

“Fleur never showed up, I couldn’t leave her there.” Harry started to swim the best he could with Gabrielle hanging on his back. He was glad for all his time in the pool at Seren Du now.

“You idiot, you didn’t seriously think they’d let us die down there, did you?” Ron burst out.

“That’s not a risk I’m willing to take with the life of a nine year-old girl,” Harry retorted sharply. “Just swim.” The closer he drew to the bank, he could see a crowd gathered with their wands out, fire flaring from somewhere in the middle. Madame Maxime towered over it all, looking like she was struggling to keep hold of something. Or *someone*. Fleur.

“*Gabrielle!*” The crowd was forcefully parted as Fleur broke away from her headmistress’ hold in a blast of flames, rushing towards the water’s edge. On Harry’s back, Gabrielle perked up, calling for Fleur.

“She’s fine!” Harry assured as loud as he could, swimming faster. Fleur clearly couldn’t enter the water when she was in her veela state, and she prowled the bank until Harry was close enough to let Gabrielle down, the little girl hitting the shallows and sprinting into her sister’s arms. Fleur immediately calmed, muttering in French and smoothing a hand down her sister’s wet hair. Ignoring Ron as he was bundled away by Percy, Harry hurried to Fleur’s side. “She’s okay, right? The merpeople wouldn’t let me take her at first, but you didn’t show up — I couldn’t leave her there.”

When Fleur looked up at him over Gabrielle’s head, her eyes were filled with tears. “I was attacked by ze grindylows,” she sobbed. “I lost my Bubble’ead charm. Water ees not my strongest element.” There were still embers flying off her hair, and Harry squeezed her shoulder.

“I got her. She’s fine.” Next thing he know, he was being dragged into the sisters’ hug, Fleur pressing kisses to his face.

“You saved ‘er, even though she wasn’t your ‘ostage,” she breathed thankfully. “Zank you, ‘Arry.”

“I couldn’t leave her there,” Harry repeated, hugging Fleur. Now that he was closer, he could see she had dozens of vicious-looking cuts all over her skin, blood dripping down onto the sand. “Fleur, you need to see Madam Pomfrey.”

“She’s not the only one, Mr Potter.” Harry’s head snapped up to see the mediwitch in question stood behind him, lips pursed as she surveyed the scene. “All of you, come with me. Honestly, sending children into the lake in *February*, it’s a wonder you didn’t all go hypothermic!”

With Fleur refusing to let go of Gabrielle, the three of them followed Pomfrey over to the first aid tent, where the other five task participants were waiting. Cedric and Cho were huddled together in a fluffy towel, otherwise no worse for wear. Viktor had an arm wrapped around a shivering Hermione, his head human once more, and nearby Ron was sat in a towel of his own, glaring at the Bulgarian boy.