

Creature Discomforts Part 2



17 May 2021

Brilliant Event

INTRO

HARRY

I sent a few Aurors undercover to investigate Dorian Fungbury's tip about magical creature poachers in Cape Town, South Africa. They're still investigating, but early reports seem to confirm a rise in black market activity in that area. There's been no word on The Unforgivable, however.

HERMIONE

It's quite possible they aren't involved at all. But there's enough circumstantial evidence to the contrary that I still think it's worth pursuing.

CONSTANCE

I agree. Even if we don't find The Unforgivable, at least we'll make the world a safer place for magical creatures by shutting the market down.

HARRY

I just hope we don't waste time that we could be spending restoring Ron's memories or searching elsewhere for The Unforgivable pursuing a fruitless lead.

CONSTANCE

If this surge is another warning from Grim Fawley, perhaps he'll be able to clarify a few things for us in this second wave...

Baby Troll

RON

Harriet, what's that smell?

HERMIONE

Hermione, Ron. I'm Hermione. And what you're smelling is probably residual musk from the baby mountain troll Foundable we just returned.

RON

I think I've smelled it before. In a... bathroom? But that can't be right. Why would a troll be in a bathroom? And why do I vaguely recall dropping its club on its head?

HERMIONE

You remember facing Professor Quirrell's mountain troll? This settles it. Some of your memories have definitely returned.

But how is this possible? Kit Gerrard and Flavius Flint went multiple months without any sign of memory recovery. Could the Foundables themselves be the key...?

Baby Chinese Fireball

HERMIONE

I just can't seem to wrap my head around what The Unforgivable's goals are. Adversaries would lead you to believe they're interested in bringing back the Death Eaters and pure-blood supremacy.

But this business with magical creature poachers and black markets... It doesn't quite fit with what we've come to expect from them, does it?

CONSTANCE

You said it yourself, there's no guarantee this dodgy activity in Cape Town has anything to do with The Unforgivable.

HERMIONE

True, but I can't think of any other logical explanation for why Grim would draw our attention to beast poaching not once, but twice.

CONSTANCE

Perhaps our problem is that we keep comparing The Unforgivable to groups like the Death Eaters or Grindelwald's army. Perhaps, rather than some shared ideal, The Unforgivable's reasons for grouping up are more practical and self-serving.

Satchel Firecrab Shell Jewels

HARRY

The Aurors I assigned to Cape Town just sent me an owl. According to them, dealers are putting together an underground auction full of illicit goods like these Fire Crab jewels and shells.

Unfortunately they're having a difficult time uncovering when and where this auction is taking place. Seems the organisers are being extra cautious and secretive about the details.

CONSTANCE

That's to be expected though, isn't it? Since Grim first alerted us to the rise in illegal beast trading, the Ministry has helped shut down quite a few black markets in Indonesia. It's only natural they're a bit spooked.

HERMIONE

An auction like that is bound to attract all sorts of Dark witches and wizards. If members of The Unforgivable are among them, this could be a good opportunity to corner them and take them into custody. We have to be there.

Baby Graphorn

CONSTANCE

Greyish purple, a humped back, scaly skin... Baby Graphorns have no right being as cute as they are. Makes me ill thinking about how they and their parents are hunted for their horns.

Honestly, how do poachers stomach hurting creatures the way they do? I once cried for an hour because I accidentally stepped on my cat's tail.

Baby Thestral

HARRY

Historically, Thestrals have been stigmatised as omens of misfortune and death. But in recent years, attitudes towards them have improved, partially due to the Second Wizarding War.

So many witnessed death during the war that more people than ever were able to see Thestrals. At first their spooky appearance only exacerbated the problem.

But as activists launched new outreach programs to combat those misconceptions, popular opinion about Thestrals softened. They're slowly but surely starting to be seen as the brilliant creatures they are.

When you witness death and tragedy, your worldview changes. But Thestrals are proof that it's not always for the worst.

MYSTERIOUS NOTE

1ST PIECE

HARRY

Constance, what's that scrap of parchment in your hand?

CONSTANCE

Something that, when pieced back together, will hopefully provide some insight into this surge. The Calamity spat it out just now after we returned that last Foundable.

HARRY

I recognise that handwriting. It's definitely Grim's. I've agonised over his petitions to reopen the investigation into the London Five's disappearance enough times that I'd know it anywhere.

CONSTANCE

So Grim is trying to send us a message! Now we just have to figure out what it is...

5TH PIECE

CONSTANCE

We've managed to recover about half of the note now, but it's looking more like a page from an Arithmancy textbook than a message. Can you make any sense of this, Hermione?

HERMIONE

It's probably a ciphered message, not unlike the one we received back in October. I should be able to decode it once we've found the remaining pieces.

CONSTANCE

But why bother to conceal the message at all? If Grim wanted us to read this, wouldn't it have been much simpler to write a normal letter?

HERMIONE

I can only imagine that he was worried it would fall into the wrong hands and trusted us to be able to decode it.

Constance, no matter what the contents of this note are, let's keep them close to the chest. If Grim felt it prudent to keep it discreet, we should too.

FINAL PIECE

HERMIONE

Thanks to the team recovering the last few pieces, I was able to decode Grim's note. Turns out it's a set of coordinates, as well as a time and date.

I went ahead and looked the coordinates up. They point to a warehouse in the Port of Cape Town, South Africa, not far from where Dorian Fungbury said the magical creature poachers were spotted.

CONSTANCE

I'd bet my wand that's the location and date of the black market auction! If we infiltrate it, we might be able to detain a member of The Unforgivable!

HARRY

Let's keep our expectations in check. We don't have any proof The Unforgivable are even involved. Still... this is a promising lead. I'll start putting a team and a plan together.

HERMIONE

Only pick those you're positive you can trust and reveal only what's absolutely necessary, Harry. I have no idea where Grim is or how he got this information, but I'm certain he had a good reason for coding it.

End

HERMIONE

Welcome back! Ron's been asking about you. Well, he's been asking about Henry, but he means you. How did the raid on the black market in Cape Town go?

HARRY

It didn't. The location indicated in Grim's note was deserted. If an auction had taken place there, it was long over by the time we'd arrived... How could this have happened?

HERMIONE

Four possibilities come to mind. First, that we misinterpreted Grim's note, though that seems unlikely. Second, that Grim misled us - either intentionally or accidentally. Third, that someone pretended to be Grim and wrote that letter to trick us. And lastly, that the traders were warned about our plans.

HARRY

As much as I don't want to believe that someone we know is a traitor... I must admit that all of these could be plausible. So what now? We may or may not have an informant for The Unforgivable in our midst and have no way to restore Ron's memories.

HERMIONE

Actually, I might know how to solve both of our problems. I can't explain how just yet, but you'll just have to trust me.