

had a type. “I thought you said you didn’t like pretty,” he said thoughtlessly, and George smirked.

“I said I don’t like the same kind of pretty *you* do. Adrian’s not pretty, he’s just got cheekbones.”

Neville gave Harry a bit of an odd look at that, and Harry’s stomach squirmed. He *really* had to tell Neville soon.

After breakfast they went back up to Gryffindor Tower, where the twins attempted to cheer Ron up a bit with several games of exploding snap. That didn’t really work, but the youngest Weasley brother did perk up when they went down for Christmas lunch. The tables were groaning with the weight of all the food, Christmas crackers exploding all over the hall, everyone talking and laughing and excited for the evening to come. They were all kicked out of the hall as soon as lunch was over, so the house elves could re-decorate for the ball, and Fred and George managed to gather a crowd for a snowball fight out in the grounds.

What started out as Hogwarts VS the other schools soon turned into a chaotic free-for-all as alliances were formed and broken, and sacrifices were made. Hermione had intended to just watch, but that went out of the window when one of Viktor’s snowballs ‘accidentally’ went wide and hit her in the shoulder. Harry laughed as a flick of Hermione’s wand had a whole host of snowballs chasing after the Bulgarian.

“Harry, duck!” He followed the instruction instinctively, looking up just in time to see Blaise Zabini get hit square in the face with a snowball. Harry hadn’t even realised Blaise was out there with them. The Slytherin boy scowled, looking for his attacker — Cassius, hiding behind a snow bank Cedric and Cho had built and then been promptly run out of.

“You’re dead, Warrington,” Blaise declared, sprinting away from Daphne’s side and reaching down into the snow.

As the evening drew on and the ball grew ever closer, people slowly began to abandon the snowball fight in favour of getting ready. Ron seemed utterly baffled when Hermione declared she was heading up to her room at five, and even more bewildered when several other girls followed. “How can it take them three hours to get dressed?” he asked, and Harry sighed, sharing an amused look with Ginny.

“You don’t understand girls at all, do you?” the redheaded girl said sadly. She hopped to her feet, sending one last snowball careening towards George. “I’m off, I’ll see you boys later. Ron, don’t lose track of time; you’re supposed to meet Luna in the Entrance Hall at quarter-to.” She still didn’t seem thrilled at letting her best friend go to the ball with her brother, but Luna was so excited to get the chance to go at all Ginny wisely kept her mouth shut. Harry suspected she was just waiting for Ron to do something to give her the excuse to hex him.

By six, it was getting too dark to properly see where snowballs were coming from, so the remaining fighters called it even and went back into the castle after a few Drying charms, disappearing off to their respective common rooms. The closer he got to Gryffindor Tower, the more Harry started to feel his nerves. “What if I freeze up?” he fretted. “What if I trip and