

“Did you ask an older student to put your name in for you?” Dumbledore continued, still in that frustratingly calm tone.

“No! I don’t want this. I don’t want to be part of the tournament!” Harry insisted. Surely there had to be a way out?

“Well, it’s a bit late for that!” Bagman crowed, chuckling. “The Goblet of Fire is a binding magical contract! Pretty dire consequences for breaking it.”

“But I didn’t enter!” Harry argued. “How can I be bound in a contract I didn’t consent to?”

“Headmaster, I really don’t think we should be rewarding Potter’s... *theatrics* by allowing him to compete,” Snape sneered. If Harry didn’t know better by now, he would’ve been raging at the man. Beside him, McGonagall was wringing her hands anxiously.

“I demand to be allowed to resubmit the names of my students!” Karkaroff said, Maxime nodding at his side.

The argument continued, Karkaroff threatening to leave, and things just went downhill when Moody entered the room. Even though he was saying all the things Harry was thinking — that someone was doing this to put him in danger, that it had to be someone powerful to fool the magic of the Goblet — it rankled to have the man be the only person outwardly on his side, speaking in such a way that it was immediately dismissed as the ramblings of a paranoid old auror.

When things came to a tense silence, everyone seeming to realise there was nothing they could do about it, Bagman clapped his hands together with a grin. “Right, shall we crack on, then? Champions,” he announced, drawing the attention of the four teens. “The first task is designed to test your daring, so we’re not going to be telling you what it is.” Harry stared flatly at the man as he went on about courage in the face of the unknown — was he serious? They were just going to *do the tournament*? Was no one but Harry even *slightly* alarmed by the circumstances?

When they were given all the information necessary, Maxime and Karkaroff didn’t stick around long, taking their champions with them. Dumbledore sent Harry and Cedric off, and soon Harry found himself in the Entrance Hall, walking alongside the Hufflepuff. He paused, looking up at the tall boy. “You believe me, right, Cedric? That I didn’t put my name in?” Cedric looked somewhat conflicted, and Harry’s heart sank. “Right, no, of course you don’t. Why would you? Who wouldn’t love to be in the Triwizard Tournament? As if I haven’t had enough of life or death situations. As if *Famous Harry Potter* could *possibly* need more attention.” His tone was bitter, and Cedric winced.

“I didn’t say that! I just... it’s all a bit mad, isn’t it?”

Harry snorted. “Just a bit. Seriously, Cedric, even if I did manage to get my name in, how the hell would I have tricked the Goblet into picking a fourth person? I don’t want to compete! I want *you* to be the Hogwarts champion, I was thrilled when you got announced! Please, just... I didn’t do this. I don’t want to compete against you, or anyone, but I’m stuck here. I just need you to believe me.”