

How Luna Lovegood Became Loony Luna

For the delightful Emily

Luna Lovegood was excited. Today she would take her first trip on the Hogwarts Express and it was nearly time to go. She double-checked the contents of her trunk.

Cauldron, check!

School robes, check!

Potions kit, check!

Nargle Repellent, check, check!

Luna slid her telescope into her best Christmas stocking to carry over her shoulder. It was far too special to pack into a trunk. It had belonged to Mum. Luna's mum had died two years ago, and now she was at the other end of the telescope, up in the sky with the stars. That's what Dad said. Each night, Luna would take her telescope and tiptoe into the garden in her nightdress and bare feet to scan the starry sky. Luna hadn't found Mum yet, but it was a very big sky and Luna Lovegood was a very patient girl.

Night after night, she'd watch the stars dancing across the black sky. Sometimes, she'd dance with them. She'd hold out her arms and twirl about on the grass until she fell over, dizzy and giggling. Dad said the stars were there in the daytime too, you just couldn't see them very well because of the bright sunshine. Luna liked knowing that because it meant Mum was always close by if Luna needed someone to dance with at lunchtime.

On full moons, Luna's father would take her out to the fields where the Mooncalves danced. But the Mooncalves did more than dance, they did great big silver poos that made wonderful fertiliser for the Lovegood's pumpkin patch. The silver dung was so good that the Lovegoods had been eating pumpkin soup, pumpkin pie, pumpkin scones, pumpkin juice, and roasted pumpkin all summer long! Before leaving for London, Luna made sure to collect a full bucket of the silver dung. It smelled a bit, but, with so many children to feed, Luna felt sure it would come in very handy at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

At Kings Cross Station, Luna stepped straight through a brick wall to reach platform nine and three-quarters, just like Dad said she would! Luna had never seen so many children in one place, rushing and shouting and waving. Even the big red train was excited, blowing clouds of white steam over everyone.

Luna spotted a few familiar faces. Mr and Mrs Diggory were saying goodbye to their boy, Cedric. Luna waved at them and Cedric smiled and waved back. Cedric was in his fourth year and he was almost as tall as his father. Luna liked Cedric. He always called her 'Miss Lovegood'. The summer after Mum died, Cedric gave Luna his whole collection of Chocolate Frog cards. And this summer, he even let her take a turn on his broomstick! Cedric played Seeker for Hufflepuff, and he was very good.

Then Luna spotted a whole family of redheads. The Weasley twins flew past, riding their trolleys like chariots towards the train. They were in the same year as Cedric. Luna couldn't see Ron Weasley. She thought he must have already gotten on board. Luna waved to Ginny, but Ginny was busy being yanked along by her big brother, Percy.

Dad stowed Luna's trunk on the train. Then he picked up Luna and put her on the train, too. He gave her one more hug, just to be sure, making it twelve that day alone!

"Be a good girl, sugar plum," he said, "and remember what I told you."

"The prettier the lie the uglier the truth!" recited Luna at once.

"That's my girl," said Dad proudly. "Now, off you go and find yourself some friends. Hurry, now."

Luna hesitated. In all the excitement, she forgot that Dad was going to miss her terribly. She reached out and gave him the biggest hug ever. When she let go, Dad needed to blow his nose hard on his most purple handkerchief.

The Hogwarts Express let out a mighty toot. More steam filled the air as the train lunged away from the station. Luna hung from the door, waving madly to her father. When she couldn't see him anymore, she skipped down the train corridor, her Christmas stocking over her shoulder and her bucket of Mooncalf Dung swinging.

"Pwah!" cried a boy in the first compartment.

"It's just Mooncalf Poo," said Luna. She tried to wipe a smudge off her shoe.

"Pool!" cried the boy's friends and they slammed the door shut. They didn't look at all friendly to Luna.

She tried the next compartment, and the next, but no one seemed to appreciate the value of top quality fertiliser.

Cedric Diggory was much nicer. He found a lid for Luna's bucket, but there were no spare seats in his compartment. Luna kept looking.

"Sorry," said a pretty girl in the next compartment with almond-shaped eyes and shining black hair, "that seat's taken. My friend just went to the bathroom."

Luna waved goodbye and kept on looking. She went through four whole carriages, but all of the other empty seats were taken, too. There seemed to be a great demand for bathrooms amongst Hogwarts students. One girl was sitting all alone. She had lots of bushy brown hair and her nose was deep in a great big spell book.

"Hello!" Luna said brightly. "My name's Luna Lovegood. What's yours?"

"Hermione Granger," said the girl. She peered over her book and said, "You do know you've got fruit hanging from your ears."

"Oh, yes," Luna said happily and swung her head, the better to enjoy the cherries banging against her cheeks. They looked so pretty and she could eat them later. "May I sit with you, please?" she asked the girl.

"What's that smell?" asked Hermione suspiciously.

"Fertiliser," said Luna.

"Sorry," said Hermione, reopening her book, "I'm waiting for my friends."

Luna looked at all the empty seats. Then she smiled broadly at the girl and said, "You're lucky to have so many friends."

Hermione's cheeks went rather pink. "Yes, they should be here any minute. I don't know where they've gotten to."

"Don't worry," said Luna, "they're probably just waiting to use a bathroom." Luna dropped her voice to a whisper. "I think there might be something nasty going around. I hope the castle has good toilets! Bye!"

Luna kept going and finally found an empty compartment and sat down with her copy of *The Quibbler* magazine. The September issue had a pop-up monster! She laid the magazine open on her lap and out popped a twelve-inch tall Yeti! The Yeti was covered from head to toe in dirty white fur, and it roared and waved angry fists at Luna. Then Luna saw why it was so upset! The Yeti's big hairy feet were stapled to the centrefold!

"Oh, you poor thing!" she said, and tried to open up the staples. "Ow! Stop that," she said when the Yeti tried to punch her in the nose. "I know you're cross, but I'm trying to help. There, all done!"

The Yeti lifted one foot, then another, then let loose a long happy roar. It did a big foot dance around Luna's lap, then bounced across the seat, as if on a trampoline, landed on the floor, and ran out the door.

"Bye!" Luna called, waving from the door. The Yeti ducked into a far compartment, where several girls started squealing very loudly. Luna sat back down and stared dreamily out the window. You were never lonely if you could dream.

A few small patches of blue sky shone through the thick cloud cover. Luna was busy smiling at a cloud that looked a lot like the Yeti when a sparkle of something caught her eye. Whatever it was, it sparkled again. Luna grew excited. Could it be a star — right in the middle of the day? Luna pressed her nose right up against the glass and stared goggle-eyed into the sky. The star sparkled again, but Luna's breath was fogging the glass. She opened the window wide, as wide as it would go. Noisy wind rushed into the compartment, making Luna's cherries bounce and her pointed hat fly right off. Luna stuck her head out the window and then jumped back just in time to avoid being smashed in the face by a pole. Peeking out more carefully, Luna's blonde hair whipped up and up until she looked as wild as the girl with the big spell book. The sparkle kept disappearing behind the clouds. Luna wasn't worried; she had the very thing she needed in her Christmas stocking!

Aiming her telescope at the clouds, Luna searched and searched until she found the star again. But it wasn't a star at all; it was a mirror! A tiny mirror on a great big blue car! And there were people inside! Boys! Luna could just see them peeking over the dashboard. One had red hair and one had black. The black-haired boy was laughing and laughing. Luna had always wondered what her father meant about dead people being happy up in the stars and now she knew why! Dead people drove cars in Heaven!

She raced into the compartment next door. "Look, look!" she cried, waving her telescope.

Everyone lunged towards the windows. "What? Where?"

But Luna was already running to the next carriage to spread the wonderful news. "There really are dead people in the stars!" she cried joyfully. "And they're happy! They're happy!"

Percy Weasley came striding sternly along the corridor. "What's all this ruckus about, Miss Lovegood?" Percy never said her name the way Cedric did. "What's going on?" he said sharply. His nose wrinkled up. "And what's that smell?"

"I saw a flying car!" Luna told Percy excitedly. "They're up there! They're really up there!"

Percy went very pale. "Don't be silly," he said loudly. "There's no such thing as a flying car! Everyone back into your compartments! Come along now; I'm a Prefect!"

Luna gave up on Percy and raced to the next carriage and the next, and the next.

"Look, look!" she cried, banging on the compartment doors. "In the sky — the sky! Dead people fly cars!"

"Shut her up!" yelled one boy. "There's nothing out there!"

"What do you expect from the *poo* girl!" yelled another.

"Look at her hair!"

"Hair? Look at her ears! She's wearing fruit!"

"She's fruity, all right! Complete fruitcake!"

"Nutcase, if you ask me!"

"Give it here, then," said a boy with white hair and a pale, pointed face.

Luna rushed into the boy's compartment to give him her telescope. Other students crowded at the door to watch.

"See anything, Malfoy?" someone called out.

"Yep," said the Malfoy boy, squinting through the telescope.

Luna beamed at him.

"What is it, what is it?!" yelled the others.

"If I'm not mistaken," said Malfoy, still squinting, "I can see — a big — fat — flying — pig!"

Everybody laughed. Luna didn't understand. Malfoy swung the telescope back to her, but he missed and hit the wall instead. A sharp crack sounded. Luna was horrified. The lens on her telescope — it was broken!

"Ooops," Malfoy said nastily. "Sorry."

His friends laughed even louder. One of them pushed Luna in the back and she tripped over a tangle of feet and hit her head on the door. She was crying by now, but they all just laughed harder and harder.

"Who's crying? What's going on?" called someone, pushing through the crowd. It was Cedric! "Luna?" he said in surprise. "Cut it out, you rotten little ratbags!" he said angrily, for the crowd had started chanting, "Loony Luna! Loony Luna!"

Sobbing, Luna grabbed her broken telescope and ran all the way back down the train.

"Luna, wait!" called Cedric, but Luna just ran faster and sobbed harder.

The corridor was choked now with people having a good sticky-beak. Luna banged into all of them. When she found her compartment, she locked herself inside and crawled deep under the seat. Curled up on the dirty floor, she hugged her broken telescope and cried her heart out. How would she ever find Mum now?

"Luna!" called Cedric, pounding on the door.

Luna was hiccupping too much to answer him.

"Alohomora!" said Cedric, and the door clicked open.

Hidden under the seat, Luna saw Cedric's brown shoes walk into the compartment. He closed the door behind him and stood there a moment.

"Luna? Luna, come out of there. Please?" He sat on the seat opposite and craned his neck down to look at her. "Please?" he said, holding out his hand.

Her nose hot and running, her lungs gasping for air, Luna shook her head vigorously.

"Come on, Miss Lovegood," said Cedric in a voice that was very different from Percy Weasley. "It'll be okay."

Cedric's hand held steady in front of Luna's face until her weeping had reduced to soft sobs. Her small fingers crept into his and she let him help her up onto the seat. Her cherries were all squashed. Juice and tears covered her face. Cedric gave her his handkerchief.

"Are you hurt?" he asked her. "There's a cut above your eye."

Luna just shook her head and hugged her broken telescope. "He — hic — broke it," she said haltingly. "Mum — hic — Mummy's telescope. I'll never find her up in the stars now."

"Oh, Luna," Cedric said softly. He carefully examined the broken lens. "It's a bad break. We better get someone from the seventh to fix it. I'll ask the new Head Girl; she's a Hufflepuff."

Luna nodded but she still felt very hopeless.

Cedric found another handkerchief and dabbed at the cut on Luna's forehead. "Why were you down with that Slytherin lot, anyway?"

"We think we might have an idea," said someone at the door. Luna looked up to see Fred and George Weasley.

"Something about a flying car?" Fred prompted delicately.

"I saw it!" Luna cried tearfully. "Why won't anyone believe me?"

The twin redheads exchanged a look, then came inside and slid the door shut.

"Big blue car, two people inside?" said George.

Luna jumped up from her seat and cried, "You saw it, too!"

Fred and George exchanged another look.

"Not exactly," said George, "but we know who it belongs to. Us."

"Dad must have talked Mum into a joy flight," said Fred.

Luna was very confused. "But your parents aren't dead, are they?"

"Dead? Not that we know of."

"Dad will be if Mum finds out someone saw the car," observed George.

"Luna, you need to say you made it all up," said Fred firmly.

Luna just stared at the twins. Her head hurt but her heart hurt harder. "You mean it was just an ordinary car? With ordinary people?"

"Well," said George fairly, "it does fly, that's a bit special."

"And it's got an invisibility setting," said Fred. "That's pretty cool."

"Let me get this straight," said Cedric coldly. "Luna spotted your family's flying car, and when she tried to tell people, they beat her up, and broke her mum's telescope for good measure, and now they're calling her Loony Luna, and you're here to tell her to wear all that just so you can protect your own precious backsides."

The twins shifted uncomfortably.

Luna was crying again, softly this time. "It doesn't matter, Cedric," she said sadly. "None of that matters. It was stupid trying to look for Mum. She's gone for good."

The twins looked even more uncomfortable. One of them offered Luna a lolly.

Cedric glared at them. "I'm going to go find someone to fix this," he said, picking up Luna's telescope. "And *you two*," he said, pressing the telescope threateningly against his classmates' chests, "you two are going to make sure that Luna gets whatever Luna wants. Hear me? Luna — happy! And I'm not talking about Cheering Charms either! Got it?!"

The boys winced as one. "Got it," they said.

Cedric looked back down at Luna and his fierce face softened. "Chin up, Miss Lovegood."

Luna tried hard to give him a smile, but she felt she mustn't have done a very good job because Cedric stopped and crouched down in front of her for a moment. With the small end of the telescope, he tapped it to Luna's chest, right where her heart was breaking.

"The people you've loved are always in there, you know," he said gently. "You just have to know where to look."

"Is there — hic — is there a telescope for seeing into your heart?" Luna sniffed hopefully.

Cedric blinked. "Erm ... I don't think so." He shook his head and tried again. "I mean, you can always find your mum if you can remember her."

Luna shook her head miserably. She leaned closer to whisper her most terrible secret. "Cedric, I — I'm starting to forget her face ... I see her in photographs, but — but not in my head anymore."

Cedric couldn't seem to find anything to say to that. "I better go get this fixed then," he said, indicating the telescope. "It'll be okay, I promise."

Cedric left the compartment, and Fred and George, now wearing identical glum expressions, sat down opposite Luna, whose feet didn't even touch the ground and whose pale eyes were swollen and wet.

George nodded to the lump on her forehead, which was turning a nasty blue. "Who ... um ... Was it Flint? Malfoy?"

"We can beat them up for you," Fred offered hopefully. "No charge."

Luna shook her head and stared out the window. Muggle towns flashed past in a blur of concrete and steel. Fred and George started muttering to each other. Luna thought she heard something about Merry-Making Potions.

"I don't need a potion," she said sadly. "I can be happy on my own. I— I just need to ... " But Luna didn't know what she could do to fill up the horrible empty feeling inside her.

A tap sounded on the door. It was the pretty girl with the almond eyes and long black hair. "Is she okay?" whispered the girl.

Fred blew out his cheeks. So did George.

"I'll get some water," offered the girl. She returned shortly carrying a glass of water that sloshed over her hand as the train trundled along. She sat down beside Luna and said, "Here you go."

"Ta," whispered Luna. Accepting the water, she took a sip. She felt bad that they were all worried about her.

"My name's Cho," said the girl.

"Luna," said Luna.

"Fred," said Fred.

"George," said George.

Luna tried to smile for them. Encouraged, Fred and George drew their wands and started casting animal jinxes on each other, trying to make Luna laugh. Fred got donkey ears, and George got an elephant's trunk for a nose.

"I'll be right back," said Cho, carefully stepping over George's long, long nose. She returned a few minutes later with a damp cloth and her potions kit. Meanwhile, Fred had grown an extra leg and George a pair of handsome tusks.

Luna let Cho clean her face properly and dress the cut above her eye. From her potions kit, Cho got out her mortar and pestle and made up a gooey green paste that she then gently massaged into Luna's forehead. The ointment smelled oddly familiar to Luna, like a pair of old flannel pyjamas she hadn't worn in a very long time. It made all the hurt go away. Then Cho started combing Luna's tangled hair. Her hands were so gentle.

Luna closed her eyes. If she didn't see, she could pretend that someone else was combing her hair, someone who smelled of soap and cinnamon and sang songs of sixpences and pockets full of rye, someone who danced with her in the moonlight, someone who — Luna sucked in a breath — someone whose nose had a little bump right in the middle where a Mooncalf had kicked her once ...

The compartment door slid open again. "All fixed!" declared Cedric.

Luna jumped to her feet. She was remembering! Really remembering! "Oh, sorry, George!"

"No ... problem," wheezed George, rolling up his nose.

"Head Girl did a great job," said Cedric. "Good as new. Look."

Luna didn't need to look. If Cedric said it was fixed, it was fixed. She threw her arms around his stomach and started crying again, which was just silly because she was feeling so much happier! She could still see Mum's face! She could see her right inside her head, dancing under the moonlight!

Cedric patted her awkwardly on the back until she stopped crying. Cho found another hankie.

"Thank you," Luna said, turning shining eyes on both of them. Hugging Mum's telescope she sat down close to Cho in the hope she'd start stroking her hair again. Cho took the hint. Meanwhile, George cheerfully blew trumpet noises through his elephant trunk and Fred tapped all three of his feet in time. Cedric, who was looking very relieved, leaned against the closed door with just two arms and two legs casually crossed.

Luna slid her precious telescope back into her Christmas stocking and declared Hufflepuffs to be the smartest students at Hogwarts! "I hope / get sorted into Hufflepuff!" she told Cedric.

Cedric chuckled at that and said, "We'd be lucky to have you." He sat down on the other side of Luna and nodded to Cho. "Sorry, I don't think we've met. I'm Cedric, Cedric Diggory."

"I know," said Cho. Her cheeks went a pretty pink and she busied herself again with Luna's hair. "I mean, I've seen you play for Hufflepuff. You're very good."

"Oh, he's the best Seeker in the world!" declared Luna.

Now it was Cedric's turn to blush. "I wouldn't say that. Erm, I didn't catch your name ..."

“Cho Chang. I’m in Ravenclaw.”

Cedric smiled warmly at Cho and nodded to her potions kit. “Thanks so much for taking care of Luna,” he said. “I really appreciate it.”

Cho smiled shyly back at him from behind a sheet of shiny black hair that was half-hiding her face. Cedric kept smiling at her; they both seemed to have forgotten how to talk. Luna decided that if she didn’t get sorted into Hufflepuff, maybe it wouldn’t be so bad to become a Ravenclaw.

“You have lovely hair,” Luna told Cho dreamily. “Like a waterfall of black wraiths.”

Cho laughed a little and continued carefully smoothing Luna’s blonde locks. “Thanks. My best friend’s hair is full of curls. Naturally, we both want what the other’s got.”

“Oh!” said Luna, her eyes goggling. “I forgot to ask! Is she okay? Your friend?”

Cho looked blank. “Who? Marietta?”

“She was in the bathroom when I asked if you had a spare seat,” Luna reminded her, adding confidentially, “I suspect there’s been a breakout of Dragon Diarrhoea. The first symptom is sensitivity to bad smells. And all the way down the train, when I stopped to ask people if I could sit with them, all the spare seats were being kept for friends who were off in the toilet.” Luna shook her head. “Those poor people.”

Cho’s mouth opened and closed. Cedric was busy examining his feet. The twins exchanged a blissful smile.

“By George,” said Fred to his twin, “I think Luna’s right! The Slytherins were looking especially peaky, don’t you think?”

“They were indeed!” said George. “Sad business, Dragon Diarrhoea. We should brew up a potion for them.”

Fred emphatically agreed. “The least we can do. I’m sure a few drops of Revengus Solution in their pumpkin juice would set things right in no time!”

“Oh, that’s a wonderful idea!” cried Luna, clapping her hands. She wasn’t sure what the *Revengus Solution* was, but she was more than pleased with the idea of helping people get better. “Can I help?”

“Lads,” said Cedric warningly, but the twins were already on their feet and lifting each other’s animal jinxes. “What are you going to do?”

Fred and George smiled broadly and said with one voice, “Make Luna happy!”

** The End **