

## Chapter 27

When the four Triwizard champions had agreed to a friendly little seeker's match before Christmas, they had decided to keep it low-key, just between them.

So, naturally, the entire castle found out.

Harry walked with his Firebolt over his shoulder, wearing his Gryffindor quidditch team robes, down a gap that had parted in the huge crowd of people on the Hogwarts lawn. He met with Cedric, Fleur and Viktor in the middle, as well as another Durmstrang student called Boris. Boris had a whistle around his neck, and was holding a small metal box. "So much for keeping this quiet, eh?" Harry remarked, and the other three grinned sheepishly.

"I may have mentioned it a couple of times," Viktor admitted.

"I told Cho, and a few friends."

"Ze Beauxbatons students asked, and I could not lie to zem."

Harry laughed. "That's alright. That lot over there are my fault," he confessed, pointing to a cluster of Hogwarts students with the rest of the Gryffindor quidditch team and Neville at the very front. "It's more fun with an audience, anyway." He hadn't expected an audience of quite this caliber, but he could handle it. It was just... practically half the population of Hogwarts, plus all the Durmstrang and Beauxbatons students. Watching him face off against an internationally acclaimed seeker.

No big deal.

Across the crowd, stood in a group of Slytherins and Durmstrang students, Harry saw Draco. The blond was sneering, but when he caught Harry's eye, his expression softened for the barest of seconds. It was enough to give Harry the boost of confidence he needed. He could do this.

"Okay," Boris declared firmly, his voice magically louder to be heard over the crowd. "Here are the rules. All four seekers will begin on their brooms with both feet on the ground and eyes closed. I will release the snitch, count fifteen seconds, and then blow my whistle. Only then can the seekers take off." His Russian-accented English filled the air as the spectators went hushed, practically vibrating with excitement. "There will be fifteen rounds, and whoever has the most points at the end wins. If it is a tie, we will have a tiebreaker round between those seekers. Usual match rules apply. Seekers, are we clear?"

All four of them nodded. Boris grinned. "May I have a volunteer each from Hogwarts and Beauxbatons?"

One of Fleur's friends, a girl called Adrienne, stepped forward with Angelina Johnson beside her. Boris held out the box, flicking it open to reveal a shining golden snitch. "Ladies, please inspect the snitch and assure our audience that Durmstrang is playing fairly."