

Luna Lovegood and the Night of the Minilop The Night of the Minilop

AN: I don't own Harry Potter and wouldn't particularly care to. Nor do I own the cast of Pete Abrams' Sluggy Freelance.

Luna Lovegood and the Night of the Minilop

Chapter One – The Horror

When school had let out following my fourth year, I found myself drawn back to the Ministry, the building not the people. I knew I needed to return after that horrible night, but I didn't know why. I deeply wished that Harry would be with me, but I knew that wasn't possible. Daddy was visiting seeking an interview and wanting to secure some documents needed for our summer hunt. I found myself poking around the building looking for... something. I still don't know what, but I certainly did look. I discovered long ago that the Ministry building somehow affected the minds of the people who worked inside its walls. Normal, thoughtful people became mindless drones who don't notice anything or anyone unless a disruption occurs. As long as I did not call attention to myself there were few places within the Ministry building I could not go.

However it did not take long for me to explore all of the areas in the Ministry that my entering would not call attention to me. So I left a note for Daddy in our usual place and left the building to explore some more.

The Muggle world is a wondrous place. So many people, so many machines. I had to wonder what was behind all their activity. I knew from reading the Quibbler (my daddies newspaper, easily the best source for information on the planet) that the Muggles were all completely aware of the existence of the Wizarding world, but they all pretended not to so as to lull us into a false sense of security. The Quibbler was running a three month series on the Great Muggle Conspiracy. I couldn't wait for the next chapter so that I would learn the secret of the Muggle mind control device known as the 'Slinky'. The device was seductively evil, walking down stairs, alone or in pairs, making a slinkity sound. I mean, completely insidious. Daddy would expose them for what they were. He was good like that.

I turned the corner to investigate the alleyway behind the Ministry of Magic building, when suddenly a tranquilizer dart whizzed by my head and shattered against the wall of the Ministry building. I knew of only one organization that was both after me for exposing them in the Quibbler and who used that type of tranq dart.

I turned to face my attackers "Hello Squishydodo." I said to the elf struggling to reload his weapon standing in the center of the group of three, all wearing black jumpsuits with white boots and gloves, and mirrored full face helmets. I think it shocked him that I could identify him despite his helmet. From my pocket I pulled the only weapon that would frighten a Black Op Elf, my notepad and quill, and I prepared to take notes. "What brings Santa's Black Op Elves this far south during the off season?"

"We don't work for the Fatman anymore Lovegood, not since the Hostile Takeover."

"And how does that make you feel Squishydodo?"

"Well change is always hard..." Squishydodo said until the female elf next to him slapped him on the back of his helmet"

"Will you just shut up? HE wants her and will be upset at us if we take too long."

Squishydodo and the other male elf both shuddered at her comment. What could inspire fear in these dealers of death and destruction? The lead elf raised his weapon. "Tinkipopo's right. Let's go Lovegood, HE wants to see you."

I thought for a second, this 'hostile takeover' the Elf spoke of had the possibility of ripping the world wide Santa Conspiracy wide open. I would get this story; the Quibbler would scoop the world yet again! I casually leaned against the wall of the Ministry building and made a series of marks on the wall. Someone familiar with the Lovegood family codes would recognize that I was telling Daddy that I was on the trail of a big story, that he should clear the front page for the scoop, and that he should pickup milk for breakfast.

"All right Squishydodo, let's go meet whoever holds your leash."

====oooOOOooo====

A rope ladder was lowered into the alley. I put my quill and notepad into a pocket, tucked my wand behind my ear, and climbed up to a bit of Elf technology that looks amazingly similar to a Muggle Helicopter. Santa's elves are a subspecie of elf that have pushed all their magic into the act of toy making. As such they no longer were capable of apparation, cleaning magic or any of the other things that elves such as House elves and Forest elves do.

The Black Op Elves were (or at least used to be) Santa's enforcement arm. They were the ones who made sure that anyone aligned against the Fatman met with 'accidents'. To do this they needed a technological edge, so an entire wing of Santa's Sweatshop was dedicated to building the tools they used to do their jobs. Armed with cutting edge 'Toy Tech'™, the Black Op Elves cut a swath of terror throughout both the magical and

non magical worlds. Few outside Quibbler subscribers even knew they existed.

I was surprised that the trip ended so quickly, when the machine landed on top of the building across the street from the Ministry. Squishydodo gestured that I dismount from the flying machine. As soon as the four of us were on the rooftop, the machine lifted off again and faded to invisibility as its stealth mode was engaged.

“That seemed strangely unnecessary.” I observed. “Climbing up a nine story rope ladder just to cross the street.”

“I hate elevators.” Squishydodo explained. “They make me feel all closed in.”

I refrained from pointing out that he had grown up in the ice warrens under Santa’s Sweatshops, and that a modern Muggle lift would be spacious in comparison. I was lead to the roof top stairwell and we descended to the next floor, which turned out to be an executive penthouse suite.

The suite was richly appointed, much as I imagined my cousins the Malfoys having, it was dominated by a large device somehow displaying images, like a giant penseive, without the necessity of putting your head into it. It dawned on me that this must be one of those TeeVees that Daddy so often wrote about. I examined it closely and became confused. I could see no breasts, which caused me to puzzle as to why was it called a ‘boob tube’? The mysteries of the Muggles knew no bounds. My escorts had taken positions behind a large sofa facing the Muggle device. It was then I noticed a tiny rabbit sitting on the sofa. It was mostly white with brown mottling; it was such a cute little bunny. Part of me wanted to rush forward and scoop it up. But the part of me attuned to auras began screaming that this being was one of pure evil.

“Good Afternoon Miss Lovegood” it said in an unexpectedly baritone voice. “Something was taken from me during your little adventure at the Ministry of Magic on the Morning of the fifth of June.” A tiny paw scratched at his left ear. “You are going to help me collect payment for my loss.”

====oooOOOooo====

Oddament Lovegood had finished his business at the Ministry, receiving an official denial of the existence of a Ministry publication known as the Rebbiuq, which of course was all the evidence any thinking person needed to prove that the rag was in fact being published and was poisoning the minds of magical Britian. Following his spate of investigative reporting, Odd had purchased the international Portkey that he and Luna would be using for their annual Snorkack hunt. He then set out to find his lovely daughter.

Her note telling him that she had taken her investigation outside was in its usual place, which led him to believe that it was a plant by the vast conspiracy to lead him astray. Then he found her second note in an unusual place telling him that her first note was in fact real and not part of any conspiracy unless they had tricked her as well. That set the senior Lovegood’s mind to rest... Unless of course that was all part of Luna’s plan... What if SHE was out to get him?

Odd swallowed that thought after shuddering in fear of what a Lovegood might do to him. (being a Lovegood made this possibility even more frightening that it might have been to a layperson) He exited the Ministry building in search of his ever inquisitive daughter.

In the alley, he found the remains of an expended tranquilizer dart of a type he didn’t recognize... It certainly wasn’t one of his he confirmed by checking the design against one of the half dozen secreted about his person. It was then he found Luna’s message in the family codes. He quickly copied the message down into his reporter’s notepad and set about decoding it.

Odd Lovegood shook his head. He was going to have to speak to Luna about her grammar and sentence structure. What were they teaching in that over priced mausoleum these days anyway? He once again read the message she had left. “Pineapple, apricots, broccoli kidnapping boyfriend, need milk. That scamp. She knew it was her turn to do the shopping. Just like a teenager, sloughing off her chores in order to kidnap herself a boyfriend.

He smiled in spite of himself while adding pineapples, apricots, broccoli and milk to the shopping list. In so many ways Luna was just like her mother. He vividly recalled the summer spent in the dungeons of the Malfoy estate after Selene had taken an interest in him. Odd found himself hoping she didn’t hurt the young man too much. Hurting just enough was plenty.

What would it cost to add a dungeon to his home? He wasn’t sure he liked the idea of his only daughter having to rent out space in some seedy dive...

====oooOOOooo====

“And here we have you losing consciousness, leaving only known Nice Neville Longbottom and this unknown Nice active against five known adult Naughties” Tinkipopo Elf was diagramming the battle at the Ministry of Magic using the display of the Naughty & Nice detection device that the Black Op Elves had kept when their organization split off from Santa Claus. I had discovered that I was still counted as ‘Nice’ despite the thoughts I had been having about a certain boy. I was so sure that thinking those kinds of thoughts would be classified as ‘naughty’. I resolved to try harder. Perhaps actually doing the things I was thinking about...

“Then a group of adult Nices and Adult Neutrals appeared on the scene,” Tinkipopo Elf continued, interrupting my inner debate. “and the unknown Nice chased an adult Naughty from this area of the Ministry to the Atrium, where it was confronted by both the Adult Naughty it was chasing and one of the few Permanent No Redemption Possible Naughties still living, one Tom Riddle. It was then that Adult Minor Naughty Dumbledore appeared, much magic was exchanged, and then this happened.”

I watched as the symbol designated Unknown (Nice) and the symbol designated Riddle (NRP Naughty) merged on the display. I realized that the Unknown entity must be Harry Potter, and the merging of the symbols must be when Riddle possessed Harry. As I watched, the Symbol for Riddle became brighter (indicating that he was becoming stronger), while Harry’s symbol became dimmer. Then Harry’s symbol flared washing out all the rest of the displays.

"That," Said the Unspeakable Horror spoken of as Bun Bun, "is when the magic flared beyond the capability of the Ministry of Magic's buildings to shield the outside world. I came to the UK specifically to see a forty eight hour Baywatch Marathon in the crystal clear PAL video format." I had no idea what this 'Baywatch Marathon' might be, but the tiny rabbit was certainly worked up over it. "Yasmine Bleeth was in mid slow motion stride when the television blew up. That flare of magic fried every television in a four mile radius. By the time a replacement large screen could be obtained I had missed nine hours of the only reason I allow everyone else on this planet to live." The bunny took a sip from his Alfalfa grass Martini before continuing. "You were there Miss Lovegood. You know who the Unknown Nice is. My elves are searching out Riddle for me, and you're going to identify this Unknown for me, then I'm going to have a little discussion with them."

====oooOOOooo====

I steeled myself for the torture that was sure to come. There is no way I would give Harry to this monster. Riddle I would happily hand over, but never Harry, never.

"Mr. Bun Bun Sir?"

"What is it Squishydodo? You know how I hate my time being wasted."

"That's just it sir, rather than torturing the information out of her, I noticed she's carrying a copy of her Newspaper in her pocket, she would have written about it."

Tinkipopo snatched my copy of the latest Quibbler from my pocket. Damn my pride. That issue had irrefutable evidence of the secret codes embedded in Muggle traffic lights, and an expose on Minister Fudge's unnatural cravings for Geoduck clams... There also might be something about the night at the Ministry of Magic....

The elves split the pages between themselves and began to scan the articles. After three minutes the Bunny spat "Find anything?"

"I can't believe he eats those things!" Squishydodo said shuddering

The other elf, a Bald male with an eyepatch and extensive facial scarring had rushed to the window to observe the Muggle traffic lights. "My god! They're right! The signals ARE trying to tell us something."

"Shut up Squintyhoho" Tinkipopo said. "I've found it here, in the Society pages for some reason. The Lovegood girl, two Weasleys, the Granger girl and" she looked up smiling. "Harry Potter."

"Cross reference every one of Santa's lists. I want this kid found." Bun Bun ordered. The Elves dashed to their equipment and after several seconds Squishydodo stood between the Horror and myself with a print out in his hands. The last record we have of a 'Harry Potter' was his first Christmas in 1980 in a place called Godric's Hollow Wales. Then he disappeared and no record of him at all until he showed up as an unknown Nice at the Ministry of Magic, and then it looks like the only reason he was detected was from his proximity to the detector."

"So this kid has been completely off Santa's radar for most of 15 years? I've got to talk to him before I kill him to find out how he did that." He returned his malevolent attention to me. "Miss Lovegood, it's time for you to take me to Tom Riddle and Harry Potter."

"I'll take you to Riddle." I said, "But not Harry, you'll never make me betray Harry!"

The tiny rabbit leapt from the sofa to my arms, I instinctively caught him. As I hugged him to my chest, I heard the unmistakable 'snict!' of a Muggle switch blade knife locking it's blade into place.

All my life I had accompanied my father on hunts for strange and dangerous creatures, but nothing prepared me for this. I knew instantly that I had never truly been frightened before, not by the bullies of my house, not by the Death Eaters in the Department of Mysteries, not even when Mum died. All of those paled when compared to the Horror. I swallowed and felt the steel of the blade against my neck.

"I want to meet these two Wizards, Miss Lovegood. They stole something from me, and I want to meet them now. The elves tell me you can take me to them, so you will, or unfortunate things will happen."

"But Harry would never..."

The blade at my throat bit slightly at my skin, I could feel a drop of liquid sliding down my neck. My blood? Fear clawed at my heart.

"We can save Potter for last. Take me to Riddle."

The horror leaped from me to the arms of his head elf, I saw his eyes glow blood red. "Now Miss Lovegood, lead on."

I had no choice. Merlin help me, I had no choice.

====oooOOOooo====

Once again the elves supplied the transportation, in what appeared to be a white Muggle delivery van. The trip to the Malfoy estate took the better part of the afternoon. We arrived at the gate of my mother's family's ancestral home just as the sun was setting. The gate was locked and warded. The Elves examined the defenses for a few seconds, made a few derisive comments about the quality of the defenses and planted a small amount of some clay like material on the hinges and the lock. The gate dissolved into dust, a fitting reminder as to just why Santa was feared worldwide by those in the know.

We four (the three Black Op elves and I) trudged up the path to the mansion on the hill. I was tasked with carrying their master, and the evil bunny

maintained a running commentary on the general idiocy of Wizards and their defenses. I could feel each and every ward as we passed through them without triggering any. The power of these elves was awesome to observe.

What an article this would make! My reputation as a journalist was assured, as long as I survived the coming encounter.

It was at the door we encountered the first human defenses. Gregory Goyle and Vincent Crabbe were outside the door, evidently avoiding Cousin Draco. Family obligations had them protecting my cousin while at school, but in all actuality the pair hated Draco with a passion.

"Trespassers!" Gregory noted with alarm as we approached.

"Indeed old chum." Vincent agreed. "It appears to be a trio of Elves of a subspecies unfamiliar to me, accompanied by Luna Lovegood."

"Luna Lovegood of the Ottery St. Catchpole Lovegoods?" Gregory asked. "Oh good family indeed, though sadly a bit on the light side." He peered closer. "I say, she appears to be carrying a *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, or Mini Lop Rabbit."

"Indeed." Vincent agreed. "I am unfamiliar with any magical rabbit breeds, so that is probably unimportant. It is the Elves that concern me, they seem to be rather aggressive in their attitude and logic would indicate that those devices in their hands to be some sort of weapon beyond my experience."

"I agree, though the concept of an aggressive elf is well outside my personal experience as well, their actions however, speak louder than words." Gregory noted. By this time, the pair was surrounded by the trio of death dealing Elves.

"Miss Lovegood?" Vincent asked politely.

"Yes Vincent? And please, call me Luna." I said.

"Thank you fair lady. Gregory and I were just wondering if your companions were as aggressive as they appear."

"Sadly, yes they are." I sighed.

"Ah, I see." Vincent said. "Do you suppose that they might be intimidated by Vincent and I flexing our biceps and cracking our knuckles Miss Lovegood?" Gregory asked politely.

"All three are highly trained and extremely experienced combat specialists Gregory." I replied. "So, no. My guess is that they would not be intimidated in the slightest."

"Ah. Thank you for your candor Luna." Vincent said before turning to Gregory. "Only one thing for it then old friend."

"I agree old chum." Then the pair drew their wands and stunned each other.

The elves exchanged confused looks. I shrugged. "A pair of extremely intelligent young men forced into servitude to the Malfoy clan by family obligations. They spend much of their time pretending to be quite dim, as a protective behavior. They recognized that they were in an untenable position and took steps to remove themselves from the conflict with a minimum of violence."

"That's nice." The horror in my arms said. "Neither of these two are the ones I want to talk to. Lets go."

We entered the Mansion that I dimly recalled from visits in my early childhood, while mummy still thought that Uncle Lucius was salvageable. The elves found and disabled Uncle Lucius and his wife Aunt Cissy, my dear cousin (whom I somehow managed to accidentally kick four or five times reducing the likely hood that the Malfoy line would continue in his branch), and assorted Death Eaters of various ranks including Bellatrix Lestrange. I am ashamed to admit it, but seeing Bellatrix laying there with a tranq dart in her neck, all I could think of was how damaged my good friend Neville was because of this woman. My Journalistic instincts told me to stay detached, to report the story, and not be the story. My human instincts on the other hand told me to do other things. Pulling my wand I cast a few charms, transfiguring her Black Death Eater robes to a yellow dress and her mask to a large yellow hair bow. I then layered multiple compulsions into her mind. From here on whenever she got dressed, she would transfigure her clothing to this outfit and her wand would forever have a large multicolored candy disk affixed to the end that she would lick endlessly, her little girl voice was now all she would ever use, and when ever she attempted to cast a crucio or the killing curse, she would burst into song, singing "The Good Ship Lollipop". A fitting curse for an evil woman.

Sitting in a throne in an ornate room we found You-Know-Who. The elves moved to barricade the doors, while I approached directly before the most evil Wizard of the last four hundred years. "What is this? Are children now delivering themselves to me? Are you this ready to die so little girl?"

"This was not my idea Mr. Who." I said.

The Dark Lord blinked. "Mr. Who?"

"Well, I hardly know you well enough to call you 'You-Know'"

Tom Riddle shook his head. "You must be Lovegood, the Ravenclaw. I have heard much of you. Some of my contacts think that I should recruit you for your mind, and others among them believe I should kill you for the same reason."

"I started this as nothing more than a courageous reporter on the trail of a story, when I found myself in the clutches of someone far more evil than you."

“More evil than me?” That idea seemed to shock him. “You have no idea of what you are talking about little girl. I am Voldemort!”

“Oh large deal.” Said the horror in my arms. There was a metallic sound when I noticed that the evil Bun Bun had drawn his switch blade from... somewhere.

Note to self, determine just where a tiny bunny could possibly store a Muggle switchblade knife.

“You stole from me, you mincing drama queen. I’m going to carve my restitution out of your hide.” You-Know-Who just stared, his blood red eyes wide with confusion.

“Do you actually believe you could attack me with a rabbit girl?”

“No you idiot.” The Unspeakable Horror spoken of as Bun Bun launched himself from my arms, and plunged his blade into You-Know-Who’s chest. “The Rabbit is attacking you with a knife.” He twisted the blade, causing the Dark Lord to scream. “Do pay attention or you’ll miss the important parts.”

I’m not going to describe what the Horror did to You-Know-Who. It was vile beyond all belief. Which is not to say that You-Know-Who didn’t get his licks in. He actually hit the Horror with a crucio... Which actually made Bun Bun laugh. He told You-Know-Who that after fighting a midlevel demon from the Dimension of Pain, the pain curse was a gentle tickle. Still, no matter what Bun Bun did to You-Know-Who, the Dark Lord just wouldn’t die. He was weakened and in horrible pain, but would not die.

Bun Bun called his elves to him and gathered me. “That was fun.” The Horror said. “Now for Potter.

====oooOOOooo====

The door at #4 Privet Drive opened at my knock. An obese man with a horrible mustache opened the door and said, “Yes?”

“Good Evening Mr. Dursley.” I said, nervously stroking the unspeakable horror in my arms. “Might we have a word with Harry?”

“Do you know what time it is? The Boy doesn’t get visitors at this time of night.” It was then he caught sight of my wand behind my left ear. “You’re one of THEM aren’t you? There will be no FREAKS in my house!” he screamed.

I made a mental note to find out if it was normal for an adult Muggle to actually change the color of his face like that. I noted that he managed to cycle through 7 different purple hues.

“Move it fatboy.” Squishydodo said pushing past Harry’s uncle into the house. I followed the elfin trio into the house where they put a tranq dart into the necks of the woman and obese boy in the sitting room; I assumed them to be Harry’s aunt and cousin. Harry’s uncle followed behind us bellowing at the top of his lungs, he lunged at me, both of his pudgy hands reaching for my throat.

There was a loud crack, must like an over powered apparation. Harry’s uncle grabbed at his leg screaming. I smelled sulfur and cordite, heard something metallic ping off the hardwood floor and looked down. The horror was holding a Muggle pistol. Where did he keep those things? What else did he have?

Harry came pelting down the stairs with his wand in his hand. He spotted me. “Luna? What the hell?”

“Good evening Mr. Potter we have something to discuss.” The horror said.

The elfin trio started moving toward him. Harry looked at them in surprise.

“Please stand back; I have no desire to hurt you.”

Tinkipopo laughed. “We do want to hurt you!”

“Dobby?”

There was a soft pop and Dobby Elf appeared next to Harry.

“The great Harry Potter Sir called Dobby?”

The trio of Black Op Elves stepped back as one.

“Thank you for coming Dobby.”

“Harry Potter Sir thanks Dobby? Oh Harry Potter Sir truly be the greatest of Wizards!”

Harry knelt down next to the excitable house elf. “Dobby, those three elves say they want to hurt me. I didn’t want to hurt them, so I thought I’d ask you what I should do.”

The house elf spun on the trio of Black Ops Elves, who were busily attempting to back away from Harry and his friend. “Harry Potter sir should ask Dobby to deal with bad elves.”

Harry nodded. “Dobby?”

The Elf nodded without moving his eyes from his cousins.

“Sic ‘em.”

The house elf leapt into the fray, the four elfin cousins became a blur of activity, moving far too quickly for the human eye to track. There was a loud pop and both the male elves in Bun Bun’s employ fell to the ground bound hand and foot, while Dobby had Tinkipopo backed into a corner.

“You is pretty.” The house elf said. “Come with Dobby to Elf Pub, we make beautiful music together... Winky is Dobby’s mate, she not understand him.” Dobby and the female warrior elf disappeared with a pop.

“Luna, are you alright?”

“Harry!” I said, “Be careful, this Bunny is dangerous.”

“You and your magic took something from me boy.” The horror said quietly. “I’m here to collect what you owe me.”

“And what did I take from you Rabbit?”

“Your magical pulse disrupted the Baywatch Marathon!”

Harry blinked. “You shot my uncle over missing a marathon of a crappy television show?” Harry looked conflicted. “Actually, I’m ok with that. You frightened Luna over a crappy television show?”

“Yes I did.” The horror spat. “What are you going to do about it boy?”

“Well, let’s think about what I could do Rabbit.” Harry leaned down until he was nose to nose with the horror. “How about I push all of my magic into a single magnetic pulse that would fry every video tape in the world? What would that do to your Baywatch fixation?”

“You wouldn’t!” The horror sounded... horrified.

“Try me. I’ll fix it so your next Baywatch fix will be when you find Hasselhoff in a dinner theater production.” The pair maintained eye contact for a full ten count.

“Fine.” The horror said finally. “Pax Potter. I’ll leave you and yours alone.”

“Just a minute.” Harry ran up the stairs and came down carrying a dozen small black boxes. “Here you go. The complete forty eight hours. Dudley recorded the stupid thing and I’ve been treated to the idiotic theme song over and over for the last week. Take them with my compliments.”

The horror jumped from my arms to his bound elves and cut them free with his switchblade. “We’re leaving. Get those tapes.”

Harry put his arm around me protectively. “Can you fix my Uncle? The gunshot wound will be hard to explain.”

Squintydodo moved the writhing Vernon Dursley and shot him with a tranq dart. He then placed some article of toy tech on his shattered knee. The device hummed for a second and the fat man’s leg was repaired.

“They’ll sleep for about three days.”

“I’ll stay with Harry.” I said.

“Fine.” The horror said. “Let’s go!” he said to his elves.

“What about Tinkipopo?” Squintyhoho asked.

“She’ll work it out with her new boyfriend and call for a pickup, or she won’t.” The horror shrugged.

And they were gone.

It suddenly dawned on me that I was alone with Harry. Well, sort of alone if you didn’t count his unconscious relatives, which I didn’t. I threw myself into his arms and began to sob, convincingly I hoped.

“Oh Harry, I was so frightened.” I sobbed wondering if he was buying this.

“Oh Luna.” He said. He WAS buying it. Yay!

“It’s better now that I’m with you!” I sniffed. “I don’t know if I’ll be able to sleep though, without you holding me, I’ll just be terrified.”

“Well, why don’t we send Hedwig to your dad with a letter telling him you’re spending the night. I’ll hold you as long as you need me.”

That Harry, he’s such a nice guy.

Yay!.

I spent six hours that night moving our relationship to the point where I might have earned my way off the Nice list and onto the Naughty list. It was during the afterglow of our first time I posed my next question.

Harry?"

"Hmm?"

"Have you ever been in a dungeon?"