can see, I'm wearing twenty-seven pairs! Think of all house elves we could free with these? How many bras could be stuffed or ..."

"My journal Professor?" Sasporilla asked handing over the book praying her teacher's train of thought would derail, and go no further.

"Ah wonderful." Professor Splatterpalette said sitting forward taking the pink Journal. "I take it the little pink sticky note tabs sticking out are the ten pages of designs you wish me to review?"

"Yes mam." Sasporilla smiled nervously.

Professor Splatterpalette pressed the pink gem in the center of the ornate pink leather journals cover. The gem glowed as the journal unlocked and opened for her perusal.

Sassy could do nothing but stand there nervously as the professor flipped through her designs making "HmMMM" and "hunhhhh" sounds, a self-writing quill taking and making notes as she looked on with pursed lips and furled brow. After the tenth design, professor Splatterpalette picked up the journal, leaned back in her chair and sighed disappointedly.

"Ms.Bucket." the professor said. "Colour me... .... unimpressed."

"Professor?" Sasporilla said all colour draining from her face, her heart broken.

"Your work was just what I asked for, ten wand designs. Including woods and materials, magical cores, lengths etc. You get a passing grade. It's just that your work is uninspired! Look!!!"

The professor opened the journal to her first design. A rather plain straight wand with beveled edges. Cherry wood, unicorn hair core, Twelve and a half inches.

"BORRING!" Professor Splatterpalette yelled.

The next was a more natural wand of Apple wood capturing the free flow of the gnarled wood branch. Ten and three quarter inches, Bowtruckle spine core.

"Looks like something my oldest made in nursery school!!!" The Professor sniffed with disdain as she flipped the pages harshly.

"Trite, pedestrian, boozgeois, common as a plastic prize in a muggle happy meal! Ms Bucket where is my Ms. Bubbles? Where is the sparkle? Where is the bubble? Where is the POP? WHERE IS THE ART???"

Sasporilla Bucket started to cry.

"Now, now dear." Professor Splatterpalette said rushing to the upset witch's side. "The designs aren't bad. In fact they are highly acceptable and not unlike those in the classic styles of Olivander, MagGovern and even O'Caelighie, but where is BUCKET? HMMMM?"

Professor Splatterpalette through the journal onto the table to hug the sobbing young witch. The journal fell open to a silly sketch Sasporilla had started of Jorje that evolved, sheerly out of bordem, into a strange pink flamingo umbrella wand design. The handle of the wand was a flamingo's head. Something she had laughed about, alone in her room one night, thinking of Hagrids wand. Sixteen inches, red oak and water oak with hippogriff feather and crystal core.

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings Ms.... Buck...et... but.... what is this?" Professor Splatterpalette asked letting Sassy go and picking the open journal back up. "Why was this not one of the ten designs you put forward? Why hold out on me?"

"It was just a doodle." Sassy sobbed.

"Well it's BRILLIANT!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "Look how the three toes allow it to stand for itself! Does it open?"

"Yes." Sassy sniffed calming down. "It's meant to be a fully functioning umbrella, and the toes point in together to form the tip of the wand when in use."

"Brilliant, Brilliant, BRILLIANT!!!" Professor Splatterpalette laughed as she took Sasporilla's hands and danced.

"It's more than just a wand, it's art! You've done it Ms.Bubbles! I am most impressed. Let me have a quick boo through your other designs. I will guarantee you that though your first designs are the most common and commercial it will always be those most outrageous like this that will attract the most attention to your shop and your talents. ART my dear. ART!"

"I was just thinking of my Mail bird Jorje and Hagrid's Umbrella when I doodled it." Sassy let out a pathetic laugh wiping away the last of her tears.

"She Doodled the best wand design to ever come through this department!" The professor chuckled. "Just as your friends brilliant painting was just something she did while working on her real painting! I swear you girls are playing some grand joke on me! You bring me one thing to show me and hold back the best work! No Ms. Bubbles, I see real genius in some of these designs. Angel winged wands that fly! Phoenix feather core wands made of fire crystal that allow you to see the burning flame within! What are these numbers? Here on this page?"

"An idea professor, that's all." Sassy said humbly. "I'm trying to balance the length and type of wood, plus materials of the wand versus the Arithmancy of tuning of the core of the wand balanced to the biorhythmic signature of the witch or wizard against the fabric of magic."

"All I heard was blah blah blah nerd blah blah... what do they mean?" Professor Splatterpalette asked.

"If I can get the numbers to quantify as Angelo says," Sassy smiled, "they could help me change wand making forever and save the fabric of magic."

"And your young man is helping you stay up late nights quantifying calculations?" The professor asked with a straight face.

"No professor." Sassy answered honestly. "Most of the time we kiss."

"Good for you!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "I mean I want to see you get your work done, but this is university and your both healthy young good looking... oh! Yes your project!"

The professor flipped through the pages landing back on the Pink Flamingo Umbrella.

"This." The professor pointed her finger into the book. "For your final project, for your final exam for next semester, you will fully design this on that retched box thingy..."

"The Abbicum with multiphasic microscope" Sasporilla said. "The Ponyo 3400."

"... yes, and produce me a working version of it for end of year! Wonderful!"

"Yes Professor." Sasporilla agreed.

"Now as you were my last exam, I am now free to go home for the Christmas Holidays and forget all about you beastly little monsters for a week. Do you have any plans Ms.Bubbles?"; The professor asked.

"Angelo and I are invited to Hogsmeade to spend Christmas with my friends Karry and Zac." Sasporilla smiled.

"Angelo's actually waiting downstairs for me, we're catching the afternoon shuttle out and tomorrow mornings Hogwarts Express in. Figure we'll spend the night at the Leaky cauldron."

"Well this is fortuitous!" Professor Splatterpalette clapped her hands. "Hold your arms out."

Sassy did so.

"Move them up and down." The professor said taking a step back.

Sasporilla felt a bit silly but did as she was asked.

"No, try doing it faster, put a bit more bend in your arms." The professor said cupping her chin and considering all possibilities."

Sassy did so and started to feel like she was being pranked.

"Now say WHOO WHOO." Professor Splatterpalette said.

"Did you want me to deliver something for you professor?" Sasporilla asked, stopping the obvious owl impersonation.

"Ah!" The professor smiled. "I knew it, you are a natural born owl. Yes! I would like it if you would A) deliver this package to Professor Rubeus Hagrid at Hogwarts and this letter to your friend Karry Curtiss. It's a thank you for the wand from the vault and some information on it. Also a pretty a big warning, though I'm sure they know all about the curse by now."

"Curses mam?" Sasporilla asked.

"Oh yes!" The miserable old sod Salazar Slytherin cursed every item he sent out. I don't know if every one had the same kind of curse but I'll lay bets that the crafty old devil went after anyone with pure blood and sent them a Horcrux like he did me."

"He turned the wand of Godric Gryffindor into s HORCRUX???" Sasporilla gasped.

"He certainly did." The professor laughed. "As if I wouldn't have suspected or detected it. Silly old fool."

"Karry's husband Zac received a ring!" Sassy said urgently.

"Surely he didn't do anything foolish like wear it?" Professor Splatterpalette asked.

"Not only did he do so," Sasporilla grimaced, "he's a blood heir to Slytherin."

"Sasporilla listen to me." Professor Splatterpalette said very seriously grabbing her by the shoulders. "I will arrange for the midnight special Hogwarts express. It's a rare over night service only for emergencies. I have pull, I know people. You get to Kings Cross by eleven p.m. and it will be waiting for you. You must get to Hogsmeade and get that ring off your friends husbands finger then destroy it. Do you know how to destroy a Horcrux?"

"I know Harry Potter used a basilisk fang and Longbottom used the Sword of Gryffindor." Sassy said.

"Good." The professor said shoving Sasporilla out of the room into the hall. "Use one of those then. Happy Christmas."

The door closed, locked and the lights shut out.

Angelo was quite shocked when Sasporilla came running out of the Arts and Design building, throwing open the doors yelling, "We have to get to the station NOW!"

"What's wrong?" Angelo asked.

"Zac's in danger." Sasporilla said. "The things sent out from the chamber of secrets vault were cursed. They were Horcrux's! And Zac is wearing one! Karry said in her letter he's been acting odd! That's why!"

"Hold on tight." Angelo said gathering the bags. "We'll apparate. How'd you do?"

"As God as my witness I will never understand ART!!!" Sasporilla chuckled shaking her head. "I passed."

"That's my girl." Angelo said as they spun out of sight with a pop.

The young couple apparated in just inside the main concourse of Majesty station. Angelo held tightly to Sasporilla who still hadn't got the hang of couple's apparition. One case, a muggle sports bag that Angelo preferred to use, was accidentally splinched and he lost some clothes.

"Oh no!" Sasporilla said.

"Better the bag than one of us." Angelo shrugged giving Sassy's hand a reassuring squeeze. "There was nothing in it that can't be replaced. I should get a magical bag designed to withstand magical travel anyway."

"Dropping hints for Christmas?" Sasporilla smiled coyly.

"Normally I'd say no underwear or socks but as it turns out, I need them!" Angelo laughed.

Christmas carols echoed through Majesty station as Sasporilla and Angelo hurried through to catch the last late Afternoon shuttle to London Heathrow. Thank goodness they had packed reasonably light. Taking creatures, animals and beasts through British customs was truly a nightmare. Sassy had left Jorje and Flossy in Corina and Jess's care over the Holiday. Neither girl was going home for Christmas and were happy to look in on the creatures. Sassy was sure Corina was actually looking forward to a holiday dance party with Jorje!

The young couple rushed their way up the elevator to the shuttle platform, through check in and screening and as the clock ticked six pm they squeezed through the shuttle doors and took their seats.

"We made it!" Sasporilla let out a heavy sigh of relief.

"Just barely." Angelo said. "By the time we arrive it will be ten p.m. We'll have an hour to make it to Kings Cross."

"No problem." Sasporilla smiled as the shuttle took off, slipping effortlessly through the shimmering purple mist and between worlds. "I packed my broom."

The shuttle appeared at Heathrow on time at ten p.m. sharp. Sasporilla swore she would never get used to the time differences between there two worlds. Sassy reached deep into her bag and pulled out her Triumphant twelve hundred X broom. As they stepped outside of the terminal Sassy finished securing the bags on the back of the broom. Mounting it she scooted forward slightly and looked at Angelo playfully.

"Climb aboard sir, and prepare for the ride of your life!"

Angelo hopped on just behind Sasporilla. It was a snug fit between her and the luggage, but they would make it work.

"All set?" Sassy smiled looking over her shoulder.

"Yes." Angelo said nervously. "I was never fond of brooms."

"I'll take it easy on you." Sasporilla said and cast "Occasum Pallium Calor!"

A bubble of warmth protected them from the winter cold as they faded from muggle view.

Sassy took off into the night sky over London. The city below sat alight like fire flies in pixie dust as she flew above the streets and building tops. Angelo occasionally opened his eyes to peek at Gunnersbury field, and Wormwood Scrubs. Sassy lowered her altitude to skim the treetops as they broke past and flew back over the city. Sasporilla enjoyed flying through Queen Mary's Rose Gardens but there was little time to enjoy today. They flew east until they reached Kings cross railway station. A trip that normally took one hour or longer on the M4 or just about as long by tube took Sasporilla and Angelo twenty-two minutes by broom.

"That was terrifying but brilliant." Angelo said kissing Sasporilla.

"I took it easy on you." Sassy smiled. "Let's gets these bags off this broom and catch the train!"

The Hogwarts Midnight Express was waiting for them on platform nine and three Quarters as promised. A ticket was waiting for them with the conductor upon their arrival.

"Yes of course I have your ticket right here." The conductor said. "The Bucket's, State room A."

"State room?" Sasporilla asked.

"Why yes." The conductor smiled. "The midnight express is an overnight train with full over night service. Including a private sitting, dining car, bedroom and private loo."

"Oh I see!" Sasporilla said looking at Angelo a bit embarrassed.

"An' happy I am abou' it too!" The big booming voice of Hagrid said coming from behind them as he passed his ticket over there heads to the conductor. "I was in th'a Leaky Cauldr'n, hav'n a bowl a fire bean soup, wonder'n just where I was go'nna find a bed'd fit me fer the night? Seen as the Leaky Cauldr'n was full up'n all. Then they makes an announcement there's a Midnight special express to Hogwarts, well Lucky me! I gets me a ticket right fast and..."

Hagrid stood there smiling looking at Sasporilla and Angelo.

"It's wonderful to see you Hagrid." Sassy said giving the giant a big warm hug.

"Ah it warms my ol' heart tah see you as well Sasporilla Bucket!" Hagrid said. "Hogwarts is so much Quieter without ya around, that's fer sure!"

"I'm sure Karry still keeps things lively enough for the two of us." Sassy laughed.

"Indeed she does, some days. Are ya gonna intra'duce me tah yer young fella?"

"Of course," Sasporilla smiled taking Angelo's arm. "Hagrid this is my Boy friend Angelo Lazarus. Angelo, this is..."

"Perfesser Rubeus Hagrid." The Giant man said holding out his hand anxiously. "Keeper a groun's an' keys at Hogwarts an' teacher a' introduction ta magical creatures."

"Pleased to meet you sir." Angelo said shaking the gigantic mans hand. "My Sasporilla speaks very fondly of you."

"Does she?" Hagrid's smile broadened. "Aw tha's nice tah hear!"

"Oh Hagrid!" Sasporilla said reaching into her bag, "One of my Professor's, Professor Splatterpalette asked me to deliver this package to you!"

"Fer me?" Hagrid said surprised. "I wonders what it could be?"

Sassy pulled the long thin box wrapped in plain brown paper and handed it to Hagrid. The simple brown twine had a magnificent pearlescent tag marked with the official logo of Professor Splatterpalette. It read "To: Professor Rubeus Hagrid: Hogwarts"

Hagrid wasted no time ripping open the unexpected gift. Beneath the paper was a simple white box. With a letter wrapped around it.

Hagrid unwrapped the letter and took a quick look, then handed it to Sasporilla. "I hates to ask, but I fergots my readin' spec. Can you read that to me while I has a look?"

"No problem Hagrid." Sasporilla smiled. "It says, Dear Professor Hagrid. It has come to my attention that you have recently passed your NEWTS at the Ministry of Magic's Department of Education offsite Exam center. Congratulations! I know you worked very hard in Madame Marian Swain's night classes for older Witches and Wizards. Hagrid that's Wonderful news!!!" Sasporilla smiled looking up at the giant of a man who looked into the box with a joyful tear in his eye. Sassy continued. "I also understand that your recent trip to Olivander's to have your wand serviced was less than productive and as I know you will be needing a new wand, please accept this wand I crafted for you. It's a more wand sized than your umbrella but still maintains that pink umbrella look and feel of your original. It is my sincerest hope that it serves you well. Professor Dina Splatterpalette - Department Head of Arts and Design Avalon University, All around fantastic Witch and Amazing Person, Infinity."

As Hagrid held up the wand magical energy flowed through him. His hair lifted in the air and his beard rustled.

"I think that says it all." Hagrid smiled.

"The wand has definitely chosen the wizard." Sasporilla smiled.

The great steam whistle of the Hogwarts express blew as the conductor yelled "All aboard!"

Angelo grabbed took Sasporilla by the hand as she waved good bye to Hagrid, who ran up the track to his car, and they all climbed aboard the Hogwarts Midnight Express. The young couple found their State room and sat down in their private seating car.

"Wow!" Angelo gasped putting down the bags. "This is beautiful! They really do the old girl up for midnight travel!"

"Yes, it was like this pretty much, when we traveled to Geneva for the Dueling championships." Sasporilla smiled.

"Should we order some dinner?" Angelo asked.

"Are you hungry?" Sassy smiled coyly.

"Well not really," Angelo wondered why Sasporilla was giving him that look, "just thought you might be? Long day and all."



"I had other thoughts." Sassy said taking Angelo's hand in hers, locking the cabin door and kissing the young wizard very passionately.

"I've always wanted my first time to be special." Sasporilla said looking a bit scared and vulnerable into Angelo's chocolate brown eyes. "What could be more special than with you on the Midnight Special of the Hogwarts Express."

Angelo could hardly contain the smile of surprise that spread across his face.

"Really? Me? Are you sure?" Angelo asked.

"Never more sure of any one ore anything in my life." Sasporilla said biting her lower lip.

Angelo kissed Sasporilla with love and passion then pulled away to look at the girl whom he'd always known was the most beautiful girl he'd ever seen, and lifted her into his arms.

"I love you Sasporilla Bucket." Angelo said looking very deeply into her eyes.

"I love you Angelo Lazarus." Sasporilla said kissing her man as he carried her off into their train cars bed chamber. The door magically closed behind them. By the time the Hogwarts Express entered the Snowy English country side they were well on there way to Heaven and Hogsmeade.



## Chapter 15

Dawn whispered softly across the winter morning sky as the Hogwarts Express pulled into Hogsmeade station. Anxious students from Hogwarts, eager to begin there Christmas Holidays, lined the platform ready to return home. Of course first they had to wait for the midnight passengers to disembark and the train to reconfigure.

Angelo held up his arms and lifted Sasporilla down from the train car, spinning her around as they kissed. There no was no longer hiding the love they had for each other. They were deeply, passionately, head over heels in love and Sassy honestly didn't care who knew it. The rest of the world just didn't seem to matter to her right now.

"Zac please don't!" The voice of Karry Curtiss echoed through Hogsmeade. "Zac Stop!"

"Damn!" Sassy said pulling away from Angelo's strong embrace. "We have to go! Leave the bags, we'll come back for them! I have a plan!"

Karry Curtiss stood in crying in the center of Main Street, in front of her home, holding her blanket wrapped child. Her husband Zac, his head shaved bald sporting a freshly grown goatee, stood on the front step levitating his wife and child's bags out the door into the street.

"Take your things and leave," Zac Curtiss insisted, "silly mud blood girl! I don't need you, or your half breed spawn!"

"Zac!" Karry screamed. "Why are you doing this? This isn't you?"

"No it isn't." Sasporilla said stepping in front of Karry drawing her wand. "It most certainly is not our Zac. The question is do you know who I am, Salazar?"

"You are a clever girl Sasporilla Bucket." Salazar Slytherin hissed raising Zac's wand. "I know everything about you Zaccariah knows."

"And I know that everything you sent out from your vault was a Horcrux." Sassy spat. "Including that ring!"

"The ring?" Karry sobbed. "Oh my god no! He's been wearing it for months!"

"Yes!" Salazar Slytherin smiled holding up his hand exposing the ring finger. "You'll never get the ring off us now, no matter how hard you try, no matter what spell you cast. It's a part of us! We are almost one!"

With one quick motion Angelo appeared behind Zac in the door way, pushed the garden sheers past Zac's shoulder and clipped the finger from his hand just below the ring. Sasporilla through a small metal box in the air and cast

"CAPTIS LIGANTUM!" The box swallowed the finger and the ring then locked itself closed. Magical chains wrapped around it as it hung in mid air shaking and banging. Salazar Slytherin trapped very much inside. Zac fell back weak into the arms of Angelo Lazarus who cast a quick Bandaging charm on Zac's finger.

"Zac!" Karry yelled running to his side. "Who the hell are you? What have you done?"

"Karry!" Sasporilla said helping Angelo get Zac to his feet, "this is Angelo, my boy friend. He was acting on my instructions. It was our only choice. Even Madam Pomfrey can regrow a missing finger, and we had to get the

Horcrux off! We still this have to destroy the Ring, as long as it has flesh to corrupt it's dangerous! Look at how they brought back Voldemort!"

"I'm..." Zac said in his normal very tired voice, "I'm so sorry... I would never hurt y.."

Zac passed out in the arms of his friends as they dragged him back inside.

"Lay him on the couch." Karry insisted Casting 'LEVICORPUS' to help support her husbands weight. "Can you watch the baby Sasporilla while I run to school and fetch Madame Pomfrey?"

"I can go Karry!" Sassy said, "You stay with Zac and the baby. I'll get Madame Pomfrey. I want to consult Professor McGonagall on destroying this bloody Horcrux anyway!"

A loud knock on the front door followed by a bang as the door fell off its hinges and hit the floor in the front hall.

"Sorry 'bout tha" Hagrid said as Professor McGonagall and Madame Pomfrey pushed passed the giant and rushed into the Curtiss living room.

"Oh goodness," Madam Pomfrey gasped looking at the passed out young man with the bloodied bandage on his hand. "What happened here."

"Long story short," Sasporilla said matter of factly. "We cut off his finger to save him from a ring that was a Horcrux."

"A bit of an over reaction don't you think Ms.Bucket?"; Madame Pomfrey snapped.

"Why not just take the ring off of him?"

"I'm not sure it would have come off." Sasporilla said stiffly. "He's been wearing it for months and it had almost completely taken him over."

"Do you still have the ring?" Professor McGonagall asked.

"Yes." Sassy said pulling out the box and handing it to her. "It's bound in here. Still attached to the finger."

"We'll need to bring in a curse breaker." The headmistress said. "Mrs.Curtiss, where did this ring come from?"

"It's one of the many 'GIFTS' sent out from the vault found in the chamber of secrets." Karry said.

"And I suppose it never occurred to anyone in charge that those Items could be cursed?" Headmistress McGonagall asked her eyebrow raised and lips pursed.

"It was suggested Headmaster," Karry sighed," but the section supervisor said I, we were being silly worry warts and to send them out!"

"Well I shall assure you there will be an inquiry!" Professor McGonagall said.

"Minerva the curse is preventing any and all healing." Madame Pomfrey said. "We'll have to transport the young man to St.Mungos."

"I'll take 'im there by flue!" Hagrid said picking Zac up and heading for the fireplace. "Fastest, safest way."

With a splash of flue powder the words "SAIN' MUNGO'S" Hagrid and Zac were away in a flash of green Flame.

"We'd best follow him Minerva!" Madame Pomfrey insisted heading in after them.

"I should go too, Sasporilla." Karry said getting her coat and bag. "I'm sorry. I guess this ruins our Christmas plans."

"It's ok." Sassy said. "In some ways I kind of saw it coming. Here's a letter from Professor Splatterpalette of Avalon University. It's about the Horcrux wand you sent her from the vault."

"Oh gosh." Karry gulped. "Look I may stay over in London, but you're free to stay here at the house over Christmas! Enjoy it! It's all done up anyway. There are some prezies in front for you. Even one for your young man, who I promise I will meet properly one day."

"We shouldn't." Sassy said.

"No, I insist!" Karry smiled hugging her friend. "And don't do anything I wouldn't do!"

"Karry Curtis!" Sassy gasped. "What sort of slag do you think I am? I wouldn't do ninety-five percent of what you done with Zac before you were married!"

"Shut it you!" Karry laughed smacking her friend on the shoulder then realizing. "Ninety-five percent?" Karry asked.

"Eighty-five maybe?" Sasporilla blushed.

Karry handed her child to Headmistress McGonagall, hugged her friend and whispered something in her ear that made Sasporilla blush beat red.

"Oh now I must go." Karry said taking back her child and heading into the fire place. "I wish we could stay but Zac will need me. ST.MUNGO'S!"

"Sasporilla." Headmistress McGonagall smiled. "You and your young gentleman friend are most welcome to come and share Christmas dinner at Hogwarts in the great Hall on the twenty fifth."

"Thank you Headmistress McGonagall." Sassy smiled. "That's very kind."

"Hogwarts will always welcome you home." Professor McGonagall smiled stepping into the fire place and throwing down her hand full of flue powder. "ST.MUNGO'S"

and in a green flash, the old witch was gone.

Sasporilla became acutely aware of the loud tick, tick, tick of the grand father clock in Kerry's hall echoing through the large empty house.

Angelo walked up behind his pink haired love and placed one hand on her waist and one on her shoulder. Sasporilla took his hands in hers, and rubbed her cheek down to his hand on her shoulder.

"What do you want to do?" Angelo asked.

"We'll stay." Sasporilla said. "We can unpack, put their presents under the tree and get a quick bite of breakfast. Then we can head to St.Mugo's. By then we won't be in the way. The healers should have answers for us and I'm sure there will be Aurors with questions for us."

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It was almost three hours later Sasporilla and Angelo arrived in the St.Mungo's lobby via flue network. As always, the lobby was alive with activity. The bloodied, the bruised the victims of spells gone wrong and those who realized no one wins a duel in a street fight.

Sassy stopped in at the gift shop and picked up a Weasley's Wiggle Digit! A large foam finger that wiggled and made rude gestures at people that Zac could strap to his hand while he regrew a new finger.

"Don't you think that's a tad insensitive?" Angelo asked.

"It's truly in bad taste yes," Sasporilla sighed, "but it's funny and I'm hoping it will cheer him up. Show him that I'm sorry and everything will be ok."

"So thoughtful." Angelo said kissing Sassy on top of the head. "You could've just got flowers?"

"God no!" Sasporilla gasped. "Zac would think he was dying!!! Sometimes laughter is the best medicine. We'd best inquire as to which floor he's on?"

The nurse at the inquiries desk was chubby, pleasant old elf name Dwindlley. She was fixture at St.Mungo's from the time it had opened and very much considered a member of the family around there. No one came or went through the Wizarding Hospital that she didn't know about.

"Excuse me." Sasporilla asked the desk nurse. "I'd like to inquire as to where my friend was taken to when he was brought in tonight, Zac Curtiss."

"Zac Curtiss..." The elf smiled, "Superficial missing digit wound on right hand but has complications due to a curse there fore he was taken too... my word!!! Sasporilla Bucket! As I live and breathe! I haven't seen you in a while! Since you'd come to visit your uncle Nick. How is University?"

"It's very difficult Dwindlley." Sasporilla said with a shy scrunched up one sided smile. "But I'm doing ok. Learning a lot! And of course I have met someone special. May I introduce my boy friend Angelo Lazarus."

"Ah!" The chubby old elf smiled climbing awkwardly up onto the reception desk to get a better look at the boy.

"Hmmm yes! Acceptable!"

"Pleased to meet you mam." Angelo said holding out his hand.

"So polite. Good manners are so important." Dwindlley smiled shaking the young mans hand. "Oooo. Firm handgrip. Good sized hands too! Very important!"

"Dwindlley!" Sasporilla laughed. "I think that is very much enough of that!"

"Indeed!" Dwindlley said plopping herself back into her overstuffed chair. "But he will make a good Illyarnveru."

"What is that?" Angelo asked.

"It's not important." Sasporilla smiled. "What floor?"

"Zac Curtiss is here on the first floor, being held in the stubborn curses wing." Dwindlley smiled. "Follow the red line to the jagged blue line, then follow the blue line until it becomes the jagged blue line. Hold your left foot up in front of you and hop three times until it turns into a green circle. Then turn around and follow the yellow line past the gift shop..."

Angelo was desperately trying to follow and remember the complex instructions until Sasporilla couldn't hold in her laughter anymore and started to chuckle. "Oh Dwindlley you're terrible."

"Oh you've spoiled it!" Dwindlley laughed. "I wanted to see if he'd hop?"

"Oh I see," Angelo smiled, "Very funny. Make fun of the non-elf."

"Oh sweet-heart no." Sasporilla said. "Honestly she was just having fun with you." Sassy smiled, "don't be mad."

"Gottcha." Angelo smiled.

"Oh!" Dwindlley spun her chair around laughing. "He has a sense of humour! Dwindlley highly approves! Miss Daisy, Dwindlley's first cousin would have been most impressed!!! You may go in!"

As they walked away from the desk Angelo asked again, "Ummm What exactly is an Illyarnveru?"

"The Husband to a an Elf Prinncess or Queen." Sassy Laughed taking his hand. "Like I said silly, It's not important!"

Sasporilla and Angelo went through the side doors into the emergency ward. Headmistress McGonagall stood with Madame Pomfrey, a short fat doctor in white robes and Auror Nick Owlmore.

"Hello everyone." Sasporilla smiled walking up.

"Well it's about bloody time you showed up!" Nick said holding up his badge walking over to Angelo. "Detective inspector Nick Owlmore sunshine, and you're under arrest for assault with a muggle weapon."

Nick forced the compliant young mans arms behind his back as the auror drew his wand and cast "CAPISTRO!" forming magical bonds on Angelo's wrists.

"Uncle Nick stop this!" Sasporilla insisted.

"I don't see why you have to be so rough with the boy Nicholas." Minerva McGonagall pursed her lips judgmentally.

"You don't have to impress your god daughter like you did her father all those years ago. Always seeking his approval!"

"You just keep gettin' up my nose old woman!" Nick Owlmore said pointing his wand Angrily.

"PETRIFICUS COETUS!" Sasporilla cast, petrifying everyone in the waiting room.

"It's the Horcrux." Sasporilla cried. "None of you are thinking straight. Salazar Slytherin is attacking your thoughts through the curse of the Horcrux. Making you fight each other. I won't let you hurt one another."

"Neither will I!" I young tall handsome red haired man said bursting through the emergency room door. "DESISTAO MALADICTUM!"

A purple glow enveloped the room and released everyone from the bonds of both the petrification spell and the effects of curse. With a flourish of his wand he returned it to his long green and gold Egyptian robes.

"Looks like I made it just in time!" The red haired man smiled.

"Who are you?" Sasporilla asked.

"Weasley," the man said pulling off his sunglasses, "Bill Weasley. Curse breaker."

All witches and wizards couldn't help but shake out the cob webs from their foggy heads. Nick Owlmore rubbed his eyes as Minerva McGonagall teetered on unstable feet. Bill Weasley steadied the old witch with his trade mark rock star smile. The werewolf scar on his face only added to his particular magical machismo.

"Easy there Headmistress." Bill Weasley smiled. "Looks like I got here just in time. Where's the afflicted young man and the cursed artifact?"

Sasporilla walked over to Nick Owlmore and placed her hand on his shoulder gently.

"Are you ok Uncle Nick?" Sassy asked.

"Ya." Nick smiled. "It's good to see you kid."

"Good." Sassy smiled giving the grumpy old Auror a hug. "Now would you mind taking the bloody binding spell off my boyfriend?"

"Sorry my sweet girl," Nick apologized, "but until this is all cleared up he's being held officially."

"You're getting a bloody lump of coal in your stocking Uncle Nick." Sasporilla said turning in a huff.

"Just one?" Nick shouted after her, "I get three free months rent from the amount of coal I give the super to stoke the boiler with!"

Angelo had to laugh, despite the fact that he was in hand cuff's he had to admit he kind of liked Nick Owlmore?

"What are you smiling at my lad?" Nick asked. "I still have some questions for you."

"Ask me anything." Angelo said. "Sasporilla told me how to get in the back door, where the muggle garden shears were and that a sharp muggle device might be the only way to get the ring off."

"Interesting." D.I.Owlmore said stroking his thick dark beard. "Let's discuss your relationship with my angelic innocent little God daughter."

"Oh boy." Angelo gulped.

Everyone was taken into the curse containment isolation area where Zac was being held. The young wizard lay on a very uncomfortable looking stone table shivering, surrounded by a bubble of red protective spells.

Karry stood to his side holding her mother's hand. Mr. Curtiss, Karry's father stood further away trying to distract the baby reading a story from a worn out copy of 'Poggie Pompouries Magical Stories.'

Bill Weasley walked inside the bubble and pulled a hand full of sand from a pocket in his robe. He made three small piles on Zac's chest and cast "QUANTEREA" as he dragged his wand through the piles of sand making a circle between them. The circle began to glow with a bright pulsing red light.

Reaching inside his robe, Bill Weasley pulled out a crystal Pyramid and placed it point down above the circle, giving it a spin and casting, "ALRAMALNAQUIA TASTAMIDU ALMALEUNATMIN HADALHIW"

The red glow of the circle changed to green as a whisp of green smoke formed inside the crystal spinning and whirling. Bill looked at concerned then picked up Zac's hand.

"Of course." Bill Weasley said. "Some one give me the finger."

Sasporilla and Karry looked at each other biting there lips trying not to laugh having spent far to much time in the company of Lyra Lee-Ashwolf. A Doctor brought the box over which shook even more violently the closer it got to the curse breaker.

"Ah there you are." Bill Weasley said. "Hmmm. Nice work. Who cast this curse bind?"

"I did sir." Sasporilla said holding up her hand like a scolded schoolgirl.

"Very advanced!" Bill said admiringly. "I'm going to hold it down by the hand and get you to cast the unbind for it please. If my guess is correct, the finger will fly out and reattach itself!"

"Isn't that Dangerous?" Professor McGonagall asked?

"Don worry Minerva," Bill gave his ex professor a cheeky wink, "Defense against the dark arts was my best subject... remember? Now!"

"CONTRAPISTRO" Sasporilla cast pulling the bindings from the little box and forcing the lid open. The finger leapt from the box and flew to the hand, wiggling its way into place where in a flash of green magical energy it healed itself onto the hand.

Zac's eyes flickered opened, glowing with a malevolent green energy, but the smug triumphant grin that appeared on his face was quickly replaced with one of fear and confusion. The green energy dimmed in Zac's eyes as the smoke in the Crystal pyramid took the form of Salazar Slytherin.

"Well Salazar, you have been naughty old sod haven't you?" Bill smirked pulling the crystal up to hold it up in front of his face. The little figure of the angry old wizard cast spell after spell, which crashed ineffective, against the crystal prison he was trapped in. "Now, now. Show some decorum old boy! It looks like as long as Ms. Bucket is around Salazar, your just not going to get away with these little shenanigans of yours."

"I didn't do much?" Sasporilla said.

"No?" Bill asked. "You stopped him in the dark city ya? Now you took it upon yourself, to ask someone to cut off a finger, of a person during a Horcrux transference, seconds before completion, which saved your friend and stopped Salazar Slytherin again! So yes... you're right you did nothing! but um detective inspector I think your prisoner is less a SUSPECT and more a HERO in this story? Just my opinion by the way."

With that Bill Weasley pulled a box from his robe in which he placed the pyramid. And with a bow he bid his adieu and disapperated with a wink.

Karry kissed Zac, who though very weak, felt like his old self. Sasporilla took Angelo into her arms as Uncle Nick released him from magical binding. Offical introductions were in order and with everybody present, even though the setting was a bit awkward, there was no better time than the Present.

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Dwindlley smiled at the elf who delivered the single bundle of the Daily Prophet to St. Mungo's every evening.

"Evening Edition on time Dwindlley." The elf smiled holding up a clip board for her to sign. "They finally done it you know? It's started! Is she here?"

"Shhhhhhh!" Dwindlley shushed the elf signing the receipt for the bundle delivery. "I swear Grimblley you and yours! Yes the princess is here! They've done what?"

Grimblley plonked a fresh copy of the Daily Prophets Evening edition up on the counter.

## Chapter 16

The sound of the Daily Prophet thumping against the front door broke the morning silence in the quiet predawn house. Sasporilla Bucket's eyes fluttered open. It was early Christmas morning. Sassy lay warm and snug in Karry's over stuffed guest bed. Feeling safe in the strong loving arms of her true love Angelo Lazarus.

Sassy ran her hand down Angelo's thin muscular forearm and placed her hand in his. She felt him gently squeeze her fingers.

"Happy Christmas Ms.Bucket." Angelo said kissing the pink haired witch on the back of the neck.

"Happy Christmas Mr.Lazarus." Sasporilla stretched and rolled over to face the ceiling. "Still a bit early, but I wanted to get an early start on the day."

"Just a big kid at heart?" Angelo laughed. "Want to rip off the shiny wrappings and get at your presents?"

"Well, yes." Sasporilla laughed. "But I want to go visit some old friends down at the lake in the forest. You up for the hike?"

"Just try and stop me!" Angelo smiled. "Where you go, I go!"

"I'm going to have a shower." Sassy smiled playfully.

"Oh ok," Angelo yawned and stretched as Sassy walked into the guest bathroom. Suddenly Angelo had a realization. "Oh!!!!"

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Once showered and dressed Sasporilla and Angelo descended the stairs. Some how without Karry, Zac and little Kam around, Karry's house seemed empty and lifeless despite the magic of her Christmas decor. The sparkle of the faerie lights, the over sized tree that had far to many decorations on it and the garland that simply swaged everywhere.

"Excuse me young miss." Angelo tapped Sassy on the shoulder. "But it seems you're standing under the mistletoe."

"Why young sir! Really?" Sasporilla giggled kissing Angelo warmly. "I thought you'd have had just about enough of me by now?"

"I don't think that day will ever come Sasporilla." Angelo said looking deep into her eyes.

Sasporilla felt things get very serious just then. She smiled but felt nervous. Why? Was it all to soon?

"Shall we open our presents?" Sassy smiled.

"Great idea!" Angelo said leading her over to the tree. "I really hope you like what I got you!!!!"

Angelo handed Sasporilla a rather small box, about the size of a shoe box, wrapped in shiny paper that sparkled with multi-coloured snow flakes. Sasporilla Pulled her wand and levitated the gift for Angelo out from under the tree. It was a similarly smallish box, but wrapped with much less flashy muggle paper.

"You open yours first." Sasporilla said to Angelo.

"No!" Angelo insisted. "You open yours first!"

Sassy knew they would sit here all day stubbornly insisting the other go first, so she smiled politely and pulled open the ribbon on her present. As the bow fell away the package began to play "We wish you a Merry Christmas!"

Sasporilla reached deep inside the box and felt something furry. She pulled out a full-length red fur coat trimmed with white fur. There was a matching White fur hat and white muff fir her hands.

"I got it at Madam Malkin's for you!" Angelo smiled. "It's made from Alaskan Horned Anaconda fur."

"Oh!" Sassy smiled. "So it's shed fur, rather than killed for its fur!"

"Exactly!" Angelo said. "I knew you wouldn't approve otherwise. Do you like it? You can change the colour to suit you."

Sassy levitated the coat into the air and cast "EXPERIATUR". The coat, hat and formed themselves onto her from head to toe as she spun around to model them for Angelo. A small tag hanging from the cuff had some instructions from Madam Malkin for changing the colour to suit ones tastes. A very simple spell.

"FARBE PINK!" Sasporilla said as the main colour of the coat changed from red to pink.

"That's more like it!" Angelo said. "A little less Mrs.Clause a little more Sasporilla Bucket!"

"Madam Malkin insisted I get you something classical as 'the Bucket women aren't fashion plates! They are sensible, and make do with what they have for many, many years.' But I wanted something very good Quality as well."

Thank you Angelo I do love it so!" Sasporilla insisted. "Ok now you!"

Angelo pulled off the paper and opened the box. Inside was a simple white box, but Angelo knew what it was immediately.

"No!" The young wizard said getting very excited, as he pulled out the white box and opened it to reveal the slim black glass and metal gift inside.

"They're all the rage amongst the technomancy and engineering students." Sasporilla smiled. "They're muggle devices called SMART PHONES."

"Yes I know but how did you know I wanted one?" Angelo asked.

"Kathleen suggested it to me!" Sasporilla smiled at his obvious delight. "She hooked me up with a spell that put you on a multi world network. Apparently there are something called WAPP's for wizards and witches to use for Technomancy, magical engineering, potions making, etc."

"I will definitely be downloading some of those!!!" Angelo smiled.

"I'm just happy you like it." Sasporilla beamed. "You play with it, maybe call your dad and wish him a Happy Christmas and I'll fix us a quick breakfast. Then we'll be off."

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Arm in arm Angelo and Sasporilla strolled down the quiet snowy early morning main street of Hogsmeade and headed out towards the forbidden forest. Sassy looked stunning in her new coat and hat. Angelo slipped his hand into her fur muff to hold hands with her as they walked.

"I always loved walking between Hogsmeade and Hogwarts." Sasporilla smiled. "Especially this time of year. It was almost always so very peaceful."

"In many ways I wish I'd been sent to Hogwarts now." Angelo sighed. "Imagine if we'd met here?"

"Yes." Sasporilla hung her head sadly trying not to think of the original Melvin, the decisions and choices she was forced to make. Choosing to follow her heart and believe that she made the right one. "Just imagine."

Passing by the castle Angelo took in every aspect of its architecture and design. It was truly a marvel of ancient times. A huge sprawling castle and institute of learning built upon a complex series of tunnels and vaults, with many magical secret places.

"A brilliant feat of magical engineering." Angelo Lazarus applauded in admiration.

"I'm sure the founders are taking bows on the other side." Sasporilla smiled.

"Well all but Salazar." Angelo said.

"He ca hardly flip you off with missing digits now can he?" Sassy laughed.

The young couple laughed all the way to the edge of the Black lake.

"Cover your ears." Sasporilla warned as she pointed her wand to her throat.

Angelo stuck his fingers deep in his ears as Sasporilla opened her mouth. Sounds that came out were horrid growls and roars that split the Christmas morning air and made large ripples on the Black Lake. Within seconds the great lake churned and with and with a vast splashing the Giant squid broke the chilly surface.

"Hello old friend." Francis, the giant squid said. A tentacle slithering ashore to embrace his pink haired witch friend.

"Happy Christmas Francis." Sasporilla said. "It's wonderful to see you."

"Is it Christmas?" The squid asked. "Such Time passes without meaning in the lake. One day passing into the next passing into infinity. Of course by that I mean, Happy Christmas Sasporilla Bucket. Who is the young man who looks at us in questionable terror?"

Sasporilla turned to see Angelo standing with his wand drawn, a look of concern and confusion on his face.

"Oh my Angelo I am sorry!" Sasporilla apologized. "Please put your wand away, Francis is no danger to me. He's a dear friend. Francis, lord of the Black Lake may present to you my boyfriend Angelo Lazarus."

"Boy friend?" The squid roared with delight. "Well I must say it's about time! I know Grindybows that have bred three generations since you started first year at Hogwarts! How soon until we see little Buckets?"

"Oh umm.." Angelo stammered wide-eyed.

"Francis!!" Sasporilla laughed. "Really?"

"I'm sorry." Francis sighed. "I forget the subtleties. The differences between the ways we live."

"That's ok." Sasporilla said. "It's been a long time since you walked in the wizarding world Francis. We're going into the forbidden forest, but I couldn't go without stopping by and saying hello to you."

"I'm happy you did." Francis said. "I think of you often. Especially when I catch a pink capped jellyfish to eat. They're very sweet, in a tasty sort of way."

Sasporilla laughed as Francis waved a giant tentacle goodbye and slipped off below the surface of Black Lake.

"That was very," Angelo stammered, "interesting?"

"Francis is very sweet." Sasporilla said. "He's also a very powerful friend to have and not one anyone would want as an enemy!"

"So I'd best watch my P's and Q's with you then young miss." Angelo smiled.

"Well," Sassy bit her lower lip smiling coyly, "perhaps just your Q's?"

Laughing they walked off into the forbidden forest. It was no real surprise the forest was dark, even in mid day. Little snow had made it's way down to the forest floor. The forest smelled dank of leaf rot and the worst bits of natural waste.

The eyes of all life within the forbidden forest were upon them. Sasporilla could feel them, but didn't fear them as she once had. She reached out with her feelings enjoying her time with Angelo but becoming the forest around them too. Those creatures with less than good intent were held at bay or frightened off by mysterious actions of a forest come suddenly alive.

They walked for hours, hand in hand, heart in heart. Sasporilla Bucket and Angelo Lazarus enjoyed each others company as they walked the quiet dark paths of the dark forest. To Angelo's ears Sasporilla began speaking gibberish. "The heavens open as Mercury rises in the east and mars crosses the path of the noon day sun."

The path gave way to a large clearing with huts sewn amongst the trees. Centaurs peeked out from door ways. A single adolescent galloped up excitedly and hugged the pink haired witch.

"In the great retrograde of Jupiter we rejoice!" Sasporilla laughed.

"By the tides of Luna I have looked to the stars for signs." Gintani smiled.

Sasporilla turned and touched her wand to Angelo's Ear and cast "TRANSFERENDUM!"

"There." Sassy smiled. "Now you can understand everything being said. Gintani this is my man Angelo. Angelo this is Gintani foal of Ferenz."

"It is an honor to meet the man of the war chief." Gintani said.

"I am still war chief?" Sassy said surprised. "I would have thought you'd have replaced me by now?"

"There has been no need." Gintani smiled. "Since you lead our people against the wizards we have been at peace."

"You what?" Angelo gasped.

"It's a long story." Sassy smiled.

"She was brilliant!!!" Gintani laughed. "Though Magnus still pushes that HE should be war chief."

"As far as I'm concerned he can have the job." Sasporilla said. "It's not fair I be war chief and not be here to defend the people."

"He would not Defend the people Sasporilla Bucket." Gintani sighed. "He would lead us in many unnecessary wars for greed in which many of us would die."

"Speaking of which where is everyone?" Sasporilla asked.

"Magnus lead a raiding party against the old elf's cabin earlier." The adolescent centaur said. "Father took another group to stop them."

"Weerlo?" Sasporilla gasped. "What could he have done to upset the centaurs? He lives in peace an harmony with the forest."

"Magnus sees him as an intruder on our territory. Though that land is not ours. He would see him and all like them killed." Gintani frowned sadly.

"Right!" Sasporilla said reaching into her bag and pulling out her broom. "I've bloody heard enough. I remember why Magnus used to get my back up!"

"What are you going to do?" Angelo asked.

"I'm going to do my job as war chief." Sasporilla said to Angelo mounting her Triumphant 1200x. "Hop on, and hold on bloody tight."



Sasporilla shot off through into the sky, the trees opening the heavy canopy of leafless branches before her. The sun hung high in the noon time sky as Sassy and Angelo zoomed across the tree tops towards the middle of the forbidden forest. The Triumphant 1200x, not normally a fast broom, was being pushed to its limits this day. Two riders at a high speed, faster than it was intended to go, was straining its very core. A distance that would take hours to walk was traveled in minutes.

Through the trees Sasporilla saw Ferenz and the centaurs charging forth down the forest path. Sasporilla opened the treetops and swooped in beside him.

"War chief Sasporilla." Ferenz smiled. "You have picked an opportune time to rejoin the tribe. "I came to wish you all a Happy Christmas, I take no joy in having to swat down some of our own."

"As wise as ever." Ferenz said. "Lead us to battle."

The centaurs lead by Magnus, dragged Weerlo from his small hut and through him to the leafy forest floor. The old house elf spit with disdain.

"Hope you what to accomplish?" Weerlo spat. "No match for me, all of you are not? Your entire tribe is not! And you are not the voice of your tribe Magnus Redhoof!"

"We will finally rid this forest, our home, of the intruders who try to make it their own." Magnus said proudly gathering cheers from his armed centaur warriors. "You are just another intruder in long line of unwanted vermin this forest needs purging."

"And one to do it is you?" Weerlo sneered.

"Who better?" Magnus chuckled. "No other centaur dares organize or lead our army as would I! Like a true leader!"

The sound of charging hooves and breaking branches filled the air bringing a smile to the old elf's face. "Oh my. You are in trouble now."

The centaurs lead by Sasporilla Bucket and Ferenz burst into the clearing.

"I think you'll find Magnus that History has made more leaders, than leaders have made history." Sasporilla Bucket said hopping off her broom. "Harry Belafonte said that. Very wise muggle, and talented and I'm not going to let you do the same sort of thing to beings of this forest that the wizards of the ministry tried to do to you!"

"But this was not their home!" Magnus growled. "This is ours! Our forest! Our land! Our territory!"

"To share with the native creatures and those who belong." Sasporilla said. "You've lived in peace with them for centuries, why...:"

"Enough!" Magnus yelled. "We do not follow you. I am War chief now!"

"What right do you have to call yourself war chief Magnus Redhoof?" Ferenz demanded charging forward meeting raised bows.

"In the absence of a war chief our warriors chose a new one." Magnus sneered.

"Very wise." Sasporilla said agreed. "I would have suggested that very thing, but you are obviously the wrong choice for war chief Magnus."

"And just why is that?" Magnus laughed.

"Because WAR is what you want." Sasporilla sighed. "What a war chief should want is PEACE! What they should be good at is war, with as few casualties as possible!"

"You are draining." Magnus said. "But like it or not I am their WAR CHIEF."

"Sasporilla Bucket is our War Chief Magnus Redhoof!" Ferenz insisted. "You have made no challenge!"

"Challenge?" Angelo asked.

"Any centaur may challenge the current war chief for the honor." Sassy smiled confidently. "Only one Worthy of War chief will win the competition. Do you challenge me Magnus, even though I find you unworthy?"

"You are a witch!" Magnus insisted. "What chance does a lowly centaur such as I have against you as long as you carry a wand?"

Sasporilla took off her new coat and hat. She handed them and her wand to Angelo and kissed him.

"Sasporilla what are you doing?" Angelo pleaded.

"Saving lives." Sassy smiled. "Don't worry. I Have a plan."

Sasporilla turned, becoming a bit cold in the chilled winter air, and glared at Magnus and his men. "Well I'm unarmed are you challenging me Magnus the unworthy, or do concede and stand down?"

"Now that you're without a wand," Magnus snarled, "I'll gladly challenge you to a fight to the death."

"I do not wish to kill you," Sasporilla insisted or any of our tribe. "Fine, then a fight until the other yields."

"Agreed." Sasporilla said.

Magnus drew a large knife from a sheath on his side and held it out in front of him. The Centaur waved it playful as he approached Sasporilla who stood firm. With a quick slash Sassy jumped back.

Angelo gasped and stepped forward drawing his wand but Weerlo grabbed his hand. "Interfere you mustn't boy." "I can't let that beast hurt my Sasporilla." Angelo said.

"Worry not." Weerlo smiled. "More than a match for him she is."

"Do you fear a bit of sharpened steel girl?" Magnus laughed.

"No more than you fear a wand." Sasporilla said circling. "Of course both are just tools, one no more dangerous than the other in the hands of a person not trained to use it properly."

"Take them!" Magnus called.

Two centaurs grabbed Weerlo and Angelo from behind. They fought to break free but the centaur's powerful grips were far too strong. The centaurs drew knives and held them to the necks of the old elf and the love of Sasporilla's life.

"Let them go." Sasporilla insisted. "The fight is between you and I Magnus. "Don't involve them."

"They are just another tool in my bag of tricks to force you to yield." Magnus laughed. "If you don't they suffer. Suffer and die, unless... you.... yield."

"Then you leave me little choice." Sasporilla said hanging her head. With a smile she looked up and winked at Weerlo and snapped her fingers. Angelo and Weerlo vanished from the centaur's grasp.

"What is this!" Magnus protested. "I said no magic!!!"

"No you said no wands!" Sasporilla sneered. "You forgot I'm an elf blood of natural origin."

Sasporilla through up her hands, fingers spread wide, taking full command of the forest. The limbs and vines shot forward entangling Magnus' warriors. Vines encircled their throats and crushed against their rib cages making them gasp for air and whinny.

"Yield Magnus or would you have me kill you army?" Sasporilla asked.

"War chief no!" Ferez pleaded.

Sasporilla held up a hand to silence him.

"I don't care." Magnus laughed. "Kill one. Kill two. Kill them all. Prove yourself a murderer of our people."

"I don't need too." Sasporilla said releasing the Centaurs from their bonds. "You've just proven to them that you are exactly that. Uncaring of your people. One, or two or all."

The centaurs, once again one tribe, surrounded Magnus bows drawn back.

"Magnus Redhoof." Ferez said. "By rules of the challenge for War chief I will let Sasporilla Bucket decide your fate. Know that if it were I who decided, you would be best used to feed the elder gardens."

Sasporilla stepped before her opponent and looked at him with disdain tempered with compassion.

"Magnus Redhoof," Sasporilla Bucket said snapping her finger and taking his knife from him. "With heaviest of hearts I sentence you to a fate worse than death."

Sassy bent down, placed the blade under her boot and pulled up. With a snap of her finger she snapped the blade magically and handed the hilt back to the angered centaur. "You are outcast from the heard, banished from the tribe. You are without family, without honor and will wander other lands until the day of your death. May you live a long healthy life."

With a snap of her fingers Magnus vanished in a flash of shimmering light.

The centaurs raised their arms and crossed them over their chests too honor their war chief.

"We apologize." The senior warrior said. "We followed as we must."

"Yes." Sasporilla gritted her teeth. "Just following orders. Many an army, many a warrior, many a coward has used that excuse. Ferez I leave you to choose their punishment."

"That is a matter of the War Chief." Ferez said.

"Yes it is." Sasporilla smiled. "And I choose you to be my successor as war chief of the tribe."

"Why would you choose me?" Ferez asked.

"You want peace." Sasporilla smiled. "and I know you don't really want the job, so you will wisely choose the next war chief."

"A wise decision then Sasporilla Bucket." Ferez said. "We must return with the news to the village. Where have you sent Magnus?"

"A world away." Sasporilla said. "Someplace he will be no more of a threat to here. The Wilds of Avalon."

"Happy Christmas Sasporilla Bucket." The centaur smiled as the herd reared up and galloped off into the forest.

"Also to wish me a Happy Christmas you came to Wish?" Weerlo said coming out of his small hut followed by Angelo who crawled after him carrying their wands in his teeth.

Angelo stood up and ran to Sasporilla grabbed her up and spun her around. "Oh my god, you are the most amazing witch I have ever seen!"

"All of this was, in some ways my fault, for not coming to visit sooner." Sasporilla frowned.

"You can't blame yourself." Angelo said.

"I was in charge." Sasporilla said. "They are my tribe. I was their War Chief. The buck stops with me. Had I been here or at least paid more attention to the tribes needs I would have known this was happening and would have been able to stop Magnus without destroying his honor."

"You spared his life." Angelo said.

"Yes." Sassy sighed taking back her coat and putting it on. "Right about now, he's wishing I'd rather not done so."

"Like a true leader, Spoken!" Weerlo said.

"Agreed!" Drooble Hogwarts head house elf smiled stepping out of the hut followed by Dwindlley the receptionist elf of St.Mungo's.

"It's so nice to see you all!" Sasporilla smiled "Happy Christmas!"

"Happy Christmas Sasporilla Bucket." The elves smiled. "and Happy Christmas Angelo Lazarus."

"Happy Christmas." Angelo smiled. "You all know my name?"

"Of course they do." A taller than average house elf said, dressed in long white gossamer robes said walking out of the shadows of the forest. "You are the consort of Sasporilla Bucket. Next in line for the Elven throne."

"Who are you?" Sasporilla asked.

"I am the Coriniel." the elf said. "She who carries the burden and the honor to find the next Queen or King Lead the worker elves."

"I'm only half elf." Sasporilla said. "Hardly worthy of the throne."

"From what saw we," Weerlo said, "more deserving are you than any who've come before you for many years."

"Agreed." Dwindlley smiled. "You will make a fine Worker Elf Queen."

"But I wish other things of my life." Sasporilla said. "To be a wand maker. To be married... some day. Have a family."

"And if we as your people were to fall to the nefarious forces that seek to harm us while you chose this path?" The taller elf asked.

"I would never forgive myself." Sasporilla said.

"You can be the Worker Elf Queen and STILL attend your University." The elves insisted. "We have no castle for you, nor great lands to speak of. You would be a queen of Slaves. We meet where you choose and when. You make the decisions that govern us. Our futures. Your uncle was going to sell our people into permanent slavery to the wizards for gold."

"Then I assume that is why he was.." Sasporilla began but was interrupted.

"Assassinated." The elf frowned. "It was not by the hand of a worker elf that he died."

Sasporilla walked into the center of the clearing and looked up into the forest canopy above. It seemed that no matter how hard she tried, leadership followed her in life and was forced upon her. She could ignore this but would it go as bad as the centaurs? Would another Elf Queen or King do something horrid to her people. She imagined her Mom and Miss Daisy standing there on either side of her. They smiled at her. Mom with her red wispy hair and thick bottle glasses and Miss Daisy looking up at her from under her big floppy yellow hat. Their smiles were loving and reassuring. They instilled her with confidence. As they faded she saw Angelo staring at her with the same reassuring smile of confidence. The smile that reminded her that she could do anything she put her mind too.

"I accept the responsibility." Sasporilla said humbly.

"Where would you do your coronation my Queen?" The Coriniel asked.

"Here is fine." Sasporilla said. "No need for great deals of fuss, pomp or pageantry. We are simple people. Humble people."

Dark patches of the forest started to sparkle with flashes of fire fly lights and the glow of faeries that had come to pay homage. Frogs and toads croaked an ancient tune in time with natural beats of the forest. The house elves waded forward from between the trees encircling the area, singing a song of joy, as Sasporilla Bucket took a knee before the Coriniel a thin gold crown appeared in her hands. A simple gold band, with a risen diamond shape in

the front was lowered to down onto Sasporilla Buckets pink hair. She felt it tingle a bit as the air about her glowed with radiant light. The elves gasped with joy as the elder crown accepted their new Queen and formed to her head comfortably.

"Arise Queen Sasporilla of the Worker Elves." The Coriniel said. "All bow to our new Queen!"

"No!" Sasporilla commanded as she stood and then bowed to all of them. "I bow humbly to all my people and pledge my life, my love and my allegiance. I will do all I can to serve you faithfully. To never see you harmed. To bring justice to those who would harm one or all. My greatest dream is to one day see the contract of bondage between us and the Magi be ended. My family got you into this, perhaps I can lead you out! But not without a plan! Not into purposeless lives!!! I promise you!!! Most of all I will never be a Queen who demands you bow before me! I am your equal! No better, no worse than any of you! We are all one from now on!"

Quite shock and admiration erupted into a fervor of excited cheers as Sasporilla stood and took the hand of Angelo who kissed her passionately.

"God save QUEEN SASPORILLA BUCKET!" the Coriniel lead the cheer echoed by the worker elves. "And long life to ANGELO LAZARUS, the Queens Illyarnveru!"

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Snow wafted down through the rafters of the great hall disappearing above the tables decorated for the Christmas feast. Bells jingled amongst the trees trimmed in festive glass balls and lights as Professor Flitwick conducted a makeshift group of carolers who filled the great hall with song. Students and professors alike, who could not go home for Christmas, for whatever reason, shuffled in and sat at tables amongst guests invited from near and far. Sasporilla and Angelo strolled in moments before dinner was to begin and were greeted by Hagrid and Headmistresses McGonagall.

"Happy Christmas Everyone!" Sassy and Angelo waved as they entered the front hall. "Happee Chris'mas ta you two... too!" Hagrid stumbled and laughed a bit embarrassed.

"Well Ms.Bucket!" The Headmistress smiled. "I'm glad to see you accepted my invitation."

"I wouldn't miss one of Droobles Turkey dinners for the world professor." Sassy smiled.

"That's fer sher!" Hagrid smiled patting his tummy, "Him an' his elves put out a delicious spread!"

"And they appreciate that you appreciate them for it Hagrid!" Sassy smiled taking off her coat.

"That's an interesting head piece you have miss Bucket?" Headmistress McGonagall noticed.

"That would be a gift bestowed upon me by the house elves." Sassy smiled. "I'll talk to you all about it after dinner. It has been a very big Christmas day and frankly I'm famished."



## Chapter 17

From the day Sasporilla and Angelo returned to Avalon there was hardly a moment she could lift a bag or get a book from the library without a loyal house elf lending an insistent hand. Sassy was always polite though embarrassed and insistent they didn't need to assist her.

The new semester held new classes and new challenges for Sasporilla Bucket. Arithmancy and biorhythmics, were old favorites. Astrology was something new that she was interested to see about. Her most exclusive courses was wand engineering 101 with Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle. This was the maths and science half the wands program. The mirror opposite of Professor Splatterpalette's wand design class.

The Wand engineering room was very stark with a lot of black board space, and cross reference charts tacked up on walls. Each desk had a comfortable padded chair, a work station for books and writing as well as a Ponyo 3400 Abbicum. Sasporilla wasn't the only arts and design student in the class. Like most from the arts, they stood out colourfully amongst the buttoned down maths and science crowd, even amongst wizarding folk. As opposite as everything the class seemed to be, between the engineering side of Wands from the Arts and design side of wands, the Professors were what was the farthest thing apart.

Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle was an old man in tightly buttoned up robes with a bow tie. His closely clipped white hair and clean-shaven face were devoid of emotion. His presentation was informative but he droned on so, hour after hour, enough to put even the most enthusiastic pupil to sleep.

"The most common and accepted relative engineering equation for wand making," professor Pennywhistle droned as the self writing chalk followed along with him on the black board, "is Wand wood type over wand wood length plus core type over tuning is equal to the harmonic with the witch or wizard."

Sasporilla raised her hand. Professor Pennywhistle pointed to her, "Yes? You have a question?"

"Yes professor." Sasporilla asked. "This seems at best... impractical? A wand maker would have to make thousands of wands on the off chance of finding a witch or wizard to harmonically attune with?"

"Yes." Professor Pennywhistle nodded. "That is the way wands have been made for a thousand years. Since the time of Merlin. It works for all wand makers. Shipp, Cleveland, Buckleberry, Olivander, to name a few. Why change now?"

"Then may I ask a related Question sir?" Sasporilla asked.

"Of you feel you must." Professor Pennywhistle sighed.

"What is it about the witch or wizard that harmonizes with the wand?" Sasporilla asked.

"That is an excellent question." Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle came very close to smiling. "We have no idea. There are many theories. Perhaps it's the aura, the life energy of the caster. Perhaps the casters biorhythmic cycle. Another theory says it could have to do with astrology and the placement of planets on the day you were born. If you'd like to hear my own theory..."

The bell rang and class was over. Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle packed up his attaché case and strolled off as if he'd not been in the middle of an explanation, or had a care in the world.

Sasporilla sat there her mouth hanging open and started to laugh. Her professors were on completely different ends of the spectrum but one thing was for sure... neither was from this world!

Sassy stood up and started to collect her things when a voice called to her from the back of the room. "Excuse me Ms.Bucket?";

Sassy looked around to see Professor Pennywhistles TA approaching her. He was a cute boy she guessed, for an engineering student and a nerd. "May I have a moment of your time."

"Mr.Lazarus you can have two." Sassy smiled kissing her boy friend.

"I just wanted to let you know that I've networked your Abbicum in here to the one in the arts class. That way, when you have moments to work on your wand project in either class you can find on there."

"Thank you Angelo." Sasporilla smiled. "That was very sweet of you. What's your next class?"

"I'm TA'ing all morning then I have Technomancy this after lunch. Want to have lunch before class?"

"Can't." Sassy grimaced. "Late lunch. I have a noon class. Political history of the Magi world."

"Sounds like loads of fun." Angelo smirked. "With who?"

" Professor Phenix." Sasporilla smiled.

"She's a friend." Angelo whispered in Sassy's ear. "Josie can be a source of great deals of valuable information." The political history room was a circular amphitheater with a single stage in the center. Professor Phenix needed no walls, no chalkboards to write upon. Only the stories of old to recount. The facts told in tales that held her student's enthralled for a few hours every day.

Professor Phenix was a tall thin woman with long dark hair. She spoke with an Australian accent and always had a smile for those who wanted to learn. She took center stage with her usual quiet deliberate grace.

"Good afternoon class." Professor Phoenix said drawing her wand from her long red flamed robes. "OSTENTO" the professor cast.

A globe of the world of Avalon formed above her.

"Our world, whole, natural. Unpolluted by border or political influence." Professor Phenix sighed as the globe stretched out to form a flat world map. "When the Magi first came to Avalon there was not a great love between all magical beings here. Magi, Elf folk, Fae and the wild all struggled against each other for dominance. Battle after battle, war after war. For no good reason. Petty victories, for little Kings, of tiny hills. Then came Calsepherus, the Magi who brought peace and order between the warring factions and negotiated these borders, proportioning the world into generous pieces for the Elves, Fae Folk and the wild beasts of Avalon while taking only this very tiny section here for the Magi and Avalon City."

There was great applause from the students at the proud history of their proud history.

"Yes it is a delightful faery story to tell your children around the fire on a cold stormy night." Professor Phenix smiled like she had a devilish little secret. "And it's all HOGWASH!"

The class gasped as the professor erased the bordered of Avalon city bringing the other three areas together.

"When we arrived, as Magi in Avalon," Professor Phenix smiled. "These were the borders that had existed for millennia before. Calsepherus was not the great peacemaker we are lead to believe. He was a racist who hated non-magical humans, or any one and any thing that stood against him for that matter, and would let nothing interfere with his plans to conquer a world of his own. He devised a spell to find a world high in magic and bridge the gap to it! It lead him here! Of course once he got here with his followers, this world was already inhabited."

"Yes!" One of the students shouted outraged. "And he negotiated! It's in all the books!!!"

"So it must be absolutely true!" Professor Phenix yelled back. "But is it in the text book you have been assigned to read? HMMMM? NOOOO???" May I continue? Calsepherus was NOT a man of peace. He was not an explorer. He was not a great negotiator! He was a CONQUEROR, A DESTROYER and a MURDERER. He took the land this city and this university is on by force, by war. There was so much blood shed in a single day that other races retreated allowing the Wizards to erect walls around what would become their strong hold and eventually our city."

"Lies." An angry student said thumping their books closed, gathering them up and walking out of class.

"Lies are what you have been taught!" Professor Phenix shouted after him. "It's a shame that you believed them then and won't hear the truth now."

Sadly the professor was used to losing one or more students a class to what they considered her seditious teachings. The facts may go against the propaganda but facts were the facts and the University and the dean was on her side.

"Now then, where were we?" Professor Phenix smiled. "Oh yes... the treaty of Avalon...."

Not surprising it was a case of the Wizards took what they wanted through brutality and trickery but agreed to a very small area for themselves. Why? Can anyone tell me why Calsepherus chose this area?"

Sasporilla raised her hand.

"Yes Ms.Bucket is it?" Professor Phenix asked.

"Yes Professor," Sasporilla stood, "It is my understanding that contrary to popular belief, Calsepherus wanted this area because it is the heart of magical power for the world. Though the source has never been found nor that theory never proven."

"Hogwash." A student said.

"Trogswaddle." Another laughed.

"Correct." Professor Phenix smiled. "Obviously someone's done the reading. Now let's get into the treaty and how the Monarchy was formed, the council that advises our King and Queen... oh and just for fun, let's take a look at the other councils of this world and how they compare. Like the High council of Elves and how the worker elves have never held a seat upon it?"

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Jorge soared high above the spires of the monolithic buildings of Avalon city. The warming spring currents wafting up from below made a comfortable cushion to glide upon in the cool early spring air. Jorge shook his tail feathers left and right, to correct his course ever so slightly, in beat to the Latin tunes on his walk-man.

Something appeared against the whispy ahead. With his goggles on Jorge's vision was as sharp as an eagles. An owl flew straight towards him at high speed. Jorge wondered why the owl was flying straight at him and wasn't moving over. There was plenty of sky? Enough for every bird! Jorge swerved at the last second to avoid colliding with large snowy owl in mid air!

"Why don't you look where you're going air hog!" Jorge yelled over his wing at the owl.

"I'm a Royal owl you pink peasant chicken." The owl screeled, "keep out of my way."

Jorge cursed the owl with string very naughty verbal expletives until he flew out of sight.

It was the sound of loud flapping heavy wings that brought the flamingo's attention forward again. Jorge's eyes bulged wide as he flew face first into a flock of Thestral's. Where had they come from? He had passed over the boundaries of Avalon city and was now over the wild lands. They must come from the forest below. Jorge lifted his feet to avoid the head of the lead stallion. The flamingo struggled to get to his feet as flapped his wings, his behind bouncing up and down off the head, down the back and off the rump of the Thestral.

"WOHA WHOA WHOA WHOA WHOA WHOA!" Jorge shouted as he bounced in and through the flock. "Sorry, pardon me, pardon me, excuse me. My fault, excuse me, Sorry!"

Much to Jorge's surprise he made it over, down and through the Thestral flock with nary a scratch. It was too busy higher up, so Jorge dove down closer to skim the tree tops. The first early buds of spring were just bursting through on the highest branches. They always made Jorge smile.

Jorge rolled happily in the midmorning air as an arrow shot past his shoulder.

"What the?" Jorge questioned rolling up right as another shot to close to his tail feathers. "Ok mang, I have had jus' about enough of dis day!"

The Flamingo poured on the speed as swerved above the tree tops avoiding the arrows from the centaur hunting him below.

"Go away pesky centaur!" Jorge yelled lifting his tail feathers and letting loose with a birds greatest and abundant weapon, hitting the centaur right in the face.

It wasn't much farther to the Silver Spruce. A giant tree in the center of the Elven forest entwined with an architecture graceful and ancient. Elthloriel, city of the Elves and the center of Elven government, the High council of Elves.

Jorge landed on a messenger pad and walked in. He dug a wing into his bag and pulled out the envelope Sasporilla had entrusted him with. A small worker elf met the flamingo at the door and held out his hand.

"Your message?" The elf asked.

"I am to deliver it in person to High Chancellor Eldin." Jorge insisted holding the envelope back. "Then I am to wait for a response."

"Sorry." The elf shook his head. "You bring mail. I take mail. I give mail. My job!"

"This letter is from Queen Sasporilla!" Jorge whispered to the worker elf.

"From she who bows before us?" The worker elf's eyes opened wide. "Why did you not say!!! I will lead you in person! Priority messenger!"

The little elf waddled as he toddled his way down the halls, Jorge in tow. The fine elven carvings and inlay in the architecture was very impressive. Even to a flamingo of Jorge's humble origin.

"I can not wait to tell Windy I guided a special messenger for our Queen today!" The elf smiled.

"What is your name?" Jorge asked?

"Me?" The elf asked surprised. "Dimmley sir"

"I'm Jorge." The flamingo smiled. "Queen Sasporilla's personal mail flamingo. I'll tell her how you helped me here today."

"Oh! Thank you sir!" Dimmley bowed. "I'm honored!"

"No Dimmley." Jorge said straightening the elf up and bowing before him. "You are helping me. It is I who owe you my thanks and like our Queen, I am your humble servant."

A tear formed in the corner Dimmley's eye. "You don't know what such words mean to those such as we. Let my Queen know that Dimmley and the whole Gwilley clan are loyal to her."

"You can count on me to deliver your message Dimmley." Jorge smiled.

The pair stopped at the end of a long hallway with a tall set of double doors. With a single knock, Dimmley pushed open the double doors and waddled into the great chamber where a council meeting was in session.

Elves from all the great houses sat in thrones crafted by ancient craftsmen long forgotten. Each one having a tale all it's own but the true tales of their craftsmanship lost to time. Eldin, the High Chancellor of the council of Elves sat in the center in a throne of white. He was a High elf of purest blood. Tall and thin, with piercing blue eyes, long white hair, long pointed ears and long thin features. The others present were Ivash of the Forest elves, Shorlap of the Sea elves, Konnm of the Mountain Elves, Iceen of the Snow elves, Sashha of the Desert elves and Keldar of the Jungle elves.

"Announcing a special messenger for High Chancelor Eldin!" Dimmley announced loudly walking over quite formally and purposefully to the High Chancellor's side, stomping his feet to signify his dutiful arrival. Jorge copied the little elves double stomp catching the Councils attention as he handed over the letter.

The High Chancelor took the letter from the flamingo with curious contempt. He didn't like interruptions especially for something others deemed important, that he rarely deemed anything more than mediocre.

As High Chancelor Eldin read the message his face got twisted into a bizarre combination of out right surprise and mocking sneer.

"The insolence!" High Chancellor Eldin said throwing the message to the floor where Dimmley quickly snatched it up.

"What was it?" Konnm of the Mountain Elves demanded to know.

"The new Worker elf Queen wondered why she was not summoned to this council meeting? Wonders why there is no Seat on the council for a worker elf Representative? And demands this be rectified by next council meeting."

"Or what?" Shorlap of the Sea elves asked.

"She made no threat." The High Chancelor laughed. "Just an empty demand."

"The courier requires a responce High Chancelor." Dimmley asked humbly.

"Is this the bearer of bad news?" The high Chancelor chuckled along with the council. "You go tell the house elf queen to fetch her masters slippers and leave the leading of real elves to the Leaders!"

Dimmley looked as if he were about to explode. His face turned deep red and smoke rose from behind each ear. With a sigh Jorge reached inside his bag and pulled out a pink crystal pad and tossed it in the center of the circle of thrones. The image of Sasporilla Bucket, a rather plain unassuming girl with pink hair, dressed in purple and pink robes with a purple and pink cloak appeared life size before them.

"Hello." The image smiled politely. "It is my honour and privilege to address the Elven council. I wish I could have been there in person but I was not invited and our people have no voice on your council. As your watching this, your High Chancelor has openly mocked my humble request to be included as perhaps have some, most or all of you. I understand that you look down upon the worker elves. After all, what are we in your society? The High elves designed the great elven city of Elthloriel. However it was worker elves who built it. You wear the finest of magical elven robes woven from the fabric of magic itself by weaver elves. Everything you own, sit on, eat from, live in, wear, have been made by worker elves. We build everything, grow everything, craft everything, cook your meals, raise your children, wash your clothes, keep your secrets... you don't want us to have an equal voice in the council? Then you don't need our help at all!!! From this day forward all worker elves, assigned to helping in elf tasks, are asked by me to stop serving the other elven races and come work on a top secret project to better the worker elf people. Until such a time as the elves gain enough respect for us that they apologize and grant us a fair and equal seat on the Council of Elves."

With a while of pink energy the gem went dark. Jorge turned to walk out of the council chamber.

"Stop!" The high Chancelor commanded. "Guards seize this bird!"

Two elven guards grabbed Jorge by the wings roughly as he squawked.

"Cut off his head and send it back to the new house elf Queen as my formal answer." The chancellor snarled.

"Along with the ears of EVERY worker elf who refuses to work!"

The guards drew their swords and swung back to get a good clean slice at the flamingo, but with an unseen snap of Dimmley's fingers the swords smacked sideways into each of their thick helmeted heads, knocking them unconscious.

Jorge took off running as the doors to the chamber locked shut. The flamingo squawked terrified as he ran around the chamber his wings out stretched. Councilors tried grabbing the large pink bird but hr bobbed right and weaved left.

"Float like a butter fly, sting like a bee," Jorge squawked, "I'm a flamingo, jou can't catch me!"

As Jorge headed for an open window two guards stepped in front of it crossing long silver spears. The sudden weight of Dimmley hopping of the Flamingo's back drew his attention momentarily as the grinning worker elf snapped his fingers spinning the guards away. Jorge and Dimmley leapt through the open window to freedom beyond. As they soared away Dimmley pointed down at the throng of worker elves that walked away from Elthloriel, much to the amazement and the chagrin of the other elven races.





## Chapter 18

Designing a wand on an Abbicum felt foreign and unnatural at first to Sasporilla. Up was down and down was side ways. Some days she thought she would never get the hang of the blasted system. More than once someone had to hold her back from casting "BOMBARDA" at the Ponyo 3400.

Angelo was very patient with her, bless him, spending many long hours with Sasporilla going over the basics again and again until one day they just seemed to click! And once the basics sunk in, the rest poured in like a dam had burst! It was a matter of days before Sassy finished the full outer wand design. Of a strange pink flamingo umbrella wand design, the handle of the wand a flamingo's head. Sixteen inches, red oak and water oak with hippogriff feather and crystal core.

"Now all I have to do is provide the materials." Sassy said, "and the Abbicum Lathe will do the rest. How boring. I love that I could design this wand for Hagrid... but I would love to know how the wand chooses its wizard. Make it so we could design wands for a wizards personal style and needs. Like eye glasses."

This was a heavy thought on Sasporilla's mind. The things she wanted to change about wands. How they ripped at the fabric of magic. That would have to stop! She wanted wizards and witches to be able to pick a wand based on their choice of style or needs, within options available to them. No more searching all day for a wand to pick you. Even to have a custom wand designed based on your needs... right off the street first time. Not based off your old wand. There must be some way of figuring out a witch or wizards wand need? Some formula? If not then she would have to figure it out! If she could do it for this project that would be wonderful! Then of course so would world peace. What ate the chances?

Sasporilla woke a bit early for class and got dressed. Flossy lay at the base of her lamp looking dull and a bit limp. Her bright pink fur was duller these days, as was Sasporilla's hair. Something she'd noticed since Christmas. Strands of her hair seemed to be fading from pink to the same dull red as her mom's. Perhaps the last effects of her fathers protection spell were wearing off. Perhaps she no longer needed them or perhaps it was something else?

"What's wrong Flossy?" Sassy asked her listless pillar cat. "Are you not feeling good?"

Flossy crawled slowly onto Sassy's arm and looked at her with a small pout and just blinked. Laying her small head against Sassy's hand.

"Poor thing." Sasporilla said. "We'll stop by professor Hannah's and see if she can fix you up? She always knows what's wrong with every creature. She'll know what to do."

Sassy was worried about Flossy but couldn't help but thinking about her wands as she walked. What made up a wand? The body was wood or metal, or wood and metal. Sometimes bone or crystal or sea shell or.. this is ridiculous!!!! It could be made of blood pizza pockets and cheese strings with a bloody apple sauce core and it would choose some wizard some where!!! Sasporilla was clearly feeling the effects of the frustration of the task she'd placed upon herself.

Perhaps the smallest and simplest of mercies in a day can be a bit of music, played by a musician on a quiet street corner. The music wafted through the early spring morning air and fell upon Sassy's ears with great pleasure. The music was warm and soothing and very welcome indeed. She followed it to the corner where she stopped and listened to it's very talented player until the end of the song. She dropped some coins into his open guitar case with a loud clank and a smile.

"Thank you miss." The old Guitarist smiled. "Every little bit helps. Don't play as much professionally anymore." The old man held up his left hand to show he was missing two fingers.

"Oh dear." Sasporilla gasped. "That's horrible."

"A cursed guitar pick from a rival." The musician sighed. "Lucky I didn't lose the whole hand."

"You still play beautifully." Sasporilla said.

"I use a custom tuning now." The old man said. "Makes it easier to play chords I don't have the fingers for."

"A custom tuning?" Sassy enquired.

"Yes." The man smiled. "There are more than one way to tune a guitar. Didn't you know that?"

"No." Sasporilla said. "I've played for years and never knew that."

"Different musicians may use different tunings to play different songs." The old man said. "Some just play different styled based of different tunings. Why I'd say that a guitar tuning for some musicians is as personal as the prescription in your eye glasses miss!"

"Thank you so much." Sasporilla smiled as she walked away muttering to herself. "How would you personalize and personally tune a core though???"

It was a little past eight when Sasporilla found Professor Hannah in front of the Avalon University Zoo undoing the mischief of last nights pranksters on the sign.

"If I get my wand on the little basta..." Professor Hannah exclaimed as she shuffled lettet's back around properly in "SEE THE ERUMPANT EXHIBIT"

"Professor Hannah?" Sassy interrupted.

"What?" Professor Hannah said dropping the X. "Who? Oh Ms.Bucket! What can I do for you?"

"It's my pillar cat Flossy mam." Sasporilla said worriedly. "I don't think she's well?"

"Oh dear." The professor said walking over to have a look at the little pink creature who seemed to be sleeping feverishly. I haven't seen this I'm afraid my dear. There is a lot we don't about the pillar cat, especially what they go through between this state and there next. Some how I don't think this is good. I wish I could offer you better news but I think your pillar cat is dying dear. A faery may know a cure but there are none in the city. You'd have to go out into the wild and honestly, their are few you can trust."

"I know one!" Sasporilla said opening her bag and digging deep inside until she came out with a small silver bell.

"I've kept this until it was needed for something just like this. If it will save poor Flossy, I'll gladly use it!"

Sassy rang the silver bell Gooseberry had left for her. With in seconds the small faery appeared before her.

"Sassy?" Gooseberry smiled. "Is it really you?"

"Yes Gooseberry." Sasporilla smiled. "I'm so very happy to see you. I need your help. This pillar cat Flossy is sick. We don't know what to do for her? I thought you might know?"

"You would trade your one time great favor from a faery to save a sick faery worm?" Gooseberry laughed. "Gosh I have missed you my Sasporilla. Of course, only you would!"

"Gooseberry please." Sasporilla begged. "She needs to feed on a golden cherry and the crystslis in that tree and soon by the state of her. It's her time."

"Great!" Sassy smiled.

"Not great." Professor Hannah said. "The botanical garden doesn't have one, the nearest in the wild are three days broom ride and deep in wild faery territory."

"Gooseberry can't you take her there?" Sasporilla pleaded.

"I'm sorry Sasporilla." Gooseberry said. "I can not. For me to go there is not allowed. I am not of there Fae. We are not friendly."

"I can't just let Flossy DIE!" Sasporilla shouted. "There must be a bloody golden cherry tree somewhere?"

"There is," Professor Hannah said, "but you're really not going to like it when I tell you where it is."

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It came as quite a shock to the witch queen when the Queen of the House elves showed up the front gate requesting a special and immediate emergency audience. Especially when she announced herself humbly as just Sasporilla, the Queen's niece. Dressed like any other retched commoner, the witch Queen wondered just what her niece was playing at. Especially at eight forty- five am on a Tuesday morning?

The royal couple were announced with trumpeted fanfare as they stepped out of the castle and walked hand in hand toward the front gates.

"Why aw the gates not open?" The Warlock King demanded of his guards, motioning to them to open them.

"I have not commanded it yet." The Witch Queen over road his command, politely.

"But Bougenvaweeia my sweet?" The Warlock King said quite shocked, "She is famiwee? She is youa niece? Shuawe you intend yo wecom ha with open ahms?"

"She is also Queen of the House Elves husband and love of mine." The Witch Queen said through clenched teeth as they approached the Royal gates. "My Royal welcome depends on her reasons for her surprise visit?"

"I'm not here on any official business." Sasporilla said. "I ask only a personal favor. Access to a golden cherry tree in your court yard."

"That's all?" The Witch Queen smiled. "The Queen of House Elves? Who has single handedly crippled the Elven city? You seek access to a... tree. Why?"

"Sweet hawt?" The Warlock King Pleaded. "Pweese! It is a simpew weequest? The twees aw mine to dea with, I see no weason why not?"

The Witch Queen held up her hand. "I simply want an answer... WHY?"

"My pillar cat." Sasporilla sat holding Flossy up. "It's her time to change. She needs to feed on one cherry then build a cocoon in the tree so she can change."

"Oh my." The Warlock King said holding a handkerchief over his nose and mouth. "Into what?"

"A faery Dragon." Sasporilla smiled. "Without the cherry tree, Flossy will die. Yours is the only one for three days flight and that won't start a faery war getting her too."

"I see." The Witch Queen mused motioning to the guards to open the gates. "Well I am not the kind of Queen to deny an innocent creature the chance to be all it can be."

"You aw most genawus and wuving my Queen." The Warlock King praised his beautiful Wife.

"However I feel that this favor I do for you my niece just may require you to repay me in kind some day." The Witch Queen smiled. "Perhaps some day I will ask a simple favor of you?"

"Agreed." Sasporilla said. "If you require me to repay you in kind then I shall. I give you my bond as Elven Queen by the Stilskin Name."

"A solid bond that is Sasporilla Bucket." The Witch Queen smiled. "Stronger than an unbreakable Bond!"

"Yes but we must shake hands on it in clear agreement." Sassy smiled holding out her hand stating. "I Sasporilla Bucket promise to repay The Witch Queen, Bougenvallia Bent, in kind for her favour to allow my Flossy access to the Golden Cherry Tree."

"Good." The Witch Queen grinned with Cheshire malevolence as she shook her nieces hand. For the first time the Queen noticed the young girls hair. The stripes of changed colour. "My dear, what is happening to your hair?"

"Not sure." Sasporilla shrugged. "Seems to be changing to my mothers colour. Ever since Christmas."

"Perhaps it's that cheep House Elf Crown." The Witch Queen laughed walking away. "Next it will turn your scalp green."

It really was everything Sassy could do not to shove her wand up the Witch Queen's turned up nose.

"Come with me Sasporiwa!" The Warlock King smiled taking her arm. "I wiw escoat you to the coat yawd wah we wiw put yowa poo wita cweetua into the twee!"

The Warlock King leads his young guest proudly through the walk ways and paths, showing Sassy the many statues and plants that rare plants they have collected and cultivated over the years.

"I am happy you've paid us this visit Sasporiwa!" The Warlock King said excitedly.

"Why is that Sire." Sasporilla asked.

"Oh pweese don't be so foamah hea, away fwum eweweone! You can just caw me uncaw! Pweese???" The Warlock King insisted.

"Very well." Sasporilla smiled. "Uncle."

"Oooo that wahms my hawt!" The Warlock King smiled. "I want so much fowa youwa Aunty to have famawee awound. Peepo to waff with and wuv!!! I fee a some days she woozes hewasewf in being Queen."

"To be honest I think your simply a better person than she is Uncle." Sasporilla said. "And you hope for to much from her."

"Pehaps." The Warlock King sighed. "but I do wuv hea you know? And I do see good in hea, some times."

Sasporilla smiled politely. Everyone had good days and showed it. She assumed even snakes smiled at mice when they were full.

The court yard with the Golden Cherry tree was at the very heart of the great castle. The single tree stood radiant in a magical glow between a circle of three stone benches.

"WEESPWENDANT!" The Warlock King smiled gesturing grandly to the tree, "Is it not?"

"It truly is." Sasporilla said taking Flossy over to it eagerly. "May I pick a cherry to feed to her, as I must?"

"Yes of cose my deea niece Sasporiwa!!!" The Warlock King insisted.

"Thank you Uncle." Sasporilla nodded.

The joy and prided beamed from the Warlock Kings face. There was an innocence and a decency to this man, somewhere behind the vanity, Sasporilla thought. Perhaps she could learn to like him. Sasporilla pulled a single golden cherry from the tree and placed it gently to Flossy's mouth. Flossy licked at it slowly but weakly.

"I may be to late." Sasporilla said sadly.

"Sire!" A Royal guard interrupted. "You are needed in chambers."

"Oh dea." The Warlock King sighed. "I'm going to have to weave you hea, I'm affwaid Saspowiwa!"

"Thank you for your help Uncle." Sasporilla said giving the Warlock King a much surprised and much needed hug.

"You my dea aw weacom in my castew anytime!" The Warlock King smiled with a tear in the corner of his eye.

"You awe most wuved famiwee."

The Royal Guard lead the Warlock King away leaving Sasporilla alone in the court yard with Flossy, at the base of the Golden Cherry tree. Flossy suckled weakly on the cherry but to no end.

"She's just to weak." Gooseberry said popping in. "She can't bite through the skin. You'll have to start it for her."

Sasporilla placed the cherry against her lips and bit just hard enough to break the skin. She felt a bit of nectar flow over her teeth and pulled it quickly from her mouth and placed it against Flossy's lips. Within seconds the pillar cat went from a weak suckling to munching at the cherry enthusiastically!

"The nectars strangely bitter on the tongue." Sassy said about to swallow it.

"Spit it out!" Gooseberry screamed. "It's a deadly poison to MAGI!"

Sasporilla spat six, seven, eight times then cast HYDROXIC on her mouth and a jet of water splashed from the end of her wand spraying her mouth clean.

"Now you tell me!" Sassy spat.

Flossy coiled happily up her arm to her shoulder and mewed in the pink haired witches ear.

"You should be ok now Flossy." Sasporilla smiled as the pillar cat blinked happily at her and hopped onto the golden cherry tree, winding its way up into the highest branches. With a single push a barb shot from Flossy's back end which nailed her firmly to a branch from which she hung. Mucus seeped from between her fur and covered her body until she was just a pinkish slimy ball.

"Soon that slime will become like armour." Gooseberry said. "Don't worry Sasporilla. I'll look over her until she hatches out. She'll be fine."

"Thank you Gooseberry." Sasporilla said. "I love you my friend."

"As I love you." Gooseberry smiled. "My friend."

Sasporilla turned and walked away from the tree with a confident smile. Knowing that Flossy was safe and left in good hands she exited the court yard and found the Royal guards left to escort out of the palace.

It was nearly half past ten by the time Sasporilla Bucket made it to her nine thirty class with Professor Splatterpalette.

"Nice of you to join us Ms.Bubbles!" Professor Splatterpalette said as Sassy entered the class.

There was little the young witch could do but apologize for her tardiness, despite being so far ahead on the Abbicum end of the wands design of her project.

"I'm sorry." Sasporilla said taking off her bag and heading for her design station at the back of the class room. "I was unfortunately and unavoidably detained as Flossy wad very sic...."

Sasporilla turned to see professor Splatterpalette Standing up before the class, who were all desperately focused on their own projects, stark naked!!! An artist with large canvas and chalk pastels drew wild lattices of colour upon the canvas around the professors nude form.

"Professor?" Sasporilla asked holding back a most bemused chuckle. "Did you forget your robe this morning?"

"No!" Professor Splatterpalette said rolling her eyes, stopping and thinking about the situation for a moment, then letting out a very reassured relaxed breath, "No! I am having my AURA DRAWN!"

"Oh mine gott." Christin said embarrassed from the front row.

"Now now Christin!" The professor smiled. "There is no shame in the nude Body!"

"Oh Gott!" Christin said as he put the hood up on her robe and synched it tight.

"You're all so repressed for young people!" The professor said waving around wildly, "You should be uninhibited and free! Perhaps I should have each of you pose for Aura's."

"Oh gott, oh gott, oh gott!" Chtistin said grabbing her paints and running out of the room beat red with embarrassment.

"What exactly is an AURA?" Sasporilla asked walking over to observe the artist.

"Good question Ms.Bubbles!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "It's the personal energy field we all have! Witches, wizards, even muggles have them apparently. Though I'm lead to believe muggle auras are much less interesting."

"Very true Professor." The artist said looking past his easel. "Please try and stand a bit more still Dina?"

"Sorry Chester." The professor apologized returning to her pose. "Oh dear! I have not properly introduced you! Here I am naked before the world being rude not introducing my dear friend, the great Aurist Chester Whitechapple Hill. I was quite lucky he was in town! He squeezed me in for this special sitting."

"Or standing as it were." Sasporilla cracked wise.

"Indeed." The professor smiled.

"What a charming, child." The Aurist smiled politely. "I see they let just anyone in the university now Dina?"

"Now now Chester." The professor scolded, "Our Ms.Bucket is a most promising wand designer. Maybe the next Olivander, so just you mind your manners."

"I'll take that into consideration." Chester said. "Yes I happen to be in town for a series of portrait sittings with no less than the Froggai Lamma himself."

"The Froggai Lamma?" Sasporilla said. "I thought he was just a story?"

"Oh no, no, no!" Professor Splatterpalette said. "Not at all! He is a very real being of great spiritual and magical power! A very wise frog indeed!"

"I do find this fascinating though." Sasporilla said looking at the swaths of color and how they interacted with each other, but more important how they seemed to form strands and wove with each other. Most of all how they formed more complex lattices, like knot work in the weave, close to here professor Splatterpalette held her wand.

"The way these colours, do what they do. You see them this way do you?"

"Yes." Chester Whitechapple Hill said in a rather huffy way. "It's a well documented and rare gift that very few Wizards have. We are known as Aurapathics."

Sasporilla looked at the professor with her glasses off. She of course saw no colours but saw the fabric of magic. The strands in places similar to where the Aurist had drawn them and suddenly she wondered, just wondered about the wand.

"When you drew the Aura around the professors wand hand, what was she casting?" Sasporilla asked.

"You mean to tell me you are not a skeptic?" The Aurist said surprised.

"Oh no!" Sasporilla said. "I do apologize, no! Not at all! If I made you think so I didn't intend to do so!"

"Your earlier comments?" The Aurist said. "I thought you were... mocking me."

"No." Sasporilla insisted. "To be honest I was just a bit surprised to find my Professor buck naked in the class room!"

"OH GOTT!" Christin's voice echoed from somewhere in the corridor.

"Fair enough!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "Repressed, repressed, repressed! I was just holding my wand like this!"

Sassy had watched, many a time, how wands tore up the fabric of magic but she rarely paid attention to anyone just holding it.

"Do you see the same sort of lattice now?" Sassy asked.

"Yes I do." The Aurist smiled.

Sasporilla strained to look at the fabric of magic. She found she needed to get closer to Professor Splatterpalette than made her comfortable but she saw it. There it was! The same sort of spiral in the fabric of magic! They were both seeing the same thing only what the Aurist was seeing was in vivid colour!

"That is positively brilliant Mr.Whitechapple Hill!" Sasporilla smiled. "Thank you so much."

"You're quite welcome!" The Aurist said.

"Now my windey little lattice," Sasporilla said walking over to her Abbicum, "Something about you looks bloody familiar. Where have I seen you before?"

Sasporilla turned on her Abbicum and accidentally knocked her bag over spilling out some of its contents. Her pink wand journal landed open under wand and her bag. When she lifted her bag, with a slight curse on her lips, she noticed her journal was open to a page she had scribbled in some notes on Biorhythmics and Arithmantics. What caught her eye was the biorhythm she had graphed out as a presumptive test she rolled the page around and saw how the lines crossed, projecting where they might go.

"Professor," Sasporilla asked not taking her eyes off the page. "What's your Birthday?"

"Are we planing a party, all ready?" Professor Splatterpalette asked excitedly. "I prefer a big cake! Vanilla rainbow cake with butter cream icing! Perhaps with seventy-five types of ice cream and nine types of sherbet. I'm not as fond of sherbet and don't get me started on sorbet! Oh but then there's Gillato!"

"Professor FOCUS!" Sassy yelled. "I need to know the date of your birth?"

"It's nice to ask a lady her age!" The Professor said coyly. "It can make her feel vulnerable!"

"You're standing in your birthday suit before the entire class!!!" Sasporilla shouted.

"Well then letting you in on my birthdays in order I guess." The professor shrugged.

Within moments Sasporilla had the date put into the Ponyo 3400 and watched it calculate the biorhythmic graph. With a quick exporting of graphs information she put it into the Abbicum's three dimensional modeler and formed it into a lattice. Before her eyes she saw it form. The same lattice in the fabric of magic at the base the wand where professor held it was equal to the biorhythm of the professor herself! Where the wand is held was clearly and always the most intricate place in the aura according to the Aurist. That is the point of HARMONIC RESONANCE!!!! The Witch/Wizard's own biorhythm is part of the Equation. A quick Arithmantic breakdown of the professors birth date confirmed what she suspected. The wands wood types and materials were arithmantically linked to the placements on the standard chart of wand materials by number! It could be a coincidence, but Sasporilla suspected deep down that it was not!

"I can test my theory at home. I have everything I need by testing the balance of the wands to witches and wizards around me. This will give me the calculation!!!!" She thought to herself as she packed up her bag excitedly, "Eureka!" Sasporilla yelled. "That's it!!! I've got it!!!!"

"Good!" The professor smiled. "As long as there's enough cake for everyone!"

Sasporilla jumped for joy screaming with delight as she ran out of the room excited and ecstatic!

"Somehow," professor Splatterpalette pouted "I don't think there's cake?"



## Chapter 19

"So let me get this straight," Angelo asked taking notes, "Arithmantic Birth date (AB) is equal to wand materials and lengths?"

"Correct." Sasporilla Bucket smiled.

"And the Tuned core is equal to a resonant harmonization of the core and the wand in tune with witch or wizards biorhythm?"

"Correct!" Sassy said excitedly.

"So the core...?" Angelo asked.

"Has traditionally always been made from parts of magical creatures like Unicorns, or dragons. Hairs and heart strings that can be tuned like the string of an instrument."

"I don't know that much about instruments but I know different strings make different notes because they're tuned differently, and of course you can't string a viola with a string for a cello!"

"You could but it really wouldn't be a pleasant effect." Sassy said. "Not all instrument strings, as not all wand cores, are one size fits all."

"Hence the difficulty in choosing wands." Angelo nodded looking into Sasporilla's playful eyes. "What?"

"What if," Sasporilla grinned, "someone designed a core that could be one size fits all?"

"How is that possible?" Angelo asked.

"By weaving it out of the fabric of magic itself!" Sassy said excitedly. "Then tuning it to the proper harmonic!"

"Is that possible?" Angelo asked?

"It's a theory." Sasporilla said. "But I'm going to test it. I can weave it myself no problem."

"This is an amazing break through honey I'm so proud of you!" Angelo smiled hugging Sassy proudly. "How is the other project going?"

"Good." Sasporilla nodded. "I'm hoping it will be over soon. The elves have gathered all the information I needed. I was able to form a council amongst the worker elves. They have an agreed upon plan for the future they wish me to implement on their behalf."

"You are a very different kind of Queen," Angelo said hugging and rocking his beautiful young witch, "my Sasporilla."

"I want only to be a good Queen, for the time that I am one." Sassy smiled kissing her fellow and slapping his derriere. "You having a meeting to get to young man."

"Yes." Angelo said looking into Sasporilla's violet eyes. "Suddenly I don't feel much like going."

"You've made a commitment Sir." Sassy said stepping back. "I expect you to keep your commitments! Even though I'd love it if you'd spend the day with me."

"You are a strong one." Angelo grinned taking Sassy's hand and kissing it. "Until we meet again, my beautiful maiden."

"I long for the hour when I once again may feel your warm embrace my love." Sassy said, then started to laugh, covering her face.

"Oh that was beautiful." Angelo said.

"But so cheesy." Sassy laughed. "Go, before I say something else 'Plein de Fromage'."

Angelo, laughing at his beautifully funny young love, turned and left her dorm stepping out onto the terrace. Jorge squawked at him as he passed.

"Yes good morning to you too Jorge!" Angelo said drawing his wand and disappearing in a curling flash with a pop!

Angelo apparated, mid back alley behind the old Armatage theater. The theater had been closed for renovations for about twenty years now. It always seemed rival interests in a company could provide the perfect hiding place in plain site, no questions asked. A loose board on a back doorway lead to hidden steps down into a cellar beneath the theater.

Angelo pulled his wand and cast "INOBSERVATUS", disappearing from the view of any on looker as he crossed the dusty old hall and stepped into an illusionary pile of rubble, that blocked an open doorway.

"VENTUS!" Angelo cast back into the hall causing a wind to blow the dust into a cloud. Had anyone tried to conceal themselves by spell or invisibility cloak the dust cloud would have revealed them. In turn as the dust settled it covered his tracks on the floor. Angelo turned and cast "LUMOS" as he started down a long set of ancient carved circular stone steps.

The walls going down, were inset with the carvings of some of the bravest knights any world had ever known. Sir Tristian, Sir Lancelot, Sir Gallahad, Sir Percival the knights of the table round. Those extraordinary muggles who stood with their King, Arthur Pendragon of Camelot, who under the council of Merlin, ran the known world in piece and harmony.

A flowery child's vision. A faery tale told to placate muggle fantasies. It was hard austere time when a few muggles dared stand with a single wizard against the wizarding world to push them back! To protect muggles from mass murder and enslavement. It was only through Merlin's gift, the spell to protect all muggles, that the War was won! The spell is commonly remembered by all muggles, but forgotten is why they know it, or how it is used?

"ABRACADABRA!" spoken by any muggle while touching one hand to the ground will protect them from any witch or wizards spell! Such power left those with less than peaceful intent impotent, and looking for a world of their own.

When the wizards came to Avalon Merlin decided he would not allow them to live unchecked and formed a new council of knights. A council of Witches and Wizards of the table round.

The steps ended in a small chamber in a deep dungeon far below the theater. Two large heavy Iron doors sat shut before him. The face of Merlin cast into the metal plate.

Angelo approached the door knocked three times and bopped Merlin's visage on the nose with his wand.

"Password." The Iron Merlin spoke.

"Abracadabra." Angelo said quietly.

"You know you don't have to hit me on the nose every time you rude child!" The Iron Merlin barked as the doors swung open.

"I know." Angelo smiled. "But for some reason, it always makes me laugh!"

Inside was a large room with a polished stone round table. Twelve chairs sat around the table with a witch or wizard seated in each one... with the exception of two... Lyra Lee-Ashwolf, leader of the Knights stood before her chair at the top of the room, speaking to the knights.

"Nice of you to finally join us, Sir Lazarus." Lyra said.

"I got here as soon as I could." Angelo smiled. "Life and all."

"Yes would that 'and all' be pretty with pink hair?" Sir Draco Malfoy asked.

"Watch your mouth Malfoy." Lyra said. "Sasporilla's my best friend! Take your seat Lazarus and I'll bring you up to speed."

Around the table, besides The head witch Lyra Lee-Ashwolf were the other knights. Sir Draco Malfoy, University student in his final year of study looking to make a difference for the misdeeds of his family and bring honour back to the Malfoy family name.

Sir Hugo looked like a hobo... smelled like one too. He was an older man with stringy salt and pepper unwashed, everything, but especially hair. He wore a dirty trench coat over his dirty clothes. He slept the streets of Avalon and had his ear to the ground. He knew everything going on in this city and had dedicated his life to it for the knights.

Dame Dina Splatterpalette was a powerful witch who kept the CAMELOT newspaper running! Though unpredictable, wild and often out-there, no one ever questioned her bravery or her loyalty!

Dame Hannah professor of Magizoology, was not just a witch and the head of the University zoo but a very powerful Animagus who changed into an Occamy. Not only a beautiful but a fearsome creature that will stand up to any other!!!

Sir Borwhen was a half giant who many made the mistake of thinking dim because of his size. However he was as intelligent as he was strong. A mountain of a man he found himself often ostracized and feared by other wizards and witches. He tended to hide himself away with his books, studying spells, history and anything he could.

Dame Josie Phenix was a very powerful witch just itching at the chance to get her hands on the Witch Queen. Josie Phenix, the child of two well-known magical rogue scholars and adventurers, had enjoyed the education of several fine institutions. Most of which she had politely been invited to leave due to her over zealous defense of weaker students or magical creatures from bullies. It was at Hogwarts Josie Phenix had crossed paths with the future witch Queen. Both had been in Hogwarts together and had never liked each other. Josie had always known Bougainvillea Bent was the meanest and cruelest girl capable of great evil. After their tussle, which ended badly for Bougainvillea, the Bent family had Josie Phenix kicked out of Hogwarts. When Bougainvillea became Witch Queen, Josie feared for the people of Avalon and swore to what she could to protect them.

Sir Keaton was the oldest amongst the knights, often called the Colonel, the gray haired old military man. A wizard who served for years in the muggle military. He signed up to fight against the wizards who were secretly fighting for the enemy in World War two. He stayed in after to make sure all magic traps, left behind by the enemy, were found and destroyed. His training and knowledge were invaluable to the knights.

Sir Stoffer was a young Second year technomancer, from an advanced society. He studied a higher program than most and was considered quite brilliant, even by their standards. Though he was a bit nerdy and cautious, his heart was pure.

Sir Griffin was a fourth year Broom design major who's father was the owner of Triumphant brooms. Great things were expected of him in the business and he wanted to make his family proud, but his real dream was to play Chaser for Ireland. He was a young man of honour and integrity, who put his families needs before his own dreams. Griffin may never play professional Quidditch but no one disputed he was one of the fastest flyers anyone had seen on a broom!

Dame Beatrix Zonko was the second daughter of the famed Zonko family of Hogsmeade. A renowned potions mistress she now studied for her doctorate in potions making so that she might become a well sought after professor of potions. Her father had always wanted her to join the family business building better stink bombs and love potions but Carol Zonko wanted more from her life than japes and gags! She saw potions as important, not some grand joke! She would use her knowledge to help and to teach and never to harm or to trick.

Those were the twelve knights of Merlin's council that sat in defense of the table round.

"Dina's brought something to my attention." Lyra said out her hand.

Professor Splatterpalette stood and lifted her wand "WINGARDIUM LEVIOSA." A stack of newspapers, old and yellowing, levitated up onto the round table. The twine, which bound the bundle, untied and a copy flew to each knight seated at the table. The papers were a couple of decades old copies of the Avalon Examiner. A photo showing a two girls switching places just as a finish line is crossed in a race was topped by the head line "PROOF BENT CHEATS TO BECOME WITCH QUEEN"

"A cache of these papers was left in my care years ago," Dame Splatterpalette said, "by Augustus Ramagast. The former Editor in chief of the Avalon Examiner and one of my dearest friends. When he ran this story he was taken prisoner by the Witch Queen. She'd have killed him except in doing so these papers would have appeared upon



his death. The fact that my garage filled up with these last night means Augustus has past in the Queens dungeon. I must now fulfill the second half of my promise to him."

"What's that?" Sir Hugo asked through his dirty baked bean teeth.

"We release the truth." Lyra smiled. "We deliver the papers."

"Expose that Bi..." Dame Phenix caught herself, "Witch for the pathetic cheat she is."

"We're going to need every operative we have." Dame Splatterpalette said.

"We're going to need more men!" The colonel barked, rolling his eyes as he saw the looks he got from his female knights. "People! More people! Draft a few in! We all know some who'll help even if they won't want to. Just make sure you can trust'em to keep there yaps shut!"

"Pretty sure I know some one who I can trust to help." Angelo smiled. "She might be able to bring a few friends."

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Sasporilla sketched a cylinder in journal. Around it, she sketched three strands of magical fiber and stared at them for a moment.

"They do indeed represent the three lines of the biorhythm, but they wouldn't lattice. Unless..."

Sasporilla drew three more strands in the opposite direction to represent magical fibers for the basics of the wand components. The intersecting strands did indeed form the lattice she was looking for.

"That's it!" Sasporilla said. "One flexible base tube wrapped in strands of three that can be tuned to the numbers that correspond to the Biorhythms and arthimantics! A Woven core!!!"

"Queen Sasporilla?" A small voice said from behind the fading pink haired witch startling her.

"What in track nine and three quarters!" Sassy yelled, making Jooble, a rather small house elf jump. "Jooble you scared me! What's wrong?"

"The Elves my Queen." Jooble said. "They have finally summoned you before the council."

"It's about time." Sasporilla smiled bowing before the small elf. "Ask the Minister to choose a delegation along with the emissary and wait for me at the village."

"It's my honour my Queen." Jooble smiled and disappeared.

Sassy had a dress, not the grand lavish royal gown of your standard Queen, but a dress made from the same kind of sacks that her people were forced to wear. It was very plain, roughly stitched by design, and had a similar cloak with the royal symbol of the Stilskin house, a double spinning wheel under a crown embroidered on the back. Placing the simple gold crown upon her head Sassy felt her ears turn pointy and grow out. She saw more strands of her hair turn to the dull red of her mother's hair colour.

With a snap of her fingers Sasporilla Bucket disappeared from her room and reappeared in a small elven village deep within the forbidden forest. Centaurs stood guard at the road in to the small grottoed hamlet.

The delegation of worker elves, came out from the largest of the temporary buildings in the village. Sasporilla Bucket took a knee before them.

"Prime Minister Wurloo." Sasporilla smiled. "The village is looking wonderful. With luck you all won't need to stay here much longer."

"It was very gracious of your friends the centaurs to make this space for us temporarily, my Queen." Minister Wurloo smiled. "Please stand. You do us too great an honour bowing before us. We are all humble equals here."

"As you wish." Sassy smiled Standing. "I've been summoned to the elven council. It's time we make our presence known!"

"Agreed." Prime Minister Wurloo smiled.

"Is the Emissary ready?" Sassy asked.

"Yes." The minister smiled. "We've chosen an indentured elf."

"Not a free elf?" Sasporilla smiled. "Good for you. This should cause issues and force them to see more of our issues. Who was your choice?"

"One of your cousins, from the Hogwarts laundry." The Prime Minister of worker Elves smiled. "Zerlo."

"What a wonderful choice!" Sasporilla smiled. "Shall we be off?"

"Please lead the way my Queen." The minister smiled.

The crown gave Sasporilla much greater power when it came to control her elven magic. With a snap of her finger the air before them shimmered and a portal opened between the Worker Elf Village and the road leading up to the Elven city of Elthloriel.

Queen Sasporilla Bucket followed behind her people humbly. It had taken weeks negotiate a temporary home for the worker elves who needed a place to live. The centaurs, though her friends were by nature a suspicious people of everyone not their own. It was only through Sasporilla's long time trust with them and her personal promise that the imposition in the forest would be temporary, that an agreement was reached.

Sassy encouraged the worker elves to learn about how different societies successfully, fairly governed them selves. She helped her worker elves build not only their temporary homes but the Ministry that governed them. A government by and for worker elves, free of their Queen who was now the final word on important decisions, until they felt comfortable enough in their own abilities to vote her out of the process. She was so proud of them. At the gates of Elthloriel they were met by four guards sent by the council to safely escort the worker elf delegation through the city. Stores looked half bare. Walls were dirty and the streets were strewn with garbage. Many places of fine dining were closed. The high elves that walked the streets looked at the worker elf delegation with grungy disdain. With no one to tend to their laundry these days the High elves were looking more the down trodden. Sasporilla found the state of the city very satisfying.

The worker elf delegation was lead into the council chamber where there were met with the glares of disheveled elven council members.

"Thank you for coming Queen Sasporilla." High Chancellor Eldin frowned. "We have acquiesced to your demands and provided you a seat on the Elven council."

There was a polite but reluctant round of applause.

"Oh you misunderstood." Sasporilla smiled and took a knee before her delegation of worker elves. "May I speak for us in this matter minister?"

"You may." The Worker elf Prime Minister granted permission.

"Thank you." Sasporilla said standing.

"What foolishness is this?" High Chancellor Eldin demanded. "You are their Queen?"

"Yes!" Sasporilla said. "But I serve my people, I do not RULE THEM. I have given them the power to govern themselves. That seat on the elven council will be held by an elected official who will execute choices of the Worker Elves as a people."

"This is ridiculous!" The high chancellor said.

"Is it?" Sasporilla asked directing Drooble to step forward and take his seat. "Perhaps you forget how you look? How the city look? Why not use elven magic to just "snap" it all clean? Oh wait, you lot can't, can you. You're kind of elves all have different kinds of magic. All those wondrous creations of the elves the wood work, armour, weapons, fine clothing... all made by worker elves! You lot just put a bit of embude spells on at the last. Even this grand city? Who built it?"

"It was a common effort between..." the High chancellor began until Drooble lifted his hand.

"Stop please." Drooble said. "Embarrass yourself, you do. Truth is documented very well it is!"

"Indeed it is Zerlo." Sasporilla said. "This city was the city of the WORKER ELVES! When the Magi came here they attacked the Elven lands, and the city which is now Majesty Station! You fled to here and were gladly taken in as refugees."

"Now see here." High Chancellor Eldin tried to interrupt but Sasporilla would not allow him the opportunity.

"You can try to deny it all you like High Chancellor," Sasporilla said approaching him pulling copies of scrolls from her bag, "but you were there at the signing of the treaty between the Magi and the high elves, where you surrendered your lands. A people who knew immortality had never known a death like one that came with the death curse.

"It was a massacre." Eldin hung his head. "You have no Idea. We had no choice."

"From my human half I deeply apologize." Sasporilla said. "If and when it is within my power to change things I will. I promise you that. Until then I must focus on the needs of my people. You do not use 95% of the ancestral worker elf homes in this city. They're blocked off and forgotten to my people. Why?"

"They're too small to access for anyone." The chancellor sighed.

"And too opulent for slaves." Sasporilla said. "Now lets talk about that. When the worker elves were pledged to the MAGI for one thousand years of servitude, there was NOTHING about being enslaved to the elves. How you

convinced those who will was broken to serve you for free??? It angers me. The sheer gaul and manipulation of my people!"

"What do you want?" The High Chancellor asked of the highly angered Queen of the Worker Elves.

"The city." The Queen said. "The city rightly belongs to my people."

The council murmured with freight as the High Chancellor became noticeably angry. Tempers flared as people started to shout at one another. One small calm voice cut through the din.

"Excuse me!" Zerlo said standing on his seat. "My friends, as the representative for our people I have posed a voted solution to our people which they found acceptable. May I propose it to you?"

"Please speak Representative Zerlo." Sasporilla said. "I'd like to hear a calm intelligent voice."

"As would I!" The High Chancellor Agreed.

"The Worker elves Agree 95% of our original homes are blocked away, and are not in use. We see no reason why we can not all equally share the city with those we invited here as guests originally. We would be willing to split the deed to the city calling it joint owned. We would like to take back a few important spots however. These can be negotiated at a later date."

"I think that is a very fair and a very wise offer from my people." Sasporilla said winking at Zerlo. "What do you say?"

"The council must vote on it." The High Chancellor said.

The decision was not unanimous but it passed. The worker elves had their ancestral home back.

"Anything to get them back to work." High chancellor Eldin said.

"Oh." Zerlo smiled. "To house us was all this was! Now discussing contracts for our work we must!"

"Ah!" Sasporilla smiled. "My work as Queen has born great fruit indeed!"

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Sasporilla Bucket returned to her dorm room just before dark, still wearing her the humble dress of sacks and the gold crown which pointed her ears and had, through out the day, almost completely drained her hair of pink. She looked at herself in the mirror and fumbled with her dull red hair. She reached over to her dresser and picked up the small box her father had left to her.

"I do I wish I knew what spell it was you used to protect me all those years ago that turned my hair pink my whole life." Sassy smiled.

"That's a sexy look on you HOT STUFF!" Angelo said from the door way.

"Oh!" Sasporilla jumped, dropping the box in her bag. "You startled me."

"You look so house elf Queeny!" Angelo smiled hugging his girl friend.

"You're incorrigible!" Sasporilla laughed. Taking off the crown causing her ears to shrink to normal, but leaving her hair dull red. "I think the crown nullified the rest of my fathers protection magic. I look just like my mum now."

"Then your father was a very lucky man." Angelo smiled.

"She would have liked you," Sasporilla said giving Angelo a peck and walking up stairs to change, "My man. How did the top secret meeting go?"

"That's why I'm here." Angelo said. "The knights are looking for volunteer's. I could use your help but..."

"But what?" Sasporilla asked.

"The knight's ask a favour of the Queen of the Worker elves."

Sasporilla stopped on the steps. A very serious look fell upon her face as she set the crown upon her head. She stood there very still as she asked. "I am always of service to my people. If a favour you ask of us, understand that I will ask the Ministry council. The people will vote and the worker elf people will decide to grant or deny your favour. The decision will not be mine alone. And know this, if we accept and help, the Worker elves may at some time ask the Magi knights of the table round for a favour in return... some day. Agreed?"

"Agreed!" Angelo smiled.

"Your word is bond Angelo Lazarus." Queen Sasporilla smiled. ""What favour do you ask of us?"

## CHAPTER 20

In the wee hours of the predawn morning it began. Knights of the table round, leading small groups of volunteers started to get the message out! The WITCH QUEEN CHEATED in her trials.

Dame Splatterpalette, accompanied by a throng of bandanna clad past and present student volunteers, painted the message in all over town as big as they could. In ways that would surely get peoples attention and greatly embarrass the Witch Queen.

Sir Lazarus, Sir Malfoy and Sir Griffin, all highly respected young men from fine wizarding families were tasked with waking up people of power and position to put the evidence in their hands personally. A job that required tact, explanation and diplomacy.

The news was not always taken as hoped. Some, loyal to a corrupt crown sent off warnings. Owls carrying messages to the royal court were brought down by stun spells by the dead eye of the Colonel.

"STUPIFY!" Sir Keaton cast holding his wand steady across his fore arm, striking an owl, rendering it limp and unable to fly. "ARRESTO MOMENTUM!" He would cast catching the bird before it hit the ground.

"Not your fault, brave little soldier, that your master is a traitor to his people!" The Colonel said taking the note and destroying it.

Though despite his best efforts, not all witches and wizards used owls. As such, a lonely large raven in the night made its way to the Royal castle with news in its black talons. There was much debate amongst the guard not as to whether the Witch Queen should be awakened by the news, but who would be the unfortunate soul to do the deed.

The scream could be heard clearly outside the palace walls brining bright smiles to the faces of Dame Hannah and Dame Phenix.

"This means it's show time." The gigantic Sir Borwhen said drawing his wand.

The sounds of alarms echoed in the guard towers. Dame Hanna, her blue hair a tell tale sign from birth of her hidden ability leapt forward into the air. A skilled Animagus she transformed into a gigantic Occamy and wrapped herself around the guard tower. Her blue feathered coils blocking all attempts at escape. Any guard trying to cast spells from the thin windows were met with a sharp snapping Occamy beak.

Dame Phenix, burst into flame and arose a brilliant bird of mythical fire! The phoenix Animagus drew a torrent of flame around the second guard tower trapping all inside.

Those brave enough to attempt to rush the flame or crawl past the scales of the beast were met with the mighty blow of a spell from Sir Borwhen.

The guards on duty, scattered through out the city were the ones to be most worried about. A team of specialists in booby traps, deterrent tactics and enemy directional assistance.

Lyra Lee-Ashwolf, who refused to take a title as she saw herself more as a mercenary than a knight, lead a small team of merry pranksters and noted pains in the behind to lay traps for the guards throughout Avalon city. Supplied by Dame Zonko and their family with tweaks from Sir Stoffer and a slew of volunteers from the second and third year advanced technomancer class.

Royal guards throughout the city suddenly found themselves fighting off swarms of destructive pixies. Giant marauding dragons creating havoc. Tornadoes that hunted guards down like the rats they were.

Those royal guards unlucky enough to come across a team delivering papers were met with giant stink bombs, fanged Frisbees, bowling bunnies, nose biting gnomes and worst of all clouds of exploding pop gnats. All would tie up royal guards long enough to allow the knights and there charges to escape.

Sasporilla sat high above the city on her broom watching events unfold as she conducted her elves movements, keeping them safe and unseen from magi eyes.

As dawn broke over the distant Horizon Sasporilla landed amongst the knights of the table round who gathered by the University Library.

"Good job Everyone!" Lyra smiled. "Soon, If not all ready, Avalon will be awakening to the news. The truth will hopefully bring change this morning!"

"What do you hope will happen Lyra?" Sasporilla asked.

"That the people will demand the Queen abdicate." Angelo smiled.

"Then there will have to be a new Witch Queen trial." Dame Splatterpalette smiled.

"One that we will demand is done by the charter!" Dame Phenix said with a nod. "Open to ALL witches of Noble blood or not!"

"Sounds fair." Sasporilla said. "But would it not be better to just get rid of the monarchy all together? Put in a more democratic system by the people for the people?"

The knights stood dumbfounded.

"I often forget the my best friend, little Sasporilla Bucket," Lyra Lee-Ashwolf smiled, "Grew up to be the wisest Queen in all the land."

"Stop it Lyra." Sassy blushed.

"Not to mention the widest butt." Lyra laughed looking behind her friend. "My goodness Sasporilla put down the butterbeer once in a while."

"Shut it!" Sassy guffawed looking round behind Lyra. "Honestly you're one to talk! You who bent over to close to the University marching band and they mistook you for the bass drum!"

"I tried my best to go boom boom boom, Lyra laughed, "but some people just ain't bloody satisfied!"

"You two must be fun at the Ladies church Bazzare fundraiser pancake brunch!" Dame Splatterpalette laughed.

"Why?" Sasporilla asked seriously. "What have you heard?"

Lyra burst into uproarious laughter. "Stop it! No one can prove who's responsible for the RAW Berry Jam."

"Raw berry Jam?" Angelo asked.

"Makes the person who eats it want to take there clothes off." Dame Hanna said. "Pitch their kit. Strip their britches Drop there knickers."

"Got it." Angelo said as the others howled laughing.

"Ok." Lyra said. "You all have your assignments. With luck there will be a group of people who will gather over this. They will need leadership. Go to your assigned points in the city, and if needed organize and lead them to the castle."

"What about me?" Sasporilla asked?

"You're with us." Dame Splatterpalette smiled holding out her arms to Dame Hannah, Dame Phenix and Sir Borwhen.

"What's our assignment?" Sasporilla asked.

"Rescue squad if it all goes south!" Sir Borwhen said.

"Right." Sassy sighed.

Sasporilla returned to her dorm just in time to join the other ladies for breakfast.

"There's our last night owl!" Corina said with a coy puckered grin waving her wand and magically pulling out a chair at the breakfast table for her.

Sasporilla sat down beside a very sleepy Christin who still had paint on her hands from the nights activities.

"Goo--ow-ing Saspo-ila" Christin yawned. "Excuse me, I'm still so very tired."

"Yes." Sassy said. "You might want to wash your hands before breakfast."

"Oh!" Christin said taking notice of her paint-covered hands for the first time. "I'm so tired I didn't notice! Thank you!"

Christin scurried off as Corina carried out some fresh Gorgam Berry Biscuits. "Wait! Where is she going? Breakfast is ready!!!"

"She just forgot to shut her lamp off I think." Sassy smiled.

"There all done!" Kathleen said popping down out of a ceiling tile.

"OH MY G..." Sassy yelled surprised as Kathleen landed next to her and sat in the empty chair. "What were you doing up in the ceiling?"

"Kathleen was tapping into professor Binklycruggs Live Wire!" Corina winked.

"Live wire?" Sassy asked her hand over her pounding heart.

"Live Wire is the magi equivalent, in Avalon of muggle cable television. The difference is you just need to know the proper way to hook it up to a painting or mirror. Then how to activate it." Kathleen smiled. "It's a third year project, but a friend showed me the other day."

Kathleen pulled her wand and flicked it at the large dinning room wall mirror. Much to Sasporilla's surprise their reflection was replaced by twisted snowy interference.

"Just a few adjustments." Kathleen said twisting her wand a little to the left then back a bit to the right until the picture came in clear.

"This is AVN." A deep voice said.

"The Avalon news network!" Corina said. "Good enough for breakfast. We'll catch up on world affairs while we feast on some of the greatest culinary creations I have ever created!"

"Looks very good!" Jess smiled pouring a cup of Orange cugga-buggle tea, with a hint of Lion bee honey.

"BREAKING NEWS!" The headline flashed as music swelled catching the young ladies attention. Morgana Moonshadow the morning news anchor, a short fat older woman with an unpleasant expression on her face that reminded Sasporilla of Deloris Umbridge, came on screen next to a photo of the Witch Queen.

"Slandorous accusations rock the capital city this morning," Morgana Moonshadow snorted with disdain and disbelief, "as our glorious Witch Queen has been accused of having cheated her way through the trials all those years ago. We take you now to our palace reporter James MacNare. James?"

Sasporilla took a big gulp of sluva fruit juice, which was very bitter, but she barely noticed as she saw the crowds of people in the streets, on the live wire.

"Morgana," the rather dapper well dressed young reporter said looking rather excited, "People are waking up all across the city to the news of the Witch Queens alleged misdeeds appauled and angered!"

The camera panned across the crowd showing people holding up copies of the news paper screaming "CHEATER!" & "ABDICATE!"

"The crowd is outraged and looking for blood! It appears as if they're being lead by a small group of people."

"Can you get to one of the rabble rousers to interview?" Morgana Moonshadow asked.

Sasporilla nibbled nervously on a slice of toast as James MacNare quickened his step to catch up with the spiky red haired witch who didn't bother to wear a bandanna to cover her face

"Miss?" James MacNare called. "Miss? May I ask you some questions?"

"If you can keep up Sparky!" Lyra said chanting. "NO IN BETWEEN FOR A CHEATING QUEEN! BOUGENVALLIA'S NOT SO GREAT, THE WITCH QUEEN MUST ABDICATE!!!"

"What sort of evidence do you have to support such claims?" The reporter asked.

"Here ya go Sparky!" Lyra slapped a copy of the Avalon Examiner into his hands. "The Avalon Examiner ran this story to stop the Coronation of Bougainvillea Bent! They published the photo's show your viewers!!!"

James MacNare hesitated as he flipped through the pages but he turned the paper to the camera.

"Are you getting this?" MacNare asked getting a thumbs up from his camera man.

"The publisher was thrown in the castle dungeons by the Witch Queen and her supporters before he could get the truth out!" Lyra said. "He hid the copies, to keep his family safe, until he died. Then they reappeared. Look at the photos!"

The pictures were incontrovertible evidence. Bougainvillea Bent switching places magically with a person a dplit second before they crossed the finish line in the Witch Trials race. Bougainvillea Bent receiving outside help from masked wizards during the great Hunt! Worst of all she was seen to cast on the two count rather than the three during the final duel with the former Witch Queen.

"Disgraceful!" James MacNare said as they cut away to other footage of the mob storming the gates of the Royal Palace. With well placed BOMBARDA spells the gates blew wide open.

"That happened pretty easy." Kathleen sniffed as she tackled one of Corina's breakfast sandwiches. "For what's suppose to be a secure castle I mean. I'd have had much better security."

"You're right." Sassy said getting a chill. "It's a trap!!!"

The witch Queen, her golden hair twisted up tight and dressed in a beautiful gown of pearlescent white spun kneezal whisker and elven silver with royal gold filigree, her crown jewels and a cloak of endangered polar bear fur stepped out onto her balcony to address the angry crowd that spilled into her court yard. A very sleepy yet presentable Warlock King stepped out to stand behind her at her off side.

"What ever could be the cause of all this unrest?" The Witch Queen said innocently.

"The jigs up!" Lyra yelled like a cop from nineteen forties B movie as she climbed up onto a statue of a royal manticore. "The people know you cheated at your trials to become Witch Queen!"

"ABDICATE! ABDICATE! ABDICATE!!!" the people chanted.

"Is that what you want?" The Witch Queen asked. "Without even hearing my side? My explanation for my actions?" The people fell silent at the warm kind smile that washed over the Witch Queen's face. Tension filled the crowd as her hands came out and cupped her heart lovingly then with one swoop her wand appeared.

"MURUSIGNIS!" The Witch Queen cast a wall of flame around the castle. Those in the crowd unlucky enough to be caught in the inferno were burned to ash.

"Bougainvawe!" The Warlock King screamed shocked. "You immuwated aw those poa peopoo! They aw oua subjects! They wuv us!"

"I owe you NO EXPLANATION!" The Witch Queen screamed! "I am your Witch Queen! Who are any of you?"

"We are the Magi Knights of the table round." The voice of Angelo said from atop a gigantic Statue of the Warlock King. "Those sworn to defend Avalon from tyrants such as you."

"Time for you to go Bougainvillea!" Lyra demanded. "Abdicate and hold a new Witch Queen trial! We the people demand it!!!"

"You demand nothing!!!!" The Witch Queen said raising her hand.

A gray fog formed around the crowd. Sasporilla ran to her room and grabbed her broom. Bursting through the door onto her terrace, scaring the feathers of Jorge, she launched herself off the ledge into the morning air.

"I and I alone am the voice of Avalon." The Witch Queen said as her trap of a technomancy stone field hardened everyone inside the walls of the palace court yards, making them as living statues. "I decide who is worthy and who is not. I decide who will die today... and who will live. I decide when and where we expand our city into other areas of Avalon, and we will. We will soon take the lands of Elves, take the lands of beasts, take the lands of any we like. Those who do not move or will not comply will die. This is my WILL AS YOUR WITCH QUEEN!!!"

A silence fell across Avalon of Horror and shock at the true nature of the monster that lead them.

"You want a Witch Queen Trial?" Bougainvillea Bent said. "Only a challenger could remove me from my thrown and there is no one of Nobel blood who is worthy."

"Aunt Bougainvillea!" Sasporilla Bucket yelled as she landed her broom on a near by rooftop, her wand pointed to her own neck to amplify her voice. "I your niece, daughter of your eldest sister Wysteria Millificent Bent, Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket. Queen of the Worker elves challenge you to the Witch Queen Trials Elves and as an heir of the Nobel house of Bent. I never wanted this but you leave me no choice through your despicable actions and your murderous ways. To allow you to go on like this unchallenged would be criminal."

"So be it." The Witch Queen smiled.



# Sasporilla Bucket

The Girl With Pink Hair

# The Witch Queen of Avalon

By Darren Kelly

A Harry Potter Universe Fan Fiction



# The Witch Queen of Avalon

A Harry Potter Universe / Sasporilla Bucket Fan Fiction

by Darren Kelly

## Prologue

Witches and wizards were glued to their LIVE WIRES across the Avalon City for news, any news on the strange brave girl who had challenged the Witch Queen. Those without their own Live Wire, crowded into homes that had it, gathered around store fronts that sold it, or into bars and restaurants that might have one that broadcast Quidditch, Spharx or dueling matches.

The AVN logo flashed across every screen in the city. With the exception of old man Willowfobble who preferred watching old Gorb and Greeple cartoons.

"Breaking News." Morgana Moonshadow's toad like smug smile broke onto the screen. "We take you live inside the palace where our Glorious Witch Queen has graciously granted AVN snitch-cam's the chance to accompany her to prove that the upstart challenger is being well looked after as the trial is organized and as she, for the first time since that horrible day five days ago, confronts Sasporilla Bucket!"

Three separate golden snitches, fitted with small eyes on their fronts, flew around the Witch queen at a comfortable distance. Each one broadcasting a different angle back to AVN. The Witch Queen walked down a long hall way to a large door.

"As you can see." The Witch Queen said. "We are in the East wing of the palace, not in a dungeon. This is an area reserved for important guests. Ms.Bucket has a suite of rooms, though her door is locked."

The Witch Queen touched her wand to the door knob and saw it move from one side of the door to the other. With a twist it opened.

Sasporilla Bucket stood in the open door way wand in hand.

"The people want to see that you are being treated well." The Witch Queen said.

"I demand you free the people turned to stone in the court yard!" Sasporilla snapped looking past the Witch Queen at the camera.

"You DEMA...." the Witch Queen began to flare but then remembered the cameras. This girl was crafty. "I am nothing if not generous, forgiving and magnanimous! I will reverse the spell for those in the court yard and free the people."

"Thank you." Sasporilla said relieved.

"All but those who called themselves the KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE ROUND!" The Witch Queen smiled. "I will place them in the dungeons and make them your motivation of sorts."

"What do you mean?" Sasporilla asked.

"Well isn't it obvious?" The Witch Queen grinned evilly. "If you win the Trials and become Witch Queen you may pardon and free them as you like. If you fail and I remain Witch Queen... well then. They are mine to do with as I like, aren't they? I feel that's more than a fair offer."

"DEPULSO!" Sasporilla cast but the spell hit the shield spell in the door way and rebounded knocking herself back across the room.

"Now, now girl! That's unsportsman like." The Witch Queen said. "But that's the Spirit!!! You see it doesn't matter how you win the Witch Queen Trials, just that you WIN!!! There really are no rules. No one seems to understand this. But as you and your friends seem to think the trials should have rules of conduct and morality... you can be absolutely sure your trials will have them, Sasporilla Bucket!"

The Witch Queen waved her wand slamming the guest room door and moving the door handle back to the other side.

"Now be gone." The Witch Queen said waving her hand at the snitch cams that flew away cutting back to Morgana Moonshadow.

"You saw it here exclusively on AVN...." The miserable old witch began as Corina changed the channel to Witches Cooking Network.

"Poor Sasporilla." Kathleen said. "I wish we could do something to help her."

"I can't believe she challenged the Witch Queen!" Christin said.

"I can't believe she was Queen of the house elves and we never knew about it???" Jess smiled.

"Our Sassy is a gal of mystery." Corina smiled. "Oh Grizzelda's Cauldron is on!!! This Live Wire is the best!"

The unfortunate part about any form of vid was it seemed were the never ending flow of commercials, even on AVN. The commercial started off like typical Honey Duke's chocolate frog commercial, until the box was opened! Colours swirled in waves out of the box, as a the grinding hum of a middle eastern guitar began to rise. A chocolate frog peeked its head out and jumped towards the viewer, the album cover for the new album by the CHOCOLATE FROGS on its tummy. Three names flashed across the screen as the hit song "THE BAZZARE" played.

"MYRON WAGTAIL... ORPHEUS MANXX...TIMPANY MUNCHAUSEN... 3 OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN MUSIC!!!" The words pulsed. "ON SALE NOW!!!"

In London AVN was carried on most MAG-SKY cable packages above basic.

"I know, I know, I know!" Myron Wagtail yelled at two faces in his fire place embers." It's an inconvenience in the schedule but I need to be in Avalon for this!"

"The Witch Queen of Avalon wants us to play at the opening of these WITCH QUEEN trials?" Orpheus Manxx asked.

"She wants to see the look in my eye as she tortures my God daughter." Myron said. "I need to be there to support her. Protector if I can!!!"

"We're here for you dude." Timpany Munchausen smiled. "Frogs gotta do what a Frogs gotta do!"

"Thanks." Myron sighed with relief. "Orpheus?"

"Well you can't do this with out me." Orpheus Manxx sneered. "It will make the Hamburg show tight, but I feel you man. I'm in."

"Great." Myron said. "I'm adding a few people to our crew to get them in fast. People that have to be there!!!

The LIVE WIRE flashed bright red. "This is AVN BREAKING NEWS!" The toad like face of Morgana Moonshadow came on screen with a broad smile.

"The Royal Palace has released the official details on the Witch Queen trials EXCLUSIVELY to AVN!" Morgana Moonshadow said excitedly as if she were the luckiest and most privileged of witches. "The Trials will begin day after next! Oh my that's not much time for those lucky few, who will be receiving tickets to attend the trials that are to take place in the Avalon Angels Spharx Stadium by invitation only, to get a new outfit! The trials, are designed to be grueling tests that prove in the eyes of all the people of Avalon that those who compete for the rite of being our glorious leader will be the true Witch Queen!"

The large screen went black as Karry flicked her wand shaking her head. "Honestly Zac, I don't know how you can stand to watch that horribly biased woman?"

"Just keeping up with any information an Sasporilla." Zac said. "Not that that old Walrus would mention her name."

"Have you heard from Myron?" Karry asked.

"Expect to any minute." Zac smiled getting off the couch and walking over to his nervous love. "Don't worry. He'll get us in and we'll figure out some way to help her. She's always been there for us. We'll all be there for her."

"I just have this horrible feeling," Karry said hugging her husband, "that Sassy is all alone in this one."



# Chapter 1

The Avalon Angel's Spharx stadium sat just over one hundred thousand witches and wizards. It's giant circular white marble walls stood as a symbol of sports excellence. Second only to that of the Royal Avalon Crowns Quidditch Stadium, which sat close to a million fans, but was far to good for an upstart such as Sasporilla Bucket. Owls had been sent throughout the entire known worlds. Private invitations from the Witch Queen herself to come and witness the spectacle. The once in a life time show that promised not to disappoint. A special concert by the Chocolate Frogs plus other musical acts! Demonstrations of skill by the Royal Guard show division and the piece de resistance, the failure of Sasporilla Bucket to achieve her trials of Witch Queen.

The bright red screen read AVN as the deep easily recognizable voice of award winning actor Horace Brogthrole said "THIS IS AVN!"

The music swelled as the new AVN theme song for the Witch Queen Trials lead the new intro graphics onto the screen. The very monotone blue screen with a picture of Sassy hanging her head read "The Witch Queen Trial of Sasporilla Bucket" in an almost accusatory way.

The Graphic faded to the faces of James MacNare and Morgana Moonshadow who stood together in the press box in the empty stadium.

"Hello viewers." Morgan Moonshadow smiled like the cat who swallowed the entire bird cage. "We are moments away from the opening of stadium. The guests of our glorious most honourable and generous Witch Queen will begin to arrive any moment now! Our own James MacNare will be covering the Red Carpet arrivals! You'd better get down there James!"

"Indeed I shall!" James MacNare said apperating onto the red carpet as the main gates to the stadium opened. Large torches in the shape of wands sparked and burst alight! Royal guard marched out through the gate. Formal gold armour was the uniform of the day with full ground length capes, helmets with gold mask fronts. Each carried a sword, a spear, a 6 foot trumpet and of course a wand. They lined the red carpet between the road way and the gate creating a living wall of protection for the Witch Queens Guests to enter the stadium safely.

"As you can see the Royal guard is in full regalia for the event." James MacNare smiled as they raised their trumpets and blew an announcement as the first stretch vehicle pulled up. "And the first Royal guest has arrived!" A royal footman stepped up to the side of the long stretch vehicle and opened the door. The Witch Queen herself, wearing a most magnificent ivory coloured gown, stepped out onto the red carpet followed by the Warlock King in a finely tailored Black tuxedo.

"Your Highness." James MacNare bowed as she approached smiling. "May I ask who designed that lovely gown?" "This is of my own design James." Bougainvillea smiled humbly to the camera's. "My personal seamstress does the rest of course. She is just a miracle worker with a needle and thread!"

"Yes she cewtenwee is!" The Warlock King smiled. "Why she could make an O'd pototato wook wike a movie staw!!!"

The smile quickly left the Witch Queens face as they moved on past. The camera did not follow the Royal couple but the mic picked up the Warlock Kings "Ouch", "OOCH,", "OUCH!" Despite James MacNare's uncomfortably trying to talk over them.

"Oh my yes what a wonderful insite into the design talents of the Witch Queen."

"I'm sowwy! No I didn't mean you wooked wike a potato!!!"

"Back to you Morgana!" James MacNare smiled nervously.

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Sasporilla Bucket watched the event unfolding from the small holding area set-up inside the stadiums lavish visiting team locker room. Despite the plush couch and chairs, the Live Wire and buffet provided, it was still very much a prison. Royal Guards stood front at front and back entrances to make sure the young witch made no attempt at escape. Not that there was much point. The wards and spells to keep her locked in were probably none existent! The Witch Queen would like nothing more than for Sasporilla Bucket to run for the hills! A coward, to afraid to back up her convictions and try to save her friends.

The royal seamstress had created several spectacular outfits for Sassy to wear during the trials. Many jumpsuits that would allow for maximum movement and freedom, while reflecting style worthy of that of a child of nobility. Even if she were an upstart niece daring to challenge.

"Have you decided on an outfit yet miss?" The seamstress asked.

"The purple pants and shirt with my cloak that I was brought in with will suit me just fine." Sasporilla said.

"The cloak is of average quality st best miss but the clothes?" The seamstress questioned. "They're MUGGLE made clothes."

"Yes they are!" Sasporilla smiled. "And I'll wear them proudly, if someone will bring them to me?"

"Right away miss." The royal seamstress said.

Guests began to apperate in droves on the red carpet as more and more vehicle arrive carrying very important guests. Politicians, entertainers, important wizards and witches

From every world spilled in.

The oddest of which chose neither to apperate nor take any form of vehicle but to walk from where he had been staying. A frog the size of a small house elf, dressed in very simple white robes, carrying a bag and a flute stepped onto the red carpet accompanied by Professor Splatterpalette dressed in a beautiful Rainbow gown and Professor Phenix dressed in a gown of Red flame.

"Oh my!" James MacNare said waving his camera to follow him as he approached. "As you can see we are graced with the his grace, the holiest of holies, the Frogai Lama. The magi monk made famous in story & song!"

"Greetings kind soul," the Frogai Lama said, "blessings on you and peace on your Witch Queen."

"You were invited to the trials?" James MacNare asked surprised.

"I was!" The Frogai Lama smiled. "I could hardly refuse to witness this! The greatest moment in Magi history!!! I brought along two good friends with me to enjoy in the festivities. This will be a wonderful experience that people will speak of for a thousand years." The Frogai Lama continued down the red carpet into the stadium leaving everyone speechless.

"Do you think everyone will still be speaking of your failure in one thousand years Sasporilla?" The Witch Queen said smiling in the doorway, her footman carrying the clothing that Sassy had requested.

"I believe that one way or the other," Sasporilla said standing, "that people will speak of those who were brave enough to stand up to a tyrant. Maybe inspire more to do the same until there are no more tyrants...EVER!"

"Brave." The Witch Queen said amused, "to the last! Get dressed. Your on soon enough. I expect you to put on a good show. You are family after all. I don't intend to kill you, straight off, but if you test me?"

Sasporilla took her clothes and walked behind a changing screen. "If I test you? You'll what? I have no illusions about what you are aunt Bougainvillea! Don't try to make it seem as if you have some compassion?"

"I don't." The Witch Queen sniffed. "However your Uncle, the Warlock King is full of it! He has begged me to give you one last chance, And I will, when the time is right. For now dress in your mugglery and get ready for your challenges. The rules for each challenge will be explained before hand."

"Making them up as you go along?" Sasporilla sighed. "Pathetic and predictable."

"Insolent whelp I should..." the Witch Queen growled drawing her wand.

"Kill me? Right here? That will look good?" Sassy said no wand in hand. "Go on you bloody coward! Kill your unarmed niece for having a sassy mouth in front of all these witnesses!"

The Witch Queen had never had anyone, in her life look at her with such intense rebellion. Sasporilla stood before her almost nose to nose, showing no fear in her young eyes. The Witch Queen saw something else she had never seen before, admiration for her opponent!

"Well played Sasporilla Bucket." The Witch Queen said putting away her wand. "Well played."

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The dark maintenance tunnels below the Spharx fields provided the perfect clandestine meeting place for the Witch Queen to meet with her advisors moments before the festivities were to begin. Six darkly cloaked figures, wearing masks of gold, lined up before her.

"Today my most trusted advisors, my most powerful magi, my friends." The Witch Queen smiled, "I send you into a very one sided gladiatorial combat to protect my throne. I have set up a number of tasks that will give you ample opportunities to exterminate this fly buzzing around my crown!"

Laughter was low but sincere. The vicious bunch of wizard and witches could not wait to get their hands on the young witch and torture her. Henimaxx Dimm the technomancer who was now more machine than man. Marie Laveau the old witch that had hidden as a beautiful young professor feeding off innocent young necromancy

students at the University for decades. Gormlobim the twisted Hobgoblin who would sooner profit off the sale of his fellow fae than see to their benefit. However none was more eager to get a chance at hurting Sasporilla Bucket than Sheliza Amari. They had an old score to settle.

"In the event that you fail." The smile sliding from the witch Queen's face. "Bringing shame to me publicly before multiple worlds! I, have seen to it that no matter what, Sasporilla Bucket WILL... NOT... WIN!"

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"Royal Box M?" Narcissa Malfoy sniffed stepping inside following the usher. "It's a personal slight by Bougenvallia! This is all your father's fault for our social outcast Draco!"

"Yes Mother." Draco smiled. "If only father had listened to you, perhaps he wouldn't have gotten involved with Voldemort?"

Narcissa turned to glare at her cheeky son. He had grown quite the back bone of late and wore it well, though she found it most annoying!

"Seats M01 and M02". The Usher smiled and apparated away in a swirl to attend to others.

Narcissa Malfoy's eyes brightened when she saw that they would be sharing a box with the Frogai Lama and his guests. A cat like grin spread across her face as she walked past her seat and stood before the peaceful Frog man sitting in the lotus position on his seat between his two professors.

"It is an honour to meet you your holiness." Narcissa Malfoy nodded politely.

The Frogai Lama felt professor Phenix stiffen and placed his long thin froggy fingers on her arm to calm her. "Is it? In which way is it an honour?"

"To meet someone of your standing and prestige." Narcissa Malfoy smiled.

"I see." The Frogai Lama sighed. "You are a person of social standing and hold such things in high regard. You have not yet reached the first milestone on your journey to enlightenment. Though I sense there is that potential in you should you choose to walk the path."

Draco covered his smile with his hand politely as not to embarrass his mother any further.

"Now you young man." The Frogai Lama smiled. "You have discovered there is more to life than social standing and money. Good for you. The path is long and yours to walk. If you ever wish to stroll together for a day I shall gladly join you."

"Thank you sir." Draco Malfoy said ushering his shocked mother back to her seat as professor Splatterpalette cast a very inconspicuous silence barrier around them.

"Leave it to Bougenvallia to put a spy like Narcissa in our box." Professor Phenix said.

"Perhaps she was placed with us for her spiritual enlightenment?" The Frogai Lama said with a small smile.

Professor Splatterpalette burst into laughter. "Jeremiah, you always crack me up!"

"It's just that I've never liked any of the Black sisters." Professor Phenix said. "We have... history."

"I understand Josie." The Frogai Lama said. "However history, which is to be learned from, is as much gravel on the path you have already traveled. To continue to walk on it gets you nowhere. To carry it with you, weighs you down."

"You're right of course Jeremiah." Professor Phenix smiled letting go. "Thank you."

"Thank you Josie." The Frogai Lama said. "For walking the path of betterment and truth."

"And what path do I walk Jeremiah?" Professor Splatterpalette asked.

"Dina my friend your path is one of truth so unique no one else could walk it!" The Frogai Lama patted her arm.

"A soul so full of love and life, creativity and fierce loyalty to those worthy. I fear this world will lose you after this life. Your path is a complete one. You know what is important and are ready and worthy to move on... unless you choose to hang out and have fun. I could see you choosing to do that. As other old souls choose to stay behind and defend the world from the most despicable evils."

"Thank you Jeremiah." Professor Splatterpalette said, tears welling in her eyes.

The royal guards blew their trumpets, signaling the start of the tournament.

The Witch Queen and Warlock King stepped onto the royal balcony box hand in hand waving to the thunderous applause of the padded crowd. The Witch Queen drew her wand and cast the amplifying charm SONORUS. Placing the wand to her neck she smiled and began to speak.

"Welcome my guests." The Witch Queen said as she looked around the crowd almost lovingly. "It seems like it was only yesterday that we were gathered here to witness the right of passage which is a Witch Queen trial. That which comes when an old queen passes away and all of the young witches of Nobel birth are gathered to test their talents in games against each other. The best of whom will be crowned the new Witch Queen. I was the last Nobel girl to be chosen."

There was a wonderful round of applause as the witch Queen held up her hand feigning humility.

"Alas, the days of patience and decency are over." The Witch Queen sighed. "My good name besmirched by my actions in those trials. Did I do whatever it took to win? Yes, as I do what ever it takes to make things happen for Avalon! That is what a real Witch Queen does!!!"

The crowd erupted into thunderous applause. Narcissa Malfoy standing and clapping loudly. Draco tried not to let his disgust and disdain show.

"Draco!" Narcissa insisted. "Stand up and show some respect!"

"Yes mother." Draco said standing and silently clapping.

The Professors sat silently along with the Frogai Lama who enjoyed a bite of popcorn.

"I stand before you today, my throne CHALLENGED by my niece!"

Boo's filled the stadium. The Witch Queen held up her hand to silence them.

"Now, now." The Witch Queen said. "She is my niece after all. However there are no other girls of Nobel standing to compete against her in the challenge trials. So I have hand picked some of my Royal Guard and my most trusted advisors..."

A hatch in the stadium floor slid open and twelve cloaked figures levitated up on a platform that snapped into place. The twelve champions raised their wands in salute.

"... witches and wizards of magi society may I present to you my champions! Those whom I have tasked to test my challenger to her most extreme abilities! And perhaps and step farther. For that is what it means to be a Witch Queen!"

Thunderous applause echoed the crowds approval of the Witch Queens choice.

"But before we begin the trials I have arranged for you some entertainment." The Witch Queen said motioning to the stage which rose from the depths of center field. "My guests please welcome by Royal Command, The Chocolate Frogs."

"Hello Av-a-lon!!!!" Myron Wagtail screamed into the mic as the music began to swell. "Are you ready Avalon? Shake shake it, ya ya!"

Karry and Zac, dressed in coveralls moved around some random boxes back stage.

"Oy!" Principal Freemance, a rather up tight old man but one of the best back stage managers in the business, called out, "who are you two?"

"Mr.Wagtail's personal roadie's sir." Zac said showing his badge. "He wanted these boxes cleared and his rest station made ready for during Mr.Manxx's solo."

"Oh yes." Freemance snipped. "I remember Wagtail saying something about you. Well be quick about it. Stay out of the way of the regular workings and for goodness sakes keep it professional!"

"Yes sir." Karry nodded getting right back to work.

Once they were sure all eyes were off of them Karry and Zac ducked into a small broom cupboard and locked the door behind them.

"Ok." Karry said as she stripped off the coveralls revealing her normal clothes beneath. Reaching deep into her bag she pulled out a bluish/purplish cloak.

"I'm glad Harry lent that to you." Zac smiled.

"It took a bit of arm twisting." Karry said throwing the cloak over her shoulders and watching her body disappear.

"But Ginny plead our case for us."

"So you know the plan?" Zac asked.

"I go look around for Sasporilla and get her out of here." Karry smiled. "And I have until the ENCORE to look."

"That's right." Zac said. "Once they start playing Do the Hippogriff..."

"I have to get back and into my coveralls by the time Timpany Munchausen plays Black Magic Woman." Karry said kissing her husband and throwing the cloak over her head. "I know."

"It's a good thing they each chose to play one song each from their old bands for the fans." Zac said opening the door to allow Karry to slip away unseen. "It will give you enough time, hopefully."

The music rang through the stadium, lulling and exciting the crowd. It permeated down into even the deepest of tunnels beneath the structure. Karry moved as quickly as she dared past guards and around officials moving through on dubious duties for the Witch Queen. She turned one corner and came face to gigantic back end with an Erumpant.

A very angry woman dressed in khaki shorts and blue robes, with shoulder length blue hair yelled at two Royal Guards .

"Where am I going?" Professor Hannah yelled! "I am taking my bloody Erumpant, that you came and took from my bloody zoo along with a bunch of other of my beasts, without as much as a bloody BY YOUR LEAVE or MOTHER BLOODY MAY I, DID YOU???" You just came and took them!!!"

"By Royal command!" The guard said holding the Erumpants tether. "This beast belongs to the Witch Queen!"

"This Beast has a name!" Professor Hannah yelled. "Her name is Dolly and she is with child!!! She is in no state to do any task for your Witch Queens idiot games. Now let her go or I'll have her ram her horn right up your...."

"Ok, ok..." the guard capitulated. "We'll need some sort of replacement."

"I'll supply you something appropriate." Professor Hannah smiled. "Why just show your games keeper to me and I'll work everything out."

It was nearing the end of the Chocolate Frogs normal set when Karry found where Sasporilla was being held. The room was heavily guarded but easy enough to sneak into wearing Harry Potter's invisibility cloak. Sasporilla sat in a chair, her eyes closed, her mind fixed on the tasks at hand.

"Sassy." Karry whispered in her ear.

Sasporilla's eyes shot open but it took every bit self control not to jump.

"Sasporilla it's me Karry. I'm here to rescue you."

Sasporilla stood up and walked over to the outfit the Witch Queen's seamstress had designed for her. She picked it up with a look of reconsideration.

"Could I ask everyone to just step out side while I try on the outfit by the Queen's seamstress." Sassy asked politely.

"We're not letting you out of our sights!" The Guard said.

"I'm just asking for some privacy so I might try this on?" Sasporilla said.

"What's wrong with the dressing bind?" The guard asked.

"It's not private enough." Sasporilla said. "Not with all the snitch cams and eyes everywhere?"

"I guess you could use the mop cupboard over there." The guard said. "But leave your wand on your chair. Call it an act of good faith on your part and we'll go stand by the door."

"Fair enough." Sasporilla smiled pulling out her wand and leaving it on the chair. With a coy smile she walked over to the utility cupboard, pulled out a roll away cart mop and bucket, and stepped inside. Closing the door gently behind them.

"Silencio" Karry cast silencing all sound past the door as she pulled off the cloak.

Sasporilla hugged her best friend.

"You brave idiot." Karry said. "Leave it to you to challenge a psycho evil Queen to save your friends."

"You'd have done the same." Sasporilla smiled.

"Well don't worry," Karry smiled. "We have a plan to save all of you! You just pretend not to have liked this outfit and distract the guards, I'll stun them and..."

"No Karry." Sasporilla said.

"What?" Karry said surprised.

"No!" Sasporilla smiled. "I'm not a prisoner per say. I'm going through with this. If you can free my friends, then great, but there is something greater at stake here. The people of Avalon are under thumb of a tyrant. An evil psycho queen as you said yourself and she is a member of my family. This is my fight and believe me, if I know my aunt she's going to make all the challenges very one sided."

"Yes." Karry said. "In her favour. Sasporilla do you expect me to stand by and do nothing?"

"Cheer me on," Sassy smiled, "I imagine Zac is here somewhere too?"

"Yes." Karry nodded a tear rolling down her cheek. "We snuck in as part of Myron's crew."

"Understand that if I fail, it's going to take stronger better people than me to stand against The Witch Queen and her Royal court of thugs." Sasporilla smiled hugging her friend. "You are so much better at everything than me. I want you to promise if I fail you'll bring a bunch from our world to stop her. Other wise I fear after she finishes fully enslaving this one she'll come for ours."

"You are so brave Sasporilla Bucket." Karry said. "My best friend, and bloody idiot."

"You'd best get that cloak back on and get back out there." Sassy said.

"Yes," Karry said slipping the cloak of invisibility back on and vanishing from site, "I'm on a strict Schedule." Sasporilla walked out and tossed the seamstress' outfit over the back of chair.

"No I'll stick with what I have." Sassy sighed as she picked up her wand and sat down.

The Chocolate frogs were playing a version of Do the Hippogryff which meant they were in the encore and Karry had little time to return.

"Oh I love this song!" Sassy smiled. "Guard could you open the field door so I can hear it better. I promise I won't run."

The guard was gaining a lot of respect for this young woman. Everything he'd seen told him that she was a person that kept her word. Didn't lie and didn't play games. Unlike the her aunt the Witch Queen.

"Yes my Lady." He said walking up the ramp and opening the door to the stadium field. The music flooded in as Karry scurried out unseen and ran across the field back to the stage before the band finished its set.

Zac stood back stage holding Myron's towel and bottle of water as Karry rushed up beside him.

"Did you find her?" Zac asked.

"Yes." Karry smiled taking the bottle of water from him and casting a chilling spell as the band left the stage amidst the cheers of the fans.

"Did you rescue her?" Zac asked.

"No." Karry smiled handing Myron his water.

The pair were silent as they followed along until they got into Myron's dressing room.

"What do you mean you didn't rescue her?"

Zac asked. "What went wrong?"

"Sasporilla went wrong." Karry said. "She insists on going through with this."

"Is she mad?" Myron yelled! "To go through with this is suicide."

"She feels it's her responsibility to protect people." Karry said.

"That's our Sasporilla." Myron said. "Just like her mom. Taking care of everyone else over her bloody self!"



## Chapter 2

Nick Owlmore's shuttle arrived at majesty station to late for the chocolate frogs but he saw from the stations Live wire feed, The Royal Guard were taking the field to display their magical skills and talents. Marching in a living wave of gold and crimson, wands raised, they cast colourful bursts of stars into the air as they took the field. The cameras cut to the Witch Queen standing to applaud her Royal boys in gold.

Nick couldn't believe he'd ever had a schoolboys crush on Bougenvallia Bent when they were back at Hogwarts. He still remembered the day every illusion he had about her was shattered.

She was a pretty little thing, even if she was a Slytherin. Kid sister of his best friends girl Wisteria who was a Squibb but no one minded that. She was such a nice girl. Nick had tried talking to Bougainvillea a few times and gotten snide or grunting responses at best. Today he saw a chance, as she was working partnerless in potions, to get in a few words. Make a real impression and maybe, just maybe, ask her to the Spring dance!

"Hey there BOOGIE-WOOGIE!" Nick said walking up to Bougenvallia with his typical silly grin.

"Stop right there!" Bougainvillea bent said holding up her hand and turning around slowly. "I have had just enough of you Nichol-Fat-Ass!"

Nick's smile changed to one of confusion and embarrassment. "What? I...?"

"I know you think I'm pretty. All the boys want me on their arm and all the girls wish they looked just like me!" Bougainvillea smirked. "But I could never and would never be interested in a... thing like you! You are a fat, unkempt, mop haired, pudding of a boy with mud blood parentage. I am nobility. It is never to be. I would never even consider going to the Spring dance with the likes of you Nick Owlmore."

Stunned and hurt Nick stood quiet for a second then he got that trade marked dim whited smile across his face.



"Actually I just came over to tell you your text book was too close to your flame." Nick said. "No point now though really."

Bougenvallia turned to see her potions text book engulfed in flames. Professor Slug horn ran over casting an extinguishing spell as the class laughed at Bougainvillea's misfortune. Nick just put his hands in his pockets and whistled as he walked away.

Nick Owlmore reached the sidewalk in front of Majesty station looking for a cab to the stadium. He was right bloody late now and hoped they were still seating. If not he was more than prepared to make quite the scene. After all, it was his Goddaughter who was going through all this nonsense. Much to his surprise there was a Royal car waiting for him with a driver holding a sign, which read 'D.I.Nick Owlmore'.

"I'm Owlmore." Nick said lugging his bag over to the car.

The driver took the bag from the auror and opened the car door with a silent smile and nodded. Nick climbed in the back where a live wire screen carried the event live from the stadium. The Royal Guard displayed great skill in offensive and defensive spell combat.

In the stands the crowd cheered with excitement at the lavish display. All except for the Frogai Lama and his guests who found such an audacious performance nothing more than a display of force and a warning to those who would further stand against the Witch Queen.

"I do believe NOW would be the perfect time?" Professor Splatterpalette smiled.

"I could not agree with you more." Professor Phenix nodded.

"I still highly recommend against this." The Frogai Lama insisted. "Though I applaud your bravery at insisting on rescuing your friends, the chances of success are... slim. The Witch Queen is a crafty opponent."

"The Witch Queen is busy watching her polished legion play tickle tag on the field" Professor Splatterpalette said. "That's why I made these perfect copies of us to attend the trials while we sneak into the palace court yard and free our friends. I even made one for you Jeremiah, so you can come with us... if you care to."

"I wouldn't miss it for the world." The Frogai Lama croaked. "But understand, I am sworn a code of noninterference. I can not help you."

"Understood." Professor Phenix said as the three of them sat in the lotus position in their seats and shut their eyes. A moment of meditation and calm that few took notice of. Few except of course Narcissa Malfoy who just thought it ungrateful, and of course the Witch Queen.

"Just as I thought." The Witch Queen smiled patting the hand of her husband the Warlock King happily. "My Darling Hyronimus will you watch over me while I duck back to the castle in one of my Golemns?"

"Why It's always my pweasuh sweethawt." The Warlock King said, "Is something the mattah? Have the gawd dispweezed you?"

"Oh no, no, no dear." The Witch Queen smiled. "More Protestors are about to attack the castle in an attempt to free the others."

"Such insewence!" The Warlock King gasped. "But shoely the gawds can handew them?"

"Yes." Bougenvallia smiled mischievously. "But where is the fun in that?"

The Witch Queen sat back in her Royal throne and relaxed, closing her eyes. Her mind drifted down a tight path until her eyes popped open and she stood sat straight up. A thin veil of white lace fell to the bedside from where she lay. The golem, a magical body created from mud and ash shaped by spells to take on the form of specific witch or wizard. As undetectable as a polyjuice potion however only the consciousness of the person it is made for can inhabit it. That was what sat in the arena next to the Warlock King.

The Witch Queen stood, dressed in a long black gown. It felt good to wear the colour that suited her best. Bougenvallia walked across the room to the large double doors of the gardens court yard terrace and through them open. The Witch Queen took a deep breath of morning air as she looked over the magi knights of the table round still turned to stone below her.

"Your friends are coming to rescue you." The Witch Queen laughed. "Or should I say Join you!"

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The fact that the front gates to the castle were easily opened with a simple ALOHAMORA spell should have been their first clue. Professor Phenix pushed the gate open just enough to allow Professor Splatterpalette and the Frogai

Lama to slip through. The castle court yard stood empty, except for the stone forms of their friends, frozen as if statues.

"This feels to easy." Professor Phenix said. "The small hairs on the back of my neck are standing up!"

"I have an Alarm hair too!" Professor Splatterpalette said, "but you'll never in a million years guess where it is???"

The Frogai Lama held up one finger. "I do believe you we have company."

A long car pulled up outside the castle gates.

"What is this?" Nick Owlmore demanded. "I'm due at the stadium. Why the hell have you brought me here to the castle?"

When there was no answer Nick approached the drivers compartment and opened the door. The driver was gone. If he had ever been there at all.

"Looks as though old Boogie-Woogie wants a word with me after all." Nick said grabbing his bags and walking up the to the palace gates which sat conveniently unguarded and ajar. Nick drew his wand as he slipped inside the courtyard gates.

Much to Nick's surprise A robe-wearing frog sat cross-legged on a rock, ten feet from him. The odd site was just enough of a distraction for him not to notice the two wands pointing at his temples.

"Drop your wand." Professor Phenix demanded.

"Josie?" Nick said.

"Nick?" Josie smiled with pleasant shock. "What are you doing here?"

"I came for the trials." Nick said giving his long time friend a hug. The hug brought back so many warm and wonderful memories, and so many of the firsts that they'd shared in their young lives together oh so long ago.

"How are hubby and the kids?"

"No." Professor Splatterpalette said. "I think she means what are you doing HERE at the palace COURT YARD. Especially right now D.I. Owlmore... Godfather of Sasporilla Bucket???"

"A royal car picked me up at majesty station." Nick said. "And brought me here."

"Then it is indeed a trap." The Frogai Lama said as the gates slammed shut and bolted.

"Yes." A voice whispered on the breeze.

"Defensive positions!" Dame Splatterpalette commanded popping open the latch on her bag and reached inside for some surprises she'd made.

"I knew you'd come." The voice of the witch Queen whispered as she passed like a shadow behind Angelo's frozen form.

"There!" Nick said casting Bombarda, having his wand knocked upward by Dame Splatterpalette. The spell cast astray, it flew into the side of the castle, blowing a small hole in the bricks.

"Be careful!" Dame Splatterpalette chided the auror. "These aren't statues!"

"These are the people we've come to rescue Nick!" Dame Phenix said.

"Good lord!" Nick gasped.

The Witch Queens evil Laughter echoed around the courtyard. "You can't fight me."

"There!" Dame Splatterpalette pointed.

"I am shadow." The Witch Queen laughed.

"There!" Dame Phenix pointed as the shadow slithered out of site.

"I am death." The voice hissed.

Black tentacles of shadow shot forth from between the frozen prisoners. Dame Phenix cast IGNIS CLYPEUS! A large shield of flame spread forth from the tip of her wand fending off the tendrils. Dame Splatterpalette tossed half a dozen complex origami squares which unfolded themselves into living rainbow coloured warriors. Blades of light cut through the shadowy tentacles as howls of pain cursed forth from the mystical beast hidden in the darkened corners. Nick Owlmore repelled tendrils that attempted to flank them from the sides or over the top of the flame shield. It was then, looking up, that he saw her.

"Boogie-Woogie you crafty old Witch." Nick said.

No more than a ripple one might mistake as a trick of the light, Nick saw the Witch Queen standing on her terrace manipulating her creature as a master puppeteer would her marionette.

A very heavily charged and silently cast BOMBARDA MAXIMA caught Bougenvallia quite by surprise and blew the terrace out from under her. The shadowy tendrils shriveled and disappeared into the ground as the Witch Queen arrested her fall, levitating before them.

"I knew you couldn't resist coming for your friends while you thought me busy at the trials." The Witch Queens evil grin spread across her face. "Like rats drawn into a trap for a bit of cheese. Pathetic."

"There are three of us and one of you Bougenvallia." Dame Phenix spat.

"Three?" The Witch Queen mused counting including the Frogai Lama still sitting quite patiently.

"Oh I've sworn a vow of non-interference in historic events." The Frogai Lama smiled. "Remember? You were there? In the shadows."

"What is he talking about?" Dame Splatterpalette demanded tightening her grip on her wand.

"You're not Bougenvallia Bent are you?" Nick Owlmore asked.

"She was the best, the brightest, the cruelest of girls that day." The Witch Queen Giggled with mad delight. "Like all those who had come before her she was proven to be the perfect vessel. The perfect next body to house me. The one true Witch Queen. She who brought shadow to Avalon.. She who tricked and enslaved the worker elves. She who is the greatest and most feared witch of any world!"

"Baba yaga." Nick Owlmore whispered.

The form of Bougenvallia Bent, The beautiful witch Queen, fell away. An gnarled old hag made of wood took her place. Baba Yaga's legs were made of straw and sticks, her arms like thin twisted limbs of trees. Her Hair was like straw infested with snakes. Snakes?

"Don't look in her ey..." Nick began but it was too late. The tree heroes had all been turned to stone as Baba Yaga's hideous laugh echoed through the court yard.

The sound was enough to crack the outer shell of a cocoon in the high branches of the courtyards golden cherry tree. From within crawled out a shining pink fairy dragon. Flossy had transformed!!! With a pop Gooseberry the faery appeared.

"Welcome back." Gooseberry smiled. "I'm Gooseberry. I'm a friend of your Sasporilla. This neither a good place nor time to be in it. I've promised to keep you safe so we should be off."

Flossy looked over at the wooden old witch walking amongst the statues, gloating. "It's so good to add you to my collection. I don't really want you for anything other than targets in the trials. That should cause Sasporilla Bucket such pain. Guards! Come move these to the stadium!!!"

The witch Queen returned to her beautiful magi form before the guards could arrive.

"Who is that?" Flossy The pink Faery dragon mewed at Gooseberry.

"That is the one who wants to hurt your Sasporilla!" Gooseberry said.

Flossy got a very angry scowl on her face as she flapped her new wings and blew a puf of a pink cloud.

"No you don't Tiger!" Gooseberry said hopping on her back. "You're not ready for a fight with that yet! Let's get you to a safe place"

The Frogai Lama watched the two Faeries disappear as Royal guards marched in to start carrying off the prisoners, turned to stone. The Witch Queen walked up and stood before him and smiled.

"You don't fear me little frog." The Witch Queen sighed.

"I do not," The Frogai Lama smiled, "old hag."

"AVADA KEDVARA!!!" The Witch Queen Cast blowing the golem of the Frogai Lama to ash.

"No!!!" The Witch Queen cursed.

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The Frogai Lama's eyes fluttered open as the Royal guard marched off the field. The Warlock King stood cheering and applauding "BWAVO! BWAVEESAMO!!!"

Narcissa Malfoy had passed out at the side of the Frogai Lama's two female guests turning to piles of ash in their seats, and was being fanned by her son.

"I take it all didn't go as planned?" Sir Malfoy asked.

"It depends on who's plans you ask of?" The Frogai Lama said, pulled out his flute, and began to play a most pleasant tune.

## Chapter 3

"What a spectacular display of the magical skilled men and women of the Royal guard whom protect us every day!" Morgana Moonshadow gushed.

"Right you are Morgana!" James MacNare smiled as a fog began to roll in across the floor of the stadium and ominous organ music sounded the coming of something big. "Wait I do believe we're getting the signal?"

"Yes James." Morgana interrupted with a wand poke to his ribs. "This is what we've all been waiting for... the start of the WITCH QUEEN TRIALS!!!!"

The Warlock King turned and took his sleeping wife's hand.

"Oh Bouganvaweeah!!!" The Warlock King pleaded. "Pweese weetun!!! You must! The tunoment is about to stawt!!!"

The Witch Queen's hand crumpled to ash and traveled up her body. He looked into her face in horror as his Beautiful Bougenvallia disintegrated before his very eyes. He took a deep breath to let out a most heart-wrenching scream.

"SILENCIO!" The Witch Queen cast as she appaerated in, anticipating her Kings reaction.

Hyronimus Rodrovich stood there confused, screaming in silence, as Bougenvallia ran her hand softly over his face and walked over to the Royal Boxes railing.

"I'm fine my love." The Witch Queen said. "I sent a golem in my place, in case of trouble. So just calm down."

"OBSCURUM!" The Witch Queen cast causing a veil of darkness to enshroud the stadium.

"LUMOS!" Cast a soft spotlight on the Witch Queen as she cast the voice loudening charm and placed her wand to her neck.

"My friends," The Witch Queen began. "Honoured Guests, and Loyal subjects, it is time for the tournament for my throne to begin."

There was trepidacious applause as the crowd was unsure how to react.

"I welcome onto the field my champions." The Witch Queen smiled humbly as the six Royal guard elite lead the way for the six of her trusted advisors. Their wands alight they marched to center field and formed a semi-circle around a place where a deep red spotlight formed.

"Never, in the history of the Witch Queens has there been a challenge such as this." The Witch Queen said. "A young girl so greedy for the throne, so impertinent and self important that she feels she alone deserves it over every other girl of Nobel magi birth."

There were many boo's from the crowd based on the spin the Witch Queen put on the motivations for the challenge, as Sasporilla Bucket was levitated up on a platform to field level, from the tunnels below. "I give you SASPORILLA IMAGINARIUM BUCKET."

Sasporilla stood in her favourite purple muggle pants and shirt, with purple and pink cloak. Her bag stretched across her shoulder.

"You may draw your wand Sasporilla Bucket," the Witch Queen scowled, "bit your bag is not allowed. Guards remove it!"

Sasporilla reached into her bag and grabbed her wand. Beside it sat the small wish box her father had gifted her all those years ago. She smiled and cupped it in her hand.

"Dad," Sassy sighed, "if ever I needed to know what spell you cast on me as a baby to protect me from my family, that turned my hair pink... it's now."

Sassy drew her wand and stuffed the small box stealthily in her pants pocket as the guards roughly took the bag from her.

"Carefully you brutes!" Sasporilla shouted. "I expect everything to be untouched in there when this is over!"

"There Will be SEVEN trials of endurance, intelligence, and other physical, mental and magical skills that you will face today to see if you are worthy of a chance to hold the Royal Scepter of Avalon which will decide if you are even right for the roll of witch Queen?"

"Why not skip the show and just let me touch the scepter?" Sasporilla asked. "Let it decide?"

"The trials are for YOU to prove to the PEOPLE you are worthy!" The Witch Queen grinned. "Do you not think suddenly you can endure the trials? Just like everyone in your generation! You want it all handed to you!!! You don't want to work for anything!!!"

"I don't fear you or your trials." Sasporilla stiffened. "Bring them on."

"Very well." The Witch Queen snapped. "If, the scepter accepts you, then you and I will duel. To the death. The winner will be Witch Queen."

"I don't wish to kill anyone." Sasporilla said.

"Then you are too weak to be a Queen." The Witch Queen laughed encouraging the crowd to laugh with her. "But then you already are a Queen aren't you? Greedy little girl! It is in this Nobel bloodline of yours that we have a problem. You have Elf blood and there fore have mastered elven magic haven't you?"

"Yes." Sasporilla said honestly.

"Yes." The Witch Queen smiled. "At least you're honest. Now tell me girl, you made me a promise didn't you? To grant me one favour of my choosing when asked? For saving the life of your worm rat?"

"Yes." Sasporilla sighed.

"Very good." The Witch Queen smiled. "I will be needing to insure that you do not use Elven magic during these trials. There fore I ask you for the favour of asking your elven people to curse you with the "Glielbelthi"."

Prime Minister Wurloo appeared on the field, walking through the smoke, casting it aside as much as one would an annoying fly. He walked up to Sasporilla with a sad look of concern.

"My Queen is this what you want?" Prime Minister Wurloo asked.

"I don't even know what it is?" Sasporilla said.

"We turn your crown from gold to iron." Prime Minister Wurloo said. "It will stop you from being able yo do elf magic. You'd be an ordinary magi!"

"Can it be undone when all this is over?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes, but..." Prime Minister Wurloo began.

"But?" Sasporilla smiled.

"You have to survive!" The old elf said on the edge of tears.

"I'll do my best." Sasporilla said. "I agree to your favour request Witch Queen."

Sasporilla took a knee before her Prime Minister. The golden crown formed on her head as he pulled it from her and held it up. Prime Minister Wurloo snapped his fingers calling forth the worker elves two most accomplished and notorious weavers, Crinklesunpin and her brother Crumplegoldjinn. It had been a few years since Sasporilla had seen the two elves. They looked all the worse for ware these days now that they were no longer the masters of so many slaves.

"Crumplegoldjinn...Crinklesunpin." Prime Minister Wurloo began. "Will you assist your government by altering the crown of Queens Crown. Cursing Sasporilla Bucket with the Glielbelthi?"

"With..." Crumplegoldjinn said.

"...Pleasure!" Crinklesunpin smiled.

The weavers of light and darkness touched their long spindly fingers to the edges of the golden crown and re-wove the fabric of its metallic structure turning it from magical gold to a ring of simple iron. Prime Minister Wurloo placed it on Sasporilla's head. The heavy iron ring glowed hot for just a second as the curse took hold, and sat permanently on her head. When Sassy snapped her fingers her Elven magic was gone.

"Thank you house elves." The Witch Queen smiled. "Now go clean something."

The crowd laughed at their expense. Without Sasporilla to protect them, they were wide open for attack.

"Just because you've disabled our Queen, don't think we are disempowered Witch Queen." Prime Minister Wurloo smiled. "We have our own government now, our Queen was just a figure head... though we have Sasporilla Bucket to thank for organizing us. We are the ones who do your work. So speak harshly to us. See what it gets you!"

With a snap of their fingers the house elves were gone. Sasporilla Bucket laughed as the Witch Queen stood with her gob hanging open.

"Insolence!" The Witch Queen said.

"No." Sasporilla laughed. "That's the confidence that comes from education, and empowerment! Once they're free they'll be an even greatest people. Think of what the subjects of Avalon will be like once I can show them life, love and new way to self govern once you're gone?"

"ENOUGH!" The Witch Queen screamed.

The crowd was starting to murmur. They were discussing what the girl was saying. Talk was dangerous. Thought was dangerous. People are sheep and must be lead!!!!

"To give hope to slaves is just cruel!" The Witch Queen said. "You dangle a sock before them with no way of ever giving it to them! IF you ever intended to give it to them at all? But enough of this... LET THE TRIALS BEGIN!!!"

The crowd erupted in applause as the smoke on the field cleared. Thirteen stone slabs appeared. All were Frustum's of equal size and weight of about ten tons.

"Each of you will stand on the line..." the Witch Queen instructed as a blue line glowed on the ground ten feet from the giant stone blocks. "Drawing your wands on the starting signal, and not before, you will have one cast to levitate the Frustum. You must maintain the levitation the longest. If you do not Sasporilla Bucket, you do not advance to the next trial. Do you understand?"

"Yes." Sasporilla said stepping up to the blue line with the others.

"Then on the count of three you may begin." The Witch Queen said "One... Two..." the Witch Queen began.

One of the Royal Guard jumped the gun and began to levitate his stone block early.

The blue line glowed and tendrils of electricity wrapped around him, electrocuting the guard, forcing him to drop his stone.

"I said not before the full count!" The Witch Queen said playfully as the Royal Guardsman dropped dead. "... Three! You may begin!"

The group of magi cast their spells. Sasporilla smirked at the witch Queen as she turned to her block and cast "LEVIOSA AUTOMATOPOETUS!"

The Frustum rose in the air before her and levitated in place. Sasporilla knew that no amount of distraction or lack of focus would make a difference with this spell. Unlike most of the wingardium leviosa's cast, this was an engineering spell Angelo had taught her. It was used to magically suspend building materials permanently in areas that were otherwise impractical to build on.

This was all too easy to stand and concentrate on holding the large blocks in the air. Too easy perhaps.

"Let's start the fun." The witch Queen smiled clapping her hands.

The sound of buzzing and clicking started to fill the air as a cloud formed over the stadium. The cloud moved down to reveal that it was a swarm of Doxys. The small black hairy creatures with beetle like wings and large mouths of razor sharp teeth descended quickly of the contestants of the trials.

The crowd cheered as the faery like creatures buzzed around the champions who swatted at them with their free hands, trying desperately not to break focus.

"PROTEGO" Sasporilla cast a bubble of protection around herself forcing the Doxys to bounce off.

Magical blasts saw some of the nasty little pests blown apart in clouds of red and green as stones fell with a crash crushing some. Though the bulk of them easily avoided the spells. Their razor sharp little teeth found exposed flesh and sank in with screams of their victims. Others climbed through the folds of robes or up the plates of armour looking for a place to feed.

One of the champions, swatting at the Doxys wildly, pulled the golden mask from her shifting form. Sheliza Amari's beautiful older face shifted into that of the Wedjat! The twisted creature opened its gaping maw and spewed forth a cloud of small black red spotted Sarcobphlygae. Deadly flesh eating desert lady bugs.

"akllahm aldaksii!!!" The Wedjat hissed.

The cloud of Sarcobphlygae swarmed the Doxys nibbling into their tiny faery like flesh. The Doxys stopped their attacks to and started swatting at the small insects. With squeals and hisses the Doxys flew off taking the Sarcobphlygae with them. A double shifting cloud in the Avalon sky, attempting to retreat back to the Doxy swamplands outside of the cities southern borders.

"INFERNIA!" The Witch Queen cast a huge plume of flame into the air incinerating both the Doxys and the Sarcobphlygae, which wafted back to the coliseum floor as ash.

Twelve Frustum stone blocks sat on the field, while one still hung in the air, levitating. That stone was Sasporilla Bucket's. Sassy stood proudly while the other champions, bleeding and out of breath, hung their heads.

"Winner." The Witch Queen smiled reluctantly, "Sasporilla Bucket."

The crowd applauded politely until the Frogai Lama stood and began to clap. The crowd went wild clapping, hooting and hollering there approval, much to Witch Queens Chagrin.

Sasporilla turned and waved to the people then took her place in the line of champions. Her stone still levitating when the Frustums disappeared.

As the crowd settled one lonely clap could still be heard from the crowd which seemed to echo through the stadium. The slow defiant clap, of the Frogai Lama. The one person amongst the many who appreciated the value of Sasporilla's struggle and the importance more than ever of staying on her path.



## Chapter 4

"I buy your used wands!" The bloated face of the annoying man on the live wire pitched his commercial. From the way he made it sound like a trip to his pawn shop was like a day at the North Pole visiting Santa Clause, or a day of visiting Gringots where every vault was open and the galleons were yours for the taking! A fun filled day of gifts and gold and all you had to was.. "bring me your old used magical heirlooms, cloaks, bags, brooms. I'll give you Galleons! 415 Main Street Avalon! Ruggle Toliver baby! Oh yah!!!"

The live wire screen faded to black then back to then back to the Tournament. The toad faced grin of Morgana Moonshadow filled the screen. "Welcome back viewers to the second event of the Witch Queen trials tournament. Let's go down to the field live with James MacNare. James, can you here me?"

"Yes Morgana." James MacNare smiled into the camera. "I'm here at field level hoping to capture the reactions of champions as the next task is revealed."

The trumpets sounded.

"Ah!" James MacNare said. "It looks like this is it!"

The Witch Queen stood in her royal box overlooking the stadium. The champions and Sasporilla Bucket stood in a line looking up at her.

"Champions," the Witch Queen addressed looking crossly at Sasporilla, "and .... you... the next task of the tournament will rest you skill in flight."

Brooms appeared at the feet of the champions. Heroku Golden Dragons, the fastest brooms on any world. At Sasporilla's feet appeared her Triumphant twelve-hundred X, a much slower broom. Much to the displeasure of the Witch Queen, Sasporilla Bucket smiled.

"You will traverse an air-borne obstacle course." The Witch Queen said. "Flying through each of the golden rings at least once. There will be several distractions attempting to dislodge you from your broom."

The crowd laughed and cheered at the thought. The Witch Queen smiled at their joy.

"And as an added bonus," the witch Queen smiled, "you may play blast tag! Try to knock each other off your brooms. Last one on their broom, to complete the rings course, will be the winner. Ready your brooms."

The champions held out their hands and collectively commanded "UP!"

Sasporilla mounted her broom casually and felt it grip her. She was not falling off easily. A great feature of the Triumphant brooms.

The sky of the stadium filled with large golden rings. Royal red flags floated in the air crossing and zipping up and down, back and forth, creating quite the flying hazard.

"FLY!" the Witch Queen commanded.

The champions took off with a shot. The slower Sasporilla Bucket bringing up the rear much to the joy of the Bougenvallia until she saw her niece draw her wand and cast her first "BOMBARDA!" into the tail of one of her guards brooms, blowing it out from under him, just as he was to pass through the first ring. The guard dropped and hung on the gold ring by one hand. Sassy flew through the ring low, grabbing the guards hand and flew down to the field dropping him safely below. The guard looked up amazed at the brave act of kindness from the young woman. This was not like the Witch Queen he knew. Perhaps this one would be different?

Sasporilla flew close to the stands casting defensive spells, stave off attacks from a very persistent royal guard. She caught the eye of the Frogai Lama who smiled at her as she cast back an offensive jinx knocking the guard from his broom.

"Good shot Ms.Bucket." the Frogai Lama chuckled as the young Witch flew off.

Sassy remembered how her mother read her the tale of the Frogai Lama from the children's book Poggie Pompouries Magical Stories. She could still here her mothers voice as she read it aloud at the side of her bed, inset into the book case in their small apartment over the pub in Avonshire.

"Gather round children and listen well

To Poggie Pompourie and the stories he tells." Wysteria Bucket would smile as read the opening line of the book.

"Which story will it be tonight young miss? Wiggly piggly? The silly snake? The Frogai Lama?"

"You pick mummy!" Sassy would say. Wiggly Piggly was her favourite but she knew her mother tired of reading it.

"Perhaps we'll read the FROGAI LAMA tonight! There's a good message in that one." Wysteria said as she flipped over to the page with a picture of a big green frog in robes sitting in the lotus position on a toadstool playing a flute. It always made a little Sasporilla Bucket laugh. It was so silly.

### \*\*\*The Frogai Lama\*\*\*

Jeremiah Bullthroade was born the First and only son to a very power Wizarding family a Millennia ago. The First student to be sorted by the sorting hat of Hogwarts and the first

Proud Hufflepuff to graduate. First of his family to get the order of Merlin, First class.

Not since Merlin himself had there been a Wizard quite as accomplish, nor as powerful as Jeremiah Bullthroade.

"The World is your oyster son!" His father laughed. "Crack it open and choose your pearl!"

To which he meant any profession he chose was open to him. Any path he chose to walk the Wizarding world seemed to clear so that it was free of obstacle for Jeremiah Bullthroade to walk. To the surprise of all in the Wizarding World from all of them he walked away.

Jeremiah Bullthroade was not a wizard who sought greater power through control of spell nor position or influence. All Jeremiah sought was inner peace. To find that balance he felt the wizarding world had lost with the muggle and natural worlds.

One night, after everyone had gone to bed Jeremiah decided it was time for him to set off into the world to find the answers he sought. He took with him only the robes on his back, his wand and a small bag containing some food and his favourite flute.

Jeremiah wandered his homeland. Worked small jobs for food as he traveled but found the same basic philosophies of personal greed before the greater need was like a black spot on the area that spread from place to place.

He found the greatest peace alone with his thoughts, in nature, playing his flute amongst the plants and animals. Away from the games and lies of muggles and wizards alike.

It was one day, after many years alone wandering far to the east, that Jeremiah happened upon a very small village at the base of a very large mountain. The people of the village were so very calm and happy. They welcomed him right in. A stranger to them, they smiled and said they welcomed al into their homes and hearts who would also welcome all into their hearts.

Jeremiah was one who never suffered fools or dark wizards lightly but always welcomed those who loved into his heart. The towns people seemed to sense that about him.

It was almost a week before Jeremiah found the right words to ask the town elder, "Where did your people learn such peace and wisdom?"

"From the monks of the mountain." The elder smiled.

It was early the next morning Jeremiah set out for hi journey up the mountain. The towns people very kindly packed him three days of food and drink. More than enough to last him... surely.

The path up the mountain was well warn and wound its way around and around. Jeremiah thought it would take many days just to get around once. He looked for a shorter way up the steep impassable slopes of the mountain but there was only the path. Jeremiah debated various spells he'd learned that would allow him to bypass the twisty windy path and fly right to the top as he walked. He thought of a levitation spell which he could use to carry himself upward but that would never get him all the way to the top. He thought of perhaps of going back to the village and enchanting a broom? No that would take far to much time and he wanted to get to the top as quickly as possible. What he did notice were the animals! The birds did not fly strait up but along the path. The goats did not climb the steep rocks but walked along the side of the path. The dogs from the village who followed him so far, followed up the path but did not stray from it, and when they returned they returned to the village by the path. Jeremiah pressed on up the path. As he rounded the side of the mountain he saw a small stone well. He stopped for a moment and drank from its cool spring waters. Carved on the slab were the words "The path is long."



Jeremiah walked on up the path and after a few hours around the mount reached another small stone. Set into it was a small bag of nuts and a bottle of water. An inscription carved in said. "The path provides those in need." Jeremiah took out the food and water he brought with him from the village and had some of that, leaving the nuts and water for the next person that might actually NEED it. Then he continued on.

By the time it was getting dark Jeremiah was fully around the back of the mountain and came to the edge of a great treed area. The lights from torches in a temple beckoned him forth. A stone on the path at the forest entrance said "The First and most important lesson of the path is patience."

Jeremiah decided to camp just outside the forest for the night. A comfortable sleep, under the stars, wrapped in his cloak quite snugly, using his bag as a pillow.

In the light of day Jeremiah saw that the Temple was separated from the path a deep gorge in the forest floor. Only a thin foot bridge to the left of the path, invisible in the night, could carry him across. Jeremiah crossed the foot bridge to the temple and was met by a small smiling monk.

"Hello my young friend." The monk bowed. "Welcome to the temple of the path only the patient and those who understand need over greed make it this far. What is your name boy?"

"Jeremiah." The young Wizard smiled.

"What do you seek on the path?" The monk asked.

"Inner peace." Jeremiah said. "To find balance between our two worlds."

"Magi and muggles you mean?" The monk sighed. "Are your eyes so clouded that you still see only two worlds?"

"I don't understand?" Jeremiah said.

"Good." The monk smiled. "An admission of ignorance means you can learn. You start tomorrow."

A thus Jeremiah started his life of learning at the temple of the path. There he learned there were many more than two worlds within even their own two worlds. Worlds of nature, of animals and insects, plants and water, air and eliminates. Worlds microscopic and larger than the mind could comprehend beyond dimension.

He learned there were many paths, which could be taken to stray from the path. Learned that the true path itself lead far from the mountain before returning to it and like all points on the path, taught many valuable lessons.

Jeremiah traveled far and saw much when he returned to the temple of the path a very old man.

Jeremiah learned that the path continued on up the mountain and at it's top was a book where all answers would be revealed. No monk had ever earned the right to walk the path that high up the mountain to read the book. Only the first monk, the Lama who put it there was a soul of learning pure enough. Until the monks were gifted with another like the Lama, one willing to for-go death and reincarnate themselves to continue learning, would one be worthy.

It was on his passing day, in the place between here and what comes next, in a pleasant glade that he met the first Lama.

"You are not the first to come before me on the path." The Lama said. "This is where you must decide, will you leave the path and continue on to death or will you return to a new life and experience a new world? Choosing to continue the path as the new Lama?"

"I choose to continue to live as the new Lama." Jeremiah smiled.

"You may choose your form to return as." The Lama said showing him a stone and ushering him forth. "Simply touch the stone thinking of what you would return as and you will live again."

And live again he did. Jeremiah returned again and again. Walking the path, living and experiencing the worlds of many. Assuming many forms, some for only a day as the Fruit Fly Lama, the Cricket Lama, and the Bumble Bee Lama. He tried a longer more static life as the Maple Lama for two hundred and forty years, learning much about plants and nature and how the worlds interact with them.

No lives game him as much pleasure, nor did he learn as much as from his lives as the Dogai Lama, the Monkai Lama, and the Llama Lama which was one of his favourites just because of the title. It was of course in this life Jeremiah chose the path of the Frogai Lama. Sticking mostly to the peaceful world of his pond, sitting on his toad stool playing his flute. Enjoying the company of those who visit, from time to time. Especially those who brought a nice bottle of wine.

It was only in his second year as the Frogai Lama that Jeremiah returned to the temple of the path.

"Frogai Lama?" The high monk smiled. "We were not expecting you?"

"No one ever expects either glad tidings nor grave news." The Frogai Lama said.

"Which do you bring?" The monk asked.

"I only ever wish glad tidings." The Frogai Lama said. "I have come to walk the path up the mountain."

"To complete your journey?" The monk said sadly.

"Oh no!" Jeremiah smiled. "I have figured out what's in the book already. Some may see it as an end to the path. I see it as the beginning of the path! All of this has just been preparation for what truly is the spirits journey."

"You have given the correct answer." A voice said from a stone slab which slid aside revealing the path up the mountain.

Jeremiah, The Frogai Lama, walked his way up the mountain side, using his flute as a walking stick. Over many days he walked the path around and around up the mountain. Stopping for food and water occasionally, Stopping only to rest at night and enjoying the best of the days blue sky and the wild flowers that bloomed on the mountain side.

A small temple resided on the mountain top. Inside on a pedestal was a large book bound in carved gold and finely tooled leather. The Frogai Lama opened the book and looked inside. It opened to reveal two pages of polished mirror which reflected his smiling face. Truly all the answers of the universe all the answers of the path could be found inside oneself if they only chose the path.

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Sasporilla Bucket passed through the final ring as it split into two, all of them across the field did, and the intersecting rings began to rotate making them impossible to fly through. A blast of green energy flew past her left shoulder as she rolled to the right.

Sassy hung on to the grip tight as she headed straight down and looked back. It was Henimaxx Dimm, the technomancer on her tail, casting green death in the hopes of gaining highest favour with his Queen. Sasporilla pulled up into a reverse belly up ground skim maneuver that would have made Madame Hooch proud.

Henimaxx Dimm cast blast after blast at her, but she was bobbing and weaving to quickly between the rings, that were taking the hits for her. He switched on his advanced targeting systems. The algorithms would predict clearly just where she would go, based on her previous tactics and flight history.

Henimaxx Dimm backed off allowing his prey to a moments breathing room. As his system charted her course. Just as she'd hoped.

Sasporilla headed towards the largest of the center rings. A pesky royal guards-man attempting to sideswipe her by surprise was met with a "PETRIFICUS TOTALUS" spell that sent him plummeting to the ground but was stopped by a merciful "ARESTO MOMENTUM."

Sasporilla turned her wand forward to the giant ring, which had split into two intertwined spinning rings, and cast "CELERO!" The rings rotation began to hasten. Spinning quicker and quicker as she approached.

Henimaxx Dimm flew in comfortably behind her. The red targeting reticle in his eye swerving back and forth as it tried to lock on to her. His wand out stretched in a steady mechanical hand.

"Just a bit more." His tinny voice laughed as he accelerated closer.

"PULSUS DISRUPTO!" Sasporilla cast a huge blue bubble of energy which hung in the air and expanded out. Neither she, nor Henimaxx Dimm could help but fly through the magically cast localized electromagnetic pulse.

Every system in Henimaxx Dimm began to fritz and sputz, shutting down and locking up, as the technomancers metallic body froze on his broom. Sassy turned to watch the old technomancer, unable to turn his Heroku Golden Dragon as it flew into the ever increasing speeding rings, and was shattered into a million micro-circuits.

The crowd cheered as the final ring had formed on the stadium floor and all other riders had been knocked off their brooms. Sasporilla landed in the ring, dismounted her broom and held it over her head triumphantly.

"Bravo!" Cheered the Frogai Lama.

"Damn!" The Witch Queen cursed very displeased.



## CHAPTER 5

Sasporilla Buckets Triumphant twelve hundred X broom was levitated high above her for all to see by the Witch Queen.

"Behold!" The Witch Queen said. "The slowest broom in hands of the slyest witch will always be the winner!" The crowd cheered until the Witch Queen held up her hand. "However, I can't help that because you caused the demise of my dear friend and trusted advisor Henimaxx Dimm, I should penalize you in some way." The Witch Queen mused. "Oh I know!"

"DISRUPTO MAXIMA!" The vile Queen cast bursting the broom apart at the very core of its magical fabric!

"Damn you Bougenvallia!" Sasporilla cried. "I kept my life stored in that broom!"

"Unfortunate." The Witch Queen smiled clapping her hands. "On with the Tournament!"

Every challenge the Witch Queen through at Sasporilla, the young witch was unmatched at. Targeted spells, under water item retrieval, even curse breaking. Which was not an event most of the Royal guards were successful at. By the final event there was only Sasporilla Bucket, three advisors and one guardsman left. The champions were lined up on a straight racetrack. At its end was a crystal hand grasping the Royal Scepter of Avalon!

"This is the final challenge!" The Witch Queen said. "The task is simple. The fastest person to the scepter wins! Oh, but in this case the only one who is really trying and is possibly worthy is Sasporilla Bucket, so kill her if you can!"

The crowd gasped.

"A Queen must be prepared for assassination attempts EVERY DAY!" the Witch Queen insisted. "Two little hitches."

The track suddenly twisted and turned. Statues and rocks appeared. Sasporilla recognized they were the prisoners! The knights of the table round, her friends! Plants and vines grew wildly around the rocks and out of the ground. Tunnels in the sides of the stadium opened up, releasing many creatures. Erumpants, blast ended scrawts, manticores, and occymys.

"Your path will not be as straight as you might have hoped." The witch Queen smiled. "But then, when in life is ones ever?"

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Bougenvallia Bent, the prettiest of the three Bent girls, was not only the smartest and most powerful witch in her both classes at her graduating classes at Hogwarts and Avalon University, but was also the first daughter of noble blood in the family able to compete in the open trials for Witch Queen. The honour should have fallen to her sister Wysteria but she was, lucky for Bougenvallia, born a squib and thus unable and ineligible. Thus she was sent off along with a hundred and twelve other noble born girls to enter the trials.

As always only the most esteemed of noted royalty, celebrities and people of note and worth were invited to view the trials. The Bougenvallia's parents were most put out that they were not sent an invitation! Not being able to imagine themselves that unimportant they showed up at the stadium in Avalon anyway only to be turned away. Much to their public embarrassment!

Her Royal Majesty Glarevoicance Spook was not long for this world. The decrepit old husk of a Witch Queen could barely stand as she hosted the trials. To Bougenvallia Bent the trials all seemed silly, trivial tasks. All of the far to easy for her talents. Each one eliminating a few witches each time until finally there were only a hand full of them left. That is when things got a bit more interesting.

In the final twelve they were forced to compete against one another in groups. To fight and to race. To do damage to one another. Do whatever it took to win! It didn't seem to matter if the fastest girl, Petunia Plunk was one step from the finish line when Bougenvallia cast "COMMUTIONEM" and switched places with her. Bougenvallia Bent crossed the finish line first, much to the delight of the old Witch Queen!

The broom Obstacle course was easy. Blowing the others off their brooms with Bombarda maxima while they tried to defend with expeliarmus was a laugh. Only one girl, Amilia Wrafton gave her any sort of bother. "AVADAKEDVARA" took care of her, and the Witch Queen approved!!! Finally it was down to her and two other girls for a race to the scepter. Bougenvallia allowed them to run ahead and get caught up in, and taken out

by, the most vicious of traps. The intelligent young witch bypassed their corpses and made her way to the end. A beautifully carved crystal hand holding a golden scepter. Bougenvallia walked up and with a deep breath and a confident smile grasped the rod of gold.

There was a feeling, something accepting and electric that enveloped her body. Almost like the feeling when she found her wand at Olivander's. Hawthorn, nine and a half inches with kneezle whisker core. An odd memory. She felt both weak and yet strong. The strongest she had felt in a very long time. Who would she choose as her Warlock King? She found it odd her mind turned to the fat pudding of a boy, Nichol-ass Owlmore. The boy that called her BOOGIE WOOGIE. The boy who, since he'd left Hogwarts had established himself as quite an up-and-comer in the Auror's office. Him and his bug-eyed gap-toothed best friend Riddonkulous Bucket, the boy friend of her older sister Wysteria, were thought to be quite the hot shot Auror's. Why would she think of him? He was nothing to her? A completely inappropriate choice for a Warlock King! Why was she so tired she wondered?

"It's ok child." A voice said in her head. "The fat boy can't help you, can't protect now. Just slip away."

"Who?" Bougenvallia asked. "Who are you?"

"I am the true Witch Queen! Baba Yaga! I have taken the body of the winning girl for centuries and continued on my rule. Now before you go dear... who is this insufferable foolish popinjay in your memory? Hyronimus Rodrovich. A Hufflepuff boy? Mmmmm? A simpleton with a good heart. Easily manipulated. He may make a very good Warlock King thank you."

And Bougenvallia Bent faded away into nothingness as the Baba Yaga raised the Golden scepter as Bougenvallia Bent! The new Witch Queen of Avalon!

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"Also Sasporilla," the Witch Queen said. "Know that if the scepter doesn't accept you... no hard feelings."

Sasporilla felt something shake in her pocket. What the heck? She went to feel what it was. It was the Wish box her father had given her.

"On the count of three." The Witch Queen grinned pointing her wand at the backs of the champions. "One... two... three.... BOMBARDA!!!"

Sasporilla was off quickly but still stumbled forward from the blast as it struck the ground behind the champions who were blown to the ground. The last of the royal guards men took the brunt of the blast and lay beside the starting line, legless and still.

Sasporilla felt the heat of a blast of magical energy graze her left shoulder as ducked behind a stone planter. The blast striking the stone form of Sir Hugo!

"No!" Sasporilla cried, knowing he was now for all intents and purposes, dead. "Bougenvallia you fiend!"

"Oh I wouldn't blame her?" The gold masked champion said in her deep dusky voice as she rounded the corner easily deflecting Sasporilla's attack. "No my dear, blame me. I wasn't even aiming for you. I was aiming for your friend."

"Damn you Amari." Sasporilla cursed. "Why? In heavens name why?"

"To bring you pain." Amari said slowly pulling the gold mask from her face.

A low rumbling growl sounded in behind Sasporilla. Sassy turned her head quickly to see a Manticore creeping up behind her.

"It seems you're trapped Ms.Bucket." Amari chuckled. "Between the proverbial rock and a hard place!"

"FELIFORS!!!" Sasporilla cast as the Manticore pounced at her. The spell hit the beast head on transforming it into an ordinary house cat which Sasporilla cast a sticking hex on and tossed at Amari.

The poor beast landed on Amari's face and sank it's frightened claws in, hissing and spitting, as Amari screamed and ran off. Sasporilla remembered the nights of reading Karry had done on the Wedjat! How many tales she had read to Sassy about how the Wedjat's were terrified of Cat's, the guardians of the under world and most prized protectors of Pharaoh's.

With a very satisfied smile, Sasporilla set off to continue on the course. A small field of what looked like lovely red speckled yellow sunflowers lay ahead.

"Helianthus Cerbottana!" Sasporilla smiled. "The Italian poison thorn throwing sunflower! Herbology year three. What was it professor Sprout used to say? Sunflowers, yellow with red will shoot you dead. 'DEFLORESCO' will make them bow their heads!!!"

"DEFLORESCO!" Sasporilla cast at the deadly plants making them droop. Their flowery heads pointing yo the ground as Sassy ran past. The poison thorns firing out into the ground at their own base and into their own stems.

"There she is!" A gruff nasal voice called out from behind Sasporilla. "We must Get to her!"

Sassy turned to see Gormlobom and Marie LaVeau on the far side of the Sunflower field.

"EXURGO!" Sasporilla cast causing the sunflowers to stand and face the new champions standing on their border.

"Have fun!" Sassy shouted as she ran off.

The path became stony and rough and Sasporilla took caution as a large cavernous rock mouth appeared before her. The path beyond still looked clear and well lit, though strewn with small grey and black rocks. The black rocks began to shake and grow quickly, springing up around her. Razor sharp black spikes that cut Sassy's arm like a knife as they sprung up.

"Ouch!" Sassy yelled! Grasping her arm running forward through the mouth of the cave. The razor like rocks growing to thirty foot monolithic heights, then come crashing back down. Spraying small shards of razor rock forward which cut into Sasporilla's leg painfully. Those shards that hit the ground began to grow! INTERFECTIOBSIDEON, murder rock! Sasporilla remembered the talk on it Hogwarts. Living rock! A creature! A blood thirsty one that can not be placated and is damn near impossible to destroy!!!

Sasporilla took the path right and the rock shot up in front of her. Sassy twisted in time to avoid the razor sharp rock from cutting through her shoulder, but the point shot forward straight through the statued form of the General, Sir Keaton, shattering him.

Sasporilla searched her brain for the lesson on how to defend against these beasts but the constant danger blocked her memory.

With a sharp crash the spiky end split the chest of Sir Griffin, shattering him. Sasporilla desperately trying to stay clear of the razor sharp edges as one sliced lightly up her back slicing her cloak in two as another sliced past her knee, smashing through Dame Beatrix Zonko's abdomen. Crumbling her like a pillar of salt.

"SALT!" Sasporilla yelled pointing her wand and casting "SALIS TELMPEST!"

A storm of salt sprayed from the tip of Sasporilla's wand causing the black razor rock to wither and die as she stood quite out of breath with her back to the stone form of

Lyra Lee-Ashwolf. Sassy looked up into the angry stone face of her friend.

"You're welcome," Sassy smiled, "Thank Goodness my butt's big enough for you to hide behind ay? OY! Oh Lyra, what have we gotten ourselves into?"

An Erumpant charged at Sasporilla through the settling cloud of salt. Sassy leapt to one side as the great beast crashed through Lyra's stone form with a great explosion.

"No!" Sasporilla screamed.

"Petrificus totalous!" Marie LaVeau hissed as Sassy went stiff on the ground.

The old witch, masquerading as the young beautiful professor Fox for so long slid down from the Erumpants back and helped her partner in crime Gormlobom down to join her. The Royal advisors, and vicious tournament contestants removed their golden masks as they approached.

Sasporilla struggled to speak but could manage only a hateful indecipherable mumble.

"Quiet Ms.Bucket!" Marie LaVeau said in a very different voice. "I'm going to remove the petrification spell but don't move! It's me Professor Hannah and Sir Borwhen."

"We've conked and tied up the other two." Sir Borwhen smiled.

"Spot of polyjuice potion." Dame Hannah said dramatically casting a nasty looking spell at Sassy that was a simple dispell. Gormlobom danced with evil delight. Sassy stayed very still as the faux LaVeau swooped in by her ear as if whispering death itself to her.

"Right then here's the plan!" Dame Hannah said hiding Sassy's slight grimace when Gormlobom bit her leg as viscously, but gently, as he could. "I'm going to pretend to cast crucio on you! You're going to convulse shake and scream. Put on a real good show! Then kick my feet out from under me 'ACCIDENTLY' and break the spell and run!!! We'll follow you on Ruthie here. Now this is the important part. Stop at each knight and wait for us to catch up. Just before Ruthie hits the stone form I'll teleport it to safety, and Sir Borwhen will cast a Bombarda to cover the tracks. Just like we did with Lyra. Got it?"

Without waiting for an answer Marie LaVeau stood up and stood before the stiff body of Sasporilla Bucket. The old hag looked to the crowd for approval and turned back pointing her wand "CRU-CIO!"

Sasporilla started to shake and writhe screaming with convulsive pain. Or so it seemed. Much to the great delight of the Witch Queen.

On cue Sassy turned her leg and kicked out Dame Hannah's legs out from under her knocking her to the ground. Gormlobom ran and hid like the coward the real one was. Sasporilla wasted no time running off down the path wand in hand clearing every obstacle to fall in her way. Her job now, not just to beat this evil Witch Queen but to directly rescue her friends. Win or lose the tournament!

Stopping at Dame Splatterpalette, as the Erumpant came charging up, Sassy shot magical blasts close to the great beasts to stop it but to no avail! From the point of view of the crowd and most importantly the Witch Queen the great Erumpant was destroying the stoned prisoners!

Dame Phenix, Sir Stoffer, all teleported back to the hide home of the table round. The best minds from the University worked tirelessly to break the spell that held them in stone form.

The door to the Witch Queen's private box burst open. A small group of Royal guard escorted in the real Marie LaVeau and Gormlobom. Both looking disheveled after having been found and untied.

"IMPOSTERS!" Marie LaVeau hissed pointing out to the field.

The crowd gasped seeing the two tournament champions standing in the Queen's box as they also charged forward on the field.

"STOP!" the Witch Queen demanded.

Sasporilla stood before the stone form of her beloved Angelo Lazarus. She felt the box, her father's wish box, shake in her pocket once more. Sassy reached her hand into her pocket and opened the box. Inside was a small slip of folded paper. The answer to her final question... her last wish.

"Who are you?" The Witch Queen demanded.

"We are your loyal advisors and champions my Witch Queen?" Professor Hanna lied. "They are the imposters!"

Sasporilla noticed the back of her Marie LaVeau's hair was turning blue and Gormlobom had grown by at least a foot in the last thirty seconds.

"Oh really?" The Witch Queen grinned evilly drawing her wand. "AVADAKEDVRA!"

Sir Borwhen knocked Dame Hannah out of the way of the killing curse. He fell to the ground dead as Ruthie lifted the winded zoo keeper on to her back.

"PROTEGO MAXIMA!" Sasporilla cast raising a protective shield blocking incoming spells. "You have to get out of here! And please take my Angelo to safety!"

"I can take you too!" Professor Hannah said.

"No." Sasporilla insisted. "My work isn't finished here!"

"Have it your way Sasporilla Bucket!" Dame Hannah said turning and flipping two fingers to the Witch Queen that were most definitely NOT suggesting PEACE nor VICTORY. Then she charging forward and Angelo's stone form then apparating out statue, Erumpant and all!

The Witch Queen glared at the young witch who stared up at her with defiance and judgmental disdain, from behind her protective shield. With a scream of outrage and frustration Bougenvallia cast a blast of magical energy that ripped the magical shield apart in a brilliant flash of white light and flame.

When the light cleared from everyone's eyes Sasporilla Bucket was out of site. Sassy took full advantage of the distraction to leg it, as far down the path as she could. Sassy stopped behind a stone block to catch her breath. She could see the sparkle of crystal and gold just ahead of her, just past a very vine heavy tree.

Sasporilla felt the paper still grasped tightly in her hand. She opened it and read it. The answer scrawled on the paper brought a smile to her face.

Two vines slammed into the stone on either side of Sasporilla's head, pinning her hair. Sassy pulled painfully away, tearing a few dull red strands out of her scalp.

"You don't have to do this." Sasporilla said to the tree as it swiped at her with a vine cracking loudly in the air. Sasporilla knew just what this was, it was a whipping willow. "I know you've been tasked to harm us, but I mean you no harm."

The whipping willow seemed deaf to her pleas. Vines shot left and right. Then one caught Sassy fast and sharp across her left cheek.

"I don't want to hurt you!" Sasporilla pleaded. "But you're really ticking me off!"

A trickle of blood ran down her cheek to her lips and tongue. That subtle salty taste of iron that was unmistakable. IRON! OF COURSE! The Iron crown had taken away her abilities gifted by Elven blood! The tree could no more understand her than she it!

"ARESTO MOMENTUM!" Sasporilla cast, to no affect.

Vines whipped left and right wildly but Sasporilla had stopped dodging side to side. Sassy was now charging forward.

"IMMOBULOUS!" Sassy cast, the vines casting the spell off as easily as an evil wizard in a duel. Sasporilla looked deeply into the tree and saw them, a colony of Bowtruckles! This wasn't just a whipping willow! This Whipping Willow was a wand wood tree! Defending the colony of Bowtruckles living in its limbs, the same way the Bowtruckles were defending the trees precious wand wood.

Sassy pointed her wand straight up along the wand's trunk as the vines swung around to wrap around her.

"THOLUSAXOM!" Sasporilla cast, tucking and rolling as the vines wrapped themselves around the trunk. A large stone dome formed above the tree and fell to the stadium floor with roaring slam!!! Sasporilla Bucket lay on the path just outside of it.

"That should protect the tree and the Bowtruckles from anyone coming up behind me." Sassy said pulling herself to her feet as she heard the voices of hostels coming onto the field.

"Stop the tournament!" The Witch Queen demanded.

"Let me get my hands on her!" Gormlobom squealed.

"I will drink her blood and feast on her youth!" Marie LaVeau hissed.

Sasporilla ran up to the crystal hand holding the golden scepter. She reached out with her right hand and smiled. She wasn't happy at the thought of having reached the finish of the race, no, it was the message from her father that had been on that scrap of paper inside her wish box that made her smile now. She had wished she knew what the mysterious spell was that had protected her as a baby and turned her hair pink? The answer...

"There was no specific spell." Sassy giggled as she reached for the scepter. "My dad just said ABRACADABRA, DADDY LOVES YOU!"

A bright flash of flame and great explosion erupted when Sasporilla Bucket grasped the golden scepter. Pain shot through the skull of the Witch Queen causing her to drag her head on the stadium floor like a wounded dog. So intense was the pain it caused her to black out.

Many in the stands gasped, shocked by the sight of the cloud of ash that was once Sasporilla Bucket, wafting gently to the stadium floor!



## CHAPTER 6

Shock and tears were most common in the homes of the loved ones of Sasporilla Bucket as the Live Wire feed focused silently on the ash which wafted down. Falling gently over the golden scepter to the stadium floor where the charred broken glasses and wand of Sasporilla Bucket lay.

The Camera AVN camera cut to the Witch Queen being helped to her feet. With great surprise and delight she picked up her niece's burned wand, and snapped it in half.

"As you can see the scepter has cruelly and decisively rejected the challengers claim to my throne." The Witch Queen Bougenvallia Bent smiled triumphantly. Finally one of Henimaxx Dimm's traps had worked on her! The pest was gone!" Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket... is.... DEAD!!!"

"Long Live The Queen!" Shouted The Warlock King

"Long Live The Queen!" Joined in her most trusted advisors.

It was not long before the rest of the stadium joined, "Long Live The Queen! Long Live The Queen! Long Live The Queen!"

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Sasporilla Bucket warm and cozy surrounded by the softest fur she had ever felt. Fur? The tournament? The scepter, the Witch Queen....

"EXPLOSION!" Sasporilla cried sitting up suddenly.

Sassy felt a cool breeze cross her very nude body. The bed of fur she was in was blue and completely surrounded her! With a low rumble the fur raised up then after a moment went back down. Sasporilla stood, her footing unsure on the soft surface and her balance uneasy, hot pink hair draped long across her shoulders once again! Sasporilla could see the distant world was blurred. Like her clothing, her glasses and most likely her wand, were gone.

With a low rumble the fur began to rise. Sasporilla lost her footing and shouted with surprise as she fell, rolling off the broad side of some great blue creature. A huge paw reached out and caught the falling pink haired witch and raised her up to its gigantic eyes.

"Don't worry little one." The gigantic beast smiled. "You're perfectly safe."

"What?" Sasporilla asked trying to cover herself modestly. "Who, are you?"

"I am a being not unlike yourself." The beast said. "Intelligent. Capable of love, hate, creation and destruction. I am of a very old species that travels great distance and lays its eggs in tranquil safe places. After many millennia of gestation we hatch and grow until we are big enough to travel and find our own."

The great beast looked up to the sky. This was one of those creatures from the stars, Sasporilla thought! Like the one they used bones to craft buildings out of in the city! What was it Kathleen had called it? A Drodakorn! But she had said they were like flying fire griffins. This giant blue fluff ball seemed such a gentle beast.

"How did I get here?" Sasporilla asked.

"You fell through the world." The great beast said. "I was making my way across the great wild lands when a fiery blast from the ground spat you out right in front of me. I had to bring myself to a sudden halt for fear of squashing you, and that is no small feat, let me tell you."

"Thank you for stopping..." Sasporilla hesitated, "what is your name?"

"I haven't got a name." The great beast said.

"Well my name is Sasporilla." Sassy smiled.

"I will remember that Sasporilla." The beast smiled. "You may call me what ever you like."

"Well I've only ever known one other gigantic beast." Sassy said. "A giant squid that lives in the black lake by the school I used to go to. He chose his own name... Francis."

"Fran-cissss." The gigantic blue creature said. "No, some how I just don't feel it suits me. To long. To complicated for a hatchling as I."

"Perhaps if I got a better look at you?" Sasporilla smiled. "It's hard for me to see all of you from here nestled in your fur."

The great beast held up one paw and Sassy crawled on. The paw was easily six meters across. As he lowered her to the ground she realized he was long creature, not unlike a great furry blue caterpillar, standing thirty meters high and two hundred meters long with many legs. His gigantic blue eyes were young and innocent yet there was something ancient about the creature. Sassy sensed that Big Blue was an old soul. Big Blue?

"How about Blue?" Sasporilla said, the chilled breeze of the wild lands on her skin reminding her of her state of undress.

"Blue?" The great beast mused? "Blue!!! I like Blue. Yes it is me. I am Blue because Blue is me."

"Good!" Sasporilla said. "Now I must find myself some clothes. First thing."

Blue held out his paw so that Sasporilla might climb back on.

"I don't know where you might find what you are looking for?" Blue said as Sassy climbed on and he lifted her back up to warm safety of his broad furry blue back.

"I need something to cover my skin." Sasporilla said. "I'm not covered in fur like you are. My kind need to cover themselves."

"I see." Blue said pulling out a small bit of loose blue fur and laying by Sassy's feet.

"Perhaps you can tie these together to cover yourself until you find something that will do?"

Sassy picked up the thick strands of soft fur. "Yes! I can tie them together into a cloak. That should do for both wind, cold and modesty purposes!"

"Good!" Blue said. "I must rest now. For tomorrow I travel."

"Where are you going?" Sasporilla asked. "Come to think of it... I'm not even sure where I am?"



"You are here? With me?" Blue said a tad confused. "I am travelling to the place where my species grows to touch the stars."

"Avalon City." Sasporilla said.

"I don't understand your words Sasporilla." Blue said.

"My people," Sasporilla sighed, "or at least people of half my blood lineage, the Magi, have built a city where you are going."

"Hopefully I will not have to go through it." Blue said. "That would be most unfortunate indeed. I don't wish to do anyone or anything any harm. But sometimes I don't see the smaller things under my feet. Sadly I do damage." Blue lifted up a back paw. Between his cubby blue toes were some crushed royal gold armour, a torn red silk cloak, and a large sack of gold!

"Just what were you up to out here Bougenvallia?" Sasporilla mused grabbing the sack and the silk. Returning to her furry spot on Blue's back Sassy set to making herself a blue fur cloak, bound by the red silk. It would take some time, but she wasn't going anywhere quickly.

"Blue?" Sasporilla asked. "May I travel with you?"

"Oh that would be nice." Blue said. "Someone to keep me company as I, a lonely hatchling grows, company on my long slow road."

"Yes and I think I might be of help to you as well." Sasporilla said. "I know what to look out for! So that you might not squash anything or anyone you might not intend to!"

"Oh that would be handy Sasporilla." The great beast yawned. "Nighty night."

"Good night Blue." Sasporilla said patting his back. "Sweet dreams."

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Two Royal guards entered the guest box where the Jeremiah, the Frogai Lama sat pleasantly on his plush seat, in the lotus position, with his eyes closed.

"Excuse me sir." One of the guards said. "You must leave."

"Must I?" The Frogai Lama asked.

"Yes sir you must!" The guard insisted.

"Why?" The Frogai Lama asked not even bothering to open his eyes.

"The tournament is over sir." The first guard said.

"Is it?" The Frogai Lama smiled opening his eyes. "I think not."

"Sir the challenger is dead." The guard insisted. "No challenger, no tournament. No tournament, no you!"

The guards reached in to each grab an arm of the small frog like man. In a blinding flash his small hands grasped their fore arms and tossed them out of the box and a quick ARRESTO MOMENTUM spell broke there fall just before they hit the turf.

"Tell your Witch Queen," the Frogai Lama yelled after the guards as they scurried away like wounded rats, "that I was invited to view a tournament and I will leave when it is FINISHED!!!"

With a pleasant calm smile, the Frogai Lama sat back in his plush seat, took out his flute, and started to play.

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"The tournament over, the guests gone, a stadium empty, a challenger and their dream... dead." James MacNare said sadly into the camera. "A challenger who fought with honesty and compassion. One I might have been proud to have seen win this tournament. This has been James MacNare for AVN News. Back to to you Morgana."



## Chapter 7

"GONIDESPECTO!" Professor Rikkto, a rather stout and bald middle aged man, of the dark arts department cast upon the rock forms of the Knights of the table round. Two figures glowed with golden light and fell free of their rocky form. Dame Splatterpalette and Dame Phenix took their first deep breath of sweet, sweet air. Cheers erupted from the crowd of professors and specially invited students crowded into the small space.

"As I thought!" Professor Rikkto smiled. "The Witch Queen is using GORGON's! We simply need to figure out the correct spells!"

"Lucky!" Dame Phenix croaked through her dry throat, grabbing a glass of water and taking a deep drink. "You were just lucky Rikkto. The Witch Queen isn't using Gorgon's!"

"No! The Witch Queen has the power of the Gorgon!" Dame Splatterpalette said finishing her water. "And she is not who she says she is! That is NOT Bougenvallia Bent!"

"No!" Dame Phenix said. "That is the tyrant Witch Queen The Baba Yaga!"

"She never relinquished power." Dame Splatterpalette said out of breath. "Baba Yaga has been transferring herself from winner to winner of the tournament for years!"

The two women had to sit as their bodies readapted to life and the excitement of trying to pass on their urgent message.

"Sasporilla Bucket must be extracted before the end of the tournament!" Dame Phenix insisted taking a seat along side Dame Splatterpalette. "Before the Witch Queen takes her over!!!"

"I'm sorry to have to tell you this," Professor Hannah said stepping forward. "but she was blown up when the scepter rejected her."

"Yes." Kathleen, Sassy's friend and dorm mate sniffed sadly. "Sasporilla Bucket, my friend, has died."

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The secret to building a house in a pit, or at least below ground, is keeping things dry. The last thing you want is to build a nice big home, in a hole in the ground, and have it become a deep watering hole! No you must have good drainage! Lots of sand and rock in just the right amounts in just the right places! So many thought the Millikan family mad for building their home this way centuries ago, but they knew. Oh yes they knew!

The Magi had all but forgotten about the Millikan's. The mad hermits of the wild lands. Generation after generation of lone hunter trackers that lived a solitary life. Until they needed a replacement, then a new one was made. Not in the traditional or natural sense but magically, unnaturally by the Witch Queen! A younger version of the original bound to her service for the hermits life. All of the knowledge, all of the madness transferred forward. For one purpose. To watch. To watch for one thing and one thing only, a hatchling Drodakorn.

Millikan sat on his front porch, in his simple black rocking chair, sipping his coffee and munching away on drippy bacon and egg butty, as he looked up at the sky through the top of his hole. How many centuries had he looked up at the same spot of sky now? Two? Three? Four? He'd seen the sky in blue and grey, red, green... oh the bad storms that come when it turns green! Millikan had watched the black night sky on cloudy and clear nights when you could and couldn't see the stars.

Over all Millikan the hermit was sick of looking at the top of the hole. He thought maybe this once, just this once he'd look at his boots. The old hermit lifted them up proudly and held them up to look at them. He rather liked his boots. They were brown once, and were now bare grey rough leather in need of a good repolish. Millikan just thought it gave them that lived in look! Like anyone who saw them would know someone owned them! He dropped his feet with a thump that rumbled and echoed through the land.

Millikan lifted his feet again and looked at them again but listening he could hear the rumbling continued. Something was coming. Something big was running across the wild lands.

The old hermit dropped his sandwich, as the rumble became a roar. Loose dirt fell in around the rim of the hole. The porch was shaking as he stepped onto the staircase leading to the surface. A staircase that the old man would classify as rickety at best, shook and swayed from side to side as something gigantic, with at least ten legs and what appeared to be a furry blue under belly, ran over top of his home sweet hermit hole.

By the time he reached the surface the great beast was miles in the distance. A huge fuzzy blue beast, not unlike a caterpillar.

"It could be." Millikan said allowed, surprised by hearing his own voice for the first time in years. "Who said that? I had better inform her majesty the Witch Queen!"

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The wild lands had been, for the most part, a great vast flat grass land filled with many great herds of wild Unicorn tended and protected by tiny two legged Porlocks. Giraffepie's, a feathered Giraffe with bird like heads also traveled in smaller herds. Unlike Earth Erumpants were in abundance in the wild lands as were Tebos. Greyish pigs with the ability to become invisible. Hunted and coveted for their hides by wizards for invisibility clothing.

On the horizon Sasporilla saw what she thought may be a forest or at least a tree. As they got closer, squinting revealed it was not a group of trees nor a forest, but a single giant tree set in the center of the wild lands.

"Blue that tree ahead?" Sassy said pointing.

"Yes." Blue said. "I see it."

"May we stop at it?" Sasporilla asked.

"I don't see why we should?" Blue said. "But then I don't know why we should not? Because you request it, Blue will do so."

Within moments Blue rumbled up to the huge tree. Sasporilla looked up into it's high branches. It reminded her very much of the tree that was home of Majesty station. She was sure it was of the same species!

"There is a tree just like this in the city where we are going." Sasporilla said.

"Yes!" Blue agreed. "I see it in the memory of my species."

"Memory of your species?" Sassy asked.

"Yes." Blue said looking towards the sky. "Drodakorn pass down memory from ancestors to spawn. When they lay eggs and drop them to worlds to hatch, we are born with what we need to know."

"What if things have changed?" Sasporilla asked.

"Things always change Sasporilla Bucket." Blue said. "But some things always stay the same. What do you need at the tree?"

"I need to see if the tree has Bowtruckles." Sasporilla said. "Or another guardian of wand woods. I need to make myself a new wand. It's a type of ash tree and I can make that work for me!"

"Not just any ash tree Sasporilla Bucket." Blue said. "That is Yggdrasil, The tree of life! The same on this side of the world as on the other. It runs through all worlds where life exists. It's wood has great magical abilities. The tree may not easily give up its wood."

"I will ask it very politely." Sasporilla smiled shyly. "Honestly, if it wasn't for the iron crown, I would be able to talk to the tree quite easily."

"What does the Iron crown do Sasporilla Bucket?" Blue asked.

"It stops me from using abilities given me by my house elf blood line." Sasporilla said.

"What would those abilities be?" Blue asked.

"Snap finger magic for one." Sassy giggled. "That would solve many problems! But It allows me to control natural elements, and talk with plants and animals."

"Like me?" Blue asked.

"Well?" Sassy stopped for a second. "I just thought you spoke Magi English?"

"A hatchling Drodakorn just happens to speak your language?" Blue chuckled. "That would be an extreme bit of luck!"

Sasporilla snapped her fingers and apparated from Blues back up into the boughs of the tree.

"Where did you go Sasporilla Bucket?" Blue asked suddenly concerned.

"UP HERE BLUE!" Sassy laughed, excited to have her elf magic back! "THE EXPLOSION MUST HAVE BLOWN THE CROWN OFF TOO!"

"What do you want here Elf Queen?" A woman's voice said making Sassy turn suddenly.

There, on the very large branch they both stood on, was a light haired woman dressed in a leafy green cloak.

"I have come to make a humble request of the tree." Sasporilla said taking a knee before the woman. "Who may I ask am I addressing?"

"I am Edda." The woman said. "I am guardian of Yggdrasil. If you have come to request longer life you are denied. If you have come to request wood to heal others with, you are denied."

"I require a piece of branch..." Sasporilla began.

"De..." the guardian started.

"... to build a new wand..." Sasporilla interrupted.

"Den...." Edda tried to assert.

"... to defeat the Witch Queen."

Edda, the guardian of the tree stopped and listened. "How big?"

"About six inches long." Sassy said. "Fifth of an inch tapered to 6th of an inch would be perfect so I don't have to shape it. Don't want bits of Yggdrasil falling into the wrong hands."

A spot on the bough glowed with golden light between them. From the spot grew a perfect branch to Sasporilla's specifications. Edda held out her hand with a welcoming smile.

"This is not a gift from Yggdrasil," Edda said, "but a loan if you will. Yggdrasil asks that when you have completed your task that you return this wood to the her in Avalon."

"To the tree at Majesty station?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." Edda nodded.

"Of course." Sassy smiled. "You have my word."

"Then please take the wood for your new wand.: Edda said.

Sasporilla stepped forward and plucked up the piece of wood with a grateful smile. "It's perfect. Thank you."

"Be warned." Edda said. "The wood of Yggdrasil is most coveted! Thieves will do anything to try and steal it from you if they discover what it is."

"Why?" Sasporilla asked.

"The Yggdrasil's wood holds many great powers. Great gifts in blessed hands." Edda smiled. "Greater weapons of destruction when perverted by the hands of evil. The wood, when carried will protect the carrier from physical damage. When touched to a person who is ill or suffered injury it will heal them. It may also inflict injury and illness equally."

"I see." Sasporilla said. "I understand."

"The Yggdrasil when touched to barren soil may also bring life!" Edda smiled. "Grow crops! Bring trees! Bring life to places long dead! It may also, if it touches a corpse... return life."

"No!" Sasporilla protested. "That... that's impossible!"

"Not impossible." Edda explained. "But not what you think either. The body is reduced to s new state, an infant. New and alive. Not the same as it was. Not the same person in looks. In personality. Maybe not in colour or in sex!"

"A complete regeneration?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." Edda sighed hanging her head. "Now imagine doing this to your enemies for punishment or entertainment."

"I couldn't imagine such a person?" Sasporilla gasped.

"There have been many who have saught such power." Edda growled. "One such creature sits on the throne of Avalon yet!"

"My Aunt." Sasporilla said ashamed. "Bougenvallia Bent."

"No." A Edda said. "The girl who was Bougenvallia Bent died the day she won the Witch Queen trials."

"What?" Sasporilla gasped.

"The creature that inhabits her body is a much more malevolent being." Edda grimaced. "An ancient, evil witch, feared in many stories. One of the first Witch Queens, who as it turns out, refused to leave when it was her time... The Baba Yaga."

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All babies are beautiful was not necessarily true for Yaga when she was born. For she was quite ugly, by normal standards, with blotched reddish, wrinkled skin. One Eye sealed shut and the other eye liddlessly open at all times. The unwanted foundling was left on the front steps of St.Boliniski's Hospital magical hospital in Warsaw Poland in 1345. It was said her birth hailed the start of the great plague. When they found her in a rough hewn basket of

twigs they thought a wounded kneezle had been left. The small child had not the cry of a normal infant but the hateful growl of an evil beast.

St.Boliniski's was not only Poland's magic Hospital but also an orphanage for the foundlings, abandoned and orphaned children of magical families. That was where the child was placed. Much to the regrets of the "Hat Mummy's" as the children called the sister's of St.Boliniski's.

Yaga was an ugly, mean, spiteful child that did not share, did not make friends and did not play well with others. At three years of age a boy decided he was going to take a doll from Yaga, that the strange child appeared to be attempting to torture. The boy held it high above his head in out of Yaga's reach in an act of his dominance over her.

"Give.... me.... my.... dolllll.... " Yaga hissed.

"No!" The boy laughed. "You're ugly. You don't deserve a pretty doll! You deserve nothing! No ones ever coming for you! No one will ever adopt you!!!"

Yaga leapt like a coiled cobra, striking the large boy in the chest with her knees and biting him on the side of the neck with her little needle like teeth. She shook her head from side to side like a wild dog, tearing his flesh, blood flooding across the floor.

The screaming and growing brought the Hat Mummy's who were shocked by the site. The vicious young girl tearing at the throat of the larger boy. Flippendo threw Yaga off the boy. Levi Corpus kept her suspended in mid air gnashing her teeth and thrashing her arms wildly. The Hat Mummy's cast spells to stabilize the boy and rush him into the hospital side of St.Boliniski's, where luckily they were in time to save his young life.

Upon their return the Hat Mummy's found Yaga in a corner asleep, with the Doll torn apart in her lap, her mouth covered in the blood of the boy.

"We must seek guidance on how to handle this child." One of the Hat Mummy's said to the other.

The solution was one of abusive humiliation for the child. A collar was placed around her neck attached to a very solid magical chain. In every room in which Yaga was placed she was chained in place by the Hat Mummy's...

"FOR HER OWN GOOD!" Anytime the horrid child would fight against the collar and chain it would give her a magical painful shock. The head Hat Mummy would smile over Yaga's twitching twisted little body. The small toad like woman took much pleasure in the pain of others while trying to bring order. "You WILL learn to behave like a proper young witch!"

Yaga learned to restrain herself. To stop live amongst the others but never to truly get along. Only to be free of the collar and chain. The children didn't like Yaga. She was ugly, like an old crone even as a little girl. The children cruelly called her "Baba" meaning old woman or grand mother. The name "Baba Yaga" stuck with her. She was nasty and unapproachable. She kept to herself and even had a room of her own, unlike the other girls who all slept in a large open dorm. Yaga had an old closet that had been cleaned out just for her.

Yaga excelled in school. She was not just smart, she was a genius. With a memory that never forgot, she was able to learn a spell or potion once and never be shown again. By the age most children were looking for a master Witch or Wizard to apprentice with, Yaga was going before the council to do her trials. To pass was to be a fully accredited witch and pass she did! Baba Yaga had the highest passing score of all witches and wizards in the from seas to steppes. Free of St.Boliniski's Baba Yaga, the young witch who looked like an old crone, that hated the world turned her back on it and walked in to the wilds by the dwindling embers of Poland's Magical hospital and Orphanage.

Baba Yaga made a name for herself as a Witch in the forests what would become Eastern Europe. The crone like Witch, that lived in the magical hut which ran on giant chicken legs, that stole and ate children. Known for her vicious evil spells and devious deals. Though she never once ate a child. She often took in orphaned girls and raised them. Using them as house maids and slaves until they reached the age of maturity, then she would drain from them their life and extend her own, casting out there bones into the forest.

It was during the reign of the fourth Wizard King of Avalon that a horrid tragedy befell him and his Queen. Both had been assassinated! Poisoned by a single poisoned apple, bought from a poor street vender, out of the kindness of their ever kind hearts. Now leaderless, the crown was free for She who could pass the first open Witch Queen trials! A series of brutal tests the royal court had devised to choose a worthy Queen!

The Witch Queen trials were open to all witches of noble birth and established name. This included Baba Yaga, who gladly jumped at the chance to compete.

Twenty four hundred witches competed for the crown. More than twenty three hundred were eliminated in the first round, as they couldn't brew a simple antidote to save a poisoned citizen. Baba Yaga could! Perhaps if the last Witch Queen could have she wouldn't have died from eating a poisoned apple from a poor bent old crone in the street!

All the tests were too easy for the witch Baba Yaga. She knew all the spells, all the hexes, all the potions, all the tricks. No one could beat her. In the end it came down to a simple duel. Baba Yaga versus a witch named Belinda Branch. A innocent and wholesome young Witch that was much the antithesis of the crone.

The two witches were given three nights to prepare for the duel. The rules were vague but quite simple. The spells used must be completely original! Having never been cast before, by witch nor wizard, any where! Also the outcome of the duel must be definitive! No ties will be allowed!

The witches were brought before the members of the Royal court that lined the sides of the palace court yard. A simple rug was laid across the cobble stones. Dark blue, edged in gold, with the phases of the moon along it. Belinda Branch and Baba Yaga took up their positions back to back in the full moon center. Baba Yaga's slightly hunched posture gave her no advantage other than perhaps a slightly smaller, twisted target to hit. Upon signaling to begin the witches took their ten paces to the end and turned.

Their wands at the ready they cast their spells. Belinda Branch was barely through the first half of her most original petrification spell when Baba Yaga uttered the most horrific words ever heard by witch or wizard... "AVADAKEDVRA!"

In a blast of green magic Belinda Branch fell to the Royal court yard, dead. The first victim of the death curse. "Long.... live... the.... Queeeennnn!" Baba Yaga chuckled as she held her crooked wand sky ward. Bringing an all new age of darkness to throne of Avalon.

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Sasporilla chose ash for her wand because it was a compatible wood that would work in a conficator with gold as her metal handle. Sassy had the bag of gold from between blues toes. She still had no idea what the guardsmen had been doing out here or what the gold was for, but Sassy was certain the Witch Queen was paying for something that she wanted no one else to know about.

Sasporilla would have to form the gold into the shape of the handle she needed. Five and an half inches with a light spiral twist and a gradual outward widening taper at handles end.

Usually she would hand carved the handle from one solid piece of gold or even pour molten gold into a hand crafted mold! Sasporilla had none of these options as she had no tools to work with, nor had she time. She needed a wand and needed one now. There was one option and now that she knew she was free to use it, she was going for it.

Sassy pulled some gold from the bag and began to pick at the corners of its weave. She started to reweave the magical gold coins into the handle her wand needed. Turning, forming and pulling the gold until it looked exactly like the image in her mind. With a snap of her fingers Sasporilla Bucket levitated both half of the wands before her.

"I have the wooden shaft of the wand and I have the golden handle." Sassy said. "All I need now is a core." And this would be the first real test of her theory. Would it be possible to weave a core? Then would it be achievable to tune it to the wand and attune it to the witch?

Sasporilla plucked a corner of magical fabric. Then another, tying it into another and crossing over another until she had woven a small cylinder, formed from the fabric of magic hanging aloft between gossamer strands. An object unseen by normal eyes, but very apparent by violet hued eyes of the elven weaver.

Carefully Sasporilla moved the core between the two halves of the wand and connected them with the core inside. Sassy carefully drew the strands connecting the core up the wands shaft and through its tip. Pulled them carefully but firmly through the gold handle and out the back, never breaking the core from the fabric of magic.

The wand felt feather light in Sassy's hand when she dropped it from one hand to the next, it fell as if made by paper, slowly, weightlessly. As if it were a feather dropped from a bird. When moved in casting motions it felt good. Fast and comfortable. Sasporilla could see that it never broke or tore the fabric of magic, but rather moved from strand to strand and staying a part of the whole. Just as she'd predicted!!!

"Now that you're built I'll have to build a tuner." Sasporilla sighed. "Going to need a few things for that."

It was good thing they were travelling. Travelling across the wild lands. Just her and her new friend Blue.

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It was very rare that the Witch Queen needed to call for the Royal Physician, Dr.Ghann MG M.D. The head of the Royal Avalon Hospital, had been enjoying a nice day on the Flyff course when the Royal summons came. The Witch Queen had suffered a severe pain in her head for no known reason and she wanted answers. After hours of tests, Dr.Ghann had no answers for her.

The Witch Queen sat slumped in her throne. The residual pain and pressure from the attack still sat heavy in her skull. Her ears ringing and her eyes unable to look at the light.

"What do you mean you don't know!" The Witch Queen yelled wincing at the loudness of her own voice.

"I... I... I'm sorry your Majesty." Dr.Ghann said. "I can see no physical reason for the pain."

"What about Magical?" The Witch Queen growled.

"N...N...No sign of a magical attack either my glorious Witch Queen. I think you just had a simple headache."

Dr.Ghann smiled nervously. "I have a marvelous wonder cure for them!"

The doctor reached deep into his old leather doctors bag and pulled out a white plastic bottle. The older man unscrewed the cap and dumped out two tablets. He placed them onto a golden tray with a glass of water and motioned for the her Royal Guardsman to carry it to her.

"These are what I prescribe for you my Witch Queen." Dr.Ghann smiled. "I believe they will fix you right up!"

"What are they?" Bougenvallia asked as she took the pills and washed them down with big gulps of water.

"Acetaminophen." Dr.Ghann said.

"I'm not familiar with the potion." The Witch Queen said.

"Oh no!" The Doctor smiled. "It's not a potion! This is a quite ingenious MUGGLE cure all!"

"WHAT!" the Witch Queen scream pulling her wand. "AVADAKEDAVRA!"

Dr.Ghann fell dead, his open medical bag spilling out across the throne room floor.

"Stop! Stop!" A Guardsman shouted at a scruffy man as he barged past holding up a gold Royal seal. A symbol of importance, of free pass and one that said you will not stop me! The disheveled visitor stepped over the doctors corpse crunching pills and kicking potion bottles out of his way with abandon.

"I'm sorry your Majesty." The Guardsman said. "But this smelly vagrant has a Royal seal."

"It's alright Guardsman." The Witch Queen said waving him off. "Dismissed. What is it Millikan?"

"The great beast is on it's journey." Millikan said holding out his hand.

"Impossible." The Witch Queen said. "I paid very powerful hunters a great deal of gold to destroy the egg!"

"The great beast passed over my pit on its journey late yesterday." Millikan smiled through his gapped bake bean teeth. "I have done my job. I want my reward my Queen."

"Yes Millikan I promised you." Bougenvallia sighed. "You've lived for centuries watching for the beast for me. You deserve peace."

The Witch Queen held up her wand cast a soft blue light from its tip and kissed her faithful servant on the forehead. It us a sad moment when what a long time servant wants more than anything is the peaceful sleep of death. Bougenvallia walked back before her throne, turned and cast a little known vicious spell... "NEX!"

Millikan was torn apart in a bloody slaughter by unseen magical forces. Flesh was strewn around the thrown room. Organs sat scattered in a lake of blood. The Witch Queen ran her finger through the splatter of fresh blood on her face and tasted its salty goodness as she sat back on her throne.

"Hmmm." The Witch Queen said looking down at the corpse of Dr.Ghann. "I am starting to feel better. Guards!!!! Get my advisors!!! I must organize a great hunt for this great beast! And clean this mess up!!!!"

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The tension was high amongst the dark arts professors and masters of their craft who gathered in the layer of the knights of the table round. Their forms of stone perplexed even the most advanced wizard's and witch's.

"Another failure Valentine?" Professor Hannah sniffed. "You said you knew every bloody spell, potion and trick to counter-act, the Gorgon's effects?"

"I do!" The thin older bearded man said wiping the sweat from his face nervously with a handkerchief. "I thought I did at least. I have never seen anything like this! There us absolutely no response at all from the stone to any part of anything any of us have done??? And we are all the foremost specialists in Gorgon be-stoning!"

Kathleen, the small unassuming technomancy student stood away from the rest wearing a Nanocularcope over one eye and holding a small clicking and flashing box in her hand. Using a small Cavalcanti Extractor wand, Kathleen scraped small grains of stone off of Lyra and looked at them through her Nanocularcope.

"Yep." The young Phillipina said tipping the scope up and checking the readings on her device. "That's what I thought."

Of course no one noticed a first year student from a discipline as ridiculous as TECHNOMANCY in the room! The adults argued amongst themselves measuring off who was most experienced and most important to make the next decision as to who would try what next as nothing any of them had done so far had yielded any positive results.

"Excuse me." Kathleen's small voice said.

No one listened, they just continued to argue. No one was bout to tell anyone else just who was in charge here!

"Excuse me!" Kathleen tried to exert herself.

When Professor Hannah threatened to transform into an Occamy and eat Professor Valentine Kathleen had had enough. The young small woman stepped up onto the round table and remembered the words of a good friend of hers from an old summer job.

"If the world won't bend to your will, break it!" He used to say. She never knew what he meant until today. He meant take control. With a deep breath she barked out the loudest voice she would ever manage in her entire life.

"Shut your mouths the lot of you!"

The room went silent and all turned to the young woman in amazement.

"Thank you." Kathleen smiled nervously. "Your spells haven't worked because your not dealing with a Gorgon. You're dealing with Technomancy."

"Don't be ridiculous girl." Professor Valentine said dismissively. "You have no idea what you're talking about!"

"No sir!" Kathleen stiffened. "You, you pompous windbag haven't the courtesy nor bravery to admit when you're wrong and someone else is right!"

"I beg your..." Professor Valentine Gasped.

"Shut it Valentine." Professor Hannah smiled. "I like her! Go on girl. What do you know that we don't?"

Kathleen used her device to project sn image on the wall. It showed what looked like bugs scurrying around.

"What are they?" Professor Hannah asked quite stumped. "I pride myself in knowing just about every sort of living creature and I must admit, I don't know this one."

Kathleen zoomed in.

"They aren't creatures in a living sense." Kathleen said. "These are NANITES. Tiny machines designed to do certain jobs. Often used in technomancy for microscopic effect. In this case to form a stone casing over our friends and place them in a state of suspended animation."

"Brilliant." Professor Hanna said. "Now my dear, how do we get them out?"

Kathleen reached into her robes inner pocket and pulled out a small piece of metal that looked like a small dish. She placed it on the end of the device. With the pressing of three buttons and the fine adjustment of a few dials the dish began to emit a sound which grew higher in frequency as Kathleen made her adjustments.

The Professors covered their ears from the invasive whine. Kathleen had no choice but to suffer through the sounds assault as she watched the nanites in the projection for any reaction. It was at frequency 639Hz that Kathleen saw the nanites begin to become agitated. At 643 Hz the Nanites began to run around distressed and disorganized.

"Just a micro adjustment." Kathleen said turning another dial very slowly until she reached frequency 643.21 Hz.

The nanites in the Projection shattered into dust!

"Eureka!" Kathleen smiled. "Just a case of needing the right frequency."

"Great, free them!" Professor Hanna smiled.

"Just need to boost the power." Kathleen said pulling a battery pack from her robes.

"How many pockets does that robe Have?" Professor Valentine asked.

"You'd be surprised!" Kathleen chuckled looking around the room spotting an old gramophone. "And I need that!"



Kathleen snapped the battery pack into the back end of her device. She pulled off the gramophones large floral speaker and had professor Hannah levitate it for her, so that Kathleen might slip the end of her device up into the small end of the speaker.

With a press of the button the clear whine of the frequency generator pulsed out of the speaker. In seconds the stone began to vibrate and shake. Then it became as mud, like a liquid prison fighting to encase it's prisoners as gravity pulled it down. Like a last gasp the nanites froze then burst into a fine powder disappearing as they dissolved. The knights of the table round were free of the stone that held them and they were caught by the readied spells of the Professors surrounding them.

"You've succeeded I see." Dame Phenix said entering the chamber followed by Dame Splatterpalette.

"Yes." Professor Hannah smiled. "You've returned just in time. Your families?"

"Safe." Professor Splatterpalette smiled bending down to look at Angelo. "Who's spell work do we have to thank for freeing them?"

"The girls!" Professor Valentine said pointing out Kathleen.

"Ahhhh!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "Josie! Do you know who this is?"

"No." Professor Phenix said. "I don't believe I've had the pleasure."

"This is our Sasporilla's Dorm mate!" Professor Splatterpalette's broad smile faded. "Just how did you end up in the secret layer of the knights of the table round?"

"With just the device we would need to free the prisoners?" Professor Hannah asked drawing her wand.

"At just the time we would need you most?" Professor Phenix demanded.

Kathleen gulped looking down the shafts of three wands pointed right at her accusingly.

"She's here because of me!" Angelo said in a dry gravelly voice, "I said if anything happened to us to come here and look for a technomantic solution. I knew no one else would. I gave her directions."

The three knights put their wands away and apologized as the other knights came around.

"Where is Sasporilla?" Angelo asked.



## Chapter 8

"What do you mean she's dead?" Lyra screamed, unable to hide her outrage as she slammed her fists on the table round. "How did it happen?"

"The Royal scepter rejected her." Professor Rikkto said. "Violently!"

"I don't believe it!" Angelo said unable to hold back tears from his angry face. "If anyone is worthy of being Witch Queen, over Bougenvallia Bent, it's my Sasporilla!"

"I'm sorry son", Professor Valentine consoled the young Wizard, "but we all saw it happen. Poof! Nothing was left."

"Forbordious Valentine!" Dame Splatterpalette chided the man for his lack of empathy. "Really?"

"Sorry boy." Professor Valentine apologized.

"Enough." Lyra insisted. "Sasporilla Bucket is, was my best friend. She fought to take down the Witch Queen when we failed."

"Because we failed!" Dame Phenix said solemnly.

"She did it to save you all in the end." Dame Hannah said.

"That she did." Lyra said allowing a single tear to escape and roll down her cheek. "Now I ask you, will her sacrifice be for nothing? Will we stop here? Will we cower now? Go hide in holes like rats or take the fight back to Bougenvallia? This time better prepared for attacks from all kinds of magic! Where is the girl who freed us?"

"Here." A small voice, like the distant chirp of small cricket sounded from the back of the room, sounded. The small Phillippina girl, her long black hair tied back in a ponytail, stepped forward nervously, her hand half raised.

"We could use a Technomancer in our ranks." Dame Lee-Ashwolf said. "You're not a professor but you have what it takes to take charge and get it done in a crisis. So I ask you... Kathleen?"

"Yes." The young woman smiled humbly.

"Would you join our ranks?" Dame Lyra proposed.

"I would be honoured." Kathleen smiled.

"Hand me your wand and take a knee." Dame Lyra Lee-Ashwolf said. "Repeat after me: "I, state your name, do solemnly swear and pledge my wand to the Knights of the Table Round, to defend and obey the needs of the people of Avalon until death shall take me, and to uphold the honor of knighthood."

And Kathleen did repeat it proudly. Seriously.

"And I, for my part, Dame Lyra Lee-Ashwolf do swear to defend and honor our Sister Kathleen as befits a true knight."

Dame Lyra tapped her wand on each side of Kathleen's shoulders.

"In the name of Merlin and in the sight of God this day I dub thee Dame Kathleen." Dame Lyra smiled. "Arise, Sister Knight!"

There was thunderous applause as Dame Kathleen raised her wand high casting light for the dawn of a new day.

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There is no place to hide on the great plain of the wild lands. Small villages, spread far and wide talked of the great beast. Seeing it in the distance. It was gigantic! It slept mostly in the day and moved at night. Its path was clear. Its tracks easy to follow and predictable.

The Witch Queen's hunters gathered in village just inside a village on the edge of wild lands where the plains meet the great forest. This village would be the one the great beast would come closest to next.

"How will we recognize the beast my Queen?" One of the hunters had asked.

"It's the only one in the wild lands as big as a building you idiot!" The Witch Queen had yelled. "Just kill it! Before it gets here and destroys the city!"

It was late on the second day when one of the lookouts on the south side of the village spotted the creature loping across the horizon. The alarm was sounded and the hunters gathered.

Omniscopes were trained on the great beast. Its gigantic form moved in shadow as the last light of day fell on the great plain. There was no question in the minds of the hunters the creature's path brought it this way, this night. Traps had been set. Special weapons readied. Spells practiced that would destroy the great beast. The hunters were ready, though the people of the village fled in fear. They knew the great beast brought with it a great sickness, so when it passed they hid in a nearby cave in the forest.

A crow cawed loudly beside a hunter annoying him.

"Be gone bird!" The hunter insisted trying to strike the crow with his wand.

'Caw-Caw-Caw!' The crow protested as it flew off into the tree tops.

"Stop swatin' at birds ya fool!" One of the hunters hissed. "You'll give away our position!"

The crow flew up high through the top of the trees and into the free air above the forest canopy. There he could see a large canyon in the plains you couldn't see unless you were almost standing beside it. The perfect cover for another large beast to have slipped across part the Great Plains unseen and up into the forest where he and his pink haired companion made camp for the night.

Blue lay in a clearing, of his own making, surrounded by trees and a small trickling brook. Sasporilla sat on a rock by the brook looking over her new wand, thinking about building a core tuner. The crickets chirped. The brook trickled past. The evening breeze wafted in the trees. Blue snored softly.

Sasporilla had to giggle. As the crickets chirped and Blue snored it reminded her of soft music.

"Chirp-Chirp-Chirp-Snore....chirp-chirp-chirp-snore." Sassy leaned back and listened to the rhythm and the flow. It came to her that the sound reminded her of Beethoven's 5th symphony. "Chirp-Chirp-Chirp-Snore....chirp-chirp-chirp-snore."

Sasporilla looked at her wand's core while she listened to the symphony between the crickets and her big blue friend. Taking in the addition of the other elements of the forest like other instruments in the symphony. The wind, the trees, the leaves. The hoot of an owl. The babbling brook. It all joined together in glorious harmony.

"What was it Beethoven had said?" Sasporilla mused. "How happy I am to walk among, the shrubs, the trees, the woods, the grass and the rocks. For the woods, the grass and the rocks give a man the resonance he needs."

"Or her!" Sasporilla smiled pulling her core taught but not stretching it between her fingers talented weaver fingers.

Sassy sat as calmly as she could becoming one with the resonance of the forest letting it flow through her and join with her. She slowly began to pull and twist the core, ever so slightly, until it began to glow. And glow it did! As bright as a freshly cast LUMOS in a dark basement! Sasporilla placed the core into the wand and joined it's halves together. A quick weave between the wood and metal joined them permanently and harmoniously better than any other wand.

Sasporilla waved her wand. It felt good in her hand, light but powerful.

"Time to test you out." Sassy smiled. "But what spell to cast?"

Caw-caw-caw came lightly from the distance.

In the waning light of dusk Sasporilla Bucket made up her mind casting "LUMOS!"

The Lumos spell she cast was bright! Very, very bright! It reminded her of how much brighter Dumbledore's Lumos was over everyone else's!

"Dumbledore's wand was rumoured to have been to elder wand," Sassy mused, "one of the deathly hallows. Could it be that death was a weaver?"

"Caw-caw-come quickly please!" The crow pleaded. "You are the one the world is whispering about are you not? The protector? The one true Queen?"

"I'm just Sasporilla Bucket," Sassy said humbly, "but I'll help if I can."

"Many wizard hunters have set a trap for NanWa." The crow cawed. "She is one of the last of the great Nundu that strides the plains. Yes she herself is a hunter. A great predator, but she is with litter. Those cubs will help to repopulate her species."

"These hunters?" Sasporilla asked. "Have they come to hunt the Nundu specifically?"

"No." The crow said. "They search only for a great beast, in the name of the Witch Queen."

"Oh do they?" Sasporilla smiled. "Show me where they are?"

The crow took off into the night sky Sasporilla, becoming as the trees and leaves following along as the forest primeval flowed until it touched the village

NanWa could smell the wizards in the village on the cool night air. The creature, akin to a sixty-foot tall cheetah, stalked low and slow along the ground. Like a large hill moving closer in the night. Her eyes seeing no movement in the dark village, but her nose was alive. She knew they were there.

"Caw-caw-caw" came a distant crow in the night.

NanWa ignored it. She prepared to run. To charge the village.

"Caw-caw- NanWa stop you fool!" The crow said! "It's a trap! The village is full of magi hunters!"

"They make no difference to me." NanWa growled. "They all taste the same in the end."

"Think of your babies!!!" The crow pleaded. "I have brought help! The protector! The one the world is whispering of!"

"The little Queen with pink fur?" NanWa asked.

"Yes!" The crow said landing on the Nundu's back.

"Then I yield to her help." NanWa said. "And if she fails... they die."

"Fair enough, I guess." The crow cawed.

Caw-caw-caw

"Damn crow." The head huntsman cursed just inside the village gates. "It's making enough noise. It bloody well not warn off our target."

There was a low growl outside the gate. Something large, very large by the sound of it. It had taken the bait and was just where they wanted the great beast to be.

"Now!" The head huntsman yelled as the gates swung open.

Nets were cast forth from wands and struck air. Multiple death spells were cast but struck dead air.

"Hold!" The head huntsman commanded holding his wand high. "Something isn't right here."

With careful steps forward the huntsman cast LUMOS SOLEM and lit up the night. A single small young woman, cloaked in blue fur with her hood up stood before him, less than a meter away. Surprised the huntsman jumped back dropping his wand. Stooping to pick it up, the young woman stepped on it. He looked up into her face as she removed the furry blue hood to reveal her long bushy pink hair. It was the girl from the witch Queen trials.... but how?

"You've come here to hunt a friend of mine." Sasporilla Bucket announced loudly. "You've done so on the Witch Queens orders. You've made a mistake with the creature you've found this night. She is not the obe you seek. She

is with litter and under MY PROTECTION! AS ARE ALL THE BEASTS OF THIS WORLD FROM YOU LOT!!!! Now return to your Witch Queen with a message from me."

"She'll kill us if we return without finishing our task." The huntsman pleaded as Sasporilla snapped his wand underfoot.

"And if you hunt my creatures I will be forced, regrettably, to do the same... but I give you the choice. Just know the beasts the forest and all of nature is on my side. And even your Witch Queens best magical trap couldn't kill me."

"What is your message." The huntsman hissed.

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"What do you mean she's alive!" The Witch Queen screamed spitting out her morning pumpkin juice all over the Warlock Kings fresh morning robes. Much to his quiet displeasure.

"Yes my Queen." The lead huntsman confirmed. "Me and my men are expert hunters but she sprung our traps and attacked us. My men were lucky to escape with their lives! She was so vicious and wild!"

Oh really?" The Witch Queen said with grave doubt in her eyes.

"Oh yes!" The huntsman lied. "Why I'd be surprised if I see some of them ever again? I was lucky to escape with my own life!"

"And how did you manage that?" The Witch Queen asked walking over to the huntsman waving her wand with a playful smile.

"I promised to deliver a message." The huntsman swallowed nervously.

"Oh!" The Witch Queen said surprised. "Awfully civilized for a wild out of control witch? Well weren't you lucky? And to go from Huntsman to Royal Messenger in one day! Well then... best deliver the message then."

The Witch Queen stood with a pleasant smile on her face as the head huntsman stood, sweat pouring down his forehead.

"The pink haired witch said... " the huntsman gulped and closed his eyes. "Tell the Witch Queen her name is Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket, she knows who you really are, and she's coming for you!"

The huntsman cringed, but no pain was forth coming. No death followed. Just a soft mad giggle. The Huntsman opened his eyes to see the Warlock King looking nervous but a tad relieved as Bougenvallia.... Giggled.

Het giggle turned to chuckle, and her chuckle to a full on laugh. Soon everyone was laughing with Bougenvallia Bent, the Witch Queen.

"She's alive!" The Witch Queen laughed. "And she knows who I really am! Fine!"

The skin of Bougenvallia Bent began to twist and tear. It became as tissue paper, tearing and falling away, a thin veneer to reveal the wooden skin crone beneath. The real Witch Queen, Baba Yaga.

"Hahaha!" Baba Yaga Cackled as the Warlock King fainted. "Then let it known. The true Witch Queen, the Baba Yaga has returned! Hahaha"



## Chapter 09

Blue had gotten bigger and so much faster. It was all Sasporilla Bucket could do to bend those trees she could out of his path of destruction and consumption. Blue found he quite liked the crunchy texture of the leafy stemmed plants that poured into his maw as he passed through the forest.

Word spread ahead of them through the plants and animals of their coming. Warning of the big fuzzy blue worm and the protector. To get out of the way, for both their paths had been chosen long ago.

It came with great surprise when somewhere along noon on the third day in the center of the great Wild lands forest, the forest suddenly gave way to an ancient stone city, that much to Sasporilla's surprise was alive and

richly abundant. A wide cobble stone roadway ran from where blue had burst through the forest and ran between two large step pyramids. A large arched bridge ran across between them. Shops and homes had been cut into the sides of the step pyramid and the steps as walkways. More shops, schools, homes all lined the giant cobblestone road.

People out to see the great beast as it slowed its passing and came to a stop in the center of the city between the two step pyramids.

"We have arrived." Blue grumbled most satisfied.

"Blue?" Sasporilla asked looking at the large crowd of people gathering carrying bushel baskets of fruits and flowers. "Where is here?"

"Just where we must be," Blue said, "for me to rest before I take in enough food for the long unstopped journey to the icy heart of death... and life."

"How long will we be here Blue?" Sasporilla asked.

"A few days and nights." Blue said. "I must be as long as the city road and my back must touch the bridges underside before I can leave."

The people of the city began to adorn the great beast with flowers. Others piled fresh fruit before blues large mouth. Then all joined the great mass crowd.

"Well the people seem friendly enough." Sasporilla smiled throwing back the blue fur hood of her cloak revealing her striking pink hair. The crowd gasped and went silent.

"Apparently," Blue mused, "they are more shocked by you than by me!"

"Can I have a lift down Blue?" Sasporilla asked.

Blue raised his great paw and Sasporilla climbed on. He lowered her gently down before the crowd on the street. Two little girls carrying baskets of flowers stepped from the crowd to greet her.

"What part of Star Worm are you?" One of the girls asked handing Sasporilla a flower.

"Shut it." The other little girl said.

Sasporilla started to laugh. How they reminded her of Lyra and herself.

"I'm just a friend of Blue." Sassy smiled. "Not really a part."

"Ah, but in that you are incorrect." A hooded figure said stepping forward out of the crowd. "You see Sasporilla Bucket, you are the creatures guardian, companion as well as friend. Actually there are many friends who will be very happy to know that you are alive."

The woman lowered her hood to reveal her lovely face with an intricate silver mask covering the eyes that were blind to the world. Sasporilla smiled and ran forward to hug her friend.

"Agnes!" Sasporilla squealed hugging the blind oracle as a shadowy figure stood up tall beside her.

"What about a hug for me?" Myron Wagtail asked throwing off his cloak with showman like flash.

"Myron!" Sasporilla yelled giving the singer the biggest hug he'd ever gotten.

"I'm happy to see you too!" Myron hugged her back. "When Agnes said she sensed you hadn't passed over and we started searching for you... well, I wondered if we'd ever find you?"

"I'm so happy you have." Sasporilla smiled.

"I'm happy you're alive, and in one piece!" Myron smiled. "Now you can come with us and we can keep you safe."

"No!" Both Sasporilla and Agnes said at once.

"What?" Myron asked. "Why not?"

"Myron," Sasporilla began, "I have made a promise to Blue. To travel with him all the way to Avalon city. He protects me and I protect him."

"We can protect you!" Myron objected.

"Then who would protect him Myron?" Agnes asked.

"That massive creature can't need protecting???" Myron scoffed. "I mean, protecting from what?"

"The Witch Queens Hunters for one Myron Wagtail." Sasporilla said putting both hands on her hips angrily... just as her mother used to. "And every other person who might want to do him harm."

"This is why the pink haired queen," an older man in long blue robes, using a staff to steady himself, said as he stepped through the crowd, "is known as the Protector!"

"Elder Corasoll." Agnes smiled. "How nice to hear your voice."

"I am sorry it took me a little longer than I would have liked to reach the main square." Elder Corasoll smiled. "These days, my age dictates my schedule. Everything takes a bit longer I'm afraid."

"I understand." Agnes smiled.

"Old age." Myron said awkwardly. "This is the oldest I've ever been!"

Crickets... Some jokes don't fly. Then Elder Corasoll started to chuckle. Myron got an elbow in the ribs from Sasporilla.

"Agnes, my best pupil," Elder Corasoll smiled, "you did marry well. Even if it was in secret."

"You're married?" Sassy asked Myron.

"Just a while ago." Myron said. "It's still a secret. The press doesn't know."

"Congratulations!" Sasporilla smiled hugging Myron then hugging Agnes. "So does this mean Agnes is now my God Mother by marriage?"

"Yes!" Agnes said. "Put your jammies on, brush your teeth and get to bed."

Sasporilla burst into laughter. She needed that sort of laugh, after everything else she'd been through.

"Elder Corasoll," Agnes said, "may I formally introduce Sasporilla Bucket."

"It is my sincerest pleasure to meet the guardian of the Great Star Worm." The old man bowed as low as his old bones would allow.

"Sasporilla Bucket," Agnes smiled, "may I formerly introduce you to Elder Corasoll. Head of the council of Elder's of Everlost City and my former teacher."

"I am honoured to meet you sir." Sasporilla bowed.

"Good!" Agnes smiled joining their Sassy hand to Elder Corasoll's. "Now that you're aquatinted I'm leaving both of you in the safest hands possible. You must excuse Myron and I but we must be off."

"Off where?" Sasporilla asked curiously.

"To stop your funeral of course." Myron said. "I'm sure there are a few people who will be very happy to know your alive and well!"

"Is Angelo ok?" Sasporilla asked.

"I don't know." Myron said. "I know that not all statues were recovered. Some were destroyed. Some are still missing. Those recovered are free."

"Angelo was recovered." Sasporilla smiled. "Give him the biggest kiss for me?"

"I will!" Myron laughed as Agnes took his arm and they vanished in a swirl and a pop.

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The dark somber skies cried tears that fell to earth. Hiding the tears on the faces of the grief stricken and broken hearted. The presession was surprisingly small at the funeral of Sasporilla Bucket. Mostly friends disguised by polyjuice potions, as most were wanted terrorists in the eyes of the crown. To there surprise there was a suspicious lack of Royal Guardsmen anywhere near the cemetery? They carried a small urn of ash, left over from the explosion, through the roadway of the grave yard toward the spot where her parents bodies lay. A stone stood for each of them. Father, Riddonkulous Bucket, Mother, Wysteria (Bent) Bucket, And of course daughter Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket. All gone too soon, before their time. At the hands of evil.

Angelo, disguised as Orson Pygmallion, one of the boys in his dorm, kissed the urn and placed it by the head stone.

"I love you Sasporilla." Angelo said unable to hold back his tears. "I'll miss you. I wanted to spend the rest of my life with you!"

Angelo started to wail and collapsed into the arms of a larger man, Arno Sparknix, who was actually Lyra.

"Come on Angie buck up." Lyra said. "There, there. Let it out. I guess we should all say something. Here someone take him."

Lyra handed Angelo off to Professor Splatterpalette Disguised as famous Werewolf hunter Mars Mikelson, whom she still had some hair from after an art project involving him a few years back.

"Sasporilla Bucket was my friend." Lyra said. "My best frend! Despite me trying everything I could do to treat her like crap. Treat her as less than. Call her names when we first met. What did she do when she found out I liked Girls? She stood up for me! When others made fun of me at Hogwarts, she stood beside me! When all

abandoned me, gave up on me, she refused to!!! Damn it wide butt why did you have to go get yourself blown up to prove you could squeeze your big monster butt into this little jar?"

Some gasped... some laughed.

"If you really knew her and I," Lyra tried to smile, "you know she'd be laughing. Even though my heart is breaking."

An older woman, short and fat stepped up and raised her vale from her face she raised a flask.

"Time for a toast to our Sasporilla." The woman said encouraging the others to pull small flasks and taking swigs of horrid polyjuice potion. "Sasporilla was my best friend as well. All the way since second year to seventh year. She was my maid of honour at my wedding and godmother to my Son."

Karry Curtis paused choking back her tears. "We had plans to be old friends together. Watch our children grow up together. Now..."

Karry broke down crying. An older man ran up and grabbed her as she collapsed. Zac had taken the disguise of Walter Moorlap, a quiet old widower from Hogsmeade known as a bit of a hermit.

"I've got you." Zac said catch Karry and helping her down.

A loud crack of thunder split the clouds and a ray of sun shawn through. Two plumes of white smoke shot down from the clouds and slammed into the ground in front of the crowd of mourners.

Agnes Moreshead, the blind Oracle and Myron Wagtail appeared from the white cloudy mist.

"Myron, Agnes, you've come." Lyra said approaching. "I wondered if you were going to make it?"

"Yes, sorry, we just got in from Avalon." Myron said.

"Well you're both just in time to say something about Sasporilla." Lyra said.

"I know just what I'd like to say." Agnes said stepping up before the small group that had gathered. "Sasporilla is Alive and well."

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Sasporilla Bucket walked with Elder Corasoll through the streets as people celebrated the return of the great beast. Adorning Blue with flowers and feeding him copious amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables, grains and leaves. Whatever they could spare.

"You see Ms.Bucket," Elder Corasoll said, "centuries ago there were three step pyramids here. They were built by peoples that were here long before us. A native people called the Magawai. A proud and decent nonmagical people who, when the last great beast made its journey here hid in fear in their center temple. The largest of the three. The one their highest priest said would withstand even the great weight of the worm. It did not."

"Oh my god." Sasporilla gasped. "Did all of them...?"

"Die?" Elder Corasoll nodded. "Yes, crushed to death, all of them. Maybe as many as twenty thousand."

Sasporilla stopped in her tracks and put her hand over her heart. The great pain she felt inside for those poor people.

"As bad as you feel now, imagine how the great beast felt learning what she'd done?" Elder Corasoll said.

"Knowing how gentle and innocent these creatures really are."

"The last great beast was a she?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." Elder Corasoll smiled. "Not that it's easy to tell. Only they really know for sure."

"So if everyone of the Magawai were killed," Sasporilla asked, "How did all of you come to build on their ruins and learn their tale?"

"Two of three high priests survived." Elder Corasoll confirmed. "One in the step pyramids on either side, along with a handful of acolytes. They sent for a Wild Talker from the Elven city. One of the elves gifted, as are you, with speaking with creatures."

"So it was an elf that first spoke with the great beasts?" Sassy asked surprised.

"Yes." Elder Corasoll smiled. "One of the small ones, of the worker class. The great beast explained this was it's path. Had always been and would always be. The path took the great beasts around the world and saw them transform into the great Star beast! Reaching great size and speed by the Elven city they would pluck a golden seed from the great tree and take off into the stars to bring life to another world."

"The tree of life Yggdrasil. Majesty station." Sasporilla hung her head. "It's in the center of Avalon city. It will be destroyed!"

"Oh yes!" Elder Corasoll nodded sadly. "The Elves were terrified of the same thing and tried to fight the Star Beast as it charged the tree. They injured it, took part of one of it's lower legs using a powerful, anciant weapon. However they could not stop the beast from it's task."

"Did many elves die?" Sasporilla asked sadly.

"Not a one!" Elder Corasoll smiled. "The star beasts approach was expected and the damage path was cleared. All those who attacked her, she refused to harm."

"Amazing!" Sassy smiled.

"The beasts are gentle at heart." Elder Corasoll said. "They have agreed not to crush us if we don't build in their way."

"Fair enough." Sasporilla nodded. "But how did all of you get here?"

"Ah yes, How did the Magi and muggle populations build a city around two old step pyramids of a lost civilization hmmm?" Elder Corasoll chuckled. "The Magi came to Avalon looking for a world of our own. Sick of sharing a world with muggles... yuk! What an attitude our ancestors had! The Elves showed us this land as a possible place to start building! With the stipulation of course that we do NOT build on the great beasts path. To do so would only bring death and destruction."

"So this was the first Magi settlement of Avalon?" Sasporilla asked.

"Oh my dear no!" Elder Corasoll shook his head. "The Magi dismissed this site for the work it would take to start over! No, no! They stole the Elven city! It was much easier!"

"Yes we studied it in school." Sassy said sadly.

"The worst part is most Magi still see nothing wrong with the way the city was taken." Elder Corasoll said. "Well our ancestors did. You see some Magi had morals and a conscience and we would not live in the stolen city. We came here and built this."

"It must have been hard?" Sassy asked.

"It was at first." The old man agreed. "But we are an innovative and resilient people. We are a mixture of Magi and muggle, Magawai and even some elves. We live in harmony without the old hatreds. Everyone is equal here."

"That is so amazing!" Sasporilla smiled with delight. "You've built a fully modern city. You must do well trading goods with Avalon."

"We have no contact with Avalon." Elder Corasoll said with grave seriousness. "We want NOTHING to do with their Witch Queen and that royal system! She is a being of pure evil!"

"I know." Sasporilla nodded.

"No girl I don't think you do." Elder Corasoll interrupted. "You see..."

"She is not my aunt she is really The old witch Baba Yaga." Sasporilla said holding up her hand. "I found out after her trap failed and I was blown here. To this side of the world. I was fighting in a trial to take her crown, but the trials were fixed."

"Of course they were." Elder Corasoll spat. "I would expect nothing less from her."

"I would expect by now she knows I'm still alive and will be sending hunters after me." Sassy smiled coyly remembering the last group of hunters. "That's why I need to uy a few things. If your shops will take these Royal gold coins?"

"Keep them." Elder Corasoll smiled. "The great gift the star beast will leave us is payment enough. "What ever you need I can assure you, we have!"

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The stormy nightmare filled torturous unconscious mind finally allowed the Warlock King to struggle to the calm surface of consciousness. Foggy, Hyronimus Rodrovich awoke in his luxurious over-stuffed soft bed, with Elven silk sheets and seven Pouwerow down pillows. Clearing the fog from his eyes and greeting the bright sunshine that beamed in through the open curtains. The Warlock King smiled and breathed a sigh of relief.

"It was aw just a dweam!" He chuckled as he turned his head on his pillow to face the retched wooden face of the evil hag Baba Yaga.



"Goodmorning," Baba Yaga smiled, black ichor seeping through her gapped tooth smile, "my love."  
"Aaaaaaaah!!!!" The Warlock King screamed his jet black hair turning snow white. "Yowah weahw!"  
"Well of course I'm real." The hag ssid trying to stroke the Warlock Kings face as he pulled away in revulsion and fell from his bed, striking the Expensive Corpiniri carpet, which felt as hard as the stone floor beneath. The hag slithered her bony knotted wood skinned body, dressed in fine Royal Silks, off the bed and levitated above the Warlock King.  
"Open your eyes." The hag insisted.  
"No." The Warlock King insisted.  
"Please my Hyronimus." The Witch Queen said. Her voice soft and sweet. "For me Pumpkin? It was just a little joke."  
"My Bouganvawia?" The Warlock King said surprised opening his eyes.  
"Boo!" The hag Baba Yaga laughed biting and snapping her black teeth close to the Witch Kings face. "Love bites my love. Let me bite you? To taste you once more!"  
"No!" The Warlock King screamed pushing Baba Yaga away. "You awen't my Bouganvawia! You awent my wove! Not my wife!"  
Tears streamed from the eyes of the Warlock King as he ran blindly in terror from the creature that perused him. "But I am your one and only," Baba Yaga hissed. Her head snapping and twisting in sudden unnatural ways as her brittle wooden form snapped and cracked as she stepped after her prey. "Wedded for ever! Till death do us part my love remember?"  
"No!" Hyronimus protested as the long wooden claw of the old witch reached for him. "You awe not who I mawwied. Not who I wove! Noooo."  
"Till DEATH..." the Baba Yaga's hissing voice penetrated the Warlock Kings consciousness driving him forward. The Warlock King flung himself through a stained glass window, and fell a hundred feet to the marble walkway below.  
"... do us PART!!!" The old hag laughed.

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Sasporilla looked at the chart on the wall with one large lense over one eye and her hand covering the other.  
"E.. FP... TOZ..LAPD...YOUR FEE IS ONE FIFTY-SEVEN NURELS?"  
"Sorry," the eye doctor laughed, "just a bit of optometrist humour."  
"That joke really does get old Carl." Elder Corasoll sighed.  
"But really your glasses and the exam fee will come to fifty-seven knurls." The eye doctor mentioned.  
"All of her costs are covered Carl." Elder Corasoll smiled. "What ever the young lady needs we will supply her with."  
"Thank you Elder Corasoll." Sasporilla said.  
"Then all you need to do is pick your frames?" The optometrist smiled and slipped her test lenses into two slots in the counter. Pushing a there was whirring and clicking in the counter, then a big pair of chunky clunky black framed glasses spat out.  
"Ok put those on." The optometrist smiled.  
"Oh." Sasporilla said surprised at the look but not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings.  
"No, no my dear." The eye doctor laughed. "These are not your glasses! These are just your pair to wear in store to help you see to pick your new glasses! After all, how can you choose glasses if you can't see them?"  
"That makes sense." Sasporilla smiled.  
A small shelf of lens shapes lift up from the counter. There were many shapes and sizes. Round, square, triangular, tear shaped. Some as big as the mouth of a tea cup and some as small as the ring of a key ring.  
"Which size and shape would you prefer my dear?" The eye doctor asked. "This will determine the type of frame available to you and colours, patterns available in those."  
Sasporilla chose large lenses, almost square, but with rounded corners. The lenses floated forward in a separate case as the shelf folded away. A large wall of frames came up from the floor and filled the wall. It began to revolve between choices until all brands, makes and models that fit those particular lenses were shown. There was no

question in Sasporilla's mind. Right from the off she saw a pair of dark purple frames with a pink rose on each arm near the hinge.

"#443." Sasporilla smiled.

"The Zowly Scholastics! A very good choice." The optometrist said pulling them down and letting Sassy try them on. "What do you think?"

"Perfect!" Sasporilla said.

"They come in a selection of colours...." the optometrist smiled pushing another button causing the rest of the frames to rotate out and be replaced only with Zowly Scholastics in every colour imaginable. Sasporilla did notice very few had the roses.

"No I like this pair," Sassy said, "in this colour, with the roses."

"Roses?" The optometrist asked surprised? "My mistake! Those aren't Plain old Scholastics those are scholastic V's! They only come in one colour!"

"Lucky me it's a colour I like!" Sasporilla laughed.

"Oh no my girl!" The eye doctor said coyly. "The frame colour is silver! Touch both roses to reset."

Sasporilla touched both roses and the frames reset themselves to a brightly polished silver colour.

"Now think of that perfect colour you love again and touch one of the rose!" The optometrist smiled."

Sasporilla did so and the frames changed colour back to that lovely dark shade of purple.

"Oh how wonderful!" Sasporilla smiled.

"They're a bit more expensive but if they're the ones you really want?" The optometrist asked.

"There will be no question." Elder Corasoll smiled.

With the push of a button a new pair were manufactured for Sasporilla right in the counter and put together, placed in a box and slid out on a padded drawer all within seconds.

"Your new Glasses Madame!" The eye doctor smiled.

"Just bill my office." Elder Corasoll smiled.

"This machine you use?" Sasporilla asked. "Who designed it?"

"They are very common automation here." The optometrist said. "It saves time and space for warehouses etc. A magical engineer named Finleey made them. A Gnome. Finleey's Fine Machines. He's across town. His devices practically built this city!"

"Indeed!" Elder Corasoll agreed. "At least the modern city. A brilliant Gnome."

"I must make it a priority to meet Finleey before I leave." Sasporilla smiled. "I may want him to build a machine for me one day."

"At least you'll see him clearly," Elder Corasoll smiled, "now that you have glasses again."

"I find that ever since I got my first pair of glasses," Sasporilla said with a somber tone, "I have seen the world much clearer."



## Chapter 10

The fashions of Everlost city were not quite to the same tastes as Sasporilla Bucket's. Where she had grown up with the standard Eurocentric Western standard fashion, those of Everlost city were more centered around a modern take on traditional and even ancient design. They reminded Sassy of clothing she had seen in books on ancient cultures of Egypt, The Aztec's, Mayans, the great African and North American tribes people. Some long flowing robes. Some thin wispy cool garments. Adornments of gold. So many Bright feathers and bright colours, and so many styles to choose from!

Sadly nothing really suited Sasporilla's modest tastes but she was too polite not to get something? There was one dress. She thought it fit right in with Everlost city, but she thought it a tad to revealing for her liking. A full length purple wrapped skirt which came up to cross the chest in an X and rest around the neck.

Sasporilla saw no harm in trying it on. A quick look in the mirror confirmed her worst fears. It certainly did show off her midriff and highlighted her bosom making her chest seem much more ample.

"Very becoming Ms.Bucket." Elder Corasoll smiled. "A very good choice. That was the height of last years fashions and on sale this year!"

"Well if it's on sale!" Sasporilla laughed. "I'll take it! My late mother would never forgive me! Passing up a bargain!"

Sassy wore it out of the shop. It helped her blend in with the other women in the city. Though she felt a tad exposed, no one seemed to look twice at her. Nor did anyone cast disparaging glances nor judgmental ones? Everlost city was a very free place to be ones self. Down the street from the dress shop was a shop whose window showcased very familiar brooms.

"TRIUMPHANT'S!" Sasporilla gasped. "Here?"

"Triumphant's?" Elder Corasoll asked. "What are those?"

"They're a very popular brand of broom back home." Sasporilla smiled.

"Oh?" Elder Corasoll said suspiciously. "No my dear, these are Erumpant's! Named after the tough beast of the plains. Curious though."

"Can we go in?" Sasporilla asked.

"Oh yes." Elder Corasoll insisted opening the door for the young lady. "After you."

The shop was quite large and filled with brooms and broomer accessories. Everything here was identical to everything back home in any broomer shop from Diagon Alley to Hogsmeade! And every broom, though they might have read ERUMPANT.... were TRIUMPHANT brooms! Sasporilla was sure of it. They even had a 1200x! Just like her old one.

Elder Corasoll rang the bell on the counter for service.

"Yes, yes..." a voice grumbled from the back, "just a minute."

A tall man stepped out of the back with gruff features and salt, pepper mutton chops and long hair wearing a cowboy hat but he was the spitting image of Pious Griffin. The founder of Triumphant Broom's.

"Ah, Corasoll." The man grumbled. "What do ya want?"

"The young lady, our honoured guest," Elder Corasoll smiled, "wished to look around your shop."

"So look!" The older man grumbled. "Why bother me? Busy working, me... see?"

"Actually I have a few questions for you Rageus?" Elder Corasoll smiled. "They concern the death of your poor long lost twin brother Pious and the law we have about trade of goods outside the city?"

Sasporilla couldn't help but feel responsible. What had she started here? What ever it was must defuse it and fast!

"I love your brooms sir!" Sasporilla fawned taking his arm. "The one in the window reminds me very much of one called a Triumphant from my world."

Rageus Griffin stiffened a bit but Sasporilla tightened her grip.

"This one over here reminds of one made by another company called the Firebolt! And this one by another by the Nimbus company line. I think you have industrial spies coming into Everlost city stealing your secrets!"

"Indeed?" Elder Corasoll questioned raising an eyebrow. "Well that's more plausible than the alternative."

"I was wondering if you had a broom with enough room so I can carry a tent or something I can camp in?" Sassy asked knowingly.

"Actually we have severally brooms that may just solve both your transportation and camping needs." Rageus Griffin said. "The Erumpant 1200x is a sturdy broom, it'll keep up with yer worm fer now an' it has a caravan feature."

A caravan feature?" Sasporilla asked innocently.

"You turn the dial by the grip here and you can extend a caravan from the tip which is magically built into the broom." The broom maker smiled proudly.

"Genius!" Sassy smiled.

"Then we also have the Erumpant 1550 X Dragon." Rageus Griffin smiled. "Fastest broom I've ever made! It'll out fly anything on the market! It only comes with a tent feature. The XT has a caravan but is a bit Slower. Still ten times faster than the old twelve hundred though."

"Really?" Sasporilla asked in awe of the 1550xt Dragon. It's black curled body and gun grip handle with gold accouterment and golden dragons head tip were quite appealing. "What about saddle bags?"

"Pair a saddle bags could be thrown in if you were ta buy today, I suppose." Griffin sneered amused. "Need any leathers?"

"Yes I do!" Sassy said looking over at the women's rack and seeing her very own style. Now she just hoped they had her size.

When Sasporilla came out of the change room carrying her leathers the Rageus Griffin and Elder Corasoll were in a heated but quiet discussion. Their wands were drawn but not pointed at each other. Not yet anyway.

"Boys calm down!" Sasporilla smiled politely. "The cost can't be that high, surely?"

"Perhaps the cost is higher than you know young lady." Elder Corasoll said angrily.

"Get the stick out of yer arse Chuck!"

"That will be Elder Corasoll to you Rageus!" Elder Corasoll snapped.

"An' that'll be Mr.Griffin ta you if ya please Lord Stick in the arse!" Rageus Griffin barked back.

"Enough!" Sasporilla shouted injecting her lit wand between the pair. "Do I have to petrify you two in the corner like a pair of death eaters or are you going to calm down?"

"He..." Rageus started but Sasporilla shot him a look equal to one of her mum's angry glances.

"This is none of your...." Elder Corasoll shut up as Sasporilla raised her eyebrows in an intimidating manner that would have made professor Severus Snape himself proud.

"Now if you gentlemen will both kindly put your wands away," Sasporilla smiled, "I'm sure we can work this out. As I clearly started this mess I will facilitate its resolution. If your smart you'll accept my offer?"

Both men looked at each other and through grit teeth said. "Agreed."

Sasporilla stood them on either side of the counter with her at the open end.

"Elder Corasoll," Sasporilla asked, "please enlighten me to the law behind your concerns."

"The law is clear!" Elder Corasoll said intensely slamming down his fist. "There is to be NO TRADE between Everlost city and the Witch Queen controlled civilizations of AVALON!"

"And nothing in my shop comes from any of the Witch Queen controlled civilizations of Avalon Charleston Corasoll." Rageus Griffin Snarled.

"Liar!" Elder Corasoll accused. "Then explain how this young woman knows your stock? She isn't from Everlost! You must be trading with Avalon!!!"

"Perhaps it's like she suggested." Rageus Griffin sneered. "Industrial spies?"

"Or perhaps there is an easier solution." Sasporilla said trying to defuse the heightening tensions. "I am not from any of the civilizations of Avalon! I am England, on Earth. You Rageus Griffin are trading with Earth."

"Is this true Rageus?" Elder Corasoll gasped.

"Yes." Rageus Griffin grumbled reluctantly. "That's where my brother has been for years after he faked his death and left this place. He's made a fortune selling my broom designs. He supplies me with whatever I need in other gear for sale. When I decide to retire and sell the shop, I have a giant bank account and nice beach house waiting for me. Away from here. Away from you, Chuck."

Elder Corasoll sat gob-smacked. It was a loophole in the law. It made him furious and Sasporilla saw the old mans face getting dangerously red.

"Why not trade with other civilizations of Avalon Elder Corasoll?" Sasporilla asked.

"Only those under the control of the evil Witch Queen." Elder Corasoll said. "We want know part of her nor anything she taints. Those places the Witch Queen controls have a way of spreading to the places she does not. To stay out of her sight all these years has served us well."

"And since nothing here comes from a place she controls..." Rageus Griffin smirked.

"There is where you are wrong sir." Sasporilla sighed. "You have beaten the law in that you are not Trading with a civilization of Avalon, but England's Ministry of Magic and Britain is under the Witch Queen's control. I'm sure that is something your twin brother failed to inform you of."

"Yes... he... did." Rageus Griffin grumbled.

"I've got you!" Elder Corasoll smiled.

"No you haven't." Sasporilla said. "The law is clear. You have nothing Elder Corasoll, but a closed minded antiquated system that I am sure this gentleman is not the only one to have skirted?"

"Ridiculous!" Elder Corasoll scoffed.

"Is it!" Rageus Griffin asked. "Do you think anyone in this town makes flying leathers like these? No! Why? They're meant for traveling! Travelling away from here! Not flying a broom around the city!"

"There is no reason local people can't make it for you." Elder Corasoll said.

"I've had these in the shop for years." Rageus Griffin said. "I dust them and return most of them for newer ones. Very few sell. No one here will make them. They'd never make money!"

"So that's one example." Elder Corasoll sniffed in derision. "Any other outside goods I'd recognize in a heartbeat." "I didn't think you would sir." Sasporilla said.

"Excuse me?" Elder Corasoll said quite offended.

"No offence meant sir but earlier," Sasporilla reminded him, "You and I walked past a music shop a street below. There was a song playing. "Can you dance like a Hippogriff?"

"Yes." Elder Corasoll smiled. "A very big song here, by some local boys. They call themselves.. "

"The Weird Sisters?" Sasporilla smiled.

"No." Elder Corasoll went pale white.

"I'm afraid so." Sassy said sympathetically. "The man who was with Agnes, Myron Wagtail is the actual singer of that song."

"Looks like you don't have quite as much control as you think you do Chuck!" Rageus Griffin smiled.

"Maybe it's time we updated the law." Elder Corasoll stiffened.

"Or maybe," Sasporilla said holding up her hands, "you can let me get to Avalon city, face the Witch Queen and finish my trials. When I'm done with her, she will no longer be a shadow on our worlds."

"And if you fail?" Rageus Griffin chuckled.

"Then Chuck changes the law and you probably run away and retire." Sasporilla said.

"Ms.Bucket do you seriously ask that we have faith in you to beat the Witch Queen?" Elder Corasoll asked.

"No." Sasporilla said. "I ask you have faith in Agnes who has faith in me to change things

To make life better for everyone like am doing gor the worker elves. What I'm asking you to do is Wait for me to get to Avalon City before you act and bet on me to beat the Witch Queen! If I fail, I die. No one wins."

There was silence between the two men.

"Now if I could get these leathers," Sasporilla smiled, "an Erumpant 1550XT and a pair of saddle bags I'll be out of your hair."

"Ah yeah of course." Rageus Griffin said rather humbled by the bravery of the young woman. He pulled the solid black broom with it's curly black body down from the wall. "Ok take the seat. It needs to imprint onto you. Security feature so no one can steal it."

"Between you and me," Sassy asked as she mounted the broom and felt the seat pinch her bottom, "What's the spell you use for that?"

"I can't tell you that!" Rageus Griffin said. "That's an industrial secret!"

"No problem." Sassy said stepping off the broom. "Just didn't want to have to point out that Live wire in the back is Avalon Technology."

"Vestigium Securitas" Rageus Griffin grumbled.

"Thank you." Sasporilla smiled.

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The once Majestic throne room, where the Witch Queen and Warlock King sat in Ivory and golden royal opulence, had now been taken over by a darker esthetic. Cracked rotting tree branches spread across the room weaving a dense cave to entomb and enshrine the royal thrones in dark royal splendor. Baba Yaga sat upon her throne of thorns and moss as the corpse of the Warlock King sat rotting beside her.

The remaining members of the royal council responded to Baba Yaga's summons. They appeared in the throne room in their true forms. Free now to appear as the creatures of darkness they all truly are. Marie LaVaeux the great Swamp Witch. Sheliza Amari the Wedjat, the ancient undead creature of the shifting sands. Gormlobom the Hobgoblin who never hid his small evil ugly little self. Then there was... Millicent Glindell. The young, innocent and kind hard working young woman stood shaking in her robes terrified.

"What's wrong my dear?" Baba Yaga asked.

"Wha- wha- what is this?" Millicent Glindell asked starting to cry. "What's happened here? Where is my Queen? What have you done to my Warlock King?"

Millicent Glindell drew her wand but was grabbed on either side by Amari and LaVeau.

"I am your Witch Queen." Baba Yaga hissed. "As for the Warlock King? He's just a little under the weather today. Feeling a touch, "maggoty"."

The creatures laughed as Millicent Glindell struggled to break free. She was slight and small but she squirmed her way out of LaVeau's grip. Stomped on Amari's foot, breaking her grip. Millicent Glindell pointed her wand at Baba Yaga and froze.

"What are you going to do my dear?" Baba Yaga asked slowly getting off her throne of moss and thrones. "Kill me? I don't think you have it in you! In fact I feel it's time for to learn a few new things. Time for a... make over... as it were."

Millicent Glindell had not noticed the fine branches and vines which had begun to climb her legs until they were half way up her abdomen. By then it was too late. The young woman cast two spells at the plants that quickly enveloped her and forced her to drop her wand.

"Now, now, Millicent." Baba Yaga smiled. "Don't fight it. This will be good for you. You've always been a subservient little stick. Now..."

The branches receded revealing Millicent Glindell in her new twisted form of wood and flesh. Another of the Witch Queens wood Zombies snapping with her jerky painful motions.

"... I will grant you your greatest wish my dear. You may tend to the Warlock King." Baba Yaga laughed. "The rest of you, come! We must organize traps for where you will hunt and kill Sasporilla Bucket."

"What if we can not beat her?" Gormlobom asked.

"If you don't kill her," the Witch Queen said, "then she had better kill you. If she does not? I will!"

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The bridge across Everlost city, between the two old temples, spanned the full width of Blues girth. It was hard to grasp just how large the city was until Sasporilla reached the bridge's center. To see the Everlost spread out before her. The temples on either side their step streets lined with shops and homes. The main road, with blue in its center, and the sprawl of homes that stretched out from it. There was no question that Everlost was as big as Essex was. Not as big as London or New York or a major city but any one good section or borough of it!

"You truly have built a remarkable city here Elder Corasoll." Sasporilla smiled.

"Thank you." Elder Corasoll sighed. "Perhaps you can try to understand why I am so protective of it?"

"Oh I do understand!" Sassy said sympathetically. "Perhaps you can try to understand the plants growth?"

"What?" Elder Corasoll asked.

"If you plant an acorn in a small pot, no matter how much you water it, tend to it, or talk to it Elder Corasoll, it will never grow to become an Oak tree." Sasporilla said. "It might sprout and become a fine small plant, but it will never reach its full potential. Do you understand?"

"I do but a city is not an acorn nor an oak tree," Elder Corasoll smiled self assured, "it's a city after all."

"Yes." Sasporilla agreed. "Alive, as a growing acorn. Do you not think for a second that acorn doesn't know what it's meant to become. Yearns to be a mighty oak. Won't burst the bonds of its small pot by cracking its earthenware sides and spreading its roots as far as it can deep into near by soil? Even if doing so is to its detriment! Even if it only finds stone floor and dies? Your little acorn is starting to break out of its pot! My question to you is this are you going to replant your tree and let it grow tall and mighty? Or let it stagnate and die Elder Corasoll? At this point I'd say the choice is in your hands."

"You are very wise for your age Sasporilla Bucket." Elder Corasoll sighed. "I have much to consider and to bring before the council after the festival of the beast is over. You have done our city a great service. The name of Bucket will be one of honour in this city from this day forward."

"Oh?" An old woman said walking slowly up at them on the bridge accompanied by a younger woman. "It shouldn't be. It's not like she is a REAL Bucket!"

"Excuse me?" Sasporilla asked more than a little confused and offended.

"Mrs. Wunk please remember this young lady is an esteemed guest in our city!" Elder Corasoll smiled at the old woman nervously.

"No!" The old woman asked. "The council may call her that and the sea of unwashed masses below may believe it BUT I KNOW BETTER, don't I? I am Mrs. Meticulous Wunk. I am your grand aunt. My mother's brother was

Circumstance Bucket, sister of your great grand father. Or rather the man married to the woman whom your great grandmother cheated on with a.... house elf."

"I see." Sasporilla said.

"Do you?" Meticulous Wunk asked. "My mother told me how her brother stood by and turned a blind eye while his whore wife gave birth to the bastard child. Buggy eyes, sharp nose, long face, just like the house elf! What a scandal! We had to move all the way here to get away from it!!! Your side of the family are imposters! House elves! Servants who have stolen my families good name!"

"I am sorry you feel that way Aunt Meticulous." Sasporilla said stepping forward and hugging the bitter old woman despite her hateful nature. "But know that I am so happy to meet you and if my being alive insults you then I apologize, I had little say in that."

"Don't be cheeky girl!" Meticulous Wunk said pulling away. "I only wanted to bring my opinions to your attentions, as you intend to be Witch Queen."

"And being Queen of the dirty Worker Elves?" Sasporilla asked.

"Yes." The old woman agreed. "You are the highest of those below us."

"Auntie may I ask who this is with you?" Sasporilla asked.

"This is my Grand Daughter Emily." The old lady sniffed. "She's a bit of a useless thing but I'm sure some man will take her some day, if she's lucky."

"I'm pleased to meet you Emily." Sasporilla smiled meeting the beaten down girls lowered gaze. "You know your grandmother is a horrid bitter shrew and you'll have to stand up to her if you ever want your own life?"

"I beg your pard..." Meticulous Wunk gasped.

"Oh shut it!" Sasporilla said stepping forward putting her finger in the old woman's face. "I tried being polite and diplomatic but as you're a passive aggressive old gas bag I'll make myself clear! No one is lesser than anyone! Not Magi, not elf, not muggle! If you can't learn to treat others like you want to be treated then perhaps you should just sit at home and look in a mirror all day. Clearly you only love yourself. I think you'll find the world is a much brighter place if you let some light into it. Until then there is no place for your kind of darkness and bile!"

The old woman stood there shaking with anger. How dare this young woman, an elf--breed-Bucket, speak to her that way? "The arrogance! The insolence!" Mrs.Meticulous Wunk. Hissed.

"Shut up Grand mother!" Emily snapped turning her grandmother's face stone cold.

"How dare you?" The old woman started.

"No grandmother," Emily cut her grandmother off, "how dare you? You bring us all the way out here today to insult a stranger! Why? For some imagined eighty year old family slight that neither you nor her had anything to do with. Does that not seem just a touch mad to you? Well it does to me! And she's right! I am tired of your constant hateful bile! Especially towards me! Ms.Bucket please accept my humble apologies on behalf of my family. Grandmother I'm taking you home and you'd best prepare for things to change. Our relationship will be taking on a bit of a different dynamic after today. If you have nothing nice to say to me, don't talk to me at all, unless you need something. Your constant browbeating and abuse of me stops now. Now let me get you home."

"Stupid Girl," The old woman said at Sasporilla, "See what you've done!"

"Lost you a slave and given you back a granddaughter?" Sassy smiled. "You're welcome Mrs.Wunk."

Elder Corasoll and Sasporilla watched the two of them walk off into the city. Emily seemed to be laying down new ground rules that her grandmother was not happy to hear about nor eager to listen to.

"Mrs.Wunk is the wife of one of our late high council members!" Elder Corasoll said.

"Is she?" Sasporilla mused.

"She has always been highly opinionated and considered herself above the rest." Elder Corasoll said.

"You don't say?" Sassy smiled.

"And NO ONE, not even me, has ever stood up to her as you did today!" Elder Corasoll laughed.

"Well then you are welcome." Sasporilla smiled, "but in many ways people like that are monsters of your own making... if you don't stand up to them yourself!"

"Sometimes an outsider is afforded more freedoms to do as they please." Elder Corasoll smiled.

"That's so true!" Sasporilla agreed. "We all choose the chains in which we live in. Why are yours made from bits of bitter shrew?"

"You have a way with words that would that would make most politicians rethink policy, poets rephrase themselves and sailors blush Ms.Bucket." Elder Corasoll laughed holding out his arm to proudly escort the young witch the rest of the way.

"I have learned from some of the best." Sasporilla smiled.

In no time they were across the bridge and down a few levels to Finleey Fine Machines. A small unassuming grey door on a windowless shop front with a simple wooden sign. Sasporilla opened the door and ducked her head to enter. She was no giant like Hagrid, only stand five foot six and three-quarters but she felt like one walking through this small five and a half-foot door.

A small gnome stood in the show room with a young man dressed in robes with his hood up.

"I will be with you in just a moment." The gnome said. "The shelves require constant restocking by busy hands but they can be shuffled around and reorganized at will to showcase any product!"

"I might be able to trade you some tech secrets for replacing busy hands for automation for shelves in some shops sometime in the future?" The wizard said.

"We may have a deal?" Finleey the gnome smiled and held out his hand to the wizard who dropped his hood to reveal that was Angelo Lazarus.

"Angelo!" Sasporilla cried lunging forward embracing him.

Angelo took Sasporilla deeply into his embrace and kissed her, unwilling to ever let her go again.

"I was terrified you were dead." Angelo said. "And I could kill you for not telling me you were alive! I had to find out from Myron and Agnes."

"Please don't be angry with me." Sasporilla pleaded. "This is really the first step of civilization we've made."

"At least I've found you and we're together." Angelo said. "I would say I will never let you go but Agnes explained you're not leaving big blue out there."

"That's right." Sassy said. "I've made a promise to protect him."

"Then I'm not leaving your side as long as you'll have me, Sasporilla Bucket." Angelo Lazarus said staring into her violet eyes.

Sassy kissed Angelo and took his hand in hers.

"I'm here for at least two more days." Sasporilla smiled. "I won't leave your side."

"No Sassy." Angelo said pulling her outside. "I don't think you understand me."

Sasporilla's heart skipped a beat when Angelo dropped down onto one knee in front of her. He reached into his robes and brought out a small box.

"Sasporilla I saw myself doing this sometime in the future." Angelo said. "Once I was in a position when I was mor financially stable and responsible, but after I thought I'd lost you?"

"I understand Angelo, and I do love you." Sasporilla said cupping his hands not allowing him to open the ring box. "But we're to young, and we're not ready. We are in love yes! I love you with all my heart!"

"And I love you so much Sasporilla." Angelo said. "I can't imagine the rest of my life without you?"

"Then hang on to this ring Angelo Lazarus." Sasporilla Bucket smiled. "I'm not saying no. I'm just saying not yet. Now what did you mean in there about trading tech for future shops?"

"Your wand shop of course!" Angelo smiled. "I'll bet that's why you're here to?"

"Mind reader." Sassy smiled coyly. "Shall we go back in?"

"Yes." Angelo smiled squeezing her hand. "We have the better part of the rest of two days to spend together. And I just love what you're wearing!"

"What?" Sasporilla blushed. "This old Thing?"





## Chapter 11

*Two souls joined as one  
Spinning in ethereal embrace  
Eliminated bliss  
Eyes locked forever  
Never to gaze upon another's  
Worlds adrift  
Far beneath their feat  
Engulfed in colours  
of waterfall rainbows  
Embrace, the lovers embrace  
Devoid of animus or artifice  
Know only passion and joy  
A love for one another  
To take from and give to each other  
Bodies spent  
They slept as they loved  
In each others embrace.*

*From Lovers Dance - by Myron Wagtail*

Sasporilla's eyes fluttered open. The finely crafted wooden ceiling of the Erumpant 1550XT Dragon's Caravan was quite nice. Oak with Black walnut and red cedar inlay. Very well crafted. The bed was very comfortable. A plush mattress on a big queen size four post bed in a full bedroom.

How rarely she'd used the bedroom in her 1200X. More often than not Sassy had spent the night on the couch. There never seemed like a reason to use the full bed. Just grab a quick kip and keep flying or get back to work. Perhaps a bed was a place of comfort? Something Sasporilla's psyche was not prepared to allow herself to have usually. Mind you, in the 1200x she never had a guest!

"Angelo?" Sasporilla purred wondering just where her boy friend was. "Where are you?"

"Here!" Angelo said coming through the bedroom door balancing a plate of toast and some fresh fruit, a couple of glasses of fresh squeezed juice. "Breakfast in bed! I brought you some groceries and some clothes from home. Thought you could use them, and happy I did! Not sure I like other guys looking at you in that local frock!"

"I never took you for the jealous type Angelo Lazarus!" Sasporilla laughed. "Where did you get the glasses?"

"Technically they're your counter stools." Angelo cringed. "I'll transfigure them back after I wash them."

"Clever man!" Sasporilla smiled taking a bite of toast.

THUMP

Something shook the caravan. Something very large, very heavy it felt like moved them sideways.

THUMP!

"Uh oh!" Sassy said. Throwing off the covers. "It's Blue. Best get dressed and fast!"

Sasporilla was thrilled to find a pair of jeans, a normal shirt and her bolero jacket amongst the clothes scattered in the living room.

"Sorry!" Angelo apologized. "They were piled nicely. I even brought your winter coat!"

"Your a dear!" Sassy smiled grabbing her blue fur cloak and bag and flinging herself out the door.

The next large thump knocked the caravan over on its side. Sassy turned the ring on the broom where it hung by the door and the caravan slipped back inside the broom.

"Get on!" Sasporilla ordered Angelo mounting her broom as the young couple took off into the skies over Everlost City.

Blue's body was rippling and shuddering. Occasionally he would lurch to one side or the other uncomfortably. Sasporilla flew close to the great beast.

"Blue!" She called out to the giant creature. "What's wrong?"

"It's his time." Elder Corasoll said waving from the bridge.

Sasporilla swooped down to the bridge and landed just short of Elder Corasoll who stood amongst a small crowd of the city elders and other key leaders. Angelo hopped off the back and followed closely behind as Sasporilla pushed her way to the front of the crowd.

"Elder Corasoll." Sasporilla said taking a place at the railing beside him. "What do you mean it's Blue's time?"

"This is when the star worm begins his great change!" Elder Corasoll smiled. "And he bestows upon our people the great gift!"

"I don't understand?" Sasporilla protested.

"I know child." Elder Corasoll said. "I will attempt to explain."

BOOM!

An explosion of flame and rock fragments rocked the bridge. Many people fell from the blast and some were injured.

"Now what?" Sassy cursed running to the other side of the bridge. A large chunk of stone had been blown out of the side of the bridge. Clearly it had been hit by a BOMBARDA MAXIMA spell, the exact same as the one headed straight towards her!

"COMMUTO PRAELUCEM!" Angelo cast transmuting the explosive spell into a harmless ball of light which passed on and dispersed.

"That was bloody brilliant!" Sassy smiled. "You'll have to teach me that one."

"Most certainly." Angelo said reaching into his robes and drawing out a stellerscope. "Damn!"

"What is it?" Sasporilla asked.

"Middle of the street, on the far side of the city." Angelo said handing his lovely girl the scope.

Sasporilla placed the eyepiece to the lens of her glasses and adjusted the focus. The smug sharp toothed wide smile of Gormlobom the hobgoblin met her view.

"Damn." Sasporilla agreed. "I'd better put a stop to him."

"You don't need to face him alone." Angelo said.

"Technically," Sassy smiled. "I'm still doing my trial. So yes Angelo, I do."

"That's ridiculous!" Angelo protested.

"Just protect the people here," Sasporilla kissed her handsome young man, "from any surprises the Witch Queen might have for us."

"Gotchya!" Angelo smiled as Sassy leapt from the bridge, broom in hand. She landed softly on blues large furry back and ran swiftly along. Sasporilla hopped on her broom as it began to take flight and sped towards the hobgoblin standing in challenge at the cities edge.

Sasporilla landed a mere ten feet between blue behind her and the Hobgoblin advisor ahead of her.

"Gormlobom." Sasporilla Bucket said gripping her wand tight.

"I'm touched that you remember me." Gormlobom grinned widely with his shark like grin. "The explosion certainly didn't effect your memory, nor your flesh. Pity."

"Thank you for your concern." Sasporilla snarled. "I demand you cease your attack and leave this place in peace."

"Oh?" Gormlobom said pulling a mask of gold from his robes and placing it over his face. Touching his wand to his neck he cast the voice amplification charm. "People of Everlost City, I am Gormlobom, your new high governor under the Witch Queen. Your city and all of it's citizens will stand trial for treason for harboring the fugitive Sasporilla Bucket!!!"

"These people have done nothing wrong Gormlobom!" Sasporilla said. "I will not allow you to harm them!"

"No of course you won't!" Gormlobom smiled. "You will fight me! You have to beat me to continue your challenge for the crown! If you don't fight me, I will have you enslaved along with this city. I will make you watch while I try and execute each and every man, woman and child and leave it a mysterious ruin!!!"

Sasporilla raised her wand before her face prepared to duel. "Enguard you horrid little monster."

"Oh my dear," Gormlobom's Cheshire grin widened. "did you honestly believe that this was going to be a fair fight?"

A roar sounded from the clouds above. Sasporilla looked up to see two large Avalonian steel dragons swooping down wingless out of the clouds. Their razor sharp steel scaled, snake like bodies, twisted through the air. Masterfully gliding the air currents above the city. Their searing hot roars singed the highest roof tops and lit them a fire.

"Sas...!" Was all Sasporilla heard Angelo yell as blast struck her hard on the side and knocked her flying back a dozen yards or more. Sasporilla landed hard on the stone road her left side badly burned and arm broken. Her ears rang from the impact of the explosion and her head swam wondering where she was, and just what was going on? Where was her mommy?

Everlost city. Her mum was dead, and she would soon join her if Sassy didn't raise her wand!

Sasporilla blocked and deflected the next blast back at Gormlobom as she dragged herself up onto her feet.

"EPESKY MAXIMA." Sasporilla cast trying to heal what little bit of her injuries the spell would heal. Surprisingly it mended her broken arm, but not without some pain, and knitted new skin under the burns leaving red patches, more like sunburns, as the blackened charred flesh fell away.

"Ok you miserable little hobgoblin." Sasporilla growled. "If you want a war, then remember, I was at the battle of Hogwarts."

Sasporilla started running towards Gormlobom casting attack spell after attack spell. Any attack spell Gormlobom cast Sassy easily cast aside or dodged rolling to one side like a big cat hunting a gazelle on the great plains. Gormlobom became very frightened as Sasporilla Bucket came close.

The steel dragons wafted down close to the city and opened their gaping maws, revealing the blast furnace like innards within. With a great roar they spewed forth a spray of molten metal vomit that covered buildings, streets and people who could not get out of the way. The white hot metal burned through anything unable to withstand its heat.

Angelo lead the towns magi in a series of defensive maneuvers against the dragons who did a great amount of devastating damage to Everlost city and its people.

Sasporilla Bucket, less than twenty feet from the hobgoblin royal advisor, saw the words form on his twisted lips. "AVADAKEDAVRA!"

"EXPELIARMUS!" Sasporilla cast and locked the wands in priorincantotum.

Magical energy flowed between the two wands and clashed in the center. Power dripped in globs, like the dragons spew, where the spells fought for control.

Gormlobom, the sly old hobgoblin that he was knew that if he cast a spell like this, the most scrupulous young witch would lock him up, rather than end his life. Just the distraction he needed to hide the twisted finger forms of Hobgoblin magic. Linking his three back curled centered fingers and spreading out the thumbs on either side of his left hand, Gormlobom called forth his secret weapon.

Vine like shoots broke through the cobblestones and grew quickly surrounding and ensnaring Sasporilla Bucket. The spells broke as Gormlobom conceded the duel. After all, when your opponent could no longer point her wand, it was only good manners. The vines flowered and fruited pods of meat like tendons and muscle which became part of the vines. They would break off becoming independent automatons, their green skins turning to bark like wood. These things were the queens wood zombies!

The vines which held Sasporilla took full inhuman form. Holding her fragile wrists tight within their thorny grips. Blood trickled lightly down Sassy's wrists as Gormlobom strolled up to her with a delighted little dance.

"Now that I have you just where I want you," Gormlobom grinned. "I can take my time torturing you slowly, as the Witch Queens pets, melt the city of Everlost to the ground!"

The dragons swooped in and spewed forth torrents of there molten metal vomit which sprayed and splashed over the back of blues furry hide and up across the bridge and those unable to escape it.

"Rrrrrrooooooaaaaarrrrrrrrr!!!!" The great beast blue roared in pain as his fur split and fell away revealing a golden lining inside and his tender pale pink skin beneath. A thin burned ridge ran up his back smoking, causing the great worm to writhe in pain.

"Blue!" Sasporilla yelled.

"I wouldn't worry about your beast, he's as good as dead." Gormlobom said poking his wand painfully into Sasporilla's ribs. "As is every person in the city."

"Going to turn them into more of these living wood zombies?" Sasporilla asked.

"Oh they aren't alive!" Gormlobom bragged. "Their flesh is very much dead."

"That's all I needed to hear." Sasporilla smiled snapping her fingers and spreading them out.

The wood zombies split apart, untwisted vines from around agonized reanimated flesh which dropped to the ground flopping insanely. The wooden vines twisted and shot forward wrapping around Gormlobom grabbing hold of the Hobgoblin and holding him up before Sasporilla Bucket.

"You forgot I'm an Elf blood Gormlobom." Sassy smirked. "We can control the natural even if you try to pervert it for the unnatural."

Blue reared up suddenly in pain. The rest of his blue fur coat split away and fell to the sides as he broke through the melted bridge. The Steel dragons could create no thermals to climb fast enough as Blue came up from below and chomped them in his wide mouth. Blue landed onto the stone road with a thunderous crash. Sasporilla called her broom to her and took off into the city sky as the wind from the impact blew across the city.

Blue took off crawling faster than she had ever seen him move. A gigantic pale pink worm moving like a bullet train out of the city, right over Gormlobom, crushing the evil hobgoblin as he left Everlost city. The great beast crashed through trees blindly flattening everything in its way.

Sasporilla flew above the city on her broom. Scouring the faces of those who wandered the dusty, rubble strewn streets for any sign of her love.

"Angelo?" Sasporilla cried out. "Angelo?"

"Sasporilla!" Angelo called to the pink haired witch from atop the east step pyramid. The few city elders that stood with him peered out across the city to appraise the damage. Sasporilla dropped her broom as she landed and ran into Angelo's strong loving arms.

"Angelo," Sasporilla wept relieved, "thank goodness your safe."

"I'm sorry I couldn't protect everyone Sassy." Angelo said hanging his head with regret.

"My boy!" Elder Corasoll smiled. "Through your wherewithal and leadership in our time of crisis, hundreds, maybe thousands were saved! You personally saved the lives of more than a few dozen people."

"You're a hero." Sasporilla smiled.

"I was just trying to keep people safe." Angelo said. "Just like you do."

"And I'm proud of you for it." Sasporilla smiled kissing her love. "And with that I must go. Blue needs my help. I fear now more than ever."

"Know this Sasporilla Bucket." Elder Corasoll said as Sassy mounted her broom, "the gift of the great hide will fund this city for centuries! For this we the people are eternally thankful. So know this, from now until the ice death, he will not stop! Anything in his path must be moved!!!!"

"Thank you Elder Corasoll!" Sasporilla said lifting off from the Pyramid. "I love you Angelo!"



## Chapter 12

Aiviq was a stout older boy of the native people frozen tundra of Avalon's North. Many called him Pidguyok meaning stout or fat. It was bad enough his name meant WALRUS! However he tried not to let the other boys comments get to him. No one was perfect amongst them and of all his people, he was warm when some of the others felt the cold.

It was not long after dawn on the third day of winter that he left his home to walk to school. Surprisingly only skriniya, snows that never reach the ground, had fallen on the already frozen tundra this year. A qanuk drifted down and landed on his cold nose. Each qanuk was unique and beautiful yet a billion of them turned the world white and buried the land in a heartbeat. The first snows of winter were upon them, and if the elders were right, this year his people would witness something most remarkable.

Snowflakes began to fall in huge amounts as Aiviq turned back home. This was more than a winter snow. This was "selamiut pirta" The Sky Dwellers Blizzard. That which foretells the coming of the great beast. "Siku pukak - Tungortok ikkuma - Selamiut Nanurjuk tingmiaq"

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It took Sasporilla Bucket nearly two days of hard riding at high speed to catch up with Blue. She followed his path of destruction the giant rampaging worm ripped through the forest like a super highway straight to him. Luckily the Erumpant's "High speed" feature formed a protective bubble around the rider curving off buffeting winds and rain, as well as keeping the temperature manageable inside.

Blue came into view just before nightfall on the second day. Sasporilla was exhausted but she pushed herself to get to her friend. His tender pink skin was covered in some kind of gelatinous oily substance that looked like muggle car oil in water and smelled of rock candy and blood. Sassy could see the travel and battle had cut his skin and scarred him. Perhaps this was some sort of healing.

Sasporilla matched her brooms speed above Blue's head. "I'm here Blue! I've found you! It's Sasporilla! I'm with you!"

But Blue paid her no attention he just pushed on forward. Sasporilla was exhausted. She had to stop but she couldn't allow him to continue on with out her. Sassy fell back and landed on Blues spine. She landed hard and skidded on the slick surface of blues gelatinous covered back. The slick oily goop covered over the protective environmental bubble provided by the Erumpant 1500 X Broom. With the last ounce of her strength, Sasporilla drew her wand. "PRAFIGIO!" Sasporilla cast remembering a distant second year charms class.

"Now class pay attention." Professor Flitwick smiled. "Once you've levitated your ornament onto the class Christmas tree, you'll need secure it! The spell to magically secure something to anything else, is PRAFIGIO!"

"Even to something moving sir?" Sasporilla had asked.

"Yes miss Bucket!" Professor Flitwick nodded.

"How about something dirty or oily?" Billy Bombaduck shouted out from the back.

"Yes Mr.Bombaduck it will even affix an object magically to a viscous surface." Professor Flitwick frowned.

"And please raise your hand in my class room! Now if you will each please come up and take turns putting up your ornaments."

The charms class came alive with student made ornaments levitating up to the tree. Much to the delight of professor Flitwick who loved seeing the light and enthusiasm in the eyes of his students when they were engaged in practical applications of charms."Very good Miss Bucket!" Professor Flitwick smiled as Sassy levitated her Rudolph the Red nosed Niffler skillfully up the tree. "Now a quick POP of your mouth when you say PRAFIGIO."

"PRAFIGIO!" Billy Bombaduck cast, affixing a great brownish thing that he said was meant to be a Sorting hat but looked much more like a turd, to the back of Sasporilla's pink hair. Much to the laughter and delight of the other Slytherin Children.

"You're right Professor," Billy Bombaduck sneered, "It will even stick to oily gross things."

Sasporilla lost concentration as she reached behind her. The red nosed niffler smashed on the floor as the class laughed and Sasporilla ran out of the room.

It wasn't until hours later Karry Curtis found Sassy crying in the secret court yard off the great hall, and brought her back to the Charms classroom, much to the relief of professor Flitwick.

"Miss Curtiss!" Professor Flitwick smiled, "You managed to find our Miss Bucket, Good! I am so sorry that awful child did that to you Sasporilla, I will remove it."

Professor Flitwick pointed his wand at the offending ornament and cast "CONTRAFIGIO!"

Billy Bombaduck's handmade morass fell away freely and would have been allowed to hit the ground and break, but Sasporilla caught it and placed it on Flitwick's desk.

"No need for two broken ornaments." Sassy sighed.

"Ah!" Professor Flitwick smiled handing the pink haired witch a small purple ribbon rapped yellow box. "That brings me to this."

Sasporilla took the box and pulled open the ribbon. Inside the box was....

"Rudolph!" Sassy cried.

"The red nosed niffler!" Karry sang.

"Someone always drops an ornament Miss Bucket." Professor Flitwick said. "So it's a great introduction for the REPAIRO charm."

Sasporilla hugged the small teacher. He was so touched. Professor Flitwick knew the girls home situation was hard but she was not the type of child who used it as an excuse to act badly but rather a reason to better herself. She was such a delight to teach.

Now Miss Bucket shall we finish our lesson?

"PRAFIGIO!" Sasporilla cast falling forward on her broom exhausted. The spell affixing her and her broom to Blue as warm waves of black washed over Sasporilla.

The never ending sea of trees gave way to open frozen tundra with a crash as Blue pounded forward with a thunderous roar. With amazing speed the gigantic worm slipped into the curtain of tundra night and vanished into the inky black moonless sky.

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Aiviq walked along side his grand father through the cold night air. They lead a delegation from villages across the tundra that had gathered because of the signs. Now they walked into the night with torches, towards their destiny as the elders danced in rainbow fire in the night skies above them.

"The Selamiut is beautiful is not my grandson?" Kuyarak asked.

"Yes." Aiviq smiled. "I've seen the lights, the aurora borealis, my whole life but never so bright. Never so alive."

"I'm glad you embrace your mothers teachings but I also need to know you remember the old ones. To pass on. Do you remember where the Selamiut comes from?" Kuyarak asked.

"When our people die, they go to live in the sky and become sky dwellers." Aiviq nodded.

"Head of the class." His grandfather smiled.

"Our ancestors have purpose. As Anatquq they have said for some time the great time was almost upon us. The time of Siku pukak Tungortok ikkuma Selamiut Nanurjuk tingmiaq."

"Grandpa," Aiviq cringed. "I just don't understand."

"No my boy." The old man smiled. "And as a boy I would not have even understood as much as you do now! Most of the Anatquq here only understand the mysteries of it in part. Even I do not understand it in whole. All we do know is this..."

The old man pointed his glove-covered hand to the night sky.

"See how the Selamiut forms a ring in the sky?" The old man asked.

"Yes!" Aiviq said not realizing the center of the aura was hollow. Like the eye of a great storm.

"Our ancestors guide us to the place of summoning." Kuyarak said. "The place where the great beast must come to die."



## Chapter 13

Sasporilla awoke on her back, sore, stiff, dazed and a bit damp around the head? A drop of water bounced off her forehead. It had apparently not been the first! Sassy sat up. She was still firmly attached to her Erumpant 1500 X Dragon's seat and the attachment spell had worked to keep them affixed to Blue.

Sasporilla felt in her pocket for her wand but was out of luck. She had passed out with it in her hand and obviously dropped it. No matter. Sasporilla was of course an Elf blood.

With a snap of her fingers, light appeared, illuminating the small bubble around her and her broom. The pinkish bubble was made of that viscous oily substance but there was something beyond it. Something thick covering over... Blue! It felt like he had stopped.

"Blue can you hear me?" Sassy called but there was no response. "Of course he can't hear me in here!"

Sasporilla took a deep breath and closed her eyes. She reached out with her feelings. She could feel Blue but something wasn't right. He was hurt, NO! He was... She couldn't tell what he was, but something was wrong! It was time Sasporilla got out of this bubble and checked on him proper. Sassy searched Blue's back for her wand. It had fallen just in beside her where she had passed out.

"SICCUM!" Sasporilla cast, causing her to shake like a dog a dry of quickly.

"Oh that's ATTRACTIVE WIDE BUIT!" she could almost here the voice of her friend Lyra laughing behind her. How she missed, even the insult play these days. "You must look like quite the pick of the litter to your man? Like best in show of the pink poodles, ya? Tell me Angelo, can she get her right leg up to scratch behind her left ear or...?"

"Shut it Lyra! " Sassy laughed pointing her wand up. "BOMBARDA!"

The blast of magical energy blew a hole through the pink crust above her and let in avalanche of snow! Sasporilla hopped on her broom and flew straight up through the snow casting BOMBARDA to clear her path. Blasting the torrent of snow back out of her way. Sassy shot forth through the gap in the snow before it tried to fill itself back in!

Sassy's broom touched sky for only a few seconds before losing its ability to fly! Much to her surprise Sasporilla felt the unmistakable pull of gravity as she sped towards the white covered ground. She pulled up on her Erumpant 1500x but to no avail. She crashed in a snowy puff and slid down a steep embankment coming to stop at the boots of a smiling old leathery faced man. He sat gloved hand in hand with another, and another. Hundreds of people holding gloved hands, sitting in a circle around the snow covered Blue chanting. "Siku pukak - Tungortok ikkuma - Selamiut- Nanurjuk tingmiaq. Siku pukak - Tungortok ikkuma - Selamiut- Nanurjuk tingmiaq. Siku pukak - Tungortok ikkuma - Selamiut- Nanurjuk tingmiaq."

"Hello." A small voice said.

Sasporilla looked between the people of the circle and saw a young boy, dressed very warmly. Sassy was quickly realizing how cold she was becoming.

"Hi!" Sasporilla waved.

"Come." The boy waved to her pushing up on the old mans arm to make an opening for the pink haired witch to crawl out.

"I'm Aiviq." The boy smiled as Sasporilla crawled out and he helped her to her feet. "We best get you into a warm hut before you freeze. You're not exactly dressed for the northern nights are you?"

"No I guess I'm not." Sassy said shivering. "I'm Sas-sss-sasporilla by the way."

"Nice to meet you." Aiviq said as he lead the young witch to the huts. "What were you doing trying to fly over the circle?"

"I wasn't flying over actually," Sasporilla shook her head, "but rather out of. You see I was on Blue's back and well sort of got snowed in there."

"What?" Aiviq gasped holding his hut door open. The warmth of the camp stove flowed out around her like her mothers hugs. "Get in quickly. You came from the great worm?"

"Yes." Sasporilla smiled as she stepped into the small hut's warmth and the boy closed the door. "That's Blue, my friend. I ride with him. Protect him on his journey as best I can."

"My grandfather will want to speak with you when his time in the circle is done." Aiviq said placing some cups on the stove. "Do you like cocoa? I like cocoa, it's my favourite! Although I don't have any marshmallows."

Sasporilla drew her wand and with a quick cast of "CONFECTIO PUFF" she created some lovely small marshmallows for the young man.

"There you are." Sasporilla smiled putting her wand away.

"Thank you, yes!" Aiviq smiled eating one of the sugary puffs. "That was what I was getting at before. You see, your magi magic, works fine out here. Outside the circle. However inside the circle your..."

"But I used my magic to blast my way out?" Sasporilla insisted.

"Strange." Aiviq shook his head. "My grandfather will know why it worked there but not for your broom. Cocoa's ready!"

Aiviq very carefully poured out two mugs of the steaming brown liquid and sprinkled in the marshmallows. He carefully handed a mug to the pink haired witch.

"Here you go." Aiviq smiled. "It should warm you. I have some cookies and cakes stashed away. As a treat of course."

"Of course." Sasporilla nodded taking a deep warming sip of cocoa. "Mmmm this is very good."

"Thank you." Aiviq smiled as he pulled a box out from under his cot. "I make it with chocolate frogs. They're hard to get but when I get one I save them. I don't care about the cards though. Do you know anyone who collects them? Someone that values them more than the chocolate?"

"Aiviq!" A deep voice said from the doorway. "It is your turn in the circle my grandson."

"Yes grandfather." Aiviq said hanging his head and placing his cocoa on the chair.

"Drink up." The old man smiled warmly. "It's cold out there."

Aiviq smiled as he guzzled the warm thick cocoa. It burned a bit but in a wonderfully comfortable way.

"Grandfather," Aiviq smiled, "this is Sasporilla. She rides with the great beast."

"Ah!" The old man smiled pulling up a camp chair. "So you are the Sapputiwoka, The protector! We thought perhaps there wasn't one. Or worse, that you had met your end defending the Siku pukak tungortok ikkuma selamiut nanurjuk tingmiaq on it's journey to the place of dying. The stories of my ancestors say many do."

"The place of dying?" Sasporilla gasped. "What is going on? What is happening to Blue? What are you and your people doing to him?"

The old man shook his head and turned to search through some things in the corner. "Not to him, for him! I wouldn't expect your kind to understand."

"My kind?" Sasporilla asked.

"Magi." The old man turned holding out a parka and a pair of boots. "University type if I'm not mistaken? Put these on and walk with me and I will try to explain."

Sasporilla snatched the clothing from the old man having taken visible offence to his statement. She put them grumbling something he couldn't quite make out but he'd heard just about every insulting thing Magi had to say to him and his people. Kuyarak was pleasantly surprised to see it was a spell.

"A spell?" Kuyarak asked.

"Yes." Sasporilla said stiffly. "A magi spell, to keep the clothes warm. According to your grandson it will work as long as I stay out of your circle."

"Yes." The old man smiled. "You See Your Kind of Magic is different from ours, and our magic fills that circle. Out here your magic will work fine. I will explain more as we walk."

Stepping out of the hut into the cold.

The blue aurora energy above the chanting circle flowed and circled the great beast like living blue flame in the sky.

Sasporilla followed along side the wise old soul as he attempted to educate her.

"You go to the university to learn." Kuyarak began. "There they have taught you there are many types of magic. However they do not teach of the oldest type of magic. That which of the ancient tribes and our ancestors."

"Ah but they do give classes on ritual magic's." Sasporilla said.

"Magi Ritual magic." The man nodded. "Not that of the non-magi, ordinary people. Those of us who remember that we are all one with nature, it's power and have learned that together we are part of its workings. Do you understand?"

"Actually I do." Sasporilla smiled. "I'm an elf blood. I've been taught to become one with nature."

"But do you know your place within nature?" Kuyarak asked. "You, Sasporilla, the tiny little insignificant cog?"

"No." Sasporilla hung her head and sighed. "I guess I have no idea unless it's protector of blue? In which I'm bad at it if all I did was bring him here to die?"

"Good!" The old man smiled. "No one really knows what purpose they play. What cog they are in nature's great machine. Only know that no cog is insignificant! The machine can not run without every cog! You are important, no matter if you are the protector, a wand maker or Mother Nature herself!"

"Why would you say that?" Sasporilla gasped.

"My ancestors showed me all I needed to know about you Sasporilla Bucket," the old man chuckled, "long before you arrived. They told me the protector was to be a magi. They told me your name and why you were chosen. Why you are special above all others."

"But I'm not really special." Sasporilla protested. "I'm just me. All I do is the best I can."

"And that is what makes you special." Kuyarak smiled. "Your willingness to give your all, even for a stranger or a beast in need and still you see nothing special in yourself. The ancestors respect you and welcome you to our circle Sasporilla Bucket."

"Siku pukak - Tungortok ikkuma - Selamiut Nanurjuk tingmiaq." Hundreds of natives chanted as the moon of snow slowly raised and lowered.

"His breathing slows." The old man said.

"No!" Sasporilla shouted trying to run forward but finding herself blocked and thrown back by a burst of blue energy.



"The ancestors appreciate all you have done to this point Sasporilla," Kuyarak smiled as he caught her and stopped her fall, "but they will not allow you to stop tungortoks makkitpok as does the tarralikitak."

Sasporilla struggled against him but he was refused to let her go. "Please girl stop struggling. This is not a sad day. It is a joyous occasion I assure you. Some times, the only way we can see our friends grow into what they are meant to be is to let them go."

"What do you mean?" Sasporilla asked as she stopped struggling. "Grow?"

"The beast will die tonight yes, but this is its natural way." The old man smiled.

"Siku pukak - Tungortok ikkuma - Selamiut Nanurjuk tingmiaq." The chant slowed, as did blues breathing.

Sasporilla looked up to the heavens. The sky was alive with a burning blue Aurora. The elders danced above them as Sassy felt her friends heart beat slowing.

Bump-Bump

"Siku pukak - Tungortok ikkuma - Selamiut Nanurjuk tingmiaq"

Bump.....bump

"Siku pukak - Tungortok ikkuma - Selamiut Nanurjuk tingmiaq"

Bump.....

Sasporilla took a heavy saddened breath as Blue's heart stopped.

"SIKU PUKAK TUNGORTOK IKKUM SELAMIUT NANURJUK TINGMIAQ!" The circle cried out to the ancestors and the ancestors responded.

Bright balls of blue energy formed in the aurora shooting large bolts of lightning down into the snow and ice.

"SIKU PUKAK TUNGORTOK IKKUM SELAMIUT NANURJUK TINGMIAQ!" Again and again the circle called to the ancestors touched the beast with fingers of power until finally they came down from the heavens.

The blue aurora poured down into the center of the snowy mound.

"SIKU PUKAK TUNGORTOK IKKUM SELAMIUT NANURJUK TINGMIAQ!" The old man cheered as the snow and ice mound burst open. A giant crystal griffin stood up amongst the dancing cold blue flame of the ancestors as they danced about him, and roared stretching out its mighty wings.

"Blue!" Sasporilla cried in happiness. "He's a type of ICE PHOENIX!"

"Yes!" The old man smiled. "Great ice bird that goes to the stars! Siku pukak - Tungortok ikkuma - Selamiut Nanurjuk tingmiaq. Ice phoenix is a good word for them."



## Chapter 14

The rhythmic breathy katajjaq throat song of the snow people filled the air as Blue's hooves tromps through the snow. Sasporilla Bucket sat high upon the great beasts head as he picked up speed. The magic of the katajjaq, pushing them farther, faster than they could have gone before. Charging across the snows at tens of kilometers a stride, then hundreds until Blue leapt high into the cold morning air, his large crystalline wings catching the air for the first time. Still not strong enough to fly, but strong enough to glide on the quickly warming thermals found in the air as they flew over a stretch of ocean towards new land.

Blue glided down fast and landed hard on the barren warm rocky coast. He stood and shook his beak.

"Flight is fun," Blue said, "landing is hard."

"Yes it is." Sasporilla smiled safely from her broom hanging magically in the air in front of him. "Don't worry Blue. I'll work on it with you. Now, where are we?"

The air was warm and getting hotter. The rocky coast lead into a dried cracked mud and up to what looked like a very large sand dune.

"Something tells me this isn't Brighton Beach." Sassy smiled taking up her broom and flying up to the top of the tall dune.

Blue leapt up and landed beside her with a loud thud. The dune was nearly two hundred feet high by Sasporilla's estimation and it was the smallest of what rolled out before them. They were on the edge of a desert. A vast dune sea.

"The Zaharanian dessert." Sassy smiled. "Well we're back on the same continent as Avalon City. It's a straight run from here."

"Or fly?" Blue asked.

"No better place for you to practice than here!" Sassy smiled. "Let's get started!"

Small leaps from one dune to ever increasing distant ones, mixed with stronger and stronger flaps of Blue's harder than diamond ice wings, took him higher and farther through the great open desert. Sasporilla flying beside him on her broom cheering him on. Soon Blue was gliding in and landing as soft as a hippogriff in August.

"The sun climbs high in the desert sky Sasporilla Bucket." Blue said concerned for how red his friends face was becoming. "I fear your skin is becoming sunburned out here. Please come shelter under the cool of my wing for a while and rest."

Sassy touched her well sunburned cheek.

"Ouch." Sassy cringed. "Right you are Big Blue! Thank you for noticing. I having so much fun working on flying with you I didn't even notice my own skin burning off! I picked up a cream in Everlost city that will heal up a sun burn quick, but what of you my friend?"

"What of me?" Blue asked.

"You're made of ice!" Sasporilla said suddenly very alarmed. "We must get you out of this heat before you melt."

"Oh my Sasporilla Noooo," the gigantic ice phoenix laughed and stomped, "why it would take the heat at the heart of the hottest star to melt me!"

"But the cold that you emanate isn't icy." Sasporilla smiled. "It's really just cool. Quite pleasant really."

"In the memories of my species I sense that I could give off great cold if I wished too." Blue said looking up to the sky. "There was one, once, who touched a distant world with it's cold to heal an injury. Leaving the world in an a centuries long Ice age as it flew off on its star journey."

"Perhaps that was world like mine?" Sassy said. "We had a very long ice age when our people were just cave men."

"Perhaps." Blue said sadly. "For this I would be sorry."

"Why?" Sasporilla asked.

"I would not have had my species harm yours." Blue said.

"It isn't your fault!" Sassy smiled. "But I accept your apology. However you must then also accept mine."

"For what Sasporilla Bucket?" Blue asked.

"Why for the exact same thing!" Sasporilla insisted. "My people have harmed yours in the past have they not? Going as far as to fight one? Hunt one? Build a tower out of the bone of one of your peoples legs?"

"Yes." Blue agreed.

"Then for my people I am sorry." Sasporilla said.

"And I, Blue the Ice Phoenix, galloper of the wastes and future traveler of the stars accept your apology Sasporilla Bucket." Blue bowed.

Sasporilla pulled up her broom and twisted the gold settings ring. The broom shook loose of her grip and flew up into the air as the caravan cast itself from the tip and settled flat onto the sands. The broom finding its place in it's holding rack next to the door.

"I'll just pop in and get my sun burn cream." Sassy smiled.

"Perhaps have a nice drink of cool water if you have any." Blue insisted. "And should you find any fruit?"

"Yes," Sasporilla laughed, "I will bring it back out to you."

The inside of the caravan was most pleasantly cool compared to blistering heat of the desert sun. The radiant heat and sharp pain from her burns was becoming very obvious, very fast. Sasporilla headed to the bathroom where she'd put the sunburn cream in her medicine chest.

Sassy grimaced at the lobster red face that greeted her. They sunburn was far greater than she had thought and would require almost all the cream she had.

Sasporilla opened the medicine chest and saw the small, plain looking, white pearlescent jars. She picked one up and twisted it open. Inside was a most miraculous ice blue cream. She dipped her sun burned finger into it and felt it cool instantly. Sassy took a small dollop and divided it between her finger on her other hand. She spread the cooling cream over her burned cheeks across her burned forehead and nose. The cooling cream instantly soothed her skin and turned it back from red to white. Surprisingly, a little went a very long way. It's cooling relief left Sassy feeling refreshed.

Sasporilla put the lid back on her more than half empty jar and placed it back in the medicine chest. She walked back out into the living-room and took a deep breath. It had been a long time since she had a moment like this. Just a quiet moment alone. No greater responsibilities, no one trying to kill her, no dire feeling of sadness dragging at her soul somewhere deep behind her eyes. Perhaps for once, just this one brief second in time...

Sasporilla Bucket burst out the front door of the caravan carrying her portable music player and her copy of 'The Chocolate Frogs - Transcendental Frogai Lama', as well as a large bag of fresh fruit.

"What have you there Sasporilla?" Blue asked.

"I just felt like dancing." Sassy said, setting her player on the sands and pressing play. "For the first time in a very long time I feel very free and happy. I don't know why. Perhaps it's being away from responsibility. Perhaps it's being out of the Witch Queen's icy grasp for a moment. Perhaps I've let go of some long held darkness in my heart. Whatever the reason take this bag of fruit my friend! Feast and dance with me!"

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The lilt of Frogai Lama's the flute filled the empty stadium. The tune was ancient but not unknown to the witch Baba Yaga. The old hag glided in through the open gates a her guards stopping behind at her order. They were honestly of know use to her against the old monk. Both their powers were evenly matched. Know this would have to be a battle of whit's. With a quick wave of her wand she assumed the more pleasing form of Bougenvallia Bent, everyone's favourite dictatorial Witch Queen, as she approached the Frogai Lama.

"Good morning." The Witch Queen smiled politely.

The old frog stopped playing his flute and smiled most delightedly. "Good morning. It looks to be a most pleasant and productive day."

"Indeed." The Witch Queen sighed. "At least that is my hope."

"Yes I know." The Frogai Lama chuckled as he started playing his flute again.

"I fear that the worm and the girl are dead." The Witch Queen frowned. "I can no longer sense them."

The lilting tune the Frogai Lama played inspired him to stand up and dance. His feet tapped on the seat, the arm rest and the back rest of his chair. Much to the angered dismay of the Baba Yaga.

"ENOUGH!!!" The Witch Queen screamed, flame shooting from her wand towards the old frog but bouncing off the tune as anger tends to do from real happiness.

"You are blind to her for the first time because for the first time she has learned to let go." The Frogai Lama smiled.

"To let go of the anger, to let go of the sadness. You have nothing to use to locate her with. All of your dark powers require a spark of darkness to feed upon, to work with, the last of her's has been dumped in the des..."

"The desert!" The Witch Queen smiled. "Yes of course. They are crossing the Zaharanian desert!"

"Your time is coming very near to it's end." The Frogai Lama sighed. "You know that don't you?"

"Shut your croak hole you little green freak." The Witch Queen smiled. "My time ends when I say it ends! Not before! I have allies to protect me. Champions!!! Bring me Advisor Amari! I see no better of my allies to face off with Sasporilla Bucket in a desert."

\*\*\*\*\*

The music flowed through the hot afternoon desert air. The sun had little to no effect on Sasporilla's skin, now that it had been covered by the healing sunburn cream. Sassy let the music flow through her as she swayed and spun on the sands. Blue stomped his giant hooves kicking up sand and grit, squawking happily. Sasporilla laughed and clapped her hands. It felt good. For the first time, in a very long time, she was just having fun, for the sake of having fun.

Sand stretched out before them as far as the eye could see. A Dune sea to the front of them. A roiling morass of oranges, yellows and browns against the deep open blue sky.

The thought of colour and form, and her motion and dance. How it might inspire a piece of art? She could her friend Christin sitting on the sandy ridge in front of her easel painting a masterpiece. Professor Splatterpalette gob-smacked at the incredible use of negative space and natural flow interaction. Especially that dark line on the horizon.

"Sasporilla Bucket." Blue said looking off to the distance. "I fear a storm is coming. Perhaps you should go inside your caravan."

"I believe my dear friend that that is no storm." Sassy spun to a stop and bowed. Turning to face the blackening dust cloud on the horizon, lightning flashing in its rolling sand clouds, she lost her happy contended expression. "I feel the Witch Queen has found us and that is not just a storm, that is a war."

Sassy stood firm as the rolling wall of sand barreled towards her. It swirled in a red, orange and yellow psychedelic canvas of death. Lightning stretched its blue electric tendrils wildly from its heart as if alive.

The hot deserts winds whipped the near by sands and cut lightly into the skin. Blue lowered himself and wrapped his giant wings around Sasporilla, protecting the fragile witch from the powerful storm, as it hit full force.

The sandstorm swirled around the great beast whipping and scratching at his near impenetrable crystal hide. Sasporilla listened from within the safety of Blue's mighty wrapped wings, to the howling sand storms winds. Sassy Likened them to the frustrated screams of a maddened niffler unable to get a galleon just out of its reach.

"Just give up your pointless onslaught and I'll come out," Sasporilla sighed, "Amari."

The winds died and sands dispersed back to the dunes. Blue separated his wings and Sasporilla Bucket walked forward, wand in hand, to stand face to face with the ancient Wedjat Shelezia Amari.

"Well, well Ms. Bucket," Amari said in her smoky sand graveled voice, "I see you are prepared to fight."

"I'd rather not." Sassy said. "I'd rather you just left us to go on our way in peace."

"You know that is not the Witch Queens will." Amari said. "and quite frankly I will take much pleasure in devouring you."

"Really?" Sasporilla asked.

"Oh yes." The Wedjat nodded with pleasure as she stepped forward sniffing the young witch. "You're not as pure and innocent as everyone believes. You've killed. You've ..."

"Yes." Sasporilla said. "In war. In self-defense. I've had to hurt people, and I hate it! I have explored some of the small pleased life offers. Those I don't regret."

"Yessssss." The Wedjat hissed as its body began to twist and grow into its monstrous form. "All sin, all evil, darkness on your soul for me to feed upon."

"And poor little me. There is no Earthly way to stop you! No muggle device. No magi spell!"

"I am so glad you have accepted your fate Sasporilla Bucket." The Wedjat roared as it lunged forward.

"WAIT!" Sasporilla demanded as a large wing cane down forcing the Wedjat to stop.

"What now?" The Wedjat demanded.

"May I at least cast my friend Blues favourite spell one last time before you eat me?" Sassy asked with wide sad child like eyes and a pouty lower lip. "Please."

"Very Well." The Wedjat said. "Make it fast."

Sassy whispered something to blue and handed him something. Amari grabbed Sasporilla by her left arm.

"What are you up to?" Amari demanded.

"Just saying good by and telling him not to fight you." Sassy said. "Go on Blue. I'll cast my spell when you "Drop" into the clouds."

Blue galloped away turned and took a mighty leap into the sky. As he reached the remnants of clouds in the sky he spit a small box from his beak.

Lifting her wand Sasporilla cast " PLUERE FELIUM"

A pretty pink stream of light emanated from her wand and struck the box which exploded like a flowery pink fire work in the sky.

"How beautiful!" The Wedjat said. "A nice send off for a friend. I commend your loyalty."

"I'm afraid it does have a nasty side effect though." Sasporilla shrugged casting an umbrella. "It tends to rain just after."

"Oh a bit of rain won't deter my hunger." The Wedjat smiled as something small and furry fell from the sky and hit the monster on the head.

"What?" The Wedjat said surprised as another furry little beast dropped from above and sunk its claws into the Wedjat's shoulder making the beast grimace. Amari turned to see the sweet face of a kitten looking up at her that quickly soured and hissed.

"Aaaaahhhhhhh!" Amari screamed as she changed back into human form. "Keep those THINGS away from me." More and more cats and kittens fell from the sky landing on the sand around them.

"I never said it would rain water." Sasporilla sighed. "No this was a little Weasley Wizard Wheezes import I picked up in a joke shop in Everlost City. You see, your choice of raining cats or dogs or both? Well I knew that would come in useful."

Amari stomped at the cats and swatted off the ones that landed on her as they clawed at her and bit into her flesh. "You see Amari I've done some reading since we've first met." Sassy smiled. "I know there is no way an undead creature like you can be killed. However the guardians of your underworld can drag your sorry behind back to what ever hell you came from and I happened to find out they happen to be cats."

"No." Amari begged. "Sasporilla please."

"MANABUDH." Sasporilla said very seriously and very precisely. She had practiced the command, from Amari's old dead language, a thousand times and didn't want to make a single mistake in its pronunciation.

The cats, their eyes alight with a golden glow, began to growl and hiss as they circled Amari. The Wedjat turned to run as the cats pounced. Hundreds of cats coveted her body and dropped her, screaming, to the sands. As hard as the Wedjat fought, the cats pulled her down under the sands until none were visible and her cries were silent.

"Horrific." Sasporilla closed her eyes saddened at what she'd been forced to do to another yet again.

Blue landed with a loud thump a kilometer away and quickly galloped over.

"I got good height on that jump Sasporilla Bucket." Blue said happily. "Did your plan work?"

"Sadly yes." Sassy said. "We should get going. I'd like to get to the edge of the burning forest by nightfall."



## Chapter 15

On the rocky edge of the Zaharrainian desert lay the burning forest. A place named for the brightly coloured red and yellow leafed trees, which gave the appearance of being on fire, but more so for the heat that came off the fiery leaves. A reflection of the desert heat, not allowed into the forest by the protective trees. The legendary thermals above the burning forest made this place the greatest place to practice gliding on the open warm thermals that spiraled upward, as the sun sank low on the horizon, but Blue and Sasporilla Bucket had other plans.

"We must set down on deserts edge to camp for the night." Sasporilla said. "We dare not start over the forest and have to set down in there. The faeries will not be welcoming."

"Can we not glide in the thermals just once before bed? Blue pleaded. "Please?????"

It was moments like this that Sassy remembered the giant Ice phoenix was still very much just a child.

"Ok." Sasporilla laughed. "But just for a few minutes and then we must land!"

"I promise!!!" Blue smiled excitedly catching a thermal in his large out stretched wings and soaring upwards into the orangey dusk sky.

Sasporilla quickly turned on her protective environmental setting. A magical bubble formed around the broom protecting her from the heat of the burning forest. It worked surprisingly well. Sasporilla allowed herself to get very close to the treetops. She could see the heat waves emanating from the orange and yellow leaves. More than that, as the sunset turned the sky a deep shade of purple Sassy saw the faint flicker of blue across the leaves.

"Burning gas flames!" Sasporilla gasped. "The forest truly does burn!"

With a distant shuffle and a loud CRACK something long and thin broke through the canopy of the burning forest and struck Sasporilla sharply in the right shoulder, knocking her backwards from her broom.

Blue gasped as he saw his friend fall through the fiery treetops and dove down but to late.

Moments in Angelo's arms. The frowns of deep disappointment and wild glorious joy of Professor Splatterpalette's encouragement. The battle of Hogwarts. Her first kiss with Korry. Karry Curtis' smile. Her mom tickling her. Daddy loves you.

The ground came up on her quickly as Blue's gigantic talon clutched her, plucking Sassy from the grip of certain death. It was there, just before she passed out she saw the centaur between the trees. Angry with his bow readied to take another shot, Magnus Redhoof, the centaur of the Forbidden forest pack that was banished to Avalon stood in silence staring hatefully at her. With a snort of derision he lowered his bow and galloped off into the

burning forest as Sasporilla passed out. A centaur arrow stuck precariously out of her right shoulder. Blood staining the cloth of her top.

"Oh no Sasporilla Bucket." Blue cried. "What am I to do?"

"Drop the magi!" A small voice commanded as a spear no bigger than a toothpick bounced off Blues talon. "Leave her to us and leave our woodland undisturbed. Destroyer of the burning wood."

"Who said that?" Blue screeched.

A small red faery painted with green war stripes fluttered up before his eyes. Hundreds, maybe thousands more fluttered up through the flaming treetops behind him.

"I am Tilkin of the fire forest fae." The faery said pointing the smallest of small spears at Blue's icy beak. "You're trespassing on our lands as all of your kind have done for millenia. You bring with you destruction and death. Well not this time, you just keep moving on!!!"

Blue could no longer support his weight on the last of the thermal current that had held him aloft. His legs crashed down into the forest splintering trees and crushing anything below.

"I'm sorry." Blue said hanging his head. "I don't mean to cause damage, but I am just so big and this is my path to follow. I know no other. However someone has done harm to my friend Sasporilla Bucket, whom I hold in my talon. I ask for help for her. Then I'll do anything you ask."

"Anything?" The Fae leader Tilkin asked.

"Yes." Blue insisted.

"You'll stand here and not move while we heal her?" The Fae grinned.

"Yes." Blue smiled.

"Agreed." The Fae leader laughed and dove down through the trees. The others followed like a swarm of bees down through the tree's canopy and down to the beast's talon. Gripped tightly was the young pink haired witch, the arrow sticking out of her right shoulder. Her top torn and bloodied from the arrow and the fall.

"So," The Fire faery commander sneered, this is the mighty House Elf Queen? She who fights to free all from tyranny? Taken down by one arrow?"

"Looks like a centaurs arrow?" Jinxi of the Sparx division said.

"That damn Centaur again!" Tilkin huffed. "Always causing problems. Well this time he may have saved the forest from the beasts destructive path."

"What are we really going to do with the witch?" Jinxi asked.

"We place her in a magical sleep and heal the wound of course." Tilkin smiled. "We have promised the beast as much. We simply never wake her. That will hold the beast to it's promise to stay still until his magi is returned."

"Or until it gets so angry it goes to war with us?" Jinxi gasped.

"Then we have his magi to hold hostage!" Tilkin grinned evilly. "Move an inch and we burn your witch!"

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Draco Malfoy's magically veiled footsteps echoed faintly on the cobbled walk of the dark Austrian street. The towns square clock chimed three times as his darkly cloaked form ducked into the alcoved doorway of the Phoenix Book Cafe and cast 'Alohamora'!

Two wands, one pressed into each of his cheeks, came from either side of the doorway.

"Password." A voice demanded.

"Chocolate Frogs." Draco said as the wands were removed.

A hanky came in and wiped a smudge from the young wizards left cheek. "Sorry Draco," Professor Splatterpalette said with a motherly grin, "got a bit of shmutz on your cheek. There, all clean now."

"Thank you." Draco Malfoy smiled a bit embarrassed as he pressed on into the shop, passed the giant storybooks and up the stairs to the cafe secreted away from plain view of the street. Professors Splatterpalette and Phenix followed close behind.

"What is the great emergency Draco?" Josie Phenix demanded. "It's one thing to put ourselves in jeopardy by gathering but to do so HERE at my families muggle owned business back home."

"I'm sorry professor Phenix but this place has been compromised." Draco said. "We all have been and I had to warn you all."

The last of the nights of the table round sat around cafe tables, pushed together to form a meeting place. Professor's Phenix and Splatterpalette sat on either side of Lyra with Professor Hannah sitting across from them.

"So what have you got for us Draco?" Lyra asked. "What's so important that we meet outside of Avalon?"

"Outside of the Witch Queen's field of power." Draco said. "Far enough away that she may not sense what we are about to do."

"Sounds ominous." Professor Splatterpalette said. "I'm in. They will sing songs of our bravery, erect sculptures to our..."

"Dina!" Professor Phenix said placing a plate with a piece of chocolate cake down on front of her friend and colleague. "Eat this."

"Oooooo cake!" Professor Splatterpalette giggled and clapped her hands picking up a fork.

"One of us is spy and doesn't know it." Draco said.

"How is this possible?" Lyra asked. "We've checked for every known curse!"

"However we haven't checked that all of us are really all of us." Draco said looking at everyone. "One of us has been captured and replaced with one of the Witch Queen's creations. A Gormlem, a type of golem, that takes on the full appearance and memories of the person they copy. The creature doesn't even know it's a Gormlem until it's mission is complete or until it's truly discovered."

"Well then shouldn't it be divulging itself about now?" Lyra asked. "You having just broken it's cover and all?"

"No." Draco said shaking his head. "Indeed I haven't blown it's cover. In fact I'm not sure which one of us it is!"

"How can you be sure at all then that any of us are?" Professor Hanna asked.

Draco pulled a cloth wrapped object, from his suit jacket pocket, and placed it on the table. The young wizard carefully unwrapped a golden dagger within. Blood, congealed and since turned brown stained the blade as a radiant gem glowed black in its hilt.

"This dagger is how." Draco said. Holding it up. "The runes carved into the blade are the spell for creating the creature. The only thing that can reveal the Gormlem is cut from blade that made it."

"Also the only way to prove ones innocence." Professor Phenix scowled.

"Unfortunately yes." Malfoy said pricking the end of his finger with the blade. "Well it's not me, apparently."

"You mean you even suspected yourself?" Lyra said surprised.

"I told you it could be anyone of us!" Malfoy hissed with an air of his father's disdain for stupid useless repetition.

"And that the spy would not, Could not know!"

"Take it easy Sam I am." Lyra chuckled picking up the blade. "I'll eat the green egg's and ham in a boat with a goat."

"What?" Malfoy scowled clearly confused as Lyra pricked her finger and even rubbed the blood on the blade.

"Clear?" Lyra asked

"Yes." Malfoy nodded taking the blade and handing it to Professor Splatterpalette.

"No, no." The professor said holding out her hand, closing her eyes. "I'll never be able to jab myself. You'll have to do it for me. I'm afraid I'm a bit of a chicken that way. I mean no one likes getting stabbed but..."

"Dina." Professor Phenix laughed. "He's finished you and moved on to finish jabbing me!"

"Oh?" Professor Splatterpalette smiled seeing the small pin prick sized drop of blood on the tip of her finger.

"That's not so bad. Anyone got a bandaid?"

"That only leaves me?" Professor Hannah smiled holding out her hand. "I know it's not me. Who was your source?"

"He may have been wrong but," Malfoy began, "why do you ask professor?"

Malfoy jabbed the dagger quickly but lightly into Professor Hanna's open palm. Her open green eyes blink closed and opened jet black.

The witch and wizard knights of the table round kicked over the tables drawing their wands as the Gormlem's form shifted from the lovely blue haired professor Hannah to a 9 foot monstrous slab of sludge and tree root. Thorned tendrils shot forth as spells blocked and disintegrated them.

It became clear to Draco the beast wasn't fighting to kill them. The Gormlem was fighting to escape! It wanted, needed to get back to the Witch Queen!!

"We must stop this creature at all costs!" Draco commanded. "Zytacho!"

Zytacho, a tactical maneuver they had only tried once, and even then it failed miserably. Take up points of tactical advantage around an open point of escape with one single knight standing in the way.

The worst thing was the only point of egress was the stairs down and the wizard in the way was Malfoy.

The Gormlem reached out with thorned vines, where it's fingers once were. They flew forward like whips and wrapped around Malfoy's throat like iron.

Malfoy struggled to breathe as he raised his wand.

"MAXIMUS DELETRIUM" The professors cast striking the creature from all sides. Disintegrating the Gormlem as it undid the spell, which created it.

The golden dagger lay on the floor next to an over turned table and began to rattle and shake. Then with a convulsive arch it shattered into dust.

"I guess that was suppose to happen?" Professor Phenix asked.

"No." Malfoy said sadly bending down and running his hand through the golden dust of the daggers remnants. "I hoped that Professor Hannah was still alive. This indicates she is not."

"Oh no!" Professor Splatterpalette gasped.

"I'm afraid she was lured away by the Witch Queen's evil spies."

"Yes." Lyra cursed. "They fill your head with lies until you follow them to your doom. No different from Voldemort's death eaters."

"Indeed." Professor Splatterpalette said. "Poor Hannah."

"We know one thing for certain." Malfoy said. "None of us was her target. She is still hunting Sasporilla Bucket."

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Sasporilla Bucket heard small voices arguing as consciousness washed in and out of her mind as she came too. She was laying on a bed of straw like an animal in a stone cell. It was being guarded by two young fire faeries with spears.

"I can't believe we've been put on guard duty... AGAIN!" Aysel complained.

"It's because we're the youngest." Kian said. "You know that."

"I know you want to be Fire Far chief one day Kian but I don't!" Aysel said. "So all this silly guard duty makes no sense to me. I want to be an animal doctor and treat the poor injured beasts of the forests."

"The same ones that try to eat us?" Kian laughed.

"Only when they're desperately hungry and don't recognize we're faer..." Aysel broke off.

Sasporilla tried to sit up. She quickly realized her motions were limited, as iron chains attached to the walls were also attached to shackles on her wrists and ankles. Not to mention an iron collar around her throat.

"It's hard being young." Sasporilla said surprising the faery's. "But honestly, you'll find there's a lot of responsibility and jobs you want to do as a grown-up either, but that's what being grown up is."

"She's awake!" Kian yelled as both faery's turned and pointed their spears at their prisoner.

"Don't you move or get any funny idea's magi," Aysel said, "my brother and I may be young but we are fierce warriors of the Fire Fae!"

"I believe you." Sasporilla said. "I mean no disrespect. I am Sasporilla Bucket."

The fierce snarls fell from their faces at the sound of her name.

"The Queen of the worker elves?" Aysel asked.

"Yes." Sassy smiled shyly.

"The Queen who kneels before her subjects?" Kian asked.

"That's the one!" Aysel said.

"Wow." Kian whispered.

"Why are you here?" Kian asked.

"I am travelling with my friend Blue." Sasporilla started.

"The great beast that destroys our forest." Aysel frowned.

"Unfortunately yes." Sassy nodded.



"Why can't he just fly over?" Kian asked.

"He isn't strong enough yet." Sasporilla shook her head. "He can only glide on thermals for a ways. If I could find a way to keep him aloft then perhaps his feet would never hit the trees or the ground. He would never touch your forest."

"Why is the prisoner AWAKE?" The old jailer demanded as the stout faery waddled in. "She is suppose to be kept asleep!"

"If you can find my friend Gooseberry!" Sasporilla asked as the jailer snapped his fingers and waved his fiery pixie hands casting pixie dust over her. Sasporilla fell back asleep onto the hay.

"You two," the jailer growled, "I don't care if you are Tilkin the chief's daughter and son, you are not to allow her to awaken! Keep her asleep and guard her!!! Don't chat with her and have tea parties like your old friends!"

"Yes sir!" Aysel and Kian said snapping to attention.

Watching the jailer waddle out of site Aysel turned to Kian and said "I'm going to find her friend Gooseberry. I've heard of her. I know just where to find her."

"You'll get in trouble." Kian said.

"I think if what she said works." Aysel smiled. "We'll stop more trouble than the adults are causing by keeping her here like this."

Hugging her brother, Aysel extended her wings and flew off.

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A flurry of pink wings fluttered in the Golden Grove that afternoon. Faery dragons spiraled through the air as pillar cats munched on the leaves and fruit of the golden cherry orchards. Rainbows arched through the cornflower blue sky. Not from any near by rain, but from rays of sun refracting from crystals in the nearby crystal canyon. The fierce warrior fae, The Amzia of the crystal canyons often came to the Golden orchards to hunt faery dragons. Not to eat! Heavens no! They sought them out to be the perfect steeds to ride! However first the head strong beast's spirit had to be broken so that they could become obedient.

"There." Pipsi a very experienced crystal faery warrior scout pointed through the trees at a patch of unsuspecting young faery dragons. "They'll do nicely! Are you ready?"

The scout asked looking back at the rest of the eight faeries in his squad.

"Ha-yee." They answered.

Spears in hand, the crystal faeries flew out of the trees into the clearing surprising the the contented faery dragons, who oddly did no more than look up at them as the fae aggressively approached. The crystal faeries flew into an octagonal formation and pulled a net between them. This was going to be easy. It was at the last moment the faeries of crystal canyons started to howl, to alarm disorient their prey as they attacked.

The cluster of faery dragons separated and instead formed a very organized line. In front of them stood Gooseberry the out cast!!! The self appointed freedom fighter that tried to stop the attacks on the warlike Fire faery factions and Crystal Faery factions against the peaceful faeries of the great fae forests.

"Breath in!" Gooseberry commanded holding up her hand.

The faery dragons inhaled deeply and began flapping their wings lifting slightly off the ground. Goose berry snapped her fingers. The clever faery and the line of pink faery dragons appeared behind the shocked crystal fae warriors who looked every for their missing quarry.

"FIRE!" Gooseberry yelled.

The breath of a pink faery dragon is a cloud of pink gas that if inhaled has the same effect as a confundus spell. A light euphoria makes the subject very agreeable to suggestion.

"Mas..." was all Pipsi, the leader of the crystal canyon faeries could utter before breathing in the pink cloud and being ensnared in it's wonderful warmth. Like his mothers hugs and warm river berry pies.

"Listen up you lot." Gooseberry commanded. "You're going back and quietly release all the faery dragons you got ya?"

"Yes of course!" Pipsi smiled.

"Then your going to let the dragons breathe on your leaders and tell them the faery dragons are off limits and never to be touched again!" Gooseberry said. "You got wings. If you want to war with people use your own wings to do your own dirty work."

"Understood." The Crystal canyon faery smiled pleasantly.

"Now leave yer nets, weapons and such and piss off," Gooseberry chuckled, "the lot of you!"

The crystal canyon fae warriors turned peacefully and flew away home. The faery dragons flew back to their leafy spot on the floor of the golden orchard. Flossy stayed back with Gooseberry who stayed above the golden treetops surveying the horizon.

"I thought we would have seen them by now?" Flossy said.

"I'm actually getting worried." Gooseberry said. "Sasporilla and the beast should have passed through yesterday. That's why I'm here!!! Where are they?"

"Do you think something's wrong?" Flossy asked frightened for her friend for the first time.

"I know something's wrong." Gooseberry frowned.

"Help!" A small voice cried from the distance coming out of the fire fae forest. Gooseberry looked as a young faery popped out on foot into the orchard.

"Help!" Aysel cried again. "Please someone help!"

The faery dragons, seeing a fire faery, the most dangerous of the fae enter their grove, surrounded the child, growling. Aysel was frightened but held her ground.

"I'm not here to fight you, but I will if you for e me too." Aysel snarled. "I bring news of the House Elf Queen, Sasporilla Bucket! She is in danger!"

"Sasporilla!" Gooseberry shouted landing before the girl with flossy. "Where is she."

"In my father's prison in the Burning Kingdom."

"Then that would make you Aysel one of the Tilkin's two children?" Gooseberry asked.

"Yes." Aysel replied proudly and unafraid.

"Thank you for telling us." Gooseberry said. "You were very brave to do so. In some situations you could have been harmed by or used by those who wanted their friend back. We aren't like that. Go back in peace. You're father need never know you helped us."

"Thank you." Aysel smiled as Gooseberry snapped her fingers returning Aysel to the Fire fae kingdom.

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Kian stood guard over the prisoner dutifully, but bored out of his mind. As he stood there looking down at the stone floor, counting the rocks that cobbled it together, for the tenth time today... he wished his sister would get back already so he would at least have someone to talk too.

"Still ten thousand one hundrand forty seven and a pebbles?" Sasporilla Bucket asked making Kian jump.

"What, who, where???" Kian jumped drawing his sword looking forward down the shadowy stone coridore.

Sasporilla reached through the iron bars and tapped the young fairy on the shoulder causing him to jump, almost clean out of his skin, with a very high pitched scream. Kian turned and pointed his sword at the prisoner. His breath was quick and heavy as gulped in the dank dungeon air. "Don't do that!"

"Sorry." Sasporilla fought to hold back a smile.

"How are you even awake again?" Kian asked. "You're suppose to be under a spell."

"Sorry." Sassy said. "Should I lay back down and lay still?"

"Yes!" Kian insisted.

"Well I'm not going to." Sasporilla smiled folding her arms defiantly throwing off the shackles.

"How did you get out of those?" Kian asked frustrated.

"Been Picking at these with a bobby pin since I woke up first time?" Sasporilla smiled. "Pays to have a miscreant friend my like my bestie Lyra."

"Well just you don't get any Ideas about trying to break out of that cell!!" Kian insisted poking his sword forward.

"Are you implying that you would do me harm with that sword if I don't do as you say?" Sassy frowned.

"I'm a Fire Faery guard!" Kian snarled. "I'm rough and I'm tough. What do you think?"

"I think," the voice of his sister Aysel said, "that you had better put that sword down before she hurts you!"  
"What?" Kian looked dumbfounded at the return of his sister coming down the dungeon hallway. "I've found your friend Gooseberry. She is working on a plan."  
"Father won't be pleased about you helping the prisoner breaking out of jail!" Kian frowned.  
"The prisoner has a name!" Sassy insisted.  
"Yes she does." Chief Tilkin snarled two guards standing at his side, flaming swords drawn. "That name is Sasporilla Bucket."



## Chapter 16

"Do you two have any idea how much trouble you're in?" Chief Tilkin roared at his youngest children Aysel and Kian. "Deserting your post? Conspiring with the enemy?"  
"But Sasporilla Bucket is not our enemy father." Aysel protested.  
"Silence!" The old faery fire chieftain yelled red in the cheeks.  
"Perhaps it's you who should be silent Tilkin," Sasporilla Bucket huffed, "and listen to your children for once. They seem to be the wisest ones in the room."  
"How dare you!" Tilkin roared drawing his flaming blade as a thick mist formed in the dungeon.  
"No need for raised voices." The small voice of Gooseberry laughed as she road Flossy forth out of the mist.  
"After all a raised voice may be mistaken for anger and that the 200 or so faery dragons, who are right now with the great beast at the edge of your forest, may hear and bring him right here! To the heart of your kingdom! Destroying everything in his wake!"  
"No!" Sasporilla pleaded. "Please Gooseberry, I don't want a Blue to harm anyone or any thing for me. I'm sure we can work this out peacefully."  
"Do you see father?" Aysel asked.  
"Sasporilla Bucket isn't a bad person father!" Kian insisted.  
"She is our friend." Aysel smiled gently pushing down her fathers sword hand.  
"And we should let her go." Kian smiled.  
"Children you just don't understand." Fire Chief Tilkin said saddly. "The Witch Queen will inflict much greater damage on us for letting her go."  
"Most of the Witch Queen's power", Sasporilla said, "like all dictators that have come before her, is in your fear of her."  
"You don't fear her?" Tilkin snorted with derision and disbelief.  
"I have stood against her many times." Sasporilla said holding her head high. "I will continue to stand against her until I stop her."  
"Very brave." Tilkin said. "but I can't risk our tribe on you."  
"Luckily," Gooseberry sighed, "Your daughter taught me something about the fire faery higherarchy. There is one person higher than FIRE CHIEF in your tribe."  
"You wouldn't?" Tilkin growled.  
"Why have I been summoned?", a dusky skinned faery in a flamed silk dress flew in. "Why have I, Silken the Fire Priestess, been summoned?"  
"Mother!" Aysel and Kian smiled.  
"My dearest." Fore chief Tilkin bowed to the Fire Priestess. "What brings you to the dungeons?"  
"The concerns of this matter bring me Tilkin!" The Fire Priestess scowled fluttering up to her mate and glowering in his face. "Why are you holding the Queen of the Worker Elves prisoner?"  
"To protect us from the Witch Queen's wrath." Tilkin insisted, just a bit ashamed. "And to keep the beast at bay."  
"I give you the day to day running of these trivial matters," the Fire Priestess Growled, "because frankly small things like politics and other day to day events bore me. Now I was in my Fire chamber preparing things for the burning day when I was interrupted to come deal with this!"

"But snookumz." Fire chief Tilkin said.

Stretching out tendrils of fire from her hair the fire priestess grabbed the key ring from Tilkin and unlocked Sasporilla's cell.

"Ms.Bucket." Fire Priestess Silken smiled. "I apologize for my husbands short sightedness."

"The Witch Queen has a way of using fear to blind and control people." Sasporilla said as Flossy flew in to her and nuzzled against her cheek. "Hello Flossy! I've missed you too!"

"I hope you will hold us no malice great Queen of Worker Elves?" Silken begged.

"I'm not angry." Sassy smiled. "Quite frankly I needed the rest. However it's time for my friend and I to move on. I just need to figure out how to move him past your forest without harming it?"

"That's why I brought 200 faery dragons." Gooseberry said.

"I thought you said it was because they could hear a great distance?" Fire Chief Tilkin asked.

"Then I'd only need one wouldn't I?" Gooseberry smiled slyly.

"You fooled me!" Tilkin screamed slamming down his fist angrily.

"Yes." Gooseberry laughed. "I'm a faery. It's what I do. No if you'll let me explain...?"

"Please." Silken insisted.

"At my command the 200 faery dragons will cast a mist that will transport Blue safely from the forests edge where he is to a large clear area on the other side of the golden orchard. He's just waiting for word as to what he is to do."

"How will he know?" Kian asked.

"Once Flossy takes Sassy out of here to the Golden orchard," Gooseberry said, "I'll go tell the others to bring Blue."

"No one harmed. No damage. No problems." The Fire Priestess Silken smiled. "Wonderful! You have my blessing to be on your way!"

"Thank you." Sasporilla said. "I just want to say special thanks to Aysel and Kian. You didn't give up trying to help me. Thank you."

The two young fire faery guards hugged the pink haired witch and waved good-bye as she disappeared into a cloud of pink faery dragon mist.

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It was not unusual to see a large bullfrog sitting on a rock on the edges of the Fae forest on a bright warm sunny day. However to see one dressed in white robes playing his walking stick like flute was indeed most unusual! The fierce warrior Fae, The Amzia of the crystal canyons peered through the rocks looking at the frog in wonder.

"Well you don't see that every day do you?" Mitsi said.

"Shut it." Pipsi whispered harshly striking him on the helmet with his spear. "That must be a friend of the faery dragons. We'll capture him and..."

"Kill him!" The bunch cheered!

"No!" Pipsi insisted.

"Torture him!" The soldiers cheered.

"No!" Pipsi huffed.

"We'll lock him up and starve him for seven days until he begs for your wife's cooking?" Mitsi asked.

"Watch it!" Pipsi scowled. "No! We'll capture him and hold him for ransom. Demanding the dragons and faeries unconditionally surrender their lands to us."

"Oh brilliant sir!" Mitsi said. "Then we give him back when they surrender?"

"No you doink!" Pipsi scoffed hitting him in the helmet once again with the spear tip. "We kill them all!"

Pipsi laughed maniacally as the other Amzia warrior Fae laughed with him uncomfortably. With a wave of his hand he silenced them and peered back out beyond the rocks. On the count of the three we charge.

"1"

"2"

"3"

"CHARGE!!!!!" The fierce warrior Fae, The Amzia of the crystal canyons charged from behind the rocks and started running at the old bullfrog dressed in white robes. Their spears pressed forward, the most fierce look

possible on their faces as warrior cries filled the air. Air which suddenly turned pink. A quickly ever thickening pink mist which meant....

"The Faery dragons are...." Pipsi started an order but was rendered unable to speak when he saw a gigantic crystal beast appear in the mist before him.

"RETREAT!!!" Pipsi command as the faery dragons appeared in the mist fluttering around the great beast.

Amongst the confusion of the fierce warrior Fae, The Amzia of the crystal canyons retreating & the great ice phoenix appearing on the edge and the Golden orchards of the Fae forest, no one noticed the sound centaur hoof beats disappearing quickly out of the pink mist and off into the Fae forest.

The calming lilt of the flute drew Blue's attention to the rock where the Bullfrog sat. The great beast leaned down his head and smiled. The notes struck a sympathetic resonance within his silicon structure and made his face glow in rainbow colours.

The old Bullfrog stopped playing, reached up and touched Blue's beak, giving him a good boy pat.

"Hello Blue." The Frogai Lama smiled. "I'm a friend of Sasporilla's. Is it alright if I sit with you for a while?"

"Yes." Blue said. "I'm worried about my friend. I haven't seen her in days."

"Be assured that she is well and is safe now." The Frogai Lama smiled. "The friends she is with now have something very important they must do with her. Did they tell you?"

"Yes." Blue nodded.

"Then you know she is only about a mile from you in the glade of the Faery dragons, in the golden orchard. When she is done she will rejoin you and we will get you going on your way."

"Yes." The giant ice phoenix reared and snorted in approval.

"Just about a mile from you in the glade of the Faery dragons in the golden orchard?" Magnus the outcast centaur smiled peering out from behind a tree. "Thank you for the tip."

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The pink mists seemed more like a maze than a veil to Sasporilla. Her out stretched hands found firm wooden obstacles in her way shifting her left and right until she finally stepped forth out into the clearing of the Golden grove. Pink Faery dragons swarmed around her as she stepped toward Gooseberry and Flossy that stood along the rim if a waist high pedestal. A silver plate sat atop it and on the plate was a freshly picked golden cherry.

"Welcome Sasporilla Bucket Queen of the Worker Elves," Gooseberry smiled, "and honoured friend of the Fae."

"You Sasporilla Bucket give so much of yourself." smiled Flossy fluttering her wings, ". You risked so much just to save my life, now it is time that the Fae give something back too you."

"You owe me nothing my friends." Sasporilla smiled humbly.

"Perhaps you feel that way Sassy," Gooseberry said, "but the truth is we know something about you that you don't."

"What?" Sasporilla asked.

"You didn't die from the juice of the golden cherry." Flossy fluttered.

"Bloody luckily!" Sassy huffed. "If I'd eaten a full one I'd have probably died."

"No." Gooseberry said flying over before her. "One drop of golden cherry juice should kill any wizard or witch!!!"

"Then how did I survive?" Sasporilla asked.

"The same reason your fathers protection spell turned your hair pink." Flossy giggled. "You are a Faery dragon Animagus!!!"

"What?" Sassy gasped. "No! I never... I can't be?"

"You are." Gooseberry smiled. "However like all animagi you need a trigger item that starts your ability to change! With cat animagi it's usually fish. With dog animagi it's often stale biscuits. Though honestly it can be just about anything with them."

"However with you," Flossy flew around the pedestal, "faery dragon animagi have to actually eat of the golden cherry as we do. If you survive, you gain such wondrous abilities!"

"If I survive?" Sasporilla puffed. "That doesn't instill me with much confidence nor motivation!"

"Take it easy kid." Gooseberry smiled. "We know you'll do fine. You've already survived the juice of the cherry. You'll be ok. Trust me."

Sasporilla had no reason to doubt the faeries that were her friends. If this were true perhaps she could transform, as the animagus do, into a faery dragon and cast a pink mist to take her and Blue to Avalon city.

Sassy stepped forward with slight hesitation and trepidation. She reached for the small golden piece of fruit. She picked it up by its small thin stem and hung it before her eyes. There was a glow about it. Something magical that almost called to her deep inside. A voice that tapped at some primal urge to eat it.

Sasporilla bit into the cherry. Its flesh was ripe and sweet on her tongue. Like no cherry she'd had before. This was not the taste she remembered from before. There was something that urged her to finish it quickly. As the last trickle of golden cherry Juice rolled down the back of her tongue, Sasporilla Bucket's eyes rolled back in her skull. Sasporilla felt as if she was floating as a euphoric wave came over her. Pulling her back as she fell inward, into a deep pink mist that she exhaled from somewhere deep inside and Sassy began to transform. Her skin rippled in waves of pink scales as she shrunk down the size of the smallest of pillar cats!

Thunderous hoof beats surprised the faery dragons as a centaur charged in to the grove from the quiet tree line and snatched the newly formed Sasporilla Pillarcat up in his hand, placing a blade to her tiny pink scaled throat. "I finally have you." Magnus Redhoof gloated. "You're helpless in my hands and there's nothing you or friends can do to save you."

The other faery dragons dare not threaten to move on him for he had the girl in a very precarious predicament. Sasporilla's little pillarcat lower lip quivered, as her eyes looked big and sad. Then her cheeks puffed up and her tongue stuck out and she spat a huge wad of pink vomit into Magnus's open wide smiling mouth.

"Kahkkkk!!!!" Magnus Redhoof coughed and dropped the young animagus as she shifted form again and turned into her final form of a pink faery dragon.

Sassy could feel the wings on her back, new and light, start to flap and lift her off the ground. The other faery dragons pointed and cheered when they caught sight of her. A new pink faery dragon in the grove flying like an old pro as she flew straight for the distressed centaur.

Three painful sparks in the hand from Gooseberry made Redhoof drop his blade. A swarming of Faery dragons disoriented him enough to bring him to kneel before Sasporilla who transformed back.

"Magnus Redhoof." Sasporilla Bucket said. "I banished you to this forest because of your scheming and your evil. It seems no matter where you go you intend to cause trouble."

"No matter where you send me," Magnus growled, "it won't save you or the world from my vengeance on you."

"Such vitriol towards me Magnus," Sasporilla asked, "why?"

"You were an outsider!" Magnus snorted and stomped. "I was biggest! I was bravest! I passed all the trials and stood in line to be lead my people! And who do they choose? YOU! A MAGI! They would choose a little girl witch over ME!!!"

"Perhaps you should ask yourself why Magnus Redhoof?" Sasporilla hissed. "Think of everything you've done to undermine and harm your people? Why? Just so you could get ahead? Or to seek revenge on those who would not support you! They deemed you unworthy and demanded your death! I chose to spare you and let you run free here. Perhaps start a new life in a place where no one knows your past. Remake yourself for the better. However you chose another path, the path you know too well, scornful vengeance."

"And I will not stop because you will not kill me. It isn't in you Sasporilla Bucket." Magnus Redhoof laughed.

"So I will hunt you down. You and everyone you love."

"Perhaps you're right." Sasporilla sighed as she turned her back on the sneaky centaur and walked away. "I guess the best I can do is continue to defend myself..."

The faery dragons gasped as the centaur drew his bow with lightning speed and let fly a poison arrow at Sassy's head. Gooseberry barely got out the first 'Sa' Sasporilla before the arrow struck its target. Some how Sasporilla stood where Magnus had been and Magnus stood where Sasporilla had been? The arrow sticking out of his chest, buried deep in his heart.

The fast acting poison stretched its green tentacles through his expanding veins as he fell to the ground in agony!

"How?" The centaur asked foaming at the mouth.

"As you said I wouldn't stoop to killing you Magnus Redhoof." Sasporilla sighed shaking her head. "But if you were dead set on killing someone today, figured it might as well be yourself. Perhaps I should have let the centaurs execute you."

Her words fell on deaf ears. Perhaps the problem was with Magnus Redhoof was all words had fallen on deaf ears all his life. Maybe if he had tried, just once to listen a little harder, he'd have had a better life.

"Sasporilla," Gooseberry smiled, "you cunning child you pulled a swap places spell!"  
"Handy little trick!" Sassy smiled. "But not as cool as being an animagus!!!"  
Sasporilla folded up in a mist of pink and reformed as a pink faery dragon.  
"You've got the hang of it quick enough!" Flossy smiled looping in the air.  
"She's a natural." Gooseberry said.  
"I'll likely have a lot to learn!" Sasporilla said. "and little time to learn it before Blue and I MUST be on our way!"  
"We are prepared to teach you everything you need!" Flossy said excitedly.  
"And we have a plan about getting you the rest of your way a bit faster!" Gooseberry smiled.  
"I'm in!" Sasporilla smiled brightly as the Faery dragons cheered!  
"Let's get started!" Gooseberry commanded! And so the Animagus training of Sasporilla Bucket at the hands of the Pink Faery Dragons in the Mystic Golden grove of the golden cherry trees began.



## Chapter 17

It was a beautiful morning on the edge of the Fae forest. The sun was shining and the morning dew sparkled on the leaves and grass that sparsely intermingled with the pebbles, which lead into the rocks beyond. Always aware that they had eyes on them, the Frogai Lama and Blue, sat unworried by any malevolent presence skulking in the rocks.

Amongst the faery dragons frolicking sparsely at the shadowy edge of the Fae wood appeared a Faery dragon like no other Blue had seen. Its pink scales sparkled with a pearlescence unlike the others. Its wings were like a fine large lace of pink woven light. Its mane was more than a small shock of pink, but a glorious flowing full head of pink hair that flowed down its back and cascaded through the air.

The beautiful Faery dragon fluttered over before Blue and the Frogai Lama and hovered just above the ground. With a small puff of pink mist from her mist she shifted and revealed herself to be Sasporilla Bucket.

It had been to long since Sasporilla Bucket enjoyed the comforting embrace of a friend. She wasted no time running up to Blue who dipped his big frozen crystalline beak to accept her wide hug. Blue was cool to the touch but not overly cold as one would expect from a giant phoenix made of ice crystal. It was however the best thing Sasporilla Bucket had felt in what seemed like an eternity. The Love of a true friend.

She pulled away and looked over at the Frogai Lama, who gave a polite wave and smile.

"My friend," Sasporilla said, "from here to Avalon city is still many days from here. My being held prisoner and learning how to use my Animagus powers put you far off your schedule my friend. You should be breaching the city walls this morning and making your great leap into space! I am going to ask you to, with the help of the other faery dragons, are going to use the pink myst to transport to a safe spot just outside the city. A spot where you can get a good running start and jump up. However, I'm asking that you please wait until I send word that it's time to do so."

"Sasporilla Bucket," Blue grumbled in his throat, "what is your plan that I must wait?"

"Blue my friend I don't want you to be the main focus of the royal guards wrath today." Sassy smiled. "I've sent out word to many allies that we are in need of help today. Trust me, we'll be fine."

It amazed Blue just how many pink faery dragons came out from between the trees of the grove. They swarmed them and in a single puff filled the air with enough pink myst to cover them completely. Thin inside of the pink myst seemed to sparkle a bit like a rainbow, as the sun did in Blues crystalline ice body. The faery dragons fluttered in formation around them like a giant tornado. Suddenly the myst separated and they were in a field a few miles outside the great walls of Avalon city.

"Welcome!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled as she ran up and hugged Sasporilla. "I'm so happy to see you. You gave me a heart attack when I thought you'd blown yourself to bits!"

"I'm sorry Professor." Sasporilla said. "Turns out I had a greater purpose to serve before I took care of our evil friend. Is everything ready?"

"Yes!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "We got your messages. Everything and everyone's in place, except..." Through the edge of the Elven wood at the edge of the fields far side marched a large army of high born elves in full battle armour carrying only the finest magical weapons. The High Elf King rode on rare silver unicorn and galloped quickly ahead. He came to a halt before Sasporilla Bucket and stepped down.

"I apologize for our late arrival." The king said sorrowfully. "We had opposition in the Elvenwood."

"From the Witch Queen?" Professor Splatterpalette asked.

"Yes." The Elf King answered. "Her living tree ghouls. Nasty creatures. hundreds of them. We took minor losses."

"I'm sorry you took any losses at all my friend." Sassy said hanging her head. "They would be alive today if not for me."

"No!" The Elf king said placing his hand on the young witch's shoulder. "They would be alive today if not for Baba Yaga! You are giving us the chance to our world of this evil once and for all! Don't you blame yourself for her evils!"

"Thank you." Sasporilla smiled raising her head turning her gaze towards the city. "Now I must go and face the Witch Queen. A large group of soldiers will stay to guard you Blue."

"I'm not afraid." Blue said stretching out his massive wings and bellowing a great icy shriek making everyone cover their ears.

"If the witch Queen hadn't known we were here before she certainly does now.!" The Elf King chided.

"I was counting it." Sassy smiled and folded up in a mist of pink reforming as a pink faery dragon. With a sly smile she fluttered off on the breeze towards the city.

"Right then Dame Splatterpalette," the Elf King said raising his sword in knightly salute as she returned his salute by doing so with her wand. "We had best get to our posts."

"Indeed." Professor Splatterpalette smiled with impish glee and disappeared away.

"First battalion with me!" The Elf king commanded. "Second through tenth stay here. Fire Fae stand ready. Faery dragons prepare for transport on her signal!"

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Standing before the cameras were two familiar faces that morning.

"And that wraps up an exciting morning of junior wizard owl trials here at the legendary Avalon Angel's Spharx stadium. So for AVN SPORTS I'm James MacNare," The dapper young dusky announcer smiled.

"And I'm Morgana Moonshadow." The older announcer smiled. "Stay tuned for highlights from the Quidditch world cup preliminaries coming up next on AVN! "

The pair of Announcers smiled until the cameras light went off.

"Children's owl trial?" Morgana Moonshadow grumbled as she stomped away.

"It could be worse." James MacNare smiled.

"How could it be worse?" Morgana turned and asked.

"We could be assigned to covering toddler magic accidents for 'OH THOSE LIL ONES!' " MacNare smirked.

With a shocked breath that comes with realization Morgana Moonshadow laughed and said. "You got me there. I just feel as though we are being punished. Ever since the Witch Queen fiasco."

"I've had that same feeling," James MacNare said, "but in some way... deep down inside... I still feel like it isn't over."

"What do you mean?" Morgana Moonshadow frowned.

"He refuses to leave." MacNare said pointing into the stands at the Frogai Lama, who had just purchased a fresh popcorn and drink.

The Frogai Lama waved politely. As the clean up crew removed the owl perches and swept up the wood chips from the arena floor, no one really saw the larger than normal pink faery dragon flutter in through the open stadium gates and land on the stadium floor. With a small puff of pink mist the Fae dragon folded out upon itself becoming a young witch with pink hair.

In one quick motion she drew her wand and pointed into sky ward calling the spell, "IMAGINARI PERSINUM! A long string of pink magical energy shot from the wand of Sasporilla Bucket and formed an exact likeness of her one hundred feet high above the stadium, with pink sparks shooting forth in all directions.

The jaws of the two AVN commentators dropped open as people started appearing into seats within the stadium.



The Frogai Lama stands and leads the newly formed crowd in thunderous applause.

"Turn on that camera!" Morgana insisted quickly fixing her hair and grabbing her co-host. "We interrupt this regularly scheduled program to bring you unfolding events at Avalon Angel's Spharx stadium. The girl we all thought dead, the witch queen contender with pink hair, Sasporilla Bucket has returned! She seems alive and well and determined to still face down her opponent."

"BABA YAGA!" Sasporilla angrily, her voice carrying for miles amplified through her spell. "I'VE RETURNED TO FACE YOU! YOUR CURSED SEPTER DIDN'T KILL ME. YOUR MONSTERS, GOONS AND TRAPS COULDN'T STOP ME. SO HERE I AM YOU EVIL WITCH. FACE ME!"

Sasporilla looked around the eerily silent stadium at the excited but trepidacious faces of those who stood in wait with her. Some stood against the evil Witch Queen Baba Yaga. Few stood with her. Most stood where it was safest to do so. Sasporilla held no ill-will against anyone's choice. She always found people had a way of being outted and judged for the truth of their actions in the end. Her only concern was...

A terrible twisted horn blew in the city air. An evil warped cry of Royal horns that announced the Witch Queen's arrival.

Sasporilla had expected the Royal guard to apparate in. Much to her surprise they marched in through the south gate in full Royal Golden Armour. Their swords sheathed but wands held at attention as they marched in formation two by two. As they approached, they separated, and marched to the stadium walls where they stood shoulder to shoulder at attention.

A black myst wafted in through the south gate. It's darkness was a true inky impenetrable black that no light got through. It seemed to move forward like living tendrils of black smoke. The blackness shot forward suddenly. Reaching for Sasporilla Bucket like an inky black claw.

"Shadow Demon!" The Frogai Lama gasped!

"LUMOS BULLITUS!" Sasporilla cast, surrounding herself in a bubble of bright white light.

The darkness bounced off with a wail as if burned and shot strait into the air above the stadium. The Witch Queen's black shadow demon had been wounded and retreated above spinning round and round in the sky above the stadium unsure of what to do next.

Eight gigantic black widow Acromantula crawled through the south gate tethered side by side. A terrifying team to pull the Witch Queen's Royal golden carriage. A stream of magical energy shot forth from the carriage and struck the black whirling mass above the stadium. The great shadow demon broke into many tendrils and headed towards each Royal Guardsman.

"Now!" Sasporilla commanded.

Worker elves appeared two by two in front of each guards man, blocking them with a finger snaps and light shield spells which encompassed and destroyed the beast of darkness, protecting the Witch Queen's guard. The crowd erupted with a rousing cheer! Along the upper rim of the stadium High Elves appeared brandishing weapons of light and magic. If the rest of her plan was going off without a hitch, Sasporilla's army of Elves, Fae magi of Avalon and of the Lost city, should be securing the castle and the rest of Avalon as she gave taking down this tyrant her best shot. She could here the words of her uncle Nick in the back of her mind "Good luck kiddo. You can do it I just know if any one can, you can." By the same token she could also hear Lyra. "Just show here that wide butt of yours and while she's laughing strike her down!"

The lull in the crowd's cheer focused Sasporilla's attention. The Acromantula had stopped and the top of the Golden Royal Carriage was opening to the eerie tinkle of a slightly out of tune, warped music box.

Rickety gnarled sticks wrapped in dried vines with withered leaves poked out of the top of the carriage, five, ten, then twenty feet high before they bent with a loud crack and fell to an angle as others grew out in there place. The sticks separated showing themselves to be like the creepy wooden appendages of a giant daddy long legs. They all reached inside the Golden Royal Carriage and attached to something, and Sasporilla Bucket knew just who that was.

"What's wrong?" Sassy yelled. "Scared to come out and face me?"

The rickety wooden daddy long legs lifted the wooden form of the evil Witch Queen from her carriage. She basqued in the horror of the crowd as she turned her stone casting gaze at them, only to find the worker elves were busy snapping magical mirrored sunglasses on members of the audience.

Sasporilla pointed the wand at her neck casting, "SONORUS!"

"Please leave the glasses on everyone!" Sassy begged the crowd. "They will protect you from Baba Yaga's gorgon effects!"

"You will address me as the WITCH...QUEEN." Baba Yaga hissed setting herself down less than thirty feet from the young pink haired witch. The long wooden legs pulled back into the wood of her body with loud cracks and snaps.

"Well, well, well." The Witch Queen chuckled. "Sasporilla Bucket. The boil on my back-side that just will not go away. Guards, this young woman was rejected by the scepter and lost the tournament. She holds no claim to the royal throne. Seize her!"

Much to the Witch Queen's surprise there was little movement. There was at the best, hesitant looks from one Royal Guards man to another inquiring what the other was going to do.

"On the contrary Baba Yaga! It is you who hold no real claim to that throne. You've stolen it from the rightful Witch Queens for far to long! You are no more of a monarch than the butterfly of the same name! Today you stand accused of the crimes of sedition and high treason before your subjects. How do you plea?"

"Oh I am guilty Sasporilla Bucket." The most evil of witches Baba Yaga said drawing her wand. "I am the only Witch Queen this world has known and I will be the only Witch Queen all the world will ever know!!! There is nothing you or anyone else can do about that!!!"

"No Baba Yaga." Sasporilla said raising her wand in a dueling salute. "I will stand against you today and fight. If I die, someone else will stand against you tomorrow. Then the next day and the next until your reign of tyranny is over."

"Quaint." Baba Yaga sneered as she attacked, "AVADA KEDAVRA!"

"TUTELAMORTE!" Sasporilla cast, forming a great shield versus the death spell, much to the Witch Queen's surprise. "METEORUM!"

Sassy cast back as three shooting stars seem to fall from the heavens and crashes into where the Witch Queen stood with a great fiery explosion!

As the smoke and flame cleared Baba Yaga stood inside a protective dome seething with anger. It seemed, the fight was truly on.

Spells flashed back and forth between the combatants in a furious duel.

"INCARCEROUS" vs "EXPELLIARMUS!"

"PETRIFICUS TOTALUS" vs. "PROTEGO!"

"LEVICORPUS" vs. "RELASHIO!"

"INFLAMARE!" hit Sasporilla with little effect.

"STUPIFY!" was shaken off by the Witch Queen like so much of a mosquito bite.

Lightning flashed from Baba Yaga's wand.

"FUNDATUS!" Sasporilla cast a long iron bar which shot forth into the stadium's turf and attracted the lighting, grounding it.

A wild wave of the Witch Queens wands produced a green mist that filled the gap on the stadium floor between the two combatants. Sasporilla watched as the mist solidified around her feet into a sea of serpents! The Witch Queen laughed!

Sasporilla Bucket kicked and stomped as the snakes crossed lines of fire, circles of cold, winds that blew them back a few feet, but they just slithered forward striking against the firm leather of her boots. Much to the Witch Queens amusement. Then she remembered a spell. Obscure but none the less... "VIPERA EVENESCA MAXIMA!!!"

A wave of yellow flame washed out across the sea of snakes which flashed out in a puff of black smoke.

"Time to play offence." Sasporilla muttered. A small spell from my friends at the pole... "MISULIK!"

A storm of ice whipped up and rushed at the Baba Yaga freezing the old witch in solid ice. In no way did Sassy believe the ice would hold her, but it gave her a chance to catch her breath.

The cracking in the ice started low at first but then grew louder and faster until the block shattered from the sticks and vines that pushed out from the Baba Yaga. They grew and grew until they topped up above the stadium. They wove together and intertwined forming a dome sealing off the top of the stadium walls. They grew down the outside of the stadium and sealed it all the doors, windows and gates.

"Haaaa hahahahaaaaa!" The Witch Queen cackled. "Now there is no escape for ANY OF YOU!!!! You all came to witness my demise? I will instead take my entertainment in all of yours!"

"MASSOCCISSION!" The Witch Queen cast waving her wand over her head. A green flame of mass death swept across the field out from her and headed to the stadium stands.

"FINITE INCANTATEM!" Sasporilla cast slamming her wand into the ground as death's flames separated around her. The nullification spell only going so far.

The Worker elves stepped out and stood before the Royal guards and snapped their fingers with a smirk. The green flames extinguished with a rush of playful wind... followed up by a low rumbling sound of flatulence. Much to the amusement of the house elves.

Some in the crowd started to giggle, then to laugh. Even Sasporilla couldn't help but snicker. Baba Yaga stood frozen her eyes darting. She was the only thing she feared... a laughing stock!

"NO!" The Witch Queen screamed, casting "ARANIA EXUMAI!"

The Acromantula were thrown from where they stood at the front of the Royal Carriage into Sasporilla Bucket. Sasporilla stumbled back. Baba Yaga beamed! This was her chance, not just to hurt the pink haired witch but to humiliate her!

"BOMBARDA MAXIMA!" The Witch Queen blasted the ground at Sassy's feet blowing her into the air and her team of Acromantula to bits.

"ASCENDIO!" The Witch Queen lifted her higher until she smashed Sasporilla into the dome of wood. Sassy's body fell limp from the ceiling as the crowd screamed.

"ARESTO MOMENTUM." Baba Yaga laughed as she stopped her pink haired opponents fall feet above the ground.

"LEVICORPUS!" Hung Sasporilla upside down before the evil old witch by her ankles.

"IMMOBULOUS!" Baba Yaga cast. Sasporilla Bucket was once again her prisoner.

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The home of Karry and Zac was alive with people from all over Hogsmeade who crowded in to view the AVN footage of Sasporilla Bucket vs. The Witch Queen of Avalon. Karry played hostess fetching drinks and snacks with her mom Kolline who had graciously apparated in to lend a hand, while Zac and her dad Alexander held court on the livingroom couch.

It was the screaming in the stands and the collective gasp in the living room that brought Karry running. What she saw made her ears buzz like someone had cast "Muffilato". All blood drained from her face. The platter of butter beers she had prepared slipped from her grasp and toppled to the floor with a great crash. The baby started to cry.

"Sasporilla Bucket was in trouble." James MacNare said as they showed the young pink haired witch hanging upside down in mid air, the Witch Queen dancing gleeful around her casting "CRUCIO!"

Sasporilla's body twitched and jerked as she hung there bleeding and broken. Helpless.

"Why does'n some'n help'er?" Hagrid shouted at the TV!

Zac stood and ran to Karry who collapsed in tears in his arms.

"She'll be ok Karry." Zac tried to reassure his wife and best friend. "She always has a plan, remember?"

"What if it's all gone south Zac?" Karry wailed.

"If it has..." Zac said trepadaciously, "then I'd hope someone there'd be brave enough to step in."

"CRUCIO or the Cruciotus curse that the Witch Queen is using on her combatant is one of the three forbidden, unforgivable curses." Morgana Moonshadow frowned. "By openly torturing this young woman she is breaking International Wizarding law on two worlds!"

"Oh no!" The Witch Queen said feigning surprise. "I don't want my torture to break any laws. Better make it humane then and end her suffering quickly."

"IMPERIO" Baba Yaga said smooth and low, "Tell them all who the rightful Witch Queen is and your suffering will all be over little girl."

Through laboured breaths Sasporilla spoke. "Hickory dickey dock. Go and wind a clock!"

"AVADA KEDAVRA!" The Witch Queen cast.

The whole stadium gasped as the green blast of magical energy struck the body of Sasporilla Bucket, but she just giggled as her body dissolved like sand!!!

"Ladies and Gentlemen!" James MacNare began.

"It seems as though the Sasporilla Bucket in the Witch Queens clutches was..." Morgan Moonshadow continued.

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"A decoy!" The Frogai Lama gave a standing ovation on his seat. "BRAVO!"

The Witch Queen shook furiously as she looked around noticing a very conspicuous tall wooden wardrobe leaning off kilter in what was left of her Acromantula.

Baba Yaga gnashed her teeth as she seethed with hatred floating towards the wardrobe.

With a wave a swish and flick of her wand she stood the old cabinet up straight. Readying her wand for combat she pulled at the door!

"Locked!" Baba Yaga laughed. "Tricky. Trick, tricky, tricky smart girl, but so easy to beat. ALOHAMORA!"

The cabinet remained locked.

"Tricky." The old Witch Queen seemed impressed. "You know a lot of spells for one so young. Well I know many, many more pup! CISTEM APERIO!"

There was an audible 'CLICK' as the cabinets lock popped open.

"Hahaaaaha!" The Witch Queen Cackled until the door shot straight out at her! A solid block of wood six feet thick, striking her hard in the torso at what must of been a hundred kilometers an hour! The block knocked her back and into the stadium wall

The crowd cheered as Sasporilla Bucket climbed out of the wardrobe and stood triumphantly on the field of battle.

"Surprise!" Sassy smiled holding up her wand.

Sasporilla apparated from where she stood to the edge of the block of wood pinning the Witch Queen.

"WINGARDIUM LEVIOSA!" Sasporilla cast the block aside only to reveal an empty shadow. A silhouette of what must have been where the Witch Queen hit. Sasporilla looked around the old witch was here, some where. Waiting in a shadow. Waiting to strike... waiting in a shadow? Sasporilla turned her attention quickly back to the shadowy silhouette. The Witch Queens face smiled out at her.

"BOO!" The Witch Queen Cackled Startling the young Pink Haired Witch. "EVERTE STATUM!"

Knocking Sasporilla back several feet Sassy dug in and took up a defensive stance. Standing opposite each other on the field of battle Sasporilla raised her wand in a dueling salute, and for the first time out of respect, so did the Witch Queen Baba Yaga.

"This is not your typical duel," Morgana Moonshadow said into her microphone.

"No Morgan," James MacNare said excitedly "This... is... a... WAR!"

Spells flashed back and forth between them. Blasts of energy. Waves of fire and ice. Walls of water, shards of glass, a rain of steel blades and a sandwich? Sasporilla had always had trouble with the Muffliato spell! She accidentally cast "MUFFULETTA!" A very tasty sandwich from New Orleans but not the effect of muffling her opponents hearing she was going for.

Both the Baba Yaga and Sasporilla bucket paced before each other exhausted. Keeping a fair distance and catching their breath.

"You," The Witch Queen huffed, "I Greatly underestimated you. INFERNIA!"

"PROTEGO!" Sasporilla puffed as she cast away the fire spell to one side. "ARANEUM!"

"REDUCTO!" disintegrated Sasporilla's web spell long before it hit the Witch Queen.

"This is pointless child!" Baba Yaga puffed. "We are evenly matched at best."

"So are you giving up?" Sasporilla asked? "Willing to stand trial before the people in court for your crimes?"

"Let us surmise, for just a moment," the Witch Queen said holding out her hands questioningly, "that I do?"

"Then you give me your wand," Sasporilla said holding out her hand, "and come with us quietly. I promise you will be treated gently and fairly."

Baba Yaga looked at the ground for a hard moment and held out her hand, wand drooped in it. Sasporilla nodded and walked forward hand out to grasp it when Baba Yaga looked up with that hateful look in her eye and that evil smile on her face. "AVADA KEDAVRA!"

The look of surprise, then terror, then peace as the Witch Queen fell to the ground dead in the place where Sasporilla Bucket had been standing just the snap of elfish finger magic before. Sasporilla stood transposed to where the Witch Queen had been holding up her hand her fingers still freshly snapped.

"THE WITCH QUEEN IS DEAD!" Cheered someone in the crowd "LONG LIVE THE WITCH QUEEN!"

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This is AVN BREAKING NEWS...

A picture of Sasporilla Bucket standing over the dead body of the deceased Baba Yaga filled the screen behind the announcer.

"This is Cassandra Brumswallow filling in for the ailing Vincent Hoovenclefft taking you live to Avalon's Angel's Spharx stadium, where moments ago the heir to the Royal throne of Avalon beat the former Witch Queen in a duel to the death, Morgana?"

The cameras switched to Morgana Moonshadow who was looking up. " Yes Thank you Cassandra. As you can see the dome of sticks and vines cast by the Baba Yaga is retreating!"

Sasporilla knew why. The magic that the evil old witch used was indeed powerful. Her wand was made from the wood of the tree of life the same as Sasporilla. However unlike Sassy, Baba Yaga's evil warped and infested the wood and in turn it warped and infested her, making the Witch Queen as much a monster outside as she was inside. The wood and vines drew back from the stadium and into the corpse of the old witch causing her to twist and writhe. Then the wood and bark withdrew itself from old Baba Yaga herself, leaving nothing more then the fragile corpse of a pale old witch in black robes, with rotted teeth.

Sasporilla took the wand and put it in her robes. As MacNare and Moonshadow approached.

"Ms.Bucket, Ms.Bucket?"; They asked with microphones out stretched. "Have you any quotes for your subjects?"

"Yes." Sasporilla said walking away into a pink myst, "It's time you started preparing yourselves for real democracy and freedom!"

It was only a flash, the change between faery dragon, the travel in to the deep pink myst to the Avalon' Majesty station and changing back into her pink haired self. Sasporilla was still getting used to being an animagus but she was getting the hang of it.

People in the terminal stopped and stared.

"Good morning everyone." Sasporilla smiled and waved as she walked past and out a service door onto a limb of the tree of life.

"I've come to keep my promise!" Sasporilla said loudly as she placed the wands near the trees giant limb. The wands grew forward into the wood of the tree and spiraled together, disappearing forever into the tree of life.

"You're home." Sasporilla smiled. "Where you belong, safe and sound."

Sasporilla turned to leave.

"Just a moment Sasporilla Bucket." The voice of Edda the guardian of Yggdrasil said.

Sasporilla turned around smiling. "I'm happy to see you Edda. I wasn't sure you would come out just to see me off."

"You are rare Sasporilla Bucket." Edda smiled putting her hand on Sassy's shoulder, "a magi that kept their promise to return the wood you borrowed? No one has ever done this before. Ever. All has had to be retrieved. You not only brought your own back but that of another. Your extremely rare."

"Thank you." Sasporilla blushed. "My mother taught me to always keep my promises."

"It is because you are such an honourable woman," the guardian of Yggdrasil smiled handing Sassy a small blue jeweled box jewel, "we have decided to give you this gift."

"Thank you!" Sasporilla said sliding open the top to reveal a small sliver of wood inside. "Is this a piece of Yggdrasil?"

"Yes." Edda said. "Not as powerful as a full wand made of the tree of life but place it on the wood of your wand and it will weave itself in. We know you will keep it secret and safe."

"I promise you I will." Sasporilla said, waving to Edda as Sassy placed the jeweled box into her Jacket, transformed to a faery dragon and fluttered off into the pink myst.

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Blue spit out the last of the Doxy army when the pink myst appeared and Sasporilla Bucket walked out of it. All of Avalon's worst evil creature that had allied themselves to the Witch Queen as a allied force this day, the Doxy's, the slime trolls, the swamp harpies, but the worst of the lot were Avalonian Steel Dragon's. Rare as they had been, Sasporilla feared they may now be extinct.

Royal Guard sat captured with few counted amongst the dead. Thankfully there were very few magi casualties but unfortunately there were far too many amongst creatures and Fae.

Laying on a stone, near each other were Gooseberry and Flossy. Both had been killed by the great blasts of a steel dragon. It was unclear who was reaching for whom, intending to try and rescue the other, perhaps with their dying breath but without question, for tiny, Fae both fought like lions and died heroes!

Sasporilla walked over to Blue. "It's time my friend. The sun is high in the noon day sky. You must be going. I'm going to miss you."

"I will miss you too... Sassy." Blue attempted a beaky smile.

Sasporilla pulled her broom from her bag. Mounting it she kicked off and took off into the air, circling around Blue's sparkling crystal head. As she leveled off and hovered beside him she smiled and asked, "Ready?"

"READY!" Blue screeled and started to run forward flapping his large crystalline ice wings.

With a mighty jump Blue took off into the air. Sasporilla pulled up her Erumpant right along side him. The current of his mighty wings would blow her far off in the skies if she dare fall behind. In moments they were over Avalon city.

A pink mist, as many that opened all across the city, opened near Majesty station. From it poured many fire faeries and Dame Splatterpalette. People panicked fearing invasion by evil Fae now that the Witch Queen was dead.

"Don't be afraid!" Professor Splatterpalette reassured the good citizens of Avalon city. "These Fae are not here to harm, nor invade, nor enslave you. NO, but at the bequest of your new WITCH QUEEN SASPORILLA BUCKET! To assist the great beast in getting over the city and away with out damage to properties or peoples!"

The Fire Fae, lead by the Fire Priestess, the Fire Chief and accompanied by his finest soldiers, especially Kian and Aysel turned their hands towards the sky. Rings of flame pulsed in their palms. Waves of super heated thermal air wafted upwards creating great lift for Blue to soar upon. Wings outstretched Blue caught the thermal and began to glide up in a circle above the great tree Yggdrasil.

The people at Majesty station looked up watching the great beast as it soared high above. The tree of life held this name for one great on known reason. It was part of a great cycle that all were witnessing.

A single bud appeared on a small branch near a very unassuming leaf on Yggdrasil. From it grew a single Golden Acorn. The branch bent down, down, so far down that one would have thought it would snap, but instead it sprung back up like a finely made spring and shot the Golden acorn high into the air. High enough that it carried just in front of the beak of the great beast Blue.

"Oh that looks good!" He said snapping it up and swallowing the tiny morsel whole as he continued to glide on thermals happily with his friend Sasporilla.

The Golden acorn found its way down the gullet and into the stomach of the great beast. He felt strong and ready.

"It is time Sasporilla Bucket." Blue said. "I must away!"

"Fly my friend!" Sasporilla yelled as Blue shot off into the sky. "Good bye Blue. I love you and I'll miss you!"

"As I love you my friend." Blue's voice boomed back. "But do not miss me. Our hearts will always touch."

Blue's mighty wings flapped and carried him out of the atmosphere and into space. The acorn inside of him told him what direction to go and where to find the lifeless body he would land on where he would plant the seed he now carried. A new tree of life would bring life and magic to a New World across the stars.



## Chapter 18

"Sasporilla Bucket!" Professor Splatterpalette called out from inside the arts and design room.

Sassy came in carrying a long box wrapped in a cloth. Angelo Lazarus, pushing a cart with a custom Abbicum he designed himself to needs, Sasporilla's and Rubeus Hagrid carrying a large wooden crate quickly followed her up. The giant of a man ducked as he stepped through the art and design room door. He walked over to the side of Angelo's cart and set the cart down gently.

"Why Rubeus Hagrid!" Professor Splatterpalette grinned from ear to ear with utter glee jumping from her chair.

"As I live and breathe it seems like a life time since I've felt one of your hugs!"

The arts and design professor ran to the giant hairy man and hugged him with all of her wonderful heart.

"Ello Perfesser Spla'erpal'e i's niwce ta see ya too!" Hagrid giggled hugged his friend back.

"To what do I owe this great unexpected visit?" Professor Splatterpalette asked.

"Well I was invi'ed, was'n I?" Hagrid smiled nodding at Sassy. "Sasporilla's asked me along fer help in her presentation t'day. Though I'm no' sure wha' much good I'll be fer anythin' more'n lift'n anythin' heavy? 'R gettin' anythin' down from th' top shelf ay? Ay?"

"Ah!" Professor Splatterpalette said wiping the smile from her face, becoming serious clearing her throat, and straightening herself. "Then I guess we'd best get started. Ms.Bucket if you would?"

"Thank you Professor." I will ask my assistants to kindly continue setting up my equipment for my second presentation."

"Yes of course." Professor Splatterpalette nodded.

"As you know Professor Splatterpalette I have had an issue with both study and build time this year." Sasporilla said.

"Ms.Bucket, I don't wont except any excuses from any students!" Professor Splatterpalette slammed her hand down on the table.

"Wha'?" Hagrid began amazed. "Now see here Dina tha'!..."

But a single raised finger, Professor Splatterpalette called for the giants polite silence.

"I don't accept boy issues, girl issues, home sickness, partying to much, or fighting for your life against an evil gauntlet of magi for months!" The Arts Professor smiled. "So show me what you got kid! Dazzle me!!!!"

"I am prepared to do just that Professor!" Sasporilla smiled walking forward putting the box covered by cloth down on the table. Sasporilla unwrapped the cloth to reveal a rather plain Maple box with a brass plate engraved with a wand makers mark. BUCKET WANDS 001.

"Excuse me Rubeus?" Professor Splatterpalette called.

"Yes Perfesser?" Hagrid asked still a bit miffed with her snappy tone towards Sassy.

"Would you mind opening this heavy box for me?"

"No problem!" Hagrid said but mumbled under his breath the whole way over. "Talkin' tha' way too 'er af'er she wen' through all tha'? I means really? Have a heart!"

Hagrid easily flipped the boxes lid open to reveal a new pink umbrella! It was pinker than his original and its handle was curved and carved to resemble the head of a Flamingo. Its point was the same colour as the head but seemed to be notched in a pattern of three.

"It's magnificent Sasporilla!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled and clapped excitedly.

"Based on my original design it was easy enough to create once we got the wand creation device built." Sasporilla smiled. "I had quite the break through on its design in the lost city and past the information to my design team."

"That would be me." Angelo smiled and waved as he worked to connect the three modules together.

"Ok, let's see it in action then." Professor Splatterpalette said. "For a passing grade it must be functional."

"Well you see that's where I have a problem." Sasporilla said with a rye side smile. "You see I made this as a gift for one single person. It can only be picked up and used by them and it must first imprint on them. Like a Triumphant Broom seat."

"Well then you best gift it to that person then hadn't you?" Professor Splatterpalette smiled.

Hagrid stood oblivious to the implication until Sasporilla picked up the box and handed it to him!

"Fer me?" Hagrid's eyes widened. "Bu' i's no' Chris'mas. No' my Birthday. Why fer me?"

"Just because I wanted to make you a gift Hagrid." Sasporilla said. "Something to show you that I appreciate everything you ever did for me when I was at Hogwarts."

"This is th' mos' beau'iful gif' anyone's ever given me." Hagrid wiped a big tear away from his eye. "I don'... I don' know wha' ta say. I loves i'!!!!"

"Well," Sasporilla smiled very giddy, "Give it a wave. Remember, when you first grip the handle, hold it firm for a second to allow the imprinting to take."

Hagrid reached into the box and grabbed the handle. There was a tickle, a tingle then a quick pinch.

"Ere now!" Hagrid said pulling his hand away. "That's a bit liwke a lil bug bi' i'n i'?"

"Unfortunately yes." Sasporilla pouted. "However it draws no blood. You're not actually bitten. The spell just makes the wand truly yours. Only you can use it. If anyone else tries to take it or use it... well they'll regret the harmonic feedback."

"Tha's brillian!" Hagrid said picking up the new pink flamingo umbrella wand and testing its balance, almost like a sword. He could feel it was in balance with him on all levels of his being.

"It is brilliant indeed." Angelo Lazarus said as he started hooking in the Abbicum.

"Mr.Lazarus!" Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "No opinions from the peanut gallery!"

"Sorry Professor." Angelo smiled.

"However I must agree." Professor Splatterpalette said "The addition of this feature to a wand could be a great selling point for a wand makers brand."

"Thank you Professor." Sasporilla bowed her head.

Rubeus Hagrid, since cleared of all charges in the great 'misunderstanding', as the Ministry of Magic had called the Chamber of Secrets incident, he had been able to study and practice magic. He'd gotten quite good at some spells and there was one he was just itching to show off.

Hagrid raised his pink flamingo umbrella wand out in front of him and began.

"EXPECTA..." Hagrid started. "Nope tha's no' i'. EXPECTO PAXO.... NOPE! NOPE... sorry. Jus' a sec.

Hagrid reached into his pocket and pocket and pulled out a handful of small bits of paper. He looked through them dropping a few on the floor until he found the one he wanted.

"O' course!" Hagrid chuckled holding the wand out straight clearing his throat spinning his wrist ever so slightly and saying so powerfully "EXPECTO PATRONUM!"

The best that could ever be expected from the simple grounds keeper of Hogwarts is the results of a novice. The simple blue pulse at a wands tip. Instead a great ghostly blue snowy owl flew forth and flew around the room! It looped and soared until it returned to Hagrid, landed on the wand and dispersed.

Professor Splatterpalette walked over and snatched the wand from Hagrid.

"WINGARDIUM LEVIOSA!" The Professor cast.

The harmonic feed back lifted the arts and design professor into the air to the top of the room then dropped her. Hagrid broke her fall in his big safe arms. Professor Splatterpalette was giggling like a schoolgirl.

"Perfessor!" Hagrid said taking back his pink flamingo umbrella wand. "Wha' were you thinkin'?"

"I was thinking some one had to test the anti-theft feature," Professor Splatterpalette laughed. "and I knew Sasporilla would never design anything deadly. I also knew with you around Rubeus I was never in any real danger. Put me down big fella!"

"Oh!" Hagrid smiled a bit embarrassed. "Sorry 'bou' tha'."

Professor Splatterpalette straightened her robes as she walked over to Sassy.

"Well well well Ms.Bucket." Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "I ask only one more test for your design.

"Oh?" Sasporilla said surprised.

"Does the umbrella work?" Professor Splatterpalette asked.

"Well." Sassy said. "Hagrid if you hold out the wand and check for a simple button? "

"WAIT!!!" Professor Splatterpalette screamed grabbing her heart.

"Wha's wrong Dina?" Hagrid asked.

"It's bad luck to open an umbrella indoors." The head of the arts and design department swooned dramatically.

"We must take it outside to private terrace! REVELIO!"

Professor Splatterpalette waved her wand dramatically but nothing magically appeared, instead she walked over to a draw chord and pulled open some very colourful drapes revealing doors to her outer terrace.

"What?" Professor Splatterpalette asked. "Not everything is magical... sheeesh!"

Chuckling at her teacher's bizarre sense of twisted humour, Sasporilla lead the way outside onto the large terrace. Hagrid ducked as he walked through the terrace doors and joined them outside.

"Ok big guy." Professor Splatterpalette smiled. "Push that button."

Hagrid checked the handle for the button. It was deceptively simple and disguised. A small pink button in the pink wooden handle just slightly raised.

"Ah!" Hagrid smiled. "There we go!"

Hagrid held the umbrella wand up and pressed the button. The umbrella opened wide. Twice as wide as it looked as if it was designed to!

"As you can see the wand is also a fully functional umbrella designed for the wizards exact size." Sasporilla said.

"This'll keep th' rain off a migh' be'r than th' old one!"

"MODICUM TEMPESTAS!" Professor Splatterpalette cast a small personal storm cloud just over Hagrid.



The mini hurricane blew strong winds and struck with heavy rains. Though the terrace around Hagrid was getting soaked, under the umbrella was bone dry. The winds didn't even blow a hair on his beard out of place.

"As you can also see," Sasporilla sighed proudly, "when the umbrella is deployed a bubble of protection is deployed against inclement weather. As an added feature."

"A++++ Sasporilla." Professor Splatterpalette said hugging her student proudly.

"Ummm... Perfesser?" Hagrid asked looking up at the storm.

"Oh." The arts teacher cringed. "Sorry."

With a wave of her wand she dismissed the small storm. Hagrid pushed the button and retracted the umbrella.

"Hagrid?" Sasporilla asked, "When you bring an umbrella in from the rain, where does it go?"

"Usually in th' broolly stand by the door. Why?" Hagrid asked.

"Just give your wand slash umbrella a flip." Sassy smiled.

"An' catch i'?" Hagrid asked.

"Oh no no," Sasporilla insisted, "just let it fall. It will be fine. Trust me."

Hagrid flipped the wand. As it approached the floor the wand tip pointed down, the handle up. The wand's triple split tip opened up and revealed three pink flamingo feet which the wand landed on firmly! The flamingo's head on the handle looked around finding the closest doorway and all three feet skittered the wand over to stand by the side of the door where it would stand on its own.

"Another feature of your new pink flamingo umbrella wand is that it is self standing." Sasporilla smiled. "It is enchanted to find the closest door in any place you go to set it down and stand beside it."

"Another three pluses Ms. Bucket." professor Splatterpalette said. "I can see the basic course was far too easy for you. We will have to put you in the advance classes next year and I'll have to go tough on you."

Everyone broke out laughing. Oh that crazy Dina and her whack-a-doodle sense of humour. However the Professor was only politely smiling.

"What's funny?" Professor Splatterpalette asked.

"You weren't kidding?" Sassy asked.

"Not at all." The professor smiled. "I think you could be the greatest wand maker anyone's ever seen. The only way to make that happen is to push you the hardest I know how. So let's get ready for your next exam shall we?"

"No break." Sassy gulped.

"No rest for the best." The professor chuckled. "Should have brought cake!"

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There was about a twenty minute respite as they waited for Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle, from the maths and engineering side of her arts and design program, to join them in the arts and design exam room.

Professor Splatterpalette tapped her foot and her wand to a tune playing on a phonographic icon off to the side. It was her first, and though her family thought it junk, she had just refused to be rid of it. Instead she brought it to her office slash studio, where she could enjoy the beautiful sounds of the music she loved, while at the same time perhaps getting under the skin of some of those students who didn't know what real music was.

Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle walked through the door hurriedly, looking disheveled and dripping with sweat.

"Sorry I'm late!" Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle apologized. "Crazy day! You wouldn't believe it if I told you!"

"Your bacon butty exploded?" Professor Splatterpalette asked excitedly casting a deerstalker cap atop her head.

"What?" Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle asked confused. "No. I,"

"No no no," The arts professor said turning her wand into a pipe, placing it thoughtfully between her lips with a sluthful squint in her eyes, "I love to solve a good mystery! By the state of your blazer, and the bags under I'd say you were up all night. Worried about someone, or something? You were worried about a...."

Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle looked genuinely concerned about where Professor Splatterpalette's line of deductions were going.

"...A CAT!" Professor Splatterpalette announced grabbing the math's and engineering professors sleeve. "By the hairs on your sleeve I see it was a cursed cat which you thought merely sick but NO! IT EXPLODED! Not your bacon sandwich, that would have been silly, no that's why you gathered up all your papers in a hurry, stuffed them into the case and got out before you got governed in any more cursed cat drippings."

Professor Splatterpalette took a bow knowing she had figured out the 'case of the cursed cat.'

"No you absolute whack-a-doodle!" Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle snapped. "Traffic is horrid and I had to run here. Thirty three blocks!"

"Well." Professor Splatterpalette said taking offence. "That doesn't explain the cat hair."

"Please don't." Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle asked holding up his hand thumping his brief case down on the table. "Just don't"

"Fine." Professor Splatterpalette smiled Slipping a small bottle into her robes. "Sasporilla as you know this is the Engineering and design part of your course exam. As Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle used up most of your time making us wait you have three minutes left to make your presentation. GO!"

Sasporilla stood there dumbfounded. Three minutes? Was she kidding?

"Tick-tick, tick-tock." The Head of the Arts department tapped her wand on the table.

"Sassy!" Angelo whispered. "Shake a leg babe! You can do it!"

Sasporilla took a deep breath smiled and said. "Welcome to the future of wand making. No more will wands need to be pre-made and hours spent going through many models finding the best fit for the witch or wizard. Now all it takes is coming in to my machine, clutching this handle grip,"

Sasporilla walked to a handle sticking up from the first box on the floor. There was a slight glow. "The handle reads the bodies biorhythm and matches it to the magical rhythm of the witch or wizard and The machine matches the type of material for the wand which as we all know, creates the important harmonic needed for the core. However, unlike other wands my wands do not use parts of magical creature bought from questionable people to use as cores. Bucket wands use cylinder cores woven by elven weavers, employed and paid by me."

Sasporilla walked over to the second box. A cabinet folded up from it.

"From here you may choose your wand shape based on availability in your material. Woods, metals, crystals, stones etc. Prices vary based on extravagance and additional accoutrements. If you want inlays that may be available then it will cost extra."

Sasporilla swiped through a rolling stock tray of wands making several choices on her wand. Sasporilla no longer needed the wand she had been given. She missed her dear HOBKNOB The conflicator. However this was about new designs and what she could deliver. It was time Sasporilla Bucket, of Bucket wands, had a new wand. 11 3/4 Ash and butterfly wood intertwined with an ornate brass handle with a pink jewel in the inlay.

As Sassy walked over to the third box she heard her professors arguing.

"This is a ridiculous show." Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle snorted. "Cores woven by elves! Probably a house elf in the boxes just carrying the wand she designed."

"Shut up and watch Pennywhistle!" Professor Splatterpalette hissed.

The wand came up through a slot on an ornate wand stand.

"Now," Sasporilla said, "When I grasp my new wand it will bond itself to me. Unlike other wand makers wands, this wand will never be able to be taken from me, not even if I lose a duel."

Sasporilla grasped the wand until she felt the pinch and smiled. She picked up the wand.

"My new wand, HARMONY, is ready for your perusal and approval." Sassy said placing it on a flat presentation pillow and carrying it over to place before her professors. "As I said it is bonded to me so I ask you be very careful and do not recommend handling it. I recommend using a spell to levitate it to inspect it."

Sasporilla smiled and stepped back from the table.

"I think the process is streamlined and intrinsically mechanical. Lacking in the personal service of a traditional wand shop." Professor Splatterpalette said.

"If you believe that having no say in how your wand will look or feel in your hand before you buy it, knowing it will work and having an attendant there to walk you through the process help you along as you go. Which I could have explained had I more time!" Sassy snapped.

"No need to be rude." Professor Splatterpalette said. "I'm merely pointing out my point of view that an old style shop with a one of a kind wand designer will never go out of style."

"Well yes Professor there we agree." Sassy smiled. "I will also offer that service in my own shop when I open it in a few years. Custom wands, BUT with Bucket cores."

"Why Bucket cores?" Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle asked, "I know you are very 'SAVE THE MAGICAL CREATURES' and all that..."

" 'Ere 'ere!" Rubeus Hagrid cheered and applauded. Everyone looked over at him until he slowed his applause.

"Sorry 'bout tha'."

"Bucket cores are," Sasporilla said folding her arms defiantly, "as I told you, woven by weaver elves. They are woven from the very fabric of magic itself. So unlike most wands, made by most wand makers, with cores taken from magical creatures, forced into the wands center, and tears at the fabric of magic itself a Bucket wands core weaves itself into strands of the fabric of magic making the wand more powerful and the core more stable."

"Rubbish." Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle said. "I know you have experience with such elvish weaving technique but...."

Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle rubbed his mouth and chin nervously. He picked up the wand and inspected it. The wand sparked and snapped in his hand forcing him to drop it.

"I warned you Professor." Sasporilla said. "The wand has its own security. You simply can not take or use my wand. It's now BONDED to me."

"Well I for one am horribly board as I always am at these sort of exams," Professor Splatterpalette yawned. "I defer to your expertise in this matter Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle. What's your opinion on Ms.Bucket's wand machine of the future... thing-a-magiggy?"

"Well?" Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle rubbed his sweaty face and licked his lips nervously. "I wasn't given any time to really look over the equipment, or the schematics or the software that runs the Abbicum. Did you look over the wand designs on from the abbicum Professor Splatterpalette?"

"Oh yes." The head of the arts department said. "Average wand shop fair. No showcase work."

"Well Angelo," Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle asked, "if you have the schematics and software I'd be happy to take them with me and look them over tonight after my last exam."

"Well of course professor." Angelo said handing over a manila file folder. "It's all in here. Just please be careful with it. This is our only copy."

"Of course." Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle smiled reassuringly snapped up his case with the plans and headed for the door. "I'll render my decision by official owl tomorrow. Good day."

Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle walked past Christen sitting nervously in the hall, holding her painting that she had for her exam as well as a plain canvas and her paint caddy for her live paint exam. As well as the model, which she was expected to supply herself, her best friend in the world Daisy, who sat listening to Queen.

The Math's and Engineering professor quickly made his way out of the arts and design building and sprinted quickly off campus. Raising his wand and casting Lumos, a cab pulled over and Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle climbed in.

"14793 High street please." Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle said.

The magical cab needed no driver. It simply drove him safely through the streets so the Professor could look over the plans. They were, as he had hoped, remarkable. Angelo Lazarus was a genius of technical design but the ideas of this girl, this... Sasporilla Bucket, were the ones of true artistry! This was indeed a passing grade, very much indeed.

The cab pulled up at his destination. The Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle paid the fair and turned to face a large half giant with heavy scars on face. The large man grabbed him by the lapels of his disheveled jacket and lifted him off the ground. He was carried over to a Hobgoblin in a finely tailored suit with salt and pepper hair. Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle pulled his wand nervously but the large scarred thug, holding him off the ground with one hand, grabbed the professor's wand in his other large mitt and snapped it in two.

Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle made let out a small whimper.

"Where is my money Pennywhistle?" The finely dressed Hobgoblin asked.

"I'll get it Horrobox." The Professor said. "I have the golden ticket right here in my bag see. As soon as I patent it, I have a buyer and then I'll have your money. Double your money. I just have to get inside to the patent office then let my buyer know it's done!"

"Ok." Horrobox the Hobgoblin said. "Three times my money, for testing my patients. This is what you get for having a problem with gambling. Lead the way."

The three of them walked through the front doors into the Avalon paten office. The older clerk behind the counter looked up.

"Take a number please and wait for me to call your number." The old clerk said.

"There's no one else here?" Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle said.

"Rules sir." The clerk said pointing to a rule sign saying 'All patent applicants MUST take a number and wait to be called.'

Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle walked over to the dusty old ticket dispenser and struggled with it to pull one out. Number 47.

The sign above the desk read 46. The clerk pulled a lever and called out, "Number 47?"

Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle stepped up to the window and tersely pushed his ticket forward.

"Thank you for your patience sir during our busy season." The old clerk smiled. "How may I help you?"

"I want to patent my wand machine." Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle said pushing the plans forward.

"Ah!" The old clerk said shakily putting on his dusty half spectacles as he pulled his wand. "REVELIO!"

The spell revealed the plans to be no more than a Corpus the Clown comic book! Worst of all it revealed, much to his chagrin, the old clerk was in fact...

"Dean Silversnow!" Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle gulped nervously backing up.

"Professor." The Dean said hanging his head. "I didn't want to believe the accusations that you had stolen designs from students in past and then failed them?" Dean Silversnow shook his head. "If Professor Splatterpalette hadn't taken your memory today as evidence to show me I might never have believed it! But this proves it, doesn't it? I'm ashamed of you."

"Look!" Horrobox the Hobgoblin sneered. "I don't care if your dad here is disappointed in you or not. I just want my money. So someone is giving me money, right now or some one's getting hurt."

"Oh really?" Said a big voice that drew the Hobgoblin's gaze up to the bearded smile of Rubeus Hagrid. "I don't think so."

One punch and the Hobgoblin flew across the patent office, through the stained glass window and landed on the sidewalk below. Followed soon after by his half-giant goon.

Hagrid stood in the broken stained glass window pain, looking at the damage, brushing his hands together.

"Sorry 'bou' tha'!" Hagrid smiled.

Sasporilla, Angelo and Professor Splatterpalette stood with Hagrid in the doorway. Behind them were four Avalon City police officers.

"Burndheart Bugbey Pennywhistle you are under arrest for theft, fraud and other charges to be brought upon you by the chief justice." The officers said placing the wizard in hand cuffs.

"Burny why?" Professor Splatterpalette asked truly concerned.

"Greed." Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle said. "Week will. Lack of any talent of my own. What else?"

"Take care." The head of the Arts Department said empathetically. She felt truly sorry for the pathetic creature he'd made himself. "I have to get back! I left poor Christen sitting in the hall with her friend, and they brought German chocolate cake! Now that is how you attend an exam Ms.Bucket!"

Professor Splatterpalette disapperated.

"Goodbye Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle." Sasporilla said, holding back the urge to slap him hard across the face.

"For what it's worth." Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle said. "A+ you two. Just brilliant!"

"Yes." Angelo said. "That's why we patent it the moment Sasporilla got back to Avalon city."

"I never had a chance did I?" Professor Bugbey Pennywhistle asked.

"No you didn'." Hagrid smiled said. "No' agains' ar Sasp'rilla!"

The police took the cuffed man out through the door.

"What were you thinking?" One cop asked him. "Trying to steal from the young woman who's going to be crowned Witch Queen?"

"The old one would have sent the Royal Guard for you rather than police you know?" The other officer chuckled.

"And he was never seen again."

"Maybe a statue in the palace hey?" The first cop said and the officers laughed.

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Professor Phenix drafted every student at Avalon University, not busy with exams, into a task force to search the university library. Every stack, every shelf every corner that contained a book, a scroll, a tablet, or an egg salad sandwich with a magical spell written on it was to be searched!

"We are looking for one spell." Professor Phenix told them. "A very ancient and powerful spell. One to break the curse of a gorgons gaze. The curse the Witch Queen Baba Yaga used to turn so many people into stone."

"How will we recognize it professor?" Laminar Cornition asked.

"You may not." Professor Phenix sighed. "That's the problem. However there may be something as small as a symbol of an eye or a snake or statue on the page. Maybe a person, stones, anything that makes you think for any reason 'We had better take a closer look at this' bring it here to me!"

The student groups broke apart and scoured the library all day and night in shifts while a group of scholars and professors looked through the books and scrolls that had been brought back. This went on for days until...

"Professor Phenix!" Marcus DaSilva called out from the Rose gallery above. "I think I've found something!"

"Good boy bring it here!" Professor Phenix shouted up to the perpetually needy young student who suffered from serious homesickness.

"No mam, you don't understand." Marcus DaSilva said. "I can't possibly bring this to you. You need to come here to see it."

"Very well." Professor Phenix huffed standing up with sore legs that were in desperate need of stretching and a walk anyway.

Rose gallery was so named as its stone work had finely carved roses along the marble walkways that overlooked the first floor from the fourth. A great statue of Merlin holding an open tome had been hewn out of rather ordinary milky quartz. One of the least impressive of his vestiges but none the less important for histories sake.

Professor Phenix got to the top of the stairs to the fourth floor and found Marcus DaSilva quite excited.

"I think this might be it professor he said." Pointing to Merlin's open book.

Professor Phenix turned to look and saw the same blank milky quartz stone book in the statue's hand she'd seen hundreds of times before.

"Right then Marcus I don't see anything." Professor Phenix said taking a deep breath. "Explain yourself please?"

"Yes Professor." Marcus smiled. "When you were telling us to search every thing and mentioned 'TABLET' something about this spot just kept drawing my eye. So I came to it to investigate it. Multiple times! It wasn't until I tried a Revelio spell..."

Professor Phenix whipped around and cast "REVELIO!" on the open blank stone pages... which unsatisfyingly stayed blank.

With a long sigh of disappointment Professor Phenix turned to Marcus, "Perhaps I've worked you all too hard this week DaSilva. Time for a break."

"No Mam!" DaSilva smiled taking her hand pulling her to the back of the statue's large head. "Please let me finish! It was here I found what was to be revealed... REVELIO!"

With a careful cast the spell revealed what looked like goggle ends for a person to look through in the back of the head.

"Look in to them Professor!" Marcus beamed.

Professor Phenix, with pure shock and pride at her first year student, took a look through the goggles which were obviously the eyes of the statue of Merlin. The Lenses were a pink hued clear rose quartz and only through them could you distinguish the Moon stone inlaid message in the pages of the book.

"Dear knights of the table round. Now at the time of the fall of Baba Yaga comes the time of FREEDOME! Here are the spells to undo ALL of the damage she has done. Use them well. Say hello to the young witch with pink hair for me. The Merlin."

"That clever old bugger." Professor Phenix laughed.

**In memory of Robbie Coltrane - Our dearest Hagrid.**



## Chapter 19

Nothing about the coronation of the new Witch Queen was as expected. The graphic on AVN wasn't the same old Royal Gold and Red with an ornate jeweled crown but a rather a plain pink crown melting way away into a multi coloured splash of hands joined on the flag of Avalon. Even the choice of music wasn't some pomp piece of ancient Royal bluster but rather a new song by the Chocolate frogs entitled 'WALK WITH ME'. The biggest surprise came as well at the behest of the new Witch Queen. No more would AVN give the best assignments to the reporters and anchors that were relatives of its board members, no they were now to be given out the person most qualified in the area to do so, as of her coronation! In the AVN stable of talent that meant only one person. She was AVN's foremost expert on Sasporilla Bucket and they had depended on her greatly in the last while for any and all information. However like all great assets, she was given neither respect, recognition nor an office at AVN... until today.

"This is Lilia Spungolo coming to you live from Avalon's Royal Palace." The young woman dark haired woman said into the camera, "The once feared center of tyranny of the old Witch Queen Baba Yaga, who had many fooled by occupying the bodies of other witches for centuries, has been defeated! Today our world of Avalon stands free thanks to the joint efforts of all its peoples lead by one young woman, Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket."

A picture of Sasporilla appeared in the corner of the screen behind her. Nothing fancy or posed for, just her Avalon university ID pass shot.

"Since Sasporilla Bucket destroyed the Baba Yaga, our new Witch Queen, which is due to be crowned in just under an hour, has seen to the freeing of all of the victims of The old Witch Queens Tyranny. Political prisoners have been freed, those turned to stone have had the curse reversed thanks to the tireless efforts of an ancient spell found by Professor Phenix of Avalon University and her team and the new Witch Queens tireless efforts to free every person. Unfortunately those, whose statues were smashed, were unsaveable. Those who have been trapped for decades, even centuries are happy to be freed but find themselves strangers in a strange land.

"This heart warming footage of Sasporilla Bucket casting the ancient spell that freed her God Father, Nicholas Owlmore from his Statue state, deep within the inner garden court yards of the Royal Palace." Lilia Spungolo said.

Sasporilla taped her wand three times on the statue, right, top and left then a golden glow formed making the stone crumble away to sand leaving Nick Owlmore back in the living flesh.

"Wha... wher... Sasporilla?" Nick asked. "What's happened? Is this a trick?"

"No Uncle Nick." Sasporilla reassured the poor man, "It's me. I assure you. I'll explain."

Nick Owlmore hugged his Goddaughter.

That was all the proof he needed. The pair of them were brought to happy tears of reunion.

"We need to get you out of here before the Whitch Qu..." Nick Owlmore started but was soon silenced.

"No Uncle. The Witch Queen has been killed." Sassy nodded. "The people are free."

"Did you?" Nick asked.

"Mhm?" Sasporilla nodded.

"Then you're the?" Uncle Nick gaped!

"Yep!" Sassy smiled. "Sure am."

"That's marvelous!" Nick Owlmore hugged Sasporilla, picked her up off her feet and spun her around like he did when she was little making her laugh and his old backache.

"Here," Nick puffed, "you have put on a stone or two since you started Hogwarts haven't you?"

"Excuse me?" Sasporilla laughed.

"I am sorry about your auntie though kiddo." Nick said. "I always sort of had a thing for old boogie-woogie, despite her being a horrible person and all."

"Why Nicholas Owlmore!" Sasporilla chided him. "If you weren't my God father I'd stand you in that corner as punishment. OH! I guess you've had enough of that kind of punishment for a life time haven't you?"

Sasporilla burst into laughter as her Uncle Nick grabbed her to throw her into a headlock and mess up her hair.

"You horror!" Uncle Nick laughed. "You are your fathers daughter."

"We'll be back with the start of the Coronation after these messages. This Lilia Spungolo and THIS is AVN!"

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Sasporilla's coronation gown was not designed by the Royal dressmakers. The Arts Design Fashion final exam was to design a gown for the new Witch Queen's coronation! All designs fairly graded by the teachers of course BUT the design chosen by Sasporilla Bucket, if any, would be given an automatic A+++.

That was the decision of the head of the arts and design department and she would hear nothing else about it! Sasporilla appeared from the fitting room, for the first time before her procession of friends, wearing her gown. The base colour was a light lavender with leafed vines of green that broke out into floral displays of purple, white and pink flowers. Her hair was braided in a loose single pony tail hanging down her back, tied with a Hufflepuff hair tie left over from her days at Hogwarts. Small wild flowers were woven into her hair by some very talented elven weavers Sassy had asked to help.

Sasporilla wore her own semi-precious and nearly worthless bits of jewelry from Primark and Marks and Spencers clearance bins. She refused to wear the baubles from the crown jewels. The crown was all she would wear today.

"Oh Sassy." Karry said. "You look radiant!"

"I feel bloody foolish!" Sassy blushed. "Dressed up like a Barbie doll on display for everyone to look at."

"Don't be foolish," Lyra smiled. "The dress looks perfect on you! It covers up the huge wide butt of yours perfectly! Makes it look like you have a bustle designed in."

Sasporilla pursed her lips and thinned her eyes. Lyra knew a good retort was coming. "Gosh I've missed hearing you say things like that Lyra." Sassy giggled as she turned to look at the dress in the mirror. "Thank goodness you pull them so easily out of your bus wide backside!"

"Yes!" Lyra cheered and clapped.

"Honestly you girls!" Kolleen Curtis, Karry's mother laughed.

"Well Personally," Professor Splatterpallette smiled. "I'm just happy you chose a design Professor Backers thought was 'HORRIBLY PEDRSTRISN'! If it had been up to her you'd have come wearing a singing and dancing clock! And you think I'm a WHACK-A-DOODLE?"

Everyone laughed until Sasporilla mentioned that was this years top winning exam design.

"Oh my stars." Professor Phenix chuckled. "Can you imagine???"

Yes indeed, everyone laughed.

"Personally, on behalf of myself and Dina," Professor Phenix said, we just wanted to say thank you for including us in your personal procession."

"Everyone one of you must understand something." Sasporilla said calling them all to her so that she could touch all hands at once. "You are not JUST my procession, ladies in waiting, or my friends. You are my FAMILY! My most loved and trusted! I would surround myself with no one else!"

A loud knock came at the door. Captain Skeevers of the Witch Queen's new personal Royal Guard stuck her head in. "Your Majesty, it's time."

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"...and the people are once again free to openly express their opinions without fear of reprisal." Lilia Spungolo reported over the AVN feed. She stood at street level, down by the crowd who, for once, stood without barricade.

"The people here are calm and happy. Everyone's talking about how wonderful the new Witch Queen is and how excited they are about the rather confusing Promise to bring DEMOCRACY. However one thing is abundantly clear, the citizens of Avalon are happy and relieved to be out from under the thumb of tyranny."

"Now I believe we have a graphic of the route which will be taken today, which is different than traditionally taken coronation routes."

The graphic which came up showed the ancient parade route was done in a sepia tone on parchment.

"As we see here," Lilia Spungolo's voice carried over the graphic, followed by footage of prior coronation's of young women's forms the Baba Yaga had stolen. "In past coronations the Witch Queen would leave the palace at nine am in her Royal Golden Carriage drawn by the team of Royal Black Octaron eight legged Horses. They would exit from the main courtyard and travel the road circling the palace. The Witch Queen would wave to on lookers and the carriage would return to the palace court yard approximately ten am."

The graphic changed to a very colourful modern one.

"Today's will be a very different route! As we've been told, the Royal procession will appear at nine am, from the Royal palace's court yard, but will then proceed down Avalon's Main Royal High Street through the heart of the city, past the university and Majesty station, all the way to the Avalon Angel's Spharx stadium. The place Baba Yaga saw defeat by her own evil magic, and the place where our new Witch Queen, Sasporilla Bucket, chose for this big day. A stadium big enough to hold thousands of Avalonian's. Oh, oh! I believe? Yes! The gates of the Royal palace court yard are opening!"

A procession of Royal Guard in a new White robes with single gold stripe down one side, white pants, boots and a white modern military style cap marched out raising old fashioned golden trumpets. They blew a celebratory tune to announce the coming of the new Monarch.

"These guards uniforms are unlike any I have ever seen." Lilia Spungolo said. "It has always been that we were forbidden to interview the Royal Guard but.... excuse me?"

The young reporter shouted running up to keep pace with one of the quick marching Royal guards, much to the chagrin of her cameraman.

"Can I ask you about your new uniforms?" Lila questioned the young man.

"By orders of the Witch Queen we are free to answer any and all questions asked of us freely and honestly as we see fit. So... sure!" The young man smiled. "Ask away."

"Who designed them?" Lilia Spungolo asked.

"Some design student from the University. Not sure of the name, sorry. I'll mention to my Captain you asked and the information will make its way to you today." The Guardsman smiled.

"It's a shame these are just for today, they look much more comfy than armour." The young reporter smiled.

"No Mam." The Guardsman corrected her. "These are now our everyday palace uniforms! The old Armour is a thing of the past. Our new combat armour will only be for emergencies and knock wood, may we never have to wear it!" The Guard said marching on.

What came next through the palace gates was quite a shock. It was a parade float!?! It magically floated forward on a myst of white that emanated below it. Many surmised the lights inside were Fae lending a helping hand. On the float was the official musical entertainment of the coronation, The Chocolate Frogs!

"Hello Avalon!" Myron Wagtail screamed. "We wanted today to be a CELEBRATION!"

The crowd cheered for the Myron, ever the master showman.

"So we're going to start this party off right! Do you feeling like dancing? Do you know how to do... the Hippogriff? 1,2,3..."

Much to everyone's surprise the members of the Chocolate frogs were playing old Weird Sisters songs! No doubt at the request of the new Witch Queen. Their biggest fan, or at least Myron's.

"As you can see," Lilia Spungolo smiled. "This was truly a party for the ages."

The crowd danced and sang. Waving flags and shooting confetti and streamers from their wands.

It was the rarest thing anyone had ever seen in Avalon. It rolled through the gates of the Royal palace, shiny black and long, its twelve rubber wheels were unlike anything they had ever seen. Everyone but the Muggle born reporter.

"Lady's and Gentlemen this is astounding!" Lilia Spungolo gasped. "I can not believe my eyes! Not since my days in the big city of Toronto have I seen such a car. Yes I said a car! A motor driven muggle convince of extreme luxury! I'd say this one is at least forty feet in length, maybe a bit longer. As we can see it's a roofless convertible and seems to contain many people."

The young reporter strained to get a better look of who all was in the car. She checked quickly against her notes.

"Yes that is the Witch Queen's procession! I can see her some of her best and closest friends and compatriots in the car...."

Then from the back of the car she stood up on the back seat and sat on the boot of the car. In her Lavender floral gown, Sasporilla Bucket smiled and waved to the people.

"Your Royal Highness?" Lilia hollered over the noise of the crowd, the engine and the music. "Your Royal Highness, may I ask you a question or two?"

"Sure," Sassy smiled for the camera, "and please call me Sasporilla. What's your name?"

"Lilia," the AVN reporter smiled, "Lilia Spungolo."

"I'm so very happy to see you again Lilia." Sasporilla said. "You probably don't remember me. I was just a new at Hogwarts the year you were there as an exchange student."

"Oh my Go..." Lilia gasped. "I never put together the shy little girl in the kitchens with the house elves."



"They're my family." Sasporilla smiled.

"And you remembered me?" Lilia asked.

"You liked Portuguese food." Sassy smiled. "So we worked hard to make sure you always had something special. Something to make you feel welcome and at home, and I never forget a face."

It was odd that something as small as being remembered by someone she really never knew should bring a tear to her eye but there was something special about the heart of this Witch Queen.

"Now." Sassy smiled. "What was your question?"

"Ummm yes ummm." Lilia stumbled slightly disarmed. "You've told the people of Avalon to prepare for democracy and freedom. Can you expand on that statement?"

"Yes of course!" Sasporilla said seriously. "It was not just a statement but a promise. It wasn't just for the Magi population either but every, and I mean EVERY member of our population of our WORLD! So I ask that everyone please stay tuned to after the coronation for a press conference that I will be holding. There I will announce my plans for upholding my promises of democracy and freedom for all!"

"Amazing news, and you heard it here first on AVN." Lilia smiled. "Can you tell everyone watching, I understand you're taking wand design at the University. Do you still plan on becoming a wand maker or is politics your future?"

"Wands are my first love." Sasporilla said. "I can promise I will fulfill my responsibilities as Witch Queen but I can tell you... in a few years, once I have finally graduated from my program at the University, I will look at finally starting that part of my life."

"Well I personally can't wait for the day when my own children might come into your shop to find their wands." Lilia smiled.

"I'll be excited to see you all on that special day!" Sassy grinned.

"Thank you Witch Queen, Sasporilla Bucket." Lilia Spungolo waved as the car drove on. "Wasn't that exciting and enlightening!"

A roar echoed from deep within the courtyard. Followed by another and another until finally....

"Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls I can't believe it but..." Lilia Spungolo said wide eyed and more excited than ever, "... yes it's the Royal Golden Dragon Broom Squad!"

The seven-guard elite trick broom flying squad took flight through the palace gates. With a roar, their mighty super powered Erumpant 1550XGT Super Dragon Brooms took off into the skies, with a rush of wind and a golden speckled magical flame trail behind. In the air they performed many aerobatics maneuvers for the crowd. Flying in various formations celebrating the life, victory, and coronation of the new Witch Queen.

Witch Queen Sasporilla's Royal procession traveled the length of Avalon to the joy and cheers of many. There were some, dark miserable souls that simply glared coldly from crowd. They weren't happy with change in leadership and what this would mean for their places of power and position. If push came to shove...

"Really?" The veiled woman standing beside a craggy old man in elegant black robes said. "If push comes to shove you'd have to hire some one to eliminate the problem? Why you're the tenth I've heard think that today."

"Just who are you?" Meister Jibbly of the Grand Duchy of Oggington asked.

"Oh, let's just say I'm the eye of Royal security in this crowd." Agnes Moorehead smiled.

"Hmmm. Perhaps the invitation in your pocket to the coronation you're carrying, Meister Jibbly, it is now officially void."

The Meister drew the golden trimmed white envelop from his pocket and watched it disintegrate in his fingers. He noticed the Gaze of the Witch Queen upon him and he suddenly became very nervous. Sasporilla pouted and shrugged at the man, the playfully smiled and waved 'bye-bye'.

"But I've actually committed no crime!" The Meister smiled stiffly protesting. "I will not go quietly. I demand my councilor."

"Oh you're not under arrest Meister." Agnes Smiled. "No no. Not for thinking about the assassination of someone. No no, that's not a crime. Sick yes... perhaps you should seek professional help. I could refer you to a good psychoanowiz at the University Hospital. At any rate no it's the other crimes you ARE guilty of such as over taxation, false imprisonment, kicking dogs! Shame on you Meister! No by the time you get back to your Grand Duchy of Oggington you will find a Royal investigations team going through your office, home and the secret files you keep disguised as casques of wine in your vineyards winery."

Anger flared in the old mans eyes, which went unseen by the blind seer, but was amusingly apparent.

"You are free to go." Agnes said lifting her veil revealing her blindness for the first time. The Meister waved his hand before her face. Knowing she was truly without sight he smiled slyly and started to walk away. "Yes, perhaps it's time I left." As quick as a whip that tricky old man turned and fumbled pulling out his wand. "AVAD..." He began but thought rather better of it facing off with the blind Investigator and six other of Avalon Cities aurors. "Now you're under arrest." One of the aurors said placing the man in embracing bonds as most of the crowd only saw the Golden Dragon's as they fled over drawing an image of the new Witch Queen above them!

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Avalon Angel's Spharx stadium was filled to capacity when the Witch Queen's procession rolled in! Every seat was filled with anyone and everyone who wanted to come see Sasporilla Bucket crowned Witch Queen. Admission was first come first served though some were handed out in poorer areas of the city, to some of the best seats in the stands!

Two rows of chairs along either side of an aisle way stretched the length of the field held delegates from all of the representative communities of Avalon. Much to the chagrin of the muggle and Magi Nobel's that had been invited, both Goblin and Hobgoblins were also in attendance for the first time. As were the Fire Fae, the fierce war like Amzia Fae of the crystal canyons, and even creatures like Doxy's and Muck Dwarves! They had all promised to behave pending the big announcement then they would be automatically teleported home.

The front rows had the truly important people from Avalon and Earth. The Friends and Family of Sasporilla Bucket. The people she considered dignitaries, even if the other worlds did or did not. Her Uncle Nick Owlmore. Karry's Dad, Karry's Husband Zac and their baby, along with Karry's Twin brother Korry. Unfortunately Madrigal, Korry's Significant other was unable to come. She had some issue with being able to come to Avalon suddenly. Headmistress McGonagall of Hogwarts was gracious enough to use the Hogwarts Express to bring some passengers for Sassy, in the way of Hogwarts House elves, some people from Hogsmeade like the Honeydukes who had generously agreed to make the coronation cake, and some of the centaurs from the forbidden forest. Hagrid was dressed in his best outfit and for the third time in his life, combed his hair! Draco Malfoy sat trying hard to look bored and uninterested as some of the old class mates, like Penny, Ron, Hermione and Harry tried to figure out just why he was down front with the rest of them. Of course Kathleen, Corina, Christin and Jess all sat excitedly waiting to see their dorm sister walk that runway!

As the procession entered the arena, the Royal guard trumpeters ran into the stadium and floated up into the air. Once they reached the center of the stadium the guard blew the three first notes of a song. A large pink bird could be seen swooping in.

"Ladies and Gentle men," the wonderful voice of Gloria Estefan, "please put your hands together for a surprise entrance display by the Witch Queen's own personal mail Flamingo "Jorge"! Joined by the Royal Trumpeters and... me."

Sasporilla's Car drove in to the stadium as Jorge flew into the center of the trumpeters, who started to play. "Come on shake your body baby do the Conga..." and Jorge started to dance in the air. The crowd cheered the A-typically talented Flamingo and he loved every minute of it.

Sasporilla pointed up, cheered, waved, clapped, hooted and sang along with everyone else. Just part of the crowd. The Chocolate Frog's float had as good as vanished as it passed through the gates ahead of the Queens car. The entire thing heading underneath the stadium to get the group to the stage.

"Are the instruments tuned and ready?" Myron asked.

"Everything is as expected Mr. Wagtail." one of the roadies said.

"That bad?" Myron laughed. "Just another day. Right lads, let's put on a show!"

Sasporilla was never more delighted than to see Jorge land on stage and dance with Gloria Estefan for the last part of the song. This moment was a dream come true for her faithful Flamingo. There was never more deserved a standing ovation, in the history of shows put on in Avalon, then there was for Jorge the dancing Flamingo.

Sasporilla was whisked away into a small Royal gold tent with the rest of her procession. The inside of the tent was much larger inside and was alive with activity. Many members of the Royal household staff were a buzz with jobs to do. The Witch Queen's hired Royal coronation advisor Professor Garvy Beanhomm, an expert in all things coronation from Avalon University, kept things running like a well oiled machine.

"Did any one see if Angelo was there?" Sasporilla asked as the Royal dressers helped to affix a very heavy Royal fur cape to her shoulders.

"Of course he's there." Kerry smiled. "Right up front. Right where he should be."

"Good." Sassy smiled, until something caught her attention. "Excuse me." Sasporilla asked. "Is this the cape I was told about? The great symbol of unity across our world?"

"Yes your highness." The Older woman said.

"May I ask what it's made of?" Sassy cringed.

"It's Nundu fur, trimmed in Zouwu fur with and inlayed with faery wing."

"Get... this... abomination... off... me..... PLEASE!!!!" Sasporilla growled.

Karry had never heard Sasporilla so mad and so polite at the same time.

"Have I done something to offend you, your highness?" The old woman became terrified.

"No." Sasporilla took a deep breath, remembering her predecessor. "The issue I have is with the evil it took to make this cloak. I will not wear it."

The dressers unclipped the cape and began to remove it when the Coronation advisor ran up in a panic.

"No no no, your Highness you don't understand," Professor Garvy Beanhomm smiled patronizingly at the young woman. "This cape is a Royal tradition. Considered part of the crown jewels and not optional. Put it back on her."

"Excuse me?" Sasporilla said stepping down, noticing professor Splatterpalette conspicuously missing. "I hate to pull rank you 'Sir', you being a 'Professor' and me being a first year student and all but just WHO IS BEING CROWND BLOODY WITCH QUEEN?"

"You are your highness." Professor Garvy Beanhomm gulped.

"And if I say killing wild animals for their fur upsets me and I don't choose to wear them then...?" Sassy asked her eyebrows raised trying to lead the man to her train of thought.

"Then it's time for a new one?" Professor Garvy Beanhomm sighed.

"Exactly what I was thinking." Sasporilla smiled.

"Where will we get one at this late minute?" Professor Garvy Beanhomm asked. "I could get someone to transfigure this one but..."

"No, absolutely not!" Sasporilla refused. "It would still be the same cape with same fur! Even if it looks like your mums old kitchen curtains!!!"

"I've got one!" Professor Splatterpalette announced walking in with a small purple bag. "Courtesy of Alison Pomegranate!"

"Professor Splatterpalette," Professor Beanhomm huffed, "we are in the middle of a cloak crisis. A little purple bag is hardly the...."

The arts and design teacher politely smiled at the annoying old curmudgeon as she reached in to the small purple bag and turned it inside out revealing it to be a well designed Royal purple cloak of fine Avalonian silks trimmed in pink, inlayed with spun gold and silver.

"This is beautiful Professor." Sasporilla smiled. "And absolutely perfect! Alison designed this?"

"Yes indeed!" Professor Splatterpalette said. "She wants to design capes, and cloaks and refused to design a dress so she was handed an F-! Now if you were to wear this...?"

"Clip it on me!!!" Sasporilla smiled much to the old Royal dresser's delight.

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"Lilia Spungolo back with you here at Avalon Angel's Spharx stadium," the young reporter now sat at a desk over-looking the stadium with a great field view of the coronation stage, "where in moments we expect to see the coronation of Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket, the little girl many thought was born without magic as her mother was, is about to be crowned Witch Queen of Avalon! The second crown she has received also having been crowned, and forced to walk away from, Queen of the worker Elves."

The lights lowered and the music started to waft from the stage. The low humming of guitar that was unlike the classical pomp that accompanied the previous Witch Queen. Then the slow, low words of Myron Wagtail. "Turn off your mind, relax and float down stream..."

"!!!BOOM!!!" Fire works went off as the drums pounded and Music started to play. TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS - by the Weird Sisters played by The Chocolate Frogs. A spotlight from the stage shot from the front of

Myron Wagtail down the center aisle between the chairs to the end of the carpet to reveal Sasporilla Bucket standing there in her gown. Her best of friends held the train of her cape as she walked forward at pace to the music.

"Ladies and Gentlemen." Lilia Spungolo's said in a voice over as the camera followed Sasporilla down the aisle, "Sasporilla Bucket, the new Witch Queen is approaching the stage! Her dress is a beautiful Lavender and pink floral gown designed as we at AVN have been told by a student at the University! She has for some reason refused to wear the crown Jewels other than the jeweled gold clasp holding her unrecognized cape on. The clasp is representative of unity in our world and I'm sure that's why she chose to wear it. It's taking all of her ladies in waiting to hold that train aloft. I must say I am surprised at the quick pace they are walking at. I honestly thought they would walk slower. At this rate her Royal Highness will reach the stage by the end of this song!"

Sasporilla met Angelo's gaze peering at her from the front row. She blushed and smiled when she saw him.

"That put a bit a wiggle in her walk." Lyra laughed.

"Shut it you." Sassy said from between a clenched tooth smile as she took the first big step up the sweeping staircase to the stage. At each step one lady in waiting dropped off and supported the cape with their wand as Sasporilla walked on stage. She walked towards a throne and a dais where the ArchBishop of the church of Avalon awaited.

Sasporilla walked center stage as the song ended. She turned and people went crazy with applause. She assumed it was for the band. She looked to Myron and the other Chocolate Frogs and applauded them. Myron Wagtail walked over, gallantly bent down on one knee, took Sasporilla's hand and kissed it and handed her a beautiful pink Rose. "My Queen."

"Charmer." Sassy smiled. "Now comes the hard part."

"You got this Sassy!" Myron winked. "Just a few moments more."

The other Frogs bowed to the Witch Queen politely and walked off stage to thunderous applause. The ArchBishop stepped up to his dais and cast "SONOROUS" so he could be heard by all.

"Sirs and Madame's, I here present unto you

Witch Queen Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket the first your undoubted Queen." The ArchBishop Smiled.

"Wherefore all you who are come this day to do your homage and service, Are you willing to do the same?"

The people of Avalon cheered all with one voice crying out GOD SAVE WITCH QUEEN SASPORILLA!!!

The trumpets sounded.

Sassy sat on the throne, a rather uncomfortable chair made of gold and cushioned in thin velvet pillows, and undid the clasp of her rather long cape discretely folding it back into a purple bag. The Archbishop standing before her administers the Coronation Oath. "Madam, is your Majesty willing to take the Oath?"

"I am willing." Sasporilla answered.

"Will you solemnly promise," the Archbishop asked "and swear to govern the Peoples of Avalon, according to their respective laws and customs?"

"I solemnly promise so to do." Sassy nodded.

"Will you to your power cause Law and Justice, in Mercy, to be executed in all your judgements?" The Archbishop asked.

"You had better believe I will." Sasporilla insisted.

"Do you promise these things today honestly before God?" The Archbishop demanded.

"I do." Sasporilla smiled. "Of course I do."

"Rise." The Archbishop commanded.

"Ah common..." Sassy smiled. "Say please."

The crowd laughed.

"Ummm...ohhh...ummm..." the Archbishop stammered, "Please your highness."

Sasporilla stood up with grace and poise. Sasporilla is escorted over to an altar area where a padded kneeler had been placed. A Bible and a bunch of sacred Royal relics of position were placed on the alter before her.

"Repeat after me." The Archbishop said. "The things which I have here before promised, I will perform, and keep. So help me God."

"The things which I have here before promised, I will perform, and keep. So help me God." Sasporilla said.

And kissing the Bible, Sasporilla Bucket takes the Royal Quill and signs the Oath and returns to the throne to more applause.

The Archbishop then brings the Bible over to Sasporilla and presents it to her.

"Our gracious Queen." The ArchBishop smiled. "To keep your Majesty ever mindful of the law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God."

Sasporilla nodded and handed the Bible back to the man who took it to the dais where he performed a very moving service of Psalms and other passages.

The ArchBishop blessed her with Holy oil as it was in ancient times. The Staff of Orianthii was carried over and presented by a Goblin from Gringots guarded by Royal Guardsmen and a trusted worker elf. The staff of Orianthii was a relic of great power. In the wrong hands it could cause great destruction. Thought stolen for centuries it mysteriously reappeared after the death of Baba Yaga in the Royal Vaults, where it should have been all along! Many suspect a defensive spell by Merlin... just in case.

"And God" the Arch Bishop continued, "and so direct and support thy servant Queen Sasporilla that she may not bear the staff in vain; but may use it as the minister of God for the protection and encouragement of those that do well. Amen."

The staff is handed to Sasporilla. A glow is seen in her eyes and she gasps, cries, then giggles and laughs.

"This is no laughing matter child." The ArchBishop Chided her.

"No I agree." Sasporilla said. "This staff contains great, powerful magic! It's allowed me to see many paths. Many futures for many decisions, in seconds. It's shown me the results... good and bad... of my own intentions. As well as the wheels within wheels of other schemes. I found it most entertaining. Arch... Bishop."

The ArchBishop gulped hard.

"D-do you Receive this Queenly Staff brought now from the Altar of God, and delivered to you by the hands of us the Bishops and servants of God, though unworthy. With this staff do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order: that doing these things you may be glorious in all virtue; and so faithfully serve our God in this life, that you may reign for ever with him in the life which is to come. Amen."

Sasporilla rose up and went to the alter. She looked over at a young man in a brown robe.

"What's your name?" Sassy smiled.

"Me?" The young monk pointed at himself shyly. "I'm brother Tucker. I'm no one."

"Arch Bishop, do you have your speech for today written down?" Sasporilla asked.

"Well, yes but..." the ArchBishop began.

"Guards, please escort this man back to the stadium security lock up and call the police." Sasporilla said. "Charges have been pending against him for years and they have been covered up. Let him have a fair trial by the people. Brother Tucker, please finish the ceremony for us?"

"This is out ragedous!" The ArchBishop screamed as he was dragged away amongst gasps and cheers.

"I'm sorry friends." Sasporilla said. "The staff showed me the truth of his crimes, which are many I assure you. I could show you, but I would save you the horror of some of what I've seen."

The staff was taken by the goblin and returned to it's home in the Royal vault.

"Ummm...ok..." Brother Tucker said looking at the notes. "Wow, the Arch Bishop's notes are surprisingly rude? Not very Christian of him. Ok I see where we are. Ladies and Gentlemen I'm kind of new at this so please bear with me?"

"You're doing smashing!" Sasporilla smiled giving him a thumbs up.

"The Witch Queen has asked not to have the usual crown jewels brought to her. The ring, the bracelets, necklace, new scepter that was made and orb as she is.... what???" Brother Tucker turned to Sasporilla amazed, looking at her with his mouth hanging open wide. "Really???"

"Yes." Sasporilla nodded smiling shyly. "Go ahead and tell them."

"The Witch Queen is donating the crown jewels, with the exception of the new crown crafted, and a portion palace treasury to pay reparations to the victims and families of victims of the Baba Yaga."

The crowd fell silent. It was like they couldn't believe anyone in power in Avalon was ever taking responsibility for anything that had ever happened ever.

"My name is Sasporilla Bucket. You wanted a Witch Queen, well with me... the buck stops here." Sassy said. The cheers were deafening.

Brother Tucker got everyone settled down and seated again after about ten minutes. Looking in the notes he started to laugh. "Can I ask you all to rise?"

Brother Tucker shuffled over to the altar and took picked up the new crown fashioned for the Witch Queen by The finest Goblin jewelers of Avalon. Unlike the old crown, which was large and full of diamonds, this one was small. Not much bigger than a tiara, made of platinum with no diamonds, only a single pink stone.

Brother Tucker read the pages as he stood before the crown. "O God the Crown of the faithful. Bless we beseech thee this Crown, and so sanctify thy servant Sasporilla upon whose head this day thou dost place it for a sign of royal majesty, that she may be filled by thine abundant grace with all princely virtues. Amen."

Brother Tucker was assisted by guardsman who carried the crown on a cushion over to the side of the throne.

"Ready?" Brother Tucker asked.

"I guess." Sassy grimaced comically. "Got nothin' else to do this morning."

Brother Tucker gently picked up the crown and lifted it over, placing it down on the head of her Royal Majesty, The Witch Queen, Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket.

"GOD SAVE THE WITCH QUEEN!" Brother Tucker cheered

"GOD SAVE THE WITCH QUEEN!" The crowd cheered. "GOD SAVE THE WITCH QUEEN! GOD SAVE THE WITCH QUEEN! GOD SAVE THE WITCH QUEEN!"

Sasporilla stood and as Brother Tucker and others started to kneel she stopped them.

"No please stop!" Sasporilla insisted. "Please stand. I must explain something to you as I did to the worker elves."

Sasporilla took a knee before her subjects.

"I am your Queen." Sasporilla said humbly. "I serve you. You do not bow before me, I bow before you. It is always been power serves itself. Today, that changes in Avalon. Forever!"

The people cast confetti and fire works. As Sasporilla stood up and the Chocolate Frogs returned to the stage. The band played while the Witch Queen assisted the Worker elves remove the throne and other props of coronation from the stage. She used her wand more than her hands but honestly, she didn't want to get the Gown she'd been leant dirty! Once done she levitated the dais to center stage as the Chocolate Frogs finished up their set. Sasporilla walked up and smiled.

"Hi everyone." Sassy said. "I promised a big announcement, One promising you Democracy and freedom, after I was crowned Witch Queen. So here it is. Within one year, the position of Witch Queen will be no more than a figure head."

"What?" People gasped.

"I intend to have every, and I mean every, group of peoples on this world have FREE, OPEN and HONEST elections to elect representatives for their own democratically run systems of government with a member sent to a world council. All members will have equal voices and equal votes! Not just Magi, but all Fae, Goblins and Hobgoblins. All dwarves, gnolls, doxies, harpies, and a fascilitator to judge and keep the council fair!"

The crowd was a gape at the news.

"I'm not saying it will be easy." Sasporilla said. "It will be hard at first. Maybe hard to even find good honest people. Trust me, that's hard on the world I'm from. However fair trial and honesty... and magical truth spells will create an environment you can work with. I'm sorry if I disappoint you as a Witch Queen by giving you a democratic governmental system." Sasporilla sighed. "But I would rather see you free than back under the rule of another tyrannical Witch Queen."

The crowd applauded slowly at first. However as people stood it got faster and, and faster as people showed their genuine approval and admiration for the young woman, Sasporilla Bucket Avalon's new Witch Queen.



## Chapter 20

"I can't believe you turned down your picture on the money!" Kathleen laughed.

"Not my style." Sasporilla said adjusting her mortarboard. "Let's face it, the new symbol of the tree of life on both sides of the world is better than my silly old face any day."

"Your Masters thesis was quite impressive!" Christin smiled. "The disadvantages of traditional wand core damage on the fabric of magic vs. non traditional wand cores. Ground breaking!"

"They had trouble understanding it," Sasporilla said, "but they had to bring in the elven weaving professor to judge the finer points. That saved me."

It was graduation day. Four years of hard work and study culminated in one day to take pride in before the terror of moving on to the rest of your life.

The commencement speaker was none other than new Speaker of the Council of Avalon. The person, who keeps the peace, controls fair speaking times and rules in the Avalon Council of Democracy chamber.

"And in conclusion, if hurding cats is what you enjoy and politics is your major then Speaker of the council might just be for you, but what ever your choice of profession my advice is this. Love it. Love ... what ... you ... do. If you do not love what you do then you will waste your life! You will spend the next forty-five years sweating and scraping to make money, to pay bills, to be responsible, but will you be happy? Not as happy as THOSE WHO LOVE WHAT THEY DO! Ever seen those people? They laugh and sing, even in the rain. They always know the answers and run to help. They are the best people to work with and for! That is who you want to be! Don't get stuck being the other one. Thank you."

The graduating class applauded as The Speaker of the Democratic Council stepped back Dean Silversnow stepped up to the podium. There was a wave of applause for the tough, but fair Dean. He smiled and raised his hand to silence everyone.

"Thank you graduates and guests. I am Geiywald Silversnow, Dean of the University of Avalon. Most of you have never seen me. It is usually only the students that cause or bring trouble to our hallowed halls that get my attention."

The Deans gaze into the crowd brought laughter from most of the crowd. Just a gulp and an uneasy blush from...

"Sasporilla!" Christen laughed elbowing her with glee in the ribs. "I think he was looking right at you!"

"Really?" Sasporilla said feigning surprise. "I thought perhaps he meant you?"

"Me?" Christen said turning beat red suddenly self-conscious and mortified.

"Oh I'm kidding silly sit up." Sassy chuckled. " Of course he meant me."

"You, the graduating class of 2005 are the future of our Wizarding World!" Dean Silversnow said. "And might I say it's a much better world now than it was a few years ago. Fair trials of corrupt officials have been brought to justice. Victims of the old Monarchy have been compensated generously for the horrors they faced. The old Royal palace has been donated to the University. The main castle becoming a museum for the World cultures of Avalon. Freedom and democracy are ours and whom do we have to have to thank for this? Ultimately ourselves!"

The crowd murmured. Those around Sasporilla looked truly shocked and looked to the figurehead Witch Queen who nodded in agreement.

"You see WE as a newly freed people were given a choice or rather a chance. A chance to govern ourselves. To make more of our selves than what we were. Cowering, sniveling, complacent and unworthy of the chance we were given. At any time this population could have stood against a single witch, no matter how powerful, and defeated her. What did we do for four hundred years? Hope for better next time. Shame on us. Shame on our lack of spine. May you, the next generation of Witch's and Wizard's have spines as rigged as your wands, but minds and hearts as flexible as our Witch Queen. Thank you Sasporilla Bucket, for every thing you've done for us."

Dean Silversnow started to applaud her and the people joined in with a standing ovation.

When everyone returned to his or her seats Dean Silversnow smiled and spoke. "Now I will ask the Department heads to come up, to present the diploma's to your individual graduates. Starting With Arts and Design, Professor Splatterpalette."

The crowd clapped politely, much to the Professors dismay. The arts and design crowd hooped it up properly, but seriously, that's the best the rest could do? Well!

"I would like to congratulate everyone who survived the Arts and design program and maintained their sanity." Professor Splatterpalette laughed madly then suddenly stopped. "However I would like to especially congratulate those who not only went through the rigors of the normal course but took their education all the way to the top! Masters of Arts and design! Our top of the top! Bravo to you Three!"

The people applauded along with professor Splatterpalette who clapped wildly for her proudest three students.

"Millicent Dregsfielder!" Professor Splatterpalette clapped. "Master Cape and Cloak Designer!"

"Is she the one that designed your Coronation cape?" Kathleen asked.

"I'm not sure." Sasporilla said. "I hope so. I need a new cloak. I should ask her about a quote after the ceremony."

The young witch came up and was handed a scroll by Professor Splatterpalette. An official picture was taken followed by a great big hug.... crumpling her diploma.

"Oops, sorry." Professor Splatterpalette cringed as the girl walked off shaking her head. "Christin! Get on up here!"

Christin walked up on stage. Her friends and family cheered when she took her Diploma and walked off stage.

"And last but not least, Sasporilla Bucket. Come on up here girl." Professor Splatterpalette called.

Sassy stood up and walked up the aisle. She gave Christin a High five as they passed each other. Sasporilla walked up on stage and held out her hand for her diploma. Professor Splatterpalette tipped it back and turned back to the podium.

"Oh what fresh hell is this?" Sassy giggled.

"Ladies and Gentlemen these three young ladies have been my greatest delight to teach. The greatest of my teaching career! I have inspired and shaped these girls into the greatest free thinking design machines in any world! They themselves are now WORKS OF ART, and I am so proud of all of them!"

The arts and Designs professor lead another round of a standing ovation for the girls.

"Now of all of them I have had a great time getting to know Sasporilla. Sassy, I'm not just happy and proud to present you with your Master of Wand arts and design Degree, but I'm proud and bloody lucky to call you my friend."

Sasporilla wiped a tear from eye as she took the scroll from her professor's hand but before the camera could even snap its picture Sassy stepped forward and hugged the ecstatic professor.

"Dina we will remain friends long after this day ends." Sasporilla said hugging not just her professor, but her friend.

Stepping back Sasporilla held up her diploma over her head victorious! She had beaten every challenge Avalon had thrown at her.

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Angelo had agreed to pick up Sasporilla at the dorms at eight p.m. His magical powered vehicle, driven by rather ticked off looking house elf, pulled up exactly on time. The wide back door of the town car opened magically on it's own and Angelo stepped out dressed in a fine black suit, with black shirt and purple tie. Sasporilla stepped through the Dorms front doors dressed in a wondrous pink strapless dress and a light pink and purple floral wrap. Woven by elven weavers, the dress gave off an aura of pink myst, not unlike a faery dragon or a pink patronus.

"You look beautiful." Angelo mooned.

"Ya I clean up all right." Sassy laughed. "You are exceptionally handsome this evening."

Sasporilla took a moment to kiss her young man. They could have stood there all night just locked in the moment of each others embrace but they had made plans to go to the graduation party.

"After you Madame." Angelo said showing her to the town car as the back door opened for her and she stepped in. Angelo climbed in on the far side.

"Ok driver." Angelo smiled. "University Graduation Party at the Old Royal Palace please. "

"Yes sir." The elf sneered.

He was obviously a nasty old elf with some axe to grind. Sasporilla could get into a political discussion with him and possibly even a fight... or just enjoy her evening for once. She chose the later taking Angelo's hand as the magical town car drove off.

The grad party was held at the old Royal palace. There was no live band to dance to. These days the Wizarding World danced to the sounds of artists like DJ Doxy Dox who had the trax spinning and the beats thumping when Sasporilla and Angelo walked through the Rose trellis into the courtyard.



Jorge was the hit of the party dancing up a storm on the dance floor with anyone and everyone who would join him. The girls from the dorm shook their stuff without abandon with the exception of Kathleen who sat at the table playing a portable muggle video game, letting it all hang in. Sasporilla had to laugh with delight at seeing everyone so happy.

"Do you want to dance?" Angelo asked?

"Sure!" Sasporilla hollered back.

Sasporilla Bucket was a master wand maker, but a horrible dancer, and she knew it. She tried to pretend to dance like the others but that third time she snapped her fingers the music changed to something both more her tastes and more her speed. 'DANCE YOUR FINAL DANCE' by the Weird Sisters dropped on the DJ's platter, much to his surprise, but he rolled with the slow dance.

"Ah." Angelo smiled as Sassy stepped into him. "Well that was convenient."

"Who'd have thought this would start playing in the middle of another tune?" Sasporilla surmised as the young couple started slow dancing.

Angelo liked the way Sasporilla slow danced. Like an elegant waltz but close enough to rest her head against his cheek as they danced. At least until DJ Doxy Dox started to add a beat to it and pick up it's pace!

"Woo!!!" The crowd cheered!

"Well that settles that." Sasporilla pouted.

"Let's face it," Angelo sighed, "it IS sort of weird that it was your first slow dance with Myron also?"

"Ya!" Sassy had to agree as they both started laughing. "Let's find a QUIET table."

Not to either of their surprise, other than casting a SILENCIO spell, there really was no quiet spot to be found at the party. Sasporilla, though she would love to spend time, dancing the night away with her friends, tonight she just wanted to spend with Angelo. Biting her lower lip she looked around and saw just what she was looking for, a stack of boxes next to the north court yard wall. She grabbed Angelo by the hand and hurried him through the dizzying crowd out of sight behind the boxes.

"Why Ms.Bucket?" Angelo said in fine southern belle accent. "What will the other girls say about my innocence?"

"Frankly my dear..." Sasporilla smiled. "I should'n say tha'!"

Sasporilla pulled her wand and traced an outline between the bricks.

"What are you doing?" Angelo asked.

"If I have the right spot..." Sasporilla said casting, "OPEN SESAME!"

A gold shaped glow formed between the bricks as a magical door appeared and opened.

"Awesome!" Angelo smiled.

"An elf named Xolly showed it to me once." Sassy smiled. "Being Witch Queen had its advantages."

The young couple slipped through the magic door from the main courtyard into a quiet hallway of many doors.

"How do you feel about the council voting on no longer needing the Witch Queen." Angelo asked. "Even as a figure head?"

"Relieved." Sasporilla sighed. "I can leave Avalon knowing that it's safe in it's own hands."

Sasporilla counted two doors forward one door to the left and cast "ALOHAMORA." The door unlocked and swung open into a lovely courtyard. Area was strung with dozens of strings of white and pink lights. A single table sat near the old golden cherry tree that stood in the court yards center.

"It looks like we were expected?" Angelo said.

"You could say that." Sasporilla smiled. "I knew the party would be loud. I knew it would be crazy. I knew we might want to get away for a bit of quiet. I do still have SOME pull around here, so I arranged this spot."

"It's perfect." Angelo nodded looking around.

"If you decide you want to invite a couple of friends in..." Sassy said. "You can."

"I'd like to talk to alone about something first." Angelo said.

"Uh oh." Sassy said. "That sentence rarely starts anything good."

Rimppoli, a rather tall thin house elf stepped in carrying a tray with some glasses of water.

"Mum?" Rimppoli asked. "Are you ready to start your dinner?"

"Yes Rimppoli." Sasporilla smiled. "We can talk over dinner. Yes?"

"Yes. Of course!" Angelo agreed.

Rimppoli placed the water on the table then sat Sasporilla first then the gentleman as he was taught to do.

"Tonight," Rimppoli smiled excitedly, "we will start with a nice fresh small Caesar salad, the we have prepared for you a wonderful Fettuccini Alfredo with meatballs, and for dessert... well that is a surprise! Bon appetite!" Rimppoli snapped his fingers and whisked away.

"All my favourites?" Angelo asked.

"Maybe?" Sassy said coyly. "Now what did you want to talk about?"

"Sasporilla, we have been seeing each other a long time." Angelo said.

"Four years." Sassy said. "Sort of longer."

"I graduated before you." Angelo continued. "In the last few years I've gone on to take what I've had and make a name for myself. I've patented invention after invention! From the magic gardener to the ever-sharp kitchen knife to the Lazarus portable Life Support system for Wizard and Witch Emergency Services." Angelo said.

"And I'm so very proud of you for all of them!" Sasporilla smiled taking his hand across the table.

"What I'm trying to say is I've made more than enough, just off my patents, for a family to live comfortably. Buy a home. Open a shop."

"That is a lovely thought." Sasporilla said looking off dreamily.

"Salad's!" Rimppoli shouted. "Fresh, nice Caesar salads!"

"Oh wonderful!" Sasporilla smiled giving some polite applause.

"Thank you." Angelo sighed as the elf placed the small bowl down in front of the young man.

"You were saying?" Sasporilla asked picking at the leaves of her salad with her fork looking for the best spot to start.

"What?" Angelo asked rather derailed. "Oh yes. I've made enough money to raise a family with."

Sasporilla refused to speak with her mouth full. She simply smiled and nodded politely. Angelo was clearly getting frustrated. Sasporilla had to give him a break.

"Sweetheart," Sassy asked, "as much as I appreciate you're loaded with galleons, just what are you trying to say?"

"I'm trying to say," Angelo smiled, "you wanted to wait for us to be financially responsible before we even thought of marriage."

"And you being loaded..." Sasporilla said.

"Comfortable." Angelo corrected.

"Sorry," Sassy said, "YOU being COMFORTABLE makes US financially stable does it?"

"Sasporilla," Angelo said, "I'm not a complete moron. You've drawn a salary, for the last three years, for your roll as Witch Queen. It was approved by the Council and it is more than enough to not only by a home, but a shop, stock the shop, build the wand machine in full, hire core weavers and pay them for ten years. Shall I go on."

"Busted." Sassy smiled. "So, what next?"

"Fettuccini Alfredo with meatballs!" Rimppoli smiled bringing out the big tray and putting down a nice bowl of pasta before each of them.

"Extra cheese for either of you?" Rimppoli asked.

"No thank you Rimppoli." Sassy smiled.

"Yes please." Angelo asked.

Rimppoli snapped his fingers and Parmesan cheese grated itself above his dish until Angelo was satisfied. Angelo twirled the pasta onto his fork, and popped a meatball onto the end. Taking a big bite Angelo savored the taste of the buttery cream sauce and the herbs of the meatball.

"Is it good?" Sasporilla asked.

"It's perfect." Angelo said. "It reminds of the pasta I had as boy. Like my Nona made."

"It's her recipe." Sassy said. "I sent to your Dad for it."

"You are resourceful." Angelo smiled reaching into his jacket pocket.

"Yes I am." Sasporilla said laying her wand across his hand. "Did you know that the spell Professor Phenix found allowed much more than just the reversal of Baba Yaga's gorgon stare? It could reverse all the damage she did! Every dirty little curse. Every dirty little spell. The bomb that split my darling Melvin Lazarus into oh so many. Including you."

"Sassy?" Angelo's voice quivered when she stood and stepped away from the table. "Every dirty Asensionmorphosus Ritual the Witch Queen did for the rich and powerful, like the one she did for Madrigal Neelander. The one that robbed me of Korry Curtiss' love! How many lives could be changed? How much could be made better?"

Angelo's face dropped and he pulled his hand out of his pocket empty. "You're right. If you had to get rid of me to make your life perfect, then I would gladly do it."

"And that Angelo Lazarus is why I say yes." Sasporilla Bucket said.

"What?" Angelo was clearly confused.

"The ring in your pocket. The same one from the lost city. I told you then to hang on to it for a better time, when all this Witch Queen stuff was over and we were in a better place. When I grabbed the staff and was shown all those multiple paths I was not just shown tonight..."

"Which explains the perfect setting and menu." Angelo smiled.

"But it also showed me the result of using that spell to undo all Baba Yaga had done. Undo her Asensionmorphosus Ritual, another would have done for them and Madrigal would still have gotten Korry. Undo the Bomb, and I'd have lost Melvin two years later to a groupie on a tour in Demoins Iowa. Then I wouldn't have you. I also never would have been introduced to the life I know my invention and would have gone on to be an ok wand maker in a small shop, alone. So go on Angelo Lazarus, ask me already, so I can say yes!"

"Well I don't know as I want to ask you now!" Angelo said. "The romance of moment has past."

Sasporilla picked up her wand and tipped it up into a dueling salute. "You leave me no choice then."

"Ok! Ok!" Angelo Lazarus laughed walking over to Sassy and kneeling before her in the hard stone ground, pulled the ring box from his pocket and opened it revealing a beautiful pink diamond engagement ring. "Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket, will you marry me and spend the rest of our lives as witch and wizard together, in mad passionate love and warm comfortable love."

"Yes my love." Sasporilla smiled biting her lower lip, nodding her head, "I will."

# The End



# Sasporilla Bucket

More than JUST A GIRL with PINK HAIR

## The Wedding Of Sasporilla Bucket

A ONE-SHOT Harry Potter  
Universe Fan Fiction  
By Darren Kelly

## The Wedding of Sasporilla Bucket

Sassy didn't want a big wedding though half of her family and her social station demanded it. There was nothing Sasporilla Bucket enjoyed more than giving the finger to all of those who still thought that they had any say in anything she did in her life. Angelo on the other hand had about fifty family members to invite. Forty-three that he truly liked and some who came with as plus ones that you couldn't avoid. That was great with Sasporilla, though she doubted that she could equal that number. Though she clearly knew far more than that many people, there were very few she considered true friends and as for family? Well even her own family was questionable on her mother's side. With the exception of an aunt that she only very distantly remembered. Her mother's youngest sister whom she'd only met once. There was something warm and living about her smile that Sasporilla Remembered. Though no one ever spoke of Impatience Bent. She had sent her an invitation to the last known address, a small cottage on an island in the south pacific. Sassy received no RSVP Owl so she doubted very much her aunt would arrive, or even if she did that she was anything like she remembered. No matter, Sasporilla had the Curtiss family which had been her surrogate family since the day of her mother's death. She would be just fine. "Mabel? Mabel?" Karry shouted into the back hall. "Where is she? Sasporilla's best friend of all the worker elves and I can't find her!"

"Look down." Mabel giggled waving. "I'm right here. Calm... down!"

Karry took her job as Maid of Honour VERY seriously!!! So seriously in fact it was driving her crazy!!!!

"Ok, ok!" Karry said trying to calm herself, checking the small elf off her list. "It's wonderful to see you Mabel, it's been a long time."

"Yes Miss Karry." Mabel smiled. "The last time was in Geneva."

"I'm married now." Karry smiled. "So no more Miss."

"Ahhh!!!" Mabel smiled. "Congratulations Mrs.Karry!!! So what does Ms.Sasporilla need me to do? Am I serving? Cooking? Clean up? Oh I hope I'm an usher!!!"

"No Mabel Sweetie." Sasporilla said appearing in the door way carrying her dress in a garment bag. "You're a brides maid! You're one of my most important friends. How often did we send letters to each other. How many times have I called you friend. I meant every word. You are as special to me as ever other Witch here that I know!" Mabel stood near to tears, her chin quivering at the thought of being so loved and accepted. She ran forward and wrapped her small arms around one of Sasporilla's legs giving her a big hug. Sassy motioned Karry over to hold her dress as Sassy pulled Mabel away only to bend down and join the hug herself.

"This is so touching." Karry said. "Ok everyone's here."

"Not Lyra." Kay Curtiss smiled.

"What?" Karry's eyes went wide. "Wa-we-where is she? She was right here?"

She said she was stepping out for a moment."

"No, no, no!!!" Karry said. "There is NO STEPPING OUT! Gosh! It's like herding cats with you guys!!! Lyra! LYRA!"

Lyra Lee-Ashwolf appeared quietly in behind Karry.

"Where is the girl?" Lyra asked in Kay's voice using the PERSONATUS spell.

"I don't know." Karry said looking out the door.

"Who is Lyra?" Lyra said in Mabel's voice

As Karry turned, Lyra stayed behind her, out of her line of sight. Making her thing she wasn't there. Having a great laugh.

"Well she better get that wide butt of hers back here fast," Sasporilla smirked, "will take her an hour to squeeze into that size nine."

"I'll have you know it's a size six thank you very much!" Lyra snapped.

Karry whipped around. "Ahah! Got you!"

"Oops!" Lyra smiled. "April fools."

"Could everyone please start getting ready now that we're all here please!!! We are behind schedule!"

"Karry!" Sasporilla laughed. "Calm down. Everything's cool. Everything's good. For the first time in our lives, no surprises. Let's just have a calm good day."

"I don't know how," Karry asked, "you can be so positive all the time after every bad thing that's happened to you?"

"It's Simple." Sasporilla smiled. "Have a little faith, that the better life is still to come."

"Ok everyone," Karry said, "we have to be at the Hogsmeade church for 1:45 as the wedding starts 2:00pm."

The guests started arriving as early as 1:30. Angelo had been there with his best man Dave "Rabbit" Mandolini and the Ushers. Angelo's twin cousins Gorman and Norman who were questionably competent but lovable. Colour coded invitations should make seating easy, or the explanation on them to clearly but kindly explain to the ushers which side they were on if the boys became confused. Luckily they did a bang up job seating everyone in the small church of Hogsmeade.

Koleen and Alexander Curtiss sat up front. Proud parents on the side Sasporilla Bucket. Next to them sat there son Korry and his wife Madrigal and there three young children. Angelo's family was big and happy but more important they were proud of the young man who stood before them. However none of them was as proud of him as his father.

Zac stuck his head in from the back of the church, caught Angelo's attention, and gave him the OK! Angelo nodded and gave Zac a thumbs up.

"Ok Father." Angelo said. "It's 2:00pm and everyone's ready. Let's get started."

"Okie dokie arta chokie!" The old priest smiled looking rather tipsy as he pointed his wand at the organ.

The church organ started playing take me out to the ball game.

"Nope!" The priest said trying again. "Sorry!"

The wedding march started playing and the doors at the back of the church opened.

"Are you feeling ok father?" Angelo asked.

"Mime fin ny boy!" The old priest slurred. "I wasss jussst umm toassing yer wedding wiff yerr uncle be 'hick' for the matrimonialisms."

"Oh great." Angelo smiled looking out at the smiling baldhead of Uncle Frank taking a nip out of his 'special' flask. "Not today Uncle Frank! SOBRY-IM!"

A small whiff of blue magical mist up into the face of the Priest, invading through his mouth, nose and ears made the old man suddenly snap back to sobriety as Mabel and Rimpoli appeared. Mabel's dress was that of the bridesmaids. A light pink dress with skinny straps and square neckline. Rimpoli wore an elegant black tuxedo to match that of all groomsmen. They walked down to the end, Mabel took her place waiting for the other bridesmaids, in front of Karry's mom who fawned over the small elf, and Rimpoli joined the groomsmen.

Next appeared Lyra and Angelo's cousin Carlo. Lyra had a lovely smile on her face as they walked arm in arm down the aisle. Carlo had a rather conspicuous black eye and did not look that happy.

"Looks like Carlo got handsy." Rabbit smiled.

"Yep." Angelo nodded. "That's why Sassy and I placed him with Lyra."

"Did you warn her first?" Rabbit asked. "About his hands?"

"Of course." Angelo chuckled. "But I didn't warn him that she's an anarchist Lesbian Aurer a bad ass attitude."

Both young man held back bursting out into, what would have been very inappropriate raucous laughter, as Lyra shoved him into the Groomsmen's line and joined Mabel in the brides maids line.

Next came Karry and Zac. They looked perfect walking down the aisle together. The perfect couple, as they' always been.

"This brings back memories." Karry said.

"Yes. Zac smiled. "I was so scared that day."

"Why?" Karry asked.

"You looked so beautiful." Zac said looking at his wife. "I was terrified you were going to come to your senses, turn around and leave me!"

"Never!" Karry said.

"We did come close." Zac frowned.

"No, WE didn't!" Karry said. "Salazar Slytherin's curse did and I will hear no more of it!"

"Yes dear." Zac laughed as they kissed and separated into there lines.

Next appeared a young man of five years old. Well dressed in his tuxedo and carrying a pillow with a box on it, the weddings official ring barer had arrived. Kameron Zarkhov Curtiss, son of Karry and Zac and God son of Sasporilla Bucket smiled brightly as he nervously walked up the aisle quickly towards his mom and dad! All these

eyes on him made the boy quite nervous. Except for Hagrid from over at Hogwarts. The pair of them got along swimmingly. Hagrid often baby-sat for Karry and Zac. Not that the house staff couldn't do it for them, but the boy genuinely enjoyed learning from Hagrid. There was no more honest and gentle soul that could fiercely protect that boy, next to his own parents of course, than Rubeus Hagrid.

"Good job kiddo!" Zac said holding on to Kameron's shoulders. Looking down at him with a proud fatherly smile. Out just beyond the open chapel doors Sasporilla straightened her dress and readied her bouquet.

"Stop fidgetin'." Nick Owlmore smiled. "You look beautiful! You look... perfect!"

Sasporilla stopped and beamed at her Uncle Nick and gave him the biggest hug of her life.

"You know." Uncle Nick said, a small tear in his eye. "Your father, God rest his soul told me 'Nicky, one day my little girls gonna be a woman see. Just like her mum, and she's gonna get married! Only I ain't gonna be there to walk her down the aisle. I want you to be so important in her life that she don't want no one else but you to walk her see? Understand?"

"And there is no one else I would have but you walk me down the aisle Uncle Nick." Sassy smiled through her joyful tears. "You were the most important person to Mom after Dad became ill, along with miss Daisy that is. After Mom died you tried hard to keep a hold on me but I was too independent by then."

"You sure were." Nick Owlmore laughed. "More of a responsible adult at 14 than I was at 35!"

"But you loved me just the same." Sasporilla said. "And you tried to be a surrogate dad/uncle/friend as best you could and I still love you for that!"

"I still love you to Sasporilla Bucket." Nick smiled taking her arm. "You are my special little lady. Remember how I used to take your arm like this to walk you down to get an ice cream in town?"

"No ice cream at the end of the walk today." Sassy smiled.

"Nah." Nick smirked. "This treat'll last you much longer!"

The organ clearly announced Sasporilla's entrance. Her long pink hair was twisted into a loose bun with long loose curls cascading the back of her neck. Her dress was a lovely diamond white with V-neck held up at the shoulders. Pink pearl tulle lined the neckline, the half sleeve cuffs, and the slit of the full length over skirt. The detachable chiffon chapel overskirt fits over the light pink satin column skirt beneath.

Her bouquet was a simple bunch of pink and white roses with some wild flowers and baby's breath.

Sasporilla chose to wear a light pink and purple lace hair tie as opposed to a veil. She wanted simple, but elegant. However at the same time completely unpretentious!

Everyone stood as Nick Owlmore, dressed in quite an elegant tuxedo, escorted his Goddaughter into the church. Myron smiled and leaned into Agnes, describing the dress to her in full detail. Professor Splatterpalette and Professor Phenix were there with their families recording the event with muggle technology. Sasporilla knew there would be a lot of people who would feel slighted by not receiving an invitation to her wedding. She had been sad the centaurs she invited declined but she understood why. They were very wary of wizards and witches and especially of being outside of the dark forest. There was one person sitting on her side that she didn't quite recognize? It would of course help if she was wearing her glasses. The woman, sitting alone at the far end of the pew was middle aged and had fair hair. She smiled at Sasporilla and gave her a polite little wave. It was her! Her mothers sister! Her aunt Impatience Bent! The only other person from the Bent blood line to come from HUFFLEPUFF house!!!!

"Well I'll be!" Nick said. "Little Imp is here!"

"What a great day!" Sassy smiled.

Kolleen Curtiss put her hands up to her mouth and pressed her head into her husband Alex's shoulder.

"Oh Alex." Kolleen wept with happiness. "All our girls have grown up."

Alex patted his wife's head. Knowing she, in many ways used the ersatz adoption of Sasporilla, to replace the daughter they lost. Some times Alex wondered if Kolleen even remembered their precious Kandy?

Nick Owlmore reached the end of the aisle where he met up with Angelo who stepped forward in line. Nick turned to Sasporilla. "It's not to late to change your mind and leg it!"

"No I think I'll stay." Sasporilla smiled kissing her Uncle Nick on the cheek.

"Here you go lad!" Nick said. "I'm handing you a piece of my heart today. Break it, I'll hunt you down. Savvy?"

"Uncle Nick!" Sassy hissed!

"No worries." Angelo nodded. "I feel the same. If anything happens, Sassy can give you my pieces to deal with."

"Deal!" Nick smiled shaking the young mans hand. "He's got heart and character. I like that."

"Your not bad your self," Angelo smiled, "big man!"

Vicar Applebottom smiled widely as the young couple joined hands and faced him. The older religious leader of Hogsmeade only church just loved weddings and christenings. The church saw far to many funerals for his liking. The Vicar signaled for the organist to wrap it up and he began the ceremony.

"We are gathered together on this day," the Vicar began, "to witness and celebrate the marriage of Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket & Angelo Melvin Michael Anthony Lazarus . We come together not to mark the start of a relationship, but to acknowledge and strengthen a bond that already exists. This ceremony is a public affirmation of that bond and as their dearest family and friends, it is our honor and privilege to stand witness to this event.

This day is made possible not only because of your love for each other, but through the grace and support of your family and friends. It is our hope that your fulfillment and joy in each other will increase with each passing year.

"Marriage is a commitment in life, where two people can find and bring out the very best in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other human relationship can equal, a physical and emotional joining that has the promise of a lifetime.

"Let us bow our heads in prayer. Lord, we thank you for gathering everyone here today. We ask that you help Sasporilla and Angelo to remember the strong love that they share. To work that love into practical things so that nothing can divide them. May their love always inspire them to be kind in their words, considerate of the other's feelings, and concerned for the other's needs and wishes. Increase their faith and trust in You. Bless their marriage with peace and happiness and make their Love fruitful for Your glory and their joy, both here and in eternity. Amen.

"While the commitment begins with the two of you, its effect radiates outward. It touches your family and friends and ultimately all of society. When this commitment is seriously made and continuously fulfilled, it leads to the richest and most rewarding of human relationships.

"Your relationship will take more than love. It will take trust, to know in your hearts that you want only the best for each other. Dedication, to stay open to one another, to learn and grow, even when it is difficult to do so. And faith, to go forward together without knowing what the future holds for you both.

"While love is our natural state of being, these other qualities are not as easy to come by. They are not a destination, but a journey. Marriage is a give and take between two personalities, a mingling of two endowments which diminishes neither, but enhances both.

"Seeing that no moment is without meaning, we ask that you take this marriage as a beginning of your lives together. Today signifies the creation of a new home and a new family for you both. May you be fulfilled by each other's love and friendship. May you be overjoyed by the promises you are about to make and the life together you will create.

"Remember that in every marriage, there are good times and bad, times of joy and times of sorrow. Marriage is a journey – a time of adventure and excitement enhanced by the love, trust, dedication and faith you share in one another.

May the promises you make to one another today, be lived out to the end of your lives. Tomorrow can bring you the greatest of joys, but today is the day it all begins.

Sasporilla and Angelo, do you, with your family and friends as your witnesses, present yourselves willingly and of your own accord to be joined in marriage?"

"We do." Both Sassy and Angelo answered together.

"Will you promise to care for each other in the joys and sorrows of life, come what may, and to share the responsibility for growth and enrichment of your life together?" The Vicar asked

"We will." Sassy and Angelo answered.

"Angelo, please repeat after me." The Vicar smiled. "I, Angelo Melvin Michael Anthony Lazarus...."

"I, Angelo Melvin Michael Anthony Lazarus...." Angelo said turning to Sassy.

"... take you Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket, to be my wedded wife." The vicar said.

"... take you Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket, to be my wedded wife." Angelo repeated.

"I promise to stay by your side," the Vicar said.

"I promise to stay by your side," Angelo said.

"In sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in good times and in bad." The Vicar raised his eyes.

"In sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in good times and in bad, and I'll hear no more of I have to do this alone. We're a team now... DEAL?" Angelo smiled.



"Deal." Sasporilla laughed.

"I promise to love you without reservation,

Comfort you in times of distress. Encourage you to achieve all of your goals, Laugh with you and cry with you, Grow with you in mind and spirit." The Vicar said. He had a good feeling about this young couple.

"I promise to love you without reservation,

Comfort you in times of distress. Encourage you to achieve all of your goals, Laugh with you and cry with you, Grow with you in mind and spirit." Angelo smiled.

"Always be open and honest with you,

And cherish you for as long as we both shall live." The Vicar said.

"Always be open and honest with you,

And cherish you for as long as we both shall live." Angelo repeated.

"Sasporilla." The Vicar smiled. "Repeat after me. I, Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket,"

"I Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket," Sassy repeated looking at Angelo.

"... take you Angelo Melvin Michael Anthony Lazarus, to be my wedded husband." The Vicar said.

"... take you Angelo Melvin Michael Anthony Lazarus, to be my wedded husband." Sasporilla repeated.

"I promise to stay by your side," the Vicar said.

"I promise to stay by your side," Sassy said.

"In sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in good times and in bad." The Vicar raised his eyes.

"In sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in good times and in bad, and I promise to stick by our DEAL?"

Sasporilla smiled.

Angelo laughed.

"I promise to love you without reservation,

Comfort you in times of distress. Encourage you to achieve all of your goals, Laugh with you and cry with you, Grow with you in mind and spirit." The Vicar said.

"I promise to love you without reservation,

Comfort you in times of distress. Encourage you to achieve all of your goals, Laugh with you and cry with you, Grow with you in mind and spirit." Sassy smiled.

"Always be open and honest with you,

And cherish you for as long as we both shall live." The Vicar said.

"Always be open and honest with you,

And cherish you for as long as we both shall live." Sasporilla repeated.

"Having this love in your hearts, you have chosen to seal your vows by exchanging rings." The Vicar said as the ring bearer walked up proudly presenting the rings on his pillow.

"Kameron Zarkhov Curtiss." Sasporilla smiled. "You are just the best boy ever!"

Sassy and Angelo took each others rings and Kam walked over to his dad and sat down.

"From the earliest times, the circle has been a sign of completeness." The Vicar said. "The rings that you have chosen to wear have neither beginning nor end, much like your love for one another. They are a symbol of the words that you speak today. May these rings be from this day forward, your most treasured adornment, and may the love they symbolize, be your most precious possession. As you wear these rings, may they be constant reminders of these glad promises you are making today.

Angelo, take your ring, place it on Sasporilla's finger and repeat after me.

I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you."

"I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you." Angelo said slipping the gold ring carved with Celtic knot work all around it on Sassy's finger.

"Now Sasporilla, take your ring, place it on Angelo's finger and repeat after me. I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you."

"I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you." Sassy said slipping the gold ring, which was a copy of her ring set into the center of a plain gold band, to symbolize Angelo holding Sasporilla's heart in his.

"Sasporilla Imaginarium Bucket and Angelo Melvin Michael Anthony Lazarus, from this moment forward you will never be alone. You will carry with you the love of another person, giving you completeness and renewed lightness. May your life together be immersed in love and excitement. May you strive to enrich each other in every possible way. And may you work to bring the peace you find to this world." The Vicar said putting his hands on

the young couples hands. "Having pledged their fidelity to one another, to love, honor and cherish one another in the presence of God and by the authority vested in me it is my honor to now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride."

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Zac and Karry promised a wonderful wedding reception for the young couple. The party of their dreams! Sasporilla and Angelo, walked out of the church being showered in magical confetti. The best part about magical confetti is the birds and squirrels found it quite tasty and it was good for them too! All the guests followed as the young couple walked hand in hand down the center of Hogsmeade. Karry and Zac were quick to catch up. Everyone in town, though not invited to the wedding was certainly invited to the reception! Many people came out of the stores to applaud and cheer as Sasporilla and Angelo walked by.

"Where are we headed?" Sasporilla asked Karry.

"The empty Broom shop." Karry said.

"What?" Sassy said surprised. "Why?"

"Trust us!" Karry smiled.

They lead the way to the old broom store. The windows were still papered over with yellowed pieces of the Daily Prophet from the summer Sassy graduated. Dust was thick on the inside window ledges and the outside of the building was in need of some desperate repairs. Over all though it had been the building Sasporilla dreamed of one day owning and making her own wand shop. One day.

"Sasporilla." Angelo said. "Zac and Karry came to me when I told them I wanted to marry you all those years ago and offered us this great Gift."

"The reception!" Sassy smiled. "You are both so sweet but honestly you didn't have too."

"No silly." Karry giggled. "Listen to Angelo for a second?"

"You told me your hopes and dreams." Angelo said. "Like the line from my favourite Christmas song, I put them with my own. Can't make it all alone I've built MY dreams around you."

"What are you saying you beautiful man?" Sassy asked taking his head in her hands.

"Zac owned the building." Angelo smiled. "He and Karry offered it to us as a gift..."

Sasporilla gasped shaking her head.

"...and I said no!" Angelo smiled. "I took some of the money I made from my inventions and bought it from Zac as a wedding gift... for... you!"

Sasporilla stood in awe of what the man of her dreams, and the people who meant the most in the world had done for her! She could cry out in delight and through her arms around her husband!

"Oh Angelo it's a dream come true!" Sasporilla sniffed.

"It will be." Angelo winked at her. "Once you've finished with it. The best part is it has a full apartment upstairs! So we have a place to live until our house is built on Hogsmeade's back road."

Angelo held out a small box for Sassy to open. Inside was the key to the shop. Sasporilla put the key in the door lock and gave it a turn. The door opened to reveal the shop had been cleaned, scrubbed and redone inside. Pink velvet ropes lead people through from the front door through to the back and out to a large event tent where the reception party was happening.

Karry and Zac whisked Sassy and Angelo up back steps to their new apartment to rest a moment and change. It was a two level four-bedroom apartment with two bathrooms and a balcony, that over looked the back of Hogsmeade but from where you had a great view of Hogwarts.

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The party was in full swing when Sasporilla and Angelo came down stairs. Sassy chose to reuse her maid of honour dress from Karry's wedding as her reception gown, and Angelo changed into a more comfortable and stylish set of formal black robes. They could see people in the tent dancing to the music of a local live band Zac had found. They could play anything you asked of them and sounded 100% accurate every time!

Glasses started to clink to get everyone's attention. There was some pointing towards the door. Zac ran up to the band that stopped the song and handed him the mic, as the drum rolled.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, honoured guests, may I introduce to you Mr. and Mrs. Angelo and Sasporilla Lazarus!!!"

"I'll need to get use to that!" Sassy smiled at Angelo.

"You mean you didn't doodle it in hearts all over your note books?" Angelo chuckled. "I'd have just as easily taken Bucket!"

"I know, you progressive man you." Sassy said kissing him as she pulled him by the hand to the head table.

Sasporilla had a wonderful less formal set up for her reception. Each table had it's own refillable buffet, just like a Hogwarts feast! This way everyone had enough to eat and got exactly what they liked. If they couldn't find anything to suit their tastes, they could transfigure their meal. That was the nicest way she could put it, As there were hundreds of choices!!!

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The meal was consistently interrupted by the abrupt tinkling of glasses demanding public displays of affection from the bride and groom. Of course as is customary it continued down the line to members of the wedding party. Father and mother of the groom who had no problem displaying their affection and love for one another openly. When Karry the Maid of honour and the best man hugged politely then shook hands, The crowd tittered with glee, as the Maid of Honours husband Zac walked past the head table scratching his head with his wand. Everyone was having a joyous time.

'TINK\*TINK\*TINK\*TINK\*TINK!'

"All right everyone if I could get your attention please?" The best man Dave "Rabbit" Mandolini called out, "As best man I'm expected to give one of those embarrassing story speeches that makes the bride suddenly rethink her life choices. Well I was asked very nicely not to do that as that is just not what this guy is like!"

The crowd politely applauded.

"Nahhhhh" Dave smiled, "I couldn't resist! I mean with stories like that first year we had in University, spring break when we went on that hike and hooked up with those two wood nymphs!!!"

The crowd gasped as Sassy raised her eyebrows to her husband.

"Oh wait." Dave said. "Nahhh that was Jimmy "The Weasle" Snodgrass wasn't it? Ok, forget that story how about that time we bet each other who drink more of other peoples drinks in the Three Broomsticks without anyone else noticing.... no..no, that was Tim Flopshtonick."

The crowd started to mummer as the best man looked through his notes and wives started questioning the shenanigans of their husbands!

"Well folks," Dave smiled, "The Rabbit has to admit, for all the wild and crazy guys I know and all the fun times I've had... this guy... Angelo has always been my rock of truth and honour. He's a good honest guy. I can't think of anybody better suited for one of the greatest witches of our age, Sassy Bucket. I think you two are the perfect couple. I hope you have a great life together. Long and happy. I hope you have lots of kids and get fat! Raise your glasses you jealous witches, wizards and muggles!!! Too the happy couple!!!"

Everyone raised their glasses as Sasporilla and Angelo raised a special intertwined glass. A twin set of champagne flutes adorned with glass leaves the stems entwined as vines holding up the drink that carried to the lips. The vines stretched but never broke, allowing the couple's glass to always stay together. Everyone drank as the happy couple drank and applauded!!!!

A rather tall slender young half house elf named Xmicklely (Zimicklily) pushed out a lovely silver cart with a towering cake upon it. The White, toppersy turvey style wedding cake with lovely icing and candied floral arrangements around it, tipped and bobbed as if it were going to fall in any direction at any time. This was always one of the fun things of Mrs.Honeyduke's topsey turvey cakes. They looked structurally as unsound as piles of jelly in an earthquake but in reality they were brilliantly put together! Fruit cakes were the standard for muggle weddings of old, sticky toffee pudding cakes for the Wizarding weddings history but this bride and groom wanted something a bit more fun! Sassporila picked up the cutting knife. Angelo took her hand in his and they made the first cut of the cake as everyone applauded. They cut out the first piece. A heavenly light vanilla and chocalte marbled square set alternating with a red velvet and chocolate marbled square set. People gasped at the checkerboard pattern of the cake.

"Not only is the theme of our cake a wonderful marbled Game board design in side of vanallia and red velvet chocolate by the one and only Honeydukes..." Angelo smiled. "... but at our request the theme of our desert course is WIZARDS CHESS! If anyone wants to play there will be white and black cream and Carmel filled chess pieces you can play on cake or candy or ice cream boards!!!"

"As well as many other confections and treats!" Sasporilla smiled smearing icing on her husband's nose laughing.

"Enjoy your deserts everyone!"

Sasporilla found her way outside, into the relative quiet of the evening air, behind the reception tent.

"Most people go out front." A woman's voice said startling Sassy. "Sorry, didn't mean to give you a start."

"Didn't see you there." Sasporilla said.

"I guess I should introduce myself. I'm your mother's youngest sister. Your aunt Impatience Bent."

"I'm happy you were able to make it to the wedding." Sasporilla smiled.

"You can let go of the handle of your wand in your sleeve." Impatience sighed. "I'm not a threat to you."

"I'm sorry." Sassy said. "Bad experiences make for cautious reactions."

"True enough." Impatience smiled. "Though sometimes knowing the whole story is the best light when your dark place. I have left you and your husband a rare family heirloom as wedding gift. I can think of no one who deserves it more. This how ever..."

Impatience Bent pulled a small box out of her purse. It was wrapped in rather plain blue muggle tissue wrap with a nylon red bow. This is a gift from your mother. She wanted you to have it when it was time. There are a few things in there that will let you see... well, you'll see."

"Shall I open it now?" Sasporilla asked.

"You can if you like," Impatience smiled, "but honestly it's of no use without what's upstairs."

"Ok then." Sassy gave the woman a puzzled but coyly trusting look. "Then I will wait until I am upstairs."

The two women stood looking out at the field and down the hills in the night sky.

"So you were in Hufflepuff?" Sassy asked.

"Sure was!" Impatience laughed. "Scourge of the family name."

"Thought that was my mom being a Squibb?" Sassy sniffed.

"That's why we got on so well!" Impatience smiled. "Out casts us! Bloody unwanted scum of the Earth. So we were always together. You'll see."

"What?" Sassy asked confused.

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN..." the band leader announced "... CAN WE HAVE THE BRIDE AND GROOM FOR THE FIRST DANCE?"

"You best get in there." Impatience Bent smiled and awkwardly hugged her niece. "I'm leaving on the Hogwarts express special in the morning. Come see me there if you want to."

Sasporilla appeared on the darkened dance floor walking into the spot light where her husband stood alone.

"Thought you left me crying in the chapel?" Angelo smiled.

"Sorry I'm late." Sasporilla frowned cutely.

"As long as you're here now." Angelo said taking her hands. "I'll always wait for you."

"I'm trying not to go anywhere my love." Sassy smiled.

"Yes woman." Angelo said sternly. "You are VERY TRYING!"

Sasporilla started to laugh as the music started to waft through the air. Sasporilla chose the one song that her mother had always loved. It was the song her mother and father had danced to at their wedding, WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN by some muggle band called.... what was it??? The builders? The wood workers? The Carpenters!!! Sasporilla folded into Angelo's arms and rested her head against his as they danced slowly to wafting music that filled the air. The rest of the world disappeared and only they existed lost in each others love.

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The bride and groom ducked out early, back to their little apartment over the future wand shop, amongst all the well wishes and cheeky comments. The party went on late into the night, or was it early into the next morning? Angelo knew he would more than likely have to apologize to someone for something that Rabbit had done. With luck he wouldn't hook up with Lyra and get into even more trouble.

The large pile of well wrapped gifts were brought up to the apartment. Sassy looked over the wrapped packages intently.

"So Mrs.Lazarus,"

Angelo hummed snuggling in behind Sassy, "looking for a toaster?"

"No Mr.Lazarus," Sassy laughed, "I am looking for a gift from my Aunt Impatience Bent."

"It would probably be that big box over there." Angelo said pointing at the dining table.

A large antique cherry wood chest sat on the dining table with white ribbon and bow on it. The tag read, To Sasporilla and Angelo from your aunty Impatience Bent.

Sassy pulled the ribbon and the box doors opened revealing it to be a small cabinet holding an antique pensive!

"What a wonderful gift." Angelo said. "These are very, very rare!"

"My aunt told me it was a family heirloom." Sasporilla said and produced the other small box. "She also said this was from my mother."

Sasporilla opened the small blue tissue wrapped box. Inside were three vials. Sasporilla knew from her studies they were taken memories of some sort to be experienced in the pencieve.

One vial was marked tears of joy. One vial marked tears of pain. The last vial was marked final tear.

"Tears?" Angelo asked?

"So many of our greatest memories aren't lost but are shared in tears." Sasporilla smiled. "I read a paper on it by Albus Dumbeldore. He was quite the expert on pencieves. Had one of his own in his office. He collected thousands of memories, not just his own. He preferred to extract them from happy tears. Though his research demanded he gather some through sadness."

"Just how did he gather those?" Angelo grimaced. "I hope he didn't cause pain in anyone."

"My guess is as Head master of Hogwarts he always had some student in distress who needed a shoulder to lean on." Sassy said. "I often did."

"Did you often go to Headmaster Dumbledore?" Angelo asked.

"No." Sasporilla smiled. "I often cried on Karry's shoulder or that of an elf."

"Just wondered if he collected one of yours?" Angelo smiled.

Dancing with Myron as he sang to her... happiest moment of her young life... a single tear rolled down from her eye...but never dripped to her dress. Corner of her eye, the flick of a wand, the flash of glass lid shutting and robes fluttering in a turn.

"He ACCIO'D my happy tear!" Sassy laughed. "The sneaky old sod!"

"What?" Angelo asked.

"Not important right now." Sassy said. "Let's get to these memories my aunt wants me to see."

Sassy poured the first vial into the pencieve and watched it swirl. Like the mists of time both inviting and terrifying and inviting Sasporilla Bucket plunged her face into the pencieve. The last thing Sassy ever expected to experience were her mothers memories.

Sassy fell through time and space until she found herself sitting on the floor across from her sister playing ball. They laughed and giggled. She could feel how much she loved her little sister. The mist shifted to her seeing a rather homely boy in Diagon Alley in Flourish and Blots. She loved the bookshop. It was the one place wizards, witches and SQUIBS like her were truly equal. If you could read, you could get lost in a book! The boy was here with his parents getting his books for Hogwarts. He waved at her and smiled. She didn't know what to do??? She bumped into someone or something... but the memory shifted... Sasporilla knew that little homely boy would grow up to be a big homely boy! Her dad Ridonkulous Bucket!!! Swirling to Kings Cross station her mom was waving good bye proudly to her little sister Impatience who was off to Hogwarts. Both of them waved. Her little sister cried not wanting to be away from the one happy positive person she had ever known. Wysteria knew she was a baby bird about to soar! She would meet wonderful new positive people and she would do just fine! The next memory was her and her dad running hand in hand through the field by her old home. It was their dream to one day move to the small village of Avonshire, build a nice home of their own for them and their four children, two dogs, a cat and a budgerigar! The next memory was the joy she felt of her wedding... it melted Sassy's heart. Her mother was so in love! Just like the love she felt for Angelo. How she wished her mom could be here today. It both surprised and saddened her that this was her last happy memory. At least it was the last one collected from her.

Sasporilla raised her head from the pencieve smiling contented with what she'd seen.

"I take it that went well?" Angelo asked.

"It was an incredible experience." Sasporilla smiled pulling her wand to retrieve the memory from the pencieve and cast it back into it's bottle. "Now for vial number two. I'm afraid I may find it just that."

"What?" Angelo asked handing her the small glass bottle.

Sasporilla turned the vial around to show the label saying 'PAIN' "Vial!" Sassy sighed.

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Sasporilla Bucket poured her mothers painful memories into the penceive. They swirled like a thunderstorm. Raged like a living creature angry at the world for giving it life. Sassy took a deep breath and slowly placed her face in. She felt the memories grasp at her and pull her under like Grindybows in the Black Lake. Sasporilla fought at first then let them pull her in. Those horrid memories were, after all, where she wanted to go.

Like death eater landing in a whisp of black smoke, Sasporilla arrived in the first memory. Wysteria sat on the floor weeping at the feet of her mother. Sasporilla recognized the twisted hideous evil features of Grandmother Bent, even in her younger days. She was livid, standing over her first born child, still just a toddler, angrily smoking her Wizingard brand cigarette.

"You!" Chrysanthemum Bent hissed. "What will people say when we tell them we have a SQUIBB in the family? Us! The BENT's!!!"

"Sowee mummy." The little girl cried.

"Sorry?" Chrysanthemum growled. "Sorry?"

The witch grabbed her child roughly and painfully by the hand.

"Owww!" Wysteria whined as her mother dragged her up to her feet.

"I'll make you sorry!" The evil woman said putting out her cigarette on the palm of the child's hand.

The screams were deafening but the fear her mother felt as she was thrown into the wardrobe and locked in. Alone, in the dark.

"You just sit there and think about the shame you bring to this family, you little SQUIBB!"

The memories swirled in gray and black until she saw her mother, about five or six years of age, being dragged by the hair by a gripping charm, cast by her father Trillium Bent. Wysteria cried in pain grabbing at her hair.

"Did you honestly think you could run away Wysteria?" Trillium sneered. "As useless as you are as a witch, being a Squibb, you may still be trained as a servant. We may not love you or have a use for you but someone may."

Shifting memories brought in her first baby Sister and brother, being taught spells by mum and dad early with borrowed wands. Wysteria stood by patiently shaking, holding targets, for her smaller siblings to fire spells at.

"But father," Periwinkle Bent asked, "what if we miss and hit Wysteria?"

"Entertainment is free." Bougainvillea laughed casting BOMBARDA burning her oldest sisters hand, making her laugh hysterically.

"See my boy," Trillium said placing his hand on the boys shoulder squeezing, "she's fine!!! SQUIBBS don't feel pain like you witches and wizards do! Now cast the spell!"

The burning, the pain, the screaming... Sasporilla didn't know how much more there was, nor how much more she could take.

Platform nine and three quarters. Bougainvillea and Periwinkle ran ahead followed by their father. Mother turned back to Wysteria having trouble pushing both trolleys, "Keep up girl! Try not to be completely useless!"

"Sorry mam." Wysteria said, masking the fact that the poorly dressed serving girl was in any way related to the Bent family.

Trying as best she could, one her sisters trolleys still got away from her, and ran off the edge of the platform and dumped onto the tracks. Wysteria gasped, terrified of the punishment coming. The rest on the platform just laughed and shook their heads. Wysteria ran to the platforms edge and was about to climb down when all the scattered items collected themselves up and packed back into the trunk. Wysteria's mother stood there looking very angry as she levitated the trunk and other items back onto the cart.

"I'm sorry mom!" Wysteria said.

"Mam!" Chrysanthemum laughed, "she meant mam! Give...me...your...hand!"

"No please!" Wysteria pleaded.

Tendrils whipped from her mothers wand pulling the young girls arm in to her mother. The older woman opened her daughters hand and held its scarred palm face up.

"Take your punishment like a servant!" Chrysanthemum insisted, "Do you think you'll ever see a better life outside our house?"

The tendrils turned to strands of leather that Chrysanthemum used to whip her daughters palm. Pain swirled into feelings of sadness as Sasporilla saw her mum and dad, both very young, sitting in a room with both groups of grand parents that looked very angry.

"Who do you think you are?" Trillium Bent laughed sarcastically. "Trying to marry your useless BUCKET son into the BENT family? Don't make me laugh!!!"

"My son?" Woodrow Bucket yelled! "You mean marrying that SQUIBB of yours into our pure blood BUCKET family!"

"Pure blood!" Chrysanthemum snorted. "Don't make me laugh. Elf blood!"

"How dare you?" Oblivion Bucket hissed. "Your squibb would be lucky to be a Bucket!"

"Oh shut up!" Riddonkulous yelled. "We love each other and we're getting married. Like it or not! I love Wysteria, whether she's a squibb or a muggle or goblin or whatever!"

"Yes!" Wysteria cried. "and I love Riddonkulous! We want to get married, have our own life and have a family."

"What?" Trillium frowned, "more squibb children or dirty little half breed elf bloods?"

"Should all be put down in my opinion" Chrysanthemum said.

"Well perhaps we could make a pact." Oblivion smiled. "We will allow the children their...marriage. However, any offspring not up to our family standards as a certified tested witch or wizard by a certified testing medical professional just after birth, will be... eliminated."

"Agreed!" The Bent's smiled.

"Agreed." Woodrow Bucket said reluctantly.

"No!!!" Riddonkulous protested as Wysteria broke down in tears.

The tears flowed and pounded against her like a hurricane as Sasporilla found herself hurtling towards the next memory. It was the morning of the Christening. Wysteria awoke and stretched. The small place they lived in was only temporary until they really got on their feet. The new mom stepped over to the bassinet.

"Good morning my lovely." She smiled as she looked upon an empty bed.

The scream woke up Riddonkulous and Nick that had past out drinking on the couch.

"What is it?" Donk asked drawing his wand.

"What's," Nick began belching, "the problem?"

"The baby," Wysteria cried, "Sasporilla's Gone!"

"The pact." Riddonkulous growled. "No one harms a hair on the head of my girls. Get dressed quick, we need to apparate to London!"

The minor constant belittlement. The senseless hatred directed at her. The mistreatment by the Wizarding world all because of the way she was born, the feeling of sadness and loneliness when her daughter left for school. The spinning pain of her mothers life through Sasporilla Bucket from the pensive in tears. Angelo ran to his wife's side and took her in his arms calming and cuddling her.

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It took some time for Sasporilla to stop shaking, let alone to stop feeling the latent ghostly sensation of the physical pain her mother had suffered. Angelo brought her a nice cup of tea to settle her nerves.

"Thank you." She smiled taking a sip.

"Some wedding gift!" Angelo cringed.

"It was a trip." Sassy sighed. "But I've one more vial to go."

"Oh no Sassy please!" Angelo begged. "Not tonight? You've been through too much already. The last? I fear it must be horrific!"

"We will see." Sasporilla said more determined now than ever to see her mother's last memory. "Accio vial" Sassy said pointing her wand right at it.

The vial marked Final flew right into her hand. Pouring it carefully into the pensive the final memory of Wysteria Bucket was her daughters to view. Sasporilla dipped her head into the swirling bowl was peacefully pulled inside. Her mother was having a lovely cup of tea. Talking and laughing with her younger sister Impatience. The faerie cakes Impy brought were brilliant. It was getting late when the knock came at the door. Time for her to go as Wysie never wanted Sassy to know about her nice sister. Wysteria still feared the pain curse which may just harm her one good family member.

Impatience apparated home as Wysteria answered the door. To her surprise it was little Billy Bombaduck, but no longer so small. All went white from there..... other than a distant strong feeling for all whom Wysteria had truly loved her daughter, her sister, her husband and the rarest of rare facts that they had loved her back.

Sasporilla pulled out from penceive.

"What did you see?" Angelo asked.

"My mom really did love my Aunt Impatience." Sassy smiled as she hugged her husband tenderly. "She left from having tea seconds before my mom died. I can't imagine how she feels?"

"You should find her in the morning." Angelo said.

"Agreed." Sasporilla yawned. "This has been such a long wedding day! We didn't have anything else on our agenda... did we?"

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Impatience Bent sat just outside the Three Broom Sticks, at one of three small tables Rosemertha had set up to take advantage of the good weather cafe business, sipping a cup of Jorrow Bean Coffee. If there was money to be made anywhere in Hogsmeade, Rosemertha could see it and tell you how to squeeze every nickel out of it. There was no Schroeder merchant in town and none better at business in all of Scotland! That's saying something!!!

It was a lovely morning, blue sky with just a hint of wispy blue clouds. The national weather service called for rain but that was simply not happening until her Niece was away on her honeymoon. She hoped the gift she had given her would bring them together? Perhaps it was a mistake and only drive them apart once and for all?

"Impatience you're being foolish!" She told herself! "She is Wysteria's girl! What will be will be and that is all there is to it! There is no more you can do! You loved your sister, you love your niece, just calm down!"

"You look deep in thought?" Sasporilla smiled shocking her aunt back to reality.

"Oh!" Impatience jumped. "You surprised me!"

"Sorry 'bou' tha'!" Sassy laughed doing her best Hagrid impression.

"Hey!" Impatience laughed. "You do Hagrid pretty well!"

"He's a friend." Sassy smiled. "May I join you?"

"Yes of course!" Impatience insisted, motioning for Sassy to sit. "I'll ring for Rosemertha to bring you something."

"No, no," Sasporilla smiled, "I got it! You want a top up? Anything else?"

"I'm good thanks." Her aunt smiled.

Sasporilla pulled out her wand and with a quick flick made the front window fly open.

"Rosie!" Sassy yelled in. "Cupa Butter tea and a butterscotch scone please!"

"Bloody Bucket girls here!" Rosemertha laughed.

"She knows you." Impatience chuckled.

"Just about everyone here does." Sassy smiled. "Been around here a lot through Hogwarts and what with Kerry and Zac's house being right over there!"

"That's your best friend from Hogwarts?" Impatience asked. "The Curtiss girl?"

"Yes that's her." Sassy smiled. "We had some amazing times in this town. Now we'll be here together! Raising our families, while I run my shop."

"Is it the life you wanted dear?" Aunt Impatience asked concerned placing her hand on her nieces. "I mean, did you dream of more?"

"Like being the most powerful witch in all of the Wizarding World?" Sasporilla smiled. "Been there, done that, gave it up to give people freedom! No THIS has ALWAYS been MY dream. To be a wand maker with my own shop... BUCKET WANDS!"

"Then I am so happy for you and so proud of you Sasporilla!" Impatience said hugging her niece.

"All right you two!" Rosemertha said bringing out the tea and scone for Sasporilla. "Break it up! This is a decent sorta place."

"Oh please Rosie!" Sassy started laughing, "Why just last week you and that travelling Quaffle salesman..."

"Enough out of you." Rosemertha quickly cut Sasporilla off holding up her finger. "This is on the house. For your nuptials an' all. Where are you two love birds goin' on your honey moon then?"

"Have either of you ever heard of the exclusive resort Island of Tzopheniopola?"

"No?" Both women answered rather shocked being well read and or well traveled.

"I'm not at all surprised. Tzopheniopola," Sasporilla began, "is a small island in the south pacific. It houses one of the most beautiful resorts and staffed by a very well taken care of staff of muggle natives, and house elves. It is very exclusive! Only royalty may grace its shores! The only way to travel there is by private portkey from the



Royal Palace of the Royalty in question. Its existence has been kept secret from the public by concealing it with spells. After all, it has been in the Witch Queen's best interest to do so!"

"That's how you discovered it?" Impatience smiled.

"And my first order of business when I get there is to tear down it's protective spells," Sasporilla smiled, "kick the royals off the island back home, tell the worker elves they're finally truly free and return the island to it's native people!"

"Wow girl!" Rosemeritta smirked. "You do have a funny Idea of what makes a honey moon? I mean most young people want to get their hands on each other, not the ruling class!"

The ladies laughed. Rosemeritta walked back inside, as Impatience and Sasporilla took a sip of their drinks. The one thing about a witches brewed tea or coffee, they never got cold, and always stayed just the right temperature.

"I wanted to thank you aunt Impatience." Sassy smiled.

"For what dear?" Her young aunt asked.

"For letting me see my mothers memories." Sasporilla said. "Especially the last."

"I feared that one would make you hate me." Impatience said looking down, a tear dripping from her eye.

"Why in heavens name would ever think that?" Sassy said taking her aunts hand.

"I left your mother alone!" Impatience cried. "I apered out when that maniac knocked! If I'd only stayed, I..."

"You can not change what happened." Sasporilla said tipping her aunts head up. "Look at me! I do not place any blame on you. She did not put any blame on you. Her last thoughts were of those who loved her and who she loved. That includes you! Knowing this how could I ever possibly HATE you aunt Impatience Blueberry Bent."

Through the tears Impatience let out a laugh. An uncomely bubble blown out her nostril made both of them laugh.

"How did you know my middle name?" Impatience asked.

"Memories." Sassy said tapping on her temple. "I learned a lot about you. My mom loved you dearly. You are very welcome in my life."

"I have waited your whole life to hear that!" Impatience Bent sniffed throwing up her hands to go hug her niece as she started crying again.

"Oh my you are weepy one." Sassy giggled hugging her aunt back very tightly.

It was a hug that felt like her mom was feeling her sisters hug for the first time in years. Sasporilla felt comfort and home in this hug, safety and love, everything a good hug should have.

"I should let you go dear." Impatience smiled. "I'm sure my moldy old arms are not the ones you want to be in at the start of your honeymoon?"

"I would not put it that way," Sasporilla Bucket smiled, "but I do have to get things together and go. Plus I have to make sure my husband has the ability to keep up! Not his fault, he's new you know?"

"Oh you are a card Sasporilla!" Impatience laughed. "Send me an owl when you're back."

"I will, I promise." Sassy smiled and waved. "Won't you be surprised when you meet MY owl!"

"What?" Impatience asked confused.

"You'll see!" Sassy laughed blowing a kiss, turning and happily walking away waving.

## BUCKET WANDS

Bucket Wands was just a small unassuming shop on the high right side of the main street in Hogsmeade. It's simple cherry wood finish, and old style oval sign that hung out ninety degrees from the building by iron brackets, allowed it to blend in as easily as any of the other boring little shops in the area. Of course there was one thing. On the sign was a large wand that seemed to hang magically from just below the world wands! Below that was a brass bucket that bobbed in the air back and forth along the length of the sign. When the bucket stopped under the wands tip, the wand cast LUMOS, the light dropping down into the bucket. The bucket then bobbed back over to the door or the window display and dumped out to highlight the shop!

Most witches and wizards that first came to the shop either came out of curiosity to see this new design of wand that didn't choose it's witch or wizard but rather the other way around? PREPOSTEROUS!!! However, as this upstart Sasporilla Bucket had understudied with the great Olivander himself and got her Masters in wand design at the university of Avalon with Professor Splatterpalette ... well ... they would at least have a look.

Then word of mouth about the quality and power of her wands spread. The best part was, if you wanted hand crafted, they did those too! Not only Bucket but Olivander! Zevon! Gobdrander & Flywich! Booghalter, Rugvenhiem, Chow Xi Chen, Kymm Gwyt and Dykumm! All the big names and slew of smaller ones! Sasporilla Bucket had bought up all the shops going out of business because of her and gave the owners and their elves jobs as wand makers in her shops. They could still craft their wands under their names, get a salary and make a commission! It was a great deal. Of course there was one great caveat. Their classic creature part derived cores like dragon heart strings and unicorn hair may only be naturally and ethically sourced under approved elven supervision. The creature MUST have donated of itself willingly otherwise the core could not be used in a wand sold at BUCKET'S!!!

Originally Sassy had quite an ethical conundrum when it came to the back stock of these old wands. The cores were gained by poachers. Great beasts and creatures killed for tiny bits for the purposes of wands & potions! When she bought the lot Sasporilla Bucket debated destroying them all! This brought joy and outrage in a split between people she knew. It was the calm insistent slap to the back of her pink haired head from Professor Splatterpalette that caught her attention.

"Sasporilla you know how much I adore you?" The professor smiled?

"Yes of course professor?" Sassy said rubbing her head.

"Then WHAT THE %#@#% ARE YOU THINKING!???!!! IS YOUR HEAD FULL OF ROCKS??? FOR ^\$#\*?\*\$ SAKES!!!! YOU STUPID :"#%\_^^^\$/&\*:GIRL!!!!!" Professor Splatterpalette yelled.

Sasporilla's eyes widened.

Taking a deep breath the professor smiled and took her favourite graduates hands. "My dear. To destroy the cores will require you to destroy the wands. To destroy the wands is to destroy decades of art by dozens of craftsmen and women. Not to mention, to destroy them means the beasts who gave their lives for those cores will have died for NOTHING!!!"

Sasporilla stared blankly for a moment as she pondered the logic of the argument as well as the surprise of the source of logic!

"You're absolutely right." Sasporilla agreed. "but it's a practice I can't allow to continue. I have an idea..."

That was how the ethically sourced wand movement in old wand style design was born amongst wand designers. Of course many young designers also saw the wisdom and advantage of the Bucket wand core design. Sassy had a brilliant idea. Up and coming wand designers should not suffer as older ones had. Stuck in their ways, refusing to change. Those who wanted to incorporate the Bucket core in their wands were welcome to it and their systems in their shops! For a fee of course but not an outrageous one! More for an agreement that they would properly employ the required amount of worker and weaver elves to properly handle and process the core and wand parts. The proof of mistreatment of workers or breaking of the contract with Bucket Wands in any way instantly and magically had the system removed from their shop! Unfortunately it happened more than once to greedy mean young wand makers. Sasporilla's shop was, as many magical shops are, much bigger on the inside. A long counter series of counters each had a grip tester for assessing ones wand needs. The one designed by Sassy and Angelo through magic and science to show how the witch or wizard harmonically interacts with the fabric of magic. The elven weavers below weave a magical wand core for the wand. The grip tester determines your choices of woods, shapes, metals, gems, that can

be included in your wand. The rolling case was filled with rolling racks of wand choices and the only thing effecting ones choice and availability was price.

Of course, there were options for children who could not afford the wands they required. There was always money set aside both from the shop and private donors to make sure no child went without the wand they needed!

Each wand was custom made on site that day and the core inserted. When it popped up on a small pedestal behind the sales person it had a small smoky illumination that was purely for effect but always brought a giggle or a gasp. The boxed wand was opened by the sales person, the top placed below the bottom, the wand revealed to be sitting in a wonderful velvet or satin lined form fitting bed. A wonder to behold.

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It was the last few days of August and in Hogsmeade that meant all the children coming to Hogwarts and their families would be descending on the town to buy the last of their school supplies. The one thing Bucket wands had done was put a strain on Diagon Alley! Even though they bought the old Olivander's four years ago, but a lot of people liked to come to the original shop to say hello to the Pink haired witch.

Sasporilla never worried that the shop would open on time. The shop would be clean, everything would be in place and everything in order, Rimpolli would see to that.

"Breakfast is ready Bucket family!" Mabel called. "Come and get it before I feed it to Bijou!"

Bijou was the dog the children had talked Sassy and Angelo into getting them from Hagrid when one of the local dogs had puppies. Apparently Fang was the father and Hagrid felt somewhat responsible for finding them puppies good homes!

Bijou, a floppy all skin and paws big headed black and tan mutt slid into the kitchen, Sassy's twins fast behind him laughing excitedly.

Lyra Karry Wysteria Janey Lazerus was your basic young eleven year old witch, born with fire engine red hair and an anarchistic attitude that would have put the Sex Pistols to shame. To this day Angelo swears Lyra put a spell on the girl that transferred part of the woman into her. Of course Sassy dismissed his fear as their daughter had a normal size behind.

Garrick Myron Ridonkulous Korry Lazerus on the other hand was quite a businessman. This was obviously a Lazerus family trait that was past down. Of course the other trait passed down to him from his muggle bloodline was he seemed to be a Squibb. Not a sign of magical ability. A nice young man never the less that most would describe as exceptionally average.

Bijou crashed into the cupboard doors nearly missing Mabel as she levitated the plates to the table.

"Keep that furry monster under control or I'll put him out!" Mabel yelled.

"Wooooo hmmm" Bijou wined.

"Oh you big suck you know I love you!" The house elf smiled reaching up to rub his ears.

Bijou smiled and gave Mabel a big lick up the side of her face.

"You asked for it Mabel!" Garrick laughed.

They sat at the table and started shoveling food into their faces like they were in an eating contest.

"Slow down you two!" Angelo insisted walking into the kitchen. "You'll make yourself sick!"

"Dab!" Lyra said pancake, scrambled egg and bacon hanging precariously in her open mouth. "Kooday is ar elevenf birfdy!"

"Close your mouth when you eat Lyra for heavens sake!" Sasporilla said entering the kitchen and kissing her children on the top of the head. "And do not talk with your mouth full please! It's not polite."

"I'm not polite!" Lyra laughed her mouth open full of food, her eyes crossed and a French toast strip up each nose!

Garrick laughed so hard he nasal rinsed his pumpkin juice out both his nostrils.

"That's it you two." Sassy said trying very hard not to laugh. "Breakfast is over for you two. I do hope you got enough to eat. Now go get ready, you have a big day ahead of you."

The twins lowered their heads and apologized as they walked sadly out of the kitchen. Bijou sat there confused. Was he in trouble too? Was he getting the left over food? What was the deal here?

"Weren't you a bit hard on them?" Angelo said putting his hands on Sassy's waist.

"That girl is a handful." Sasporilla sighed looking at Angelo and giving him a kiss. "I have to keep her in line some times. Look at this mess?"

"I'll clean it up, Ms. Sasporilla." Mabel said.

"I think the twins should clean this mess up." Angelo said.

"Normally I'd agree," Sasporilla said snapping her fingers and clearing the table of the mess with the exception of a few bits of food that accidentally fell to the floor for Bijou. "but I need the twins to come with me to the shop today."

"What do you think his chances are?" Angelo asked.

"50/50." Sasporilla sighed. "He is or he isn't. Only the grip tester will tell."

Garrick being a squibb was not a big deal in the Lazerus house hold. Sassy and Angelo would have no one made fun of, or thought less of, for any reason in their home. This was a quality they tried to ingrain in the twins. One they had no control over outside of the home but Sassy was a voice in Hogsmeade that people listened to. Many old ideals had changed since the arrival of Sasporilla Bucket in Hogsmeade.

In the shop squibb's were often brought in nervously by parents to be tested on the wand grip. Even the lowest amount of magical energy could be registered in the grip test and wand created! This was always an Earth shakingly exciting day for a young witch or wizard thought to have no magical ability! However, for those whom the grip registered no magical ability, their worlds sometimes came crashing down.

It was not long after the shop had first opened that Sasporilla got quite a surprise customer. The oldest squibb the shop had ever had visit. Mr.Filch the caretaker of Hogwarts.

"Mr.Filch!" Sasporilla smiled as she sidled up to him. "Welcome to Bucket Wands. I am so very happy to see you! How can I help you today?"

It was very clear he was nervous and embarrassed. "I... I..." the old man muttered quietly, "I'd like a test to see if I can get a wand?"

"Of course." Sasporilla said quietly like it was their secret. "Step this way."

Sassy walked the old man over to the grip on the counter.

"What do I do?" Filch hissed and sneered in his grumpy old manner.

"Grab the grip" Sasporilla said. "The read out will tell us your results."

"Hmfff." Filch nodded reluctantly grabbing hold of the grip.

Sasporilla pointed to the read out. Old Filchy brought out his reading glasses from his coat pocket and squinted at the read out. It showed a number he didn't understand.

"What does that rubbish mean?" Filch snapped.

"It's not a bunch of zeros." Sasporilla said. "It's not a needle buried in the no zone! Mr.Filch, you do have magical ability! We can build you a wand."

"I'm not a squibb?" The man shuddered.

"Nope." Sassy smiled.

"I'M NOT A SQUIBB!!!" Mr.Filch cheered.

"I'm very happy for you sir." Sassy smiled, a tear welling in her eye. "Step over here and we'll fix you up with a wand."

Mr.Argus Filch's wand was eleven and a half inch zebra wood wand. The handle wood loosely braided showing the glowing elven weave core. When it was presented to Mr.Filch he was warned it would give his palm a slight... pinch. That was the spell making the wand his. Unusable by anyone else for eternity! Filch held the wand with tears in his eyes. It felt so good. So natural. How many years could he have spent being the wizard he had been meant to be if only... if only....

"How do you like it Mr.Filch?"; Sasporilla asked from behind the counter.

"I always said." Old Filchy grumbled. "That if someone, some how could make me a Wizard, there would be a spell I would try out. You see, I watched and I learned while all the nasty little brats laughed at me and called me squibb. Well this is my revenge..."

Wands were drawn all over the shop by everyone. Everyone except Sasporilla Bucket.

"INCANTO FLORIDIUM!" Mr.Filch cast.

Flowers filled the walls and floor. A lovely bouquet dropped into Sasporilla's arms.

"I always swore I'd shower the witch who made me wizard with flowers."

Thank you so much Mr.Filch." Sasporilla smiled sniffing the lovely Violets and Irises. "But What if it had been a wizard?"

"I'd have bought him drink!" Mr.Filch said his face almost breaking as he half smiled, paid for his wand and left the shop.

"Weren't you afraid that old buzzard was going to cast a curse on you?" A customer asked putting away their wand.

"No." Sassy smiled. "Though I always hope for the best in people, as Mr.Filch proved to you all today he is more than capable of, everyone in my shop is protected from any harm. No one can cause magical nor physical harm to anyone in here."

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It was just a quarter to nine a.m. when Sasporilla and the twins came in through the shops back door.

"Good morning everyone!" Sasporilla called cheerily through out the shop.

"Good Morning Mrs." The staff smiled getting themselves ready for the front doors to open and the rush to start. A few people were looking in the shop window and checking the time but they had a few moments to themselves before the rush.

"Ok you two." Sasporilla smiled encouragingly. "It's time."

She shuffled them over to the grip tester.

"Ok Lyra you first!" Sasporilla said.

A few of the shop workers gathered to watch as the young woman bravely grabbed the grip which instantly registered her as a very powerful witch. Nearly off the chart!

"You have a pretty wide range of woods you can use but it says you must incorporate Amethyst, silver and gold."

"Cool." Lyra smiled.

"You know how the cases work." Sassy pointed. "Go ahead!"

"I want to watch Garrick!" Lyra smiled.

"Of course." Sassy smiled putting her hands gently on the shoulders of her trepidacious son.

Garrick stepped up and grabbed the grip without hesitation. The machine rolled and whirred. 000.000.....00...1.

"Is that the lowest score you've ever seen?" Lyra asked.

"What does that mean mum?" Garrick asked.

Sassy let out a deep sigh of relief throwing her head back and laughed. "It means, No that is NOT the lowest score I've seen in the shop. It means yes my dear son you do have magical powers but not like your sister. I won't be making your first wand. Rimpolli walked up to the counter with a box. He handed it to the boy inside was the oddest wand Garrick had ever seen.

"10 & 3/4 Butterfly wood & Brass knobby handle. Basilisk Fang & Phoenix tear core. The wand is known as conflicator and can only be wielded by an Elf Blood witch or wizard learning their craft." Sassy said.

"Me?" Garrick smiled picking up the wand, feeling the rush of power run through him and the wand.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. They turned to see Headmaster McGonagall at the front door of the shop 2 fresh Hogwarts letters in her hands. Rimpolli opened the door as everyone poured in.

"Sasporilla." Headmistress McGonagall smiled.

"Minerva, how have you been?" Sassy asked.

"Getting tired dear." The Headmistress sighed. "I'll soon retire and they'll no see the back of me for my speed going!"

"Oh please!" Sassy laughed. "You'll be there for decades yet. What brings you today?"

"Now don't play coy dear." Minerva McGonagall smiled. "It was never your strong suit. Your children have finally qualified for Hogwarts letters. Here they are. How do you want to handle the boy?"

"Full kitchens and laundry!" Sassy smiled. "All the elven exposure he can get."

"But he knows you have money?" Minerva said.

"I'll tell him out right it's part of his special training as an elf blood." Sassy said. "I did it, he'll have to do it. Like it or not."

"Glad your not my mother." The Head Mistress chuckled. "You are one tough cookie! Good day."

"Good day Head Mistress." Sasporilla waved.

"Ok Lyra, Garrick," Sassy smiled excitedly, "your Hogwarts letters are here with just two days to spare. You know what that means. We'll have to take you shopping."

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Lyra's wand was twelve inch cherry and bloodwood intertwined with an elven weave core using an amethyst as a point of balance between caster and spell cast. The gold and silver filigree in the notched crooked soft spiral design. She couldn't help but look at it while her mom got the first year books from Tomes and Scrolls.

"Quit staring at your stupid wand!" Garrick said shoving his sister.

"Quit it Butt-lick." Lyra said shoving back. "It's not my fault you got the weird wizard wand!"

"Shut up." Garrick huffed.

"And it's not my fault your in the 'special' class at Hogwarts!" Lyra teased "You should be happy you're going at all!"

"SHUT UP!" Garrick yelled. He was clearly angry now.

"WHAT... is... going .... on over here?" Sasporilla demanded of both silent children. "Lyra Karry Wysteria Janey Lazerus?"

Garrick Myron Ridonkulous Korry Lazerus? Hhhmmmmm? Either of you want to tell me why you're acting like five year olds in public? Shall I give you spanking like five year olds? Send you to bed without supper?"

"Well we didn't eat much for breakfast..." Lyra mumbled.

"Young lady you are treading on my last nerve for today!!!" Sasporilla said grabbing her darling daughter by the ear.

"I started it mum." Garrick said. "It's not Lyra's fault. I was making fun of her."

"I see." Sassy said grabbing hold of Garrick's ear. "Young Mr.Lazerous, you can carry all of these packages... books and all... home. Lyra make sure he gets home safe and sound. I have your shopping to finish up."

"Mum," Lyra started to say but her mother wanted to here nothing more from either of them.

"When you get home help Mabel make the lunch and set the table. Make sure you both get enough. Have her send me a bit down to the shop. Savvy?" Sassy instructed them.

Lyra nodded and ran off after Garrick.

"Why did you do that?" Lyra asked as she took half the load from her over burdened brother.

"I did it because mom was really mad this time." Garrick said. "We made her angry but you REALLY TICKED HER OFF! I had to do something. I mean... you're my sister. I kind of like you MUG."

"I tolerate you BUG." Lyra laughed sticking her tongue out at her brother and running off ahead.

"Why do I bother?" Garrick chuckled rolling his eyes.

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The shop was bustling when Sasporilla walked in. She expected nothing less for this time of year but was pleasantly surprised at some of the faces she saw. Sasporilla put the packages away and cast her shawl up onto the rack as she stepped up to the counter.

"May I help who was next please?" Sassy smiled.

"Oh my yes." A young dark haired mother said as she turned and ushered her children forward. "Sasporilla, oh my!"

"Oh!" Sassy gasped remembering the young woman from her coronation as Witch Queen. "Lilia! You were that wonderful young reporter that interviewed me!!!"

"I can't believe you remember me." Lilia said. "Let alone my name?"

"Only people I think are nice." Sasporilla smiled. "What can I do for you for you today? A wand obviously, I mean."

"Wands plural." Lilia said. "Marianna my little Griffyndor Broke her wand this summer over the head of a young man she doesn't like who tried to steal a kiss..."

"Mo-m!" Marianna protested.

"... and my little man Anthony needs his first wand. He got his Hogwarts letter this summer."

"Well let's get you all set up then!!!" Sasporilla smiled.

The children took the grip and found their wand types and sizes. Now it was just a question of woods and styles they had to choose from. They had no end of fun mixing and matching bits and parts through the rolling cabinets.

"Sasporilla." Lilia said leaning in. "I am on a bit of a budget so if the children pick anything to outrageous, please tell them that the part is out of stock?"

"Or how about we just make sure what ever wands they make today are affordable for you Lilia?" Sassy smiled. "It's the Bucket way. No one pays what they can't afford and no one goes without. Remember just where I came from."

"Thank you." Lilia smiled.

"We have plenty of galleons floating around here from donations and other spots. This ones on me," Sassy smiled back, "for your kindness to me that day."

Anthony's wand was made of a black Koa wood with snake embellishments. Marianna's new wand was also black but charred ebony with steel core and silver inlay. Quite pretty and sturdy enough to bang a boy on the head with and not snap in two like her previous wand. The price for both was actually very economical and well within Lilia's budget.

Sassy never liked that look on the children's face when they felt that pinch, but to know no other witch or wizard could ever take or use their wand against them, was worth it. All Bucket wands were attached to their users and anyone else would be blown back if they tried to use them.

Lilia and the children smiled as they took their bag of wands to go.

"Remember to look for my two at Hogwarts!" Sassy called after them. "Lyra and Garrick! It will be their first year as well!"

Wizards and witches mulled around the shop. Faces blurring past as one was served after another. Then a face stepped forward that Sasporilla recognized. A Hufflepuff boy who was a year ahead of her named Lee. Strangely enough he was not only very good at potions but was enjoyed the class and liked Professor Snape!

"Can I help you Lee?" Sasporilla asked.

"Um well yes of course." Lee said. "You're Sasporilla Bucket aren't you? The owner of these shops?"

"Yes." Sasporilla smiled. "As well as the designer of most of these wands and co-designer of the wand core system we use. I am also a Hufflepuff that was a year behind you at Hogwarts."

Lee searched his memory. Something clicked in his mind. His eyes widened.

"The little girl with pink hair that hung around the weird trouble maker with red hair and stinky troll girl?"

"Lyra and Janey." Sasporilla stiffened. "Yes. My best friend that year and that stinky half troll girl was the bravest girl who died at the battle of Hogwarts!"

"No!!!" Lee said wide-eyed. "I meant no offence. My adult mind that knows better went back to my second year idiot mind that didn't. I do apologize if I've offended you."

"No Lee of course not." Sassy smiled reassuringly.

"Actually I was always rather jealous of you all." Lee said

"Of us?" Sassy asked "The weird first years?"

"Yes. I mean no! I mean.." Lee stumbled and Sassy put her hands over her mouth to hide her lip bitten giggle.

"What I mean is I was a misfit just like you guys. Only I had no one. I just didn't fit in. I was alone. That's why I clung to Professor Snape I guess. He reminded me of my grand father in so many ways."

"Lee!" Sasporilla gasped so surprised. "I remember everyone liking you! A few of the girls even had crushes on you!"

Lee stood there mouth hanging open. "Well. This is information I wish I'd had when I was a teenager!"

The pair of them started to laugh heartily like the oldest of old friends.

"Now let's start again," Sassy said, "how can I help you today?"

"Wands for my two children Fin and Sophia." Lee smiled.

"That is just what we're here for!" Sassy smiled.

"Sophia needs her first wand as this will be her first year at Hogwarts." Lee smiled.

"Congratulations young lady." Sasporilla said.

"And my dear daughter refuses to use her Grandmother's antique Olivander wand." Lee rolled his eyes.

"I learned how it tears apart the fabric of magic." Sophia said. "It makes me sick. I want an Elven weave core that the fabric of magic flows through! It's more environmentally friendly."

"She is quite the environmentalist." Lee smiled proudly.

"It's a thing to be proud of." Sasporilla smiled.

"My young man Fin had his wand taken from him in a back alley duel." Lee frowned.

"Dad", Fin through his hands up for the 10th time, "Josh and I had no choice. They were Broomers and they weren't taking NO for an answer!"

"Really?" Sassy frowned. "Where was this? I can send Auror friends of mine to put a stop to them."

"The alley by the barrel which leads down to Knockturn Alley." Fin said.

"Where you shouldn't... be hanging... around!!!!" Lee said in a low harsh tone, which was frighteningly reminiscent of professor Snape.

"I'll talk to people about it and have them... dealt with." Sasporilla assured them. "Now step up and let's get you some wands shall we?"

"Yes please!" All three of them said.

Fin's wand was close to a full fourteen inches long and resembled in many ways a jousting lance. It's long tapered front widened just before the handle giving it that lance effect. Made from Cherry wood and Rose wood the unique wand had rose quartz in its handle.

Sofia's wand was wand was Hickory and Poplar, length twelve and seven eighth inches. It had a Turned handle but a very natural wand end. An inlay of emerald green vines and leaves flowed up the wand from end to tip.

Both kids were ecstatic with their new wands and dad with the price. Bucket wands, unless custom hand made, really were half the price of old style wands. Even with modern day inflation.

Lee had the broadest smile she had ever seen on a Hufflepuff. This was the part of the job that makes it all worth while. Waving good-bye to them Sasporilla moved on to the next customer and the next....

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Lyra and Garrick did not understand why their mother made them come to London the night before school? They got to stay in the most prestigious and coveted hotel on Diagon Alley, The Golden Goose Hotel. There were only two suites and they had to be booked years in advance. The chances of being bounced from your reservation for someone more important was rare, as only the truly important celebrated witches and wizards were allowed to stay here... until today.

Apparently this was the final day of the hotels exclusivity. It had been bought and was about to be renovated to hold many guests of all types. Much to the expressed vitriol of some of the long term employees who were about to change or retire.

After a great restful night sleep Sasporilla made sure the children had all of there things together.

"You have your chests?" Sassy asked.

"Yes mother." The twins answered rolling their eyes.

"You've got your carry on bags?" Sassy asked checking her own things.

"Yes mother."

"Lyra, where is your owl?" Sassy asked.

"Heidi is right here mother!" Lyra said suddenly lifting the small cage on her far-left side. The poor young elf owl was visibly shaken. Small fluffy pinfeathers wafted about as it let out a hoot.

"And you have Bijou Garrick?" Sassy asked.

"Yes mum but why do we have to bring all of this with us and the animals? Are you leaving dad? Are we running away to some private island? Or Avalon? Are we going to live in the castle."

"You really are thick aren't you bug?" Lyra sneered.

"Shut it MUG!" Garrick snapped.

"Enough of that you two." Sassy insisted. "We have to get to Kings cross Station. Come on now."

"Kings Cross Station?" Garrick asked. "We came all the way here just to take the train home?"

"Not just any train guys," Sassy smiled pulling their tickets from her handbag, "The Hogwarts Express!"

"Yay!" Lyra fiend excitement then gave a thumbs down and blew a raspberry. "Big deal. A train full of snot nosed Melvin's all heading to school singing school spirit songs."

"Lyra Karry Wysteria Janey Lazerus!" Sasporilla gasped. "Pull back the reigns on that attitude! This ride is a pivotal part of the Hogwarts experience. You may meet other kids on the ride there that become your best friends for life!"

"Like aunt Karry and uncle Zac?" Garrick asked.

"Exactly." Sasporilla said tapping the tip of his nose.



"If I just let you meet the students at the platform or at school, I would rob you of all that. I just can't, in my heart, do that to the two of you." Sasporilla said. "Do you understand."

"I love you mom." Garrick said hugging his mother.

"Lyra?" Sassy asked.

"Yes mom I get it." The girl said throwing back her head in defeat. "You're a sappy nostalgic old lady but I love you."

Lyra hugged her mother and Sassy kissed both her children on top of the head.

"You're ground for a hundred and eighty years for that old lady crack Lyra."

"Ya ya." Lyra said hugging tighter. "Put it on my tab."

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There were a few magical families at Kings Cross Station when the Buckets arrived. It was funny how muggles just didn't seem to see them with their trolleys of chests and bags, an owl cage and eight-month-old huge dog.

Lyra needed no prodding when it came to running through the barrier between platforms nine and ten. Honestly she always wondered if she'd hit anyone on the other side? No such luck.

Garrick was a tad nervous.

"I'll run and push with you." Sassy smiled. "On the count of three. One, two, three!!!"

Mother and son ran the cart, Bijou flopping along behind, as they ran through onto platform nine and three quarters. Sasporilla took a moment to speak with a few of the moms who recognized her from the shop. She blamed herself for not paying attention to what was going on around her.

Worker elf porters' gladly took trolleys to the help load baggage on the train. Lyra let her owl Heidi be loaded with baggage but Garrick absolutely refused to let anyone put Bijou in with the bags.

"No!" Garrick yelled holding Bijou's leash as an elderly porter pulled on the dog's collar.

'Wofk!' Bijou half barked half choked.

"What is going on?" Sasporilla demanded. "Unhand my sons dog immediately!"

"Your SON was attempting to take this ANIMAL onto the train. It is NOT PERMITTED."

Sasporilla pulled a letter from her pocket book. "This is a letter from Headmistress McGonagall. This ANIMAL has been APPROVED by HOGWARTS as his animal OF CHOICE over and above a cat, rat, frog or owl."

"I don't care if the..." the old man stopped and looked at the pink haired witch for a moment. "Pink... hair... THE MONKEY!"

Sasporilla realized this old fellow was the same train worker that gave her such a hard time all those many years ago.

"Yes." Sassy nodded. "I was the pink haired little girl with a monkey. Are you the man who didn't want me to take her on the train?"

"Yes!" The old man hissed. "It was against the rules. I don't care who you are or what pull you have! IT'S AGAINST THE RULES!!!"

"I understand." Sasporilla said. "Give Bijou to me son."

"But mom!" Garrick gasped surprised.

"No." Sassy said. "Rules are rules. I will bring Bijou back with me and meet you on the platform with him when you arrive. When the school asks why I'll explain it to the school. No one, is above the rules."

The old man looked at the pink haired witch in amazement. "You're not going to fight or cry or threaten?"

"Nope." Sasporilla said shaking her head. "When I was here as a kid I was happy to have people who fought for me because I was a poor child from Essex that really never known anyone ever fought for her in her life. Now me and mine have it all. Including love and self-respect. If it what it takes to make another person, like you happy, is to simply do the right thing and follow the rules properly? Then that is just what the Buckets will do!"

"Right." The old man nodded. "Go on then son, get on board."

"Where is Lyra?" Sassy asked getting a hug and a kiss from her son.

The boy looked around and pointed down the platform. Lyra was talking with some Hogwarts Gryffindor Quidditch fans. She was doing tricks with a quaffle that would make any pro take notice.

"Wow kid." One of the Gryffindor's said. "I'd say you should try out for the team but first years aren't allowed."

"Unless there exceptional." Sassy said coming up with Bijou and Garrick. "Harry Potter was taken in first year as Griffyndor seeker. Come on Lyra, time to stop showing off and get on the train with your brother."

"See ya Lyra!" The Griffyndor's waved.

"Way to embarrass me mom!" Lyra protested.

"Oh I can do so much better!!!" Sassy said bending down bear hugging her daughter and smothering her face in kisses.

Garrick almost wet himself laughing until they both turned on him!!! Even Bijou joined in and his kisses were the gooiest and the sloppiest!!!

Sasporilla hated to let them go, but she rushed her children up the step and into the Hogwarts Express train car.

\*\*\*\*\*

Everyone rushed through the train. Checking the cars for friends or for at the very least free space. A group of pushy fourth year Ravenclaw's shoved past Marianna and Anthony as they looked for a car.

"Excuse you!" Marianna said.

"Jerks." Anthony muttered straitening himself.

"Never mind them." Marianna said. "Those three think they're special as they have the highest grades in school."

The next car had only two young, obviously first years in it. Marianna slid open the door and asked "Room for more?"

"Of course!" Garrick smiled enthusiastically as Anthony stepped in and sat down.

"Hold on a second please Marianna." A voice said.

"Fin." Marianna smiled seeing her houses head boy already dressed in house robes. "What's up?"

"I need to speak to you about a couple of things that concern Griffyndor house this year. In confidence if we might?"

"Ummm yes of course." Marianna said hesitantly. She never liked clandestine meetings but if Fin needed to meet it must be important.

"Hi." Garrick smiled holding out his hand to the new boy. "I'm Garrick. Garrick Lazerus."

"I'm Anthony." The boy smiled shaking his hand. "Anthony Spanguolo."

"Nice to meet you Anthony." Garrick said. "This is my sister Lyra."

"Hello." Anthony smiled.

Lyra blew a large red bubble from her bubblegum. She popped it out on her finger and stuck it on the end of her brothers nose. "Nice to meet'cha Tony. I was named after the Goddess of anarchy."

Lyra stood dramatically "I am chaos incarnate!" Then suddenly bent into Anthony's face her wand drawn and pointed at her brother. BOO she said as she poked the bubble gum with a loud POP! Making both boys jump and Lyra laugh insanely.

Anthony clearly questioned his choice of seating and whether or not he could catch up with his sister.

Lyra took her gum and popped it back in her mouth. "Still eighty eight days of flavour left in this one."

"Don't mind her." Garrick said. "Mug likes to think she's funny, but sometimes she's just weird!"

"Ok." Anthony gulped.

"Weird?" Lyra said. "Speak for yourself Bug."

"Mug and Bug." Anthony said. "Is that what you call each other?"

"Amongst other things." Lyra laughed. "Once I called him a moth-"

"Lyra!!!" Garrick gasped. "And got us both grounded for three weeks thank you very much."

"Only because you called me a mean spirited bi..." Lyra started but the car door slid open.

"It looks as though you are all first years." A seventh year Slytherin Girl said. "I'm Layla the Slytherin Head Girl. I would appreciate any and all assistance in passing the message to my house that I expect everyone in full uniform and robes upon arrival."

"Will do." Anthony smiled.

Garrick nodded, Lyra just thumped her head into the window.

"Thanks much." Layla smiled. "Good luck on your sorting. Hoping to see some of you in Slytherin."

The Slytherin head girl walked on down the corridor out of sight.

"Well she seemed nice." Anthony said. "For a Slytherin I mean."

"Not all Slytherin's are bad." Lyra sighed. "Our uncle Zac was Slytherin and he is a sweet kitten. His wife is a Hufflepuff like our mom and smart as A Ravenclaw and braver than any Griffyndor. Your sort really doesn't matter. Just don't let it change who you are for the worse, only for the better."

Anthony sat there gob-smacked. "Who are you?"

"Goddess of chaos baby?" Lyra laughed and popped another bubble.

A young blonde girl, another first year, stuck her head in the open door. "Excuse me but have you seen my brother? He's an older Griffyndor. His name is Fin???"

"Yes." Garrick said.

"He took my sister Marianna away to speak about something." Anthony said.

"Wonderful." The young lady sighed. "Well then may I sit with you? He's left me behind and I wanted some money for the trolley. Guess that's out."

"Can I ask you a question Fin's sister?" Lyra said leaning forward gently taking the young ladies hands.

"Yes." She answered.

"WHAT'S YOUR NAME!!!!" Lyra yelled scaring her and making the boys jump.

"What the he..." the girl said out of breath. "What is wrong with you?"

"Goddess of chaos." The two boys said flatly.

"Sofia!" The girl yelled back. "My name is Sofia."

"Hi Sofia! I'm Lyra!" Lyra said leaping forward giving the girl a big hug. "I hope we can be friends and have sleepovers, listen to music, talk all night... we'll be great friends!!!"

"Is she mentally ill?" Anthony asked.

"No." Garrick laughed. "My parents had her tested. That's just Lyra."

"Anything from the trolley dears?" A soft voice called from the door.

The boys rushed up to the door for Chocolate frogs and gummy burps.

"Nothing for me." Sophia sighed. "I'm broke."

"My besty broke?" Lyra said. "I'll not hear of it! Come on Sophie, it's on me!"

\*\*\*\*\*

All first years were ordered into uniforms, robes and hats before the train came to a stop at Hogsmeade station. The train was greeted by a giant of a man, the schools grounds keeper Rubious Hagrid.

"This way to the boats." Hagrid called. "First years folla me!"

Lyra elbowed her brother in the ribs when she saw what he was holding.

"Ow! What?" Garrick asked looking to where his sister gestured.

Hagrid was standing there with a big broad smile holding Bijou's leash. Garrick ran up to the giant smiling.

"Hello Hagrid." Garrick smiled.

"'ello there Garrick." Hagrid smiled back. "I sees ya had a safe trip. I was a safe'n too I imagines ay? Ay?"

"Yes it was just fine thank you." Garrick said. "My mom left Bijou with you?"

"She did indeed." Hagrid smiled handing over the leash to the young boy. "She didn' wan' t' embarrass ya infrom' of any new friends ya migh' make on the Express."

"Ah the wisdom of the ELDERLY." Lyra laughed as she walked by with her new captive friend Sophia.

"Speakin' o'friends who is this young feller 'ere?" Hagrid asked.

"Oh I'm Anthony." The young man smiled holding up his hand to shake.

"Well Anthony I'm Rubious Hagrid, keeper of Grounds and Keys here a' Hogwarts an' I am honoured t' mee' ya!"

"Like wise sir!" Anthony smiled.

"Wha' a nice young feller!" Hagrid smiled.

"Ya yer mum told me abou' tha' fella back a' Kings Cross. Pencil pushin' sticklers fer stupid rules tha' don' hur' nobody bu' give'm power ya see. Makes'em feel big inside ta harass people."

"I think my mom was right though." Garrick said. "No one is above following the rules."

"Well tha's true." Hagrid said leaning in. "bu' no one is so low tha' they don' go' th' righ' t' question'm! Remember tha'."

"I will Hagrid." Garrick said.

"Allrigh' you firs' years enough daudlin'!" Hagrid yelled. "Come along!"

The trip across the Black Lake in the enchanted boats, on a starlit September first night, was pure magic. On the other side the boats were moored and the children ushered inside to the great hall. It was time for the children to be sorted into their houses.

Deputy Headmaster Flitwick stood up before the great hall with the list of names and the sorting hat. Of course he stood on a platform that was built for him, for the occasion, and he used his wand to place the sorting hat. Everything in the end worked out just fine.

Anna Alvarez was first. A small slight girl with thick glasses. She was sorted to Ravenclaw.

"Garrick Lazerus." The name was not as well known as Bucket. Perhaps that's why mother had insisted on them taking their fathers last name.

Garrick stepped up and sat on the stool as the sorting hat fell upon his head and gripped him tightly.

"Many Buckets have I passed through these houses. Many through Slytherin. You have no opinion, curious. I also have place some in Ravenclaw. Also no opinion from you. A Lazerus has passed through here. Oh yes one or two. Very, very curious." The sorting hat was perplexed at the young man's sense of calm resolve. "You have an inner strength, bravery, but fierce loyalty and are a hard worker above all else. Ahhhhhhh you are like only one other Bucket I've seen before with the skin of a wizard but the blood of an Elf. I will put you in.... HUFFLEPUFF!!!"

The Hufflepuffs cheered as Garrick walked over. His Hogwarts patch shifting to a Hufflepuff one.

"Lyra Lazerus." Professor Flitwick called.

Lyra walked up and sat down before the hat could touch her head she grabbed it, turned it towards her and snarled something in a low growling voice to it. Then she plonked it down on her own head and sat there like a pretty princess looking innocent.

"Griffyndor" The sorting hat said. "Yes, yes! Definitely Griffyndor. Let's move to the next child please!"

When the hat was removed from Lyra's red hair, she skipped playfully to the Griffyndor table and took her seat proudly with welcome from the Quidditch fans she'd met on the platform at Kings Cross.

"What did you say to the sorting hat that scared it so bad?" A young Griffyndor asked.

"I warned it if it didn't sort me into Griffyndor I'd use a spell that my aunt Karry found that could destroy it!"

Lyra smiled all cute batting her eyelashes.

"That sounds like something a Slytherin would do!" One Boy accused.

"Yes but before he could even agree I told him I'd stuffed the only ancient copy up inside him for his own safe keeping." Lyra smiled. "So then it was his decision. There-by putting his life in his hands and no body else's forever. Sounds pretty Griffyndor to me...ay?"

This year saw the usual cross of students distributed between the houses but there seemed to be a greater number in Griffyndor for some reason and the lowest amount in Hufflepuff in a century. However the sorting ceremony was far from over.

The Griffyndor table found its Head boy Fin deep in quieted conversation at the far end of the house table with the third year girl he'd called along after him on the train. A young Griffyndor by the name of Marianna.

"I'm telling you it's all ready approved." Fin reassured the young lady. "All you need to do is accept."

"Me?" Marianna blushed. "A Griffyndor prefect? Really?"

"Of the list of candidates I submitted to the Headmistresses office at the end of last year," Fin smiled, "your name came back on the top of the list! So that means Old McGonagall herself agrees with me. You would be perfect... for prefect!"

Marianna was so very excited. It was a lot of responsibility to try and keep her housemates to obey the rules... or at least the important enough ones.

"Ok." Marianna smiled. "I'll take the job."

"Anthony Spagnuolo" Professor Flitwick called. - Slytherin

The confident young man stepped forward and sat on the stool with a big happy grin. The sorting hat was lowered onto his head and it latched onto his head.

"You might belong in Hufflepuff,

Where they are just and loyal,

Those patient Hufflepuffs are true

And unafraid of toil. I see you already have a friend you've made in there..." the old sorting hat mused. "... but perhaps it is in Slytherin you'll find what you truly seek. That to take you further and make you better. The better best version there is of you..... YES.....SLYTHERIN!!!!"

Layla, the Slytherin head girl, had the whole table stand to welcome their newest house mate. Quite frankly most of them were growing tired of it but no one dared say anything for she was a tough as she was kind.

Anthony bounced happily over to the Slytherin table where he took his seat and went to shake hands but found very few to shake. He quickly found there were a lot of snobs in Slytherin.

"Hey Anthony!" A voice said from behind him.

Anthony turned to see Garrick sitting behind him on the Hufflepuff table bench.

"Congrats on making Slytherin Anthony." Garrick said holding out his hand.

"Thanks Garrick." Anthony said shaking his friend's hand. "Congrats to you too on making Hufflepuff! Hope we have some classes together."

A second year Slytherin boy named Guyus Draaper slapped their hands apart.

"Ow!" Anthony yelled.

"Quit it!" Garrick protested

"We don't consort with HUFFLEPUFF'S!"

Garrick took a rather deep breath and let loose with a loud "&^%# you!"

"Silence please!" Headmistress McGonagall said loudly but firmly. Her steel glare ending all conflict on that side of the hall. It was then they realized their friend Sophia was stepping up to be sorted.

Sophia sat nervously on the stool of all the houses she did NOT want to be put in Slytherin. The sorting hat was barely placed above the young girls head before it rang out GRIFFYNDOR! Never since the Malfoy boy had the sorting hat made a decision so quickly.

The Griffyndor table stood and cheered, but none so loud as Lyra!

"BESTIE!!!" Lyra yelled excitedly grabbing the young witch as she walked over stunned. "Oh I hoped we get roomed together! We can stay up all night studying! Breakfasts, lunches, dinners together! We'll make all wonderful friends and try out for the Quidditch team together! It will be an amazing seven years!"

Sophia could only sit in shock as she realized that, for now, she was stuck with this red-spiky haired, psychotic, that she prayed was only making a joke for her own amusement.

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Students poured into Professor Melody Leon's class. Unlike other Hogwarts classrooms hers was stuffed from head to toe with memorabilia from every generation of Hogwarts. Unlike the seriously important pieces on display throughout the castle most teachers and students considered her collection just bits of tat but she knew better! These were valuable bits of history that she was saving and preserving. One day they would see! They would all see.

Of course Peeve's enjoyed a good game scavenger hunt better than most! Or rather he enjoyed stealing Professor Leon's collectibles and hiding them on her so that she would go near mad having to look all over finding them around the castle. What fun!!!

"Good morning." Professor Leon smiled. This was a brand new class of first years. A good mix of all houses represented. Unlike some classes Professor Leon liked to mix her class up so not all houses sat in sections. The children were spread out amongst each other. This stopped a lot of in house cheating, cronyism and bullying.

"Welcome to the History of Hogwarts 101." The lovely professor said standing from her desk. "I am your Professor, Ms.Leon, and we are a serious history class. So if you think this is going to be an easy one, it will not be. If you think I will mark you easily. Well... we'll see. Now, open your tiny volumes of Hogwarts a History and open to Page one."

The grunts of first year students pulling the huge books from their bags and the thumps on their tables always made Professor Leon Smile.

"Now before we start to read." Ms.Leon started. "Who can tell me some of Hogwarts more esteemed and successful alumni?"

Only three or four hands shot up. She took note of who they were as these would be the ones who answered the lion share of questions all year.

"Yes Ms.Windsnapple is it?" Professor Leon pointed.

"Yes professor." The young Ravenclaw nodded. "Harry Potter."

"Yes." Professor Leon agreed leaning back on her desk. "Harry Potter. The boy who lived. The young man who lead the houses of children against the attacking Death Eaters lead by the Villain Voldemort at the BATTLE OF HOGWARTS. Something you'll study in length in year five. Any one else?"

"Albus Dumbledore." Was another boys answer.

"Some say he was the greatest headmaster of all time!" Professor Leon smiled thoughtfully. "But was he really? These are questions you'll be asked to answer!"

"Newt Scamander." A girl from Hufflepuff smiled.

"Author of Fantastic Beasts and where to find them." Professor Leon nodded. "The book that single handedly changed the way the wizarding world looked at magical creatures! Well done! Five points for Hufflepuff! However, was he the greatest Hufflepuff of all time?"

The Ravenclaw girl thrust her hand up again. "Clearly not Professor. I mean, there was Helga Hufflepuff after all. The original Hufflepuff!"

"Very true!" Professor Leon politely applauded. "Not truly alumni but I'll allow it."

Another boy at the back stuck his hand up. A big young man that looked a bit shy and unsure of himself from Griffyndor. "Yes Mr. McDunne?"

"Lyra Lazerus!" The boy mumbled.

"I'm sorry young man can you speak up please?" Professor Leon smiled encouragingly.

"LYRA 'WILDFIRE' LAZEROUS!" The boy yelled standing pumping his fist in the air in praise. "BEST CHASER THE HISTORY OF CHUDLEY CANNONS!!!"

Some of the class gasped and some laughed at him. Professor Leon clapped. "I must say young Mr.McDunne I do express admiration for your enthusiasm for the sport."

"I fancy her." The boy said sitting down. "I have her autographed poster at home."

"Very nice." The professor wanted to quickly move past that subject now. "Yes she was indeed a Griffyndor here, but what of her family?"

"Her brother is an inventor and businessman like his father!" McDunne smiled. "Of course her mom is the wand lady who was like Witch Queen and freed all the elf slaves and stuff."

"Yes Sasporilla Bucket." Professor Leon laughed. "Also one of the hero's of Hogwarts that figured out how to successfully do her fathers failed spell and reversed the dementor's kiss! No big deal. Also a Hufflepuff by the way."

Professor Leon walked back to her desk and had a seat. "Who would like to read the opening few paragraphs for us?"

The Ravenclaw girl put her hand up like a shot, which was of course no surprise to the Professor.

"Go ahead Ms.Windsnapple." Professor Leon smiled.

""Over a thousand years ago (10th century), the four greatest witches and wizards of the same age shared a dream, to create a school where young people of the wizarding world could study and be trained in the magical arts they needed to become skilled, fully-trained wizards. These four great wizards each founded one of the Houses ( Hufflepuff, Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw)of the school that they worked together to form: Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry."" .....

# The End of an Era

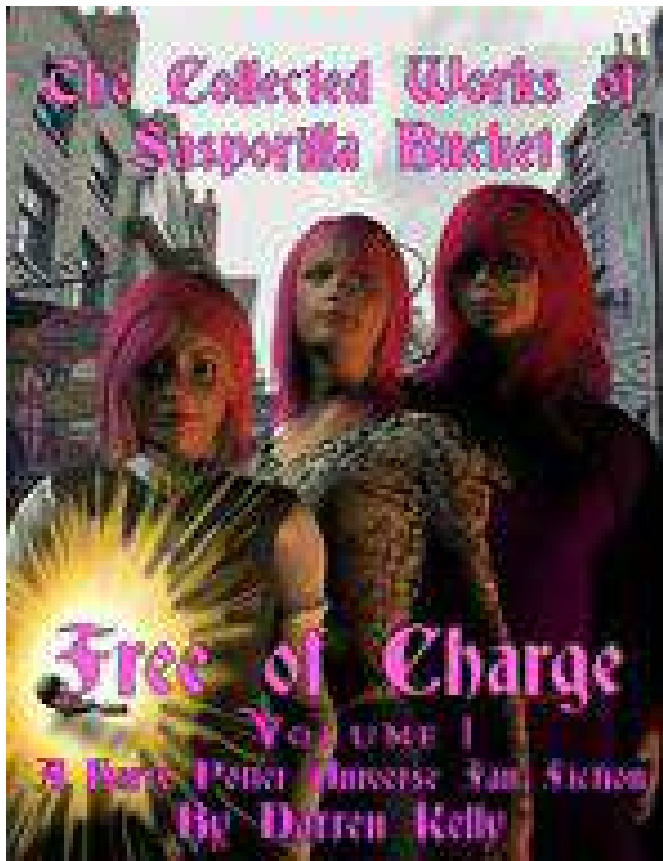
# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Darren Kelly married 50+ year old who is very much still in love with his wife of more years than she'd care to remember! He has many hobbies and enjoys writing and working on art in CGI or sketching. He is a dog lover and loves the books of J.K. Rowling and films of Harry Potter.

Darren Kelly is a very private person though he will always take time to talk with friendly people.

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