

“Yeah?”

“Do you... are you still seeing whoever it is you were snogging at the Yule Ball last year?” The question was quiet, and made Harry tense. “You don’t have to tell me who.”

“Yeah, I am,” he admitted, unable to stop his smile when he thought about Draco. Cho wiped at her eyes, nodding decisively.

“Good. I’m glad.” She looked back to Cedric’s picture, and took a deep breath. “You hold onto him, yeah? Because... because you never know how long you’ve got with the people you love.”

Harry felt something wet slide down the side of his nose, and he realised that he was crying, too. “I will,” he promised, pulling Cho into a tight hug, lips pressed to her forehead. “Cho, I’m so sorry.”

Her whole body shook with a sob. “It’s okay,” she said. “It’ll be okay. These spells you’re teaching us all will keep us safe, and hopefully — hopefully no one else will end up like Cedric.”

That wasn’t a guarantee Harry could make, and they both knew it, but he nodded all the same, his tears dripping onto her hair.

He couldn’t say how long they stood there, hugging and crying silently, both lost in their memories of a Hufflepuff boy with so much love in his heart and so much life left to live. Eventually, Cho pulled back with an awkward, wet chuckle. “I didn’t mean to cry all over you,” she admitted.

“We’ll call it even,” Harry replied, wiping at his own face.

“Alright. I’m gonna go back to Ravenclaw, I think. Have a good Christmas, Harry.”

“Have a good Christmas, Cho. Give Fleur a hug from me.”

Cho smiled, then stepped up to the mirror. She kissed her fingertips, reaching up to press them tenderly to Cedric’s photographic cheek. Then, with one last attempt at a smile in Harry’s direction, she disappeared through the Ravenclaw door.

Harry let out a long, shaky breath in the silence of the room. He looked at the photograph, the boy still beaming. “I’m trying, Cedric,” he murmured. “I’m trying.”

And then he too left the room. But not to go back to his common room.

There was still forty minutes or so until curfew — Harry had ended the session early, in the spirit of the season — and he ducked into an alcove to pull the Marauders’ Map from his bag, his heart hammering in his chest. “I solemnly swear that I am up to no good.”

Spidery lines spilled across the map’s surface. Harry scanned them desperately, looking for one dot in particular. *There*. Draco Malfoy, in the library, with Theo and Pansy.