

## Harry Potter and the DADA NEWT The NEWT

On a sunny Thursday in June at NEWT time, a long line of frightened students formed up on the edge of the Forbidden Forest. Inside the woods, a trail had been marked out, which they were supposed to follow until it emerged some distance away. Various hazards, ranging from monsters to traps to Aurors disguised as Death Eaters, barred their way. One by one, the students entered, while those waiting attempted to get some clue as to what lay in the Forest's depths from the occasional roar, growl or scream issuing from the shadows of the trees. One by one, the students came out the other end of the trail in various states of disarray – at least the ones that passed. The ones that failed had to be rescued by the team of teachers and Aurors who were proctoring the exam.

The test had started at dawn, with "Abbott, Hannah" (passed, but came out bright purple); "Bones, Susan" (passed, but refused to come out until a female proctor brought her some replacement clothes) and stopped for lunch break after "Malfoy, Draco" (failed, and had to be removed from a bed of Venus Man-traps). Shortly after one, they started again, with "Moon, Crawton" (passed, but crawled out the far end of the trail and passed out after kissing the meadow), followed by "Nott, Theodore" (passed, staggered out of the woods and threw up into Hagrid's compost bin). There was a pause for another rescue, as "Parkinson, Pansy" was extracted from an Acromantula web. "Patil, Padma", "Patil, Parvati", and "Perks, Sally-Anne" emerged from the test successfully but disheveled.

"Potter, Harry!" the proctor called, and the Boy-Who-Had-Killed-Voldemort-and-Aced-Every-DADA-Test-Ever drew his wand and sauntered casually into the woods. A few moments later, hideous grunts, howls, screams, shrieks and moans erupted from the Forest, punctuated with cracks and crashes. Then there was silence.

Ten minutes later, Harry wandered out at the far end of the trail, apparently totally unscathed. Alastor Moody and Severus Snape, the supervising Auror and teacher, checked him out. "Have any trouble in there, Potter?"

"No sir, none at all. Was there actually anything in there, sir? I didn't see anything."

"Are you sure you stuck to the trail?"

"Yes, it was very clearly marked."

"And you saw nothing? No creatures, no traps, no Death Eaters?"

"I saw some footprints. And some damaged trees. Oh, and I found this kitten." Harry produced a tiny black-and-white kitten that licked an injured paw. "It was stuck up a tree and I stopped to get it down. That's what took me so long. You won't take points off for that, will you?"

"No, Potter," said Snape in a long-suffering voice. "You get extra credit for rescuing the kitten. Moody, you'd better check the situation in the forest."

Moody sent the rescue team into the woods, and when they came out, he questioned them closely. "Well, what happened to the monsters?"

"Ran away, sir."

"And the Aurors pretending to be Death Eaters?"

"Ran away from the monsters, sir."

"And the traps?"

"Triggered by Aurors running away from the monsters, sir."

Moody groaned. "All right, all right. Potter, you pass."

"May I keep the kitten?"

"Yes, you may keep the kitten." The boy headed off to Hagrid's hut to show off his new pet. "The rest of you, come back tomorrow. We need to re-set the maze." He turned to look at Snape, who was standing with his arms crossed and a smirk on his face. "Go ahead, Snape. Say it."

"I told you we should have sent Potter in *last*."