

## Chapter 21

Harry's knees barely supported him as he started walking down the aisle between the Gryffindor and Hufflepuff tables, keeping his head down and his gaze forward. Whispers were filling the hall, the eyes on him like a physical pressure against his skin. No one was applauding.

Dumbledore urged him through the same door the three champions had walked, into a small side chamber. The three looked up at him, confused.

"Cedric, I didn't do it," Harry blurted, speaking for the first time since his name emerged from the Goblet. "Please, you have to believe me — all of you. I didn't put my name in, I didn't do it."

Cedric's brow furrowed, but before he could ask for an explanation the door opened once more, and Ludo Bagman strode in, beaming. Cold dread entered Harry's heart when the man introduced him as the fourth Triwizard champion.

"I can't be!" he insisted. "I'm too young, I didn't put my name in!"

"But 'e is just a boy?" Fleur Delacour said, a puzzled look on her face. "Zis 'as to be some sort of joke, non?"

"No joke! Harry's name came out of the Goblet, he's magically bound to compete, just like the rest of you!" Bagman's voice was far too cheerful considering the circumstances.

There was a loud noise, and the door slammed open. All three heads of school entered, followed by Mr Crouch, as well as Professors McGonagall and Snape. Harry glanced at Snape with a helpless expression; the man's face was tight, and pale. Nobody looked happy, except Bagman.

Fleur immediately hurried to her headmistress, speaking in rapid French, and the tall woman surveyed the gathered crowd with contempt. "Dumbly-dorr," she said eventually, her voice icy. "Explain."

"I don't remember anything in the rules saying the host school is allowed two champions," Karkaroff agreed. Dumbledore had a look of mild concern on his face, but otherwise seemed quite unruffled. Harry glared at him; was this his fault?

The two heads of the foreign schools continued to question Dumbledore, furious that not only had a second Hogwarts champion been chose, but an underage one at that. Eventually, Dumbledore cleared his throat. "Harry, did you put your name in the Goblet?" he asked, as if he was merely commenting on the weather. Harry glared at him.

"No, I didn't!"

"Obviously 'e is lying!"