

The entirety of Beauxbatons strutted into the Great Hall on the morning of Halloween, two by two. The younger students peeled off to let the older students through and each of them placed their piece of parchment into the blue-white flames. It flickered red again and again until the very last one was placed in by Fleur. Once they finished, Maxime dismissed them and they dispersed around the hall, mingling with their hosts.

The walls of the hall were decorated for the holiday. There were floating jack-o-lanterns in place of the usual candles and bats gliding around the morning sky reflected in the ceiling. Instead of the usual orange and black, there were streamers with the colors of each of the three schools.

Neville commented from beside Harry, "Well, I guess they finally decided to finally get it over with."

"They're French, they needed to make a show of it." He joked.

He felt Neville turn to look at him, the same appraising look he'd received from everyone else the last few days, "And what about you? Still haven't decided?"

Harry chuckled, he'd gotten the same question five times since he woke up and dozens more in the previous few days, "As it so happens, I did." There were some people, particularly Ron, who seemed hopeful that he wouldn't, as though the only thing standing between them, and the fourth-year spot was the entry of his name. His ginger friend had been rather distant in the last few days, keeping to Seamus and Dean, and pleading with Parvati, who still hadn't forgiven him for being a prat at the Welcoming Feast.

Reaching into his bag, he pulled out a poorly written strip of parchment. His handwriting would never be anything but chicken scratch, but you could make it out well enough. Neville clapped him on the shoulder and gave him a shake, "I knew it. There was no way you could resist."

With a shake of his head, Harry threw his leg over the bench and bounded up to the goblet. There was a whoop of joy from Fred at the Gryffindor table. Harry only quirked an eyebrow in his direction as the flames engulfed his entry. All around the hall, people watched him. *Fucking Merlin, you'd think I'd be old news at this point but no.*

Returning to Neville, Harry asked, "What had Fred so happy?"

"There were bets going around on whether you'd enter or not... Apparently most of the upper years were convinced you weren't going to when you didn't enter the first couple days, so they just made a tidy bit of money." Neville admitted guiltily, giving himself away.

Harry snorted out a laugh, "Well... did you at least win." In answer to his question, Fred slid down the table with a none-to-small pouch of galleons in his hand.

"Well done, Harry." He placed the pouch in front of Neville, "You just won your friend here some lovely shopping money for the next Hogsmeade weekend."

"Happy to be of service." He responded dryly as the other boy went red in the cheeks.

"I..."

"Just be sure to treat Hannah next time you head down to Hogsmeade, mate." Neville was full blown tomato red at that as he stammered and stuttered, "She likes you, might as well take a shot, yeah?" Harry grabbed his bag and excused himself, "Now, there are still classes this morning and I need to get

to Runes... I'll see you later, hopefully with Hannah." He deliberately said the last bit loud enough to carry over to the Hufflepuff table.

Striding out of the hall, Harry tried not to pay the looks any mind as he made his way to the door. But there was one that forced him to glance in the direction of the rest of the tables. Fleur, sitting with her sister, her friend, and Luna, much to his surprise, was looking right at him. There was a calculating glint in her eye, and or the life of him, he couldn't imagine what difference it made to the French witch. It didn't help that every time he looked at her, he thought of his dream a few nights earlier.

Luckily, he didn't have to think about it long as he made it out into the corridor in just a few seconds. Unfortunately, he was met by an unwelcome face, complete with foul looking snit, "I can't think of anyone worse suited to representing Hogwarts than you, Scarhead. We'll get absolutely embarrassed!"

"Malfoy, finally decided to crawl out from that rock you've been hiding under since you got your arse handed to you on the train?" Harry replied calmly. *Whatever's been said to him by his mother clearly hasn't stuck. Two months is better than I was expecting though, honestly.*

Draco scoffed in dismissal, "You got lucky!"

"Funny that, I seem to get lucky a lot. After a certain point you have to wonder if it's not just luck... and I don't know, maybe some skill as well."

"We'd be better off represented by a Hufflepuff, or Longbottom, or even a Mud..."

The air became suddenly cold around them as Harry glared at the boy across from him, "Go ahead, finish it." Draco swallowed nervously, looking to Crabbe and Goyle at his sides for support. The only support he'd had since returning to the school.

"I... uh..."

Both Crabbe and Goyle took a step back in fear while Malfoy was rooted to the spot as Harry seemingly towered over him while being only a few inches taller. He stared unblinking, emerald eyes piercing, "Go ahead. Say. It." Draco shook his head, thinking better on his near mistake. *Huh look at that, you might actually be able to teach bigoted arsesholes new tricks.* "Right, I thought not. You've done a good job of not pissing me off since the train, Malfoy. Let's not ruin a good thing. Because I doubt that you'll enjoy the repercussions."

"Is... that a threat?" Draco tried to look brave, but the way his voice broke made him sound anything but.

"Oh, no. Let's just call it... an educated observation."

"Piss off, Scarhead," he snarled, finding some of his earlier boldness, "one of these days you're going to get what's coming to you!" *Now that was definitely a threat.*

"What's going on here?" The tension in the air lifted at Professor Flitwick's arrival.

"Oh nothing, sir." He assured, "Draco and I were just having a little conversation."

"I'm sure." Flitwick didn't sound convinced. And given their history, Harry couldn't exactly blame him, "Well, if your conversation is over, I recommend you both get off to class."

“Of course, Professor.” Harry pushed past the Slytherins and made his way toward the staircase, muttering to himself, “Bloody pillock.” He walked to the Runes classroom in a sour mood, the sort that only interacting with Malfoy or Snape ever caused him.

When he got to Babbling’s classroom, there was a smooth rock engraved with various runes all interconnected on a plinth at the front of the room. That wasn’t the only thing in the room, and he found the person there more interesting than whatever it was that they’d be working on that day. Padma sat on the right-hand side of the class at one of the two person desks reading a letter.

Just like every other class, they’d been encouraged to work with people from other houses and unlike some of the others there were no assigned partners for day-to-day classes. So, Harry dropped his bag by the chair next to her. She startled as he plopped down in the chair.

When she realized that it was him, she quickly tucked the letter away with the rest of her things, “Sorry, Padma, didn’t mean to scare you.”

“You didn’t,” she insisted, but then stopped herself, ‘well you did... but it’s alright.”

Looking at the beautiful Indian girl, for a moment all he could remember was what her wide hips had felt like in his hands as he thrust away at her body in a dream. He still didn’t fully understand why she’d been there in the first place, but he’d be a liar if he said it hadn’t been incredibly appealing.

“Right,” he gave her a smile, “letter from home?”

“Oh,” she glanced down at her bag nervously, “yes. From my grandmother. We always try to keep in touch.” She didn’t seem to want to look at him, not directly anyway.

“That’s great,” she nodded quickly, and he nudged her shoulder with his own, “hey, you alright? Seem a bit jumpy this morning?”

“Just... uh... just a bit nervous.”

“About what?”

She glanced at him, right at his lips to be specific. Her tongue darted out to lick her own, “They...” it seemed to him that she was looking for a lie, “you must not have seen. The schedule for the tournaments until Christmas was on the house bulletin boards this morning. First event for the fourth-year academics is next weekend.” Padma finished in a rush.

“Oh, is that all.”

“What do you mean is that all?” she tried to sound affronted, but it didn’t quite work.

Harry gave her a disarming little smirk, “You’re going to be fine. Absolutely no reason to worry. They don’t stand a chance. You’ve been preparing almost non-stop. Brilliant witch like you has nothing to worry about.”

Her eyes lit up, pleased with his compliment, “But...that doesn’t mean that I’m not nervous about it.”

“Fair enough.” he conceded, “There are good ways of getting rid of nerves you know.”

Padma was definitely looking at him now, her big, brown eyes wide, “What do you mean?”

“Oh, flying and dueling do it for me.” Harry said innocently, looking her right in the eye, “Though if I was nervous about either of my tournaments, I suppose that wouldn’t work since... you know that’s what I’m actually doing. Why? What did you think I meant?”

“Nothing,” she told him a bit too loudly, “I... I was just curious, that’s all.” Even on her darker skin he could make out the faintest of blushes. They were interrupted from any further conversation as the door opened and more students poured into the classroom.

There were two Durmstrang and three Beauxbatons students mixed in with the regular lot. Daphne noticed him sitting with Padma, huffed slightly and took a seat with Blaise. There were murmurs all throughout the classroom as Babbling came in from her office, “Morning everyone and welcome to our guests. I’m Professor Babbling, I look forward to spending the rest of the year teaching you.”

When she came to stand at the front of the classroom, she asked, “Now out of curiosity, what language did I just greet everyone in Miss Granger?”

“English, Professor.” Hermione answered, confused.

“And Miss Duvernay?” She looked at one of the Beauxbatons students.

“French.”

“And Mr. Ragnarsson?”

“Swedish.” No one questioned how exactly the Professor knew the foreign students’ names without asking. They were too intrigued by what was going on.

“Excellent, though you’re all wrong.” Babbling told them cheerily, “I said it in Hebrew.” She placed her hand on the stone sitting on the plinth, “This handy little runestone is what’s responsible for the confusion. No one has ever managed to work out the arithmancy to make a simple spell work and so this is the alternative. You see, it works as a translation device for each person within its vicinity. It requires a mixture of runecraft and charms work, and they’re terribly trick to get right. I’ve singed my eyebrows more than once perfecting them.” The class laughed at her admission.

A hand raised to the back of the classroom, “Yes, Miss Iliev?”

“How can it translate into more than one language at a time?” she asked.

“That is for you to find out, I’m afraid.” Babbling clapped, “Right, for this class session. You’ll be analyzing one of these stones with your partners, focusing on the runes. I want you to identify as many of them as you can and how they interact.” She waved her wand, and one of the stones landed on each table. No one moved, and she shewed them with her hand, “Go on, get on with it ladies and gents.”

One complicated piece of charms and runes and I might be able to understand Anya and Orina in Bulgarian. I wonder if it would be easier to just learn it instead... because this looks complicated. Padma was looking at the smooth, engraved stone fascinated. She was probably the best in their year at Runes, though it was a close-run thing with Hermione. If nothing else, she was the most passionate about it.

“That’s frickin’ awesome.” Padma said almost reverently.

Harry leaned in to give it a closer look, and he thought he heard her gasp ever so slightly as their thighs touched in the process., “Well, I’m confident that we’ll be able to crack it... eventually.”

“Of course, we will.” Padma smiled at him.

She was as comfortable reading runes as he was flying up in the sky. They split the stone half and half to translate, trying to determine their purposes, but he needed her help more than once. While he understood runes well enough, but this seemed like it was particularly intricate. Fortunately for him, Padma was happy to help every time he wasn't quite sure what he was looking at.

His one big breakthrough came when he noticed something, "That's not the normal 'ansuz' rune is it?" The Elder Furthark rune, that represented the Aesir, didn't look quite right to him.

"What?" Padma asked turning the stone to get a better look.

"It's been altered slightly, maybe to represent a specific concept."

"That would make sense with some of what I've worked out, but which one?"

"Well," Harry contemplated, "if the stone manages to translate for each person, regardless of their native language, you'd think it has something to do with the mind."

Óðr means mind in Old Norse, so..." she was looking at her notes, and talking to herself more than him for a few seconds, "And that would make sense with 'mannaz' rune... That's excellent, Harry. I imagine that it's probably magnifying one of the charms."

"Some variation of the Legillimency Charm maybe." He offered.

Speaking just behind him, Babbling made him jump, "Quite right, Mr. Potter. Not many fourth years would be aware of that particular spell." The witch was amused by his reaction, always enjoying the chance to catch one of her students off-guard. Giggling, she didn't even wait for him to respond and moved over to someone with their hand up.

Padma beside him looked amused at his expense, "Didn't think you'd be quite so jumpy, Harry. Considering everything you've done."

"Yeah, yeah, laugh it up." She did just that before focusing on their work again. When he saw that she was properly occupied, he struck. With a gentle poke to her side, she jumped in her seat and stifled a squeal.

"Harry!" She hissed at him, without any real heat. She couldn't hide her own amusement at his antics.

He was entirely unrepentant, though did manage to stop from laughing at her, "In all fairness, I'm not that surprised you're a bit jumpy, Pads." She rolled her eyes at him, but the smile on her face gave her away.

As the class neared its end, they combined their notes and put their heads together to put down as much as they could to parchment. That ended up largely being Padma's responsibility, by choice though, and Harry could only watch intently.

When she finished, she dropped her quill beside her and noticed his gaze. She swallowed, feeling slightly self-conscious, "What?"

"Nothing," he told her warmly, "I just love watching somebody do what they love. There's always something really captivating about it. I like to think I look something like that when I'm flying."

Padma ducked her head, delighted and embarrassed by that, "You do... I mean... I think you do. Probably a bit more intense than me looking at some runes though."

“Oh, I don’t know. If you get runes wrong, they can blow up in your face or worse.” They both remembered what Luna had told them during their carriage ride not too long ago, “Seems about as dangerous as flying if you ask me.”

Padma was at a loss for words, and he thought it was cute the way she stuttered, “I... uh... thanks.”

“You’re very welcome.”

“Alright, that’s our time done class. Please bring me your work before you leave.” Babbling announced from the front of the room, “And now you’ll know why you can understand each other in your other classes.”

Padma walked up to the front of the classroom and handed in their work before hurrying back to the desk and stuffing her things into her bag, “It was great working together. I’ll see you later, Harry. Bit of a hike to Transfiguration, you know?”

It wasn’t that far, and certainly not the worst trek in the castle, but he wasn’t going to question that, “Cheers, Pads. See you later.” In her hurry to get out of the room as quickly as possible, she dropped her grandmother’s letter and didn’t notice. As Harry started cleaning up his own things, he saw it sitting on the ground on the side of the desk. As he finished up, Harry grabbed it and went in pursuit of the Ravenclaw.

Hurrying out to the corridor, he didn’t see her and jogged to catch up. She wasn’t down the next corridor either. He bounded up the enchanted staircase and toward the Transfiguration classroom, but still no sign of her. *Damn, she’s booking it.* Harry thought he caught a glimpse of her, but she was turning down a corridor that definitely didn’t lead to her next class. Figuring why not, he followed after her and went down the same almost entirely disused corridor and found no one there.

Running a hand through his hair, he shook his head. *Well, I suppose I’ll just give it to her next time I see her. Maybe she won’t even realize that it’s gone.* He was just getting ready to turn and head back toward the stairs when he heard something that pulled him up short. A breathy gasp for air from behind one of the tapestries along the wall.

Hushed mutterings followed that he couldn’t quite make out. Some innate part of him told him that he should go and investigate, and lately his instincts had done nothing but lead him to fun instead of horrible danger, so he wasn’t going to ignore them.

Pulling the tapestry back quietly, he was treated to the sight of Padma in the throes of passion. With her eyes squeezed shut, she bit her bottom lip hard enough that he thought she might draw blood. She was trying to stifle any further outbursts as her arm moved insistently beneath her skirts.

Squish. Squish. Squish. He could make out every wet plunge of her fingers as she chased her peak. One of her hands slid underneath the hem of her blouse to cup one of her firm tits. She gasped again and muttered softly, only just loud enough that he could hear, “Handsome... bastard... getting me all riled up.”

“This is certainly another one of those things that can relieve stress and nervousness, though I find it’s better with a partner.” Harry told her softly, sure that his voice wouldn’t carry into the next corridor.

Padma jumped like he hit her with an overpowered stinging hex, “Harry! It’s... not...” She tried in vain to hide her disheveled appearance.

"It's exactly what it looks like, Pads." He told her, stepping behind the tapestry and letting it hide them, "You were getting yourself off... because of me. Because I got you all riled up, I think you said."

Padma ducked her head, refusing to look him in the eye, "Nothing new there."

Harry smiled at her shyness, "I'd be happy to make it up to you... if you'd like me to that is." He grabbed her hand and laced his fingers with hers, "I did say it's better with a partner."

"Really?" she asked, horny and eager, but utterly shocked.

"Yep."

Padma weighed her options in silence. Unsure what exactly was the right thing to do. But he could see how much she wanted it. Her eyes were big and nervous and terribly hopeful too, "I... uh... I'd really like that." She guided his hand down to her womanhood, "It... well... it never seems to be enough when I do it myself these days."

"I'll take good care of you." He promised her as the tips of his fingers felt the heat coming from her sex before he ever made contact. *One horny girl.*

"I know." Padma rested her head against the stone wall behind her. She breathed out needily as he slid just one digit into her tight tunnel, "Oh... please don't let this be a dream!"

"Shhhh now," Harry murmured right next to her ear. He placed his hand at the side of her head to brace himself as he started plunging his finger in and out of her leaking slit, "We don't want anyone to hear us now, do we?" Padma shook her head and bit her lip to stifle the noises that were threatening to escape her, "And I promise, this isn't a dream."

She looked like she was having a hard time thinking, so enthralled with the pulsing pleasure coming from her sex, "Why... why would you look at me?" she asked him self consciously, "You have Daphne... and Susan... and Sue... and Ginny... all after you... and even... my own sister... is a better version of me."

Harry growled in her ear and it made her shudder, her pussy flexing around his digit. He pushed his hips against the curve of her hip, "You feel that, Padma." She nodded her head frantically, "That's because of you... all because of you... not Daphne, or Susan, or Sue, or Ginny and certainly not because of your sister. Just you."

Padma whimpered low in her throat and wrapped one of her small hands around his flexing forearm to try and steady herself. Her beautiful honey-brown eyes were open and staring at him, "That's...amazing. Please don't... stop." She whispered in awe.

"You're fucking sexy, Padma." Biting her lip wasn't enough anymore and she covered her mouth to stop from making too much noise as her pussy flooded with her juices, "Don't ever think differently, understand me."

"Hmmm... ye...yes, sir."

"You have an arse to die for, you know that." She shook her head, disbelieving, "you do. Every boy from first to seventh year stares at it when you walk by. It's fat and spankable, and it's a shame that I can't see it jiggle beneath your school robes."

"Just you." She said suddenly very serious, "I don't care... about any other boys. They can look all they want... but my bum is just for you."

“Oh, is that right?” He reached down and smacked his hand against the side of her wide cheeks, taking a firm squeeze of her peachy behind.

Padma’s breathing was quick and desperate as he added another finger to her grippy hole. She stretched around him as he pushed and prodded at the sensitive walls of her pussy. She pulled her blouse open and revealed a powder-blue bra beneath, holding up her perky bosom. Yanking on one of the cups, she revealed a firm, chocolate-brown nipple that was poking out in desperate need of attention. Reaching for it, she looked at him with betrayal as he slapped her hand away.

That look was quickly replaced as he leaned down and captured the bud between his lips. It was thick and longer than any of his other lovers. As he swirled his tongue around her oversensitive nipple, her back arched off the wall and Padma was forced to bite down on her own hand to stop from crying out in ecstasy. Her pussy quivered around his fingers, and she tried to hold his arm in place as her whole body trembled through an orgasm.

Undeterred, he fucked her right through her orgasm. He flicked her clit with his thumb, and that set her off even harder. Her juices splashed around his incessant fingers. The tops of her knee high socks became stained with the evidence. Her pussy gripped and flexed, trying to coax cum from his fingers that it would never get.

Again and again, the beautiful Indian witch shook and shivered even after the main event was finished. *Pop.* Her grasping sheath had no desire to let him go as he pulled himself free. Padma looked at him with glassy, blissed-out eyes, “Way... way better... than doing it myself.”

“Happy to help!” Grinning, he brought his fingers to her lips and flexing them to show her the thick strands of her slick juices. He licked them clean as she let out tiny little pants of lustful need.

“Holy... Merlin...” She couldn’t believe what she was watching as she reached up to tweak her nipple one last time at the lewd sight.

He moaned his approval and pulled his fingers from between his lips, “You taste delicious.” *Floral and crisp and entirely Padma.*

“You’re... incredible.” Padma told him awestruck. Pleased with himself, he helped correct her uniform, pulling the cups of her bra back up and doing up some of the buttons.

“Well, thank you. You’re pretty incredible yourself, Pads.”

Padma was trying to decide on what she wanted to say next, uncertain, “I know!” she finally blurted out. He quirked an eyebrow in question, so she elaborated “About the other girls... and... well... I don’t mind. Or at least, I don’t think I do.”

Harry leaned in and kissed her forehead, “Observant, aren’t you?”

“When you don’t talk as much as my sister, it makes it easier to pay attention.” Padma said with a laugh, “But I mean it.”

They’d already taken a long time and he didn’t want to make her late, “I believe you. We can talk about it when we have more time. I promise. But I’m glad to hear it.” Waving his wand, he removed the stains from her clothing and gave a nod of approval, “There we go, good as new.”

“Better than new.” Padma smiled, she shook her head, “But, you...” she looked down meaningfully toward his crotch where he was still half-hard in his trousers.

“Don’t worry about me. I’ll manage.” He leaned down and gave her a peck on the lips. That little gesture made her beam up at him, but then she furrowed her brow in confusion, “What is it?”

“Why did you follow me, anyway?”

“Oh, right.” He reached into his bag where he’d discarded it when they started and pulled out her letter, “You dropped this.”

Padma took it from him quickly, and with the barest hint of a blush on her cheeks, “Thanks! You didn’t... you know... read it, did you?”

“Nope.”

She couldn’t hide the relief at that, “Great. I appreciate it.” There was a warning that classes would begin soon, and she pushed off the wall, “Bye, Harry... and thanks again.”

“My pleasure.” With that she pulled open the tapestry and hurried toward Transfiguration. Shaking his head, Harry headed off to Charms. He ended up being late, but thought it was absolutely worth it.

The hall was bathed in pale moonlight as the torches on the walls dimmed and the last of the desserts disappeared from the tables. The excited chatter died down as the blue-white flames of the goblet grew brighter.

Dumbledore stood at the head table and made his way to the casket, “The moment we’ve all been waiting for these last days has arrived. Should the goblet choose you, you will go into the next room to await instruction. Best of luck my young friends. Now, I believe we’ll start with the fourth years.”

Across from him, Ron was muttering to himself, “Come on... come on.”

The goblet’s flames expanded upward, though they gave off no new heat. From the flames burst a strip of parchment, orange embers licking at its edges. Deftly, the Headmaster caught it as it descended, “The champion for Durmstrang, Ivar Rasmussen.” A tall boy with dark-blond hair and a neatly trimmed goatee stood from the Hufflepuff table. He was met with raucous applause from his school, and polite applause from the others. He stepped over to the side room and disappeared behind the door.

The goblet stirred again, and Dumbledore caught another piece of parchment, “For Beauxbatons, Solen LeClaire.” A short girl with braided brunette hair stood from the Ravenclaw table. The applause from Beauxbatons was more polite, and Harry couldn’t help but notice that Fleur’s seemed almost sarcastic for the younger witch. *Curious.*

A third time, the flames rose but something curious happened. Instead of a single piece of smoldering parchment escaping from the flames, two did. Everyone watched horribly confused at the whole thing, even the Ministry officials standing at the front. But Dumbledore caught them as though they’d been just one.

Since he behaved as though nothing was amiss, everyone just behaved as normal, “For Hogwarts, Harry Potter.” The confusion caused a delay, but the roar that followed was deafening, bouncing around the ancient stone walls loud enough that he thought a stone might knock loose. Though one person who was noticeably silent was his ginger friend.

Ginny and Hermione both shoved him to get up, “Go!” He walked his way over to the side room and noticed McGonagall’s pleased smile... and Snape glaring at him like he wanted to burn hole through his

head. *He's like a child, I swear.* Hagrid clapped his massive hands together so hard, Harry was pretty confident he was responsible for at least half the cheering. As the door closed behind him, the cheers were muted, and he was alone walking down to the antechamber. Inside, silent and keeping to themselves were his two competitors.

Harry went and sat by the roaring fire in the room. He didn't know exactly how to feel, he was elated at being chosen, curious and anxious about what the tasks might be, but more than that, concerned. *Why in the bloody hell did two slips come out of the goblet. I know that I only put one in there. That shouldn't be possible. There were so many precautions.*

As the minutes ticked by, they were joined by more champions. The fifth year champion for Hogwarts ended up being a Slytherin, Terrence Higgs, the one time seeker of for the snakes before Draco and his father bought his way onto the team. He'd been a decent seeker and actually played fair, unlike the likes of Flint. Harry gave him a nod as he entered, but nothing more.

There was a roar from outside that could be heard even in the antechamber, and everyone looked to the door. The sixth-year champion entered, and he was unsurprised to see Cedric Diggory. He was the only person that Harry could imagine would garner that sort of reaction.

The amiable Hufflepuff came over to Harry with a winning smile, "Congratulations, Harry. Everyone knew you'd get it."

"I'd say most the school was expecting you to get it as well." Harry returned with a smile of his own. Cedric was a quintessential Hufflepuff and quite likable because of it.

"Ah, I don't know. There was Angelina. I wouldn't have been surprised to lose out to her."

Finally, the last of the champions started coming. It was the Hogwarts Champion first, and Harry almost laughed when Roger Davies walked in. The older Ravenclaw had yet to forgive him for what he thought was an insult at Sprintwitches, and so he only glowered at Harry and moved to the other side of the room.

Next came Krum, the Bulgarian looked straight-faced, just as he had every other time he'd seen him. He moved over to the sixth year Durmstrang champion and they started talking quietly. Finally, they were joined by Fleur. She stepped into the room with elegant grace, almost gliding down the steps. He heard a scoff from somewhere else in the room and looked to see Solen roll her eyes at the older woman.

Fleur paid it no mind though, moving over to the fire, "Congratulations, 'Arry." She told him sincerely.

"To you too." They didn't get a chance to talk further.

The door opened one final time and many footsteps approached down the stairs. All the school heads, Bagman, Crouch, and the Magical Patrol officers came down the stairs and stood at the entrance, "Congratulations. Congratulations to all of you." Bagman was extremely effusive, "We finally have our twelve champions."

"Yes, congratulations." Crouch said monotonously. His dour expression a stark contrast to his coworker, "You are now representatives of your schools and of your nations." It sounded almost like a warning coming from him.

And to some extent, it was as he continued, "There will be media interviews set for each of you in the coming weeks." Just the thought of that made Harry want to shudder, "The weighing of the wands will be November 25th and the first tasks the next day."

"Is that all you're going to tell us?" Davies asked irritably.

"About the task, certainly, my boy." Dumbledore interjected, "Your ingenuity will be tested just as much as your skill in the coming weeks. I wish you all the best of luck." He chuckled and clapped, "Now, I'm sure that your fellows are planning some rather exhilarating parties to celebrate your selections. You're all free to leave."

The Beauxbatons and Durmstrang students followed their heads out of the room. Fleur hesitated briefly and gave him a little smile, "I'll see you soon." He had the feeling that she meant something specific.

"Yeah, of course." He assured her. They'd barely shared more than two conversations, but he was looking forward to it.

"If that's all, Dumbledore." Bagman seemed to be in a rush.

"Yes, yes of course. I'm sure we can handle anything else that comes up in the coming weeks." Harry lagged behind as the Hogwarts students followed out the foreign students.

Cedric was the last other than him and he clapped him on the shoulder as he left, "Too bad it's a Monday, eh? Hufflepuff can party with the best of them, but everybody will be too worried about classes in the morning."

"You've never been to a Gryffindor party, mate," Harry laughed, "but you're right. Things won't go too late. They'll just have to save until after the first task."

Cedric patted his shoulder one more time and bid him, "Night, Harry."

"Yeah, Cedric, you too." With that, Harry was left alone in the room with Dumbledore.

When the door closed, the Headmaster pulled both strips of parchment from his robes and looked them over. "I know one can become forgetful in their old age, Harry, but I don't remember you putting your name in the goblet twice."

"That's because I didn't, sir."

"I thought not." He offered the two singed strips to Harry.

Grabbing them he looked them over and handed him one back, "That's the one that I wrote and threw into the goblet."

"And the other?"

"I have no idea. I'd say I wrote the name, but the school and year were from someone else."

"I thought the same." Dumbledore stroked his trimmed beard, "Someone wanted to ensure that you'd participate."

"But why?"

"I cannot say." It was rare to see the Headmaster at a loss for words, and in that moment, he looked every bit of his age, "All I know is you must be wary, Harry. It wouldn't do to be caught flat footed."

"Of course, sir."

A tired smile came to the vaunted wizard's lips, "You make me proud... very proud. I had no doubt when I saw you put your name into the goblet that I would see it emerge from the flames. I'm sure you'll find yourself equal to all the tasks ahead."

Harry was touched by the man's confidence, "Thank you, sir. It means a lot."

"Off with you. I'm sure a fun night awaits you up in the Gryffindor Tower, my boy."

It can never be simple, can it? Not where I'm concerned anyway. Still, as he made his way up to Gryffindor Tower, he had to admit it was the most conventional Halloween he'd had since coming to Hogwarts.