

Chapter 24

The morning after, Harry forgot for a minute that the task was already over. He woke up entirely convinced that the task was that morning, and he'd really just dreamed facing the dragon the first time.

Then reality set in, and he slumped against his pillows in a mixture of disbelief and overwhelming gratitude. He'd already done it. He didn't have to do it again. He never had to look at another dragon in his life if he didn't want to.

The castle was abuzz with chatter when he went down to breakfast, though for the first time since Halloween people were looking at him with amazement rather than annoyance. His little flying stunt had been the most visually impressive, according to just about everyone in Gryffindor Tower — Harry thought they were biased, but seeing a group of second year Slytherins staring at him and then break into hushed whispers and bright grins, maybe they weren't.

Either way, it was over. And now he was back to classes like nothing had happened.

Neville was checking on some sort of extra-credit Herbology project right after breakfast, so Harry walked up to Charms alone. At least, he tried; halfway there, he was yanked into a narrow passage behind a tapestry. "What—" He relaxed when he saw pale blond hair. "Draco, what the hell? Anyone could have seen that!"

"You reckless, idiotic, foolhardy *disaster of a wizard*," Draco hissed, grey eyes burning, fist still clenched in the front of Harry's robe. "Do you have *any* idea how many years it took off my life watching you fly around with that bloody dragon like it was a game of tag? You could have died!"

"Well, yeah," Harry said with a shrug. "But I didn't."

Draco stared at him incredulously. "*Gryffindors!*." The word sounded like an insult, but it made Harry grin.

And then Draco's fingers tightened around his robe, and he pulled Harry forward, their lips slamming together.

Harry forgot to breathe.

He forgot to do a lot of things, actually. Luckily instinct kicked in and he was kissing back before he could even think about it, his hand settling on Draco's shoulder. They parted, but not far, foreheads pressed together. "Don't you *ever* scare me like that again, alright?" Draco breathed. Harry was amazed the blond could find words. His head was still spinning, stuck in the moment Draco's lips touched his. Did this mean... what did this mean?

"I, er, can't guarantee that," he said eventually. "Triwizard champion. Harry Potter. Kinda comes with the territory."