



"That's chess!" snapped Ron. "You've got to make some sacrifices! I make my move and she'll take me — that leaves you free to checkmate the king, Harry!"

"But —"

"Do you want to stop Snape or not?"

"Ron —"

"Look, if you don't hurry up, he'll already have the Stone!"

There was no alternative.

"Ready?" Ron called, his face pale but determined. "Here I go — now, don't hang around once you've won."

He stepped forward, and the white queen pounced. She struck Ron hard across the head with her stone arm, and he crashed to the floor — Hermione screamed but stayed on her square — the white queen dragged Ron to one side. He looked as if he'd been knocked out.

Shaking, Harry moved three spaces to the left.

The white king took off his crown and threw it at Harry's feet. They had won. The chessmen parted and bowed, leaving the door ahead clear. With one last desperate look back at Ron, Harry and Hermione charged through the door and up the next passageway.

"What if he's — ?"

"He'll be all right," said Harry, trying to convince himself. "What do you reckon's next?"

"We've had Sprout's, that was the Devil's Snare; Flitwick must've put charms on the keys; McGonagall transfigured the chessmen to make them alive; that leaves Quirrell's spell, and Snape's ..."

They had reached another door.

"All right?" Harry whispered.

"Go on."

Harry pushed it open.