

Harry gaped. "He sent his own son to Azkaban?" Sirius was hollow-eyed, as he was whenever anyone mentioned the prison.

"His wife died soon after. She took a turn as soon as he was locked up. Grief, they say," he said quietly. "Crouch has always been firm in his hatred for dark wizards. Sounds like one of them might've got to him at last. Or he just cracked under the guilt."

"But he's been in and out of Hogwarts for ages. I see him on the map all the time." Always wandering about in the late evenings, or sometimes in the middle of the day. "If... Percy said he's been out of the office for a while. How come he's still visiting Hogwarts, if he's been sick?"

Remus and Sirius shared a look. "It's possible he's been looking for signs of darkness at the school," Remus said eventually. "What with Karkaroff about. And Merlin knows plenty of people still don't trust Severus." He scowled briefly. "But if his mind has been going this whole time, who knows what he's been after. Are you sure it's him, Harry?"

"How many '*Bartemius Crouch*'s can there be?" Harry retorted. Again, the pair shared a look, but they didn't say anything. Harry let out a frustrated noise. "None of this makes any sense."

"It's nothing you can do anything about, anyway," Sirius said, clearing his throat. "Just focus on the third task. A maze, you said?"

Harry had barely spared a thought for the maze all evening, and he slumped back against his pillows. "Yeah. Full of obstacles; they're a bit vague on the specifics. I suppose I'll just practice the usual defensive lot and hope for the best." All his training over the summer would be worth something; it was the most confident Harry had felt about a Triwizard task so far.

"All your little escapades at school will finally come in handy. Good experience, that," Sirius remarked with a grin. Harry snorted, remembering the obstacles in front of the Philosopher's Stone.

"Anything in particular you'd recommend I work on?" he asked, since they clearly weren't going to give him any more information about Crouch. He'd bet anything Snape would go to Seren Du as soon as he was able, and the three would talk about whatever it is they weren't telling Harry. He tried not to let it grate on him too much; he trusted them to tell him what he needed to know. If there was more information... Harry just hoped it wasn't relevant to him. People keeping things from him 'for his own good' tended to have a habit of backfiring in spectacular ways.

Conversation turned to spellwork, and by the time Harry let the pair go to bed, he was feeling a lot calmer. Still utterly confused by the whole Crouch situation, but at least people other than Dumbledore were aware of it.

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