

There was an all too familiar buzz in the Great Hall as Harry made his way in for lunch. The first through fourth year team dueling competitions were set to take place that afternoon and people were rightfully excited. Anya and Orina had to work the morning but were taking off early to make the event.

Making his way over to the Hufflepuff table, he couldn't help but notice Ron sitting next to Parvati talking animatedly but quietly. And it didn't look like they were fighting.

Since the beginning of the new term, his ginger friend had been avoiding him, and just about everyone else, like the plague. The only exception was quidditch practice and even then, he'd been nearly useless in the last week. The odd thing about it was that he didn't seem to be angry but embarrassed. *And considering he acted like a right knobhead, I can't really blame him for it.*

Even two weeks later, Harry still hadn't gotten a proper explanation of what Ron's antics had been on the night of the Yule Ball. Parvati only told Padma, and she had no intention of betraying her confidence. All she would tell Harry was that he'd made the night miserable and left it at that.

Sitting down next to Neville, he ended up just across from the... *are they a couple again now?...* with his back turned. Susan was across from him with Daphne and Padma on either side. His favorite of the Patil twins was staring intently at the conversation going on at the table next to theirs, "So... what's going on?" He gestured backward with his thumb.

Surprisingly, it was Hannah who spoke up from Neville's other side, "Ron seems to be apologizing for, I think this is a direct quote, 'his atrocious behavior the night of the Yule Ball.' He knows that he ruined what should have been a wonderful night for them and he's willing to do anything he can to make up for it." She was holding the once shy Gryffindor's hand under the table because, just as he'd predicted, they were together.

"He even went through the trouble of getting a hold of her favorite flowers." Padma added with a glance down at the bench beside her sister. He hadn't noticed them when he walked in, but sure enough there they were.

"Quite rightly, Parvati is skeptical. Because this seems to be a pattern." Hannah added, which caused the rest of the group to snort. *Understatement.*

"You'd think he'd have learned his lesson after he was such a git at the beginning of the year, but apparently his head is harder than a mountain troll's because it takes a while for those things to sink in." He didn't think he'd ever heard Padma say something quite that acerbic before, but then this was her sister.

"Oh, they're hugging, wonderful." Daphne said dryly. If there were any of his girls that didn't care for Ron, it was her. And given his rather narrow-minded view on Slytherins, that persisted despite the change in dynamic, no one could really blame her.

"He promised he'd be better in the future," Hannah informed them, somehow able to hear them over the general din of the conversations going on in the room, "and that he'll apologize to Ginny... and you... and Fleur?" The Hufflepuff seemed confused by that last bit, but Harry wasn't surprised in the slightest. Since that night, he had a sinking suspicion that he knew exactly what caused the row between the couple and now, he was sure.

"You know, Hannah, I'm pretty sure you should work in espionage because I didn't get a word of that." Harry told her, dead serious.

"She's just a good listener, that's all." Neville chuckled as she blushed. He wrapped an arm around her shoulder and gave her a squeeze.

"If they didn't want to be overheard, they should've taken it somewhere private." The blonde shrugged her shoulders.

"Parv was much too peeved with him to give him the opportunity." Her sister seemed ambivalent about the change, at least for now, "She said he'd been looking for a chance all week, but she's been avoiding him."

"She should've stuck with that instinct if you ask me." Daphne huffed.

Ron made his way over to the Ravenclaw table next where his sister was sitting. She was with a few of her year's duelists. Harry watched as she scowled at her brother, but he must've sounded contrite enough to convince her because she stood and headed out of the hall with him.

"Anybody seen, Sue?" Harry asked.

"Up in the dorm earlier, yeah." Padma told him, "She seemed a bit anxious, but you know how seriously she takes dueling."

He did, but he'd never known her to get particularly anxious about it either. Either way, he'd see her down at the stadium soon enough. Eating quickly, Harry, Daphne, Susan, and Neville all got up to head down to the stadium. His fellow Gryffindor gave his girlfriend a peck on the cheek before leaving, and told her, "I'll see you down there."

With a wink toward Padma, Harry was the last in the group to leave. As he reached the door, Ginny passed him on her way back in and then he just about ran into Ron headfirst as he turned the corner. For a second, they just looked at each other in silence before his friend spoke up, "Do you have a minute?"

"Just about," Harry replied, terser than he really meant to be.

"Right." Ron shuffled his feet awkwardly, "You mind?" He gestured back to the same room he'd used with Padma and Daphne during the Durmstrang-Beauxbatons quidditch match. Harry nodded and that was enough for the ginger to lead the way.

With the door closed behind them, there was silence. After a solid thirty seconds of that, Harry just couldn't stand it anymore, "Is there something you need to say to me, or should I just head down to the stadium?"

With a heavy sigh, he finally spit it out, "I'm sorry."

Harry just frowned back at him, "What for exactly?" He knew from the moment that he saw Parvati alone at the Yule Ball that Ron had done **something**. But he still didn't know what exactly that was, even if he had a reasonable guess, "You've been doing your best to avoid me like I have dragon pox, so..."

"For being a massive bloody prat." Unlike the last time he received an apology, Ron was perfectly sober. And every word seemed genuine and measured, "I thought you were going to the ball with Ginny, when I

realized you weren't and that you were actually going with Fleur, I was... upset. Even after Fred and George let me know I was being ridiculous, I just couldn't let it go."

"Seems that's putting it mildly considering you managed to ruin your own night and your relationship with Parvati." Harry didn't have it in him to take it easy on his friend. His antics and outbursts were tiring, especially after it seemed like they'd gotten past things.

One of those aforementioned outbursts at that blunt evaluation wouldn't have been surprising, but it appeared that he'd managed some actual growth for once, "I know."

"I thought you realized that being an older brother didn't mean you get to make decisions for your sister. That she's a grown woman who can make her own mistakes. That you were content to cave my head in if I hurt her and let it all be. That you'd gotten past your stupid jealousy." The last one was a real sticking point as far as he was concerned. Because as much as he wanted to protect his sister, Harry was sure that he wouldn't have been nearly as horrid if it'd been someone other than Fleur that he went with. *Even if he cares about Parvati, he gets in his own head and it's just ridiculous.*

Ron could barely look him in the eye, "So did I, but I guess I was wrong. I said some awful things about you, and Fleur, and even Ginny when Parv tried talking sense into me."

"I take it that's why you're going to be apologizing to Fleur as well?" Not that she really cared about his opinion anyway.

"Yes..." He coughed awkwardly, "I knew what I said was wrong before I even made it back to the dorm. I was too embarrassed to even think of facing any of you the next day."

"Which is why you ran to the Burrow."

"Right," His ears turned red as he mumbled out, "Not that it was any better."

"Was it your mum, or the twins?"

"Bill and Charlie. Bill's back from Egypt and going to be for a while and Charlie took off from the reserve. I didn't want to tell them what happened, but they got it out of me." Harry could almost sympathize with him. *Not that he didn't deserve it.*

"And?"

"They gave me the dressing down of a lifetime. Honestly, it put mum to shame." He looked almost haunted at the memory, "But it was for the best because they convinced me I need to not be a coward and own up to my stupidity."

"I imagine physically removing your head from your arse would be easier than the metaphorical task they took upon themselves. Magic doesn't fix pigheadedness."

Ron snorted out a laugh, "If it did, I wouldn't keep sticking my foot in it."

"Knowing you, you'd still find a way."

“Probably.” He gave a wan smile before it turned into a frown, “I know you have no reason to believe me, but this is the last time this is going to happen. I promise.” Somehow, his sincerity was far more believable this time given his sobriety.

It left him cautiously optimistic, “I guess we’ll see, won’t we? Besides, if it isn’t, I’m pretty sure your sister is going to hex you so thoroughly you’ll spend the rest of your school career in hospital.”

“She said something similar... except that you’d probably end up doing it together... with Fleur for good measure. And that I probably wouldn’t recover until I’m thirty... at the earliest.”

Harry couldn’t contain his laughter at that, “She’s quite inventive when she wants to be.” *Not to mention Padma would be happy to help if you hurt Parvati again.*

“Trust me, I know.” For a few seconds, they just looked at each other until Ron offered his hand, “We’re good?”

“Yeah, mate, we’re good.” They hugged it out briefly before pulling apart, “Have fun apologizing to Fleur though.”

“Just feels like the right thing to do.” he said with a little shrug.

“So, it’s not because Parvati is making you do it?”

“Actually, no.” Ron corrected him, “I was the one who told her it was going to happen. Whether Fleur heard any of it or not, she didn’t deserve any of the shite I said about her. And if she’s with you or friends with Ginny... or whatever’s going on, I don’t want there to be any bad blood between us if she hears about it in the future.”

Harry clapped him on the shoulder as they walked out into the Entrance Hall, “Look at you actually thinking about things and how they might affect you down the road. There might just be hope for you yet.”

Hermione was waiting there for the two of them with a raised eyebrow, clearly having heard what he said, “I find that terribly hard to believe.”

Ron couldn’t hide his grin, “I’d like to say piss off, but I can’t exactly blame you.”

With that the three of them made their way down to the stadium together, bundled up against the cold. They talked about nothing and everything in the short journey and for just a few minutes it was just them. *When was the last time things were like this? Before the World Cup, probably.* He wouldn’t say he didn’t enjoy it but, at the same time, he wouldn’t trade it for the way things were now in the slightest. They’d all made new friends, created new relationships, and there wasn’t anything wrong with that.

“One of these days, when we’re not all too busy, we need to sit down and have a proper chat.” Hermione insisted as they neared the entrance, “Feel like we haven’t done it in ages.”

“It’s been a mad year, hasn’t it?” Ron didn’t sound the least bit upset about it though, “Never thought I could be so busy.”

"I'm pretty sure Hermione's set up a bedroom somewhere in the library at this point," Harry teased, "That's the only way she can keep up with her study schedule."

"Yes, very funny," Hermione tried to hide her own amusement but failed miserably, "Though I wouldn't say I haven't thought about it. Considering you spend more time out of the tower than anyone, I don't think you're one to judge either."

"I'm not judging. Just stating the obvious." She gave a playful thump to his shoulder as they stopped at the entrance. She gave him a hug, "Good luck."

"Yeah, mate, give 'em hell." Ron agreed before they parted ways. When he made it to the changing rooms, he was the last one in.

The Hogwarts boys from first to fourth year were all there, and Blaise came up the second he walked through the door, "We were starting to think we'd need to send a search party out for you."

"Neville knew exactly where I was." Harry pointed out as he moved to change. He didn't even bother to mention the fact that they were going to be waiting for the younger years to finish before starting anyway.

"Which I reminded him of... multiple times." Neville said from the bench.

Blaise waved them off, "Which is the only reason we didn't."

"The 'we' here is just you, isn't it?"

"Of course not, I would've gotten Susan and Daphne involved too."

"So, it was just you." Harry deadpanned and Neville chuckled. The Slytherin smacked him on the shoulder, but it just made him laugh harder. Harry barely finished getting ready before the door opened, and Professor Flitwick stepped in.

"Gentlemen, are you all ready?" He received nothing but affirmatives, "Good, then follow me." They joined the girls in the tunnel, "If you'll organize yourselves by year, two lines of four. First years, you'll be entering the competition arena when we enter while there is a set of stands for the rest of you. *All eight of them?*

He quirked in eyebrow at Sue next to him, and she looked just as confused. They'd been under the impression that they were fighting in groups of four, but that didn't seem to be the case. *Suppose we'll just have to adapt on the fly.*

Flitwick led them out into the stadium, and as the cheer erupted from the gathered crowd, Harry was more concerned with the arena. It wasn't just a simple expanded dueling arena for four. Instead, there were white pillar and walls littered around the field for cover from spell fire. There were blind spots, ways of taking high ground for tactical position. While he'd never been, it looked something like what he imagined a muggle paintball field to look like. At the edge of the arena there was a low ring wall where the first years were instructed to wait by Professor Flitwick. Just outside of the wall were stands for the rest of them.

"Welcome everyone!" It was Headmistress Hendriksen, or just Mila as he heard Dumbledore and Maxime refer to her, that greeted them, "To the first of the team dueling competitions. The goal is

simple, be the last school standing in the arena. Being forced from the arena is an instant out for that participant. It doesn't matter if there is only one representative remaining or all eight. One can win it for the rest. And considering they are allowed to *Rennerivate* their teammates, it is essential that they are tactical, opportunistic, and most importantly work together to achieve victory."

"So... we have one shot at winning then?" It was Dennis Creevey that asked the question. Flitwick just nodded his head. It was a far cry from the individual tournament. If you had a bad first round, you could pull yourself together for the next one and go again. *That's not an option today.* It added a level of jeopardy that he hadn't expected. It left him that much more excited about what was coming.

"Now, without further delay, let the competition begin!" As she sat down, there was a bang and the wall opened to allow the participants into the arena. The crowd cheered as the participants cagily made their way inside. The Hogwarts first years waited at the entrance, unsure what exactly to do.

There was one particularly ambitious Beauxbatons participant that splintered off from the rest of his team, made his way around the outer wall and fired off a spell that caught one of the Slytherins square in the shoulder and sent him tumbling out unconscious. *Well, that was quick.* There was a projection overhead that ticked down from eight to seven with the Hogwarts school crest above it, as Flitwick revived the blushing Slytherin. He hurried over to the stands and didn't even make eye contact.

"Your only mistake was not being aware," Harry said down to him, "Don't beat yourself up about it. He was the only one who decided to go steaming in and he's going to pay the price for it." The Slytherin looked back at him and seemed relieved. One of the second year Ravenclaws gave him a thump on the shoulder to drive the point home.

What the Beauxbatons student didn't account for was the other seven Hogwarts participants turning their wands on him and firing spells of their own. *Probably thought he could get away while they were all surprised.* He was wrong. Even though he tried valiantly to escape, he wasn't good enough to avoid or stop seven spells at once and he fell to the ground unconscious. With no one around to help him, it was a simple task to levitate him over and deposit him on the outside of the arena.

"Durmstrang already has an advantage. Something tells me it's going to make a big difference since they're first years." Sue observed from next to him.

"That little stunt is going to cost both teams by the time everything is said and done." Daphne agreed from behind them where she was sat beside Susan.

As it turned out, she was right. The whole match lasted just over twenty minutes, and considering they were first years the standard was quite high. Every elimination was met with a roar from the side that managed it but none of it seemed to reach the people inside the arena.

They had to be smart about funneling their opponents toward the edges because they didn't have the repertoire of spells to consistently incapacitate them. In the end there were two girls left, a Beauxbatons and lone Ravenclaw that were forced to team up to try and contend with four Durmstrangs.

They managed to get one of them but couldn't take them all. The Beauxbatons girl was thrown over the wall by a Banishing Charm and the Ravenclaw was caught in a Body-Bind just a few seconds later. A massive cheer went up from Durmstrang contingent as the rest of their team stormed in and

congratulated them. There was some spell scorching littered around the arena, but nothing too severe. And it restored itself to its prior perfect condition as the teams made their way out.

“Yes, well done to our victors Durmstrang!” Hendriksen’s voice rang clear around the stadium. She couldn’t hide her pride in her own school, “If the second years could please go to their designated starting areas, the second match will begin shortly.”

As they headed off, Harry spoke to the rest of his team, “We need to prioritize getting them disarmed. If they don’t have their wands, or can’t use them, then it doesn’t matter if they’re brought back into the fight.”

“Unless they happen to be capable of wandless magic.” Ginny pointed out from the row in front of him with a cheeky little wink back at him. The girls were well aware that if worst came to worst, he’d done enough work that he actually could manage a few wandless spells.

“Yes... but, that’s rather unlikely.”

“Best not to underestimate anyone though.” Susan reminded them, and he couldn’t agree more, “And like Harry said, disarmed or unable to use them... so a Bone-Breaker would be just as useful. Healing a bone is tougher work than simply reviving someone, after all.” It was a rather brutal thing to say in such a chipper tone and he couldn’t help but chuckle.

Their attention returned to the arena as there was another bang, and the next match began. The second years were better organized than the first years just because they knew what to expect. They kept together in groups of four and clearly discussed how they were going to approach the fight while they waited.

They took one of the elevated platforms and rained down spell from there to great effect... for a while anyway. Their mistake was complacency, leaving the stairs up unattended. One particularly skilled Beauxbatons boy disillusioned himself and snuck up behind them. They didn’t even have a chance to react and went from leading 7-5-3 to losing right along with Durmstrang. They lost another teammate when Dennis Creevey tried to charge the stairs to reneuvate them only to meet the same fate. From there, the result was a foregone conclusion.

“Beuaxbatons is the winner of our second match!” Hendriksen was understandably less enthused about that result, but congratulated them all the same, “A very well fought match by all!”

“Third years, come along then.” Flitwick gestured for them to come down.

Harry squeezed Ginny’s shoulders and gave her a kiss on the top of the head, “Good luck.” Luna was beside her and looking at them with her big silver eyes, “You too, Luna.”

She smiled that dreamy smile of hers, “Thank you, Harry.” She waited there for a second and he leaned in to give her a kiss on the top of the head, too. If anything, the quirky younger girl had become something of a younger sister to him, so he didn’t mind in the slightest. That seemed to be what she was waiting for because, satisfied, they both got up and headed down. Sue hid her amusement behind a cough from beside him.

The third tilt of the event was wholly different than the first two, because these students had a far more impressive repertoire of spells. There were transfigurations that needed to be countered and traps laid with charms and hexes that made the entire viewing experience that much more enjoyable.

One thing became obvious as things progressed. Ginny and Luna were a force to be reckoned with. They both had an impressive catalog of spells, even for third years, and Luna's rather unique approach meshed well with Ginny's more blunt force approach. They trounced a dark-haired Beuxbaton's lad and then followed it up with an equally dominant display over a Durmstrang girl. And all the while, their offensive prowess was backed up by Colin of all people. *Seems he has a bit of knack for defensive charms.*

At one point, he was sure that her brothers managed to start up a cheer of, "Ginny! Luna!" That rumbled the stadium.

Their round ended almost at the very center of the arena after almost forty minutes of intense competition. There was just one Durmstrang left, and he was doing a fantastic job of keeping himself in the fight, but there was only so much one person could do when facing three.

Emerging from behind a pillar, Ginny charged at him at a full sprint without so much as a thought to her own wellbeing. He thought it was his opportunity but as he popped up to take her out, a spell sunk into his chest and sent him rag-dolling to the ground. Luna had a dreamy smile on her face as Ginny wrapped herself up in a hug a second later.

The cheer was by far the loudest, which wasn't surprising given the winner, "And the victory goes to Hogwarts!" Nothing more needed to be said, and even magically enhanced no one could hear what Headmistress Hendricksen had to say. But they all understood the pattern of things and didn't even wait for Flitwick to call them down. As the last of the third years made their way out, they were already waiting at the entrance.

Ginny, Luna, and Colin were all smiling. And the last two were sweating quite noticeably. It was hard work to say the least. *And if it weren't for the odd little benefits, we've all been experiencing, I imagine Ginny would be as well.* As the noise from the crowd eventually softened to murmured excitement, Henricksen spoke up, "To our last match of the day!"

Harry stood toward the front with Sue, Ernie and Neville, "We've been preparing for this. We know what we're capable of. If we go out there and execute, they don't stand a chance." All seven of the others heard every word. There were no smiles amongst them, just quiet determination.

Then there was the bang, the wall opened, and they were off. The second they stepped inside, the noise from outside disappeared and all that was left was footsteps on stone. It was different inside than up in the stand. The view was more obstructed. He could see flashes of color from the other side as their opponents started making their moves. Ever alert, their foursome made their way to the right while the other went left. There was palpable tension in the air as they waited for the first spell to set things in motion.

They didn't have to wait long. It came from above, one of the Durmstrang girls stood there and a torrent of fire left her wand and filled the spaces between the pillars and walls of the arena. Their once white surface scorched black from the heat of them.



With a wave of his wand, the flames went cold, almost ticklish. Sue pointed her wand at the girl from behind his shoulder and sent a Banishing Charm her way. It was quick and precise and sent her off the platform. There was a hard thud, and a cry of pain that echoed around the arena. *That's probably going to smart something fierce.* But her entire show had been meant as a distraction.

From behind a pillar to their left, a dark blue spell came right toward Harry. It didn't surprise him. Given their status as champions, he was sure he, Solen, and Ivar were almost certainly viewed as the greatest threats. *Take me off the field and the path to victory becomes simpler.*

The spell that escaped his wand was bright, reflecting off the white stones as it headed right toward the pillar. He didn't try aiming around it, he intended to go through it. It crumbled, raining down small stones that had the Durmstrang boy running in panic. Spell fire came from behind a low wall trying to cover his retreat, but they were stopped by a shield from Ernie.

Stepping to the side, Harry caught him with a Leg-Tangling Jinx that sent their assailant tumbling to the ground. He tried to crawl back to the safety of his team, but Sue followed up with ropes that left him bound and useless. His teammates tried to use a spell to drag him toward them, but Harry pointed his wand and overwhelmed them. Realizing it was a loss, they beat a retreat to a larger wall that abutted the outer ring. With a simple levitation, they tossed their first opponent from the fight.

The entire thing was distinctly different from a duel, or even any of their practice sessions. It felt like a proper fight. *Granted, with a few rules for safety.* People used their defensive positions to their advantage, and sometimes it was the waiting that drove them to make foolish mistakes. There were three Beauxbatons who'd holed themselves quite effectively and didn't seem to have any intention of moving... Until Harry decided to conjure seven snakes and send them over to three of the Beauxbatons contingent

They all forgot themselves as the conjured serpents slithered their ways up their legs and toward their necks. It left them as easy pickings. Sadly, Solen wasn't amongst them.

They were methodical, tactical, and as the fight wore on, there was no doubt that they were doing the heavy lifting as far as eliminations were concerned. That wasn't to say they were perfect. Ernie tried to take on Ivar by himself as they flanked around the outer wall, but the Durmstrang Champion dispatched him without much trouble. The Hufflepuff stormed off when Flitwick came by to resuscitate him. Ivar beat a hasty retreat when Harry turned his attention toward him, but the damage had already been done.

They dispatched another Durmstrang student before they started finding other hard to come by. Harry was moving through the middle of the arena when there was a hail of Shield-Breakers and Stunners that came raining down from above. Harry didn't even need to see him to know that it was the Belgian from his solo dueling first match. Neville was caught with one of the stunners and he knocked his head as he fell, but a quick *Rennervate* had him up and going with a cut to remember it by.

Hurrying over to the base of the platform with Sue and Neville in tow, there was no good angle, so Harry made his way around toward the stairs. When they reached them, Neville guarded their back as they made their way up.

They only made it halfway up when Solen popped around the corner and fired a spell right at his head. The bright blue light whirled toward him, but he managed to deflect it upward with the tip of his wand. They could hear spell fire from behind as well. *They're trying to pinch us.*

"Help Neville!" Harry told Sue as he felt the stairs flatten out beneath them. But Harry was quick enough to catch them, surrounding their feet with stone before they could tumble down. Harry climbed with his stone shoes up to the platform where they were both waiting.

Two overpowered Shield-Breakers shattered the shield he pulled up, but he returned fire with a series of spells of his own. Even though there were two of them, they were on the defensive. *They wouldn't be if they were a bit better at working together.* A Bone-Breaker zipped across faster than they could react and caught the Belgian in the shoulder.

*Snap!* To his credit, he tried to keep fighting even as he cried out in pain. It was clear that Solen was a cut above her schoolmate and frankly, most other duelists. She was talented to say the least. *But Fleur is leagues better.* They traded spells, the sound of them sizzled in his ear as he dipped and dodged around. The ones he caught with a shield had physical force to them. The Belgian tried to get involved but ended up being a detriment rather than a help.

Using him to his advantage, Harry flicked his wand and sent him hurtling toward Solen and she had no chance of avoiding the burly boy.

**"Stupid bastard! Get off me!"** Solen was furious, and desperate as it left them both struggling on the platform. Thinking quickly, she managed to turn her teammate so that he was the one to take his next spell as she freed herself. As Harry closed in smoke poured from her wand to cover her escape. She levitated her way down to the ground and kept right on running.

Harry considered going after her, but it wasn't just about him. There were things he could do on his own, but this was about the team.

Heading back down, he found two more Beauxbatons students out of the fight. Neville looked worse for wear again. And it seemed he was missing his wand. At Harry's quirked eyebrow, he explained, "Last one managed to get off a Disarming Charm, got away with my wand. Don't think I'm going to be much use from here."

"Looks like you did plenty of work anyway, mate." He assured him with a chuckle. Neville left him there to make his own way out of the arena.

That's when they heard spell fire to their right. He and Sue shared a look, and they were off. Hurrying toward the commotion. What they came upon was surely everyone left in the competition. Blaise, Susan and Daphne were all huddled behind a single wall that was slowly being chipped and destroyed by the slew of spells splashing against its surface. They were pinched between it and the outer wall. If they retreated, there was no doubt that at least one of them would fall to the onslaught.

Three Durmstrang students, including Ivar, and the last two Beauxbatons students, including Solen worked together to keep them pinned down. It was a testament to just how strong his earlier spell had been since the wall still stood where a single spell from him destroyed the pillar.

But as they finished weaving their way through the obstacles and into the fray, it finally broke down. Blaise was the one who took the brunt of it, as he instinctively tried to shield his teammates. A banishing charm sent him flying behind them.

The next frantic moments became a blur. Sue and Harry arrived on the scene with spells of their own. They caught all but one of their opponents entirely unawares. Knowing the greatest threat, Harry aimed for Solen while Sue went for Ivar. Solen was the only one who knew they might be coming, and just caught the light of his spell from the corner of her, diving out of the way.

Unfortunately, that meant that her schoolmate went flying backward and spinning over the outer wall. Ivar wasn't quite as agile and found himself pinned against the same wall wrapped in chains. His teammates tried to help him, but they should've turned their attention elsewhere instead.

Susan, as he would've expected, went over to try and help Blaise where he was groaning, pained on the ground. On the other hand, Daphne turned her wand on those that remained. Because the Durmstrang students were preoccupied with Ivar, it left Solen as the sole focus of Daphne, Sue, and Harry.

While he didn't like the girl, he figured utter defeat was humiliation enough. He didn't use anything to outright hurt her. Instead casting to break down defenses. She frantically tried to stop them, but she was fatigued, almost moving in slow motion as the adrenaline wasn't enough to pull her through after their earlier encounter. His first Bludgeoner hit its mark, but she managed to shield the stunner from Sue. It appeared that Daphne wasn't being quite as nice as him because he hit her in the neck with a Stinging Hex that left her swelling instantly.

He had to admire that she fought through the pain, but his next spell left her unconscious. And he might've put a bit too much into it because it sent her flying back into the last two Durmstrang participants. Sufficed to say, they didn't put up much of a fight falling over.

"Winner, Hogwarts!" The noise of the crowd came through again then. The cheers were deafening. There was a weight on his back as Sue wrapped her legs around his waist with an excited squeal. He didn't hear anything else from there, as another weight pressed into his side and Daphne hugged him.

Susan helped a limping Blaise over until he could brace himself on a pillar before she moved over to embrace his other side. Over chants of 'Hogwarts', the Slytherin boy gave a cheeky smile, "You'll excuse me if I wait to celebrate until later..." he coughed and groaned as he grabbed for his sore ribs, "got a bit beat up, you see."

Harry just shook his head, "No problem, mate."

Flitwick was already there, helping get everybody up and about though he seemed to be struggling with Solen, "Ah, Mr. Potter," he called from, "I think I might need your help here. Seems the strength of your spell is a bit beyond me." That caused a quirked eyebrow from Blaise because while he wasn't the most powerful professor at the school, he was highly skilled and no slouch in his own right.

Harry gave Sue a pat on the bum, "'fraid you're gonna have to get down."

She didn't even pout, she was too excited about their victory. The cherry on top of their group's success was the unmistakably livid look on Solen's face when she saw him with a grin on his face. Before he turned back to join his team, he couldn't help himself, "Better luck next time, LeClaire."

With that they headed out of the arena, back to the locker room and eventually some raucous celebrations.