

Harry twisted and turned in mid-air easily slipping right through the conjured hoops hanging from the roof of the room courtesy of the Room of Requirement. His spirit form was quite easy to control as far as the flight is concerned. He'd say it was far better than a broom when it comes to manoeuvrability but in speed, the Firebolt would undoubtedly win. He wondered whether any supplementary spells could augment his speed in this spirit form. He'd have to check with the books in the Chamber or better yet Helena if he could somehow track down the elusive ghost of the Ravenclaw tower.

Not that he was in any kind of hurry to modify his current ability. He was already quite happy with the magically sustained flight. If anything, he'd spend more time deciphering the Horcrux conundrum or even the constant references to Elysium in the ancient scrolls he found in Slytherin's library. Not to mention he was back to trying his hand at mastering the animagus transformation. He had already stuck a Mandrake leaf on the roof of his mouth. He fervently hoped his second attempt would be the last because having a leaf sticking to the roof of his mouth for days without end was just downright uncomfortable. He had to be extra cautious too as he had to make sure no one notices the Mandrake leaf in his mouth.

Finished with his flight training Harry left the Room of Requirement after taking a long swim in the pool. He walked through the vacant hallways of Hogwarts whistling a jolly tune and a spring in his steps for good measure. There were quite a few reasons for his rather happy mood.

Daphne's advice with his Occlumency was immensely helpful. He had followed her advice and employed Occlumency against the unfortunate events that happened surrounding Colin Creevey. It was a difficult task but he managed to let go as Daphne had suggested. When he managed to shield his mind from over-fixating on the issue with Colin Creevey the uncontrollable rage that was fast becoming a problem vanished instantly. He had planned to use his considerable influence over Rita Skeeter to smear Umbridge and chase her out of Hogwarts. He'd have used the same tactic he employed against Snape against the resident pink toad but Daphne's advice made him rethink that strategy.

Where he saw in justice Daphne saw an opportunity to increase his influence within Hogwarts. If he was to charge right out of the gate with sword swinging against the Ministry and Umbridge he'd probably win. He could potentially bring down the pink tyrant to her knees but what would that change in Hogwarts? The criminally negligent staff of Hogwarts would continue to function like everything was right in the world while he'd end up playing the role of hero.

No, Daphne was right to say that allowing Umbridge's reign of terror to continue was an opportunity. The more Umbridge terrorises the students the easier it'd be for Harry to make inroads into certain groups in Hogwarts. It'd also expose the Hogwarts staff for what they were, a bunch of good-for-nothing cowards. Besides, it was not his place to butt in into every little problem. If Umbridge turned against him, now that was a different matter. For now, he was going to step into the shadows and observe Umbridge from afar.

When he was just about to reach the portrait of the Fat Lady the entrance of the Gryffindor tower swung open and it was Ron Weasley on the other side with a broom in his hand. Seeing this, Harry was a bit confused.

"There is Quidditch practice today?" he asked curiously.

"No." Ron muttered looking a bit embarrassed all of a sudden.

"Then where are you going with the broom this evening?"

"Er – nothing. I'm just...ya know taking some time to practice as Angelina said. Just on my own though. I bewitch the Quaffle to fly at me and then I try to keep it out of the hoops." Ron said nervously.

"Huh. Good for you. Keep up the good work." Harry patted Ron on his shoulder and entered the Gryffindor tower leaving Ron outside. Before the portrait closed behind Harry, he heard a hasty 'thanks' from Ron making him smile.

The next morning Harry was invited to take a stroll along the Viaduct as they had a common free period. He'd have preferred to spend some time in the Chamber working over Nagini but Daphne rarely asks for anything so he obliged readily. Besides, there was ample time tomorrow as today was the last working day of the week.

They walked hand in hand from outside the entrance to the Great Hall towards the Viaduct taking in the many sculptures and suits of armour that stood guard on either side of the gatehouse.

"You feeling all right Harry?" Daphne asked, as they strolled out from the gatehouse.

"I'm quite fine. Thanks for that by the way. Your advice was quite valuable."

Daphne smiled upon hearing that. "That's a relief. Anyway, I asked for you to give you this..."

Harry raised an eyebrow when Daphne presented him with a book that had no title or the name of the author on the cover.

"It's a copy of the book from the family library. It should help you better with Occlumency than the standard books on the subject." said Daphne, handing over the book with a black hardcover.

"Oh!" Harry was a bit surprised by the gesture but happy nonetheless. "Thanks a lot, Daphne. I'll take good care of it. I promise."

"I know. That's why I gave it to you. Besides, you showed me the Chamber. It'd be remiss of me if I didn't give you something in exchange for the honour of seeing Slytherin's Chamber." said Daphne.

"Really! I show you a thousand-year-old secret chamber of one of the illustrious Founders of Hogwarts and you give me a copy of one book from your family library. Come now, Daphs. You can do better." Harry smirked at the cute frown that came over Daphne's delicate features.

Daphne came to a halt and looked at him searchingly.

"Then what do you want?" she asked, tilting her head to the side her blue eyes sparkling with interest.

"Don't get me wrong. I like the book. It's just that we could spend some quality time alone preferably in a broom closet if you're okay with it." Harry said in a soft purr breathing hotly against Daphne's ear making the blonde shiver at the sudden proximity.

She let out an embarrassed squeak when Harry took hold of her by her hips and boldly raised her and set her down so that she was sitting on the railing of the viaduct. The wind that blew from the chasm down below blew away her hair to the front. Daphne nearly screamed in fright as she realised she was at the very edge of the railing and a small mistake could leave her at the very bottom of the chasm. But no sound came out from her lips because they were otherwise engaged in a heated kiss.

When they parted after several minutes of battling it out with their lips Harry could see how intoxicated Daphne's eyes were. His eyes strayed to the deep chasm just behind Daphne and he felt a little bit adventurous.

"Do you trust me?"

"Uh-huh." Daphne moaned, reaching out and kissing him again.

Harry smirked against her lips and pushed them both over the railing. He silenced her screams by locking their lips while he consumed them both with his spirit form. He had only tried taking something along for the flight with inanimate objects but was confident he could take Daphne with him.

By the time Harry pulled back from her lips Daphne was just about ready to pass out. She looked around wildly and saw to her befuddlement she was somehow climbing up high into the sky instead of falling to the bottom of the chasm as she imagined.

"Wha..? How?" Daphne sputtered lost for words as her blue eyes shined with a combination of wonder, fear, and pleasure.

"I'm the boy-who-lived love. Nothing is beyond my reach." Harry winked.

Harry took her for a spin for a few more minutes in the sky and around the bridge until finally, they decided to cut it short. They spent the rest of the time on the ground until it was time for their class. Daphne was shooting him impressed looks from time to time as they walked toward their potion class in the dungeons.

"So, what spell was that?"

"Do you want to know?" he asked a smirk slowly growing on his face which put Daphne on edge.

"I'd love to fly, yes." She answered warily.

"Hmm. It's going to cost you though." Harry whispered. "I've picked out a perfect broom closet if you really want to learn to fly like me."

Daphne's ears and cheeks turned red and she hit him before walking away with long strides.

"Hey! I'll compromise and let you choose the broom closet." Harry shouted after her while chuckling all the way.

When they finally reached the Potion class there was a crowd forming right outside the classroom. At the centre stage was Draco Malfoy waving around a parchment while strutting around like a peacock.

"I went and asked for permission on behalf of the Slytherin Quidditch team and we got the permission right away. It's no surprise really. I knew Professor Umbridge for a long time thanks to my father. He's always popping in and out of the Ministry. Minister Fudge always asks my father for advice on important matters you know."

"What is the ponce talking about?" Daphne whispered to Harry.

"It's the new educational decree. All clubs in Hogwarts require the permission of Umbridge to function."

"Oh. She can do that?" Daphne asked incredulously.

"She seems to think so." Harry shrugged.

"It'll be interesting to see whether the Gryffindor team are allowed to play this year, won't it?" Draco asked with an arrogant smirk.

"Why? Did your father whore himself out to the Ministry to make sure his useless son can boast a victory this year without us in the game?" Harry asked seamlessly, earning roars of laughter from Gryffindor students.

"You! You won't be laughing for long you blood traitors. You'll all get what's coming for you." Draco threatened, his eyes glinting maliciously. "It won't be long before the mudbloods and blood traitors get their due. The Ministry will deal with Dumbledore and his ilk while you Potter...you and your friends will get the real deal. Maybe, if you are lucky, they'll just leave you lot in the care of St. Mungo's hospital permanently. I hear they've got a special ward for mental cases like you lot."

Hermione and Ron had to physically hold down Neville as he was trying to go for Draco with burning rage in his eyes.

Harry on the other hand looked coldly at the Slytherin students that laughed at Draco's little threat.

"I see. Then let me give you a fair warning Draco. When giants battle worms should hide under the soil or they'll get destroyed and dismembered which makes them unrecognizable even for their families. If you doubt that, ask your friends Nott, Crabbe and Goyle whether I'm wrong." Harry smiled coldly at the Slytherins. "After all, they're intimately familiar with such a situation considering what happened last year."

Crabbe and Goyle were scowling while Nott withdrew to the back of the crowd with his face chalk white.

"Please do extend my warm greeting to Mr. Malfoy. The last time we met I didn't get much time to speak with him or with anyone else for that matter." Harry said, eyeing

Crabbe, Goyle and Nott before settling on Draco. "I'll correct that mistake in the future."

"What is going on here?" Snape barked, opening the door with a bang.

His dark eyes immediately zeroed in on Hermione and Ron who were holding Neville back.

"Fighting in the halls Weasley, Granger and Longbottom? Five points each from Gryffindor. Now, get inside!" the greasy-haired Potion master snarled.

Harry took his usual seat at the back of the potions class with Neville who looked like he was just about ready to murder Malfoy.

"Calm down. This is not the place or time to settle scores." Harry whispered to his friend. "Your time will come. Trust me."

Neville let out a deep breath. He opened the potion textbook and stared at the page silently.

"You'll note that we have a guest with us today." said Snape, his eyes glinting darkly but his face closed off giving nothing away of his thoughts on the matter.

The potion master gestured to one of the dim corners of the room where Umbridge was sitting with a clipboard and a quill in her hand.

"Now, what is this bitch doing here?" Harry muttered.

Neville cracked up a little upon hearing that.

"She was in our Divination class as well. She was not particularly impressed with Professor Trelawney." Neville muttered.

"Who is?" Harry and Neville shared a smile.

They went back to concentrating on the Strengthening potion they were supposed to brew and the instructions Snape had written on the board. While working on the potion Harry eyed Umbridge from time to time whenever the ministry stooge popped with a question or two for Snape on his teaching methods. He even heard her asking about the probation Snape suffered last year. Snape grinding his teeth in frustration could be heard across the room making Harry smile. He supposed there was some fun in watching Umbridge tear into Snape.

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Harry carefully took each breath mindful of how much he inhaled and then slowly exhaled the air trapped inside his lungs. He repeated the process a few more times until he was confident that he managed to suppress the pre-game jitters in his body. When he opened his eyes, he noticed his knees had stopped shaking and he was almost back to his normal self. Breathing out of his mouth Harry leaned back in his seat and made sure the protective gear on his elbows was strapped in nice and tight.

If he was having pre-game jitters then Ron's condition was much worse.

"You all right there Ron?" Harry asked, seeing the pale white face and the occasional shivering the red-haired boy was going through while waiting in the locker room.

"Y...Yeah. I...I think so." Ron stuttered, his cheeks turning tomato red sinking into his seat with his head bowed.

"You should take a few breaths and calm yourself. You'll do fine out there." Harry consoled the guy taking pity on the roughened-up Ron. "Angelina, Alicia, and Katie are very good with the Quaffle. You'd barely get many shoots from the Slytherin team."

"What happened to our..."

"...wee brother today?"

Harry shook his head seeing the Weasley twins plopping down on either side of Ron. They threw their arms around Ron and began to try their best to pull Ron out of his shell.

"What are they doing?" Angelina asked once she came out of the dressing room in her Quidditch gear.

"I think Ron is getting the motivational talk for the game." Harry commented.

"Not on my watch. He has been motivated enough." Angelina went straight for the Weasley twins and pulled them away from Ron.

"I won't have you two jokers mess up the game by being hard on Ron." Angelina shouted at them as she pulled the twins away by their ears.

"We were just..."

"...trying to help."

The twins chorused but Angelina was having none of it. She pulled those two away from the locker rooms by her lonesome.

"Well, I didn't expect to see that. I thought we were supposed to beat up the other team not our own." Alicia deadpanned watching their captain tearing into the Weasley twins just before the game.

"Meh. Those two can handle it." Katie said, joining them in watching the spectacle.

"Angelina is just worried because we didn't get enough time to practice." said Harry.

"All thanks to that vile woman." Angelina said, her face twisting in fury. "Umbridge was adamant to cancel all our practice sessions and give more to Slytherin."

"I might be responsible for that. She most likely didn't like the fact that I complained to Dumbledore about her practices during detention." said Harry.

"And no one will blame you, Harry. You did the right thing." said Angelina, waving away the issue.

"I was really expecting them to fire Umbridge." said Katie.

The blowback from the inaction in the case of Colin Creevey didn't affect Umbridge too much. Already, most students in Hogwarts hated the pink toad with a passion. The ire of the students was mostly focused on the faculty and even the Ministry to

some extent for rewarding Umbridge with a new position as the Inquisitor of Hogwarts.

"It's time." Angelina suddenly said, hearing the crowd making noises from the stands. "Let's go out there and put those snakes down for good."

Shouldering their brooms they walked out of the locker room and into the pitch. A roar came from the stands and Harry found the sound coming from Luna who had a lion head for a hat which opened its mouth and let out another roar.

"That's an impressive piece of magic." Harry muttered.

He even gave a thumbs up in Luna's direction for the incredible piece of magic and support shown for the team. The Slytherin team also filtered into the pitch with a confident swagger in their steps. He saw Crabbe and Goyle among the Slytherin team sticking close to Draco Malfoy. It was then that he noticed the crown-shaped badges on the Slytherin team's robes which read *Weasley is our King*.

"Madam Hooch. I understand that Quidditch has a strict code of conduct and prescribed uniforms, do they not?"

"Yes." Hooch slowly nodded.

"Then please do take necessary action against the Slytherin team. They seem to have broken the decorum and rules of the sport." Harry said softly.

Madam Hooch frowned at him and then took a close look at the Slytherin team.

"What are you all wearing? Montague! What do you've to say for yourself?" Hooch tore into the Slytherin team captain who sputtered upon being put on the spot.

"Remove all those badges. Right now!" Hooch shouted at them making the Slytherin team flinch and obey speedily.

"Seven fouls are awarded to Gryffindor." Hooch declared blowing her whistle seven times.

The Slytherin team protested but Madam Hooch was having none of it and asked Angelina to prepare for the penalty shots.

"It's either that or your captain gets benched for the game." said Hooch when she became tired of the complaints.

"You see. There are consequences for acting juvenile Draco. I thought you learned that lesson last year." Harry said, smirking at the embarrassed Malfoy he flew high into the air and made a few spins with his Firebolt.

The crowd was roaring out in approval as they realised the Slytherin team was starting with a huge disadvantage early in the game.

"Good one Harry. I never even thought of appealing those insufferable badges." Angelina excitedly said, whooshing past his side with a large smile on her face.

"Meh. I just have more experience when it comes to stupid badges." Harry smirked, earning a hearty laugh from his captain.

"Nice." Katie said, high-fiving Harry while Alicia bumped fists with him.

"Bloody brilliant Harry." Ron excitedly yelled as he took his position guarding the hoops.

"It seems the slimy snakes..."

"Jordan!" McGonagall shouted.

"Just sayin' as I see it Professor." Lee Jordan defended himself

"Anyway, the Slytherins team just conceded seven fouls in a row thanks to an appeal from Harry Potter. What a great bloke Harry huh? Always have a keen eye for detail. That's why Potter is the best Seeker out there."

"Jordan!" McGonagall cried again.

"Just saying, Professor."

Harry shook his head and laughed sharing a grin with the twins as well.

"Oh look! It's Angelina Johnson taking the first penalty. Lovely girl. Has a good record on the pitch and is quite easy on the eyes. Shame she turned me down when I asked her out for a date."

"Jordan!"

"What Professor? It's true. She turned me down. I swear."

Harry was holding his sides while floating in mid-air on his broom. Lee Jordan's trolling was on full blast and he supposed Jordan was making the most of the opportunity to mock the Slytherin team. Going by all the yelling and cheering, the crowd was also enjoying it very much.

"There she goes into the snake's lair boldly with Quaffle in hand. Malfoy looks on with a scowl as the Gryffindor captain swooshes past him with blinding speed straight for the Bletchley who looks a tad green. She shoots and SHE SCORES!"

"Gryffindor-10, Slytherin-0. It's not over folks! There are six more penalties to go." Jordan chimed happily.

The grave silence that was coming from the Slytherin stands was quite glaring. Harry suspected Draco was going to get a less-than-warm welcome when the match ends today.

"Oh, look! Alicia Spinnet takes the next penalty. She is a sharp one. No way she's going to miss it. This is more trouble for Bletchley." Lee Jordan aired out from the stands.

Harry cheered as did the stands when Alicia delivered the Quaffle with a spin that made the ball swing out and go through the outermost ring on Bletchley's right side. The crowd roared out in approval. Katie was next and she also scored in a similar fashion making the crowd roar out their approval. The Gryffindors in the stand were on their feet and dancing with fervour at the three consecutive goals. The next four penalties were of a similar fashion where Angelina, Alicia and Katie found their

marks quite easily. By the end of it, Bletchley looked like he might just faint as Gryffindor was leading with 70-0 on the scoreboard.

"Harry, change of plans. You don't have to play interference. Catch the Snitch as fast as you can. Let's not take any risk and destroy Slytherin for good." Angelina ordered.

"You got it, Cap." Harry said, giving a fist bump.

Madam Hooch blew the whistler and released the Bludgers and Snitch into the field while Angelina took the Quaffle and sped towards the Slytherin side with Katie and Alicia on her heel.

Harry flew straight up as he traced the Snitch all the way to the Slytherin's side of the pitch. He didn't make any sudden moves as he didn't want to give away the position of the Snitch. Instead, he chose to barrel towards Crabbe in full force. Just as he neared Crabbe, he dived straight down scaring the Slytherin beater out of his wits. It had the added benefit of the Bludger smacking straight into Crabbe's stomach courtesy of Goyle.

Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Draco speeding towards him attempting to cut off his dive most likely thinking Harry was after the Snitch. Harry pulled out of the dive halfway and allowed Draco to needlessly sail down while he went straight up at full speed straight for the Snitch.

"Oh look! Katie Bell scores another goal. This is a good hunt for the lions." Lee Jordan commented with cheers coming from the crowd.

Harry chased after the Snitch taking twists and sharp turns but he was not willing to give up the chase that easily. The Snitch went low all of a sudden zooming past Goyle's ear. Harry followed and Goyle tried to take a swipe at him with his bat but Harry rolled along with his broom and evaded the swing easily. While he was at it he gave a sharp kick to Goyle's face as he barrelled down at full speed. The Snitch went as low as half a meter from the ground forcing Harry to level out but the Snitch didn't escape him as he reached out and plucked it out of thin air. The small golden ball helplessly beat its wings against his hand but there was no point.

"What an amazing save by Ron Weasley. And look at that, folks! Harry Potter caught the Snitch in just under fifteen minutes. This must be a record." Lee Jordan yelled.

Harry was swarmed by his teammates as they celebrated the easy victory. It was also the first Quidditch match after a year's gap so the excitement was quite palpable.

"We won! We won!" Angelina was crying her eyes out while the rest of the team was laughing and hugging.

Harry looked searchingly at the stands and found the owner of a pair of blue eyes.

'I suppose I'll have to properly thank her for giving a heads-up about Malfoy's stupid plan with the song and badges.' Harry thought amusedly.

Not that the song even saw the light of day. It was drowned out by the roars of the crowd thanks to the stellar performance put forth by the Gryffindor team. He supposed there were also the celebrations to look forward to. After the gloomy cloud

that was hanging around Gryffindor common room after the issue of Colin Creevey, this was something to celebrate.

The twins started chanting 'Weasley is the King' as they pulled up Ron over their heads and began dancing around like a pair of hooligans making everyone laugh. Pretty soon, everyone took up the slogan.

Harry chuckled and looked at Draco Malfoy who looked like he swallowed a lemon. "Childish." Harry mouthed at the Slytherin seeker as he too joined the festivities by taking up the slogan.