

how incredible it would feel to fly at that level.

They started out easy — laps, with Claudia calling out instructions; names of moves, changes in direction, seeing how quickly he reacted to things. Things got progressively harder, but Harry kept up the pace, grinning to himself as sweat began to stick his t-shirt to his back. To his relief, ignoring the few people in the stands was easy once he was in the air, just like ignoring the crowds at school matches.

Once Claudia was satisfied with that, she brought out a beater's bat and a single bludger, and despite her fairly petite form she could certainly give it a whack. But Harry had dealt with *multiple* occasions of cursed bludgers trying to kill him in his time, so that didn't bother him either.

They tossed the quaffle around for a bit, as a cool-down according to Claudia, then the pair of them landed and Harry got a good look at the hook-nosed figure chatting to Andy and Ollie at the edge of the pitch. "Viktor!"

The Bulgarian turned, grinning. "Hello, Harry. You are off to a good start, it seems." He clasped Harry's arm, patting him solidly in the back.

"What are you doing in the country?"

"I had some other business here, and I could not miss this chance," Viktor explained. "I'm glad; you are all warmed up for me." His dark eyes glittered in challenge, and Harry gaped.

"You're who I'm going to fly against?" He had expected perhaps an ex-team seeker, or another member of training staff.

"I have waited a long time for a chance to reclaim my pride," Viktor joked. "When Andy offered, I could not say no."

Their seekers' match in fourth year felt so long ago, now. Harry grinned. "Just don't cry if I beat you a second time."

Viktor let out a short, loud laugh.

"You two ready, then?" Andy asked, rocking on the balls of his feet like an excited child. Harry wondered how much he'd been told about the last face-off between the pair of them.

Viktor pulled out his own Firebolt — four years, and it was still the fastest broom on the market. "Give me a minute to warm up," he requested, kicking off into the sky. Harry watched him, folding his arms over his chest.

"I see how it is," he mock-complained, "I get put through my paces until I feel like I've already played a full match, and he comes in all fresh-faced and ready to go."

At his side, Claudia laughed. "We have to know you've got the stamina for it," she teased. "You're no good to us if you can't last long enough to catch the snitch when it shows up."

She raised a good point, but it still didn't seem fair. Harry wasn't going to argue, though.