

## Evening the Odds

“Harry Potter!”

Harry froze, staring at the Headmaster like a deer in the headlights. There was no way his name had just come out of the Goblet of Fire. It just wasn't possible. Life couldn't possibly be that unfair.

“HARRY POTTER!” Dumbledore shouted.

“Harry, go!” Hermione hissed, jabbing him in the side sharply with her elbow.

“But, I didn't – I swear-”

“I know, but you need to go,” she said, pushing him from the bench.

Shakily, Harry got to his feet and slowly made his way to the front of the hall. He did his best to ignore the pointing and growing whispers but couldn't help but hunch his shoulders self-consciously. By the time he reached the Head Table, the whispers had turned into a constant murmur. Dumbledore handed him the scrap of parchment that had come out of the Goblet, and Harry took it with a sinking feeling in his stomach.

*Harry Potter*

It was his name, and almost definitely his handwriting. Suddenly, the parchment burst into purple flames. Harry tried to drop the parchment, but it stuck to his hand. Violet fire raced up his arm and chest, then spread out to engulf his entire body. Screams rang out, and he was sure he could hear Hermione shout his name. There was a moment of sheer panic before he realized the flames weren't burning him.

The world around him blurred before Harry began seeing images that felt oddly familiar. Like it was some sort of film, he watched the next four years of his life. Though the memories flew by, he could remember them perfectly. He could feel the pain, the anger, and the loss as if he'd lived it. When the flames vanished suddenly, Harry found himself on his hands and knees, panting heavily.

Staring down at his hands, they looked wrong, yet he knew they weren't. As he climbed to his feet, Harry realized his entire body felt different. He was taller and bulkier, his muscles larger and stronger.

"Harry?"

Looking up, he found himself staring into the bright, worried blue eyes of Albus Dumbledore. Where before, seeing the Headmaster filled him with a sense of calm, now he didn't know what to think. Memories of the lies and mistakes the old man had made played in his mind's eyes. For a moment, he felt compelled to tell him everything but stopped before the words could leave his mouth.

Maybe he should try to find out if the memories were real first, he thought to himself.

"What the hell just happened?" Harry asked, his own voice sounding foreign to his ears.

"Well, it appears as if the Goblet wanted you on equal footing with the other Champions," Dumbledore said, looking him over while stroking his beard.

"But I didn't enter my name!" Harry yelled. "How can my name come out when I didn't put it in there? And why would the Goblet choose four Champions?"

"I know you're upset, Harry, and I promise you we will look into this," Dumbledore said, gripping his shoulder.

Harry allowed himself to be led into the trophy room where the other Champions were waiting. Fleur and Krum looked at him curiously, probably not recognizing him right away, but Cedric did and nearly choked on his tongue.

“What happened to you?” he asked.

“Someone thought it would be a good idea to force the Goblet to pick me as the fourth Champion,” Harry grumbled.

“Oh, very funny,” Fleur said, looking to her headmistress for reassurance.

“Oh, this is no joke,” Bagman said, grinning boyishly. “Harry’s name really did come out of the Goblet. Extraordinary, isn’t it?”

The shorter man reached up to clap Harry on the shoulder but he shook it off and moved off to the side. He sighed as Maxime and Karkaroff began to argue with Dumbledore as they had in his memories. Keeping half an ear on what they were saying, he tried to keep a surreptitious eye on Moody. If he was an imposter, he gave nothing away. Harry dearly wished he had the Marauder’s Map on him, but it was sitting in his trunk.

The one person he tried hard to ignore was Snape. The memories and revelations about the man swirling in his mind. Were they true? Was he really responsible for his parents’ death? Maybe his older self had been able to forgive him because the bastard was already dead but seeing him now made him want to strangle the greasy git.

“There’s no way Potter could’ve gotten past the age line,” McGonagall said, lips thinning as she crossed her arms over her chest.

“Potter’s flaunted every rule this school has,” Snape hissed. “It would be just like him to find a way into the tournament.”

“Enough!” Harry barked, shocking the professors into silence. “Is there any way to get me out of this?”

“I’m afraid not,” Crouch said, straightening his robes unnecessarily. “Once a name is chosen that person is bound by magical contract to compete to the best of their ability or risk losing their magic.”

“And the Ministry thought that was a good idea?” Harry asked incredulously before shaking his head. “Great. In that case, why don’t you give me a points deduction or something? Take me out of the race so I can’t possibly win?”

Maxime and Karkaroff perked up, looking to Dumbledore for his opinion.

“It is possible,” the headmaster shrugged. “Technically, it could be overruled unless we could provide evidence Harry entered of his own free will. However, so long as he does not protest...”

“And I wouldn’t,” Harry said firmly.

“A hundred point deduction would mean the best he could do was have zero points by the third task,” Karkaroff said, twirling his beard thoughtfully.

“Let’s not be too hasty now,” Bagman said nervously.

“Yeah,” Cedric said. “It’s not really fair to punish Harry if he didn’t do it. There has to be a way to tell who put his name in, isn’t there?”

“It’s fine Cedric,” Harry said. “I’d really rather not compete at all if I could.”

“Might I remind you all that you’re compete to see who’s the best,” Moody growled.  
“Handicapping a fourth year before the Tournaments even begun hardly sends a message of confidence. Especially if he does well.”

“I ‘ate to admit eet, but ‘e does ‘ave a point,” Maxime acknowledged. “What do you zhink, Fleur? You are zhe one competing.”

Harry barely heard Fleur’s response, he was too busy watching Moody out of the corner of his eye. The grizzled man gave an uncharacteristic smirk and pulled out his flask. As soon as the lid popped open, he caught the unmistakable smell of Polyjuice potion. Looking away and pretending to pay attention to the conversation around him, Harry stuck his hands nonchalantly in his pockets and palmed his wand.

Against Moody, even taking him surprise, Harry knew he wouldn’t stand a chance. But against Crouch Jr? A man who had spent years in Azkaban and then even longer under the Imperious Curse without being able to use his wand? Yeah, Harry figured he could take him.

Fast as he could, Harry drew his wand, wordlessly loosing a Stunning Hex that slammed point blank into Moody’s chest. To his credit, Moody, or Crouch Jr., whoever he really was, managed to get his wand out and up, but just a little to slow. As his body flew back and fell to the floor, while everyone was shouting, Harry was already transitioning to Crouch Sr. who barely blinked before he too was on the ground.

There was a beat of silence before all hell broke loose.

It took Dumbledore a full minute to quiet everyone down and calm an insensate Snape.

“Harry?” he asked simply and calmly.

“Polyjuice,” Harry replied. “I smelled it coming from his flask when he took a drink.”

“And how do you know what Polyjuice smells like?” Snape hissed with a glare.

Harry rolled his eyes, “Hermione brewed it in second year. I’ll never forget that smell.”

“And why would Ms. Granger-”

“Severus,” Dumbledore interrupted pointedly. “I’m sure we can worry about that later. For now, as our resident Potion’s Master, perhaps you should check to see if Harry is, indeed, correct?”

Sneering at Harry, Snape whipped his cloak around him and stalked over to Moody. Reaching into his jacket pocket, he pulled out the silver flask. He popped the lid and took a light sniff, a pained grimace coming over his face.

“Polyjuice,” he confirmed bitterly.

“And Mr. Crouch, Harry? Why did you feel the need to stun him as well?” Dumbledore asked.

Well, bugger, Harry thought.

He really didn’t have an answer for that. Not without telling all of them the truth.

I really should’ve thought about this more, Harry thought, cursing to himself.

“His eyes went glassy like he was under the Imperious Curse,” he said, hoping they’d buy it. “It happened twice while we were talking. I figured it was better safe than sorry.”

“Indeed,” Dumbledore said, looking amused.

Waving his wand in a long, complicated pattern around Crouch's prone body, his smile gradually faded into a frown.

"It appears as if you are correct," he said, lowering his wand. "Barty is indeed under the influence of the Imperious."

"Ow could zhis 'appen?" Maxime demanded. "Somezhing like zhis would never 'appen at Beauxbatons!"

"You wouldn't be saying that if I transferred," Harry joked.

His humor was met with glares, except Cedric who tried to cover his laugh with a cough.

"I assure you, we will investigate thoroughly," Dumbledore said. "For the time being, I need to contact the Aurors. I suspect the real Alastor Moody is being kept alive within the castle. They would need a source of hair for the potion nearby to pull such a deception off for any extended length of time. Minerva, perhaps you would be so kind as to check his office?"

"Of course, Headmaster," McGonagall replied.

"Check his trunk," Harry called. "The one with all the locks. I heard screaming coming from there. I thought it was a boggart, but now..."

"Thank you, Mr. Potter," she nodded.

As his Head of House walked passed him, she reached out and squeezed his shoulder.

"Fifty points to Gryffindor for spotting this – *imposter* – and for your excellent wand work," she told him.

Harry gave her a small, grateful smile before watching her leave.

“Severus, please take Mr. Crouch to the infirmary and stand guard over him until the Aurors can escort him to St. Mungo’s,” Dumbledore continued. “Igor, Olympe, you’re free to join me in my office, of course. I’m sure you’re just as curious to know who this is as I am.”

“The Champions should know, too,” Harry said. “Being kept in the dark will only get them hurt.”

Dumbledore’s penetrating gaze met his for a long moment before he nodded.

“Very well, shall we?” he asked.

Levitating Moody, the headmaster led them out into the Great Hall, which was mercifully empty, and through the halls. On the way, Harry thought through his options. He was convinced everything he saw was true now. It had to be. And if there was ever a time to strike at Voldemort and end him before he could hurt anyone else, it was now. Slowly, a rather audacious plan, even by his own standards, formed in his mind.

The group entered the headmaster’s office and Dumbledore effortlessly conjured seats for them with a negligent wave of his wand.

“I’m afraid it will take some time yet before the Polyjuice wears off,” he said, gently setting Moody’s body on the floor. “I’ll call the Aurors once we know who it is.”

Sighing, Harry whipped out his wand and stunned Karkaroff without a word. It was a testament to the oddness of the night that hardly anyone reacted.

“Was that really necessary, Harry?” Dumbledore asked, looking at him over his half-moon glasses.



“Barty Crouch Jr.,” Harry replied, pointing to the body resting on the floor. “That’s who he really is. When the Goblet decided to age me up, it didn’t just work on my body, it gave me all my future memories as well. I know everything that’s going to happen.”

For the first time Harry could remember, Dumbledore looked suitably surprised.

“Perhaps we should talk about this in priv-”

“No,” Harry interrupted firmly. “Secrets and lies get too many people killed in the future.”

“Are you certain these memories are real?” Dumbledore asked.

“I know about Ariana, your wand, and what’s in my scar,” Harry said, watching the headmaster’s face pale drastically. “Your plan worked, but you should’ve told me sooner. I was never afraid of dying if it meant taking Voldemort with me.”

“You-Know-‘Oo?” Fleur asked. “But ‘e is dead, non?”

“No,” Harry sighed. “His body was destroyed, but his soul survived.”

“Harry!” Dumbledore said sharply. “Perhaps this isn’t the best-”

“Yes, it is,” Harry interrupted again. “They don’t need to know everything, but they need to know what’s going to happen or it will get them killed. Maybe I should start from the beginning.”

Taking a deep breath, Harry launched into an explanation of everything that had and would happen relating to Voldemort. He felt particularly bad telling Cedric about his own death, but he needed to know. Harry felt oddly detached as he talked about his life. He didn’t give away anything about Horcruxes or tell Fleur who she would marry. The last being a more personal

choice. He didn't want to feel like she was trapped. If it was meant to be, it would happen regardless.

"And you know how to stop him?" Dumbledore asked intently when he was finished. "You know where they are?"

"Yes," Harry said.

"They?" Cedric asked curiously.

"Nothing you need to worry about," Dumbledore told him.

Hearing a groan, they all turned just in time to see Moody shift and change into Barty Crouch Jr. right before their eyes.

"Merde!" Maxime gasped, her face paling. "Eet's true!"

Before anything else could be said, there was a knock at the door.

"Ah, I believe that will be Minerva and Alastor," Dumbledore said, unlocking the office with a wave of his hand.

Moody hobbled in first, a crude, wooden peg leg on his left leg, an eye patch over his right eye, and a crutch tucked under one arm. Professor McGonagall followed him in, watching him with a disapproving frown.

"Sorry to interrupt, Albus," she said. "He insisted on seeing you as soon as he was awake."

"What? No parrot?" Harry asked.

Fleur and Cedric snickered while McGonagall tried her best to look offended but Harry could see her lips twitch. Moody just grunted and walked over to the man on the floor. Studying Barty for a long moment, he lifted his crutch and brought it down hard on his stomach.

“Alastor, was that really necessary?” Dumbledore asked with a sigh.

“The bastard attacked me in my home and stuffed me in my own trunk. What do you think?” Moody growled. “Where’s my wand?”

Shaking his head, Dumbledore handed it to him. Moody quickly summoned his leg and eye from the floor, grumbled under his breath, and heavily took a seat. Fleur grimaced and looked away when he put the eye back in.

“At least Potter here was paying attention,” Moody growled as he fixed his leg. “Can’t believe it took one of you two months to figure out he was an imposter.”

“Yes, he fooled us all quite thoroughly, I’m afraid,” Dumbledore admitted.

“And it gets worse than that,” Moody said. “Crouch isn’t the only one back from the dead. I saw Peter Pettigrew was there with him, and he’s an Animagus, apparently. Little shit popped up and hit me in the back while I was dealing with Crouch. Huh, coward.”

“There is much more going on here than that, my friend,” Dumbledore sighed.

“Figured as much,” Moody nodded. “So, what’s the plan?”

“I believe Harry was just getting to that,” Dumbledore said, turning to him with a raised brow.

“Right,” Harry said, feeling a little nervous. “Right now, we keep this quiet and pretend everything is normal. When Crouch wakes up in hospital, find out what you can and tell everyone he was obliviated. We need to get all the information we can out of Crouch Jr. so Moody can play his part. From what I remember, he never left the castle to meet with Voldemort, but they must have a way to communicate.”

“Voldemort?” Moody asked, his fake eye spinning in its socket until he stopped it with a finger. “Damn it!”

“Voldemort wants me to win the Tournament,” Harry explained. “The plan was for Crouch Jr., as you, to turn the cup into a Portkey that would take me directly to him. He wants to use my blood to gain a new body. I want him to think his plan is working perfectly while I work on a way to kill him for good.”

“I suppose we can’t just pay him a visit and kill him now?” Moody asked.

“No,” Harry told him, shaking his head.

“Course it can’t be that easy,” Moody grumbled.

Standing up, he walked back over to Crouch Jr. and, with a flick of his wand, summoned a small vial full of a clear, colorless liquid. Pulling the stopper, he took a sniff and then eyed it closely. Nodding to himself, he put the stopper back, conjured a plain wooden chair, and practically hurled Crouch into it. Chains shot out of his wand, binding the Death Eater securely to the chair.

“Olympe, it’s been a long night, I’m sure Ms. Delacour would like to get some rest,” Dumbledore said. “I’ll let you know if anything important comes from our questioning. I don’t think I need to ask you to keep this to yourself.”

“Of course,” Maxime said, standing to her full, considerable height. “What of Igor?”

Harry thought for a moment before drawing his wand and aiming it at the unconscious Death Eater.

“Obliviate!”

“Harry!” McGonagall gasped.

“I modified his memory,” Harry said, stowing his wand. “He remembers me stunning Crouch, but not Moody or anything about the Polyjuice. We’ll need to do the same with Bagman, though. He’s probably in Hogsmeade making a bet with the Goblin for me to win.”

“How-”

“I’ll explain everything later, Minerva,” Dumbledore said, gesturing for her to calm down.

“I weel take care of eet,” Maxime volunteered. “Eef my student ees in danger, I weel ensure she is safe.”

“Thank you,” Harry said gratefully.

“Indeed,” Dumbledore nodded. “Please do be gentle with him.”

Moody snorted, “As if anyone would notice.”

Giving a short bow, Maxime left with Fleur on her heels. The younger witch eyes Harry speculatively as she passed him, prompting Harry to give her a cheeky wink. She gave him a small smile over her shoulder as she left.

Drawing his wand, Dumbledore walked around his desk and levitated Karkaroff into a standing position. Motioning Krum over towards the door, he set the Durmstrang headmaster on his feet at the same he woke him up. Karkaroff looked a little confused, but let Dumbledore lead him toward the door.

"I'll let you know as soon as I know more, Igor, I give you my word," he said.

"See that you do," Karkaroff said, marching out without a backward glance.

"Nicely done on the Memory Charm, Harry," Dumbledore complimented once he'd shut the door. "I needed to adjust it to fill in what happened here, but it was quite seamless."

"I had a lot of practice," Harry shrugged.

"Alright, let's find out what this one can tell us," Moody said, smiling gleefully as he forced the truth serum down Crouch Jr's throat.

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After two hours of questioning Crouch and explaining things to Professor McGonagall, Harry finally left the office and made his way back to Gryffindor Tower. The more time that passed, the more he felt out of place. It felt less like he had memories of the future in his mind and more like he'd come back in time. Walking through the halls, he could see the ghosts of damaged walls, flickering flames, and fallen bodies.

Shaking his head, it took him a moment to remember the password to Gryffindor Tower. When he entered, he was relieved to find the common room mostly empty. Hermione, sitting on the couch in front of the fire, turned at the sound of the door and jumped to her feet.

"This is going to be a long night," he mumbled to himself.

Waving her over to a quiet corner, he put up a Muffliato Charm and explained what had happened for the third time that night.

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The next day, Harry met with Dumbledore again. All of the pieces were in place for them to keep up the ruse of Moody impersonating himself. In the meantime, Harry had to work on Destroying all the Horcruxes. While he knew where all of them were, some would be harder to get. When he talked to the headmaster, he stressed that he needed help getting the one out of Gringotts first. If they couldn't get that, his plan would go down in flames.

Dumbledore was happy to get started on that while Harry went after the easier ones, but he had an ulterior motive. He wouldn't let Dumbledore go after the ring this time. The man clearly had a weakness when it came to the Deathly Hallows while Harry couldn't care less about them.

Somehow, and he wasn't even sure himself how he managed it, Harry convinced Dumbledore to give him access to the castle wards so he could Apparate in and out. Later that night, Harry left the common room, assuring Hermione he would be fine, and made his way to the Astronomy Tower. A part of him felt bad for leaving her behind, but as brilliant as she was, she was still only a fourth year. Taking her along on a Horcrux hunt would be too dangerous. Besides, he thought it would be easier to slip in and out if it was just him. He just had to be careful not to alert Voldemort that he was there.

"No explosions this time, Harry," he said to himself just before Apparating away.

Harry reappeared on the side of a small dirt road in Little Hangleton. Keeping his Occlumency firmly in place, he lit his wand and searched for several minutes before finding the overgrown path to the Gaunt Shack. The moment he stepped onto the graveled walkway the whole world seemed to get darker. It felt like there was a malevolent presence sitting just over his shoulder, waiting to pounce. Steadfastly ignoring the feeling, he continued forward, eyes peeled for any sign of the house.

Other than the feeling of something watching him, nothing happened as he walked up to the shack, the outside even more weathered and worn than in the memory of Bob Ogden. Cautiously moving closer, Harry heard a hiss. Holding his wand high, he swallowed thickly as hundreds of snakes of all shapes, sizes, and colors slithered out of the woods and formed a circle around him.

Forcing himself to stay calm, Harry continued his walk to the door. The skeleton of a snake, nailed to the outside, came to life with a hiss, staring at him with its empty sockets.

“Who goes there?” it hissed.

“I am Lord Voldemort,” Harry hissed back.

His hand tightened around the shaft of his wand as all of the snakes hissed loudly. A moment later, the snakes disappeared back into the woods, the snake on the door went limp, and the lock clicked open. Letting out a breath, Harry pushed the door open and stepped inside. Immediately, his scar gave a throb and he knew exactly where to find the Horcrux.

His feet left footprints on the dusty floor as he walked across the hovel in three steps and stood in front of the fireplace. There, on the mantle, sat the Gaunt ring, the Resurrection Stone back and glittering. The compulsion to put on and see his parents once more tugged at his mind, but Harry didn't budge. Instead, he raised his wand and stripped away the Withering Curse placed on it. A hiss of black smoke came from it as he finished.

Still not touching it, he levitated it with his wand and placed it in a dragonhide bag. Cinching the bag closed, he stuffed it in his pocket and strode out quickly. The front door slammed shut behind him, the lock clicking back into place. It took all of Harry's willpower not to sprint back to the road. Adrenaline coursing through his veins, he forced himself to walk calmly. The moment he was back on the road, he twisted and Apparated back to Hogwarts.

“AHH!”



Harry whirled around, his wand snapping into his hand. Professor Sinistra stared back at him, her eyes crossing to look at the tip of his glowing wand.

“Er, sorry, professor,” he said, lowering his wand and taking a deep breath to calm his racing heart.

Sinistra held a hand to her chest and took a shaky breath of her own.

“How in Merlin’s name did you get here?” she asked. “I swear you weren’t here when I came up. It’s almost like you Apparated.”

“Er, Portkey,” Harry made up, scratching his neck. “Professor Dumbledore needed me to take care of something for him.”

“The headmaster sent a fourth year out of the castle at this time of night?” Sinistra asked, cocking her hip and quirking her brow.

For a moment, Harry was tongue-tied. Professor Sinistra was the youngest and best-looking teacher at Hogwarts. She was a little shorter than him with smooth, dark skin, long dark hair, and bright hazel eyes. It was hard to tell what her body was like other than slim in the thick robes she normally wore, but now, in a light, casual robe, it was easy to see the amazing hourglass figure she was hiding.

“Er, you could ask him, if you want,” Harry offered.

“Oh, I will,” Sinistra said, biting her lip as she eyed him up and down. “Unfortunately, he left the castle after dinner and said he won’t be back for a few days at least.”

“Oh,” Harry said, blankly.

“Yes, oh,” Sinistra said, licking her lips. “That puts us in a bit of a bind, doesn’t it? If you’re telling the truth, it wouldn’t be right for me to punish you. On the other hand, if you’re lying, it isn’t right for you not to be punished.”

Harry didn’t realize he was backing away from her until his back hit the parapet. Sinistra had a predatory look in her eyes, and too late, he recognized the glint in them. The Horcrux couldn’t get into his mind so easily, but it looked like Professor Sinistra was easier to affect. He didn’t know what the Horcrux hoped to achieve by making his teacher seduce him, but he needed to get out of there.

“I think he told Professor McGonagall before he left,” Harry said, swallowing thickly as she pressed her ample breasts against his chest. “Maybe you should ask her?”

“I’ll be sure to do that,” Sinistra said, toying with his tie.

Harry jumped away to the side when her thigh brushed his growing erection, putting some distance between them. From the smirk on her face, she knew exactly what she’d done to him.

“I – I should really get to bed,” Harry stammered.

“I’ll be talking to Minerva first thing in the morning Mr. Potter,” Sinistra said, eyeing him intensely. “If she can’t confirm your story, you’ll be spending the next week in detention with me. If I find out you’re telling the truth when Dumbledore gets back, I’m sure I can find a way to make it up to you.”

Nodding, Harry practically ran from the Astronomy Tower. Down the stairs, he took a sharp right and raced back up to the seventh floor corridor. After summoning the Room of Requirement, he ran inside and leaned against the closed door with a sigh.

“Bloody hell,” he said.

Taking the bag out of his pocket, Harry opened it and dumped the ring onto the floor with a glare.

“Asshole,” he grumbled.

Staring at it, he realized he didn’t have the Sword of Gryffindor, and with Dumbledore gone, he had no way to get it.

“Er, Fawkes?” Harry called.

In a flash of fire, the bright red and gold Phoenix appeared in front of him with a cry, the sorting hat clutched gently in his talons.

“You’re brilliant, Fawkes,” Harry grinned.

With a musical warble, Fawkes dropped the hat in his hands and circled around to land on his shoulder. Reaching in, Harry drew forth the Sword of Gryffindor with a smile.

“Two years ago, you and I killed one of these things without even realizing it,” Harry said, looking at the bird on his shoulder. “You feel like sticking around for a couple more.”

Fawkes cried happily, causing the ring to shudder on the ground. Grinning, Harry put the hat on his head, heedless of how ridiculous he might look.

“How about you, Hat?” he asked.

“My, oh my,” the sorting hat said aloud. “I do miss a good adventure. Do try not to let me land in slime this time.”

“That’s the spirit,” Harry smiled.

Standing over the ring, he gripped the handle, raised it high, and brought it down tip first on the band. As much as he didn’t care about the Hallows himself, he saw no need to destroy them if he didn’t have to. With an ear-splitting shriek, the sword sliced through the band, releasing a black, noxious cloud from within. Taking on the face of a younger Tom Riddle, it spit and hissed before slowly fading into nothing.

“One down, one to go,” Harry said.

Sticking the sword in his belt, he marched through the Room of Hidden Things, the Sorting Hat humming on his head and a Phoenix warbling on his shoulder. In moments, they stood in front of the bust holding the Diadem of Rowena Ravenclaw.

“I don’t suppose either of you knows of a way to destroy what’s inside without harming the Diadem, do you?” Harry asked.

“I’m afraid not,” the hat said while Fawkes thrilled sadly.

“Well, nothing else for it then,” Harry sighed.

Hefting the Sword of Gryffindor high above his head, he swung down, cleaving the Diadem clean in two. Like the ring, the wraith inside raged impotently before disappearing for good. With a satisfied grin, Harry put the sword back in his belt and made for the exit.

“Not quite as impressive as your last adventure, but a task worthy of Gryffindor himself nonetheless,” the hat said proudly.

“You know, we make a pretty good team,” Harry said, earning a thrill from Fawkes.

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The next morning, Harry ate breakfast with Hermione. Ron was still avoiding him, and he planned to give his friend time to come around before explaining everything to him.

“The Beauxbatons Champion is staring at you,” Hermione whispered.

“Fleur?” Harry asked.

He looked up just in time to see Fleur look away. Smiling, he shook his head, planning in his head to talk with her after the Weighing of the Wands ceremony. She’d been a staunch friend in his old future life, and he wanted her around this time as well.

“At least *you* don’t drool over her like everyone else,” Hermione said waspishly.

“She’s a Veela,” Harry explained patiently. “I imagine it’s difficult for her to come here after being in an all-girls school.”

“Why would it be difficult for *her*?” Hermione asked, scowling.

“Well,” Harry said, wiping his mouth. “There, she was safe. Here, half the population wants to shag her brains out.”

Hermione choked on her eggs and coughed hard to clear her airway. Smiling, Harry slapped her on the back a couple of times.

“Harry!” she scolded after getting her breath back.

"It's true, innit?" he asked. "Girls aren't affected by the Allure, even if they're attracted to them. I imagine she doesn't have much practice holding it back. I'm sure she would if she could. I doubt she likes seeing Ron's half-chewed breakfast any more than you do."

"I – I never thought of it like that," Hermione admitted softly, glancing at Fleur over her shoulder.

"Try not to worry about it too much, Hermione," Harry told her with a smile. "Trust me, you'll get more than you're fair share of looks at the ball. You turn into quite the hottie, you know."

"Harry!" Hermione exclaimed softly, hitting his arm. "Don't say that!"

"It's true," he shrugged. "I've seen the future, I would know."

"No, I've completely forgotten that my best friend is now three years ahead of me," Hermione huffed before turning thoughtful. "Did – Did you and I ever...?"

As she trailed off, Harry set down the fork that had been halfway to his mouth and cast a Muffliato Charm around them for some privacy.

"Date?" Harry asked. "No. We did have quite a lot of sex, though."

He tried not to grin as she did her best impression of a fish out of water.

"But – but why would we... do that if we weren't...?"

"It was a dark time," Harry sighed, running a hand through his hair. "I'd broken up with Ginny, Ron took off, and the world was falling apart around us. We listened to the Wireless every night, praying we did hear the name of someone we knew had been killed or captured. Every day, we

were running and fighting for our lives. That kind of stress, on top of the bit of Tom we were carrying around... Well, we needed some way to let out the stress."

"What about after the war was over?" Hermione asked softly. "Do you think we might've...?"

"I don't know," Harry said. "My memories end just after we killed Voldemort. Ron had just lost Fred, your parents were still in Australia, and I was all kinds of messed up. Knowing I'm here and can stop all that is the only thing keeping me sane at the moment. Besides, I don't just look seventeen; almost eighteen. I feel like it, too. And I feel like a right perv having this conversation with my fifteen-year-old best friend."

Hermione giggled and hugged his arm, her head resting on his shoulder.

"Mr. Potter."

Looking up, Harry looked at Professor Sinistra nervously and pulled away from Hermione. He hoped she would be acting more herself now that she was away from the Horcrux.

"Yes, Professor?" he asked.

"I spoke with Professor McGonagall," Sinistra said, her hazel eyes boring into his.

"Unfortunately, the headmaster didn't speak to her before he left. You'll be spending your nights with me in detention, until Professor Dumbledore returns. If your story checks out, you'll be awarded extra credit and house points."

Harry sighed but nodded.

"Alright, Professor," he said, glad she was at least acting like her old self.

“My office after dinner, don’t be late,” Sinistra said, walking off before he could do more than nod.

“What did you get detention for?” Hermione asked, brow furrowed unhappily.

“Bugger.”

“Harry!”

~

Tiredly, Harry made his way up to the Astronomy Tower. Classes had been a nightmare. Sure, they were easy now but that made them just as boring as Binns’ class. Not to mention the girls who wouldn’t stop giggling and ogling him every chance they got. He swore Lavender nearly creamed herself when he sat next to her in Charms.

Turning left at the spiral stairs that led up, Harry knocked on the door to Professor Sinistra’s office.

“Come in,” she called.

Opening the door, he stepped in to find Sinistra standing behind her stacking papers.

“Good, you’re right on time,” she said, setting the papers down. “Have a seat. We need to have a talk.”

Fighting a grimace, Harry took the chair across from her as the professor walked around and sat on the edge of the desk.



“While Professor McGonagall couldn’t tell me if the headmaster had given you permission to leave the castle or not, she did tell me about what’s happened to you since your name came out of the Goblet,” Sinistra said, watching him closely. “It certainly explained your physical changes and the maturity you showed last night. I don’t know what came over me last night. I’ve never behaved that way towards a student before.

“That said,” she continued just as Harry opened his mouth to respond. “It did remind me of a few things.”

Standing up, Sinistra circled around him like a shark, her hand trailing along his shoulders.

“I’m only twenty-two, not so far removed from my own Hogwarts years,” she said in a husky tone. “And you, Mr. Potter, are without a doubt the most extraordinary students to even attend this school. After listening to Minerva take about your past and future exploits, I think I can understand what drew me to you in the first place. That said, I’m going to give you a choice.”

Walking around back in front of him, Sinistra straddled his legs and sat down in his lap. Harry instinctively drew his hips back to hide his growing erection, but she followed with her own, a knowing smirk on her lips.

“Everything can go back to normal, we pretend like this never happened, and you serve your week of detention with me cleaning telescopes and grading papers,” she said, wrapping her arms around his neck. “Or, we can spend the next week shagging our brains out.”

Harry swallowed, opened his mouth to reply, closed it, and thought for a moment.

“Bed or desk?” he asked, hands landing on her hips.

Sinistra grinned and rolled her hips, grinding against his erection.

“Desk,” she whispered, capturing his lips.

Harry kissed her back, their tongues melding as her hands caressed his chest. At this point, there was no way the Horcrux could be affecting her, so he felt no guilt as his hands oved to her bum. With a sensual moan, Sinistra pulled back with a sultry smile and climbed to her feet. Undoing the clasps on her tight black robe, she pushed it off of her shoulders, revealing her large, high breasts, impossibly narrow waist, and wide hips.

“Please tell me you taught class wearing that,” Harry whispered.

“I did,” she said, pulling him to his feet and unbuttoning his shirt. “Thinking about what you might do to me had me so wet I had to put on knickers after my second class.”

Pushing his shirt off his shoulders and tossing it to the floor, she started unbuckling his belt.

“And what did you imagine me doing?” Harry asked, reaching up to cup her perky breasts, her pointed nipples rubbing against his palms.

“So many things,” Sinistra purred. “My favorite was thinking of you bending me over the desk and making me scream while the whole class watched. I’ve heard what the boys say behind my back. What they would do to me if they could. You get to do all that and more. More than their pathetic teenage imaginations could possibly come up with.”

Popping the button on his slacks, Sinistra pushed his trousers down and purred in the back of her throat as his erection leapt eagerly into the open.

“Perfect,” she whispered, wrapping her small hand around him. “Mmh, I might have to tell Septima about you. She loves a nice thick cock.”

“Professor Vector?” Harry asked, his voice coming out unnaturally high.

“You didn’t think becoming a teacher makes you a nun, did you?” Sinistra chuckled. “We’ve kept each other’s beds warm on many a cold night in this castle.”

Harry throbbed in her hand at the thought. Professor Vector was a pretty blonde witch that taught Ancient Runes. If the class wasn’t so notoriously hard, more boys would’ve taken it just to get a glimpse of her notorious bust. Even the heavy, bulky robes she wore couldn’t hide their enticing size and movements from the horny teenagers of Hogwarts. Thinking of her with Professor Sinistra...

“Like that, do you?” Sinistra smirked, running her thumb over his head and his own excitement over the swollen glans. “So do I. Merlin, I can’t believe I’m doing this but it’s so hot.”

Pausing, she looked at him, her eyes wide and vulnerable.

“I’m trusting you with this, Harry,” Sinistra said softly. “If anyone finds out...”

“They won’t,” Harry said, his voice quiet and sure.

Caressing her cheek, he leaned down and kissed her slow and soft. Sinistra melted against him, his length rubbing against her stomach as she moaned. Wrapping his arms around her, he trailed them down her back slowly and cupped her thick, wide bum before lifting her up and sitting her on the desk.

“Yes,” Sinister hissed when his tip grazed her slit. “Fuck me. I haven’t had a real cock in years.”

Smiling, Harry gave her neck one last kiss before pulling back to line himself up. Slowly, he eased himself forward, both of them gasping and panting as his long, thick shaft sank between her lips.

“Oh, Merlin,” Sinistra whispered, staring wide eyed as inch after inch disappeared inside of her.

Reaching the hilt, Harry paused and savored the incredible wet heat wrapped tightly around his shaft. Sinistra leaned down to kiss and nip at his chest, her hips rocking lightly against his. Tilting her head up, he kissed her on the lips while thrusting his hips, each time pulling back just a little bit further. Whimpering into his mouth, she pulled back with a gasp and laid back, her eyes locked on the pale pillar sawing in and out of her.

“Oh, fuck yes,” she moaned. “Fuck me. Fuck me.”

Harry leaned over her, one hand moving to her breast while the other gripped her shoulder. Pulling nearly halfway out, he hammered back into her depths, causing her eyes to widen and her back to arch. With a cry, she collapsed on her back, arms knocking the papers she'd graded all over the desk and floor.

“Careful,” Harry panted. “You're students might smell sex all over those papers when they get them back.”

Sinistra moaned, her depths fluttering around him. Grinning, he picked one of the papers at random, even as he continued his exuberant pace.

“Mary Greenwald, sixth year Ravenclaw, right?” he asked.

“Yes,” Sinistra moaned distractedly.

With a smirk, Harry placed the paper over her clit and teased it lightly through the parchment, causing her to gasp and stare with an open mouth.

“Now she'll smell you all over her exam,” Harry said. “You can give her extra credit if she guesses what it is.”

Pressing down on her clit, Sinistra arched her back impressively and came with a scream. Harry tossed the paper aside, teasing her clit with his thumb as he slowed his thrusts. His professor

writhed on the desk, her body displayed beautifully as it contorted. After a long moment, she sat up and pressed her hands to his stomach, causing him to stop.

“Fuck!” she barked with a laugh. “I had no idea you could be that kinky.”

“Neither did I,” Harry chuckled.

“Then let’s try something else kinky,” Sinistra smiled. “Pull out for a second.”

Harry did as she asked, his shaft literally dripping with her arousal. Standing up and wobbly legs, the professor spun around and bent over the desk, presenting him with her perfect, heart shaped bum.

“I want you to fuck me as hard as you want,” Sinistra said, her hazel eyes burning as she looked over her shoulder. “Use me as rough as you want, and don’t you dare stop until you’ve cum.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Harry said, lining up behind her. “Best detention ever.”

“I hope so,” Sinistra giggled, breaking off into a moan as he sank back into her depths. “Mmh, pull my hair, spank me, do anything you want. I’ve been a bad girl.”

“Bad girl?” Harry asked with a smile as he thrust his hips.

“I’m such a dirty little whore for seducing one of my students,” she moaned, her hands gripping the edge of the desk tightly as her body rocked back and forth. “Please, don’t tell anyone. I’ll do anything.”

“I think I’ll take you up on that,” Harry said.

Gathering her hair into a ponytail with one hand, he gripped it like a handle with the other and smacked the left side of her bum. Gradually, Harry started to build up speed and force with his thrusts. Words gave way to moans, groans, and grunts, the room filled with the sound of flesh smacking flesh. Soon, he was thrusting so hard that Sinistra lost her grip on the desk each time he plowed into her, leaving only his grip on her hair keeping her upright.

After the third time, Harry pushed her down, pinning her to the desk as he railed her from behind as hard as he could. The legs of the desk scraped along the floor as Sinistra screamed out again and again. If it weren't for the constant flow of her arousal and the clenching of her depths, he'd have worried he was hurting her. As it was, it felt like she was going from one climax to the next with no break in between.

"Is this what you wanted, Professor?" Harry panted, sweat dripping from his brow as he smacked her ass hard.

Her response was to cum again, her legs shaking uncontrollably as her arousal dripped onto the floor. Snorting, Harry gripped her shoulders tight and chased his own climax. The intense pace brought him to the edge swiftly. With just a handful of savage thrusts, he buried himself to the hilt and erupted inside of her. Tiredly, he draped himself over Sinistra's back, rocking his hips with each pulse of his shaft. With a tired, content moan, she turned her head and kissed his cheek as he unloaded in her depths.

"I've changed my mind," Sinistra mumbled after a long moment. "You have detention for the rest of the year."

Chuckling tiredly, Harry straightened up and slipped out of her. Before either of them could react, the lock clicked and the door swung open. Harry could only stare as Professor Vector walked into the room.

"Aurora, why was your door locked? Have you – Morgana's saggy tits!" Vector screamed, her mouth hanging open as Harry tried to cover his groin with his hands.

"Er... it's not what it looks like?" he asked more than said.

Sinistra burst out laughing while Vector continued to stare at the scene in shock.

## Chapter 2

With his newfound knowledge, Harry found the majority of his classes boring. He took to skipping Potions entirely and spending his time in his other classes working out a plan for the Horcruxes. Professor McGonagall hadn't been happy to see him ignoring her lessons, but every time she called on him to perform a spell, he did so non-verbally and with ease. After a week, she stopped calling on him entirely.

Snape's reaction hadn't been so mild. He tried to give Harry detention for missing class, but he simply didn't show up for those either. When he took the matter to Dumbledore, the headmaster dismissed Harry to talk with Snape alone. Harry didn't know what was said, but while Snape was clearly furious, he went from targeting him at every turn to pretending he didn't exist.

A vast improvement, in Harry's opinion.

"Are you alright, Harry?" Hermione asked, watching him worriedly.

Shaking himself from his thoughts, he realized he'd been staring off into nothing, his fork hovering halfway to his mouth.

"I'm fine," Harry said, setting his fork down and pushing away his breakfast. "Just a lot going on in my head."

"Is there anything I can do to help?" she asked, nibbling her bottom lip cutely.

"Not right now," Harry smiled. "But thanks for having my back, Hermione."

“Oh, you’re welcome,” Hermione said, ducking her head and blushing.

Harry’s smile widened briefly but fell when he heard Parvati and Lavender giggling a short distance away. As glad as he was to see Lavender alive again, he could do without all the staring and whispers. He felt like he was back in sixth year when girls he’d never even spoken to were chasing after the Chosen One. He just hoped the novelty wore off before he ran out of patience.

The sound of fluttering wings drew his attention to the ceiling where hundreds of owls descended from the rafters. A speckled owl landed in front of Hermione to deliver its copy of the Daily Prophet, while a brown barn owl landed in front of Harry. Looking at the bird curiously, he untied the tattered parchment from its leg. As the owl took to the sky, he unfurled it and read.

*Meet me by the stile at the end of the road today, 10 am.*

There was no name attached, but there was no need. Harry knew it was from Sirius, and his heart leapt at being able to see his Godfather again. Then, remembering how he lived in a cave near Hogsmeade, feeding off rats as a dog, Harry stood abruptly.

“Harry?” Hermione asked.

“I need to take care of something,” he replied quickly. “You can come if you want, or I can meet you by the carriages.”

“I’ll come,” Hermione answered, quickly getting to her feet.

Smiling, Harry led her out of the Great Hall and down towards the kitchens.

“Where are we going?” she asked curiously.



“The kitchens,” Harry said, handing her the note from Sirius. “Sirius is going to be staying in a cave near Hogsmeade. I’m going to bring him some food and ask Dobby if he can make regular visits. Damn, how could I forget Dobby is here?”

Harry’s excitement turned dark as he began to question himself. How could he forget about Dobby after he died saving them from Malfoy Manor?

Feeling Hermione’s hand slip into his, he looked over and gave her a small smile, squeezing her hand gratefully. When Harry let go, he wrapped an arm around her shoulders and hugged her to his side.

“You’re a great friend, Hermione,” he said, kissing the top of her head. “The best a bloke could ask for, but sometimes I seriously question your sanity.”

“What? Why?” Hermione asked, slipping her arm comfortably around his back.

“Because, after everything we’ve been through and knowing how bad things could get, you’re still here,” Harry smiled. “Any sane person would’ve run far away from me years ago.”

“Harry, we go to a castle most humans can’t see to learn magic,” Hermione said, rolling her eyes. “We’ve had to deal with Trolls, giant three-headed dogs, a Basilisk, and Dementors, not to mention a teacher with two faces, one that can turn into a cat at will, and one that was a Werewolf. I left sanity behind when I boarded the express.”

Harry laughed as they turned the corner. Unwrapping his arm from around her, he walked over to the portrait of fruit and tickled the pear. With a giggle, it danced out of the way to reveal a door handle. Turning the handle, he pushed the door open and stepped inside the bustling kitchen.

“Dobby!” Harry called.

The House Elves stilled, turning to look at him curiously.

“Harry Potter, sir!” Dobby yelled.

Seeing a stack of brightly colored, wobbling hats making their way through the crowded room, Harry smiled widely. As Dobby ran towards him, he fought back tears while pulling the surprised House Elf into a tight hug.

“It’s good to see you again, Dobby,” Harry said, his voice thick as he pulled back and clapped his shoulders.

“Dobby is glad to be seeing Harry Potter again, too,” he replied, smiling widely. “Is Harry Potter, sir needing Dobby’s help?”

“Yeah,” Harry said, smiling at the way his friend’s eyes lit up at the prospect of being able to help him. “Is there somewhere private we can talk?”

“Oh, yes,” Dobby said, nodding so hard his hats slipped over his eyes. “Follow Dobby.”

Harry and Hermione followed him over to a stack of Butterbeer barrels that had been converted into homes for the House Elves.

“What is Harry Potter, sir needing?” Dobby asked.

Kneeling down, Harry cast a Muffliato Charm around them.

“Listen, Dobby,” he began. “Sirius Black is my Godfather, and he’s innocent. I found out at the end of last year. Now, he’s back in Britain because I got mixed up in this Tournament. He’s hiding in a cave near Hogsmeade. Could you deliver him food when he needs it and help him get anything else he needs? I can pay if-”

“Oh no, Harry Potter, sir, doesn’t need to be doing that,” Dobby said, bouncing on the balls of his feet. “Dobby be happy to help Harry Potter, sirs, Godfather.”

“Thank you, Dobby. You’re a good friend,” Harry said, smiling when his little friend beamed with pride. “If you need money for anything, just let me know. Could we get a basket of food to take with us? We’re going to visit him today.”

“Of course, give Dobby just a moment,” he said.

After Dobby rushed off, Harry stood up and checked his watch.

“We still have fifteen minutes before we can go to Hogsmeade,” he said to Hermione. “Do you mind if we stay here for a little bit?”

“Of course not,” Hermione said, looking at him sympathetically. “Besides, I want to know more about the House Elves that work here. They’re free like Dobby, right?”

Bugger, Harry thought.

“Harry?”

~

Hermione ranted about the injustice of enslaving House Elves for the entire carriage ride to Hogsmeade. Harry just nodded along silently, letting her get it out of her system. By the time they got out of the carriage, most of her anger had burned itself out, and he felt safe enough to respond.

"I agree with you, Hermione, but don't go trying to knit clothes and homing to trick them into freedom," Harry warned, smiling when she blinked at him in surprise. "It won't work. They'll just stop cleaning the common room, and Dobby will have to do it by himself."

"But it's wrong!" Hermione exclaimed frustratedly. "Harry Potter, don't you dare tell me I should let this go."

"I'm not," Harry said, raising his hands in surrender. "All I'm saying is you need to start in the right place. You'll never free House Elves if they don't want it. And you can't just tell them what they should want. People tend to resist being told what to do on principle. You need to convince them there's a better way. Talk with them; get to understand them better. Show them that you genuinely care before you go trying to change minds. They'll respect your opinion more if you do."

"Oh," Hermione said, blinking at him in surprise. "I suppose that makes sense. When did you get so smart?"

"I didn't, I just learned a thousand different ways not to do things," Harry smiled. "I used up all my bad ideas. All that's left are good ones. Usually."

"Usually?" Hermione asked amusedly.

"Bad ideas still creep in now and again," Harry said. "I think it's my brain's way of keeping me on my toes."

Hermione giggled as they continued down the road, walking past the Shrieking Shack and down to the stile. They were early, but Harry knew exactly where to go. Taking Hermione's hand, he led her down a barely visible game trail, winding between trees and over logs. Eventually, they reached a rock outcropping where the entrance of the cave was hidden in the shadow of the morning light.

"Hello," Harry called out. "Sirius?"

“Harry?” Sirius called back.

Stepping out of the cave, he shielded his eyes from the sun and squinted.

“Sirius!” Harry yelled.

Grinning, he rushed towards his Godfather and pulled him into a crushing hug.

“Whoa,” Sirius chuckled. “Good to see you too, Kiddo. Merlin, you got big. What the hell happened to you?”

Harry hugged him for a moment longer before letting go, a smile stuck on his face.

“Let’s go sit, and I’ll explain,” he said. “Oh, Hermione and I brought some food for you. A House Elf friend of mine is going to make sure you have everything you need. His name is Dobby. Don’t worry, I trust him with my life.”

As Harry led a thoroughly confused Sirius back into the cave, Hermione followed behind. They both stopped and bowed to Buckbeak when they saw him lounging on the floor. He looked up and gave them a short nod. Grinning, Harry set the basket he was carrying down and pulled out a whole, uncooked chicken. Buckbeak perked up and got to his feet. Tossing it underhand into the air, the Hippogriff snatched it out of the air with his beak, the bones crunching easily under his powerful jaw.

Handing the basket to Sirius, they all sat, and Harry began telling him about how the Goblet had affected him and the memories he now had. It was a long, emotional conversation, but Harry plowed his way through to the end. While he trusted Sirius, he kept the Horcruxes from him. He wasn’t going to do anything that would risk his Godfather’s life again. If he told him, Sirius would jump in without hesitation, and that wasn’t something Harry needed to worry about.

"Listen, Sirius," Harry said. "I need you to do something for me. At Grimmauld Place, there's a golden locket Kreacher is hiding. Regulus gave it to him. I need it."

"Why do you want something my brother had?" Sirius asked suspiciously.

"I'll explain everything later," Harry promised. "I can't tell you more than that. Sirius, I need you to trust me. Can you get me that Locket?"

Taking a bite of his sandwich, he nodded his head.

"Yeah, I can do that," Sirius said.

"Thank you," Harry said gratefully. "When you find it, tell Kreacher to bring it to me so I can destroy it. Oh, and make sure you order him not to talk to Narcissa or Bellatrix. I don't want him tricking me again."

"Oh, I will," Sirius said, shaking his head. "Can't believe the little shit helped to get me killed."

"It's a bit more complicated than that," Harry told him. "And for what it's worth, Regulus turned against Voldemort before he died."

"Really?" Sirius asked, surprised. "Reg did that? What happened?"

"I can't tell you yet," Harry said apologetically. "I promise I'll fill in everything after the Tournament is over."

"Alright," Sirius replied. "But want you to promise me you'll ask me for help if you need it. I don't want you going off on your own to protect me. It's my job to protect you. I'd gladly die a thousand times if it meant keeping you alive."

"I know," Harry said, smiling sadly. "And I will. In fact, I might need your help with something soon. I'll meet you here once I have it figured out."

"Then I'll look forward to your visit," he smiled. "Just don't come down here too often. I don't want to draw attention."

"Don't worry, I've gotten good at sneaking around," Harry smiled.

"So, what else interesting happens in the future?" Sirius asked, leaning back on his arms.

Harry and Hermione spent another hour talking to Sirius before they had to leave in case they were missed.

"So, how many of those things are left?" Hermione asked as they trudged through the woods.

"Minus the Locket, three," Harry said. "The Cup, Nagini, and me."

"Do you really have to...?" Hermione asked, trailing off worriedly.

"Yes," Harry said, squeezing her shoulder. "Don't worry. I'll be fine. It doesn't even hurt. I'm more worried about the Cup."

"That's one in the Lestrage vault, right?" Hermione asked.

"Yeah," Harry sighed, running a hand through his hair. "We only got in last time because Bellatrix was loose, and Voldemort had taken over. You Polyjuiced yourself to look like her, and even then, everything went wrong. We had to free a Dragon and flew our way out. That won't work this time. Dumbledore's working on it, but I don't know if he'll be able to get it. The Goblins don't really care about Voldemort one way or the other. I just hope we can get it before the end of the Tournament."

“What about Nagini?” Hermione asked.

“She’ll be in the Graveyard,” Harry said. “I’ll have to kill her then.”

“I wish there was more I could do to help,” Hermione said sadly.

“You help just by being here,” Harry told her sincerely.

Giving him a smile, they walked back to Hogsmeade.

~

A few days later, Harry made his way to the third floor for the Weighing of the Wands ceremony. Without Snape’s antics to hold him up, he got there on time. He had to hold back a smirk when Rita looked up and smiled falsely. If she thought she was going to run roughshod over him like she had last time, she was in for a surprise.

“Ah, Harry,” Rita said, grabbing his arm. “It’s so nice to finally meet you. I’m Rita Skeeter, but I’m sure you already know that. Now, how about a quick interview? You know, for a bit of color.”

While she spoke, she led him over to a small broom cupboard he had to duck to get into. Rita crouched in behind him and sat on one side while he took the other.

“There,” Rita sighed, flashing her pearly white teeth. “This is cozy, isn’t it? You don’t mind if I use a Quick Quotes Quill, do you?”

“Let me save you some time, Rita,” Harry said. “I’m going to tell you what happened, and you’re going to report it exactly as I tell it. If you don’t, I’m sure the Ministry would love to hear just how you get all those juicy stories no one should be able to overhear.”



“Oh, and just how do you think I’m doing that?” Rita asked, her smile turning tense.

“You should be more careful about who you *bug*, Rita,” Harry smirked. “You might just get squashed.”

Rita’s face fell, her face paling as she snatched her Quick Quotes Quill out of the air.

“Glad we understand each other,” Harry said. “Now, I didn’t put my name in the Goblet of Fire, and I don’t know who did. When my name came out, the Goblet decided to make my physical age match that of the other Champions. If you want to know why, ask Dumbledore or someone at the Ministry. I voluntarily took a points deduction to take me out of the competition. I’m just a sideshow. The other three are the real Champions, and I’m going to do everything I can to stay out of their way.”

Standing up as best he could, Harry reached for the door before pausing and turning back to Rita.

“Oh, and leave my friends alone, too,” he told her. “Especially Hermione, the Weasleys, and Hagrid.”

Opening the door, he stepped back into the room. While he was dealing with Rita, Fleur and Madame Maxime had arrived. They looked at him curiously as he stepped out of the cupboard, and Rita followed him out. Smiling, Harry walked over to Fleur.

“She’s a reporter,” he told her softly. “Gossip columnist. Avoid her as much as you can.”

“Merci,” Fleur said, eyeing Rita with disdain.

There was a bright flash, and Harry spotted Bozo lowering his camera after taking a picture of Fleur in profile. His eyes were fastened to her until Maxime stepped in front of her and folded her arms over her chest.

“So, how are you liking Hogwarts so far?” Harry asked.

“Eet ees alright,” Fleur replied. “I am not used to ze cold, and I weesh zey ‘ad more French food, but eet ees nice.”

“Just not as nice as Beauxbatons,” Harry said, smiling. “I get it. Hogwarts is like my home. No matter how nice Beauxbatons might be, it just wouldn’t be the same.”

“Oui,” Fleur smiled.

“Well, I can’t do much about the cold, but one of the House Elves that works here is a friend of mine,” Harry told her. “I’ll ask him if they can make some French food for you and your classmates.”

“Merci,” Fleur said, looking at him curiously. “You are friends wiz a ‘Ouse Elf?”

“It’s a long story, but I tricked his abusive master into freeing him, and then he saved my life when he tried to kill me,” Harry smiled.

“You ‘ave a very... interesting life,” Fleur noted amusedly.

“Oh, you don’t know the half of it,” he chuckled.

“Zen maybe you can tell me sometime?” Fleur said, smirking slightly.

Before Harry could figure out if she was flirting with him or not, Cedric arrived along with Bagman. A couple of minutes later, Krum and Karkaroff showed up, followed a minute later by Dumbledore and Ollivander.

“Excellent,” Dumbledore smiled, clapping his hands. “Since everyone is here, perhaps we should get started. Garrick, if you would?”

The Weighing of the Wands went much as it had in Harry’s memories. Unfortunately, Rita still wanted her photos for the article she was writing.

“Perhaps we could have Harry first, and then-”

“I’m not doing photos unless the other Champions are in it. This isn’t about me,” Harry interrupted her.

Rita scowled but motioned for the other to join him. Smiling widely, he swung an arm around Fleur and Cedric’s shoulders. Shaking her head with a smile, Fleur wrapped her arm around his back and struck a pose.

“Come on, Krum, get in here,” Harry said, waving him over.

Cedric and Krum looked at each other before Cedric shrugged his shoulders and slung his arm around Krum. With a strained smile, he gave the camera a thumbs-up just before the flash.

“Maybe we should get one with Fleur standing in front of the boys,” Bozo suggested.

A room full of glares was his reply. Thankfully, he stopped making suggestions after that. Once they’d finished taking pictures, everyone got ready to leave.

“Hey, Fleur, do you fly?” Harry asked.

She looked at him oddly, "Oui."

"How about the four of us go flying, I want to talk to you about something," he suggested, looking at Cedric and Krum to get their opinions.

"I'm up for it," Cedric replied while Krum grunted and nodded.

Shrugging, Fleur turned and spoke to Madame Maxime in French for a moment before turning back.

"I weel need to get my broom from ze Carriage," she said.

"That's fine," Harry smiled. "Let's meet at the Pitch in fifteen minutes?"

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"Hey, Harry," Neville said, looking up from his Herbology book when Harry entered their dorm.

"Hey, Neville," Harry grinned, grabbing his broom from next to his bed. "New book?"

"Yeah," he replied. "Moody gave it to me. It's really interesting. Have you noticed he's acting a bit different lately? He doesn't seem as... I don't know..."

"Creepy?" Harry suggested with a smile. "I think it's because he's calmed down a bit. He was a bit intense in the beginning."

"That's one way to put it," Neville mumbled as Harry walked over to the window and pushed it open.

“I’m going flying for a bit, do you mind closing the window behind me?” Harry asked.

Neville tilted his head curiously.

“What?” he asked.

Grinning, Harry climbed onto the sill and gave his wide-eyed friend a cheek wave before falling backward. The wind roared in his ears as he plummeted through the air. Mounting his broom mid-fall, he shot off towards the Pitch.

Predictably, he was the first to arrive and flew a few laps while he waited for the others. It felt like it had been years since he’d last flown on his Firebolt. When Cedric and Krum showed up shortly after he arrived, they joined him in the air. Fleur was the last to arrive, bundled tightly in a heavy cloak and scarf. The boys flew to the middle of the Pitch to meet her, coming to a stop high above the stands.

“You know, they have these things called Warming Charms,” Harry told Fleur teasingly.

Fleur flicked a Tickling Charm at him with impressive speed, but he rolled out of the way laughingly. Huffing, she put her wand away.

“So, what’d you want to talk to us about, Harry?” Cedric asked.

“Right, well, I’m pretty much out of the competition, but I still know what the tasks are,” Harry said, running a hand through his hair. “The way I see it, I can tell you three what they are so we’re all on the same footing, or I can keep it to myself, and you can compete like I’m not even a part of it. I’ll leave that up to you, but you all have to agree. I’ll warn you now, though, this Tournament is more dangerous than you probably think it is.”

The three Champions looked at each other for a long moment.

“Wouldn’t that be against the rules?” Cedric asked.

“The Goblet already broke the rules by giving me memories of my own future,” Harry pointed out. “And the first time I did this, Crouch cheated to help me win. Cheating is a tradition in the Triwizard Tournament. I’m just offering to level the playing field by making sure we all cheat the same.”

“That has to be the most Gryffindor thing I’ve ever heard,” Cedric snorted, shaking his head.

“I want fair competition,” Krum said. “If we all know, is fair.”

“Oui,” Fleur agreed, her words slightly muffled by her scarf. “We should all know.”

“So long as we all know what’s going to happen, I suppose that’s still fair,” Cedric said after a moment of thought.

“So, you’re all agreed?” Harry asked, getting nods in return. “Alright, the first task is to steal a Golden Egg from a nesting Dragon.”

Fleur’s bright blue eyes went wide, Cedric’s mouth fell open, and Krum went rigid.

“They’ll be chained to the ground, so they can’t fly,” he continued. “I’ll leave how to deal with that up to you. The Egg is a clue to the Second Task, which is to retrieve something from the bottom of the lake. You’ll need to hold your breath for about an hour. Oh, and the clue doesn’t tell you what they take, but it’s people. For Krum and Cedric, they took your Yule Ball dates. Fleur, your date didn’t go so well, so they took Gabrielle instead.”

“My seester!” Fleur exclaimed indignantly.

“Sorry,” Harry said sympathetically. “They put them in an enchanted sleep at the bottom of the lake. The Third Task is a maze filled with dangerous spells, enchantments, and magical creatures. In the middle of the maze is the cup. Grab it, and you win.”

“So, you could still win this thing,” Cedric said.

“Maybe,” Harry shrugged. “Even with a perfect score in the first two Tasks, I’ll be starting ten minutes after everyone else. Realistically, the only way I can win is if all of you are eliminated in the maze.”

“But now that we all know the tasks, can’t they give you those points back, and we can all compete evenly?” Cedric asked.

“It’s not just knowing the tasks, I’ve done them,” Harry said, shaking his head. “Besides, I shouldn’t even be competing. I don’t want to compete. I have bigger things to worry about.”

“You mean You-Know-Oo,” Fleur said.

Harry nodded.

“Is there anything we can do to help?” Cedric asked.

“No,” Harry said firmly, shaking his head. “I know you three are capable, but this is my fight. I know what I’m doing... for once. I don’t want anyone else to get hurt. Hey, how about we fly for a bit? It’s been a while since I could stretch my wings.”

Thankfully, the others let it go and agreed. Harry zipped around the Pitch with the others, playing a game of tag and letting his worries fall away for the moment.