

And at the top, like a reminder of what it was all for, was a picture of Cedric Diggory. He was in his Triwizard uniform, but it wasn't the picture from the paper. It was of him before the third task, his friends crowding around him like he'd already won. The last picture taken before he'd died. And Harry knew Cho had taken it.

"He would've loved all this," Cho said, finally breaking the silence. She turned, gesturing to the room at large. "Everyone coming together like this. Last year, it made him so happy when people started studying outside of their house groups. And when you and Viktor and Fleur and him all worked together for the tasks." Her smile quivered, heartbreakingly sad.

"He was a Hufflepuff," Harry said, and a sharp laugh burst from her lips.

"*Such* a fucking Hufflepuff. Wanted everyone to be friends and stand together, stand up for each other." She shook her head, tears now trailing down her cheeks. "Like I said. He would've loved this."

Harry reached out an arm, tucking her into his side, and together they stood and watched the picture of Cedric laugh and smile and blow kisses at the camera. "I got a letter from Fleur the other day. She asked if I was going home over the holidays, wondered if I wanted to meet up. She... she said Cedric told her, last year, that Christmas was his favourite time of the year. That he loved the Yule Ball, because it felt like Hogwarts was finally having the celebration that Christmas deserved." She sniffled, and Harry squeezed her tighter. "Fleur thought I might want something to look forward to instead of just sitting at home and thinking about how much Cedric turned into a giant puppy at Christmas and how quiet it is without him,"

"Did you reply?" Harry asked, his heart constricting. He couldn't imagine being in Cho's position, being surrounded by people who had moved on when your heart still felt like it was torn apart.

"Yeah. We're going to get coffee on Boxing Day. Some muggle place in France; she's sending a portkey for me that may or may not be legal." Cho managed a weak grin, and Harry snorted. That sounded like Fleur. "She said there will be coffee and croissants and possibly snow, and an ice skating rink where we can both make fools of ourselves because neither of us knows how to skate. So then I can look back on this Christmas and know that I wasn't sad all the time. Because Cedric wouldn't want me to be sad."

"I'm sure you'll both have a wonderful time," Harry said sincerely. "She's right. He'd want you to be happy."

"I know." Cho sniffled again. "He'd be so proud of you, y'know." She turned to look at him, smiling through her tears. "Protecting everyone like this. Finding ways to keep everyone positive even when there's Umbridge and You-Know-Who and everything." Her smile widened. "He'd say you're being quite Hufflepuff yourself."

"From him, I'd take that as the highest compliment." He looked back at the picture, feeling a stab of pain in his chest, that gaping hole from the summer starting to feel raw around the edges again.

"Hey, Harry?"