

The Hallows

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Chapter1

Chapter 1

A balled up piece of paper flew across the room to hit the back of Hadley's head. She let out a deep sigh and looked up from her homework to glare at her grinning brother. "Yes, Conner?" her voice full of thinly veiled annoyance.

"I'm bored." He shrugged like it was a reasonable explanation.

"You know you'll be even more bored tomorrow in detention if you don't finish that paper." She replied pointedly. Conner grudgingly turned back to the maths paper on the carpet in front of him and stared at it blankly before giving up for the second time. Hadley watched him out of the corner of her eye and felt bad. She knew that he wasn't good at maths.

She lifted herself off of the floor and walked to the other side of the living room to her twin brother's side. "Do you need help?" she offered, "remember, I said 'help', I'm not doing it for you this time." Conner smiled up at her.

Conner lay on the sofa flicking through his novel as Hadley was fully immersed in the world of simultaneous equations and inequalities. "Are you hungry, Hads?" Conner yawned.

"Yup – wait a minute, how did I end up doing your homework again?"

“Well, I’m sort of a wizard... and don’t pretend you don’t like doing my homework.” He winked as he got off the sofa and went into the kitchen to search for food. Hadley couldn’t argue with what he said: she was the very definition of a geek (she had looked it up) and she wouldn’t admit to anybody but Conner but maths was more of a hobby than a chore. As for the wizard part, well, that was true as well. Unfortunately, it wasn’t much fun being a wizard when using the tiniest bit of magic would result in a month long grounding courtesy of their mother.

Conner re-entered the room with a packet of Jaffa cakes and a couple cans of Coke balanced in his arms. He chucked one of the cans at Hadley who grabbed it out of the air. She scribbled the answer to the last question on the paper and then got up to sit next to her brother on the sofa.

“Pass over the biscuits, fatty.” She joked, poking him in the stomach. Conner relented and shoved a few more in to his mouth before giving her the half empty packet. The two sat and watched sitcoms on TV for an hour before they got bored and turned it off. “Is mum here today?” Hadley questioned her brother.

“Yeah, she’s in the basement with Liam.” He rolled his eyes.

Hadley mirrored this action at the mention of Liam’s name. Liam was always in their house; he was their mum’s PA and their mum was a textbook workaholic. She quite literally brought her work home with her and unfortunately that included Liam. He was easily the most awkward man that the twins had met – they had known him for at least eight

years and he still only managed to mumble a stiff hello every time he saw them.

The twins weren't entirely clear on what their mum's job actually was. They just knew that the basement was off-limits and the business had been their dad's before he died. Liam had been their dad's PA and their mum had just inherited him.

Seconds after Conner mentioned his name, they could hear Liam's voice. Their mum was coming upstairs.

They front door opened, it closed and then their mum walked into the living room. Laurie Hallow was pretty with dark auburn hair and a freckled complexion but she looked older than her 35 years. After the death of her husband, her face had aged and frown lines had set into her forehead.

"Homework?" was the first thing that she asked as she entered the room.

"Done." The twins chorused back at their mother – it was a daily ritual of theirs. The twins stared at their mother for a number of seconds whilst she looked back trying to suppress a smile. Her face finally cracked and her children smiled along with her.

"Fine, you get one spell tonight – just one." She turned back and went down into her study emerging with a large and familiar book. It was a yellowing hardback with the title, 'LIBRO INCANTAMENTA' inscribed in elaborate lettering. "I think it's your turn to pick a number Conner." She nodded towards him.

“73.” He replied without missing a beat.

Laurie chuckled inwardly to herself; she loved how excited this part of the evening got her kids. It was like they were little children again, eagerly waiting for their mum to tell them a bedtime story. “Nice choice: spell number 73 – the animation charm.”

“What? Like cartoons?” Conner asked, unimpressed.

Laurie opened her mouth to respond but Hadley beat her to it. “No genius, animation – as in being alive. I swear we don’t go to the same school.” Conner was about to come out with a retort but his mum gave him a look which told him that it would not be worth it.

“Don’t be rude to your brother.” Laurie ordered Hadley. “Now, the animation charm brings things to life just like Hadley said and-”

“We can raise the dead?” Conner asked incredulously.

Hadley shook her head. “Seriously mum, how do you expect me to not insult him?”

“One more interruption and I’ll put the book back.” Laurie warned. Conner and Hadley shut their mouths and sat back in their chairs, giving their mum their undivided attention. “Thank you. Now, I should probably start by establishing that you cannot raise the dead with this spell. Raising the dead is a very advanced form of magic which I wouldn’t even know how to begin to teach. This spell animates inanimate objects – I’ll show you.”

Conner's empty Coke can was sitting on the coffee table in front of him. Laurie looked at it intensely and muttered a couple of words which her children couldn't hear. Nothing happened for a few seconds and then the can started hopping. The kids watched in wonder as the can hopped around the table trying to find a way down. Their mother muttered another word and the can stopped moving.

"That was too cool!" Conner exclaimed.

"That was awesome – how? How do we do it, mum?" Hadley continued. They were practically jumping up and down in their seats.

"Hmm... I'm not sure you're ready for it yet." She teased.

"Mum!" the twins groaned in unison.

"Okay, okay, you need to focus on the object that you want to animate. More than just look at it – focus, make it so it's the only thing in your head. Not only that but you have to visualise what you want it to do otherwise it isn't going to work. Once you know what the object is going to do you say 'animandum'. You ready to try it?"

"Umm, yeah I am!" Conner grabbed his can and placed it in front of him whilst Hadley did the same with her own. His face screwed up in concentration and after five seconds he said "animandum" and the Coke can toppled over onto its side. "What? That isn't what I wanted it to do!" he complained. Before he had even finished moaning, Hadley's can jumped swiftly over his and onto the floor where it continued leaping around the room.

“I did it!” she smiled triumphantly. “How do I stop it mum?”

“Focus on it and say ‘inanimati’.”

“Inanimati” Hadley ordered and the can came to a stop mid-air and fell back to the ground.

“That’s it for tonight guys. You can try again tomorrow Conner – as long as-” Laurie began.

“-as long as I finish my homework. I know mum.” He finished for her, struggling to not roll his eyes.

“You got it kiddo.” She ruffled his hair as she left the room. “I’ll get dinner started now.”

Hadley sprinted upstairs to add the spell to her growing files whilst Conner turned on the Xbox and took his frustration out on zombies. “Finally,” he thought to himself “something I’m good at”. 287 kills later and Laurie was calling her children to the dinner table for dinner.

Dinner in the Hallow household was always interesting because before he had died; their father had always been the chef of the house. Their mum was not a good cook. Actually, she was a terrible cook. Hadley and Conner had witnessed her mess up instant noodles on multiple occasions and at one point she had she had set fire to pasta.

Tonight’s meal was a deep dish oven pizza alongside (undercooked) microwave chips.

The three of them went through the normal charade of pretending to enjoy the meal before their mum went back down to her study and Hadley went up to her bedroom

leaving Conner at a loss as to what to do. After moments of deliberation between blasting some more zombies and hanging out with Hadley, he decided to give his thumbs a rest for the night and check in on his sister.

He didn't knock before he walked into her room (Hadley hated that) and he did a double take at what he saw. Hadley was sitting cross-legged on her bed looking down at her tablet with music playing in the background but that was all normal. The strange thing was the stationery floating mid-air around the room. "Hadley?" Conner asked with a mock-scandalised expression. "Are you doing magic without mum around?" Everything suddenly dropped to the ground as Hadley noticed her brother in the room. Conner had to duck out of the way of an incoming ruler.

"Can't you knock?"

"Seriously, that's all you can say? I was under the impression that Hadley Hallow never broke the rules – especially not rules about magic." He smiled, shutting her door behind him as he sat next to her on her bed.

Hadley poked her tongue out at him half-heartedly; she was concentrating on her tablet. "What are you even doing on there?" he questioned.

"Huh?"

"Earth to Hadley! What am I, invisible?" he waved his hand in front of her face.

"Urgh, you're so needy." She pushed his arm playfully. "I'm trying to catalogue all the spells we've learned into

different groups. Eventually, I'll have my own digital copy of the book." She beamed proudly.

"You. Nerd. I think I'm just going to go to my room in case, you know, it might be contagious or something."

"Goodnight." Hadley called out without looking away from her tablet.

"See you." He replied as he exited her room.