

it until she about had a breakdown.” He put a hand on Harry’s back, rubbing soothingly. “Take some time to let yourself feel things. You’ll appreciate it later on.”

“What if I just do my homework all day?” Harry suggested hopefully. Remus levelled him with a flat look.

“I’ll have Ceri confiscate all your textbooks. No homework until you’ve had fun for a bit.” He blinked, his own words echoing in his head. “I don’t think that’s how grounding is supposed to work. You’re a weird kid.”

“So I’ve been told.” Harry thought about arguing further, but Remus was pretty set on it, and it *had* been a while since he’d been flying. His Firebolt had been sorely neglected since Christmas. “Fine. Can I go fly? Will you be home today?” Snape had already left on Order business, and Harry wasn’t supposed to go flying if no one was in the house, just in case something bad happened.

“I’ll be here until five; there’s an Order meeting tonight, so we’ll all be out for an hour or so, but we’ll be back in time for dinner.”

“That’s fine,” Harry assured. He could handle a couple of hours alone. “I’ll see you at lunch. Thanks for breakfast, Ceri!” he added to the house elf, who beamed at him.

Some of the tension in Harry’s shoulders left him as soon as he kicked off into the air, and he closed his eyes against the breeze as he flew in slow laps around the half pitch. The last time he’d been on his broom, he’d beaten Viktor Krum. The last time he’d been on his broom he’d been with Cedric.

Part of Harry hated Remus for forcing him to take stock of his emotions like this, but he knew it was for the best. At school everything had been so *loud*; even when people were giving him space, the whispers had still been present. He hadn’t felt any right to mourn Cedric when there were people like Cho and Patrick around; people who had known Cedric for years, who had loved him.

He still didn’t feel much of a right to mourn Cedric now. Not when it was his fault the boy was dead.

Everyone he’d said as much to had yelled at him for thinking it, but he didn’t see how it could be any other way. The Cup was a portkey because of Harry, Cedric had touched the Cup because of Harry; he was dead because of Harry.

Harry wondered if it would have hurt less if he hadn’t spent half the year getting to know Cedric, becoming friends with him, competing against and alongside him. If Cedric was just some random Hufflepuff student, would he still feel a tidal wave of grief every time he so much as thought about him?

It was so *unfair*. Cedric was one of the best of them. He was Hogwarts champion for a reason, but more than that, he had been *good*. So Hufflepuff it had driven people mad sometimes, in the best of ways. He’d hoped to join the aurors when he left school. He’d