FIC: Second Most Haunted

Title: Second Most Haunted

Author:

Prompt Number: #56 by [info]citrus_lime

Travel Destination: Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Rating: PG13

Pairing(s): Harry/Draco

Summary: After Draco remarks that ghosts in the States aren't as substantial nor frightening as those in England, Harry decides an investigation is in order.

Warnings: Minor language and suggestion

Word Count: 2210

Author's Notes: I was delighted with this prompt and promptly pounced on it! I didn't specifically mention it in the fic, but Harry is enamored of the British paranormal program Most Haunted. Special thanks to my beta!

Second Most Haunted

The imposing building came into view, and Draco's pulse accelerated in nervous excitement. As prisons went, Eastern State Penitentiary was nearly as dreadful as Azkaban was. Draco shuddered involuntarily. "Do we have to tour this building?" he complained.

Harry spared Draco a glance and a grin as he drove. "It will be fun," he replied. "You're not afraid, are you?"

"Certainly not," scoffed Draco.

He had been the one to tell Harry he didn't believe the States could boast the type of hauntings that England was rife with and famous for. The conversation had turned into a lively debate that ended when they had agreed, at Harry's insistence, to travel to the States and investigate for themselves. Draco had responded to the challenge, and here they were in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, approaching Eastern State Penitentiary. It was reputed to be one of the most haunted sites in America.

During its heyday, the prison had housed some of the most notorious criminals in American history, including the infamous gangster Al Capone. Harry and Draco were planning to tour the complex to see whether it harbored as many ghosts as England's Tower of London or even Hogwarts.

Harry parked the car and grabbed his bag of ghost hunting equipment. He had a video camera packed, along with a digital voice recorder and some other ephemera that real paranormal investigators used. "Ready, love?" he asked.

Draco nodded and got out of the car. He drew his wand and cast a minor Notice-Me-Not charm over them. It would enable them to mingle with the Muggles without being noticed unless they spoke up or drew attention to themselves.

They joined a group of Muggles who were streaming into the building for a guided tour. Harry and Draco hung back while the guide gave a brief history of the prison. They were in a large rotunda, with corridors leading off in all directions like the spokes of a wheel. Draco looked around with interest. Despite the nature of the building, this must have been beautiful at one time. Now, the windows were broken and the floor was littered with debris.

The tour guide was wrapping up her spiel, and she cautioned everyone to watch their step and to stay with the group. Draco glanced at Harry, who winked at him. They planned to strike out on their own at the first opportunity; thus, the Notice-Me-Not charms.

They left the rotunda with their group, but then Harry and Draco hung back and allowed the others to go ahead. "Come on," Harry urged. "I want to visit Cell Block 12."

Draco remembered the tour guide mentioning that particular cell block. "Isn't that the most haunted place in this dilapidated building?" he frowned.

Harry nodded. "It certainly is," he said. "I can't wait to see it."

Draco quelled his reticence and followed in Harry's wake. Draco had grown up around ghosts. A couple of dour old relatives flitted about the Manor, and Hogwarts had boasted several spectral denizens. The ghosts Draco was accustomed to, however, had been rather civil. Any ghosts they encountered here would be the spirits of hardened criminals. Draco suppressed a shiver and quickened his pace to keep up with his enthusiastic boyfriend.

They made their way down one of the corridors, dust and detritus swirling about their feet. Broken skylights high above them provided some welcome illumination in the otherwise dank and dreary prison. Paint was peeling from the walls, and most of the metalwork they passed was rusted. The ambiance was sobering and oppressive.

As they picked their way through the debris, Draco heard and felt a breath in his ear. He yelped and lurched into Harry.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked, stopping to look at his boyfriend.

Draco was batting at the air near his head and scowling. "I thought...it felt like someone blew in my ear," he complained. Harry scrambled to turn his video camera on and aim it at Draco. Once Draco realized he was being filmed, he pushed Harry's hand away. "Stop taking video of me," he snapped.

"Get out the little voice recorder I gave you," Harry instructed.

Draco complied, but his expression indicated he found it a hardship. Harry showed him how to turn it on. "Now what?" Draco frowned.

"Now we try to capture an E.V.P.," Harry replied, smug in his paranormal expertise, gleaned from watching the telly.

"Evee what?" Draco asked.

"E.V.P," Harry repeated. "It stands for electronic voice phenomena, which is what you call it when you record voices that you didn't hear with your ears."

"That's queer," snorted Draco.

"Ask a question," Harry coaxed him.

"Are you mad?" hissed Draco.

Harry sighed. "I'll try it then." He cleared his throat and asked, "Are there any spirits here with us?" He paused. "What is your name?"

"Whom are you speaking to?" Draco inquired.

"I'm trying to contact any spirits who may be lingering," Harry explained.

Draco arched an eyebrow. "Do you see any spirits?"

"Just because we don't see them doesn't mean they're not here," Harry replied with as much patience as he could muster.

Draco's chin lifted. "Yes, but--ouch!" He whirled around.

"What?" Harry asked him, camera rolling.

"Someone pulled my hair!"

"A ghost!" grinned Harry.

Draco gulped and sidled closer to his boyfriend.

"Give me your recorder," Harry said. "I want to play it back and see if we caught any E.V.P.s." Draco handed the small device to Harry, and Harry rewound it and hit the play button.

"...don't see them doesn't mean they're not here."

"Yes, but--ouch!"

"Pretty."

The last word was barely a whisper--more a breath of sound--but it was clear.

Draco glanced up at Harry. "Did you say that?"

Harry shook his head. "Did you hear me say anything?"

Draco's eyes bulged. "N-no." He looked around nervously. "Harry, I don't like it here."

Harry had the nerve to laugh at him. "You're not scared, are you?" he teased. "After all, American ghosts aren't nearly as strong and frightening as the spirits of England."

Draco made a rude gesture. "It wasn't you getting your hair pulled, was it?"

"Please," scoffed Harry. "You love to have your hair pulled."

"Not by a...a perverted, dirty old ghost!"

Harry laughed again at his boyfriend's aggrieved expression. "Come on, let's explore some more." Harry continued down the corridor, and Draco followed reluctantly.

♥

They stepped through a doorway into a dimly lit room. "What is this place?" Draco whispered.

Twisted remains of metal bed frames were scattered about, along with a dilapidated sink. More debris was strewn across the floor, and there were spiderwebs decorating the corners.

"It's the infirmary," Harry responded, "where they performed all manner of sadistic and inhumane experiments on the inmates."

Draco's eyes widened in horror. "You're taking the piss," he accused.

Harry snickered. "Yeah, I am."

"Berk," snorted Draco. He followed his pronouncement with another yelp. "Something just pulled my hair again!" he cried.

Harry swung the video camera around and aimed it at Draco. "Are you certain it's not just spiderwebs catching the strands of your hair?" he tried.

"Spiderwebs don't hurt, Harry!"

"I daresay one of the resident spooks has taken a fancy to you," Harry mused.

"Let's catch up to the others," Draco whined.

"It's just an invisible, little Muggle ghost," chided Harry. The look Draco turned on him told Harry he'd probably be sleeping alone tonight. "I still want to visit Cell Block 12," Harry said, keeping his tone light. "That's where the most reports of activity come from."

"I don't like this," Draco repeated in a sullen voice.

"Nothing we've experienced so far is any worse than the tricks Peeves would pull at Hogwarts," Harry reminded him.

"Peeves didn't fancy me!"

"How do you know?" Harry countered. "Perhaps he watched you wank in your dorm."

"Harry! Ugh!" Draco cried.

Harry chortled. "Let's go, pretty boy."

♥

"Here we are, in the infamous Cell Block 12," Harry intoned in a solemn voice. He had turned the camera on himself, since his boyfriend had refused to narrate. "This area of the prison is said to be--what was that?" The camera panned to the left.

"I heard footsteps," Draco whispered.

"Is it the other tourists?" Harry asked.

Draco shook his head. "No, they were making much more noise."

Both of them all but held their breath as they listened intently for another sound. When nothing else occurred, Harry resumed his monologue. "Cell Block 12 is reputed to be the most active, most haunted place within Eastern State Penitentiary. We're here-"

"Harry, I'm getting a chill."

"Yeah?" Harry responded with a grin. He was clearly thrilled. "That's a sign of spirit activity."

Draco rubbed his arms and looked around as if expecting a transparent specter to walk through a wall.

"Please give us a sign of your presence," Harry said. "Make a noise, move something, pull Draco's hair again."

"Are you mad?!" Draco cried. "Tell it to pull your hair!"

"Sorry, love," chortled Harry. "The entity seems to fancy you." They waited in breathless silence, but nothing further happened. Harry tried again. "We mean no disrespect. We simply wish to know if someone is here with us. What's your name? Were you a prisoner here?" Harry paused after each question as if expecting a reply. He looked at Draco. "Do you have your voice recorder on?"

"Yes," Draco replied. "I never turned it off."

"Excellent, let's play it back," Harry suggested. He accepted the device Draco handed him and rewound it briefly. He pressed play and held it up to his ear. Harry listened closely but heard nothing unusual until his voice asked What's your name? Harry's eyes widened, and Draco tensed.

"What is it?" he asked.

"When I asked for a name, I got a response," Harry told him. He rewound again and listened once more. Frowning, he said, "I can't make it out, though. Here, you have a listen." Harry held the device out, and Draco bent his head to listen.

Draco heard a harsh whisper. "Play it again," he requested. Harry showed him how to work the recorder, and Draco listened to it a couple more times. "I think I hear the name Jack," he said, handing the device back to his boyfriend.

Harry listened to it again and began to laugh.

"What is so bloody hilarious?" Draco demanded.

"I believe the voice said 'jack off'," Harry replied. At Draco's blank look, he explained, "Jack off is American slang for wank."

"That's terribly rude," Draco sniffed in affront.

"It's bloody fantastic!" Harry disagreed. "We got a response to a question, which is indicative of an intelligent haunting."

"Aren't all ghosts intelligent?" asked Draco. The ones he had met seemed like ordinary people, except that one could see through them.

Harry shook his head. "No, not all of them are. There's such a thing as a residual haunting, in which the same activity, sound, or even an apparition repeats itself over and over. It's almost like the recording on this device. Catherine Howard, who haunts Hampton Court, is one such residual haunt. She is said to repeat the same activity of running down the hall and screaming whilst seeking an audience with Henry VIII to plead for her life."

"She's not a residual haunt," Draco argued. "My mother met her once, and Lady Catherine is quite the conversationalist. She had some rather amusing anecdotes about old Henry."

Harry stared at him. "You're taking the piss."

"I most certainly am not," Draco said with a lofty air. "Ask Mum yourself the next time you see her."

Harry's eyes narrowed on his boyfriend, but Draco didn't blink. Both of them turned at the sound of voices. "The tour is catching up to us," Harry sighed in disappointment.

"As Father always says, 'Safety in numbers'," Draco beamed. He sidled past Harry and hastened to meet up with the Muggles.

Harry scowled as he followed after. As they surreptitiously joined the others, the tour guide was busy talking.

"...coming up on Cell Block 12, which is allegedly the most active place in the prison."

Harry and Draco exchanged a knowing glance. The tour began making its way in the direction Harry and Draco had just come from, but they filed along behind anyway.

"If I agree that American ghosts are as scary as their English counterparts, will you agree to give up this paranormal nonsense?" Draco whispered to his boyfriend.

"Of course not," Harry told him. "Tomorrow we're headed to the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado."

Draco halted in his tracks. "Isn't that the creepy hotel where The Shining was filmed?"

Harry's glee was evident by his huge grin. "It will be wicked!" he enthused. "The Stanley Hotel is another paranormal hot spot in the States."

"Harry, dear?"

"Hmm?"

"I'm so going to kill you."