

After a few minutes, Viktor finished his warm-up, and Harry shouldered his broom.

It was much the same as the last time, just without the enormous crowd of students around them. One snitch, two seekers, a fifteen second wait and then a start. Harry hadn't asked how many rounds they were flying — he wasn't sure he wanted to know.

When Claudia's whistle went, he sped into the air, immediately on the hunt for the little golden ball. Viktor followed him, drawing level, and Harry grinned. He wasn't sure when he'd next get the chance to fly with his friend; they could still have a little fun with it.

He spiralled around Viktor, drawing him into a game of follow the leader, which the Bulgarian took to quite happily. They jostled for leader position, forcing the other into more adventurous dives and twists, all the while both keeping an eye out for their prize.

Harry saw it first. He veered around, bolting across the sky towards it — Viktor realised immediately what he had seen, haring after him, leaning flat on his broom to catch up. The snitch dove, and the two seekers dove with it, heading towards the ground at phenomenal speed. Harry hadn't flown against someone else with a Firebolt, not since the last time he faced Viktor, and it was exhilarating having to actually push his broom to the limit just to stay level.

He didn't flinch as the ground grew closer, didn't pull away even when most others would. The snitch was determined to get them as low as possible — barely five feet off the ground, it stopped descending and took a sharp left. Harry immediately did the same, but so did Viktor, and he had the advantage of being on the left side already. Still reeling from the G-force of pulling out of the sharp dive, Harry could only stretch forward on his broom and reach his arm out, but it wasn't quite enough. Viktor grabbed the snitch from the air, mere centimetres from Harry's fingertips.

The pair of them slowed, doing a wide loop to steady their brooms, and Harry tried not to let his shoulders slump too obviously. He'd blown his chance, for sure!

Viktor, however, had other ideas. "I thought we were going to die," he declared, shoving his goggles around his neck to reveal shocked brown eyes. "You did not leave the dive, and for a moment, I thought we were both going to die."

Their eyes met, and both of them laughed breathlessly.

"Good game, Viktor," Harry said, swallowing back the disappointed lump in his throat. "I guess you finally got your pride back."

"Perhaps, but you sure as hell made me work for it!"

Andy, Claudia and Oliver were stood at the side of the pitch when they landed — Oliver was beaming like a proud parent, while the other two looked utterly stunned.

"Kid," Andy began, and Harry braced himself for the polite let-down. "If you can fly like that in a real match, you're hired."