CHAPTER SEVENTEEN - THE MAN WITH TWO FACES

All Harry could think of doing was to keep Quirrell talking and stop him

from concentrating on the mirror.

"I saw you and Snape in the forest --" he blurted out.

"Yes," said Quirrell idly, walking around the mirror to look at the

back. "He was on to me by that time, trying to find out how far I'd got.

He suspected me all along. Tried to frighten me - as though he could,

when I had Lord Voldemort on my side...."

Quirrell came back out from behind the mirror and stared hungrily into

it.

"I see the Stone... I'm presenting it to my master... but where is it?"

Harry struggled against the ropes binding him, but they didn't give. He

234

had to keep Quirrell from giving his whole attention to the mirror.

"But Snape always seemed to hate me so much."

"Oh, he does," said Quirrell casually, "heavens, yes. He was at Hogwarts

with your father, didn't you know? They loathed each other. But he never

wanted you dead."

"But I heard you a few days ago, sobbing -- I thought Snape was

threatening you...."

For the first time, a spasm of fear flitted across Quirrell's face.

"Sometimes," he said, "I find it hard to follow my master's instructions

-- he is a great wizard and I am weak --"

"You mean he was there in the classroom with you?" Harry gasped.

"He is with me wherever I go," said Quirrell quietly. "I met him when I

traveled around the world. A foolish young man I was then, full of

ridiculous ideas about good and evil. Lord Voldemort showed me how wrong

I was. There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too

weak to seek it.... Since then, I have served him faithfully, although I

have let him down many times. He has had to be very hard on me."

Quirrell shivered suddenly. "He does not forgive mistakes easily. When I

failed to steal the stone from Gringotts, he was most displeased. He

punished me... decided he would have to keep a closer watch on me...."

Quirrell's voice trailed away. Harry was remembering his trip to Diagon

Alley -how could he have been so stupid? He'd seen Quirrell there that

very day, shaken hands with him in the Leaky Cauldron.

Quirrell cursed under his breath.

"I don't understand... is the Stone inside the mirror? Should I break

it?"

Harry's mind was racing.

What I want more than anything else in the world at the moment, he

thought, is to find the Stone before Quirrell does. So if I look in the

mirror, I should see myseff finding it -- which means I'll see where

it's hidden! But how can I look without Quirrell realizing what I'm up

235

to?

He tried to edge to the left, to get in front of the glass without

Quirrell noticing, but the ropes around his ankles were too tight: he

tripped and fell over. Quirrell ignored him. He was still talking to

himself. "What does this mirror do? How does it work? Help me, Master!"

And to Harry's horror, a voice answered, and the voice seemed to come

from Quirrell himself

"Use the boy... Use the boy..."

Quirrell rounded on Harry.

"Yes -- Potter -- come here."

He clapped his hands once, and the ropes binding Harry fell off. Harry

got slowly to his feet.

"Come here," Quirrell repeated. "Look in the mirror and tell me what you

see."

Harry walked toward him.

I must lie, he thought desperately. I must look and lie about what I

see, that's all.

Quirrell moved close behind him. Harry breathed in the funny smell that

seemed to come from Quirrell's turban. He closed his eyes, stepped in

front of the mirror, and opened them again.

He saw his reflection, pale and scared-looking at first. But a moment

later, the reflection smiled at him. It put its hand into its pocket and

pulled out a blood-red stone. It winked and put the Stone back in its

pocket -- and as it did so, Harry felt something heavy drop into his

real pocket. Somehow -- incredibly -- he'd gotten the Stone.

"Well?" said Quirrell impatiently. "What do you see?"

Harry screwed up his courage.

"I see myself shaking hands with Dumbledore," he invented. "I -- I've

won the house cup for Gryffindor."

236

Quirrell cursed again.

"Get out of the way," he said. As Harry moved aside, he felt the

Sorcerer's Stone against his leg. Dare he make a break for it?

But he hadn't walked five paces before a high voice spoke, though

Quirrell wasn't moving his lips.

"He lies... He lies..."

"Potter, come back here!" Quirrell shouted. "Tell me the truth! What did

you just see?"

The high voice spoke again.

"Let me speak to him... face-to-face..."

"Master, you are not strong enough!"

"I have strength enough... for this...."

Harry felt as if Devil's Snare was rooting him to the spot. He couldn't

move a muscle. Petrified, he watched as Quirrell reached up and began to

unwrap his turban. What was going on? The turban fell away. Quirrell's

head looked strangely small without it. Then he turned slowly on the

spot.

Harry would have screamed, but he couldn't make a sound. Where there

should have been a back to Quirrell's head, there was a face, the most

terrible face Harry had ever seen. It was chalk white with glaring red

eyes and slits for nostrils, like a snake.

"Harry Potter..." it whispered.

Harry tried to take a step backward but his legs wouldn't move.

"See what I have become?" the face said. "Mere shadow and vapor ... I

have form only when I can share another's body... but there have always

been those willing to let me into their hearts and minds.... Unicorn

blood has strengthened me, these past weeks... you saw faithful Quirrell

drinking it for me in the forest... and once I have the Elixir of Life,

I will be able to create a body of my own.... Now... why don't you give

237

me that Stone in your pocket?"

So he knew. The feeling suddenly surged back into Harry's legs. He

stumbled backward.

"Don't be a fool," snarled the face. "Better save your own life and join

me... or you'll meet the same end as your parents.... They died begging

me for mercy..."

"LIAR!" Harry shouted suddenly.

Quirrell was walking backward at him, so that Voldemort could still see

him. The evil face was now smiling.

"How touching..." it hissed. "I always value bravery... Yes, boy, your

parents were brave.... I killed your father first; and he put up a

courageous fight... but your mother needn't have died... she was trying

to protect you.... Now give me the Stone, unless you want her to have

died in vain."

"NEVER!"

Harry sprang toward the flame door, but Voldemort screamed "SEIZE HIM!"

and the next second, Harry felt Quirrell's hand close on his wrist. At

once, a needle-sharp pain seared across Harry's scar; his head felt as

though it was about to split in two; he yelled, struggling with all his

might, and to his surprise, Quirrell let go of him. The pain in his head

lessened -- he looked around wildly to see where Quirrell had gone, and

saw him hunched in pain, looking at his fingers -- they were blistering

before his eyes.

"Seize him! SEIZE HIM!" shrieked Voldemort again, and Quirrell lunged,

knocking Harry clean off his feet' landing on top of him, both hands

around Harry's neck -- Harry's scar was almost blinding him with pain,

yet he could see Quirrell howling in agony.

"Master, I cannot hold him -- my hands -- my hands!"

And Quirrell, though pinning Harry to the ground with his knees, let go

of his neck and stared, bewildered, at his own palms -- Harry could see

they looked burned, raw, red, and shiny.

"Then kill him, fool, and be done!" screeched Voldemort.

238

Quirrell raised his hand to perform a deadly curse, but Harry, by

instinct, reached up and grabbed Quirrell's face --"AAAARGH!"

Quirrell rolled off him, his face blistering, too, and then Harry knew:

Quirrell couldn't touch his bare skin, not without suffering terrible

pain -- his only chance was to keep hold of Quirrell, keep him in enough

pain to stop him from doing a curse.

Harry jumped to his feet, caught Quirrell by the arm, and hung on as

tight as he could. Quirrell screamed and tried to throw Harry off -- the

pain in Harry's head was building -- he couldn't see -- he could only

hear Quirrell's terrible shrieks and Voldemort's yells of, "KILL HIM!

KILL HIM!" and other voices, maybe in Harry's own head, crying, "Harry!

Harry!"

He felt Quirrell's arm wrenched from his grasp, knew all was lost, and

fell into blackness, down ... down... down...

Something gold was glinting just above him. The Snitch! He tried to

catch it, but his arms were too heavy.

He blinked. It wasn't the Snitch at all. It was a pair of glasses. How

strange.

He blinked again. The smiling face of Albus Dumbledore swam into view

above him.

"Good afternoon, Harry," said Dumbledore. Harry stared at him. Then he

remembered: "Sir! The Stone! It was Quirrell! He's got the Stone! Sir,

quick --"

"Calm yourself, dear boy, you are a little behind the times," said

Dumbledore. "Quirrell does not have the Stone."

"Then who does? Sir, I --"

"Harry, please relax, or Madam Pomfrey will have me thrown out.

Harry swallowed and looked around him. He realized he must be in the

hospital wing. He was lying in a bed with white linen sheets, and next

239

to him was a table piled high with what looked like half the candy shop.

"Tokens from your friends and admirers," said Dumbledore, beaming. "What

happened down in the dungeons between you and Professor Quirrell is a

complete secret, so, naturally, the whole school knows. I believe your

friends Misters Fred and George Weasley were responsible for trying to

send you a toilet seat. No doubt they thought it would amuse you. Madam

Pomfrey, however, felt it might not be very hygienic, and confiscated

it."

"How long have I been in here?"

"Three days. Mr. Ronald Weasley and Miss Granger will be most relieved

you have come round, they have been extremely worried."

"But sit, the Stone

I see you are not to be distracted. Very well, the Stone. Professor

Quirrell did not manage to take it from you. I arrived in time to

prevent that, although you were doing very well on your own, I must say.

"You got there? You got Hermione's owl?"

"We must have crossed in midair. No sooner had I reached London than it

became clear to me that the place I should be was the one I had just

left. I arrived just in time to pull Quirrell off you."

"It was you."

"I feared I might be too late."

"You nearly were, I couldn't have kept him off the Stone much longer --"

"Not the Stone, boy, you -- the effort involved nearly killed you. For

one terrible moment there, I was afraid it had. As for the Stone, it has

been destroyed."

"Destroyed?" said Harry blankly. "But your friend -- Nicolas Flamel --"

"Oh, you know about Nicolas?" said Dumbledore, sounding quite delighted.

"You did do the thing properly, didn't you? Well, Nicolas and I have had

a little chat, and agreed it's all for the best."

240

"But that means he and his wife will die, won't they?"

"They have enough Elixir stored to set their affairs in order and then,

yes, they will die."

Dumbledore smiled at the look of amazement on Harry's face.

"To one as young as you, I'm sure it seems incredible, but to Nicolas

and Perenelle, it really is like going to bed after a very, very long

day. After all, to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great

adventure. You know, the Stone was really not such a wonderful thing. As

much money and life as you could want! The two things most human beings

would choose above all -- the trouble is, humans do have a knack of

choosing precisely those things that are worst for them." Harry lay

there, lost for words. Dumbledore hummed a little and smiled at the

ceiling.

"Sir?" said Harry. "I've been thinking... sir -- even if the Stone's

gone, Vol-, I mean, You-Know- Who --"

"Call him Voldemort, Harry. Always use the proper name for things. Fear

of a name increases fear of the thing itself."

"Yes, sir. Well, Voldemort's going to try other ways of coming back,

isn't he? I mean, he hasn't gone, has he?"

"No, Harry, he has not. He is still out there somewhere, perhaps looking

for another body to share... not being truly alive, he cannot be killed.

He left Quirrell to die; he shows just as little mercy to his followers

as his enemies. Nevertheless, Harry, while you may only have delayed his

return to power, it will merely take someone else who is prepared to

fight what seems a losing battle next time -- and if he is delayed

again, and again, why, he may never return to power."

Harry nodded, but stopped quickly, because it made his head hurt. Then

he said, "Sir, there are some other things I'd like to know, if you can

tell me... things I want to know the truth about...."

"The truth." Dumbledore sighed. "It is a beautiful and terrible thing,

and should therefore be treated with great caution. However, I shall

answer your questions unless I have a very good reason not to, in which

case I beg you'll forgive me. I shall not, of course, lie."

241

"Well... Voldemort said that he only killed my mother because she tried

to stop him from killing me. But why would he want to kill me in the

first place?"

Dumbledore sighed very deeply this time.

"Alas, the first thing you ask me, I cannot tell you. Not today. Not

now. You will know, one day... put it from your mind for now, Harry.

When you are older... I know you hate to hear this... when you are

ready, you will know."

And Harry knew it would be no good to argue.

"But why couldn't Quirrell touch me?"

"Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot

understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your

mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign... to

have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone,

will give us some protection forever. It is in your very skin. Quirrell,

full of hatred, greed, and ambition, sharing his soul with Voldemort,

could not touch you for this reason. It was agony to touch a person

marked by something so good."

Dumbledore now became very interested in a bird out on the windowsill,

which gave Harry time to dry his eyes on the sheet. When he had found

his voice again, Harry said, "And the invisibility cloak - do you know

who sent it to me?"

"Ah - your father happened to leave it in my possession, and I thought

you might like it." Dumbledore's eyes twinkled. "Useful things... your

father used it mainly for sneaking off to the kitchens to steal food

when he was here."

"And there's something else..."

"Fire away."

"Quirrell said Snape --"

"Professor Snape, Harry." "Yes, him -- Quirrell said he hates me because

he hated my father. Is that true?"

242

"Well, they did rather detest each other. Not unlike yourself and Mr.

Malfoy. And then, your father did something Snape could never forgive."

"What?"

"He saved his life."

"What?"

"Yes..." said Dumbledore dreamily. "Funny, the way people's minds work,

isn't it? Professor Snape couldn't bear being in your father's debt....

I do believe he worked so hard to protect you this year because he felt

that would make him and your father even. Then he could go back to

hating your father's memory in peace...."

Harry tried to understand this but it made his head pound, so he

stopped.

"And sir, there's one more thing..."

"Just the one?"

"How did I get the Stone out of the mirror?"

"Ah, now, I'm glad you asked me that. It was one of my more brilliant

ideas, and between you and me, that's saying something. You see, only

one who wanted to find the Stone -- find it, but not use it -- would be

able to get it, otherwise they'd just see themselves making gold or

drinking Elixir of Life. My brain surprises even me sometimes.... Now,

enough questions. I suggest you make a start on these sweets. Ah! Bettie

Bott's Every Flavor Beans! I was unfortunate enough in my youth to come

across a vomitflavored one, and since then I'm afraid I've rather lost

my liking for them -- but I think I'll be safe with a nice toffee, don't

you?"

He smiled and popped the golden-brown bean into his mouth. Then he

choked and said, "Alas! Ear wax!"

Madam Pomfrey, the nurse, was a nice woman, but very strict.

"Just five minutes," Harry pleaded.

"Absolutely not."