

Harry's stomach sank as her words became clear. "I have to learn to dance?" he squeaked. "I have to find someone willing to dance? With me? In front of *everyone*?"

McGonagall's lips twitched further, her amusement barely showing. "Yes, Mr Potter, I'm afraid you do. I'm sure one of your friends will be able to help you; most purebloods take dancing lessons prior to Hogwarts."

For a second, Harry thought she was talking about the other heirs, and his heart stopped when he tried to figure out how she'd found out about it all. Then he realised she was probably just talking about Neville or Parvati or someone. There was no way she was talking about the Weasleys.

"Can't I just face another dragon instead?" he asked meekly. McGonagall's fingers clenched for a second around her wand, like she was resisting the urge to put her face in her hands. It was an expression Harry was pretty familiar with from his housemistress after three and a half years.

"Sadly not, Mr Potter. I'm sure you'll pick it up as quickly as you've been picking up spells lately. I must say, I'm impressed. You get more and more like your mother every year." That made Harry beam, chest fluttering with warmth.

"Thanks, Professor." He flashed her a quick grin, turning away once it was clear he'd been dismissed. He paused in the doorway, glancing back. "Professor?" She looked up. "Does my dance partner have to be from Gryffindor?"

"Of course not! The whole point of the ball is to socialise with our international guests and extend the hand of friendship; that includes the four houses as well. Your partner may be whomever you choose, as long as they are a student at one of the three attending schools."

"And here I was hoping Professor Snape would go with me," Harry mock-sighed, smirking when the Transfiguration professor almost lost her composure for a second. "See you, Professor!" He left the classroom, heading towards Gryffindor Tower and the siren call of his bed.

He had a little under three weeks to find a partner, and learn how to dance well enough to avoid embarrassing them both in front of everyone at the ball.

He would *definitely* prefer to face the dragon again.

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Apparently, finding a partner wasn't going to be a problem for Harry. Not if he cared whether he actually *knew* the girl or not. Within the first twelve hours of news about the ball filtering through the school, he was asked out by no less than five girls he had never spoken to in his life. He was even asked by a second year Hufflepuff, who stuttered so much she could barely get the words out.

Neville found the whole thing hilarious, because he was the worst friend ever. "Just pick someone and ask them," he said, as if it was that simple.