

cub,” Remus murmured, his hand solid on Harry’s shoulder. “Just breathe.”

“I can’t do this!” Harry said, his voice strangled. “I’m fourteen! I don’t know nearly as many spells as the others, and sheer dumb luck will only get me so far! I’m going to die in this sodding tournament!”

“*You will not die.*” The words came in a firm hiss, and Harry’s head snapped up, meeting Snape’s near-black eyes. “You’re not an idiot, Potter. You’re a darn sight more powerful than you give yourself credit for, and after teaching you this summer I have every faith in your ability to survive this tournament. You will have help wherever you should need it — surely you didn’t expect us to just throw you to the wolves?”

Harry blinked. Snape took a step back, looking a little surprised by his own outburst. By his side, Remus smiled. “Severus is right, Harry. You’re a talented young man, and we’ll do whatever we can to make sure you get through this in one piece. Now, why don’t you head up to bed? I daresay after all this excitement you could use the rest.”

Now that the shock was fading, Harry *was* pretty exhausted. He gulped down the hot chocolate, feeling the sugar rush through him. “Okay,” he said eventually, once his pulse had returned to normal. “It’ll be fine. Everything is fine.” He looked up at the two adults. “You really think I can do this?” The tournament was supposed to challenge even the of-age wizards. How could Harry compare?

“Absolutely,” Remus assured. “You don’t have to win. You just have to finish.” He took Harry’s empty mug, setting it on the coffee table. “Now go on, up to the dorms with you. Call Sirius when you get there, would you? He wanted to come with me, but we didn’t want to risk it.”

Harry got to his feet, eagerly accepting one last hug from the werewolf. “Thank you,” he murmured. “Both of you.” He glanced up to Snape. “I’m sorry to barge in. I just... I needed...” He trailed off, the words not quite making it to his throat. He needed reassurance, and he had come to *Snape*, regardless of whether Remus had been there or not. What was the world coming to?

To his surprise, Snape put a hand on his shoulder, just for a second. “I told you to come here if there was an emergency,” he reminded. “I rather think this qualifies.”

Harry offered the man a tentative smile, which didn’t last long when he geared himself up to head to Gryffindor. Time to face the music.

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To his surprise, Gryffindor Tower was in the middle of a party when he arrived, and he was immediately dragged into the middle of it. “Brilliant, Harry!” Katie Bell cheered.

“If it couldn’t be me, at least it’s a Gryffindor!” Angelina enthused. Harry was congratulated and slapped on the back by people he barely even knew, the common room full of cheering and applause. Harry tried to insist he hadn’t put his name in, but no one wanted to listen.