

Fred's Ghost

by palfow

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Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: My entry for the Podcast Missing DH Scene Challenge

"Protego!" Percy yelled, effectively protecting himself from a Death Eater's spell that hit the already maimed wall, adding another hole. He was sweating now. His robes had been torn in several places, small cuts gracing his body. His head was throbbing wildly, and he couldn't use his left arm since it had been hit with a hex a few minutes previously. He'd lost his right shoe, and his sock was halfway scorched, his red hair equally blackened. But none of it mattered.

His opponent was aiming again, and once more Percy was able to block the hex headed his way. He threw himself to the floor, barely noticing his ribs slamming into rubble and tearing his skin in several more places. While he turned around, he fired off a spell of his own. His full Body-Bind hit the masked man right in the chest, proving his suspicions correct that this was a relatively newly recruited Death Eater.

He kept his wand pointed at the frozen body and pushed himself upwards. Flashes of pain raked through his body, his head seeming to explode. Ignoring it all, Percy scuttled over to the fallen man, tearing away his mask. He knew those eyes staring unmovingly at him. Not a man, a woman. She'd been a fellow Prefect in his year. A Slytherin. The knowledge could not bring new emotions to his already battered mind. Sighing, Percy tied the young woman using Incarcerous and tied her as best as he could. He dragged her off to a secure part of the corridor, although he had no idea how much longer it would stay that way. It was the least he could do.

Then he set off again, resuming the quick pace he'd had before running into another fight. Doors and portraits flew past him, their sheer existence reminders of a time long past when he'd walked these ancient walls so proudly, thinking himself above the rest of the world. He had been happy here at Hogwarts where he could be brilliant and had earned the professors' respect for it. His eagerness, will and dedication had meant something here while he'd always been considered quite the oddball at home. Sure, Bill had been clever as well, but he'd never had to put as much effort into it as Percy had done. But Bill had also been reckless, full of life and appreciation for it, never missing out an opportunity to discover. Percy, on the other hand, had been quite the bookworm from a very young age on, and he'd had to deal with teasing brothers until he'd set foot in the sanctuary of Hogwarts. It had been so easy to fit in here, finding wizards and witches with similar interests. They had all been Ravenclaws.

Percy had always wondered why the Hat had chosen him for Gryffindor, pleased as he was with this choice. It would have alienated himself even more from his family. Something that Percy had managed by himself, after all. He thought back to those first few weeks when he'd denied his parents. Probably that was where the Gryffindor Sorting came in. It had taken all his resolve to stand firm for what he believed. His heart had ached when he'd sent back his parents' Christmas gifts. It had been unbearable on the day of Bill's wedding, fighting with himself for the desire to join his family and the need to prove to himself that he was worthy of respect as well.

But his resolve had already been wavering at that point. And then he'd found out that Ron had come down with Spattergroit. He'd always been fond of Ron, and the falling out with his youngest brother had caused him the most pain. He'd debated endlessly with himself until he realized that around him, the Ministry was slowly and

unceremoniously being taken over by Death Eaters. He'd suddenly found himself confronted with the truth that his parents had been right after all. Getting into direct contact would have been too damaging to his position that he kept in order to keep tabs on what the Death Eaters were doing in the Ministry. He'd thought long about how to get any news on his family when he'd remembered Dumbledore's brother, Aberforth. The relief of knowing that Ron wasn't going to die because of Spattergroit was short-lived once he heard what Ron was really doing – off on a mission with Harry Potter and Hermione Granger. And nobody knew where they were or what exactly they were doing.

And then Aberforth had contacted him, talking wildly about a looming battle between Light and Dark. He'd rushed over to Hogwarts, hoping that he wasn't too late to join the fight against He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named and praying to Merlin that he could find his family and ask for their forgiveness before the battle broke out in full force. He'd stumbled through that door and found himself looking at the people he had missed more than he'd been able to admit.

And they, miraculously, had accepted him, Fred offering the hand of friendship with a joke. He'd been so relieved that producing hundreds of Patronuses would have been positively easy.

But now, he would not even manage one. Fred was dead, and as Percy raced through the empty corridors of the haven that had turned to hell, the name 'Fred' was the only word crossing his mind. He kept repeating his brother's name over and over, a mantra to keep his focus and not cave in to the searing pain that hurt more than any of his physical wounds.

He wanted to scream "Fred" with every breath. The name had become his sole redeeming obsession that was quickly shattered and replaced with a voice screaming "George" inside his head when he rounded a corner and saw red hair running towards him. He ceased running. The moment until George stood before him felt like eternity.

Percy was rooted to the spot, staring at his brother as if he had seen a ghost. There was something utterly and ominously wrong with George, who looked at Percy with frantic eyes and asked, "Have you seen Fred?"