

Still, Ron's bad mood couldn't dampen Harry's spirits after the win against Ravenclaw. He felt like he was walking on air — he had one of the best brooms in the world, he'd caught the snitch, *and* he'd produced a decent Patronus. Even if the dementors hadn't been real.

His heart did a funny sort of squeezing feeling when he thought about what Malfoy had done. He'd thought things were getting better between them. Was he just so desperate to win the Quidditch Cup that he'd sabotage Harry?

The party in the Gryffindor common room raged for hours, especially once the twins brought back their Honeydukes haul, winking at Harry when they entered the common room with arms full of sweets and butterbeer. Harry let them drag him into the celebration, their arms flung around his shoulders and beaming grins on their faces. Even Ron was having a good time — though he was pointedly not looking at the corner of the common room, where Hermione had her nose buried in her Muggle Studies book, her hair getting increasingly more wild as she tugged on it anxiously. Harry had already tried to get her to join the party, but she wasn't having any of it. Apparently, the only reason she wasn't up in her dorm was that Fay Dunbar and Sophie Roper were having some sort of boy-related crisis up there. Considering that pair of her dorm mates had even less patience for Hermione than Parvati and Lavender, Harry didn't blame her.

Eventually, it all got a bit much for Harry. While the others were distracted by the twins letting off some Filibuster's Fireworks, Harry slipped out of the portrait hole, heading off down the corridor. He didn't have a destination in mind, but his feet seemed to be taking him somewhere regardless. He wasn't entirely surprised when he rounded a corner to see a familiar blond head.

"Shouldn't you be celebrating?" Malfoy asked as Harry approached. He reached out, dusting a bit of red and gold confetti off of Harry's shoulder. "Surely the party isn't over already."

"Needed some air. It's loud in there," Harry replied. He went over to the window ledge, sitting on it and staring out at the darkening grounds. "Why'd you do it? Pretend to be dementors?"

"It was Pansy's idea," Malfoy replied with a faint grimace. "She thought it would be funny. I thought it would be good practice of that spell Lupin's teaching you." He edged closer, but didn't sit on the ledge beside Harry, leaning against the wall instead. "People are starting to ask questions. Questions that might get back to my father. The excuse of my arm hurting only worked for so long," he added dryly.

Harry thought back to his conversation with Neville the other day. Of course; he was being stupid. Malfoy had to keep up appearances. "Your father wants you to pick fights with me?"

"My father wants me to act like a *proper* Slytherin," Malfoy corrected. "Including showing I'm better than Gryffindors. Especially Golden Boy Gryffindors." The nickname was almost fond, and Harry's lips twitched.

"I suppose I can toss a few spells your way between classes," he replied magnanimously. "Ron keeps telling me I'm being too nice to Slytherins these days."