

At lunch, Harry was once again at the Ravenclaw table — this time sat with Cho. “I wanted to thank you again for writing to me over the summer,” she said quietly, offering a shy smile. “It... it’s been hard, without Cedric. I’m glad I’ve still got friends like you, and the Hufflepuff boys.” Cedric’s old roommates, from what Harry could see, seem to have taken Cho under their wing; which, considering she spent most of her time with them before due to hanging out with Cedric, wasn’t surprising.

“Of course, yeah. I’m glad we’re friends, too. Last year was fun, even with all the parts that... weren’t.” He paused, eyeing her in concern. “Are you doing okay?” He couldn’t imagine what it was like for her, being back at school with everyone whispering about Cedric’s death, being confronted with all the memories of her boyfriend.

The smile she gave him was strained around the edges. “I’m getting there. Like I said, it’s been hard. But it’ll get easier.”

Harry wrapped an arm around her shoulders, giving her a quick squeeze. “I’m always here if you need me,” he promised.

“Honestly, just knowing the truth of what happened was a big relief,” she confessed. “If I’d been left with just that vague stuff Dumbledore said last year, I don’t know how I’d be feeling.” She sniffled a little. “I just wish everyone else would believe what you say, too. Patrick and the boys do, when I told them — not the details, just, y’know, how he died,” she added quickly. Harry hadn’t left much out in his explanation to her and the other Triwizard champions, so he was glad she wasn’t spreading the *entire* story about. “But all those people who believe the *Prophet*... it’s like they’re just laughing at Cedric’s death, y’know? Saying it was an accident, or part of the tournament — like he wasn’t *good enough* to make it to that Cup.” As she spoke, she glared pointedly up at Umbridge. Harry wondered if Cho had had a DADA lesson yet.

“As far as I’m concerned, Cedric Diggory won the Triwizard Tournament,” Harry declared plainly. “I wouldn’t have been at the Cup if not for him.” And for Crouch rigging the whole maze in his favour, but that was beside the point. “They’ll see the truth, one day. Voldemort won’t stay quiet forever.”

Cho’s smile became a grim line.

“We’ll be ready, when he does.” Her eyes were fierce, and Harry believed her. Even if he hoped that none of them would need to join that fight.

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It was tempting, during Care of Magical Creatures, to ask Grubbly-Plank when Hagrid would be coming back. But if he truly was out on a mission for the Order, either she didn’t know or she did and wouldn’t tell him. Instead Harry kept his head down and studied his bowtruckle, quietly hating the guilt he felt from enjoying the calm, informative lesson so much. Hagrid was wonderful, but his classes were always... exciting.

He could have done without Draco and Pansy making cutting remarks about the half-giant under their breath, but most of Harry’s ire in response was feigned; they were doing what was