

THE LOVE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

It was love that motivated me to accompany Luna Lovegood on a dangerous mission. We'd been inseparable for three years, and by now we were as much in love with each other as any two fourteen-year-olds could be. As soon as we had met as Ravenclaw first-years, I undertook to protect her against any harm that may have befallen her. At first it was only mean pranks played by students who were intolerant of her harmless eccentricities. To be an effective protector, I was going to have to increase my magical powers, and who better to teach me to do so than Hermione Granger? She was a year ahead of me and the brightest student in her year. She was already tutoring several of her friends, but I managed to persuade her to tutor me and Luna as well by doing favours for her and her friends. The spells Hermione taught us were already powerful when cast by a single person, but when Luna and I both cast the same spell at the same time and place, our combined spells were even stronger, powerful enough to undo any harm that her enemies could do to her, and they soon gave up and quit picking on her.

But now, near the end of our fourth year, Luna faced a danger far greater than a few naughty students: she had volunteered to accompany some of her Gryffindor friends, including Hermione, to the Ministry of Magic to rescue Sirius Black from the Dark Lord! She didn't have to ask me to come with her; there was no way I could have been kept from doing so. The other students rode on thestrals, but I was afraid to ride an animal I couldn't see; so I followed them on my broomstick. When we got there, Sirius was nowhere to be found, but several Death Eaters suddenly confronted us, and they were soon joined by the Dark Lord himself! We ran for the exit, the Dark Lord and his followers in hot pursuit. I stayed at the back of the pack of students, casting the Protego spell behind me every few steps, and as a result, none of us got hurt except for Ron Weasley, who had been addled by some brains he had touched.

Suddenly we found ourselves trapped in a room with the Dark Lord and his Death Eaters! Fortunately some members of the Order of the Phoenix, including Sirius Black, came to our rescue. Thinking that they could manage without our help, we all hid behind various objects, but I soon saw that Sirius was in terrible danger! He had foolishly challenged Bellatrix Lestrange to a duel. She was a much better dueller than he was and he was standing in a very dangerous place. I stepped out into the open and cast the Protego spell between Sirius and Bellatrix just in time to intercept a spell shooting out from each of their wands. By this time, the other members of the Order had arrested all the Death Eaters except for Bellatrix. Finding themselves overmatched, the Dark Lord and Bellatrix disappeared.

"Why did you do that?" Sirius rounded on me. "I could have had her. Her spell wasn't Avada Kedavra; the flash of light from her wand was red, not green."

"No, she would have had you," I replied. "You were standing right in front of the veil. Luna, who has seen death, told me that she heard the voices of the dead through the veil. Any spell that hit you would have knocked you through the veil and you would have joined the dead."

Sirius thought for a while, and then said, "Well, young man, it seems that you saved my life, and I thank you. Is there anything I can do for you in return?"

"Yes, there is," I replied. "I've heard that you're an Animagus, and I'd like you to teach me how to become one too."

"Gladly!" he said. And then we all made the long trip back to Hogwarts. Sirius could have apparated with the other members of the Order, but he decided to keep us company on the way back. He too was afraid to ride on a thestral; so he rode with me on my broomstick. He then appealed his conviction on the charges for which he had been incarcerated in Azkaban, and with Albus Dumbledore as his chief witness, he was cleared of all charges.

It took me two years to learn how to transform myself totally into an animal. In the meantime, Luna faced another danger from which I was to protect her, and this time I didn't need to use magic. Every Christmas she used to go home to spend some time with her father Xenophilius, but this time, in our sixth year, I pleaded with her to stay at Hogwarts with me. "Now that the Dark Lord has taken over the Ministry, it's not safe to venture out of Hogwarts," I said. "This is still the safest place to be." After some hesitation, she agreed, and it was a lucky thing that she did. When the students returned to Hogwarts at the end of the Christmas holidays, some of them told us that a gang of Snatchers had boarded the Hogwarts express on the way from Hogsmeade to King's Cross Station and searched for Luna! Apparently the Dark Lord had wanted to use her as a hostage to make her father stop publishing articles in his newspaper, the Quibbler, in support of Harry Potter, the Dark Lord's greatest enemy. I was relieved that she had avoided being captured and I was all the more determined to continue protecting her.

A couple of months later, I finally became a full-fledged Animagus. A wizard can't choose his Animagus. It reflects his personality, and my Animagus, a bonobo, reflects mine: intelligent and peaceful. It was the very animal I had hoped it would be. As an ape I could handle a wand. Although I couldn't say an incantation, I had already learned how to cast non-verbal spells, and since nobody would suspect an ape of being capable of casting a spell, I could do so by surprise. Of course, I didn't register right away, because that would have blown my cover to the Ministry, which was in the Dark Lord's hands. Little did I know how soon I was going to have to use my newfound powers.

Near the end of the school year, we suddenly saw that Hogwarts was no longer going to be the safe place it had been up until then. The Dark Lord was advancing on Hogwarts, bringing with him an army of Death Eaters and other disgusting creatures like giants, acromantulas and dementors! The defenders began erecting a magical barricade, but they warned everyone that the barricade wouldn't hold off the enemy for long. "It will if many of you cast the same spell at the same time and place," Luna announced. "We've been practising teamwork since our first year here and it makes spells stronger. We'll be outside the barricade, though. I think I know a way we can stop this battle before it starts, but I'll need your help." She whispered something to Kingsley Shacklebolt and he nodded. Then she explained to me the plan she had conceived and the part I was to play in it. I protested that it was a risky plan and I wouldn't always be able to protect her, but she was adamant, and after some hesitation I agreed to go along. I transfigured myself into my bonobo form and the two of us left the vicinity of the castle, armed with our wands, and stopped just outside the area where the barricade was being erected.

The nearest Death Eaters bumped up against the barricade and were stopped in their tracks. The Dark Lord and all his Death Eaters threw every spell they knew at the barricade, but it held firm.

One of them spotted us, grabbed Luna and yelled, "I've caught one of the students, my Lord. We can use her as a hostage." He dragged her over to the Dark Lord, while I followed behind, ignored by everyone and everything around me.

"Well, well, look what we have here!" sneered the Dark Lord. "We tried to kidnap you on the Hogwarts Express to shut up that crazy father of yours. You got away from us then, but now you foolishly walk right into our clutches, and at a most convenient moment for us, too! Did you think we'd be too soft-hearted to use you as a hostage to make the Hogwarts defenders lower their barricade, or did you think your pet ape could stop us by hitting us all over the head with that stick?"

While the Death Eaters were laughing at the Dark Lord's joke, I pointed my wand at him and applied all my willpower to cast the Obliviate curse non-verbally at him and then immediately cast Protego around myself and Luna. He fell onto his back. Bellatrix, who had been looking at him with love in her eye, rushed over to him and said, "Are you all right, my Lord?"

"Am I a lord?" he asked, staggering to his feet, breaking his wand and throwing away the pieces.

"What did you do to him?" she screamed, pointing her wand at Luna.

"I made it possible for him to love you," replied Luna. "All you have to do is tell him that you're his lover and kiss him. It'll be imprinted on his mind."

"This better work or I'll torture you into insanity!" Bellatrix growled at Luna. Then, turning to the Dark Lord, she said softly, "Did I say 'my Lord'? I meant 'my lover'." And then she gave him a passionate kiss on the lips.

"Well, Darling, let's get away from this crowd," he said, looking at her with hearts in his eyes. "I'd take you home with me, but I don't remember where I live."

"Oh, my poor baby!" she said. "Come with me. I'll lead you there." With that, the two of them pushed their way through the crowd of Death Eaters and creatures, holding hands and kissing each other every few steps.

The Death Eaters nearest to us pointed their wands at Luna, but before they could cast any spells, one of them - Severus Snape - declared, "Okay, folks, the party's over. Let's go home. Even if we could get through that barricade, we could never defeat the defenders of Hogwarts. They still have an inspirational leader and we no longer do."

"If we just give up, how are we going to stay out of Azkaban?" asked one of the Death Eaters.

Snape was uncharacteristically silent, but Luna announced, "I spoke to Kingsley Shacklebolt, who will soon become the new Minister for Magic, and he promised that if you stand down now, tell the truth to the Wizengamot about what you did and why you did it, and never commit another crime, you will be pardoned." Most of the Death Eaters began leaving the area, leading the creatures away with them, and the holdouts, seeing how few of them there were, reluctantly followed them.

At the trial, Death Eater after Death Eater confessed and was pardoned. The last of them to speak was Snape. "I joined the Death Eaters to wreak revenge on two Gryffindors who had bullied me during our student days," he said. "But when the Dark Lord murdered the only woman I ever loved, even though he could have got everything he wanted by Stunning her instead, I was so furious with him that I switched sides and worked for the Order as a spy against him and the other Death Eaters. Of course, I did have to do some evil deeds to avoid blowing my cover. And yes, I did murder Albus Dumbledore – on his request. The Dark Lord had ordered Draco Malfoy to kill Dumbledore, threatening to kill Draco and his parents if he failed, and to protect Draco, his mother insisted that I make an Unbreakable Vow to do the deed if he failed, which he did. If I had broken the Vow, I would have died instantly, and Dumbledore, realizing that he was by then too weak to be of as much use to the Order as I was, ordered me to kill him. It was my Patronus that led Harry Potter to the Sword of Gryffindor, which he used to destroy one of the Dark Lord's Horcruxes. I wish to apologize to all the people I hurt and I beg the Wizengamot to pardon me."

Just as the Wizengamot was preparing to adjourn, Sirius got up and took the stand, surprising everyone present, and said, "In most conflicts, atrocities are committed by both sides, and this one is no exception. I was one of the two Gryffindors who bullied Severus Snape, and worse, I am guilty of attempted murder. When he started spying on our werewolf friend, I tried to eliminate him by exposing him to the werewolf, and it was only the interference of the other bully that saved him. I wish to apologize to Severus for my unconscionable behaviour and I beg the Wizengamot to pardon me." As the Wizengamot finally did adjourn, the two former enemies shook hands, embraced and left the courtroom with their arms around each other's shoulders.

Life in the wizarding world returned to normal. Neville Longbottom killed the Dark Lord's snake Nagini, which contained one his Horcruxes, and Hermione exorcised the last Horcrux – the one in Harry's forehead – which she was able to do without killing him because it had flown there instead of being put there with a magic spell. With the Ministry now in good hands, I finally registered as an Animagus. At the end-of-year feast, Ravenclaw was awarded the House Cup, thanks mainly to our having prevented the Battle of Hogwarts from ever happening.

A year later, Luna and I graduated from Hogwarts together with Hermione, who had returned to complete her education after taking the previous year off to help Harry and Ron find the Dark Lord's Horcruxes. As soon as the end-of-year feast was over, I proposed marriage to Luna. She was hesitant at first because she wanted to be free to study magical creatures everywhere in the world, but when I promised to follow her and take precautions against having children, she accepted my proposal.

I did follow her, but when her studies led her to Africa, I decided to part company from her for a little while to do a study of my own. All the great apes had been studied by observers who had lived with them, but none of these observers had lived as one of the apes they were studying. As an Animagus, I could do this; so I travelled to the south shore of the Congo River, the only habitat of bonobos. I wandered around until I found a group of bonobos, and there I pitched a tent and magically turned its interior into a comfortable dwelling. Then, after studying their communication while in human form, I transfigured myself into a bonobo. At first the group was wary of me because I was a stranger, but after a few days I was given an opportunity to gain their trust. I heard a band of poachers approaching. I erected a magical barricade to protect the

bonobos from the poachers and signalled to them to hide, while I stayed behind and faced the poachers. They shot at me, but the barricade stopped their bullets, and the poachers, rightly suspecting me of having magical powers, fled in terror. The bonobos then realized that I was on their side; so they accepted me into their group.

Bonobo society is matriarchal: a male bonobo's rank is largely determined by the rank of his mother. Male bonobos sometimes do struggle for dominance, but unlike common chimpanzees, who often kill each other, bonobos' power struggles are rarely violent and never fatal. Several times I was challenged, and each time I submitted immediately, thinking that my low status would make me unattractive to females. In most animal species, the loser of a power struggle must groom the winner to appease him, but each bonobo to whom I submitted groomed me to console me! Since I was with bonobos instead of chimpanzees, I would be in no danger – or so I thought. A couple of months after I had joined the group, a female, who must have known that I was at the bottom of the male hierarchy, presented her backside to me as an invitation to mate. Since in my mind I was human, the prospect did not thrill me; so I declined. She called for reinforcements, and three other females heeded her call. I ran into my tent with the four females in hot pursuit. I quickly changed back into human form just before the four females barged into my tent and started searching for the male bonobo I had been. I joined in the search to minimize the damage they would do. Eventually they gave up and departed. At this point I decided to terminate my studies and rejoin my wife.

I now had something to occupy myself with while Luna continued to study magical creatures: I wrote a book called "My Life as a Bonobo". To obey the International Statute of Secrecy, I pretended that I had worn a bonobo costume. I submitted my book to a Muggle publishing company and they published it. It sold well and was translated into several languages. The Swedish version was made into a movie by the producer who had made the movie "My Life as a Dog".

A couple of years into our journey, Luna met Rolf Scamander, a young man whose grandfather had written the book "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them". He was visibly taken with her but, seeing that she was already married, he quickly married another woman, and the four of us became good friends.

During the course of her studies, Luna eventually learned that Nargles and the other creatures her father had told her about didn't really exist, and she sent him an owl telling him about her findings. Fortunately he believed her. Hermione, who had visited him together with Harry and Ron, had told him that what he thought was a horn of a Crumple-Horned Snorkack was actually an Erumpent horn, which explodes if it is shaken. He hadn't believed her at first, but after receiving Luna's owl, he decided to be on the safe side and carry it into his backyard. Not long afterwards, there was a slight earthquake in the vicinity of his house, and the Erumpent horn exploded, making a large crater in the ground. Had he not moved it out of his house, it would have demolished the house and either injured or killed him if he happened to be indoors at the time. He immediately sent an owl to both Luna and Hermione, thanking them profusely for having saved his home and possibly his life and inviting them both to visit him and bring their spouses. Luna and I were too far away to do so at the time, but that was soon to change.

Five years after we began our world trip, Luna got an owl announcing the retirement of Hagrid, the Care of Magical Creatures Professor, and inviting her to take over the position. She decided to accept the invitation, for by now she was ready to have children and she thought it would be better for them if we settled down in Hogwarts instead of dragging them around the world with us.

A year later our first child was born – a boy – and Luna named him Xenophilius after her father. "The name means one who likes outsiders," she explained to me, "an appropriate name for a Ravenclaw." A year after that, our second child was born – a girl – and I named her Hermione after our mentor. While Luna worked, I stayed home to look after our children, and I home-schooled them. I decided to give them a good grounding in Muggle science; so I bought mathematics and science textbooks from a Muggle bookstore to teach both myself and my children.

As we had hoped, our son was invited to study at Hogwarts and was sorted into Ravenclaw. The following year our daughter too would be attending Hogwarts. Since our children would no longer need so much of my time, I wanted to be gainfully employed; so I asked the Hogwarts Headmaster to create a new course – Muggle Science with Applications to Magic – and to let me teach it, starting at the beginning of the following year. He was reluctant at first, but a few weeks later he changed his mind. Our son had regaled everyone he met about the cool things I had taught him, and they had prevailed upon the Headmaster to hire me to teach them too.

For the first year of my employment, I taught biology to all the students, beginning with comparative animal behaviour. Each year I introduced a new subject to the students who had taken the previous ones until, after seven years, all the students who had passed my course each year of their studies knew enough to enter a Muggle university in mathematics or any of the natural sciences. Some of them did, mainly Ravenclaws but also a few from each of the other Houses. Mingling with Muggle students, they learned a great deal about the Muggle world. They were fascinated with Muggle technology, especially computers, but the discovery of theirs that made the greatest impression on them had nothing to do with technology. It was to have a profound effect on the magical community.

Ever since magic had been discovered, some Muggles had witnessed it done, in some cases by their own children, and they had told others about it. In the past, this knowledge had been suppressed by memory charms, but now, thanks to the internet, it had spread so fast that all the Muggles now knew that magic existed. Since most of the magic they saw or heard about since the taming of the Dark Lord was benign, the Muggles, with the exception of a few religious extremists, no longer feared it. Magical people, and those Muggles suspected of being magical, were no longer persecuted.

When this information reached the magical community, the International Confederation of Wizards held a meeting to review the International Statute of Secrecy. Those who wanted to keep that Statute argued that Muggles would ask us to use magic to solve their problems, but their opponents countered that we had done this in centuries past with no ill effects, and now the Muggles had something new to offer us in return: their scientific knowledge. After some debate, the Statute was repealed and replaced by the Muggle Protection Act: magic was not to be used to harm Muggles or to cheat in Muggle competitions.

Carlotta Pinkstone, who was serving time in Azkaban for violating the International Statute of Secrecy, was released and led the campaign to reintegrate the magical and Muggle communities. Quidditch became an extremely popular spectator sport for Muggles, and it inspired them to invent their own version of the game: they carried a broomstick between their legs while running around the pitch. Hogwarts, Hogsmeade, Diagon Alley and Platform nine and three quarters in King's Cross Station became lucrative tourist attractions and provided employment for magical people as tour guides. I put out a second edition of my book, in which I told the truth about my transfiguration into a bonobo, and the movie was remade accordingly.

Many Hogwarts graduates decided to take up occupations in the Muggle world. Some Gryffindors became pop musicians, while others satisfied their thirst for adventure by becoming soldiers, circus performers, professional athletes, fire fighters or crime fighters. One crime fighter, who, like the Dark Lord and Severus Snape, could fly without a broomstick, dressed up as Superman while on the job. Most of the Hufflepuffs worked in health care, where they were greatly valued as Healers, or in childhood education. One teacher became immensely popular with her pupils by giving them broomstick rides. The Ravenclaws gravitated towards the sciences, in particular computer science, and the arts, in particular classical music. One pianist wowed his audience by playing one part of a piano duet while bewitching the piano to play the other part, and one university professor livened up her lectures by demonstrating magic. Some of the Slytherins amassed huge fortunes in banking, industry and real estate, while others satisfied their power lust by becoming politicians. One of them captured the American White House on a Tea Party ticket; his policies made it easier for Muggles and wizards alike to make a lot of money and provoked a mass exodus of the newly dispossessed into Canada.

To be sure, a few of the Slytherins turned to the Dark Arts in the hope of becoming a successor to the Dark Lord, but with so many other opportunities, both in the magical and Muggle worlds, to satisfy power lust, and with blood status becoming a non-issue because of ever increasing intermarriage, they weren't able to recruit nearly enough followers to pose a serious threat. The Department of Magical Law Enforcement became increasingly occupied with minor violations of the Muggle Protection Act such as cheating in Muggle sports. Hermione, who had joined that Department after seeing to the betterment of the condition of House Elves and had risen to become its Head, now decided that her position could be entrusted to someone of lesser intelligence than herself; so, when she was offered the position of Arithmancy Professor at Hogwarts, she accepted it, and upon the retirement of the current Headmaster, she became Headmistress of Hogwarts. Luna and I were now working under her command, something we had grown used to during our student days.

Now that we are retired, we can look back upon our lives, satisfied that we have helped to make the world a better place, something we were able to do partly because as students we worked hard at our lessons, and partly because we worked together as a loving couple.