

Chapter 10: The Second Task

"Harry! Are you staying?" Ginny asked after they had heard the announcement about the Hogsmeade trip.

"Yes I think I should probably get that egg done." Ginny nodded her head. Ron and Hermione sat on the other side of the table, not talking to each other.

"Well I am glad you are going to work on the egg."

Harry smiled. "I should have done it a while ago huh?"

"Yes!" Ginny and Hermione snapped. Ginny held his hand in hers under the table. Harry hadn't officially asked Ginny to be his girlfriend but he was glad to be around her. "Oh Hermione we should be getting the pictures back real soon, could you tell Viktor for me?"

"I will, he will be happy to know they are almost done."

"I can tell Fleur and Cedric if you would like?" Harry questioned.

"Thank you Harry. Well we better get going," she said as they all got to their feet. Harry told them goodbye. "See you later Harry," Ginny said as her and Hermione went to meet Krum. As Harry was heading back he ran into Cedric and Cho. "Oh Cedric, Cho, Ginny wanted you two to know that the pictures will be back soon."

"Thank you," Cho said with a smile.

"Oh Harry can I talk to you for a second?"

"Sure," Harry said as he followed Cedric off to the side. "What's up?"

"Does your egg make loud noises when you open it?"

"Yes."

"Try taking a bath with it."

"What?"

"Are you staying?"

"Yes."

"Alright use the prefects's bathroom. Fourth door to the left of the statue of Boris the Bewildered on the fifth floor. Password's 'pine fresh.'"

"Thanks," Harry said as Cedric went back to Cho.

Harry took Cedric's advice and went to the prefects' bathroom. After her got the water going he slipped into the tub. He stretched out his arms, lifted the egg in his wet hands, and opened it. The wailing sound still happened and he didn't get what Cedric had meant.

"I'd try putting it *in* the water." Harry jumped at the sound of Myrtle's voice.

"Myrtle! I'm not wearing anything!"

"I closed my eyes when you got in. You haven't seen me in ages Harry. Not since your second year."

"I haven't been able to go in there, it's off limits."

"Oh well...I'd try the egg in the water, that's what Cedric Diggory did."

"Were you spying on him too?"

"Not really I come in here sometimes but I never talk to anyone."

"I'm honored," Harry mumbled as he picked the egg back up. Slowly he lowered it into the water. He took a deep breath and dunked his head underwater.

"Come seek us where our voices sound,

We cannot sing above the ground,

And while you're searching, ponder this:

We've taken what you'll sorely miss,

An hour long you'll have to look,

And to recover what we took,

But past and hour the prospect's black,

Too late, it's gone, it won't come back."

Harry pulled his head out of the water and closed the egg. "Myrtle are there merpeople in the lake are there?"

"Oh you are quicker than Diggory was."

"Thanks Myrtle!" Harry said as he waved for her to cover her eyes. When she did he climbed out and quickly dressed. He grabbed his egg and dried it. "You were a lot of help," he called before sprinting off to the library.

That is where Ginny found him. His head was buried in books. Many of them were open beside him and he was starting to get frustrated. Ginny came up behind him placing her hands on his shoulder. Harry turned to look up at her. "Back already?"

"Have been for a couple of hours. Hermione and I went looking for you. Myrtle says you unlocked the egg."

"Well if it wasn't for Myrtle I never would have gotten it. Sirius sent me a letter congratulating me on passing the task."

"Did you write him back?"

"Of course I did," Harry said as he began to tell her what had happened between Snape and Moody.

When he was done Hermione and Ron had arrived. "We are here to help," Hermione said with a smile.

"I could use it," he said quietly.

Nothing seemed to be working for them. The four of them spent as much time going over as many books as possible. "I'm out of ideas!" Harry said.

"So am I." Ron put in

"How is he supposed to last an hour underwater? I mean he can't transfigure," Ginny said annoyed.

Just then Fred and George came in. "Professor McGonagall wants to see you two," Fred said to Hermione and Ginny.

"Why?" Hermione asked.

"Don't know but she looked a bit grim," George said with a shrug.

"We'll meet you two back in the common room," Hermione said as the two disappeared with Fred and George. Ron and Harry eventually had to leave and took as many books with them as possible. It was late when they fell asleep, still having nothing to use for the task tomorrow.

"Harry Potter must wake up, sir!" Dobby cried in Harry's ear. Both Harry and Ron sat up suddenly.

"Leave me alone Dobby."

"Harry Potter needs to hurry. The second task starts in ten minutes."

"Ten minutes! I don't have anything!" Harry cried. "I can't do the task I have nothing!"

"Harry Potter will do the task," Dobby said handing Harry a slimy ball.

"What is that?" Ron asked.

"Its gillyweed sir. To help Harry Potter breathe underwater."

"Fantastic thank you Dobby!" Harry yelled as the two took off for the next competition.

Harry was the last to make it there and he stood panting.

"All right Harry?" Bagman asked.

"Just fine," he said rubbing his chest.

"Well, all our champions are ready for the second task, which will start at the sound of the whistle. They have precisely one hour to recover what has been take from them." Harry quickly pulled off his robes and shoes as he lined up with the others, shoving the gillyweed into his mouth. "One...two...three!" A shot rang out and the four dove into the water.

It took Harry a while to recover and realize that he had gills. He began to swim towards the center of the lake. Fish swam passed him. As he got closer to the bottom something grabbed at his leg. Turning Harry fired at whatever had tried to capture him.

"An hour long you'll have to look,

And to recover what we took..."

Harry soon began to swim faster. He emerged in a ruined city. Continuing to swim he could still hear the mersong.

"...your time's half gone, so tarry not

Lest whatyou seek stays here to rot..."

He saw people swimming around, ones just like the painting in the prefects's bathroom. As Harry swam on he saw four figures floating in the middle. Between Cho and Hermione was Ginny. There was also a girl who looked no older than eight, who had silvery hair, Harry realized she must be Fleur Delacour's sister. When Harry got close enough he untied whatever was wrapped around Ginny's ankle. Looking around he didn't see anyone else coming. *What is taking them so long?*

Then Harry tried to free Hermione but the merpeople pulled him away. "You take your own hostage," one of them told him.

"No!" Harry cried. Harry was glad to see Cedric when he swam up.

"I got lost, the others are coming," he told Harry as he grabbed Cho and began to swim off. Next came Krum who looked just like a shark. He freed Hermione in a

second and continued on. Yet Harry still waited for Fleur. Finally he could not wait any longer.

He tried to free the girl. They jumped in front of him and Harry drew his wand. He aimed it at them and held up three fingers. "One...two...three." The merpeople scatter and he darted forward to cut her free. He grabbed both Ginny and the girl around the waist as he made his way to the surface.

Harry knew he was very deep but he kept swimming as hard as he could. His energy was being drained as he headed towards the top of the lake. Taking a deep breath he pulled Ginny and the girl's head above the surface. They both gasped gulping in the air. "Harry!" Ginny said happily as she brushed her wet hair from her face. "Is that Fleur's sister?"

"Yes," he said as he let her wrap her arms around his neck. The little girl held tightly to him as the three of them made their way back to where everyone waited. Harry could see Madam Pomfrey fussing over Hermione, Krum, Cedric, and Cho, who were all wrapped in thick blankets. He also saw Madam Maxime trying to hold back Fleur, who was fighting her hardest to get back to the water.

"Gabrielle! Gabrielle! Is she alive? Is she hurt?"

"She's fine," Ginny said as she climbed out of the water. Harry passed Gabrielle up to Ginny. Fleur had finally broken free of Madam Maxime and ran to hug her sister.

"It was ze grindylows...zey attacked me...oh Gabrielle, I thought...I thought..."

"Come you two!" Madam Pomfrey said as she dragged Ginny and Harry over to where the others sat and wrapped blankets around them. Ginny curled up next to Harry.

"You did it Harry!" Hermione said as she hugged him.

"Thanks Hermione."

Fleur and her sister were also brought over. She had many cuts on her face and arms and her robes were torn but she didn't seem to care and she wouldn't let Madam Pomfrey to clean them. "Look after Gabrielle," she told her, and then she turned to Harry. "You saved 'er, even though she was not your 'ostage."

"Yeah," Harry mumbled quietly.

Fleur bent down and kissed Harry twice on each cheek. "And thank you too," she told Ginny as she hugged her tightly.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have reached our decision," Ludo Bagman cried. "Fleur Delacour, though she demonstrated excellent use of the Bubble-Head Charm, was attacked by grindylows and she was unable to retrieve her hostage. She is awarded twenty-five points."

Applause could be heard from the stands.

"I deserve zero," she told Ginny over her sister's head.

"Cedric Diggory, also using the Bubble-Head charm, was the first to return with his hostage and returned one minute outside of the hour, so therefore he is awarded forty-seven points."

Cho cheered beside him as well as did many people from the stands.

"Viktor Krum used an incomplete form of Transfiguration, which was nevertheless effective. He returned second and is awarded forty points."

Cheers rang up for Viktor as well.

"Harry Potter used gillyweed to great effect. He returned last and way outside the one hour time limit. However, the Merchieftaniness informs us that Mr. Potter was the first to reach the hostages and that the delay in his time was so that he could make sure all the hostages returned safely."

Ginny and Hermione both gave Harry a half-exasperated, half-commiserating looks.

"Most of the judges feel that this shows moral fiber and merits full marks. However Harry is awarded forty-five points. The final task will take place on June twenty-fourth."

"Congratulations!" Ginny cried hugging him tightly. Fleur, Hermione, and Viktor were all clapping for him.

It was over and Madam Pomfrey began herding the champions and hostages back to the castle to get into dry clothes. Ginny smiled at all of the champions. They all sat in a warm room around a fire. Gabrielle sat with her sister, who seemed intent on not letting her go. All of them were tired and still a little chilled from the match. Dumbledore had allowed them this room to gather themselves before returning. Hermione sat on a small couch with Viktor who talked with her quietly. In a corner Cho and Cedric did the same thing.

"I have something for everyone," Ginny said suddenly. Harry sat up straighter and everyone looked up. Ginny handed out the copies of the pictures from the ball. "I thought you all would like to have them." Everyone seemed a bit more cheered up by the pictures.

Harry held Ginny to him not caring if anyone saw, after all it didn't matter to him anymore. Ginny leaned back against him and flipped through the pictures. She stopped on one picture of her and Hermione. "When was this taken?"

"I took it while you two weren't paying attention. You look great though," he mumbled against her neck. He could feel her shiver and smiled.