A Uniquely Portable Magic

by indecisivelyindependent

Summary

Ten months after Newt Scamander leaves New York City, Tina Goldstein sees a certain book in a certain bookstore.

Notes

Newt and Tina's relationship is one I'm really excited to watch unfold, and so I thought I'd do a little unfolding in the meantime... Newt and Tina and their magic belong to JK Rowling, while NYC and its history are my way of working into the story. Title courtesy of Stephen King: "Books are a uniquely portable magic."
Porpentina Goldstein was not one to sit around moping over a man. Or stand around, for that matter. But there she was in the magizoology section of the newest bookstore on 4th Avenue, and she was most definitely moping. It had been ten months since the memory-erasing rainstorm had fallen over Manhattan. Ten months of being an Auror again, ten months of Grindelwald trials in the MACUSA court system, ten months of long days spent quieting rumors spread by Second Salemers.

Ten months since Newt Scamander had boarded an ocean liner and sailed back to England.

Tina, she thought to herself, pull yourself together. But there it was, red leather and gleaming gold lettering and Newt Scamander in a smaller font beneath the title. She had seen a table display at the front of the store but couldn’t bear to stand there so close to tears. Instead, she dashed to the far back corner and rested her forehead against the same shelf she had checked every day, week after week, for this thin reference book with its simple, straight-to-the-heart title. One hand reached out slowly to touch the binding, the smallest “O” for Obscurus Books letter-pressed onto the spine.

She heard a small cough and quickly wiped her eyes on the corner of her coat sleeve. Turning, she saw Benji Bass, his hands in the pockets of his ink-stained Strand Bookstore apron. “Can I help you, Miss Goldstein?” he asked, and Tina could hardly bear to see the kindness in his eyes. He knew her by name because she had visited his No-Maj bookstore 81 days in a row, ever since discovering that a simple Specialis Revelio charm would unfold new sets of bookshelves from the walls.

It had been a blistering hot July day when she’d first walked into the Strand after seeing the “now open” sign in the window. Benji had been behind the counter that day, asking her what she liked to read. She stumbled through something nonsensical about animals and travel, and he had pointed her toward the back rows of shelves. As an Auror she had gotten into the habit of whispering revelio whenever in a new place, but this was the first time something actually happened in the middle of a very No-Maj part of Greenwich Village. When the first set of shelves pulled out of the wall she’d swung around, ready to obliviate the store clerk, but Benji was focused on unpacking a box and hadn’t even looked her way. He’d never said anything, so neither had she. Any time she brought a magical book up to the counter, like the sequel to The Flap of the Cape, it transfigured itself into whatever No-Maj book was most popular that week, like Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse or Agatha Christie’s The Big Four. Usually she’d end up buying one of those as well – Benji would joke for years afterward that without her, the Strand would have closed its door in three months.

Benji was one of the nicest No-Maj’s she’d ever met, Tina had decided after a few days of stopping by the store on her way home from the office. He was about her age, and quiet, but he understood literature and texts better than anyone she knew, No-Maj or not. In some ways he reminded her of Newt Scamander, but Benji wore thick glasses and his hair was already starting to thin, and he was married to a girl named Margaret, a librarian at the New York Public Library. He didn’t ask her too many questions, which she was thankful for – interacting with No-Maj’s had always been difficult for her. She had none of Queenie’s allure, or her legilimency. But between her obsessive book-buying habits and Benji’s kindness, they had forged a simple friendship. She told him, after two weeks of checking the magizoology shelves each evening, that she was looking for a recently published book written by a friend in England. She didn’t mind telling him Newt’s name, knowing that between the December rain and the nature of No-Maj bookselling, Benji would probably never manage to find the book. Or its author. Still, Tina couldn’t help but check every day, July giving way to August blowing into September. And day after day, no book by the British wizard who’d broken
all of the rules when he had apparated into her life and, just as quickly, sailed out of it.

She knew, she knew Newt had asked if he could deliver it in person, and she was pretty certain she had told him that he could. And yet, there it was, shelved between The Erkling Wars and other Scary Stories for Children and the more austere Gardening with Gnomes.

“Miss Goldstein?” Benji asked again, his hand on her arm. “Are you alright? Here. Come sit down over here.” He led her over to his stool behind the counter and she sat. The front display was flickering between the bright scarlet of Newt’s book and the mint-green of Thornton Wilder’s The Bridge of San Luis Rey. To Benji’s eyes, it probably just stood still in pale green, but to her it looked like a Christmas display drunk on too much giggle water.

She wiped her face with her sleeve again, sighing. “I’m fine, Benji, really.” He didn’t look convinced. “It was just a long day at work.” And a long sixth months since Newt Scamander’s last letter, she thought, but she kept that one to herself. She stood up and made her way over to the door.

“No book today, though?” Benji’s eyebrows were raised. “That’s not like you.”

Tina glanced quickly over at the green-to-red-to-green covers. “No,” she said quietly. “No,” again, more firmly this time. But Benji shook his head and, stepping out from behind the counter, took one of the books – a steady green in his hand – and pressed it into hers.

“Take Wilder’s new one,” he told her. “No, no. I don’t want any money. Escape from work a little tonight.” He opened the door for her, and she stepped out into crisp fall air.

She looked down, and there it was, as red as a maple leaf in her grasp.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them.
The Brownstone

Chapter Notes

All of your lovely comments warm my heart. <3 I wish I could say that a very, very apologetic Newt was standing on Tina's doorstep when she arrived home, but...

The quote in this chapter is from page xxxv of "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them," by JK Rowling.

Chapters might be a little slow over the holiday (my brother is getting married on Saturday!), but they'll make there way here over the next week or so!

The brownstone windows were dark when Tina turned the corner onto West 24th Street. Queenie must be out again, she thought as she climbed the stairs to their rooms. Even Mrs. Esposito was quiet. Tina was thankful. She didn’t really feel like encountering anyone at the moment, maybe most especially anyone who could read her mind, sisterly love notwithstanding.

She unlocked the door, hung her coat and hat on their stand, and charmed the embers in the fireplace into flame. Unlacing her boots and pulling on a pair of thick socks, Tina melted some cocoa on the stove for her customary hot chocolate before curling up in the corner of the sofa. She looked at the cover of the book she still held in her hand. She couldn’t bring herself to put it down, as if by holding it she was also holding onto the coat sleeve of its author. But she was also having a terrible time bringing herself to open it.

“Porpentina Goldstein,” she scolded herself under her breath, “if one Mr. Newton Scamander was good enough to help rid New York of Grindelwald, you can be good enough to read his book.” She put her mug of chocolate down on the side table and opened the book. There was no dedication, not that she was looking for one, and no introduction. The book began rather abruptly, following the cover page, with the British government’s Ministry of Magic Classifications.

The Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures gives classifications to all known beasts, beings, and spirits...

Two hours later, the fire had died down to embers again, and Tina had finished the book, placing it next to her on the sofa. She was still sitting there in the dark, a blanket wrapped around her shoulders and legs tucked up beneath her, chocolate gone cold, when Queenie quietly opened the door and slipped into the room. Tina didn’t make eye contact when Queenie moved the book aside, sat down next to her, and touched her arm.

“Honey, I could hear you all the way outside,” her younger sister said softly. “But it was all more of a jumble than usual, the subway and streetcars and taxis all jostling for the same lane. What’s wrong, Tina?”

Tina leaned into her sister, still not willing to look at Queenie but unfolding a little of the tension that had been tickling at her spine. “I went to the bookstore today...” she started but stopped, a little sob coming up from somewhere deep inside.

“And you found Mr. Scamander's book there.” Queenie finished for her, wrapping her sister in a
hug. “Oh, honey, it’s okay if you want to cry a little. I promise I won’t tell anyone.”

Tina hiccupped, her eyes filling a little. She shook her head. “It’s...” She hiccupped again. “It’s silly.” Hiccup. “It wasn’t right for me to expect him to actually come back.” Hiccup. “He’s probably off on a book tour or, knowing him, out in a jungle looking for flobberworms and arguing with Pickett.” Queenie rubbed her back, and the hiccups lessened. “Or maybe he and Leta LeStrange...” She couldn’t finish that thought. She couldn’t.

“Porpentina Esther Goldstein, you look at me.” Queenie was firm, her green eyes snapping. “Don’t you dare think that he and that Leta are off together dancing and drinking butterbeer in some Irish pub. Stop it. Stop it right now.” Queenie’s arms loosened a little, but Tina didn’t move away from her sister. They didn’t have many moments like these, real, honest heart-to-hearts. Queenie was open with everyone, maybe because they were always open, consciously or not, to her. But Tina wasn’t like that. She wished she were, wished she could flirt and laugh and invite confidences the way her sister did. Queenie was like the Bethesda Fountain, bubbling up and running over. Tina was like the Hudson River, cool and deep, ice curling along its edges.

“And stop comparing yourself to me!” If Queenie had been standing, she probably would have stomped her foot. But she had curled up to mirror Tina, and now she was holding the book in her hands, tracing the gold leaf lettering with a fingertip. “It is such a pretty book, though.”

Tina sighed, smiling a little. “It is, isn’t it? So much nicer than a lot of the books I’ve gotten from Benji.” She glanced over at the bookshelves she had bought last month to hold all of her purchases from the Strand. Queenie had started complaining about the stacks of books lining the wall beneath the window, so Tina went to an antique shop and had two tall walnut bookshelves delivered to their apartment. Mrs. Esposito had just shaken her head, muttering something under her breath about over-educated girls not being able to find husbands.

Queenie handed the book back to Tina and stood, stretching and yawning. “Does it sound like him? The way he writes?” She started walking towards their bedroom, humming “Funny Face” a little bit off-key.

Tina nodded, thinking about the box of letters beneath her bed. Twenty-six in all, the last one was postmarked March 4th, barely three months after saying goodbye on the quay. It had been sent from England, that last letter, and in it he had described his childhood fascination with Horklumps. Nothing to indicate a severance of communication, not a word of goodbye or “I’m busy” or “I’m going to elope with Leta LeStrange next week and we are going to have twenty children, thought you should know.” No, he had ended it in the way he did all of his letters, “Looking forward, as I always do, to your next letter. Yours most sincerely, Newt” and she had liked that, liked that his sincerity bled out of him onto the page. She had written back a day or two later, telling him about Queenie visiting Jacob’s shop two or three times a week, how happy it made her to see her sister so happy.

There hadn’t been a reply. She wrote again, a few weeks later, asking if he was all right, if there was anything she could do. No reply. She tried one last time in June, on a particularly tiring day after drinking probably a little too much giggle water. She couldn’t remember, exactly, what she wrote in that last letter, something about admiration and friendship and time and distance. She’d sealed it up and sent it the next morning without a thought.

Queenie stopped humming and looked back at her sister.

“Yes,” Tina said. “Yes, it sounds like him.”
The Café

Chapter Notes

Apparently this fic likes being written late at night/early in the morning. And I'm not the only restless one...

I'm so glad that you are enjoying reading this as much as I am writing it! <3

Tina didn’t sleep well that night.

It had become another one of her patterns the past couple of months, waking up at three in the morning, earlier even than the No-Maj milkman and the New York Ghost sunrise delivery boy. She would slip out of bed, pull on her coat, and walk through the Village. If it were Saturday or Sunday morning, she’d walk a few blocks over to MacDougal Street and order a cappuccino at Caffe Reggio. Tina had gotten to know more No-Maj’s in 1927 than she ever had before – at Caffe Reggio, it was Domenico, the talkative Italian barber who retired from his barbershop and brought the first espresso machine to New York City. Tina discovered that she loved espresso, its dark jolt sliding through her. She also visited the café so that she could talk with Sofia, Domenico’s oldest daughter, who always worked the last shift as night turned to day.

“Ciao, Tina,” Sofia called out from her place next to the towering silver espresso machine as Tina walked through the door. “Do you want the usual this morning?”

“Yes, please, Sofia,” Tina called back as she made her way over to say hello to Domenico, wiping down tables along the walls.

“Tina, bella, up this late again?” Domenico asked over the hum of late-night (or early morning, according to Sofia) customers gathered around small tables or sat in overstuffed armchairs, talking about who was singing over at the Savoy and which speakeasies had the best Planter’s Punch. Sometimes, it seemed to Tina, there really weren’t that many differences between No-Majs and magical people. In New York City, everyone talked about jazz and Prohibition and Babe Ruth.

“Up late as always,” Tina smiled a tired smile back at Dom as she sat down at an empty table in the corner of the café. Sofia brought over Tina’s cappuccino and sat down in the chair across from her.

“Tina, amica mia, you need to get some sleep. Or borrow some of your sister’s powder to hide the circles under your eyes.” Sofia looked inquisitively at her friend. “How is work going? I know you’ve been busy these past few weeks. They’ve been working you too hard, haven’t they?”

“Oh, you know, the paperwork just keeps piling up. Sometimes I think that they’re trying to keep me off the streets, with the amount of write-ups I’ve been having to do,” Tina shook her head. Just that and tall, kind British magizooligists and their own stupid, brilliant writing skills.

“I still can’t believe that you’re actually doing detective work, just like Hercule Poirot,” Sofia giggled. Sofia loved mystery novels, especially British ones, so when Tina accidentally let it slip that she did investigative work, Sofia couldn’t stop comparing her to her favorite crime-solvers. Tina didn’t mind Sofia’s questions. It was nice to talk to someone, albeit vaguely, about work when that someone didn’t know anything about work. Or aforethought magizooligists, for that matter.
“It’s really not that thrilling, Sof.” Tina winced a little at the fib. “I’m serious. My desk is covered in files and my fingers with paper cuts. But enough about me. Tell me about going over to Jersey last weekend.” Sofia loved to go hiking. When the weather was nice she’d gather some friends together, guys and girls from their part of the Village, and they’d go on long picnics in Central Park or out on the Island. Sometimes, if she wasn’t tied up at MACUSA, Tina would tag along, feeling a little out of place but enjoying keeping both feet on solid ground for a few hours. She hadn’t gone out with the group since August, so as she listened to Sofia describing the trees they’d seen along the river and the cannoli that Rosa’s Nonna had packed for dessert, Tina promised herself that she’d make more of an effort to spend time with her friends. *Maybe it would be good to have something else to think about,* she thought.

Tina stayed at the café until closing time, helping Sofia polish the espresso machine and pull down the shades for the few hours the shop was closed. With a quiet “ciao,” she said goodbye to Sof and walked back through the still-dark streets to the apartment. The sunrise edition of the *Ghost* was on the stoop, so she sat down on the steps to browse the headlines. There was a surprisingly rave review of No-Maj stage actor Bela Lugosi’s version of Dracula (“Lugosi, somehow, has captured the essence of one of the magical world’s most reclusive beings in his brooding on the Broadway stage”) and, as usual, the daily columns filled with questions about Grindelwald’s past – and future (“MACUSA and England’s Ministry of Magic discuss ethical imprisonment practices”).

The sky was just starting to turn light when Tina felt a light touch on her shoulder. Her neck was stiff and her feet were cold – she must have fallen asleep on the steps, she realized, eyes barely open. She groaned, rubbing at the sleep at the corners of her eyelids. Apparently, two espressos at four in the morning weren’t enough to keep her awake till seven. Next time she’d have to try three. Or convince Sofia to let her drink straight from the machine. “I’ll come inside in a minute, Queenie. Could you put the kettle on? I think I need to balance out Dom’s coffee with some cocoa.” Tina burrowed under the pages of the newspaper that had sprawled across her lap. She probably looked in utter need of a wash, but she was still so very tired. Maybe Queenie would start running a bath for her...

She felt the touch on her shoulder again and heard someone, a very masculine-sounding someone, quietly clear their throat. It didn’t, on second thought, sound like Queenie at all.

Tina’s eyes flew open, and she looked up into a freckled face and brown eyes crinkling into a hesitant smile.

“Good morning, Miss Goldstein,” said one Mr. Newt Scamander, crouching down next to her on the stoop, a hand gripped tight around the handle of a familiar tan suitcase, the other resting gently on her shoulder. “Might I suggest a nice cup of tea?”
Hooray for chapter 4! This one took a little longer - between heading back from the holidays and getting caught up on schoolwork, I'm hoping it reads alright!

There are references, in this chapter, to both the textbook of Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them and JK Rowling's Pottermore writings about Ilvermorny. And maybe Eddie Redmayne's BBC Radio 1 interview... :)

You, dear readers, are so wonderful in your kudos and comments. <3

“You know, Miss Goldstein, when I mentioned tea I wasn’t thinking of...” Newt trailed off, glancing up from beneath the unruly hair that had a tendency to hang over his eyes. He quirked a small smile, and flicked his fingers a little at the bustling tables around them.

Tina raised her eyebrows. “You have something against jasmine tea, Mr. Scamander? I thought, given your rather intimate knowledge of defending yourself against the Kappa with a cucumber, and Japan’s relative proximity to China, you might...” She noticed his eyes crinkling up again, the way they had when he’d woken her on the stoop less than an hour ago. She’d Side-Alonged him to Chinatown, gotten him seated in a corner table at Nom Wah Tea Parlor, ordered dim sum without a thought. Queenie’s influence must be growing, if Tina was taking to feeding men, especially a man who appeared in New York City without any warning, months after her last letter.

“Appreciate a good green tea?” Newt finished her thought, clearing his throat. His chopsticks were nervously tapping against the china plate he had just cleaned of its spring rolls. “Well, yes. That is, I was in Wuwei in May and—”

“Wuwei?” In her surprise, Tina nearly flung a shrimp dumpling at Newt's head. That explains his chopstick dexterity, then. “You were in China during the earthquake?”

Newt nodded, setting his chopsticks down on the table, bumping elbows with the woman sitting at the next table over. He winced in apology before turning back to Tina. “There was some fear that the local Chinese Fireball might take advantage of the death toll, so I traveled there with a contingency from the Ministry.”

“And you were fighting dragons.” Tina’s tone flattened. Leave it to a man, a demented lanky British man, to think he could take on a dragon. “Of course you were.”

“Oh, no, Miss Goldstein. Not fighting. I was hoping that she was a female, that she might have laid an egg recently.” Newt’s eyes brightened, and he leaned towards her, lowering his voice so that the No-Majs wouldn’t catch too much of their conversation. “I was correct. The shell-shards will do much to aid relief efforts in the area, help the locals purchase more shingles for re-roofing.”

He looked younger when he was smiling with his eyes, less world-weary, Tina thought. And it was so difficult to be terse with him, to not give in to the small urging of her mind to reach out and brush his hair away from his forehead. Pull it together, Goldstein, she steeled herself, taking a sip of tea
and looking at the mirrored walls around them. He’s said nothing about the letters yet, or the book.

“Did you...” Now she was the uncertain one. The teacup rattled a little as she placed it back down on the table. Be strong, Tina. “Did you just return from China?”

“Oh, no.” Newt was emphatic in his earnestness, and Tina blanched. There it is, she thought, plain as the jewel on the Horned Serpent's head. He’s forgotten, and I’ve been a silly fool.

“No,” Newt continued, his voice still low, “after China it was off to Norway. I wanted to investigate the effects of the total eclipse on the mooncalves. They were absolutely terrified, poor things. I vowed I’d never bring them to Norway again. Then it was Palestine in June, another earthquake, because I thought the Jericho sphinx might have been injured, but he was fine. Then—” he paused, thought a moment with his head tilted to the side, then nodded. “Yes, then the hurricane a little farther north from here, I think. The merpeople were a little shaken up by the storm, but they were learning some new music while I was there – Irving Berlin, I think they said. They told me he was pretty good, for not being Canadian. It was not quite calming enough for me, but the merpeople seem to like it. And—”

He stopped, his cheeks flushing. Tina blinked at him. “What?” she asked. “‘And’ what?”

“Your tea’s going cold, Miss Goldstein.” Newt pointed a chopstick at her teacup, holding it as if it were a wand. She smiled a little at that. “And I am talking too much. Why am I talking so much?” He started to fold in on himself, the way Tina noticed he did whenever he felt self-conscious. The tops of his ears were turning red, too.

Tina sighed and took another sip of her cold tea. If Queenie were here, she could read his mind and tell me what he was thinking and then this whole painful episode would be over and I could go back to assuring Mrs. Esposito that I’ll always be alone. And Newt can go back to saving people from destitution and listening to merpeople play ragtime and—

“You’re tired, Miss Goldstein,” Newt said gently. He reached out his hand just far enough to brush her wrist where her hand rested on the table, so softly she almost thought it didn’t happen. When she blinked, his hand was back on his side of the table, a chopstick spinning between his fingers. He looked at her and shook his head. “Perhaps going out for tea was a bad idea. I should get you home, let your sister r-r-run you a, a...” He stammered, for the first time since he’d arrived, and flushed again. “A bath.”

Tina flushed too. “No, no.” She nodded down at their table; dim sum plates stacked one on top of the other. “There’s still some tea left, and I like listening to your stories.”

She truly did. No one talked about the world the way he did, in a way that was both wise and exuberant at once. Newt Scamander didn’t just travel, she was beginning to realize, and he didn’t just find new creatures. He loved them, the beasts and beings he cared for, and he loved the vastness of the world, even in the midst of its disasters. But that love took a toll. She could see the disasters beginning to etch themselves across his face. His coat was hanging more loosely than it had last December, she realized. And even when his eyes smiled, she saw the exhaustion in them, exhaustion he probably saw mirrored in her own.

“Tina.”

She looked up at him at that. He had so seldom used her first name, even after twenty-six letters. He was looking at her so seriously from across the table, here in this tiny tea parlor in the middle of Chinatown. Tina felt as though she might be dreaming. She had dreamed, on the nights she could sleep, of what would happen when he returned. Her dreams had been nothing like this, no awkward
conversations about his gallivanting. In her dreams, he had always appeared with arms full of sunflowers, begging for her forgiveness as he pulled out sheaves of miss-sent letters. But Dream-Newt was not Real-Newt, the Newt who stammered when he talked about baths, the Newt who sat across from her, his shoulders bowing in over the table, his fingers drumming an anxious pattern on his knee.

Real-Newt reached into his coat pocket and took out an envelope, folded in half and then in half again. He unfolded it, smoothed its edges, and held it out to her. She looked down, and saw her own handwriting across its front, addressed to Newt. It was postmarked in June, the letter she had sent after drinking a bit too much and feeling a bit too much and *Mercy Lewis it’s the letter and he’s read it and now—*

“I’m wondering if we could talk about this,” he said without a stammer at all, setting the envelope down on the table between them.
**The Letter**

Chapter Notes

FAMILY!! I RETURN FROM THE GRAVE OF ALMOST-BUT-NOT-QUITE-FINALS!!

I, like Newt, have had a lot going on in my life. So you can consider the belatedness of this chapter a bit of real-life engagement with the story. :D :D :D Don't kill me.

I'm not quite sure how many more chapters this will be - originally I thought five would be all, but turns out that Tina needs a little bit more time to express her feelings and Newt needs to figure out how to not cause people to choke on their tea.

I love you all - your comments mean the world to me. <3

Of course the first thing she would do would be to start choking on her tea. Cold jasmine tea never did agree with her, Tina thought, sputtering. Newt was out of his seat in a flash, nearly knocking over the woman next to him as he handed Tina a small glass of water and started to firmly, yet gently, pound a fist against her back. This, of course, only caused her to cough more.

“It always works with the mooncalves, or when an imp swallows an overly-large cockroach,” Newt was muttering to himself as Tina regained the ability to breathe normally again. “Not that tea is anything like a cockroach, but one wrong swallow and...” His fist slowed, fingers spreading to rub her back in slow circles. “Better, Tina?” he asked, and she nodded, glancing around the restaurant in embarrassment. But the other customers were all focused on their own conversations and breakfasts, save, perhaps, for the woman who Newt kept bowling over.

“I'm—I'm fine, thank you,” Tina managed to get out before she went back to sipping from the water Newt had given her. Her eyes were watering, but she could still see the letter on the table in front of her.

Newt stood, brushing off his knees as he carefully inched past their neighbor, who sighed loudly and started attacking her own dim sum plate again. After he settled back into his chair, Newt made a face at Tina, a mix between a grimace and a grin.

“I didn’t mean to shock you, you know,” he said sheepishly, his eyes smiling. “You were the one who sent the letter, after all.”

Tina set her glass down at that and cleared her throat for good measure. “Yes, but I didn’t mean to,” she said, her voice a little hoarse in its intensity. Her eyes started to well up, cursing on that choking spell, and she couldn’t meet his gaze, those clever eyes that seemed to see right through her when he got around to looking. “You weren’t meant to see it at all,” she continued, more subdued. “Mercy Lewis, Newt, at this point I can’t even remember what I wrote. I wrote it when I was tired and had too much to drink and—”

Newt picked up the envelope, opened the flap, and pulled out two thin sheets of notebook paper. Tina wanted, desperately, to snatch them out of his hand, to set them on fire. It didn’t even matter anymore, what they said, what she had written. She wished she could take it back, take all of it back,
let this man walk out of her life and leave her to her sleepless nights and gray city streets and perfectly plain life.

“You’re thinking too much, Tina Goldstein.” Newt took one of her hands and pressed the pages into her palm. “Read it,” he said, his hand curling tight around her hand not holding the letter. “Then we can talk about whether or not you meant it.”

She looked down at the lavender paper she had torn out of one of Queenie’s flower-scented journals. It was crumpled, with splotches here and there that looked suspiciously like tear stains or maybe spilled giggle water. Probably both, Tina thought. She felt Newt’s steady gaze on her as she squared her shoulders and let her eyes run down the page.

_Dear Mister Scamander_, it began.

_It’s been months, now, since your last letter. I’m not writing to blame you, though I may or may not be upset about your [indecipherable smudge]. I thought we were friends, and maybe friendship can survive a few weeks without contact. I’m not sure. I’ve never found myself in this kind of friendship before._

_Maybe you won’t get this letter at all. You probably didn’t get the last one, since I never heard back from you, and maybe not the one before that. Where did you go, Newt, that you couldn’t leave a forwarding address?_

_I’m not one to worry. Queenie’s the more concerned one of the two of us, always thinking of others, always wanting to help. I want to help, too, but I get caught up in rules, in logic. I tell myself that there must be a logical reason for your silence, which leads me to believe that you must not want to correspond anymore. And I refuse to [indecipherable smudge] you if you don’t want it._

_What if it was meant to be like this, you off saving the world, me filing paperwork at the office? I’m not adventurous, Newt, not like you. When you were here in the city, I could be someone brave, but you should know that’s not me. This is me: a tired girl, who stays overtime at work and then comes home to a dark walkup, pours herself a glass of giggle water, and tries to forget that tomorrow is going to be just the same._

_You probably have far better things to be doing than writing letters to a Miss Tina Goldstein who lives with her sister in Manhattan. And I want you to do those far better things. You don’t need my help – you are a hero, Newt. I was just a girl along for the ride._

_yours, [this had been scratched out]_

_all the best,_

_Porpentina Goldstein_

“Do you know,” Newt said softly as Tina set the two sheets of paper side by side on the table, “that this was the first time I had ever learned your name—your real name, I mean?”

“It’s not something I share with the general public,” Tina ran her finger along the edge of one page. She still couldn’t meet his eyes. “I learned that my first year at Ilvermorny. Porcupine quills in my pillow.”

Newt chuckled. “I’ll trade your quills for the newts in my goblets my entire first year at Hogwarts. Every time I’d go to take a drink, I’d make a new friend.” His fingers tightened around hers again. “Tina, I _had_ left a forwarding address, when I first left for China, and I’m not trying to make excuses because Merlin knows no excuse would be good enough, but this is the kind of life I lead. It’s
unpredictable and dangerous and I don’t like dragging people into it, especially people I care about,” Tina almost looked at him at that, “because more often than not people get hurt. They get hurt. I get hurt.”

Tina thought he might not be talking about magizoology anymore. She stared at his hand, his thumb resting on the knuckle of her first finger. She could see tiny scars riddling his skin, like puncture wounds, and larger gashes that hadn’t seemed to heal well running up the back of his hand toward his wrist. His skin was tanned and freckled and she wanted to kiss each finger because it was so dear, he was so dear—

“Tina,” his voice lowered again, the way it had when he first pulled out the letter. “I think we have a few things we need to straighten out. One of which being my... hero status.” She smiled a little at the embarrassment that tinged his voice and, again, she almost—but not quite—looked up at him.

He continued, a subtle wryness entering his tone. “The second of which being yours, because we both know that you are anything but content to be just, as you put it, along for the ride.”

Tina finally looked up at him, ready to defend herself. But Newt beat her to it.

“No, Miss Porpentina Goldstein, I’m not going to throw your words back in your face. But I am going to ask you to face them.”
At long last! This is, I think, the last chapter - at least for now! It took nearly all of winter break for me to get this one done, and hopefully it's not too rushed, but I rather like leaving Newt and Tina the way this chapter does.

Much hope to all of you as we begin 2017 - fight back the darkness with a little bit of light and a whole lot of love.

It took Tina a few seconds to realize she and Newt were still sitting in the dim sum restaurant, waiters whisking past with stacks of steamer baskets in their arms, clicks of chopsticks against china echoing in her head. She also realized that she had been staring at Newt for that same number of seconds, staring at him without actually seeing him. And she couldn’t decide if this was a dream-come-true or a nightmare, because she found herself to be both relieved and furious at once.

Relieved that the letter wasn’t as terrible as she had imagined, and furious that, once again, Newton Scamander had managed to upend her life.

Newt’s forehead was wrinkling in concern. “Tina?” he asked, the old hesitancy back in his voice. “Are you feeling alright? We can go, if you’d like... I – I shouldn’t have brought this up, not yet, not here...” He raised a hand to wave down a waiter, but Tina reached out and gently pushed his arm down.

“No,” she said quietly, but with a hint of determination. “No, we need to talk about this or – or I won’t know what could have happened and I’ll always wonder.” Newt lowered his arm, and Tina folded her own hands into a tight knot. She took a deep breath and looked Newt full in the face. Her heart stuttered a little at the look in his eyes – a little bit hopeful, a little bit chagrined – and she released her breath with a sigh.

“I’m not good at – at this,” she started, still quiet. A waiter walked by, poured them some more tea, and moved on. Tina noticed that Newt had started to fiddle with his chopsticks again without seeming to notice it himself.

She took another breath and continued. “You weren’t supposed to read that letter, not really, but it’s true – I meant what I wrote. I know what I do – going to the office, sometimes going out on the streets to deal with a mishandled spell here or a curious No-Maj there – but that’s it. That’s what I do. And I enjoy it, the simplicity of it, the routine. You, though, you know what happens out in the world and you go there and you care for whoever might be hurting. And I lo-” she choked a little, and Newt gave her a look, and it was too much. She couldn’t say any more. *Curses on too little sleep and too much thinking. Mercy Lewis, Tina, you’re an absolute wreck.*

Newt was silent for a moment, looking at her carefully. Tina did her best not to look away. Then Newt nodded once and reached into his coat pocket, counting out a few dollars and placing them on the table. He stood up and reached for her arm, helping her to stand. She shivered a little at the contact.

“Will you walk with me, Tina?” he asked, walking her towards the door. “Morning walks can help
clear the mind, I’ve found. Especially walking across the Weald in the company of a Crup. For us, the sidewalk will have to do.”

It was still early enough that the streets were quiet, which Tina was thankful for as she and Newt started to wind their way through Chinatown towards Little Italy. Newt tucked her in close as they walked side by side, her hand resting on his coat sleeve. He slowed their steps a little once they crossed Canal and the streets narrowed to barely a car’s-width.

“You know, I don’t think I’ve seen this part of New York before,” Newt said, almost as if to himself. “We magic folk spend so much time apparating from place to place that we seldom see a real place at all…”

Tina almost, almost thought he was going to leave the previous topic behind, but he reached his free hand, the one not carrying his suitcase, up to cover hers on his sleeve.

“Tina, this is what I want to explain about my job. Me, being a magiczoologist, traveling and meeting people and helping creatures... I don’t do it out of any savior complex. And being asked to write a book was a pure accident – I didn’t even want them to put my name on the cover at all. It’s rather like being a No-Maj doctor, I would guess. People become doctors to help others. Or like you – you didn’t become an Auror for the deskwork alone, but because you care about what’s right. That’s all I do, Tina. I try to make things right, especially for creatures who cannot do so themselves.”

They strolled past sleepy café windows, where gray-haired nonnas were placing trays of cannoli and biscotti. The sky was surprisingly blue for October, and children were rushing around them on their way to school. Tina took a deep breath of autumn air, the cleanest air New York City had all year, free of the smoke of winter and the heat of summer.

“You’re right, you know,” Tina said as she turned them onto Broome. “I do want to make things right – you saw that last winter, perhaps better than anyone else. I told one of my No-Maj friends that I do detective work – I want justice, I want this city to be safe. Not just for magical people, but for everyone. This Grindelwald business has been exhausting because it seems like we’re never going to be safe again.” Newt looked over at her and tightened his grip on her hand. “We’re never going to go back to a time before Grindelwald, but figuring out what to do now... I get so tired, Newt. I wish it were easier, or that there was any kind of answer at all. But I know I have to keep going.”

Newt pulled her to a stop right before they crossed Broadway, easing out of the factory-worker foot traffic to lean against a wall already rumbling from textile looms. He let her hand loosen its grip on his arm only so he could hold it between them as she stood next to him. “That’s it, Tina. That’s how you and I are the same. There is this... this drive to make things better, no matter what the cost.”

Tina closed her eyes. The city was awake now, people hurrying down the sidewalks, taxicabs honking, the subway hurtling somewhere deep beneath them. She could feel Newt’s hand in hers. She opened her eyes and looked up at him. He was smiling again, the way he had when he woke her on the steps. Mercy Lewis, I’d do anything to keep him smiling. Her heart hurt a little at the thought.

“Newt, I don’t... I’m not...” She stopped, settled her heart, and started again. “I want to try.”

Newt set his suitcase down on the ground so he could hold both of her hands. “Be specific, Tina,” he said with a small grin. “I spend most of my time talking to Bowtruckles, remember. I can be a bit...”

“Dense,” Tina started laughing. “I remember.” She looked down at their hands and back up at him. “I want to try this. Try us, whatever us is. Even if you disappear for months on end, though I’ll expect proper notification before that happens. And maybe an invitation to disappear along with
“Newt was blushing, but so was she. “I’ll need... I’ll need time, I think, and don’t go thinking I’m going to move to England or China or the moon just for you, because I won’t, even if you just have to go searching for more mooncalves.”

“I wouldn’t expect you to,” Newt started to laugh as well, but just as quickly the earnestness entered his tone again. “We’ll make it work, Tina. I can’t promise it will be any easier than endless Grindelwald trials, but,” his ears turning a slightly deeper shade of pink, “I can promise that it will be a bit more enjoyable.”

And then Newt Scamander kissed her, right there on the corner of Broadway and Broome, and once she could look into his eyes again, Tina thought that it would be worth it. Distance and difficulty and interfering work schedules and her realism and his idealism, it would all be worth it to be able to stand next to this man on any street corner, anywhere in the world.

And that maybe, if he asked, she might move to England after all.

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