

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Harry finally talks to Filch.

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He's going to have to do it. As much as circumventing Filch and never ever actually speaking to the man sounded really, really nice, Harry knew that he was just being a big baby about things. It sounded like the squib had answers he needed for whatever was going on in the Magical World... and that meant having a conversation with the man.

Of course, that didn't mean Harry was going to approach Filch in the same way he'd approached Hagrid. After saying his goodbyes to the half-giant and accepting a standing invitation to stop by Hagrid's hut again any time, Harry makes his way back into Hogwarts wearing his Invisibility Cloak. Then, he starts to hunt Filch down once more.

With lunch time long over and most of the castle's population back in classrooms, Filch has once again left the dungeons and is roaming around the halls of the place. This time he doesn't have Mrs. Norris however, having seemingly split up with his cat for the latter half of the day.

Harry follows Filch in silence for a time, waiting for the right moment to 'strike'. Eventually, the squib moves into a part of the castle that has clearly not seen much foot traffic in quite some time... years even. Hogwarts is self-cleaning to a certain extent to be fair, but even the magical spells cast on the castle's corridors can't keep out all the dust.

More than just the layer of dust on everything though is the lack of magical portraits and suits of armor in this part of the castle. Almost like they've been moved around to more active parts of the castle with the inevitable shrinking of Hogwarts' yearly population in recent times.

Of course, Filch is clearly on the lookout for anyone skipping class and trying to hide their misdeeds by going to the unattended part of the castle, but a quick few spells from Harry lets him know that there's nobody actually around except for him and the Hogwarts Caretaker.

As such, when the squib steps into an empty, abandoned classroom to give it a good hard look, Harry follows him in and closes the door shut behind him with a rather ominous slam. At the same time, he swaps his Invisibility Cloak out for a normal black cloak with an identity-concealing enchantment on it. So long as the hood is up, Filch won't be able to see into its shadow and won't be able to make out his features.

Argus Filch immediately whips around at the sound of the door closing shut... and his eyes widen when he lays eyes on Harry.

"N-No... s-stay back! Stay away f-from me!"

The reaction is interesting. Sheer, utter terror. The Hogwarts Caretaker stumbles back in fear, looking downright terrified as Harry moves forward, slowly approaching. Eventually, Filch's back hits the wall and he trembles as Harry closes the distance between them.

Finally... he speaks. Though of course, another element of the identity-concealing enhancement is that it modulates his voice, making it impossible to tell things like gender.

"Argus Filch..."

"P-Please... I don't want to die..."

It's not too surprising that Filch thinks Harry is here to kill him, he supposes. After all, he and Hagrid are apparently the only two left in a world where every other man has been killed off. Even Harry had been killed once at this point in fact, it just hadn't stuck. But given Filch was highly unlikely to be Master of Death, Harry doubted he'd survived this long the same way.

However, there does seem to be something a bit more... personal to the fear. Filch knows something, Harry is more sure of it than ever. A quick Legilimency would no doubt tell him everything he wanted about what the squib had witnessed... but that would require him entering Argus Filch's mind. Ew.

"You wish to live, Argus Filch? You wish to survive this conversation?"

Blinking as he realizes he's not dead yet, the cantankerous caretaker slowly nods.

"I... y-yes?"

"Then you will tell me everything that happened between you and Dennis and Colin Creevey."

Filch flinches hard at that, his entire body jerking in surprise. He stares at Harry with more suspicion than fear now, baffled and confused... and starting to frown.

"You... you're not her... are you?"

And there it was. If that wasn't a sign that he was on the right track, Harry didn't know what was.

"Who do you speak of, Filch?"

A glint of something appears in Filch's eyes... before the fear returns. However, this time the fear is not directed at Harry like it had been originally.

"I can't... I won't tell you. She'll kill me if I say anything."

Harry huffs, frustrated with the other man's recalcitrance. He lifts up a hand... and Filch slams into the wall behind him, sliding up it a few inches so his feet are off the ground and his arms and legs are spread wide. The weasel of a squib cries out, whipping his head back and forth as if expecting visible chains on his arms.

"I will kill you if you don't, Filch."

It's a bit of a bluff, of course. Probably. Harry certainly didn't come here today to kill Filch, nor does he have any intention of doing so. He probably won't even resort to torturing the man... but Filch is a consummate coward regardless of the spiteful chip on his shoulder. The only bigger rat in all of the Magical World is usually Peter Pettigrew in most of Harry's lives.

So it's no surprise when his threat causes Filch to almost immediately break down blubbering again.

"Alright, alright! I'll t-talk! Don't kill me, please!"

He leaves Filch pinned to the wall and tilts his head to the side.

"What happened between you and the Creevey Brothers, Filch? How did Dennis Creevey die and why did Colin Creevey try to kill you?"

For a moment, Filch trembles in place and looks like he might try to stay stubbornly quiet. But in the end, he lets out a gasp and spills the beans.

"It was... it was just a normal detention. The boy earned it too! He was sneaking around the grounds with that camera of his, taking pictures! I knew he was up to no good! So I sent him out into the Forbidden Forest... not allowed to do anything worse than that. Would have happily strung him up in the dungeons by his thumbs if I were! But... he didn't... he..."

He died. Harry can connect the dots, even if Filch's face scrunches up like he's bitten into something sour and he's not willing to say it outright. The man had caused Dennis Creevey's death from the sound of things. But of course, someone like Filch was never going to admit that maybe sending a young wizard into the Forbidden Forest was a death sentence more often than not.

Of course, it was also on the Hogwarts Faculty for letting it happen. Harry couldn't even begin to count the number of times he'd found himself in the

Forbidden Forest over his own years at Hogwarts despite it... you know, being Forbidden.

Still, that didn't explain Filch's fear. If it was as cut and dry as Filch abusing his power and getting a young boy killed, prompting the boy's older brother to try to take revenge... then who was *she* in all of this?

"So you caused Dennis Creevey's death and in turn Colin Creevey decided to kill you."

Filch, despite his current situation, scowls mightily at the accusation.

"Bah! I didn't kill the boy! Neither did anything in the Forbidden Forest! He was found cold as a stone with no injuries! It was the curse that did it! The curse!"

Harry tilts his head to the side at that. The curse. Filch was throwing around 'she' and still talking about a curse? Hm...

"What happened next, Filch? How exactly did Colin try to kill you?"

The squib flinches again, a shadow falling over his face. He clearly doesn't like remembering what happened.

"... Brat lured me out into the Forbidden Forest. Kidnapped Mrs. Norris, he did! Left a note saying I had to come alone or she'd die! He... he got me to where they found his brother and he was going to kill me... and Mrs. Norris too!"

Harry could imagine it. Colin Creevey, mad with heartache over the loss of his brother. And no matter what Filch said, he definitely played a part in Dennis' death. Sure, both Creeveys might have been doomed to die with the rest of the wizard population anyways, but Dennis being sent into the Forbidden Forest was just asking for something bad to happen.

Filch's weasel-like face suddenly twists into a vile smirk.

“Didn’t work out for him in the end though, did it? Me and Mrs. Norris survived... and he went to Azkaban!”

... The ploy is so transparent it hurts. Harry doesn’t even entertain it. He just sighs.

“Because of ‘her’, right?”

Filch’s smirk drops, the blood rushing from his face as he goes deathly pale. The context makes it obvious, even if he’d tried not to say it outright. What had happened that day in the woods... clearly, Colin had been about to kill Filch when someone else had intervened. Someone who had stopped the murder attempt, saved Filch’s life, and ensured Colin’s imprisonment.

But who? Who was it?

“I can’t... I can’t say anything more... I can’t...”

Harry narrows his eyes at that and reaches out with his magic. Filch’s insistence has him wondering for a moment if the squib is under some sort of magical contract or curse that will kill him if he tells anything else. But... no. There’s no such geas on him. Instead, the only spell that Harry finds on Filch after looking this hard is...

“You’ve been rendered impotent.”

His tone is downright baffled as he declares his findings. Earlier, on his first inspection of Filch, he’d thought at a glance that there was no obviously lingering magic on him. However, this was a much more... in depth examination. And upon looking deep, he does find this bit of magic... magic that will ensure Filch never sires a child, no matter how hard he might try.

Filch flinches for the third time at Harry’s announcement, making it clear that he already knew. At this point... Harry is just so done with this conversation. Clenching his hand into a fist, he amps up the pressure that the squib is under, making him cry out in pain as every part of his body feels like it’s being crushed.

It's not enough to actually injure Filch, to be fair. Not enough to crush a bone or do more than maybe give the other man some bruises. But it is enough to get Filch talking again.

"She did it! She said it was the only way she'd let me live!"

"Who, Filch? Who is she?!"

"I don't know! She wore a cloak just like yours! I thought you were her for a second!"

And there it is. There's the kicker. Harry pauses as he hears the truth in Filch's voice. The other man HAD thought Harry was her at first when this altercation started. And... it would make sense that whoever it was wouldn't let Filch know their identity. It sounded like they were rapidly approaching a dead end. Luckily for Harry... death was never the end and he had other avenues to explore.

But first...

"Tell me exactly what she told you, Filch. Don't leave anything out."

Filch shudders but quickly starts speaking when Harry twitches his fist threateningly.

"She... she knocked out the Creevey boy. Saved me and Mrs. Norris from him. And then... then s-she told me she'd leave me alive as a joke when all was said and d-done. That I'd be one of the last men standing... because even if I were the last living man in all of B-Britain, nobody would... would fuck me. And then she said she was making sure even if they did, nothing... nothing would come of it."

... How positively juvenile. And yet, it wasn't like Harry hadn't already wondered if that might be a possibility. Though it didn't fully explain Hagrid's survival. The half-giant definitely hadn't had an experience like Filch's, he would have told

Harry about it... hell, he would have told the authorities about it ages before Harry came around. Unlike Filch, Rubeus Hagrid was no coward.

Harry... sighs. Finally, he silently casts 'Legilimens' on the pinned squib in front of him. Filch's mind offers as much resistance as a muggle's would... meaning nothing at all. Harry tries his best to keep his search to just the memories of that fateful day in the Forbidden Forest, where Colin lured out Filch and Filch was saved.

Events play out just as the Hogwarts Caretaker said they did and Harry gets his first true glimpse of the woman who might just be behind the near-complete annihilation of one half of Magical Britain. She is cloaked as Filch said, though hers does not have the identity-concealing enchantment that his does. As such, it is clear she's a woman... and also that she's surprisingly short.

Eventually, it ends with her casting a spell on Filch and then vanishing, leaving Filch to retrieve Mrs. Norris and go contact the authorities about Colin's attempted murder.

Pulling back, Harry frowns as he considers things for a moment... part of him is honestly tempted to kill Filch here to avenge Dennis Creevey. But maybe he should just stick to memory charming the squib and leaving him to wallow in his current state of being.

Even that cursory glimpse at Filch's mind had revealed the pathetic truth after all... despite the deaths of nearly every other male in the magical world, despite being one of the last men alive... Filch had never been approached by a single witch.

In the end, the precaution that this mystery woman had taken in rendering him impotent had so far proven to be entirely unnecessary... because nobody in the whole of the magical world was willing to touch Argus Filch with a ten foot pole. Not even with an existential threat to their civilization's very survival...

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!