

“Well, there will be obstacles, of course,” Bagman said, looking quite pleased about it. “Hagrid is providing a number of creatures; there’ll be spells to break, all that sort of thing. We can’t make it too easy on you!”

He went on to explain the specifics, how they would go in by order of points, and beamed at them when he finished, rocking on his toes. “Should be fun, eh?”

None of the champions looked like they agreed with the assessment, but they all nodded politely. Bagman deflated at their lack of enthusiasm. “Right. Well. If you’ve not got any questions, we should head up to the castle; getting a bit chilly out here!”

They all turned to leave, clambering over the hedges, and Viktor sidled up beside Harry when they left the stands. “May I talk to you for a minute? Alone?” he asked quietly, his dark brows furrowed.

“Yeah, sure,” Harry agreed, perplexed. He waved off Bagman’s concerns and followed Viktor away from the rest of the group, heading towards the edge of the forest. “Is everything alright?”

“It is Hermione,” Viktor sighed, folding his arms over his chest. “Ever since the second task, she has been... distant. She spends less time in the library, and I wonder if it is because of me?”

“Oh.” Harry tried to keep his face blank, wondering what the hell he could say in the face of that. “Viktor, I... it’s probably just because of exams, mate. Hermione always gets a bit single-minded when it comes to academics. She’s probably just too busy studying in her room to go down to the library. She doesn’t like it when it gets as busy in there as it does during exam season.” He hoped it was just that. Hoped it didn’t have anything to do with him, or Dumbledore.

“You do not think it is because of that Skeeter woman’s article? And the pus? If I haff come on too strong, been too forward...” Viktor looked distressed, and Harry clapped him on the shoulder.

“I don’t think it’s that,” he assured, wishing he could be as confident as he sounded. “No one really remembers the article after mine came out. Just give her a bit of space while she studies, yeah?” He eyed the Bulgarian boy in consideration. “You really like her, don’t you?”

“Ve do not get girls like her in Bulgaria,” Viktor said, a smile tugging at his lips. “I am not blind; I know she does not haff the same feelings for me that I do her. But... I would still like to end this vell ven I leave here.”

Part of Harry was glad, that Viktor seemed to realise that Hermione was just biding her time while Ron got his head out of his arse, but it still made a pang of sadness rise in his chest. Viktor deserved better.

He opened his mouth to assure the other seeker that Hermione would be alright, when something moved in the trees behind them. He grabbed Viktor by the arm on instinct and pulled him away, raising his wand. “Vat is it?”