

## Triwizard Tales Here There Be Dragons.

### Part One: Here There Be Dragons.

*There were hundreds and hundreds of faces staring down at him from stands that had been magicked there since he'd last stood on this spot. And there was the Horntail, at the other end of the enclosure, crouched low over her clutch of eggs, her wings half-furled, her evil, yelloweyes upon him, a monstrous, scaly, black lizard, thrashing her spiked tail, heaving yard-long gouge marks in the hard ground. The crowd was making a great deal of noise, but whether friendly or not, Harry didn't know or care. It was time to do what he had to do... to focus his mind, entirely and absolutely, upon the thing that was his only chance.*

*He raised his wand.*

*"Accio Firebolt!" he shouted.*

*Harry waited, every fiber of him hoping, praying... If it hadn't worked... if it wasn't coming... He seemed to be looking at everything around him through some sort of shimmering, transparent barrier, like a heat haze, which made the enclosure and the hundreds of faces around him swim strangely...*

**- Excerpted from "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire"**

00000000000000000000000000000000

Up in the student section of the stands Hermione Granger had taken to biting her left fist to stop herself from screaming. Harry's Accio had not worked. Why hadn't it worked? They had drilled and drilled and drilled until the charm was second nature to Harry. But it hadn't worked and now the poor boy was standing there in front of the impossibly huge dragon looking so very small.

The crowd went almost silent watching; even Ron's constant harangue about Harry cheating his way into the tournament had gone quiet in the face of the horror that Harry had to face all alone when a single voice rang out.

"I'll lay a hundred to one odds that Potty forfeits or dies."

Every head in the student section turned to face a smirking Draco Malfoy. The Slytherin section of the crowd was peppered with laughter and then silence once again fell on the crowd. Harry still stood stock still in the arena. Hermione decided then that she had to do something.

"The Muggles have a saying Malfoy," she said clearly, loud enough that everyone could hear her. "It's morally wrong to allow a loud mouthed sucker to keep his money, and betting against Harry is always a sucker bet. I have ten Galleons not doing anything just now. I'll take some of that hundred to one action. Are you good for it?"

"Of course I am," the blonde said flushing.

"Oh, good," Justin Finch-Fletchley said from the row in front of Hermione. "I've got twenty Galleons looking for some friends as well. If attending Hogwarts for the last three years has taught me nothing else, it is that Potter usually wins. I'll take you up on your odds."

Malfoy managed to add up what thirty Galleons would be at a hundred to one and paled beyond his usual pallor. He tried to cover his nervousness with bluster. "Are you two sure that both of you can risk that much on a casual bet? Wouldn't it be better used to upgrade the mud huts your pathetic families live in?"

"That sounds like a little boy trying to **weasel** out of a man's wager Malfoy..." Justin asked with a twinkle in his eye. Getting a dig in for the transformation Draco had suffered at Professor Moody's wand was just gravy. Justin had long listened to Draco carry on about the wealth of the Malfoy clan, but having seen the Wizarding economy and the generalized pricing of consumer goods, the son of a pair of very successful investment bankers was willing to wager that his family could buy and sell that of the arrogant pure blood several times over. "What's wrong, don't you have the balls to carry through with your bet? You can cover Hermione and my little wagers can't you?"

"Of course I can cover it. Your paltry thirty Galleons is nothing to the Malfoy fortune."

"Great," Susan Bones broke in, pulling her eyes from where Harry still stood facing the mother dragon. Cedric was a 'Puff, but Harry was a very nice, very cute boy whom she had had her eye on for a while, and there was no way she was going to let an ass like Malfoy bad mouth him. "Now that you mention it, I could use some pocket money as well. Put me down for ten Galleons too."

The scion of the Malfoy clan paled even further when the crowd around him erupted with wagers against his offered odds.



**Well this is bad**, Harry thought as he fought to keep from vomiting in terror. **OK Boy Who Lived Long Enough to End up Flash Fried, think of something.**

Nothing came immediately to mind.

Crap.

What were the odds that Dumbledore would allow a competition that would kill the competitors dead? It seemed unlikely... but then he had almost been killed every year since he started at Hogwarts, and this year someone had entered him into a contest where, according to Hermione, death was a common occurrence, so, yeah, he could end up being killed here.

The dragon roared, and then seemed to concentrate her attention on a section of the crowd for a moment. The beast's oddly expressive face seemed to curl into what Harry could only describe to himself as an evil grin.

**~ You carry the taint of a Speaker little one. Can you understand me? ~**

Harry blinked. Dragons spoke Parseltongue? ~ I can, ~ he responded in a similar manner.

The dragon stomped her feet and strained at her chains, roaring furiously. **~ So this is a contest of some sort? A test for you and those others? ~**

~ It is, ~ Harry responded, while dodging a gout of flame that seemed to him to have been very poorly aimed.

**~ I heard some of your companions in the audience making wagers as to your success against me ~** the dragon said while again straining at her chains and roaring. **~ They are fools of course; against me, you have no chance... However, a thought occurs to me, what would winning be worth to you? ~**

~ What do you mean? ~ Harry asked wondering just why these things kept happening to him.

**~ It seems to me that I might need a few things for my hatchlings when they make their appearance. Things that no human would ever willingly supply ~** an evil glint appeared in the dragon's eye. **~ Gold however, solves so many problems. ~**

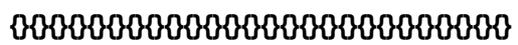
Harry mind raced as he dodged yet another underpowered wave of flame. Was this Dragon offering to throw the contest? For money? How much money? He did a quick calculation of the amount of gold in his vault. From his estimated size of the pile in his vault, he guessed that he could give up approximately five thousand Galleons and still be able to afford Hogwarts for the next three years.

Still, there was no point in being stupid about it. ~ 500 Galleons. ~ He offered.

**~ It's good to see that some of you humans have a sense of humor, ~** the dragon laughed. **~ Do you really believe you could convince me that you so undervalue your life? Ten thousand. Now cast something at me! ~**

~ I'm summoning that rock behind you, ~ Harry said getting into the spirit of the game. "Accio Rock!" ~ I'm not rich; I haven't got that kind of money. One thousand. ~

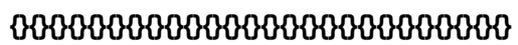
The dragon grabbed the boulder from the air with her forelimbs before heaving the huge stone close to, but not at, Harry.



Hermione was far too terrified for Harry to manage to join in with the cheering of the crowd around her. Where the other three Champions had all gone at the dragons they faced from oblique angles, Harry was actually standing his ground and fighting the dragon practically toe to toe.

It slowly filtered into her consciousness that the crowd around her was actually chanting 'Harry!' over and over. Even the Hufflepuffs who had raised the sound level for their housemate Cedric were cheering for the tiny boy facing the huge Dragon with such... style.

Who was that, and what had he done with Harry Potter?



**~ It's agreed then, ~** the dragon said while dodging the Leviosa Harry had flung in her direction. **~ Two Thousand Five Hundred Galleons, ten hogsheads of Ogden's Old Firewhiskey, and a hundredweight of habanero peppers and I let you win. ~**

~ Deal! ~ Harry agreed. ~ How do we do this? ~

**~ I'll send a fireball your way, you jump over it and run between my legs. As soon as you are under me, do whatever light show you want and I will do the rest. ~**

Harry leaped over the expected gout of flame and ran for all he was worth, wondering while he was doing so if he was just committing a highly choreographed suicide. He slid between the widely splayed forelegs of the dragon and once under its belly he cast the most powerful Lumos he could.





Charlie Weasley entered the rough log cabin that served as the offices for the dragon reserve through the employee entrance. It had been a week since he and his coworkers had returned the she-dragons and their clutches from that stupid tournament and the dragons were still in something of an uproar.

The higher ups all claimed that the dragons did not really communicate between themselves, but as the four nesting mothers came into contact with other dragons, the new comers seemed to be infected by the she-dragons' hostility. Any fool could see that the dragons were talking, and they were not pleased... All except Kiska, who seemed to be inordinately pleased with herself for some reason beyond the normal pride of a new mother with her brood happily flying about her.

That little detail was worrisome all by itself.

The redhead paused at the door to the Reserve Director's office and knocked.

"You wanted to see me Boss? Kiska is still acting a bit weird, even for her; her babies are awfully cute though."

"I rarely want to see you, Weasley," Constance Beaumont answered dryly. Beaumont was an older witch who had been a dragon handler for most of a century, with the burn scars to prove it. All of the handlers working on the Reserve respected the woman, and more than a few feared her. "The goblins of Gringotts on the other hand," she gestured toward a small being wearing the bank's crests, "seem to have some use for you."

The goblin looked up into Charlie's eyes. "You are Charlie Weasley?"

"I am," Charlie answered cautiously. He had never had much in the way of dealings with the goblins, as the Weasley clan rarely had enough gold to require a trip to the family vault.

The goblin thrust an ornate stone tablet with several sheets of parchment attached. "Sign on the bottom of page one, page seven, and page nine, initial in the marked spaces on pages three, four, ten and fourteen."

"What is this?" Charlie asked unwilling to sign anything handed to him by some goblin, even if the being was wearing Gringotts' livery.

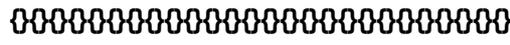
"Can't you read human?" the goblin sneered. "You have been designated the proxy for the she-dragon Kiska, and as such you are taking delivery of a gift for her."

Beaumont and Charlie exchanged a glance at the mention of Kiska's name. Who would be sending gifts to a dragon? Charlie's eyes then went to the delivery receipt in his hands. "Twenty five hundred Galleons, ten hogsheads of firewhiskey and a hundredweight of habenero peppers? Who would send that to Kiska? Where is it? I'm not signing for anything I can't see."

"I don't believe it, a wizard with basic business sense," the goblin said with just a touch of grudging respect. "Outside."

Charlie and Beaumont followed the goblin out to the front of the cabin. There, guarded by four large unfriendly looking Security Trolls they found a large chest, and the rest of Kiska's 'gifts'.. "Seriously?" the redhead asked, "someone sent a gift to a dragon?"

"I don't question a client's motivation," the goblin commented, "If he has the gold, I make deliveries. Sign the receipt, human, I'm a busy goblin."



In the end, it took every handler working at the Reserve to deliver the she-dragon's gifts to Kiska's cave. This is partially due to the penalties that would be exacted upon the Reserve's staff should the delivery not take place with expediency, but mostly it was the novelty of a dragon being sent gifts that drew the handlers to Kiska's lair.

Outside the cave, Charlie made sure that everything was ready, and then raised his dragon whistle to his lips and blew as hard as he could. The horrible wet sound of a cow being eviscerated issued from the device. The handlers all hated the sound of a dragon whistle, but it was the only device known to Wizard-kind that was guaranteed to bring the huge beasts running... Or flying as the case may be.

It only took seconds for Kiska to appear at the mouth of her cave, as well as a crowd of dragons from throughout the Reserve.

Charlie could not believe his eyes at the reaction of the huge she-dragon when she spotted her gifts. The Horntail was practically hopping in place with glee at the gold and other things. A giddy dragon? Now he had seen everything.

Kiska was directing the other dragons in the task of taking her treasure into her lair, when she seemed to notice the assembled handlers. The huge she-dragon seemed to fix them all in her stare, and then she butted her head against the flank of one of the smaller males who was carrying one of the firewhiskey hogsheads in his mouth. The drake deferred to the larger female and laid the hogshead at her feet, and then entered the cave to join the others.

The horntail lifted the hogshead in her mouth, and then swung about to face the handlers, until she was snout to nose with a very confused Charlie Weasley. Charlie hardly had a chance to register her hot, humid breath in his face, before she spat the heavy hogshead into his chest.

Charlie found himself thrown backwards into a pair of his fellow dragon handlers, and the three large men struggled to remain upright under the combined weight of fifty gallons of firewhiskey *and the wooden cask that contained it. The other handlers gathered to wrestle the heavy cask*





## Triwizard Tales The Ball

### Part Two: The Ball.

"Hello Harry."

Potter looked up from the book he was reading on magical objects and the sounds they made and blinked owlishly. He fought the temptation to stare at the rather impressive breasts in front of his eyes and concentrated on maintaining eye contact with Susan Bones.

"Hi..." he squeaked, his voice breaking at precisely the wrong moment. He swallowed and tried again, forcing his voice into a lower octave. "Hello Sue. How are you?"

"I'm fine Harry. What are you reading?"

Harry held up the book so that the Hufflepuff could read the cover.

"*From Gabriel's Horn to Knopfler's Axe, how magical sound changed the world*". That's an unusual book."

Harry pulled off his glasses and began cleaning them. "I'm trying to figure out the egg thing from the Tournament."

"Cedric gave us all headaches when he first got his," Sue confided. "Since the first couple of times he hasn't opened it in the common room though," she paused and seemed to steel herself. "I hear that you don't have a date for the Ball."

Harry blinked at the sudden change of subject. "I find it hard to believe that my pathetic social life could really be a topic of conversation in the 'Puff common room."

"Harry," the redhead said with a serious expression. "You are a champion without a date. Of course we talk about you."

"Ah, I would have thought..."

"That you weren't all that popular among the Hufflepuffs?" Susan asked with a small grin. "That was true, until Cedric sat everyone down and made it very clear to everyone that he believed you when you said that you didn't put your name in the Goblet, and that if it weren't for you warning him, he might not have survived the dragon in the first task. Cedric says he considers you a decent person and a friend."

Harry blushed and did not say anything, so Susan continued. "Anyway, I'm guessing that you are planning on waiting until the last minute and asking Hermione to take pity on you."

"That was my original plan," Harry admitted, "but Hermione has a date, though she won't say who it is."

"I wasn't sure if you knew about that or not," Sue sat across from the boy who lived. It was now or never. "How did you find out?"

"Hermione started acting all girly, looking at fashion magazines and talking about colors and contrasts. It wasn't hard to figure out."

"So Weasley has no idea?"

"None at all," Harry returned her grin for the first time. "He has this great plan for asking Fleur Delacour to the ball. He tells me that she's sure to have an ugly friend I could go with, because he says 'extremely pretty girls always have an ugly friend for a guy's wingman.'"

"And you would be the wingman?"

"So he tells me," Harry closed his book. "And if I was a smooth talker this is where I would ask you if you had any ugly friends open to a pity date."

"Sorry, I don't have a troll girlfriend for a wingman."

"Ah," Harry said with a slight blush. "It was worth a shot."

"However," Susan said, "I do have a brand new set of formal robes, and I was telling myself that since you are pretty much responsible for my being able to afford them, I thought that I might ask you to go to the Ball with me."

Harry blinked. "With you?" One of the prettiest girls in his year was asking him out? There had to be a catch, his luck most specifically did not work like that.



Harry sat on the sofa in the corner that the fourth years normally staked out as their own and contemplated what little he remembered of the 'Dance Lessons' that Susan had shanghaied him for. Mostly he had concentrated on not staring down into her awe-inspiring cleavage and trying to keep Susan from discovering the evidence that he had, in fact, looked down once or twice by bumping her hip into said evidence. As a result, he had not actually learned much in the way of dancing.

Neville quit pulling at his collar and nudged Harry to get his attention. He then nodded toward the doorway to the boy's dorms.

There stood Ron Weasley, all decked out in his dress robes, a mélange of purple and lace. Ron spotted his dorm mates and made a beeline for them.

"So," Dean asked, "who took pity on you Ron?"

"Ha, you're so funny Dean. I'm here to keep Hermione from looking silly."

There was a moment of silence until Neville asked the question that all the others were thinking. "The sight of that purple monstrosity is going to distract everyone I suppose, but how is it going to keep Hermione of all people from looking silly?"

"When she comes down and has to admit that her 'mystery date' is a figment of her imagination of course," Ron sighed as if he was explaining the most obvious thing in the world.

"Ron," Harry said, trying to spare his somewhat unreliable friend's ego, "Hermione has a date."

"You would take her side wouldn't you?" Ron sniffed.

"Ron, pull your head out of your arse," Seamus laughed. "The girl has a date. You pissed about, and then set your sights impossibly high, and now you have the choice of staying here with the youngsters or going stag."

"I asked Hermione before Ginny asked me," Neville pointed out. "She already had her date then. That was more than a month ago Ron. Quit being such a wally and man up."

"Ginny asked you?" Ron shouted before wheeling on Harry. "This is your fault. If you had been there for me when I went after the Frenchie, then I wouldn't be left out like this."

"For god's sake Ron, this isn't about you," Harry began.

"Ron," Dean cut in dangerously as he stood, showing that Ron had not been the only Gryffindor to have had a growth spurt over the previous summer. "You're being an ass. No one made you go after a girl that everyone knew you had no chance with, no one made you ignore Hermione, and for you to start blaming Harry for anything after the way you badmouthed him before the task with the dragon is just stupid. Now shut up and go away before you get hurt."

Ron looked furiously at his dorm mates before stomping off out the common room doorway and out into the halls.

Dean shook his head and returned to his seat. "Sorry Harry, I know he's your best mate, but I'm just not in the mood for Ron's shite tonight."

The silence spread among the fourth years for several moments before Seamus broke it. "Krum's date was something of a surprise eh?"

"Yeah," Harry noted, wondering just when it was he quit being so interested in Cho. "Kind of makes sense though, the both of them being seekers and all that."

"I kind of doubt that Krum is looking for tips on seeking," Neville said with a grin.

"Probably not," Harry agreed with his own grin. Ah, yeah. It was the first time Susan's dance lessons had him holding her close and he looked down and...

Cho who?

"Merlin!" Seamus breathed as he stood up from the squashy chair. Harry turned his attention to the door to the girl's dorms in time to see that the girls were making their appearances.

They were... There was... Hermione was... How the hell had he missed this? Had he been so wrapped up in himself that he missed... this?

"Close your mouth Harry," she said with a pleased smile. "You're staring."

"Bloody hell Hermione," he answered trying to recover his dignity by looking her up and down in an exaggerated manner. "You scrub up quite nicely."

Hermione cocked her head to one side as if thinking of a proper response, and then quicker than Harry could react she cuffed him on the side of the head. Glancing down at her nails, she smiled happily then held them up for Harry to see.

"Magical nail polish, complete with built in quick-drying charms, and it's chip proof, as I just demonstrated on that hard head of yours. Lavender loaned it to me," the girl grinned. "And mind your language Harry. There are ladies present."

Harry rolled his eyes as he rubbed the side of his head. "This side of you is scarier than normal; I'll have to warn your mystery man about how violent you can be."









## Triwizard Tales The Rescue from the Depths.

### Part Three: The Rescue from the Depths .

"Myrtle, please?"

"You don't have to ask me so politely Harry," the ghostly teenager said with a smirk. "I could stare at you all day, every day."

"Lovely," Potter noted, wondering if this was how Susan and Daphne Greengrass felt when every perv in the castle stared at them. He returned to the issue at hand, that being Cedric's rather cryptic suggestion that he take a bath with his egg. Harry leaned back in the scented water and reached for the magical construct. It seemed a pity to spoil the wonderful silence of the Prefect's bath with the screeching horror that escaped whenever he opened the egg, but there was nothing else for it. Harry began fumbling with the latch, his hands slippery.

"The other one held the egg under the water," Myrtle said in an uncharacteristic bout of helpfulness.

Harry considered that for a moment, wondering if water would damage the egg and its clue. Then deciding that he did not know enough to guess what might happen, he held the egg under the water and opened it. He was immediately rewarded with an unintelligible murmur coming from beneath the water.

That was... odd. Well, at least the water muffled the screeching so that it was no longer painful.

"The other one stuck his head beneath the water," the ghost said helpfully. "His bum stuck out of the water when he did." she giggled.

Harry sighed to himself and tried to ignore the pervy ghost. Drawing a deep breath, he ducked his head beneath the water. Immediately his consciousness was filled with singing.

***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 an hour - the prospect's black  
Too late, it's gone, it won't come back.***

Harry surfaced and wiped the water and soapsuds from his eyes, while trying to ignore Myrtle's giggling as he pondered what he had heard. That little song was not ominous at all. Something he valued was going to be taken from him and he had an hour to find it. That much was clear at least. If he did not find it in that hour, then it was gone, evidently forever.

Harry tried to think of things that he would miss enough to really care about... He would miss his wand certainly, the same for his Firebolt, and then there was the photo album with pictures of his parents that Hagrid had made for him first year. Beyond those items, there were not too many things he was particularly attached to. Logically, it had to be one of those things.

That thought gave Harry pause. Was it a good idea to try and think logically about a magical competition?

Where would whatever was to be taken be hidden? "Come seek us where our voices sound," the singers had said... "We cannot sing above the ground,"

Ok, look where the singers are... they could not sing above the ground...

Where their voices sound... He had to submerge the egg under water, and be underwater himself to understand it... Underwater! Something he valued was going to be hidden underwater? In the Black Lake perhaps? Would the Squid have it?

"Fuck!" Harry exclaimed as he closed the egg and lay in on the floor outside the giant tub. "I can't swim."

"Purhups Ah cahn ahsistah in thaht."

Harry sat bolt upright in the tub shocked to see a scaly head rising from the sudsy water, a pair of eyes with huge black irises stared at him unblinkingly. Harry's mind raced. His wand was with his clothing on the other side of the room.

"Be aht eahse hoomahn," the... watery voice said through the water, those unblinking eyes focused on him. "Hyou are Hahrry Pahtah?"

The being's voice sounded remarkably like someone speaking while gargling, which Harry supposed was exactly what it was doing. "I am,"



professors and Remus' time at Hogwarts had not shown him to be a stickler for the rules, he had still been a teacher. As it turned out that Harry had been worrying about nothing. The prankster side of the unfortunate werewolf found Harry's plan to be hilarious and Remus made several suggestions that improved his original scheme.

Both of the Marauders agreed with the dragon, Harry did not understand showmanship, but he was willing to learn.

Cedric and Viktor stood, waiting for the signal to start, already in their swimsuits, clapping their arms around themselves in the February cold. Fleur stood a bit apart from the others still bundled in her robes.

Harry approached the two men a bit out of breath from rushing, to catch his breath, he leaned forward, with both hands upon his knees.

"Alright there Harry?" Cedric asked.

"Yeah," Harry responded as he stood upright, shrugging out of his robes since the others were out of theirs. Cedric's eyes bugged out.

"What the hell you wearing?" Viktor asked incredulously.

"This?" Harry asked with a grin while pulling the gloves onto his hands, "it's called a 'Dry Suit'. Muggles make them for going into cold water."

Viktor raised an eyebrow,

"What?" Harry asked. "I can't swim, I had to do something."

"I wish I had thought of such a thing," Fleur said joining the conversation.

"And it's just a coincidence that you're in Gryffindor colors?" Cedric snarked.

"Oh, am I?" Harry asked innocently.

"We three," Viktor said shaking his head, "we adults, we experienced. We freezing like fools while young Harry warm and comfortable."

"Well, thanks Viktor, but I wouldn't go as far as comfortable," Harry said. "I still can't swim; the suit isn't going to help with that."

"Oh yes," Fleur said sarcastically, "you fought and defeated your dragon, so we are supposed to believe that you are simply going to sit on the shore? I made the mistake of thinking you were a 'leettle boy' once, never again."

"Well... yeah, I guess I've got some ideas," Harry admitted. "But something is bothering me. We're all decked out to go into the water so we all solved the egg, but I haven't figured out what they might have taken. I checked all the things that I would miss and none of it is missing. I have no idea what we're supposed to be after."

Both Fleur and Viktor shrugged, but Cedric looked concerned. "I don't think it's a thing we're after; I think it's a person. I haven't seen Hermione anywhere today, and even if she wasn't going to be here for me, she would certainly be here for you."

Harry paled as the implications of that thought sunk in. Where was Susan? He looked to the lake... surely not. Harry shot a glare at the judges table, where all of the arrogant prats, including Susan's aunt were sitting surrounded by comfortable warming charms. If a single hair of either Susan's or Hermione's head were harmed...

Ludo Bagman was now moving among the champions, spacing them along the bank at intervals of ten feet. Harry was on the very end of the line, next to Viktor, who was now holding his wand at the ready.

"All right, Harry?" Bagman whispered as he moved Harry to his position. "Know what you're going to do?"

"Yeah," Harry nodded.

Bagman returned Harry's nod and returned to the judges' table; he pointed his wand at his throat and said, "Sonus!" and his voice boomed out across the dark water toward the stands.

"Well, all our champions are ready for the second task, which will start on my whistle. They have precisely one hour to recover the treasure that has been taken from them. On the count of three, then. One... two... three!"

The whistle echoed shrilly in the cold, still air; the stands erupted with cheers and applause; without looking to see what the other champions were doing, Harry pulled the hood of the dry suit over his head and from the pouch on his belt, he produced a shrunken boat that he tossed into the lake. Upon touching the water, the boat expanded to its full size.

Harry climbed into the boat and used his wand to raise the sail, and then with a flick, cast the wind charm that pushed him away from the shore and out into the middle of the lake.

It was only then he heard the noise from the crowd. There was an even mixture of cheers and laughter and boos, from those who felt his use of tools was cheating.

That was OK, Harry decided; he had not wanted to play this stupid game in the first place. His little boat moved cleanly through the water to the middle of the lake, and the boat suddenly stopped dead in the water. That was his signal.

He lowered his mast, and then enlarged the last three of his boxes and started to follow Remus' directions. Once the box to the front of the boat





Fleur arrived at the source of the light and found a small village made up of stone structures on the lake bottom; the structures were dotted here and there by dark windows, the occasional face appearing through those windows as Fleur continued on her way to the village center.

Soon the dwellings became more numerous; there were gardens of waterweed around some of them, and she even saw what appeared to be a pet grindylow tethered to a stake outside one door. Mercreatures were emerging on all sides now, watching her eagerly, pointing at her as she swam by. Fleur turned a corner and a very strange sight met her eyes.

A whole crowd of mercreatures were floating in front of the houses that lined what looked like an underwater version of a village square. A choir of the beings was singing in the middle of the open square, calling the champions toward them and behind them rose a huge statue; a gigantic mercreature roughly sculpted from a boulder.

And tied to the tail of the statue were three people.

Fleur recognized the Hogwarts student who had accompanied Viktor to the ball; she smiled to herself inside her bubblehead charm. The Bulgarian was such a boy. Next to the Chang girl was the mousy, bushy-haired girl who had accompanied Cedric... but she was one of Harry's confidantes was she not? No, she was the one that Cedric would miss most. The last was her own hostage. The one they thought she would miss most. She almost laughed.

All three of them appeared to be in a very deep sleep. Their heads were lolling onto their shoulders, and fine streams of bubbles continuously issuing from their mouths. Only three. That means that she had been beaten to the village, likely by Harry Potter.

She was not going to win this one, but that was fine. Ever since Olympe had let slip who her hostage was, winning this one was not really her objective. It would have been nice to beat that damned child to the prize, but it was not her real goal.

Fleur made her way toward the bound captives, half expecting the mercreatures to block her advance, but they did nothing. The ropes of weed tying the hostages to the statue were thick, slimy, and very strong. Not for the first time, the French Witch was pleased that she had heeded her mother's admonition to never go anywhere without a blade within easy access. She reached for the charmed knife she had strapped to her left thigh.

Fleur checked each of the hostages in turn. As far as she could tell, they were fine, so she passed down the line to her hostage. She gathered a handful of the slick fibers and slowly sawed her knife back and forth, making sure the enchanted blade had time to work its magic until the strands parted. She then turned and began retracing her path out of the village.

A seven-foot-tall mercreature with a long green beard and a necklace of what appeared to be sharks teeth tried to block her exit. "Your Hostage..." he said in a harsh, croaky voice.

Fleur laughed and shook her head inside of her bubblehead charm. "I have what I came for." She pushed past him on her way to the shore.

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Cedric was the next into the village, making his way to the remaining hostages. Cho still floated unconscious, her hair fanning from her head like a halo... she must be here for Viktor... probably... Next to Cho was Hermione... his hostage? Or perhaps Harry's? He spent a moment wondering who was ahead of him.

Finally, Cedric decided that it did not matter and he started trying to cast cutters on the weeds restraining Hermione.

There was a movement he caught out of the corner of his eye and he turned in time to see an enormous shark bite through the restraints holding Cho and then on a second pass gather the unconscious girl in its mouth and swim off... then he saw that rather than a tail, the shark had human legs.

Viktor. Inside his bubblehead charm, Cedric breathed a sigh of relief before he realized that he was now behind the Bulgarian in the race for second place. The weeds parted with his next cutter, so he grasped Hermione's robes with his left hand and began the long swim back to the shore.

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Viktor did what he considered to be a rather impressive turn flip to catch Cho after freeing her from her restraints and made his best speed back to the shore, more than a little surprised. One of the gifts of the Shark transfiguration was an amazing sense of smell while in the water. On top of Cedric Diggory's scent, the water was rife with the scent of Fleur, so after passing Cedric that put him in second place. He didn't like second place, he never had.

Where was Potter? He wondered while he passed through the last of the stone structures. He had been positive that the light flare had been Potter's doing, yet there was no hint of the boy's scent in the water. A flash of bright color caught his eye. Viktor paused for a moment to investigate the unexpected bit of red in the village of stone and green weed. It was a merchild, playing with some kind of crockery that had a blue lid sealing the top... and the label was in English...

Viktor returned to his long swim to the shore with a pair of thoughts burning in his mind. The first being, **do not bite down**, and the second, **how very odd**. He would have to remember to ask Cedric just what 'Jif' might be...

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Harry ignored the assembled crowd as he half-led, half-carried Susan to Madam Pomfrey and her medical tent.

"What are you wearing Mr. Potter?" the school Healer asked incredulously.

"It doesn't matter, I'm fine, I never even got into the water," Harry answered. "It's Susan that needs you, she's nearly frozen. There are three more hostages out there slowly freezing to death, and the other three champions are in normal swimwear. They're going to need you as well."

Pomfrey pushed Susan onto one of the waiting beds muttering about insane old men and their stupid contests when a cheer went up from the crowd. It must be the next champion to arrive.

"Harry," Susan said through chattering teeth. "You should go out there; you should be with the others when they come out of the water."

"I'm not leaving you Susan,"

"I believe Miss Bones is correct Mr. Potter," Pomfrey said quietly. "I was going to ask you to leave anyway, as I have to get Miss Bones out of her wet clothing to get her warmed up."

Harry's mind blanked for a moment when the image of what he imagined a naked Susan might look like flashed through his mind, and then a blush spread across his features. "I'll be going outside then," he said edging toward the door.

"Make sure the others come directly here," Madam Pomfrey called as she closed the curtain around Susan's bed.

Harry stood outside the Healer's tent for a moment, the image of a naked Susan still consuming the majority of his attention, and then shaking his head, he made his way through the crowd to the shore of the Black Lake. He arrived in time to see Fleur stop swimming and stand up to begin wading ashore. Harry glanced around and spotted the robes that Fleur had removed prior to going into the water. He picked them up and carried the robes to the shoreline.

"You beat me," Fleur observed as she emerged from the water and wrapped her robes around herself. "So the light, that was you?"

"Um... yeah," Harry admitted feeling a bit guilty for how he had won, "sorry about that."

"Do not apologize, Harry Potter. This contest is about winning, and you are doing just that," She smiled. "Viktor and Cedric will be embarrassed."

"Fleur..." Harry hesitated, "your hostage... didn't you find him? Or Her?"

"Oh, I found him," she answered with a wide smile. "I just didn't need him. Raising her left fist, she showed the shock of fine white strands it was clutching. "I have what I would miss most right here in my hand."

Harry's brow furrowed, was that... hair? Fine white-blond hair? What was the French girl telling him?

A sudden splashing out on the lake interrupted their conversation. Perhaps twenty yards away a thrashing form surfaced, throwing itself back and forth as it became apparent that Viktor had returned and was reversing the partial transformation back to a fully human form. Victor stooped to lift Cho Chang from the water, and as soon as her face was exposed to the air, the enchantment over the girl broke and she began to breathe with an all too familiar start.

Before Viktor could take his first step toward the shore, Cedric surfaced beside him with Hermione Granger in his arms. The two young men looked at each other, then at the coughing shivering women in their arms, and then at their two fellow champions standing on the shore waiting for them. Viktor issued an odd bark-like laugh, while Cedric moved to bump shoulders with the Bulgarian, then as one the pair made their way to shore.

Harry and Fleur were waiting with conjured blankets. "Madam Pomfrey wants everyone to the Healer's tent," Harry said as soon as everyone was on the shore.

"Good idea," Viktor agreed, "I will never be warm again."

"Wait!" Dumbledore called from the Judge's table. "Miss Delacour, where is your hostage?"

"Hostage?" Fleur asked innocently, "what hostage?"

"The hostage you were tasked to rescue."

"I'm not sure what you are talking about, Headmaster Dumbledore," Fleur responded in a confused tone, "we were tasked with retrieving something that we would sorely miss... when I arrived at the underwater village I found two young girls, whom I had met socially once or twice and an insignificant nothing whom I despise. There was certainly no person down there I would sorely miss."

"So you just left Draco Malfoy down there in the dark?" the old man asked incredulously.

"Well, I certainly wasn't the one who put him 'down there in the dark', as you put it, but no, I didn't leave all of him."

"What?" Dumbledore asked, horrified at what that statement might mean.

"It occurred to me that what I would truly sorely miss would be the opportunity to torture the horrible little insect, so I took advantage of the situation and took a souvenir..." Fleur lifted her left hand and allowed the shock of white blond hair to flutter away in the cold wind, strand by

strand. "If you will excuse us, Headmaster Dumbledore, it is very cold and we are very wet."

The French girl turned and imperiously walked away toward the Healer's tent. The three male champions hesitated for a moment, then looked at each other, shrugged, and followed her.

Harry spent the several seconds of silence that passed between the champions by struggling not to laugh at the mental image of a scalped Draco Malfoy, until Viktor Krum broke the silence between them.

"Remind me," he said shaking his head, "to never, ever, make Fleur angry with me."

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Clahcktahnk of the WahahahsTokkah carefully equalized his swim bladder so that he could lounge comfortable among his favorite stand of Canadian Pondweed. Using one of his clan's ancestral spells, left over from that horrible time when his people fought a long and ultimately pointless war against the Veela clans, he created a small bubble, approximately the size of a human head. This bubble tethered to his wrist by a simple linking charm.

The knowledge of the fact that his people were the origin of the human's 'bubble head charm' amused Clahcktahnk to no end. Inside his bubble, he carefully suspended one of the jars he had received from the Potter human. The food of the gods could be exposed to water with no real harm, but doing so would limit the storage life of the wondrous mixture drastically. Therefore, unless the entire jar was to be consumed in a single floating, his people only opened the jar inside one of the chained air bubbles.

As he brought a three-fingered scoop of the heavenly mixture to his mouth, Clahcktahnk reflected that his decision to approach the Potter human had turned out to be a good one. His popularity among his people, having delivered to them so much of this almost unattainable delicacy, had risen like a bloated fish. Life was, he admitted to himself as he worked to dislodge a mass of peanut butter from the roof of his mouth, good.

He raised a scaled brow ridge when he noticed a human being lowered nearly on top of him. Carefully securing the tether of the bubble to a convenient rock, he moved to situate himself in an upright attitude to reflect that of an air breather, he took in his visitor. The human was encased in a large full body suit of material similar to that Clahcktahnk recalled from the sails of human ships. Heavy metal covering shod the visitor's feet, and a heavy metal sphere enclosed the human's head, with small windows on the front and sides so that presumably the human could look out of the sphere. Heavy lines extended from the visitor disappearing toward the surface leading the way for the bubbles that issued from the helmet in a constant stream.

The appearance of the visitor seemed somewhat familiar... it was not until he recalled stories told by some visiting saltwater cousins that Clahcktahnk made the association. This was a human diving suit. How very odd.

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Xeno Lovegood nodded to himself as he reached the lake bottom and found the leader of the Merfolk waiting for him. As usual, his sources were perfectly accurate. This was the place that the Mer-chieftain went to relax from his duties.

"Good Morning," Xeno called, offering his best approximation of the tail-wag greeting of the Merfolk. This was somewhat hampered by the bulk of his diving suit and by his generalized lack of a tail. "I am Xeno Lovegood, Owner, Publisher, Crusading Editor and Chief Reporter for the Quibbler, News of the Magical World, the Gringotts' Financial Review, The Daily Web, The Dark Lord's Daily Planner, Riddle Me This, and the Beano. I am here to investigate the charges of collusion between the Merfolk and the Boy Who Lived."

Outside the diving suit, Clahcktahnk heard only an unintelligible muffled drone. "What?" he asked. "What do you want?"

Xeno could clearly see that the Mer-Chieftain was speaking, but he could not hear a thing over the sound of the air hissing into his helmet. "What was that?" he asked. "I can't hear you."

"What?" Clahcktahnk responded.

This exchange went on for slightly less than two hours.

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Clahcktahnk surfaced at the edge of the lake, wondering, not for the first time, just why he was bothering. After the day before and his long exposure to the insane air breather he had almost forbid all interaction with the surface world, but then a rather intriguing note came drifting down attached to a most fetching stone.

There on the edge of the shore stood the human he suspected of being the man in the diving suit. Now however rather than a heavy diving suit that smelled and tasted of canvas, metal and rubber, the human now had a black body stocking stretched over his ample frame with a black beret perched atop the man's furless head.

"Ah ahm hyer hoomahn,"

"Oh good!" an unexpected voice chirped in an oddly cheery way. A smaller human with long yellowish fur sprouting from its head appeared from behind the man. A young female if Clahcktahnk was any judge, she was also dressed in a black body stocking and beret. "After how badly Daddy got on with you yesterday I wasn't sure you would come."



## Triwizard Tales Lost in a Maze

### Part Four: Lost in a Maze.

Harry reached out to take Susan's hand as they made their way around the Black Lake. As had become their habit whenever the weather permitted it, the pair had taken to spending the weekends together out of the castle, away from prying eyes.

Despite the damned tournament, in Harry's opinion, this was turning out to be the very best year of his life. Susan seemed to actually enjoy being around him, which was a big plus. Ron, after his huge blowup with Hermione in the common room the night of the ball, had actually seemed to pull his head out of his arse and was acting like a friend again. Hermione appeared to be deliriously happy dating Cedric and Harry's fellow champions all seemed to accept him as a peer.

Yeah, he thought as Susan cuddled close to him, life had gotten pretty good.

Which was why he was not particularly surprised by what happened next. Alarmed, yes, but not surprised.

As the pair rounded a corner where the foliage would hide them from anyone on the castle grounds, Susan stopped and leaned back against what she had taken to calling her 'favorite tree'. Then with both hands, she took hold of Harry's jumper and pulled him against her body and into an open-mouthed kiss.

As it usually did when Susan took the initiative like this, Harry's brain went off line with extreme happiness. When the pair broke their kiss, some very small part of Harry noticed that the sky had suddenly gone dark, despite there not having been a cloud in the sky only moments before.

The sudden darkness was only beginning to penetrate through the dense layer of happiness that surrounded Harry's brain when something small yet massive suddenly hit him, shoving him to the ground.

~ Uncle Harry! ~ A cheerful childlike voice called out. ~ We found you! ~

Harry found himself looking into a pair of cold yellow reptilian eyes. He was utterly shocked to find a miniature dragon the size of an Alsatian dog sitting on his chest wiggling in excitement.

~ Get off Uncle Harry, ~ another child's voice called out as another miniature dragon butted its head against the side of the one on top of him, knocking it from his body. ~ You'll break him! ~

~ **Children,** ~ a familiar voice scolded. ~ **be careful. Humans are fragile.** ~

~ Kiska? ~ Harry asked his eyes wide to see the jet-black she-dragon from the first task.

~ **Hello again Harry Potter,** ~ the dragon said with what could only be called a grin on her face. ~ **You should tell your friend to calm down before she gets hurt.** ~

Friend? Suddenly Harry realized whom Kiska was referring to, his eyes flicked to Susan who was still standing with back against the tree, her wand in a badly shaking hand.

"Susan, no!" Harry shouted. "Don't, she'll hurt you. This is Kiska! The dragon from the first task."

"Why is it here?" Susan yelped, her eyes wide with fear. "And why are the little ones swarming you?"

That was a good question, Harry reflected. "I don't know, I'll try to find out."

"Try to find out?" she screeched in near hysterics, "You'll try to find out?"

~ Is she your mate? ~ One of the smaller dragons asked in its child voice.

~ Ewwww! ~ Three of the others chorused.

~ I think it is romantic, ~ the fifth disagreed. ~ Even if she does get excited real easy. ~

~ Ewwww! ~ The mini dragons chorused again.

~ Kiska, ~ Harry called out, ~ what's going on? Why are you here? ~

~ **The children wanted to see their Uncle Harry**, ~ the she-Dragon explained calmly.

~ Uncle Harry? ~

~ **Yes, they imprinted on you when you were the first living thing they saw upon hatching**, ~ Kiska explained. ~ **I must admit to be a little jealous, since it is usually their mother newly hatched dragons imprint on. Because of that imprinting, they will always be able to find you, and they will always know how you are. You belong to each other.** ~

~ We love you, Uncle Harry, ~ the five dog sized dragons called out.

Harry looked over to Susan. "Kiska says that her hatchlings imprinted on me because I was the first thing they saw after hatching. They think I'm their uncle."

"Kiska **says**?" Susan sputtered. "Kiska **says**? Are you telling me that you can speak to **dragons**?"

"Well, yeah," Harry admitted as he climbed to his feet. "It seems that dragons speak Parseltongue."

~ **We most certainly DO NOT**, ~ Kiska roared. ~ **Serpents speak a bastardized version of Dragon.** ~

Harry winced at the volume of the rebuke, while noticing that Susan was even more terrified than she had been. "And Kiska understands English. It seems that dragons don't speak Snake, snakes speak Dragon."

~ **Quite so**, ~ the Dragon huffed.

"You speak to dragons..." Susan whispered, before seeming to calm and a weak smile crossed her lips. "You didn't really fight her did you?"

"um," Harry cringed a bit. This could not possibly be good. Hufflepuffs were famous for their love of fair play... Susan had gotten over his paying off the Merfolk easily enough, but this... "Not as such, no."

"You made a deal with her, just like you did with the Merfolk, didn't you?" Susan asked accusingly.

"Yes," Harry admitted. This was it. He had known all along that this relationship with Susan was too good to last, and that sooner or later she was going to wise up and tell him to get lost. It looked like that time had arrived.

"So, we aren't in any real danger?"

"I don't think so, not really, no."

~ **I must be going, little wizard**, ~ Kiska said, interrupting the potential breakup. ~ **I shall return on the morrow, there will be the standard exchange of treasure upon my return**, ~ she pronounced. ~ **Ensure that my Hatchlings eat well, and only those foods that are good for them, and see to it that they are asleep by the time the moon is high tonight.** ~

Harry blinked. Wait a minute, he recognized this spiel. The words are different, but the intent was the same... he was being hired as a baby sitter?"

~ Kiska, wait, I don't know... ~

~ **I'm sure that my Hatchlings will be safe with their Uncle Harry**, ~ Kiska spread her wings. ~ **Children, behave for Harry.** ~

~ Yes Mum! ~ Five high pitched voices chimed.

~ Mum! Mum! ~ The little red dragon piped as Kiska began to take off.

Furling her wings, she paused. ~**Yes little one?** ~

~ Our names Mum, you forgot to ask Uncle Harry about our names, ~ this speaker was the smallest of the five, colored a fire engine red where the others were all jet black in their coloring.

~ **Oh, yes. You will need to name them**, ~ the dragon said in an offhanded manner before she took to the sky, rocketed upward at an incredible speed and... vanishing in a slit second while Harry blinked. She had been there and then she wasn't.

"What was that?" Susan asked.

"It seems I'm babysitting tonight," Harry said with a sigh while hanging his head. "And for some reason I don't understand, I need to name them."

"Only you, Harry," Susan said shaking her head, "only you."

"How much trouble am I in?" Harry asked. He had always been of the 'get bad things over with and out of the way' school of thought. Maybe it would hurt less if she just told him to go to hell right away.

"Trouble? Do you think I'm mad at you?" Susan asked taking his hand.



Hagrid sort of acquired a dragon egg our first year," Harry explained. "Norbert is the dragon that hatched from that egg. Hagrid are you telling me that Norbert flew all the way from Albania?" Harry asked incredulously.

"Flew? Nah, fer long distance travel dragons have somethin' like apparition, once they are in the air, they jus' burst into flame an' are someplace else. It's sumptin' to watch, when Norbert left to return to his home I watched as he did it. Amazin'," the half giant shook himself at the memory. "But fer now the babies must be gettin' hungry."

~ We're not babies! ~ The small male insisted yet again.

Setting the female back onto the floor, Hagrid rose from his massive chair and rummaged about in a huge pantry cupboard for several moments before he emerged with a pair of headless sheep carcasses, still clad in their wool. Susan and Harry shared a look of muted horror, and not for the first time Harry had some serious concerns about Hagrid's diet.

"This should do nicely," Hagrid rumbled as he tossed the two ewes on the floor next to the miniature dragons. Immediately the red male tackled one of the carcasses and was rolling around on the floor with it, ripping mouthfuls of flesh from the main body with great enthusiasm. His sisters, on the other hand, settled around the other ewe and began to nibble delicately on the carcass, at least when compared with their brother.

~ Thith id GOOD, ~ the male enthused through a mouth full of flesh. ~ lths betta when you mak da kill yersef o course... ~

~ That is disgusting! ~ The female Hagrid had been stroking said with a sniff.

~ Uncle Harry! ~ One of her sisters called out. ~ Make him stop being so disgusting. ~

Harry translated the exchange for Sue and Hagrid despite the shade of green Susan was turning.

"I think I'd best head back to the castle," she said, trying not to look at the mess the small dragon was making.

"I'll walk you back," Harry said, until she laid a hand on his chest.

"Don't be silly," she said with a forced smile. "The fresh air will do me good." She leaned forward and planted a kiss on his cheek. "Besides," Susan whispered in his ear, "we both know that if you leave your 'babies' alone with Hagrid their mother will never get them back."

For several long seconds after Susan had left Hagrid's cabin, Harry continued to stare at the door, only to be interrupted by Hagrid's rumbling chuckle.

"What?"

"It's just that watchin' you two is like watchin' yer Mum an' Da once they stopped fightin' all the time and started payin' attention to each other," the big man laughed.

~ Is she going to be our Auntie? ~ One of the females, the one obsessed with romance asked while delicately wiping her muzzle with a bit of the still intact fleece.

~ You never mind that, little Miss Romance, ~ Harry hissed before turning his attention back to his first magical friend. "And you, Hagrid, quit giving the dragons ideas."

Once again, the half giant chuckled in the face of Harry's glare. "Right then, names fer the lil' darlin's?"

~ Names! ~ the small red male called out with his mouth full, looking up from inside his ewe, ~Yef! Names! ~ He then tore into the carcass once again.

"I suppose you're right Hagrid." Harry went to his knees in front of the females. ~ Alright, Kiska said I was to name you, but what would you like to be called? ~

One of the black miniature dragons looked askance at the question. ~ Uncle Harry! A dragon's name is given, never taken! ~ She huffed sounding for all the world like a dragonsque Hermione.

Harry grinned widely, he was sorely tempted, but more than a little frightened by what Hermione might do if she ever found out he had named a she-dragon after her. ~ So the rules are important to you are they? ~

The she-dragon's eyes grew large, and then she looked down shyly. ~ I just think that there are proper ways to act... ~

~ Well then, let's see. The Goddess Juno was the protector and special counselor of the state of Rome... Rules were important to her, I would guess, so how does the name Juno sound to you? ~

~ Juno? ~ she asked, a sense of wonder in her voice. ~ My name is Juno! I have a name! ~

~ Me next Uncle Harry? ~ One of the other females asked, her tail thumping on the floor in excitement.

"Makes a right racket that one," Hagrid noted, "She must really want to be named."

"She is a loud one, isn't she?" Harry laughed.







"What?" Hannah exclaimed.

"Well, actually snakes speak Dragon according to Harry." Susan amended. "Dragons understand English too. The Horntail recognized that Harry was a speaker and offered him a deal. The dragon would lose the fight for the right price."

"Harry cheated?"

"No!" Susan protested shaking her head. "The rules don't even address the possibility of making a deal with a magical creature. In fact, the rules don't even seem to consider the possibility that any magical creature is intelligent enough to make a deal with. When Harry retrieved his egg, the Horntail's eggs hatched and Harry was the first thing they saw."

"Wow," Hannah breathed. "I was watching the whole time and I never even imagined... But what does that have to do with anything?"

Susan sighed. "Evidently a hatchling dragon bonds with the first living thing they see. So all five of them bonded to Harry."

"But..." Hannah was starting to wonder if she had been lucky that Susan had found Harry first. Exposure to the boy had seemingly driven her best friend around the bend. "Ok, pretending for the moment that what you're saying makes the slightest bit of sense, what does it mean that the baby dragons bonded with Harry."

"They love him. He's their 'Uncle Harry'"

Hannah blinked, and then stood up and placed the necklace down where she had found it. "Get your robes on; I think we need to go to Madam Pomfrey so that she can take a look at you."

"Hannah, I am serious. I was there when they mobbed him. I watched five miniature dragons lick Harry all over his face and arms, just like little fire-breathing puppies. The dragon mother came to Harry to have him babysit the little ones."

"Babysit?" Hannah sat down on her bed and looked at her friend with concern. "Susan, listen to yourself."

"I know how crazy it sounds Hannah," Susan protested. "But I saw it happen. Harry said that the dragon gave him the necklace for his trouble."

"Susan."

"Do you think I'm enjoying sounding like a crazy person Hannah? Like I said, I know what it sounds like, believe me, I know. But is this really any more insane than the thought that one of our classmates could go toe to toe with a dragon, and not only survive, but win?"

"Well no..." the blonde hesitated.

"Look, I was involved with the second task..."

"I was watching," Hannah nodded. "Harry did some big spell that no one I know of could tell me what it was."

"Harry did a potions-based light show that he got from one of his father's best friends. That's all it was, a light show."

Hannah frowned. "Then how did he..."

"Harry made a deal with the Merfolk. He traded something called 'peanut butter' for me."

Again Hannah blinked. With a Muggleborn mum, she knew exactly what peanut butter was. "Let me get this straight. You claim that Harry made a deal with a dragon, adopted a clutch of baby dragons, made a deal with the Merfolk to retrieve you for bloody peanut butter no less, and was paid with that huge emerald for babysitting a clutch of dragons and you're wondering if you were dating him because of his money?"

"That does sound marginally insane," Susan agreed.

"I think," her friend said quietly, "that the two of you are utterly mental. You might as well be mental together." Hannah pondered for a moment. "Does Harry even have any money?"

Susan's brow furrowed for a moment. "Now that you ask, I don't really know." Her expression brightened. "I'm **not** a gold-digger. I'm just insane!"

"And that's at least a little bit better," Hannah snarked.

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Charlie Weasley entered Constance Beaumont's office at a dead run. "Boss! Kiska's back, and she's got her brood with her."

An expression of relief flickered across Beaumont's features. She had not been looking forward to informing the Reserves' Board of Directors that one of their endangered Horntails had disappeared with all five of her offspring.

"Any idea where she might have gone?"

Charlie shook his head. Weasley had been the one to discover Kiska's deserted lair three days before, and had been tasked with the search that had turned out to be utterly fruitless. Even with the unprecedented disappearance of the Horntail, it seemed it was something about her







puzzle.

Harry took another step closer and his foot came down on a stick that broke with a sharp snap.

The sphinx looked up from her puzzle in surprise. "Well done champion, few have the talent to sneak up on me."

Harry stepped backwards from the magical creature. She had her long, almond-shaped eyes focused on Harry as he gathered his courage and approached. Harry raised his wand in a quaking hand, hesitating. The sphinx didn't crouch like a cat ready to attack, rather she had put her magazine away and was pacing from side to side of the path, blocking his progress. Then she spoke, in a sultry voice.

"You are very near your goal, champion. The quickest way is past me."

"So... any chances of you letting me by?" Harry asked quietly, "please?" said Harry, knowing what the answer was going to be, but wondering if sphinxes liked peanut butter.

"No," she said, continuing to pace. "Not unless you can answer my questions three. Answer all three and I let you pass. Answer wrongly and your life becomes interesting. Remain silent – I will let you walk away from me unscathed."

Harry fought not to smile. Who knew that Dudley's fascination with Monty Python would ever have come in handy? At least the sphinx was not asking riddles like the books all said they did. He had never been any good at puzzling things out, which was Hermione's thing, not his.

"Okay," he said. "Ask your questions."

The sphinx sat down upon her hind legs, in the very middle of the path, and asked:

"What is your name?"

"Harry Potter,"

The sphinx perked up. "Harry Potter? Seriously?"

"Uh, yeah," Harry answered, somewhat surprised by her reaction. "Is that the second question?"

"No, sorry, it just surprised me to find Harry Potter here," she said starting to babble, "Oh – My – God! I mean I knew you were part of the tournament, but I never dreamed that..."

"What is the second question then?" Harry asked realizing for the first time that being a Boy Who Lived fangirl might not be limited to humans.

"Oh, sorry," the sphinx blushed through her fur, an odd effect. "What is your quest?"

"Mostly to survive this insanity," Harry answered truthfully.

"Good answer," the sphinx affirmed. "And now your final question: What is black and white and read all over?"

Harry blinked. Surely not... but... Oh, to hell with it he decided. How much could the fall hurt, really?" "A newspaper."

"Yes!" the sphinx exulted. "I also would have accepted 'magazine', and speaking of magazines," she produced the magazine she had been working the puzzle from, and Harry was more an a little shocked to find that his face filled the cover. "Could I bother you for an autograph?"

"Sure," said Harry, and, amazed that he had somehow gotten away with it again. After hastily scribbling his name, Harry carefully edged past the sphinx and made his way to the far side of the clearing. Just as he reached the exit, he heard the Sphinx speak behind him

"Welcome Champion, you may pass if you can answer my questions three. Answer all three and I will let you pass. Answer wrongly and your life becomes interesting. Remain silent – I will let you walk away from me unscathed."

Harry paused to see who might be following him.

"I'm ready," Cedric's voice carried from the darkness.

"What is your Name?"

"Cedric Diggory," the tall Hufflepuff answered.

"What is your quest?"

"I seek the Triwizard Cup!"

"And your last question," the sphinx asked, a sly look of amusement in her eyes, "Under the Dewey Decimal system, what class would the study of languages be indexed under?"

Cedric blinked. "That would be the 400 class."

The sphinx blinked twice. "That's... that's right. How did you know that?"

"When you're dating Hermione Granger," Cedric chuckled, "you just have to know that sort of thing."

As he headed deeper into the maze, Harry just had to laugh.



Harry wiped the blood from his eyes and stumbled onward. He had survived four more of the maze's traps, including a strange golden mist that somehow inverted gravity.

He had to be close by now; he just had to be... Hermione's trusty 'point me' charm had his wand telling him he was bang on course; as long as he did not meet anything too horrible, he might have a chance...

Harry broke into a run. He had a choice of paths up ahead. "Point Me!" he whispered again to his wand, and it spun around and pointed him to the right-hand one. He dashed up this one and saw light ahead.

The Triwizard Cup was gleaming on a pedestal a hundred yards away. Suddenly a dark figure hurtled out onto the path in front of him.

Harry felt the possibility of winning slipping from his fingers. Cedric was going to get there first.

The tall Hufflepuff was sprinting as fast as he could toward the cup, and Harry knew he would never catch up, Cedric was much taller, stronger, had much longer legs...

That was when Harry spotted a huge... something over the hedge to his left, moving quickly along a path that intersected with the one he and Cedric were on. Whatever it was, it was moving so fast Cedric was about to run into it, and Cedric, his eyes on the cup, had not seen it...

"Cedric!" Harry shouted. "Look out!"

Cedric must not have heard him, or else the Hufflepuff thought that Harry was trying to distract him from the prize, the young man ran full bore throat first into an extended leg of a gigantic spider, knocking the breath from his body and dropping the young man to the ground insensate, his wand flying from his grasp and disappearing into the brush.

The Acromantula regarded the fallen Hufflepuff for a moment before spotting Harry, and immediately started barreling toward the boy faster than any eight-legged creature should be able to.

"Stupefy!" Harry shouted, his wand bucking in his hand; the spell hit the spider's gigantic, hairy black body, but for all the good it did, he might as well have thrown a stone at it; the spider jerked, scuttled around, and continued its rampage toward Harry.

"Stupefy! Impedimenta! Stupefy!"

It was no use - the spider was either so large, or so magical that the spells were doing no more than annoying it. Harry had one horrifying glimpse of eight shining black eyes and razor-sharp pincers before it was upon him.

Harry was pinned to the ground by the massive front legs; struggling madly, he tried to kick at the spider; his legs connected with nothing. Harry experienced gut clinching terror as the spider lowered its pincers closer to his face

His horror at the sight of the pincers only inches from his face was not abated in the slightest when he spotted a small pink bow on the side of the huge spider's head.

Harry was sure that his revenge on Hagrid was about to be put off forever, when he heard something that he never expected to.

"I'm Missy Aranea, Mr. Potter, from News of the Magical World. Do you have a comment for my readers on winning the Triwizard Tournament?"

"What?" Harry asked incredulously.

"I'm Missy Aranea, Mr. Potter, and I'm a reporter for the News of the Magical World."

Harry stared into the closest of the huge spider's eight eyes and tried to wrap his mind around being interviewed by an eight-legged Rita Skeeter. Could his life possibly get any weirder?

"I haven't won yet," he protested.

"A trifle," the spider huffed, clacking her massive mandibles mere inches from his face while producing a quill and notepad from... somewhere. "The French human was incapacitated by one of the skrewts," she said checking what appeared to be notes, "the Bulgarian broke his leg after the third time he failed at answering Brenda's questions,"

"Brenda?" Harry asked, still trying to believe the situation in which he found himself.

"The Sphinx, a marvelous girl, she throws the best parties."



## Triwizard Tales Voldemort Reborn.

### Part Five: Voldemort Reborn.

Susan, Hannah and Hermione sat side-by-side waiting in the darkness for the final task to be finished. It was only the anxiety of not knowing how Cedric and Harry were doing that kept spectating this final event from being utterly boring.

There had been a short period of amusement, not long after Harry had entered the maze, when there had been a confrontation between Ron Weasley and Draco Malfoy. Draco had chosen a seat directly in front of Ron and upon sitting had lowered the hood of his cloak, which allowed a huge rainbow colored mass of tight curls to escape.

There was silence throughout the student section of the stand for several seconds as the sight of the Slytherin prince's newest head covering sank in. Ron had reached out and tapped Draco on the shoulder. "Down in front."

Turning his head to face Weasley, Malfoy asked in his most imperious tone, "Excuse me?" The individual strands of the aforementioned multi-hued mop continued to move in hypnotic spirals for several seconds after Draco's head had stopped moving, spoiling the effect of his attitude.

"Look, I can't see the field; can you do something about your hair?" Ron paused, peering at the rainbow afro in suspicion. "Speaking of your hair, have you done something different with it? You look different somehow Malfoy."

In the seats behind him, George and Fred Weasley exchanged guilty glances as they observed first-hand the results of Ron having been their principle test subject for pranks just a few too many times.

"I've done nothing different," Draco spat, busily employing that tactic favored by the Malfoy clan for generations; Deny, Deny, Deny.

"Really?" Ron asked. "I could have sworn you looked different somehow, but anyway I can't see the field with your hair in the way."

From there the discussion between the two rivals had descended into what some generous souls might have called violence. The pair pushing each other a few times before beginning what could only be called, an epic slap fight. The twins and Draco's bookends made a few halfhearted attempts into stopping the embarrassing altercation, before all four backed off when a furious Professor Flitwick came thundering up the bleachers to confront the battling pair. After several moments of attempting to calm the situation, the crowd was treated to the Charms instructor grasping both of the fighters by their ears, and escorting them away, all the while chastising them for 'embarrassing Hogwarts' with their childlike behavior.

The waiting became worse by the minute until at the 83-minute mark when red sparks sprayed into the sky over the maze. The instructors clustered for a moment before Professor McGonagall, easily identified by her tartan sash, entered the maze, only to emerge a few minutes later levitating a badly burned Fleur Delacour.

"Merlin," Susan breathed as the runic arrays showed, in graphic detail, the wounded French champion being levitated into the medical tent. "How horrible! I wouldn't have thought a Veela could be burned."

"I'm sure Professor Dumbledore knows what he's doing," Hermione said, trying mightily to convince herself. "The staff must have taken precautions to keep anyone from getting hurt. Fleur probably just lost her concentration for a moment."

Hannah nodded in agreement while Susan looked at her two friends as if they had lost their minds. All year long, the Champions had been subjected to horrible dangers and the majority of the students still thought that the tournament was safe. It had never occurred to her that Hannah and Hermione shared in that delusion. Still, Harry had a plan. He hadn't told her what it was, but he had a plan, Susan was sure of it. No one who could make deals with Dragons and Merfolk could possibly be inconvenienced by a mere hedgerow maze.

At the 107-minute mark, the murmuring of the crowd was broken by an odd sound, one that Hermione associated with the cartoons she had watched as a child. A sort of low pitched 'TWANG!' That unusual sound was followed by the sight and sound of a screaming Viktor Krum arcing through the air over the hedgerows. The three girls exchanged looks.

"Was that part of the task?" Hannah asked, while trying to figure out exactly what a flying Krum might mean.

"I don't know," Hermione answered truthfully. "I can't imagine what that might..." That was when the bushy haired Gryffindor spotted Susan's calm demeanor. "You aren't worried."

"Harry," Susan said quietly, "has a plan."

"A plan?" Hermione asked incredulously. "He's got a plan?"

"Harry has had a plan for every task in this contest," the redhead said simply. "I don't know what, and I don't know how, but he's going to be fine." A grin puled at the edges of her mouth. "And he's going to win too."

"Sue!" Hannah protested, "I know you think he was talking to dragons on the Merfolk, but you can't possibly believe..."

"Talking to dragons?" Hermione interjected, "what do you mean by that?"

"Harry is a parselmouth as you well know," Susan said quietly. "Dragons speak parseltongue."

"But..." Susan could see that Harry best friend was conflicted between what she had read in her textbooks and her belief in Harry. "Dragons are supposed to be mindless beasts."

"And snakes are erudite conversationalists?" the redhead asked.

"Well, no but..."

TWANG!

The three girls' eyes flashed to the maze in time to see a screaming Viktor Krum once again flying in a ballistic arc over the maze.

"Why the hell is he doing that?" Hannah asked.

"I don't think he's doing it on purpose," Susan said before nudging her fellow 'puff. "Check Chang out."

"Crying again?" Hannah snorted. "The bint was like a waterworks when she dumped Cedric, and now she's sobbing for Krum when he flies without a broom?"

"You'll forgive me," Hermione smirked, "if I find the idea of Cho breaking up with Cedric to be a good thing."

"Yeah, you would," Hannah snarked.

"My love life aside," Hermione sniffed. "Are you seriously expecting us to believe that Harry can talk to **dragons**?"

"Hermione, you are brilliant, but sometimes I think you're blind. What is more likely, that Harry can talk to dragons or Harry could defeat a dragon with the magic he knows?"

"Well... I suppose what you're saying makes some sense..." Hermione said hesitantly.

"Tell her about Harry's nieces and nephew," Hannah said with a grin.

"Nieces and nephew?"

"Hermione," Susan said lowering her voice though she was sure no one was listening to them, "do you remember the rumors back in March about dragons being seen near the Forbidden Forest?"

"Yes," the brunette replied cautiously.

"At the first task, the Horntail's eggs hatched just as Harry was retrieving his golden egg. He was the first living thing the hatchlings saw, and they bonded to him."

"Bonded to him?" Hermione asked, "What does that even mean?"

"According to my insane friend, the little dragons all think Harry is their uncle."

Hermione paused for a moment while taking that bit of information in and comparing it to what she had managed to learn about dragons. "That doesn't make the slightest bit of sense."

"That's what I told her," Hannah agreed. "Personally, I think associating with your friend Harry had driven her 'round the bend. You should see the necklace Harry gave her, telling her he got it for babysitting the little dragons."

"A necklace?" Clearly, Hermione decided, the Hufflepuffs were not as stable as their reputations would lead one to believe.

TWANG!

Again, Viktor's flailing form flew through the air over the hedges.

"Ok," Hannah pronounced. "He's got to be doing that for the fun of it now."

A weak spray of red sparks appeared over the hedgerows. That left only two competitors in the maze.

OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

Soon, it was going to happen soon.

Barty Crouch Jr. stood transfixed standing apart from the other professors, in the shadows of the towering seats, trying and failing to use Moody's magical eye to see what was going on behind the hedgerows. Karkarov had been just too protective of his champion and Crouch had been unable to get close enough to Krum to put the boy under the Imperius, so his plan 'B' had fallen to the side.

It really did not matter, one way or the other; his master would be regaining a body this night. The Dark Lord had said that he wanted Potter, but he would settle for any of these children. First the Veela had failed and was removed from the maze, and then Krum had broken his leg. That left Potter and Diggory alone in the maze. His Master would reward Crouch for his work, of that Barty was sure, but to get Potter... His Master







Harry tried to ignore the injuries he has sustained in the maze, as well as the residual pain of Voldemort's Cruciatus, and concentrated on putting as much distance between himself and the Death Eaters as possible. All around him pulses of light showed that they were trying to stop him, though rather than giving chase; they stood their ground and cast spells at him.

Wizards.

Harry jinked around a large ornate tombstone when an orange curse he didn't recognize hit the stone, fracturing it. The upper half of the statue of some woman fell from its pedestal and onto Harry, pinning him to the ground. Before he could even begin to free himself, a Cruciatus Curse again hit him. The pain was so extreme, he no longer knew where he was... it was like knives of electricity were piercing every inch of his skin, his head was surely going to burst with pain, but somehow he knew that he couldn't scream, he wouldn't give the bastard the satisfaction.

And it stopped. Harry struggled to sit up, his legs still pinned under the fallen statue; his entire body shaking uncontrollably.

"Afraid to face me Harry?" Voldemort asked from where he stood, not having moved from his original position, "Perhaps you need a little help? Would you like this to all be over Harry? It could be you know, it would be so simple for me to end your little life. Just think, no more pain, no more fear. Would you like that Harry? Ask me to end it. Ask me."

Harry did not answer. If he was going to die, he wouldn't do it with a whimper. Those pitiless red eyes were telling him that death was coming, and there was nothing he could do about it... but he was not going to play along. He was not going to obey Voldemort... he was not going to beg...

"So far I've demonstrated the Cruciatus curse to you Harry," said Voldemort softly. "I believe a famous young man such as you should know all three of the Unforgivables. Before I re-introduce you to the Killing Curse, I've heard rumors that you have a certain resistance to the Imperius curse. Let us see how you like mine. Ask me to end your life Harry. Imperio!"

Harry felt a sense of wellbeing wash over him. It was as if his mind had been wiped of all worry... It was such a delight, not to think, not to fear, it was as though he were floating, dreaming... just ask. Just ask that it be over, then this feeling would go on forever... just ask... just ask...

**I will not**, he heard himself say, in the back of his mind, **I will not surrender to anyone, ever... I won't do it, I won't say it...**

Just ask...

"Fuck you!"

Those emphatic words burst from Harry's mouth; the shout echoed through the graveyard, and the dream state was gone as if it had never existed. Harry hissed in pain as the aches that the Cruciatus Curse had left all over his body rushed back to the fore, as the realization of where he was, and whom he faced returned as well.

"Fuck me?" said Voldemort quietly, and the Death Eaters were not laughing now horrified that anyone would so defy their Dark Lord. "You dare to defy me Harry, even now? You cannot run from me any longer Harry. Does your defiance mean you are tired of our duel? Does this mean that you would prefer me to finish it now, Harry?"

Harry lay pinned behind the ruined headstone and knew that it was over. There was no hope... no one to help. He watched as Voldemort raised his wand and took aim. It had not been that bad a life. Sure, the Dursleys were arses, but he had gotten to know Hermione, Ron and the Weasleys, and he had gotten to fly. He had done magic. He had met Susan. He had danced with Susan, he had kissed Susan and she had kissed him. Harry pushed an image of Susan's face to the front of his mind, her eyes, her lips, the taste of her...

Voldemort was ready. "Avada Kedavra!"

A jet of green light issued from Voldemort's wand. Harry watched as it arced across the distance that separated them. This was it. Would it hurt to die?



"Where is Harry Potter?" Susan demanded.

"Miss Bones, you should go back to the castle with the rest of your classmates," Albus Dumbledore said calmly, his eyes twinkling.

"Bugger that," the redhead spat. "Where is Harry? What are you doing to find him?"

"Susan Amelia!" Auntie Amelia said, shocked at her nieces' language. "Respect your elders."

"Bugger that as well, Auntie." Susan swore hotly. "My elders have subjected my boyfriend to facing a Dragon with no training; to retrieving me from the lake when he couldn't swim by making him believe that if he failed I would die, and you forced him into a maze on the bloody castle grounds where he disappears because you bloody idiots never noticed that a Death Eater was impersonating someone who was supposedly one of both of your oldest friends? What precisely am I supposed to be respecting?"



With an empty, yet still queasy stomach, Harry stood and wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his Triwizard uniform, once again taking in the results of the short, yet vicious, battle. Dead Death Eaters were everywhere, with body parts strewn everywhere. He felt his gorge rising again, but fought it down. He turned to face the only surviving enemy in the graveyard.

“How did you do it Potter? How did you enslave these dragons?”

Draconic laughter filled the air. “Enslaved? What makes you think I did anything like that?” Harry asked.

“How else would they obey your commands?”

“You haven’t heard me issue a single command,” Harry pointed out. “Kiska and her family are not my servants, they are my friends.”

“But how did you teach them parseltongue?” the Dark Lord demanded.

“Teach them?” Harry asked incredulously. “Do you mean to tell me that you never even tried to speak to a dragon? I didn’t teach them anything. Here is a news flash for you. Dragons don’t speak snake, snakes speak a bastardized version of dragon.”

“But they’re beasts!”

“They’re people,” Harry said dismissively. “Dragons speak, and laugh and have dreams. They’re just bigger than us.”

“Fine Potter, you have me captured, but do you really think you can hold me? That your pitiful Ministry will be able to confine me?” Voldemort laughed. “I have a body again, and I will be free! Sooner or later your guard will be down and I’ll end you.” Voldemort extended his arms to the side, his wand held loosely in his right hand. “I surrender.”

Before Harry could speak, Kiska rumbled. ~ **The problem, little wizard, is that you are not Harry’s prisoner, you are mine.** ~

~ **Meaning what, Dragon?** ~ The Dark Lord asked.

~ **Meaning, I do not take prisoners.** ~ With those words, Kiska unleashed her fire breath, incinerating the reborn Dark Lord. The massive she-dragon then turned her attention to the Dark Lord’s familiar. ~ **Will we be continuing this fight snake?** ~

Nagini immediately lowered her head in submission, ~ Don’t bother on my account, ~ she hissed. ~ I never really liked the human in the first place, he always wanted me to eat his defective followers, and you can imagine what they would taste like. You’ve done me a favor really. ~

Harry ignored the conversation between dragon and snake while never taking his eyes off of Voldemort’s corpse. The Dark Lord’s body lay on the ground; lifeless with no hint of the vaporous wraith he had witnessed leaving the burning body of Professor Quirrell first year. Could it really be over?

Before he could dwell on it, he found himself mobbed by the young dragons.

~ Uncle Harry, are you all right? ~ One called as she galloped up to him. Harry somehow knew that this one was Thumper. ~ You were in so much pain! ~

~ Uncle Harry, we were so worried. ~ One of the others added.

~ Who was worried? ~ Ron scoffed. ~ Not me, I just wanted into the fight! ~

~ Don’t listen to him, Uncle Harry, Ron was the one who was the loudest about coming to help you,” Thumper said, ~ Flaming Fart was sooo worried about you. ~

~ I was not! ~ Ron said butting his head into Thumper’s side. ~ The only thing that worried me was that one of you clumsy idiots might have hurt him when you tried to protect him. ~

“Uncle Harry was fine,” Sweetie said, a hint of pride in her voice. “I was with him after all.”

~ Thank you all, ~ Harry said, trying to head off a fight, ~ you all saved my life. ~

~ **It is what one does for family,** ~ Kiska said simply. ~ **We had best be going, all the magic that was expended here is sure to attract attention. That metal object,** ~ she gestured toward the Triwizard cup where it lay in the tall grass, ~ **seems to be imbued with same wizard travel magic used to move me and my clutch to your school. It should get you away from here Harry.** ~

~ That’s what got me here. ~ Harry admitted. ~ I think you’re right though, I doubt the Ministry would take kindly to the idea what you killed these people, no matter what kind of monsters they were. Thank you again. ~

~ **Come along children,** ~ Kiska said. ~ **We will visit Harry another time when there is less threat of being attacked.** ~

~ Uncle Harry, ~ Cuddles said quietly... or at least as quietly as a two ton dragon could manage. ~ Maybe you could come visit us. ~

~ I’d like that Cuddles, maybe I can work something out... ~ Harry suddenly found himself flat on his back being licked by a forked tongue as long as his arm and twice as thick.

~ I miss you so much Uncle Harry, ~ the dragon sobbed. The saliva assault on Harry was joined by her sisters while Ron stood to the side rolling his eyes.

~ **It is time to go children,** ~ Kiska insisted. ~ **We really must be going before more wizards arrive.** ~

~ Yeah, come on, ~ Ron agreed. ~ It’s all you can eat water buffalo night, and I don’t want to miss it. Later Uncle Harry! ~

~ Bye Uncle Harry, ~ the girls chorused as they launched themselves into the air following Ron and their mother. Harry lay on the ground and watched the six dragons make the jump into the Dragon's travel technique, each of the doing it individually this time rather than riding on their mother's back, and he started to laugh.

He still hurt all over his body, and suspected that he was injured far worse than he knew, but damn, his life was weird. It took most of ten minutes until he had enough control of himself to struggle to his feet, still giggling. Harry limped over to the Triwizard cup, and stooped to reach for it when he realized that there was no way in hell the Dursleys would ever allow him to go to Romania to visit his dragons. He paused and thought for a moment, and then he limped over to where the Dark Lord had fallen. Truth be told, there was not a lot left of the man, dragon fire being what it was, but there was a piece that might be useful in proving his story.

He picked up his proof and hobbled over to the second thing he wanted to take with him. He shoved his proof under his left arm and hefted the second by grabbing a handful of hair and dragged it toward the cup.

Upon reaching the cup, Harry made sure he had a good grip on his evidence and grabbed onto the cup. For the second time that day he felt the sensation of a hook behind his navel and his feet left the ground.



"NO!" Fudge exclaimed. "Lord Thingy is dead."

"I know," Harry said with a puzzled look on his face. "I just told you it was taken care of."

"No," the Minister protested, "He died thirteen years ago."

"More or less," Harry agreed. "And he did it again tonight. Ask the Headmaster and the rest of the judges. They're the ones that set it all up. I mean how else could the Triwizard cup have turned out to be a portkey?"

"We did no such thing Harry," Dumbledore protested. "It was..."

"Oh, right, it never happened." Harry said working himself up to a rant while scooping his proof from the high grass. "And this isn't Voldemort's arm, and it isn't holding his bloody wand! Honestly Minister, are you going to let them get away with this?"

"Lord Thingy's arm?" Fudge said, backing away in horror. "And his wand?"

"Yeah," Harry agreed nodding vigorously. "I don't know how they did it, but they set it up so that Voldemort was reincarnated for their stupid fourth task."

"Lord Thingy is back?"

"For about half an hour, yeah. Long enough to call his Death Eaters to him and to start throwing curses around. What kind of task is fighting a Dark Lord? I mean he came out of the cauldron looking all snakey and stuff." Harry waved the severed arm in the Minister's face. "Seriously Minister, just look at this thing. Does that even look remotely human?"

"Keep that away from me!"

"If you think this is bad, you should have seen it when it was still attached to his body and casting curses at me." Harry said his eyes wide. "Now, that was scary, let me tell you."

"Harry..." Dumbledore attempted to interrupt.

"Oh, no," Harry said, swinging the wand holding hand of the severed arm into the Headmaster's face before waving it at all of the judges. "You lot set this whole thing up. You all made me compete when you knew quite clearly that there was no way I could get past Headmaster Dumbledore's age line around the Goblet of Fire. You made me face a dragon, you tried to kill Susan in the lake, never asking if I could swim, you made me go into that maze full of some really horrible creatures, and then your Triwizard cup took me to Voldemort. Minister, you've got to do something about this!"

"Dumbledore!" Fudge shouted, "what is all this?"

"Mr. Potter, where did the portkey take you?" Amelia Bones interrupted her Minister, "the longer we wait, the colder the trail becomes, we may never find those who were waiting for you when you were taken."

"I have no idea where I was taken Madam Bones," Harry admitted. "But they aren't going anywhere. I'm pretty sure they're dead."

"Dead?" Amelia blinked. "How did they die?"

Harry hesitated. What to say? "Voldemort wanted to prove to his people that he was more powerful than I was, and wanted to duel me. So Peter cut me loose from the tombstone he had tied me to and gave me back my wand."

"Peter?" Olympe asked. "Who is Peter?"

"Oh," Harry slapped his forehead, and turning to search in the high grass. "I almost forgot. Peter Pettigrew."

"Harry," Amelia said gently, "Peter Pettigrew was killed by Sirius Black the day after your parents were killed."

"No he wasn't," Harry said. "And I don't appreciate you saying bad things like that about my Godfather."

"Your Godfather?" Amelia asked. "Sirius Black is your Godfather?"

"Yeah," Harry acknowledged stooping over to lift his second piece of evidence from the ground with a grunt of pain. "And here is what's left of Peter Pettigrew."

Fudge shrieked at the sight of Pettigrew's upper torso. In short order, his shriek was joined by similar sounds from Fleur and Susan. Hermione looked like she was going to be sick, but she was not surprised by the half traitor as she had been staring at him since she arrived on the scene.

"You'll note the Dark Mark on his left arm?" Harry said allowing the half corpse to fall to the ground. "Minister, you've got to do something about the horrible injustice that was perpetrated against my Godfather by your predecessor. Surely a hero of law and order like you can fix all this."

"Peter Pettigrew? Peter Pettigrew was a Death Eater?" Fudge gasped, backing away from the bisected torso, a look of revulsion on his face.

"You were telling us what happened Mr. Potter," Amelia reminded them all.

"Oh, yeah. Peter cut me down and gave me back my wand, and then Voldemort wanted to duel. I distracted him, and ran for it. That made all the Death Eaters start casting all kinds of spells at me, and well; I ended up trapped under some kind of statue, and then the dragons came.

"Dragons?" Fudge squeaked.











