

Last but not least, Harry gathered a small group of people in Gryffindor Tower the night before the article was due to come out, more nervous than he had been with any of the others. There were a few people in the group he'd already told, and they offered him supportive smiles.

"Hey, so, I'll try and make this quick," Harry started, knee bouncing anxiously. "I just wanted to give you a bit of a heads up about something that's happening tomorrow, since if anyone's likely to get questions, it'll be you lot." He looked around the gathered faces; his dorm mates, three of the five girls in his year, Ginny, the twins, and the rest of the quidditch team. His friends. They wouldn't judge him for this. "Skeeter's been writing a lot of crap about me lately — and about people close to me — so I thought I'd hit back with something true for once. I wrote an article for the *Quibbler*, it'll come out in the morning. And, uh, so will I, I suppose."

Both the twins looked at him in shock. "Really? To everyone?" George asked.

"Yeah. Better that than having it hanging over my head, wondering when someone will find out and tell everyone. At least then it's over with and everyone knows." The more he talked about it to others, the more confident Harry was in his decision. He didn't want to keep having to come out over and over again for the rest of his life. He was in the position of being able to say something and have just about everyone in the wizarding world listen; he might as well say what he wanted.

"That's really brave, Harry," Lavender said supportively, reaching over to pat him on the knee.

"I don't get it," Ron said, frowning. "What's the article gonna say?"

Harry resisted the urge to roll his eyes, wondering if Ron was being purposefully obtuse. "It'll say I'm gay, Ron," he said, glad his voice didn't even tremble. "I've written an article in the *Quibbler* to tell everyone that Skeeter's article is bullshit because I don't even like girls."

Ron gave a forced-sounding chuckle. "That's a bit drastic, just to get her off your back, isn't it? Just make up a girlfriend or something. Let her think you're dating Ginny. Just because you don't want to tell her who your real girlfriend is."

Harry gave an exasperated look skyward. Ginny put her head in her hands despairingly. "I don't have a girlfriend. I'm not writing the article to get Skeeter off my back — I'm writing the article because I'm gay and people might as well know, if they're going to make shit up about me."

Ron turned pale, then very red, then a little bit green. "You're— what? But— but we've roomed together for years! That's— you can't be—"

"Tell me, little brother, why Harry *can't* be gay," George asked, his tone icy. Ron went even greener.

"I just meant— he's not like that, y'know? All..."