

Cedric stared at him for a long moment, then his shoulders slumped, and he ran a hand through his hair. "I believe you."

Harry blinked, the words echoing in his head. "Really?"

"Really. You're clearly not happy about this, and I don't think you're that good a liar," the Hufflepuff added with a brief grin. "Besides, like Moody said; I reckon you have to really know what you're doing to mess with the Goblet like that."

Harry couldn't help himself; he wrapped his arms around the Hufflepuff's waist, relief flooding him. "Thank you," he breathed. That was one person — one student — who believed him. He let go, flushing. Cedric's cheeks were pink too. "I'm sorry about all this. You were supposed to be the one, and I came in and stole your thunder." Hufflepuff finally had a moment in the sun, and Harry had to ruin it all. Cedric shrugged.

"Not your fault," he dismissed. "And it's all for Hogwarts, eh?"

Lips pursed, Harry didn't respond. He doubted the rest of the school would see it that way.

They parted ways at the stairs, but Harry didn't go up to Gryffindor Tower. He wasn't ready to face that yet. Instead he went to the dungeons, only one destination in mind. A place he'd never been, but seen on the map enough times to find his way to. He knocked cautiously. The door opened, and dark eyes greeted him. "I thought you might show up."

Snape beckoned him into his quarters, and Harry barely got the chance to look around before he was wrapped in a tight hug. "Oh, cub!" It was Remus, his grip almost painful. "I came as soon as Severus told us. Merlin, Harry, what happened?"

"I don't know!" Harry said once Remus' grip loosened, looking up earnestly at the two adults. "I didn't put my name in! Dumbledore says I have to compete; it's a binding magical contract, apparently!"

"Unfortunately, he's right," Snape declared. "The Goblet of Fire is a very old, very powerful magical artefact. Once it selects you for the tournament, you must compete in each task unless you die or are disqualified, or risk losing your magic."

"How do I get disqualified?" Harry asked. Snape's face was grim.

"Previously, champions have been disqualified for trying to kill or severely injure another champion." Oh. Maybe not, then.

"So I'm screwed, is what you're saying?" Harry surmised. "Great. Whoever's trying to kill me is finally going to get their wish. Do you think it was Dumbledore? He didn't look all that put out by it all. And he's certainly powerful enough."

"I think the headmaster has other plans for you, and he wouldn't risk them on something like this," Remus said gently. "I think this came from... the other side of the board."

Voldemort, then. Fantastic. Harry felt his hands begin to shake, the shock setting in, and within moments he was being led to a chair and handed a mug of hot chocolate. "Breathe,