

## Chapter 22

Saturday morning arrived bright and clear, the kind of perfect autumn day that made staying indoors feel criminal. Harry woke early, stretched, and dressed in comfortable clothes suitable for flying. The dormitory was still quiet, Ron snoring away in his bed while the others slept peacefully.

Harry made his way down to the common room and found it mostly empty save for a few early risers working on assignments. He grabbed a quick breakfast in the Great Hall, noting that the Quidditch pitch would be available all day for informal flying since there were no official matches this year.

By mid morning, word had spread that several house teams were planning to use the pitch for practice sessions. Harry made his way down to the Gryffindor changing rooms where Angelina, Alicia, and Katie were already pulling on their Quidditch robes.

"Morning," Angelina greeted him with a grin. "Ready to show us you haven't gotten rusty over the summer?"

"I could ask you the same thing," Harry replied, moving to his locker.

"Please. I've been flying since I could walk." Angelina pulled her dark hair into a ponytail. "Katie here might need the practice though."

"Hey!" Katie protested, laughing. "I'll have you know I flew plenty over the summer."

"Did you now?" Harry asked, pulling on his Quidditch robes.

Katie turned to face him properly, her brown eyes meeting his as she adjusted her own robes. "Every chance I got. I don't like getting rusty."

There was something in the way she looked at him, a directness that hadn't been there in previous years. Harry held her gaze for a moment longer than necessary before replying, "Neither do I."

Her lips curved into a small smile before she turned back to finish getting ready.

The twins arrived moments later, already bickering about something. Fred immediately started stretching while George rummaged through the equipment chest for a Quaffle.

"Right then," Angelina said once they were all ready. "Let's see what we can do without an actual match to prepare for."

They headed out onto the pitch where several other students had already gathered. Harry spotted Ginny among a group of younger Gryffindors, her red hair bright in the morning sun. She waved when she saw him and he nodded in acknowledgment.

Ravenclaws were arriving as well, Cho among them with her teammates. She was laughing at something one of her friends said, her ponytail swaying as she turned. When she caught sight of Harry, her laughter faltered slightly and a faint blush colored her cheeks.

Harry smiled at her before turning his attention to his broom. He'd brought his Firebolt, which immediately drew appreciative comments from those nearby.

"Bloody hell, Potter," one of the Ravenclaw Chasers said. "Can't believe you've got a Firebolt."

"Best broom money can buy," Fred said admiringly. "Wish we all had one of those."

"Maybe if we win the tournament, the prize money could cover it," George suggested.

Students began mounting their brooms and kicking off into the air. Harry swung his leg over the Firebolt and pushed off, feeling the familiar rush of wind and freedom as he shot upward. The Firebolt responded to his slightest touch, powerful and smooth beneath him.

He leveled out about fifty feet up and took a moment to just fly, enjoying the sensation of movement and speed. Around him, other students were doing the same, some practicing maneuvers while others simply flew in lazy circles.

Katie rose to meet him, her broom bringing her alongside his. The morning sun caught in her dark hair, making it shine almost blue black. She looked good on a broom.

"Show off much?" she asked teasingly.

"Just respecting a good broom."

"Is that what we're calling it?" Katie's smile widened. "Because it looked like you were trying to impress everyone."

"Did it work?"

"Maybe a little." She tilted her head. "But I think you know exactly how impressive you are."

"Confidence isn't a crime."

"No," Katie agreed, her voice dropping slightly. "It's not. In fact, it's quite attractive."

Harry let his gaze linger on her face, noting the way her cheeks had colored slightly, the way her breathing had picked up just enough to be noticeable.

"Good to know," he said finally.

They flew together for a few minutes, matching pace and altitude. Harry found himself acutely aware of Katie's presence beside him, the way she moved on her broom with fluid grace, the occasional glances she sent his way when she thought he wasn't looking.

"Want to run some Chaser drills?" Katie asked eventually. "See if we can get Angelina and Alicia to join?"

"Sure."

They descended to where Angelina and Alicia were already tossing a Quaffle back and forth. Harry hung back slightly, content to watch and occasionally intercept passes. His role as Seeker meant he didn't often practice with the Chasers, but he understood the fundamentals well enough.

And it gave him an excellent vantage point to watch Katie work. She was good, better than he'd fully appreciated before. Her movements were economical and precise, wasting no energy on unnecessary flourishes. When she scored, it was with a combination of speed and accuracy that showed her hours of practice.

"Harry!" Angelina called, pulling his attention back. "Stop daydreaming and pay attention!"

"Sorry," Harry said, not sounding sorry at all.

Katie flew past him, close enough that he could have reached out and touched her broom. Close enough that their eyes met for a brief, electric moment.

"Distracted?" she asked softly.

"Observing."

"Right." She grinned and accelerated away, catching a pass from Alicia and scoring neatly through the center hoop.

They continued practicing for a while, the morning sun climbing higher in the sky. More students had arrived, including several Hufflepuffs and even a few Slytherins who weren't on their house team. Harry noticed Daphne Greengrass among them, flying with surprising grace on a decent quality Nimbus.

"Didn't know Greengrass could fly," Fred commented during a water break.

"She's not bad either," George added. "Shame she's in Slytherin."

"Why is it a shame?" Ginny asked, appearing beside them. She'd been flying with some of the younger students but had apparently decided to join the older group now.

"Because Slytherin has a sexist team. If she were in literally any other house, she could probably make the team."

Ginny shrugged and grabbed a water bottle. "Maybe she just flies for fun."

"Imagine that," Harry said dryly. "Flying for enjoyment rather than competition."

"Madness," Fred agreed solemnly.

They returned to the air after the break. This time Cho flew over from where she'd been practicing with her teammates, bringing several other Ravenclaws with her. She approached Harry first, her broom bringing her close enough that he could see the nervous excitement in her eyes.

"Want to scrimmage?" she called to Angelina, though her gaze remained fixed on Harry. "Ravenclaws against Gryffindors?"

"You're on," Angelina replied immediately.

They quickly organized teams and set up a proper scrimmage. Harry played Seeker as usual while Katie, Angelina, and Alicia took Chaser positions. The twins served as Beaters, using spare Bludgers from the equipment chest.

Cho was Ravenclaw's Seeker, which meant she and Harry would be competing directly. She flew over as they were getting into position, her expression friendly but competitive. The wind had picked up slightly, tugging at loose strands of her dark hair.

"May the best Seeker win," she said.

Harry let his gaze travel over her face, noting the way her cheeks flushed under his attention. "I intend to."

"Confident." Cho's voice had gone slightly breathless.

"Always." He smiled. "Should I not be?"

"No, I mean, yes. I just..." Cho paused, clearly flustered. "You're very sure of yourself."

"Is that a problem?"

"Not at all." She bit her lip, a gesture that drew Harry's attention to her mouth. "It's actually quite..."

"Quite what?"

"Impressive," Cho finished, her blush deepening.

"Then I'll try to continue being impressive."

Madam Hooch's whistle cut through their conversation. She released the Snitch and both Seekers shot into the air, though Harry caught Cho glancing back at him even as she climbed.

The scrimmage was fast paced and chaotic in the best way. The Chasers were evenly matched, trading goals back and forth. The twins were having the time of their lives with the Bludgers, sending them rocketing toward anyone who got too comfortable.

Harry circled high above the action, watching for the Snitch while keeping half an eye on Cho. She was a good Seeker, her movements efficient and her attention focused.

He spotted the Snitch hovering near the Ravenclaw goal posts and immediately went into a steep dive. Cho saw him move and followed, her broom screaming as she tried to catch up.

The Snitch darted away at the last second and Harry pulled out of his dive, rolling sideways to avoid a Bludger sent his way with perfect timing. Cho overshot slightly, needing an extra second to correct her trajectory.

“Nice flying,” she called as they both resumed their search.

“You too.” Harry let his broom drift closer to hers. “You almost had me there.”

“Almost doesn’t count.”

“Maybe not. But it was still impressive.”

Cho’s smile was brilliant, her earlier nervousness replaced by genuine pleasure at the compliment. They continued circling, occasionally diving after false sightings or feints meant to throw the other off.

The game continued below them, the score climbing steadily on both sides. Harry found his attention split between searching for the Snitch and watching the players below. Katie scored a particularly impressive goal, feinting left before spinning right and sending the Quaffle through the hoop with perfect accuracy.

She looked up after scoring, her eyes finding Harry’s across the distance. Even from this far away, he could see the flush of exertion on her cheeks, the way her chest rose and fell with rapid breaths. She smiled at him before turning back to the game.

A flash of gold near the ground caught his attention. Harry angled into another dive, this one steeper and faster than before. The Firebolt responded beautifully, accelerating until the wind made his eyes water.

Cho was right behind him, her broom straining to keep pace. Harry could hear her breath coming in quick gasps as she pushed her broom to its limits, trying to close the gap between them.

But the Firebolt was simply faster, pulling ahead with each passing second. Harry stretched out his hand, fingers closing around the struggling golden ball just inches from the ground. He pulled out of the dive at the last possible moment, sweeping back up into the sky with the Snitch held triumphantly above his head.

The Gryffindors cheered while the Ravenclaws groaned good naturedly. Cho flew over, slightly breathless but smiling.

"That was brilliant flying," she said, genuine admiration in her voice. "Your dive was perfectly timed."

"Thanks. You nearly had me a few times."

"Nearly doesn't count in Quidditch." But she was still smiling, clearly not too disappointed by the loss.

"True enough."

They descended together, landing near where the others had gathered. Angelina was already organizing another scrimmage, this time with mixed teams to keep things interesting.

"Harry, you're with Alicia," she announced. "Katie, you're on my team. Fred and George, split up. Let's shake things up."

Harry caught Ginny's eye across the group. She was standing with the younger students but watching the team arrangements with obvious interest. When she noticed Harry looking, she smiled slightly and made a small gesture toward Katie that was subtle enough that no one else would have noticed.

Ginny was definitely up to something.

They rearranged themselves and started another match. This time Harry found himself playing alongside Cho rather than against her, which proved to be an interesting dynamic since she'd chosen to play Chaser. She was easy to work with, calling out positions and communicating clearly.

But Harry's attention kept drifting to Katie, who was playing for the opposing team. She'd shed her outer robes at some point, leaving her in just a thin shirt that clung to her curves as she flew. The fabric had darkened with sweat in places, molding to her body in ways that were distinctly distracting.

The way she moved on her broom was almost hypnotic, fluid and confident. When she caught a pass, her whole body moved with the motion, twisting and turning with practiced grace. Harry found himself watching the flex of her muscles, the way her hair whipped around her face, the determined set of her jaw as she focused on the game.

"Harry!" Cho's voice snapped him back to attention. "The Snitch!"

He spotted it immediately, hovering near the center of the pitch. Both he and the opposing Seeker, a fifth year, dove for it simultaneously.

Harry got there first, snatching the Snitch and ending the match. More cheers erupted, this time from the mixed teams who didn't particularly care about house pride at the moment.

"Right," Madam Hooch called. "Let's take a proper break. You've all been flying for hours."

Had it been hours? Harry glanced at the sun and realized it was well past noon. Time had flown by, literally and figuratively.

Students descended and gathered near the benches at the edge of the pitch. Someone had brought down pitchers of pumpkin juice and water, which everyone attacked with enthusiasm.

Harry found himself standing between Katie and Cho, both girls laughing about something from the scrimmage. The proximity to Katie was doing interesting things to his pulse. She smelled like sweat and sunshine and something distinctly her, a scent that Harry found himself wanting to get closer to.

Katie's shoulder pressed against his arm as she reached for a cup, the contact brief but electric. Her skin was warm through the thin fabric of her shirt, and Harry had to resist the urge to let his hand drift to her waist.

"You're quite good," Cho said to Katie, seemingly oblivious to the tension. "That goal you scored in the first match was impressive."

"Thanks." Katie's smile was genuine as she turned to Cho, though Harry noticed her body remained angled toward him. "You're not bad yourself. Almost caught Harry a few times."

"Almost being the key word." Cho glanced at Harry, her expression softening. "He's frustratingly fast."

"It's the broom," Harry said modestly.

"It's not just the broom," Katie argued, her hand coming to rest on his forearm. The touch seemed casual, friendly, but Harry felt the slight pressure of her fingers, the deliberate nature of it. "You've got excellent instincts. You always seem to know where the Snitch will be before it gets there."

"Just practice."

"Right, and I'm the Minister of Magic." Katie's fingers trailed down his forearm as she pulled her hand away.

Cho was watching them with a thoughtful expression, her eyes moving between Harry and Katie as if trying to work something out. But before she could comment, Ginny appeared beside them, having finished her own flying session with the younger students.

"That was brilliant," she said to Harry. "Especially that last dive."

"Thanks."

"Though I have to say, Katie's goal was probably the highlight." Ginny turned to Katie with an admiring smile. "The way you feinted before scoring? That was textbook perfect."

Katie's cheeks colored slightly at the praise. "Just got lucky with the timing."

"Luck had nothing to do with it. That was pure skill." Ginny grabbed a cup of juice. "You should teach some of us younger players that move sometime."

"I could do that," Katie agreed.

"Perfect." Ginny's eyes sparkled with mischief that Harry recognized immediately. "Maybe you and Harry could both give some pointers? Between his Seeking skills and your Chaser techniques, we'd learn loads."

"That's not a bad idea," Katie said, glancing at Harry. Her brown eyes were warm and inviting. "Would you be interested?"

"Sure," Harry replied easily. "Could be fun."

"Excellent." Ginny's smile was entirely too satisfied. "I'll organize something for next week then. Maybe we could use one of the smaller practice pitches? More intimate that way."

The word intimate hung in the air for just a moment too long. Katie's cheeks flushed slightly darker and Harry caught the knowing look Ginny shot him before she wandered off to talk to some of the other younger students.

That little minx was absolutely facilitating this situation. And Harry had to admit, he appreciated the effort.

The conversation flowed naturally after that, discussing various flying techniques and memorable Quidditch moments from previous years. At some point Alicia called Katie over to discuss something about training schedules, leaving Harry alone with Cho again.

The Ravenclaw Seeker fidgeted with her cup, seeming suddenly uncertain now that they were alone. She kept glancing at Harry and then away, as if working up the courage to say something.

"I wanted to say," she began, then paused. "That is, I've been meaning to tell you. It was really brave, what you did with Malfoy the other night."

Harry raised an eyebrow. "Was it?"

“Standing up to him like that. In front of everyone.” Cho’s brown eyes were warm with admiration. “Most people are too scared of his father’s influence to challenge him directly.”

“His father’s dead,” Harry pointed out. “The influence died with him.”

“I know. But still. It took courage.” Cho bit her lip, a gesture Harry was beginning to recognize as a nervous habit. “Anyway, I thought you should know that not everyone thinks you were out of line. Some of us think Malfoy had it coming.”

“Good to know.” Harry let his gaze settle on her face, really looking at her. “I appreciate you telling me.”

Cho’s breath caught slightly at the intensity of his attention. “I just thought you should know.”

They stood in comfortable silence for a moment, watching the other students mill about. Harry could see Cho working up the courage to say something else, her fingers tightening around her cup, her teeth worrying at her lower lip.

“Would you maybe want to fly together sometime?” she asked finally, the words coming out in a rush. “Just the two of us, I mean. Not a scrimmage or anything formal. Just for fun.”

Harry let his gaze settle on her, noting the way her cheeks had flushed pink, the nervous energy in her posture. She was pretty when she was flustered, her eyes bright and her lips slightly parted. The sunlight caught in her dark hair, making it shine.

“I’d like that,” he said, his voice dropping slightly lower. “How about tomorrow afternoon?”

“Really?” Cho’s face lit up with a brilliant smile that transformed her entire expression. “That would be perfect!”

“Meet me here at two?”

“I’ll be here.” She paused, then added softly, “I’m really looking forward to it.”

“So am I.”

The promise in those words made Cho’s cheeks flush even darker. She smiled at him once more before heading back to her friends, glancing back over her shoulder twice as she walked away.

Madam Hooch announced that the pitch would be closing in an hour for maintenance, which prompted everyone to mount their brooms for one last flight. Harry took to the air again, this time just flying for the pure joy of it.

He climbed higher than necessary, until the students below looked like ants and the castle seemed small in the distance. The air was thinner up here, colder, but

exhilarating. Harry paused at the apex of his climb, hovering for a moment as he surveyed the grounds spread out below him.

Then he angled into a steep dive, picking up speed until the world blurred around him. The wind screamed past his ears, tearing at his robes and making his eyes water. The ground rushed up to meet him at terrifying speed.

At the last possible second, he pulled into a complex maneuver he'd learned years ago, the Wronski Feint combined with a barrel roll that transitioned into a steep climb. His broom responded perfectly to his commands, the Firebolt's superior handling making the dangerous maneuver look effortless.

It was showing off, pure and simple, but the impressed gasps and cheers from below made it worth it.

He leveled out and descended more sedately, landing near where the others had gathered to watch. Several students were staring at him with expressions ranging from awe to concern.

"Bloody hell, Harry," Fred said admiringly. "That was mental."

"Brilliantly mental," George added.

"I thought you were going to crash," Katie said, her eyes wide. She'd moved to stand directly in front of him, close enough that he could see the rapid flutter of her pulse at her throat. "That dive was terrifying."

"But impressive," Alicia pointed out.

"Very impressive," Cho agreed softly from where she stood with her teammates.

Katie's hand had come up to rest on Harry's chest, as if to reassure herself that he was solid and unharmed. Through the fabric of his Quidditch robes, Harry could feel the warmth of her palm, could see the concern and something else in her brown eyes.

"I'm fine," he said quietly, just for her. "I knew what I was doing."

"You could have been hurt."

"But I wasn't."

Katie's hand remained on his chest for a moment longer before she seemed to realize what she was doing and pulled back.

Harry just smiled and began packing up his broom. The afternoon was wearing on and most students were heading back to the castle. He joined the stream of people making their way toward the changing rooms, acutely aware of Katie walking beside him.

The Gryffindor changing room was crowded with team members all talking at once about the day's flying. Harry grabbed his things and headed for the showers, stripping off his Quidditch robes and the sweat soaked clothes beneath.

The shower area was a large communal space with multiple shower heads along the walls and wooden half-doors for privacy. Steam already filled the air as several people had beaten Harry there. He found an empty spot near the back and turned on the hot water, letting it cascade over his sore muscles.

Flying for hours was exhilarating but also physically demanding. Harry closed his eyes and let the water work out the tension in his shoulders and back, washing away the sweat and grime of the day.

Around him, the others were gradually finishing up and heading out. The twins left first, still arguing about something related to Bludger trajectories. Their voices echoed off the tiled walls before fading as they moved into the changing area.

Angelina finished next, wrapping herself in a towel and calling out a goodbye as she left. Alicia followed soon after, mentioning something about homework that needed finishing.

Harry heard footsteps approaching and opened his eyes to find Katie stepping under the shower head a few feet away from his. She'd wrapped a towel around herself but removed it before turning on her water.

It was interesting that she'd chosen the shower head closest to his when there were others available.

Harry had the perfect angle over the half-door and he tried not to stare but it was difficult. Katie was beautiful, all smooth curves and toned muscle from years of Quidditch training. Water cascaded over her dark hair and down her body, droplets catching the light as they ran over her skin. She was fit, her body lean and strong.

Katie glanced over and caught him looking. Instead of being embarrassed or offended, she smiled slightly, a knowing curve of her lips that sent heat racing through Harry's veins.

"Good flying today," she said conversationally, as if they weren't both naked and rapidly becoming alone in the showers.

"You too. That goal in the first match was incredible."

"Thanks." Katie turned to face him more fully, water running down her chest and over the gentle curves of her breasts. "I've been working on that feint all summer."

"It shows." Harry's voice had gone slightly rougher without his conscious intention.

They stood there for a moment, the air thick with steam and something else, something electric that made Harry's skin tingle. Katie's eyes had darkened slightly, her lips parted as she watched him with an intensity that matched his own.

The last of the other house members finished and left, their voices fading into the distance. The only sounds remaining were the patter of water against tile and their own breathing, which had both picked up pace.

"Harry," Katie said softly, her voice barely audible over the water.

He moved before consciously deciding to, crossing the distance between them in two steps. His hand came up to cup her jaw, thumb brushing across her cheek. Katie's breath hitched but she didn't pull away. Instead, she leaned into his touch, her eyes fluttering half closed.

"Tell me to stop," Harry murmured, giving her the chance to back out even as his body pressed closer to hers.

"Why would I do that?" Katie's voice was breathless, her hands coming up to rest on his chest.

He kissed her.

Katie responded immediately, her arms sliding up to wrap around his neck as she pressed against him. Her lips were soft and eager, opening under his as the kiss deepened. Harry's other hand found her waist, pulling her closer until there was no space between their wet bodies.

The water continued falling around them, creating a warm cocoon of steam and sensation. Katie made a soft sound against his mouth and Harry swallowed it, kissing her harder. His tongue swept into her mouth and Katie met him eagerly, her own tongue sliding against his in a way that made his blood heat.

When they finally broke apart, both breathing heavily, Katie's eyes were bright and her cheeks flushed.

"I've wanted to do that," she admitted breathlessly. "Since the welcome feast. Maybe before."

"Have you?" Harry's hands traced slow patterns on her waist, feeling her shiver under his touch.

"Yes." Katie's fingers trailed down his chest, exploring the defined muscles there. "You're different this year. More confident. More intense. It's incredibly attractive."

"Glad you think so."

Harry kissed her again, slower this time, exploring. His lips moved from her mouth to her jaw, trailing kisses along the line of her throat. Katie's head fell back, a soft gasp escaping her as his mouth found the sensitive spot where her neck met her shoulder.

Her hands mapped his shoulders and back, her touch leaving fire in its wake. Harry backed her against the tiled wall, his body pressing hers there as his mouth continued its exploration. The cool tiles against her back made Katie arch forward into his heat, her body moving against his in ways that made his breath catch.

"Harry," she breathed, her fingers digging into his shoulders. "We shouldn't. Someone could come back."

"Do you want me to stop?" Harry's mouth moved lower, kissing along her collarbone.

"No." The word was barely a whisper, filled with desperation. "Merlin, no."

"Then stop worrying about what might happen and focus on what is happening."

Harry proved his point by letting one hand drift lower, trailing down her side to her hip. Katie trembled under his touch, her body already wound tight with tension. He took his time, building the anticipation slowly.

Soft kisses along her collarbone. His thumb brushing the underside of her breast, close enough to make her breath catch but not quite touching where she wanted. His thigh pressing between hers, creating friction that made her moan softly.

Katie was making small, desperate sounds now, her body arching into his touch. Every nerve seemed to be on fire, hypersensitive to every brush of his fingers, every press of his lips against her skin.

"Please," she finally gasped out.

"Please what?" Harry's voice was low and dark, filled with satisfaction at how thoroughly he'd undone her.

"Don't tease."

"But you look so good when I do." He let his hand finally drift higher, cupping her breast and feeling her gasp at the contact. "So responsive. So desperate."

"Harry." It came out somewhere between a plea and a demand.

He kissed her again, deep and consuming, even as his hand continued its exploration. His thumb brushed over her nipple and Katie's knees buckled slightly. Harry caught her, pressing her more firmly against the wall as his touch became more purposeful.

Katie was trembling now, her hands clutching at his shoulders for support. Harry could feel her getting lost in the sensations, could see it in the unfocused glaze of her eyes, could hear it in the desperate little sounds escaping her throat.

His hand drifted lower, skimming down her stomach. Katie's breath stuttered in anticipation, her body tensing as she waited for his touch. Harry took his time, drawing out the anticipation until Katie was practically vibrating with need.

When his fingers finally found the heat between her thighs, Katie's entire body jerked and a moan tore from her throat. Harry captured the sound with his mouth, kissing her deeply as his fingers began to move.

He worked her with patient precision, learning what made her gasp, what made her moan, what made her grip his shoulders hard enough to leave marks. The water continued falling around them, masking any sounds they made, creating their own private world of steam and sensation.

Katie was completely lost now, her body moving against his hand in desperate rhythm. Her breathing had gone ragged, punctuated by soft cries and gasps that grew more urgent with each passing moment.

"That's it," Harry murmured against her ear, his voice dark with satisfaction. "Let go. I've got you."

His fingers curled slightly, finding that spot inside her that made Katie cry out. At the same time, his thumb pressed against her clit with perfect pressure and Katie came apart completely.

She came with a muffled cry, her body shaking as pleasure crashed through her in waves. Harry held her through it, his fingers gentling but not stopping, drawing out her orgasm until she was trembling and gasping against him.

When Katie finally opened her eyes, they were dark and satisfied and still hungry. She pulled Harry into a kiss that was all heat and gratitude, her tongue sliding against his in a way that made him groan.

"Your turn," she whispered against his lips, and her hand wrapped around him.

Harry's breath caught as Katie's fingers moved skillfully. She knew exactly what she was doing, her touch firm and perfect as she worked him. His forehead dropped to her shoulder, his breathing going ragged as pleasure built quickly.

"Katie," he managed, his voice strained.

"Feel good?" Her free hand traced patterns on his back while the other continued its devastating work.

"Fucking incredible."

She laughed softly, the sound pleased and knowing. Her movements became more focused, more deliberate, her grip adjusting to give him exactly what he needed. Harry's hips moved involuntarily, seeking more of that perfect friction.

The tension built quickly, pleasure coiling tight in his gut. Katie seemed to sense how close he was because her movements became even more purposeful, her hand working him with single minded intensity.

"Come on," she whispered, her lips against his ear. "Let me see you lose control. Let me watch you fall apart the way I did."

That did it. Harry came with a groan, his body shuddering as release washed through him. Katie stayed with him through it, only stopping when he finally slumped against her, completely spent.

They stood there for a long moment, catching their breath under the warm spray of water. Harry eventually straightened and kissed Katie again, this time slow and thorough, tasting her satisfaction on her lips.

"That was unexpected," Katie said when they finally separated, her voice still slightly breathless.

"Good unexpected?"

"Very good unexpected." She smiled up at him, her brown eyes warm and sated. "Though we should probably finish actually showering before someone comes looking for us."

"Probably."

They separated reluctantly, actually washing themselves this time though with frequent glances at each other that held promise of future encounters. Katie's body was flushed and satisfied, her movements languid in a way that showed she was still feeling the aftereffects of her orgasm.

Harry found himself already planning the next time, already thinking about all the ways he wanted to explore her body, all the sounds he wanted to draw from her throat.

By the time they were dressed and heading back to the castle, the sun was beginning to set, painting the sky in shades of orange and pink. They walked close together, their shoulders occasionally brushing.

"So," Katie said as they approached the castle. "Tomorrow you're flying with Cho?"

"That's the plan."

"And what about us?" She glanced at him, vulnerability showing through for just a moment. "Are we just having fun, or is this something more?"

Harry considered his answer carefully. Katie deserved honesty, at least to a point.

"It doesn't have to be just once," he said finally. "If you're interested in seeing where this goes, so am I."

"I am." Katie's smile was shy but genuine. "Very interested. I just wanted to make sure we were on the same page."

"We are."

"Good." She paused at the entrance to the castle. "And I'm okay with you seeing other people too. I mean, we're not dating or anything. This is just fun between us."

The words surprised Harry, though he was careful not to show it. "You're okay with that?"

"As long as you're honest about it and we're safe, then yes." Katie shrugged. "We're young. We should be having fun. And I like you enough that I'd rather share than not have you at all."

"That's remarkably mature of you."

"I'm practical." Katie's smile turned slightly wicked. "Besides, I think it's kind of hot, knowing other girls want you too. Makes me feel lucky that I get to have you."

They parted ways in the entrance hall, Katie heading up to Gryffindor Tower while Harry made a detour to the library to pick up a book he'd requested. His body still hummed with satisfaction, his mind already planning future encounters.

Things were progressing beautifully across all fronts. Cho was interested and eager for their flight together tomorrow. Katie had proven to be enthusiastic, responsive, and refreshingly practical about their arrangement. And through it all, Ginny was working behind the scenes to facilitate his various pursuits.

The year was shaping up quite nicely indeed.

To be continued...