

Chapter XII

The Third Task and After

It had taken Harry and Cedric over fifty minutes to get to the Cup in the original time stream, and then Harry was with Voldemort for over an hour (mostly waiting for the Death Eaters and listening to Voldemort harangue them). Harry in his huge bear form made it to the Cup in just over ten minutes. His aura warned the magical creatures that there was a magical alpha predator passing through, and none wanted to match itself against it since Harry wasn't marking territory.

Harry reverted to his human form, took out his wand, and grabbed the Cup.

In seconds, he was at the decaying Riddle house.

Harry made his way to the cauldron, where Wormtail was finishing the potion. Harry glanced around and saw no sign of Voldemort, but he could hear Nagini coming to investigate his presence. Harry had been uncertain of exactly what he would do once he arrived. He had all sorts of scenarios. He seemed to have stumbled into one he had thought rather unlikely. He would have preferred to have Pettigrew do the dirty work, but that would now risk Voldemort somehow surviving.

Pettigrew straightened up and muttered, "Finally finished." Harry therefore stunned him.

Nagini started to retreat. She had hoped this was a non-magic user, but since it wasn't she knew she had to warn her Master.

Harry apparated ahead of the retreating snake, and with one sweep of his wand cut off her head before she could strike. Even before the body stopped writhing, Harry had located the emerald Horcrux, located deep inside the snake's gullet. Getting it out was a quick but messy business.

Harry cleaned himself and the emerald off and apparated back to the cauldron. He grinned, stood behind a tall tombstone, and commanded with all his power, "Accio Voldemort!"

The nasty little humanoid thing that held Voldemort's bit of soul came screaming through the air face first. That face hit the tombstone Harry was hiding behind, stunning Voldemort semi-senseless for several minutes.

Voldemort's head cleared when he was dashed by a bucketful of conjured ice water. He was shocked not only by the pain in his face and by the water, but by the fact that he was bound. "Who dares!" he demanded.

"I dare," Harry said simply.

Voldemort was clearly surprised. "Potter?"

"That's me," Harry said. "Now, I've destroyed all your Horcruxes but one." Harry pointed at the emerald, sitting on a flat tombstone some ten meters away. Harry stepped back behind the tombstone and sent a powerful shattering curse at the emerald.

"NO!" Voldemort screamed as the Horcrux exploded. For a few seconds, the surprised image of an earlier Voldemort hung in the air.

"So, now you're almost mortal," Harry said, coming back around the tombstone. "If I destroy that poor excuse of a shell you're in, though, it will likely just turn you back into whatever you were for almost thirteen years, and I don't know how to kill that. So, let's see if the ingredients are the only thing that count, or if the intentions count as well."

The ugly face frowned for a moment, and then registered surprise when Harry picked up the form. "What? No! Potter, wait! We can rule together!"

"I don't want to rule, and if I did, I certainly couldn't trust you to share," Harry said. "You learned not to share in the orphanage, and certainly never learned to share since." He tossed the struggling body into the cauldron, regretfully removing the bonds as he did so. He summoned a leg bone from Riddle Senior and tossed it into the cauldron, saying the formula as he did so. Then he tied a tourniquet around Wormtail's wrist, remembering to make it look as if Pettigrew had done it himself, and then sawed the hand off. Then Harry cut a slash into his left forearm, and let the blood drip into the cauldron as he said the last sentence.

In the first ceremony, the potion in the cauldron had instantly turned a bright white, sending out diamond-like sparks. This time, it was a bright cream color, and the sparks had a faint yellow tinge. When the sparks stopped, the billow of steam which extinguished the fire was also yellowish.

In the center of the dissipating mist, a thin figure was trying to straighten up -- it was debilitated compared to Voldemort's returning form in the first time line. Harry cast an Ennervate at Wormtail, who instantly woke up, screaming, unable to decide which pain was worse, the one from his missing right hand or the pain on his left forearm as Voldemort tried to draw more magic, more life force, from the Dark Mark than it was ever designed to channel, to bring the new-but-crippled body to full life.

Harry knew he could not cast the Death Curse or the Cruciatus. He just did not have enough hate in him. Still, there were other spells, just as deadly if not as quick. Harry pulled Merlin's wand and cast a small bubble around Voldemort's head. Air could not get in or out. Two breaths quickly used up what oxygen there was inside the bubble.

Pettigrew shrieked in agony and then flopped over, dead.

All over the United Kingdom and Ireland, and on the island of Azkaban, the thirty-four remaining Death Eaters with unaltered Dark Marks died, one by one, as Voldemort tried to survive.

As Voldemort fell out of the cauldron and rolled on the ground, trying to gain access to oxygen in any possible way since without the magic and power flowing to him he would already be dead, Harry walked away and made certain that Nagini's body was destroyed.

After six more minutes, Voldemort seemingly died. Harry cast a detection spell, and it was another three minutes before the last little dribble of power petered out. Harry dumped the body back into the cauldron and wedged Pettigrew in next to it.

He waited another ten minutes before removing the bubble around Voldemort's head and then ran every test he knew to see if there was any trace of life.

There was none.

Harry cleared away all evidence of the spells and put away Merlin's wand. He summoned the Cup, and it whisked himself, the cauldron, and the two bodies in it away.

Without Barty Crouch Junior's interference, it had taken Viktor 42 minutes to get to the Cup's original location. Cedric was right behind, while Fleur took 54 minutes.

Dumbledore had made a partial announcement: the person who had entered Harry Potter's name into the Goblet of Fire had been caught, and had turned out to be a Marked Death Eater, escaped from Azkaban. The Cup had been used as a portkey, and even then, Harry Potter was struggling at an unknown location against at least one other Death Eater, who was trying to bring Lord Voldemort back into his power.

By now, there were two dozen aurors on the scene, and numerous reporters. Suddenly, Karkaroff screamed in pain. For the next five minutes, he writhed and screamed, although he did so under a silencing spell beneath the stands.

"What is it?" Fudge had demanded.

"It's his Dark Mark," Snape said, realizing now why Potter had been willing to spare him. He now owed two life debts to Potter, and now fulfilled them. "The connection to the Dark Lord was made through the magic and very life of the Death Eater. Karkaroff might have betrayed several of his fellow Death Eaters to earn his reprieve, but he did not renounce the Dark Lord in his heart." Snape rolled up the struggling Karkaroff's sleeve, and the Dark Mark showed, purplish-black and pulsing, until, with every muscle spasming, Karkaroff suddenly died.

Snape rolled up his sleeve, and there was just the faintest outline of the Mark on his skin, and it had gaps in it, as the flesh was slowly regenerating since Harry had altered it. "I, on the other hand, betrayed my former Master. On the night Potter broke his power, many of the Death Eaters passed out. My guess is the Headmaster was correct. By passively, even willingly, giving his blood, Potter contaminated the ceremony to the point that the Dark Lord is dying. When the last loyal Death Eater dies, he will truly die." 'I hope,' Snape added to himself.

Harry, the Cup, and the cauldron showed up less than twenty-five minutes after Karkaroff died. Before Fudge could order the lot to be swept up by the aurors, Harry had amplified his voice. "This is the body of the self-proclaimed Dark Lord Voldemort! His attempt to come back with new powers failed! Here is the Death Eater who tried to bring it about, Peter Pettigrew! He was the one who betrayed my parents, not the innocent Sirius Black!"

Harry turned to the officials and allowed himself to be led away to be questioned. Only he would be able to know that the Harry who had used the time-turner was near by, and was helping everything along by using undetectable charms which made everyone more willing to believe nearly anything Harry said.

Harry tried to give the Cup to Viktor, who refused it. Harry scowled at the invisible Harry, who just shrugged his shoulders. After an hour of questioning, Harry got permission to use the toilet. The two Harrys switched off. Time-turner Harry went back to the questioning. The Harry who had just killed Voldemort turned himself invisible and went down into Merlin's Sanctuary. He used Merlin's

time-turner to go back a few hours at a time until the previous Friday night, and then he collapsed into sleep, knowing he had to get up in a few hours to finish working on the letters and boxes to turn over to Dumbledore in two mornings.

Back on what was now the early hours of June 25, Harry had had enough and said so.

"Just who do you think you are?" Fudge demanded.

"I think I am the Heir of Merlin," Harry said. "I didn't want to do this, but if I stay in here with you lot any longer, I'm going to start cursing you." He stood and with a gesture, everyone in the room, even Dumbledore, froze. Harry was being questioned in one of the Quidditch changing rooms. He walked out the door, which broke the spell. Fudge, the aurors, and Dumbledore all ran out after Harry.

The crowd had mostly stayed, and they cheered when Harry appeared. Then they gasped as Harry whipped out a wand and suddenly the Red Dragon shot into the sky. Harry again amplified his voice and turned towards the now-worried Minister. "The Minister answers to the Wizengamot and to the Queen. But in whose name was the Wizengamot formed?"

When Fudge didn't answer, Harry turned to Dumbledore. "Well?"

"The first Council of Wizards was the Welsh one, called by Godric Gryffindor in the name of Merlin," Dumbledore said. "A few years later, he did the same in England, and that was the first Wizengamot. Gryffindor was the senior member, because he was the magical heir of Merlin."

"Can anyone but the Heir of Merlin create Merlin's Mark?" Harry demanded.

"No," Dumbledore said.

Harry turned on Fudge. "By tradition, I could take over magical Britain, but just because I can do magic no one else has been able to do for a thousand years is a pretty stupid way to run a modern Government. But I tell you right now, leave me alone! I figured out a way to beat this Dark Lord and risked my life to do it. Why should a fourteen year old boy have to do that, Prophecy or no Prophecy, Heir of Merlin or no Heir of Merlin?"

Harry turned on the crowd, who mostly shrank back a few steps. "That goes for the rest of you! It will not be my job to solve your bloody problems! I've told the Headmaster and left the Minister a letter detailing what I intend to do with my life, and how I hope to make magical Britain a bit safer and a bit better for various parts of the community which have been forgotten. Part is outlined in a letter I gave to the Minister and the rest is in a box which will open on my eighteenth birthday. I also needed to come back here if I could to learn more. I may have a lot of raw power, but that doesn't bring knowledge or wisdom. The Minister, by refusing to be reasonable, has prevented that. As for all of you, if you end up trying to get me to solve all your problems, I will just leave. I'll leave you to a corrupt Ministry, the next Dark Lord, or to the mercy of the Muggles if I have to. The next moves are up to you."

And with that, Harry disappeared.

"So what did all this mean?" Dan Granger demanded late the next morning as a group gathered to put the pieces together.

"Merlin was the most accomplished, most powerful wizard in European history, and one of the most powerful known in world history," Dumbledore said. "Harry has his power, but not his knowledge. He, and your daughter, have plans to make wizarding Britain a better place. He had hoped he could accomplish what he did last night in a much lower-key way than he had to."

Dumbledore turned on Minister Fudge. "He nearly accomplished that, but you just couldn't let go, could you? You had to push and push until he had to declare himself the Heir of Merlin, just to get a bit of peace."

"I'm disappointed my son didn't win," Amos Diggory said to Fudge, "but I am proud of how well he did. I am ashamed, however, at how you acted."

"How about at how you acted, berating that poor elf last August?" Hermione asked. Remus and her parents rolled their eyes, while Snape merely sneered. Fudge rather echoed Snape. Madam Bones, the other person present, merely observed.

Diggory flushed. "Yes, well, after hearing your views on elf rights, I can see why you'd say that."

"She's just a child, and an ignorant one at that," Fudge snapped. "I am tired of being harangued by the lot of you! The MLES can decide what to do about Black. I don't care one way or another. . ."

"Interesting," a voice from the door said.

Everyone looked over in surprise, even Dumbledore.

"The Minister and the Headmaster know who I am," the man said. "I am Lord Severn, Hogwarts Class of 1933. While I was Muggleborn, and therefore rather low in the eyes of you, Minister, and people like you, I have been the link between the Ministry and Her Majesty since 1955. I informed Her Majesty of the appearance of Merlin's Mark during the Second Task, and some of the oldest magical retainers had several interesting things to tell us about the role of Merlin in the magical royal families. The Heir of Merlin revealed himself to me in early May."

After a pause, he went on, "He came to me again last week and again early this morning. Mister Fudge? Her Majesty has revoked your appointment as the Royal Wizard." He turned to Dumbledore. "You are the Royal Wizard Pro-tempore until such a time as the Wizengamot suggests a replacement. While the next meeting is of course on the equinox in September, her Majesty requests that it meet in emergency session soon."

"And if I must decline her Majesty's gracious offer?" Dumbledore asked.

"Then the next most qualified person would have to be the Heir of Merlin," his lordship stated.

"A fourteen year old boy!" Fudge protested.

"It would not be Her Majesty's first choice," Severn reminded them. "She does not expect you to take the position on anything but a temporary basis, and in fact that is part of your job description as Chief Warlock, unless you're giving up that position?"

"No," Dumbledore said, "I am not. I will serve until the emergency meeting."

"From what Mister Potter has said, the unrepentant Death Eaters are likely dead?"

"Yes," Dumbledore agreed.

"Then I would expect there will be some missing members of the Wizengamot," Severn stated.

"What do you mean? that there were Death Eaters on the Wizengamot?" Fudge protested.

"Nonsense!"

"As best we can determine, there were at least thirty people who died because they had the Dark Mark," Bones said. "Lucius Malfoy, Giles Goyle, and Marmaduke Parker among them. Two of the Noble members and one of the Regular members."

"I can't believe it," Fudge said.

"Her Majesty would look favorably at the recommendation of Madam Bones for the appointment as the Royal Witch," Severn said, ignoring Fudge. "She is also studying a proposal of the Heir of Merlin for changes to the Wizengamot, but will discuss that with whomever is appointed. We shall be notifying the Prime Minister to expect a new visitor. Oh," Severn added, handing two sealed parchments to Dumbledore. "One confirms the removal of Mister Fudge, the other is a Royal Pardon for Sirius Black." He bowed to the group and started to leave as abruptly as he had arrived.

"Lord Severn?" Hermione piped up.

"Yes, Miss?"

"Do you know where Harry is?"

Severn smiled. "Are you Miss Granger?"

"I am, my lord."

"I understand you are going to be co-founding a new school of magic with him."

"We hope to," Hermione agreed.

"He's at the castle which will form the nucleus of the Royal Academy of Magic." Hermione's eyes went wide. "His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, made the suggestion, and Her Majesty approved of the idea. I would imagine he'll be with you soon after you leave Hogwarts." Severn left.

"Come, Cornelius," Madam Bones stated as she stood. "Stop gaping and pointing like a fool. Albus, please call the Wizengamot as soon as you can. If you know where Mister Black is, have a talk with him. See if he's able to take a position on the Wizengamot. It might be good to have a friend of the Heir of Merlin in our deliberations."

Monday, July 17, 1995

It was a beautiful day in Norfolk, so Hermione slipped into the fenced-in back garden of her parents' home just after lunch. There was one spot where there was both complete privacy and good sun. She laid down a towel on the grass and slipped off her sandals, shorts, and top. She laid on the towel in just her one set of thong panties, set an egg timer to ring in three minutes so she wouldn't get too much sun, and then closed her eyes.

She had received one note from Harry, saying the he was 'fine' -- and more importantly that things were going very well and that he would come to visit her some time soon. And of course, that he loved her. There was also a long statement attached, charmed for her eyes only, which described in detail his year, his plans, and what had happened the night of the Third Task.

The timer had gone off for the second time, and Hermione had just tuned back on her stomach, when she heard Harry say, "I could stay and watch you all day, but I thought I'd best take this chance to announce my self."

"How long have you been watching," Hermione said.

"About a minute," Harry admitted. "I wasn't sure if you were awake and I didn't want to startle you."

"Plus you wanted to look at my titties," Hermione teased.

"I wanted to look at all of you," Harry said, kneeling next to Hermione.

Hermione rolled over and asked, "Do you expect me to believe that?"

"Yes," Harry said. "Besides, as much as I enjoy breasts, I'm more of a leg man myself."

"Well, that does explain your physical attraction to myself, Luna, and Cho," Hermione conceded. "Now what?" she teased, caressing Harry's face.

"I'd like to snog you senseless, but if we get started, I don't know if we could stop." He looked around. "I don't know if this is private enough for that."

"Perhaps not," Hermione agreed. She sat up and slipped on her top and then stood to finish dressing. "My parents won't be back until after Five. My bedroom, then a shower, and then we talk?"

"Sounds like one of your usual brilliant plans."