

Fixing Filch

by notsosaintly

Bribery abounds as the Weasley twins make Argus Filch an offer he cannot refuse.

One-Shot

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer:

Oh, how sweet it is

To be given such a treat

Such wonderful players

It's my pleasure to tweak.

Thanks, JKR!

A/N: This was written for the *How Filch Found His Firepower Challenge* on Potter Place. I hope you enjoy it!

The tiny brown-flecked owl careened down the corridors, making unnecessarily sharp turns, and seemed to be having an incredible amount of fun flipping and tumbling through the air. Not at all a clumsy bird like Errol had been. No, Snitch was very adept at flying, and he absolutely loved it when his masters sent him on an errand. This errand, Snitch had been told, was the most important one yet.

Master Fred and Master George had spent nearly all of the previous evening with their heads together, debating how they were going to get the patent for their new product, Fred's Firepower Festoons. They had received a rather nasty letter from a certain lumpy, frog-spectacled member of the Ministry this morning. If the epithets that were coming out of the men's mouths were anything to go by, the sender was definitely as filthy as its owl, and Snitch snubbed it supportively. Apparently, research could not continue on the Firepower Festoons unless the two Weasleys would sign a wizard contract to deliver a certain "good" once the product had been developed, successfully tested, and administered.

"Oh, wonderful," Fred, the slightly thinner and mussier of the two, had said. "Now we're being bribed by the Ministry."

"Not the Ministry. Only Dolores Umbridge, the mangy she-bull," George complained, slumping in a teetering office chair.

What was worse, the product wasn't even close to being completed. The idea was a holdover from their days at Hogwarts, one they had revisited on a whim. They had kept fastidious notes, which had been sadly confiscated by none other than Argus Filch. Granted, the notebook was entirely blank...or would look as such if anyone were to merely look at it. The proper spell was needed to reveal the writing on the page. At least the two men were secure in the knowledge that Argus Filch had the notebook...for

Fred had seen it fall from his pocket as he and his brother had fled Hogwarts for the last time, and watched it land right in Filch's gleeful grip. And at least they knew that the Squib caretaker would never be able to reveal the writing.

If he could have seen the writing, if he could have seen where the last few pages of the notebook revealed the latest research the Weasley twins had been working on, Argus Filch would have been blubberingly ecstatic. As it was, he never suspected a thing. Well, that wasn't entirely true. He suspected *everything* when it came to Fred and George Weasley, which was why he still had the notebook safely in a filing cabinet marked with their name. In fact, the filing cabinet it resided in was dedicated solely to the twins.

The brothers discussed how they could get back into the castle undetected and break into Argus Filch's infamous horde of confiscated...and mostly illegal...wizard baubles, treats, and varied miscellany. Fred and George hypothesized that the majority either belonged to them originally or originated from their shop, so they were justified in taking whatever they found there. It wouldn't *really* be stealing, as the items had been originally "stolen" from them.

In the end, they decided to go the direct route. They were being bribed by the Ministry, so why not turn it around and bribe the one person who held hostage the crucial notebook they so desperately needed? If they played their cards right, they would end up happy, having been granted permission to continue developing their product; Argus Filch would be happy and maybe even grateful enough to relinquish all their "stolen" goods still in his possession; and the old bug-eyed hag of a Ministry official would be the happiest of all when she...well, they didn't really want to think on that.

The men still shuddered in repulsion every time they thought of what that bespectacled harpy...for they just could not bring themselves to call her a woman, and she didn't live up to the title 'witch' in their minds...wanted in exchange for the much-needed permit.

~o~

Snitch tumbled down the final staircase and spiraled to a halt in front of Argus Filch's quarters, batting his wings furiously against the splintered door in an effort to wake up the occupant. It was early, much too early to be awake, and the grumbling that came from behind the door let the miniature castle-crasher know that. Not that the owl really cared; he was on a mission.

As the door flew open, Mrs. Norris squeezed out from between her cantankerous old owner's legs and took off at a trot down the hallway. Simultaneously, the bright-eyed and bushy little owl swerved around the edge of the door, swiping the flipped-up fuzz of what usually covered the man's bald spot.

"Crazy old bird!"

Argus swatted at the owl, who decided the safest place to perch was high atop an old, crooked and almost broken-down bookcase. Of course, bookcase was not entirely accurate, as a collection of glass jars and illegal contraband littered the shelves, only occasionally interrupted by a book, most likely also confiscated. Snitch held out his leg importantly, trying to show the obviously oblivious recipient of the letter that he had a mission to accomplish.

Argus scrunched up his face and growled, "Well, get down here, then. I can't very well go climbing up there after you!"

The owl spun down and landed on a stack of raunchy Muggle magazines that Argus had left half-open on a table. When he properly balanced himself, Snitch once again held out his leg, a little more impatiently this time.

Argus snatched off the letter swiftly and glared at the bird, who made no move whatsoever to leave his perch on the unsteady pile of magazines. He rarely got an owl, and there were no owl treats to be found anywhere in his quarters. Sadly, the entire protocol of offering the bird a treat was completely lost on the caretaker, for Snitch had definitely earned one.

Roughly, he unrolled the small bit of parchment, unfolding it at the last, to reveal a bit of handwriting he would have never thought to have seen again in his life...correction, handwriting he never, ever *wanted* to see again in his life. He glanced down at the signature first only to discover he had been right: the letter was from none other than the twin bane of his existence, Fred and George Weasley.

To the Honorable Argus Filch,

We are writing to you to make an unusual request, though one we are sure will pique your interest. Before we left the Holy Halls of Hogwarts, most ceremoniously may we add, you took from us a small notebook, whose pages were blank. Of course, knowing how suspicious...and rightly so...you were of us, you must have realized that it was most likely not blank and kept it all these years. So it shouldn't surprise you that this notebook is indeed quite valuable and most definitely written in.

We would like to set up a meeting with you at The Hog's Head at three o'clock this afternoon. Please bring the notebook with you. It holds valuable research in which we think you will have personal, vested interest. In exchange for that notebook, we will be willing to share with you the fruits of this research, once we have explained what it is, of course.

We look forward to our meeting.

Yours,

Fred and George Weasley.

Argus' eyes widened. Then they narrowed. What were these two up to now? This was obviously a trick to get their hands on some contraband they had left behind. Possibly even more than just a single notebook.

Still, they were only asking for one item, and it wasn't necessarily an illegal item at that. They did say that he had a 'personal, vested interest' in what the research would offer. It was a mystery of sorts, and Argus Filch had always enjoyed a good mystery. He would find out what this was all about. Rummaging through the filing cabinet marked "Weasley Twits," he found the small notebook wedged up against the inside of the drawer.

Then, unable to go back to sleep, he decided it would be wise to go patrol the corridors. Who knows, there might be some early-rising miscreants doing unspeakable things for which he could assign the most heinous of detentions....

~o~

Argus saw the twin heads of flame before he even opened the door, even through the dusty windowpanes that Aberforth never bothered to clean. A scowl settled itself on his face, and he looked down the street, first left, then right, before opening the door to the establishment. Slipping inside, he noticed there was only one other patron, most notably pissed and passed out at the bar. Fred and George Weasley motioned Argus over to join him, and Aberforth followed to take his order.

"Firewhisky, Argus?" the bartender dutifully asked.

Argus nodded curtly and glared at the two men already sitting at the table. He reluctantly sat down on the vacant third chair.

"Well, did you bring it?" one of the twins asked, either Fred or George, not that it really mattered which. The two had become irreversibly fused in Argus' mind, a single entity of troublemaking torture.

Argus grimaced and answered in a gravelly voice, "Oh, I have your precious notebook, all right." But he made no move to reveal its presence.

He looked as though he wanted to continue on a tirade. His harsh face flushed and contorted in a way that said he had so many things he wanted to say...to do!...to these men now that he had them in his clutches. But he refrained. The men were all business, and Argus actually was a little interested in what this notebook held, not to mention how it pertained to him.

"Good," the neater and more composed of the redheaded men answered. "Now, I suppose you would like to know exactly what we're willing to offer to get that notebook back."

"Not that I'm saying I will be giving it back, mind you..."

"Oh, but I think once you have heard what we have to say, you'll be more than happy to return it to us." The first redheaded man leaned across the table to make his point. "What is in that notebook are notes for a product we're developing...a product that we cannot complete without those notes. This product, when consumed, will enable Squibs to use ... magic."

Argus Filch sputtered, Firewhisky dribbling down his chin. Could it be? Could it be so simple? Although, how did he know that was what really was in this notebook? They could be lying and leave him in the lurch.

"How do I know what you're saying is true?" Argus asked, suspicion quickly overtaking hope.

The two men looked at each other as one of them aimed a wand at the pocket in Filch's coat that bulged with the notebook. Argus flinched away from the tip of the wand, but he was grabbed firmly and held still as words were mumbled beneath a faint breath. For an instant, Argus regretted that he couldn't hear the spell the man muttered, but even if he had heard, he supposed it would have done him no good.

The notebook seemed to thicken slightly in his pocket, grow infinitesimally heavier somehow, and Argus pulled it out gingerly, letting it fall open before him. On its pages was writing, in two different scripts, in many colors of ink.

"Turn to the last few pages," one of the twins ordered.

Argus did as he was told, and there, before his eyes, were words that could not deny what he had been told. Feverishly, he turned page after page, occasionally looking up at the once-worthless Weasleys, who had relaxed smugly into their chairs, confident that this could only go their way.

"And you...you can make this happen?" Argus stuttered as he closed the notebook and subconsciously handed it over, his decision having made itself.

"Yes," the mussier of the men answered. "But there is a ... catch."

Argus' eyes narrowed, and he grabbed for the notebook, which was now out of his reach.

"I should have known," he growled.

"Not so fast, Filch." The man tucked the notebook safely away where Argus would not be able to find it. "First of all, we need someone to test the product on, once we have a viable sample."

Argus seemed to calm down at that and nodded his head. It made sense.

"And then, there's the slight little problem of getting our permit from the Ministry to continue developing the product," the other man spoke up.

"Yes." The rumpled twin leaned in towards Argus Filch once again. "You see, it seems we can't get permission to continue developing my Firepower Festoons unless ..."

Fred looked up at George, who gave his brother an almost imperceptible go-ahead.

"Unless you sign a contract and agree that once the product is successful, and you are officially deemed a 'wizard,' you will agree to ..." Fred coughed...he couldn't help it. "To court Dolores Umbridge, with the intent to eventually marry."

"D...D...Dolores?" Argus stammered, eyes wide. "Well, I...that is, I never thought of ... Okay, well, I have thought of ... but that was *strong* ago ..."

The brothers looked at each other queasily, in shock. Argus Filch had actually thought of bedding that old biddy? Unbelievable.

~o~

Later that evening, Fred and George celebrated their luck. The contract was signed and Argus Filch had actually looked ... happy to sign it. They had promised him that the first sample would be ready to test by the middle of next week, and told Argus to get himself a wand. That was when Argus had confessed he was already in possession of a wand...legally purchased...for he had taken a correspondence course for Squibs a while back. They nearly laughed right in Argus Filch's face, but then they didn't want to alienate their test subject. Especially not when a product like this would make them millions.

Snitch was wildly somersaulting over Fred and George's heads in anticipation. He was going to be sent on another errand of extreme importance: the delivery of his masters' contract with Argus Filch to the one and only Dolores Umbridge, who would see to it that he return with the much-awaited and desired permit. He felt like the most important owl in the entire wizarding world.

~End