

Wade in the Water

by RedOrchid

Sorting AU. Harry asks his best friend to help him figure out the the clue for the second task of the Triwizard Tournament.

Bubbles

Chapter 1 of 2

Sorting AU. Harry asks his best friend to help him figure out the the clue for the second task of the Triwizard Tournament.

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A/N: This one is playing in C'est what?'s Slytherin!Harry-verse, following her story Second Impressions (<http://cest-what.livejournal.com/14523.html>). You don't have to have read that story for this one to make sense, though. AU starting point: Draco didn't botch his first meeting with Harry in Diagon Alley, and so Harry chose Slytherin over Gryffindor when offered the choice by the Sorting Hat. And things turned out a bit differently. :-)

Chapter One Bubbles

"I think Cedric Diggory just tried to hit on me."

Draco didn't look up from the cuffs he was unbuttoning on his dress robes or react to the statement in any obvious way, but Harry could see the corner of his left eye give a small twitch. It made him smile, the way he and Draco were able to communicate silently with the smallest of looks and shrugs.

"And you're surprised?" Draco drawled, moving his hands to the top of his robes, loosening the collar. "I've been saying it for months." On the dresser next to him, a small pile of flashing badges concurred, sending 'Support Harry Potter...even his stalker does!' across the room, alternated with a picture of the older Hufflepuff boy's face, looking longingly into the distance.

"I'm serious, Malfoy. I think he really did try," Harry said, slumping down on his bed and starting to remove his shoes. "And would you stop with the badges, already? They weren't funny the first time, and being spread all over the school hasn't improved them any."

Draco scoffed, but pulled out his wand and sent the remaining badges falling into an open drawer. He let his robes slide off his shoulders and turned around, walking over to the large closet near his bed to hang them up properly. "What did he do?"

Harry wondered whether he was imagining the tension in Draco's voice, because when he looked over, his friend looked as unaffected as anything. He swallowed. "He cornered me after the ball, said something about how I should take the egg for a bath." He trailed off, wincing slightly at the memory. "And then he gave me the password to the prefects' bathroom. Told me to go there. For the *privacy*."

Draco dropped the hanger he'd been holding. It fell to the floor with a muted *thud*, bouncing slightly on the thick carpet.

"Oh," he said, and Harry did a double take.

"Not your most impressive comeback," he said, frowning slightly. Draco spluttered and turned his back. Harry's frown deepened. "Malfoy? You alright? I need your brain to help me out here."

"I'm fine," Draco started, closing the heavy oak doors and moving towards his bed. "I...Really? He actually said that?"

"Practically whispered it in my ear," Harry confirmed glumly. "You have to help me." He gave Draco his most pleading look, the one he usually saved for help with Potions theory and History of Magic essays. He expected Draco to roll his eyes and then relent and was surprised when the blond boy came over to sit down on the bed next to him, sliding an arm around his shoulders.

"Tell me what to do," he said quietly, pressing his face to Harry's hair as the dark boy leaned into him, resting his head against his shoulder. The tension in Harry's back lessened, and his arm went around Draco's waist, fingers digging into the pale, bare skin.

"Come with me?" Harry murmured against his neck. "I could just avoid him, I know, but it's less than two months to the second task, and I'm getting desperate enough for almost anything."

Draco smiled against his hair. "Including fending off Pretty-boy Diggory in one of the most infamous groping spots in all of Hogwarts?" he teased. "Ouch!"

"Don't even joke about it," Harry muttered, going in for another pinch. "I could never be desperate enough for that."

"Now, Potter..."

"There is always a point of desperation where any price is acceptable, I know," Harry intoned, turning his face to press against Draco's neck. "I'd just rather take on another dragon than deal with Diggory right now."

"Fair enough," Draco said, letting go of Harry and jumping off the bed. "Well, are you coming?"

Harry blinked. "What? You mean, right now?"

Draco walked over to the trunk at the foot of Harry's bed, rummaging through it with practiced ease until a shimmering cloak came into view.

"No time like the present. Now, come on before Nott and Zabini get back. Besides," he took Harry's heavy golden egg from the trunk and tossed it to him before donning a bath robe and sweeping the Invisibility Cloak around both of them, "if Diggory's there, we can just drown him."

But the prefects' bathroom was empty when they arrived, and Harry breathed a small sigh of relief. Perhaps he'd just overreacted after all. Perhaps there wasn't anything more to the glances he could feel burning against his neck whenever the other champion was around than simple competition. Jealousy. Irritation. Anger. He could deal with all of those things without problem. He got worse from the Gryffindors every single day.

"Oh, I'm definitely making prefect next year," Draco exclaimed beside him, letting the cloak fall off their shoulders and walking over to the shimmering pool in the middle of the room. "Just imagine coming here after Quidditch practice instead of having to endure the tepid showers down at the pitch."

Harry followed him, grabbing a few fluffy, white towels on the way. Draco was fiddling with the taps, sending jets of brightly-coloured foam spilling into the pool, filling it up in a matter of minutes. Harry grinned and went over to the dressing area, removing his half-opened robes and folding them into a haphazard pile. A soft *splash* replaced the humming of the taps, and he turned around just in time to see Draco break the frothy surface, shaking foam out of his hair. Taking the egg with him, Harry crossed the cool tile to join his friend.

"Close it! Close it! Fuck!"

Harry threw himself at the egg, slamming it shut and ending the horrible, wailing sound that had come pouring out of it, just like every other time he had tried to get the bloody thing open. The sound was ringing in his ears and still echoing faintly across the room. He met Draco's eyes, and, in the blink of an eye, they shared a look that outlined elaborate plans for a very painful death for Hufflepuff's golden boy. Then they turned in perfect, slow synchronisation, and their eyes fell on the enchanted object.

"Now what?" It was Harry who spoke, but Draco nodded the same question along with him. The curling feeling of desperation began to renew its coils in his gut. Another dead end.

"I'd try putting it *in* the water if I were you."

They turned as one, surprised yelps breaking from both of them as they came face to transparent face with a rather unattractive ghost.

"Who are you?" Draco demanded, moving closer to Harry and shifting them both back against the side of the pool.

The ghost sniffed. "No one ever knows!" she exclaimed, sounding rather put-out. "No one cares. No one! You would think that *lying horribly* in the middle of the school would make people remember you, but no! Not me, apparently. People find it perfectly alright to forget all about *me*."

Harry shook himself slightly, trying to get his brain from 'er, what the...' to something more articulate. Next to him, Draco was rolling his eyes, clearly exasperated. Then something seemed to click in his mind, and Harry's saw his gaze narrow slightly and a devastatingly charming smile spread across his face.

"I'm sorry," he said, sincerity thick and smooth in his voice. "I'm sure your death was *very* tragic, and I'm personally appalled that the professors would have neglected to inform all of us of such an important point in the school's history."

Harry did his best not to grin as the ghost visibly preened. "Oh, that's just what I think!" she crooned, floating closer to Draco with a wide smile on her face. Draco's sincere expression never faltered, even as he collided with Harry, drawing back from the onslaught of bubbly-ghost-murder details. His hips were pressing Harry into the tiles, and the darker boy slid his arms easily around his friend, putting his chin against his shoulder and watching the ghost gesticulate wildly as she re-enacted what seemed to be every wrong ever committed against her. Draco's hands wrapped around his, pressing a subtle warning into the backs of his hands, and Harry bit the inside of his cheek to keep from laughing. Finally, the ghost made a pause to draw an imaginary breath, and Draco saw his opening.

"So, about the egg," he said casually, smiling winningly at the ghost (Myrtle, she had told them, flicking her incorporeal hair). "When you came in, you said to put *it* in the water. What did you mean, more precisely? I mean," he added quickly, when Myrtle's face lost some of its shine, "you seem to know a great deal, having lived in the castle for so long."

Myrtle beamed at him. "Well, that's what the other boy did," she said. "Put it in the water, and *it's* bang, and rather prettily too. Though, I didn't get to hear what it said because he chased me away." She screwed her face up in a scowl at the memory. "He was rude. I didn't like him."

Harry couldn't hold back a chuckle this time. He pressed his mouth against Draco's shoulder, trying to muffle the sound as his body shook slightly in mirth at the ridiculousness of the situation. Myrtle looked deadly affronted, and Draco squeezed his hand warningly beneath the surface of the water. "He's not laughing at you," he

assured the ghost with a serious look on his face. "Harry would never be rude like that."

Harry did his best to pull himself together and shake his head. Myrtle stopped scowling, so he figured it was good enough.

"No," he said, swallowing another chuckle. "I wouldn't laugh at you, Myrtle. Of course I wouldn't. It's just nice, you see, hearing you say that. I don't like that boy much either."

The ghost looked as though she could kiss him, and he felt a cold spark go down his back, hoping fervently that she wouldn't. He'd accidentally brushed against the Bloody Baron once, and the feeling of connecting with the departed soul had been a lot less than pleasant. He shivered at the memory.

"Go on then, Potter," Draco said, turning in the circle of his arms to lean over and pick up the egg from the edge of the pool and hand it to him. "You heard what Myrtle said. Put it in the water and let's hear what it says."

And so they did.

"An hour." Harry said weakly, slumped against the side of the pool. A long time had passed; the bubbles on the surface of the bath were almost gone. Noting the increasing chill of the water, Draco moved away from him momentarily, turning on some of the taps again. The quiet spluttering felt loud in the empty room. They hadn't spoken much since they'd managed to talk Myrtle into leaving.

"Draco, how will I breathe?" Harry could hear his voice rise to a slightly panicked pitch and did his best to moderate it. "I mean, have you heard of anything like this before? Anyone we can ask?"

Draco racked his brain.

"Not off the top of my head," he admitted reluctantly, shaping the new, thick foam into little toppy mountains. "The only thing I've heard of for holding your breath's..." He trailed off abruptly, cheeks flushing.

"What?" Harry urged. "Tell me."

Draco's cheeks deepened in colour, and Harry could see the blush beginning to creep down his neck.

"It's nothing that'd work here," the blond tried, studiously refusing to look away from the foamy shapes he was busying his hands with. "Forget I mentioned it."

"How do you know it wouldn't work?" Harry demanded. "If there's a chance it might help me, you know *not* drown, I think we should try it at least. We could test it out right here...What?" he exclaimed, when his best friend made a strangled, choking sound beside him and disappeared under the surface of the water. Harry pulled him up again, a little roughly from the increasing irritation he was feeling.

"Harry...come on... Oh, al-bloody-right then!...remember when we found that enormous room off the seventh floor corridor when we were hiding from Filch?" Draco started, throwing him a quick, embarrassed look. Harry nodded, somewhat impatiently. "Well, among the things I picked up in there was this... magazine, right?" The blush was deepening, Harry noticed as he crossed his arms and waited for the point. "And there was this article in there on spells to use to, um..."

"Just spit it out, Malfoy," Harry sighed, unfolding his arms to reach out and comb some foam out of the other boy's hair with his fingers. Draco's eyes fell closed, and another choked little sound came from the back of his throat.

"It was...there was... Fine, they were sex spells, alright?" he half-snapped, words tumbling out of his mouth. "And one was for letting you hold your breath for a long time, to, you know, with your mouth..."

The hand in his hair stopped moving, freezing in mid-stroke.

"Oh," Harry said, blushing hotly. "Oh." The hand fell away, and an embarrassed silence descended. Draco busied himself with the foam around his hands, pushing it into little piles in front of him.

"We should try it."

Draco's head whipped around, mouth agape. Harry's eyes widened, and he quickly took a step back.

"No!" he spluttered, trying desperately to back-pedal. "No, I didn't mean...of course not!...The breathing! I meant that we should try it to see if it works on not breathing under water."

"Right," Draco said, swallowing. "Right. Of course. The lake."

"Draco..."

The blond boy evaded his touch, moving away to fiddle with the taps again.

"Draco, come on. Don't be weird."

Harry followed him, reaching out to draw the other boy back towards him.

"Don't..."

Harry didn't listen, just grabbed hold of his friend's arm and pulled, bringing Draco's front flush against his own for a burning, electric second, before Harry stiffened in shock and Draco managed to push away. Quickly deciding that this was a moment for fleeing rather than bravery, the blond boy scrambled out of the pool, snatched up his robe and underwear from the floor and was out the secret doorway before Harry's brain could grasp what had just happened.

When realisation came, all air went out of his lungs, and he slumped back against the tiled poolside, breath hitching in his throat.

A/N: This story was born out of botched fanart. The art with this story was supposed to become a Cedric/Harry picture foHero, but somehow, Draco managed to sneak in and steal the spot. And then, of course, I had to write a bubbly scene for him and Harry as well. :-) More soon. Please review!

The Black Lake

Chapter 2 of 2

The second task.

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Chapter Two The Black Lake

They didn't talk about it. They tried to a couple of times, but all that came of it were unfinished sentences, uncomfortable silences and swift changes of topic. Draco was avoiding him; nothing overly overt...they weren't fighting or anything...just leaving for breakfast a few moments earlier, before Harry had time to put on his shoes and walk with him, going out to fly alone and studying late with Nott in the library instead of in the common room with his side pressed up against Harry's on the floor. Little things. Missing touches. Smiles that lit up and then flickered, as though they suddenly remembered that they weren't supposed to be. Missing thoughts inside his head from silent communication over a croaking frog in Transfiguration. Little things of every day, most of which Harry hadn't even noticed were there until they were suddenly part of an empty, aching void inside him.

He couldn't stop thinking of "it", replaying the moment over and over in his head, morphing it with different interpretations, different sets of light. He felt the wet, slippery skin of an arm under his fingers over and over again, registered the warm, hard connection as their chests collided...a little unbalanced, winding him slightly...and stopped breathing, all sensation rushing to the pit of his stomach, as he felt another kind of pressure, hot and hard against his hip. He saw his friend's face before him, open in utter terror, but with an underlying flicker of something else, something Harry would normally have read as 'relief,' except nothing between him and Draco seemed normal anymore.

They worked together in preparation for the second task, but even working was colder and more efficient than it had been. The spell for holding one's breath wasn't mentioned again, and Draco was doing his best to pretend that the conversation in the prefects' bathroom had never happened. He wrote long letters to his mother, stroking the edge of the parchment hesitantly with the tip of his finger, and Harry wondered what they said.

The weeks that went past turned the tension into numbness, and Harry felt like he was merely going through the motions of his life, everything turning into grey, distorted shapes around him, as though he was watching the rest of the school through the base of a dirty bottle. The preparations for the task were sorted...Draco had seen to that, getting something called 'Gillyweed' from Snape, which would apparently make him able to breathe water like a fish. They read up on the Black Lake and practiced spells to fight off anything from Grindylows to sticky seaweed. He should have felt ready. Prepared. Mainly, he just felt sick to his stomach.

The night before the task, he went out alone, walking the corridors for hours under the protection of the Invisibility Cloak. He needed to focus, to clear his mind of confusion and rolling emotion, and so he walked, purging the thoughts of Draco, the task...everything really...from his head with the monotonous *clap, clap* of his feet against the stone. He didn't arrive back to his dormitory until well past midnight and more or less fell into bed, still wearing most of his clothes.

"Harry! Harry, wake up."

Someone was shaking him, and he rose blearily from a heavy sleep. The night had been restless, dreams gliding across his consciousness in confusing patterns, staying just out of reach, leaving him with the sensation that he had been chasing something all night, knowing that he needed it but without any clue as to why.

"What time is it?"

"Almost eight," Zabini told him, throwing a pair of clean socks his way. "Come on, hurry up. We need to get to breakfast before the task starts."

Harry nodded absentmindedly and got himself off the bed, gathering his things and checking that the objects he was taking with him to the second task (knife, wand, magical plant) were still in their places. His robes were wrinkled after having been slept in and smelled a little sweaty. He threw a quick Ironing Charm on them (living with Malfoy *and* Zabini had the definite advantage of learning all sorts of useful tricks to keep yourself looking immaculate at all times), deciding that spending the morning in the lake justified skipping out on his usual shower.

Crabbe and Goyle were in the common room, waiting for them as Harry and Blaise emerged. Nott was sitting in a chair by the fire, reading a book and nibbling on an apple. There were a few other students present, but none of them had the pale, blond hair Harry suddenly realised he was subconsciously scanning the room for.

"Did Malfoy go up to breakfast already?" He hadn't meant to ask, but the words tumbled from his lips anyway. Beside him, Blaise shifted uncomfortably, trading a closed-off look with Theo. The silence spread.

"He didn't come back last night," Nott finally said. Something cold flickered inside Harry's stomach...a premonition of something, lingering just on the other side of his consciousness.

"What do you mean 'he didn't come back'?" he demanded. "Where did he go?"

Silence. Crabbe and Goyle moved a bit closer to the door.

"Dammit, Zabini! Where did he go?" he exclaimed, the cold feeling in his stomach spreading, spinning a suffocating web through his chest. "Tell me!"

More silence.

"Snape came to collect him," Nott said finally, his quiet voice carrying easily through the compact tension of the room. "Something about the Tournament. We weren't supposed to tell you."

Logically, Harry knew that nothing actually changed. The floor was still solid beneath him, and the temperature of the room didn't suddenly drop. He just couldn't feel it anymore. Couldn't feel anything anymore except the harsh beats of his own heart in his chest.

And while you're searching, ponder this:

We've taken what you'll sorely miss...

He wanted to throw up, to scream, to do something other than stand there, frozen in place with no air entering into his lungs. It couldn't be. And yet, there was no other explanation. Nothing which made more complete or perfect sense.

But past an hour...the prospect's black;

Too late, it's gone, it won't come back.

He was vaguely aware of moving his feet, of the sensation of his hand touching the doorway and pushing open the secret passage. His fingers clutched convulsively at the small bag of Gillyweed in his pocket, all hesitation gone from his mind. It would work. It would work because it had to.

The crowd was just as big as for the first task, but this time, they all seemed to bleed together in Harry's mind. He was in his swimming trunks, wand strapped to one leg and a small knife to the other. He vaguely felt the cold February wind on his face and against his skin; on his right, Fleur Delacour shivered, her beautiful, blonde hair whipping around her in a tangled cloud. Cedric was on his left, looking grim but focused. Krum was at the end of the platform, muttering quietly under his breath.

The signal went off, and Harry swallowed the Gillyweed, relief flooding him as he felt something clamp over his mouth and slits appear on the side of his throat. One hour. Three thousand six hundred seconds to find Draco, put an end to the fucking stupid weirdness between them and get his best friend back. He'd do it in half that time. Feeling his focus narrow down to a single bright point, the same way it would whenever he caught sight of the Snitch during a Quidditch game, he dove off the platform and into the welcoming waters.

"This way."

He had just escaped a horde of Grindylows when he heard the familiar voice somewhere below him. The ghost from the prefects' bathroom was floating some distance away, waving for him to follow. He kicked with his webbed feet, propelling his body forward, thanking his lucky star that his best friend was a manipulative bastard with a talent for making girls fall all over themselves in order to assist him. Myrtle chatted away happily as they swam, seemingly content with the distracted noises she was getting in reply from Harry. Deeper and deeper they went, spiralling into the watery darkness.

"Through there," Myrtle said finally, pointing at a constellation of stone forming an archway a little further ahead. Harry could hear singing now...hauntingly beautiful notes, the same kind that had come out of the golden egg. "I have to stay here. They don't like me very much." Harry nodded, stroking his hand along the outline of her translucent arm in quiet thanks. Myrtle beamed at him.

"I'll stay here a while," she said brightly, waving for him to go on. "Do what I can to delay the others, especially that horrible boy with no manners." Harry felt his face split into a real smile for the first time in days and nodded his head in encouragement. Myrtle giggled and left, swimming off in the general direction of the shoreline. Harry checked the enchanted watch on his wrist. Twenty-two minutes left. Increasing the force of his kicks, he moved downwards, passing through the archway.

No! Please, no...

For a short, panicked moment, Harry thought he was too late, that he had somehow read the time wrong and that Draco was dead. His body was floating limply in the water, skin deathly pale and bluish in the dim light. Merpeople were circling the spot, guarding their hostages with tritons and violent-looking spears. Harry pulled out his wand, preparing to fight, and was taken aback as they merely swam to the side, letting him pass into the circle. There were three more poles set up in the small clearing, and he recognised Hermione Granger...the bossy Gryffindor who always did her best to trump him and Draco in class...and Cho Chang...the pretty Ravenclaw Seeker he'd briefly considered taking to the ball before Daphne asked if he would go with her sister, who was too young to take part otherwise. The third girl was younger, blonde and with an ethereal prettiness to her. Delacour's sister, most likely.

Draco's skin felt cold and unresponsive under his fingers, and fear started to build inside him again. He pushed two fingers against his friend's neck, trying to feel a pulse while his own heart raced in his chest. A faint, almost imaginarily weak movement made him expel a great burst of bubbles in shaky relief, and he fumbled for the knife strapped to his leg, hurrying to cut Draco down and pull him into his arms.

The other champions were nowhere to be seen, and he threw a worried look over his shoulder at the three girls still hanging limply on display. He reached out to cut down the nearest one and was immediately pushed back by a dangerous-looking guard. The message was clear...he was only allowed to free his own hostage. The cold lump in his gut was back. He didn't know the girls very well, and Granger was usually rude to him, so he didn't much like her, but he didn't want them to *die*. On the other hand, he needed to get back to the surface if he was to bring Draco back. And soon. The faint pulse he could feel against his fingers was practically slowing with every minute. Moving his hand from Draco's neck to push a strand of wispy, blond hair out of his face, he let his fingertips brush against the bluish cheek and made his decision.

The Merpeople erupted in angry shouts and gestures as the poles that held the three girls disintegrated into dust, sending the unmoving forms floating softly towards the surface like hot-air balloons on a clear summer day. He held his wand in front of him, warningly, holding the angry creatures back until he was sure all three girls were rising steadily and would not go back down again. Sending out a jet of hot bubbles to scatter his opponents, he kicked out hard with his webbed feet, tightened his hold around Draco's waist and shot upwards, fighting his way back towards the sky.

He broke the surface with four minutes to spare and had to go down below the water now and then for the remaining time in order to breathe until the Gillyweed wore off and he could take air into his lungs again. The crowd was cheering all around him, and he saw the other champions out of the corner of his eye, popping out of the water and swimming towards the floating forms of Granger, Cho and little Delacour, pulling them to shore.

Draco stirred in his arms, moaning softly as he blinked and opened his eyes. His gaze was sleepy and unfocused, but there was a smile there as it fixed itself on Harry, a sense of *warmth* that Harry hadn't seen in almost two months, stirring within. It only lasted a second, flickering away as the blue eyes cleared from whatever enchantment had been worked on the blond, and Harry felt his heart contract.

No. Not again.

He didn't choose to do it, just knew that he had to get through to Draco somehow before his friend withdrew again, escaping Harry like the dreams that taunted him in his sleep and the wispy, smoky thoughts toying with the brink of his consciousness. He took Malfoy's face in trembling hands and pressed their lips together, fingers tightening in blond hair as Draco froze and made to pull away, gasping in shock. Harry didn't care. Couldn't make himself care as weeks and weeks of tension and confusion and, *God*, missing Draco so much it *fucking* hurt crumbled around him, releasing jolts of adrenaline into his bloodstream. He parted his lips against Draco's, desperately trying to get closer, and moaned in relief as he felt the other boy melt against him, wrapping his arms tightly around his neck and kissing back with such heat it made Harry's head spin. The restlessness of the past months clenched and released in his chest, the dreams that had been evading him coming into sharp focus. Draco's body flush against his, long fingers tangling in his hair and those soft, incredible lips sliding wetly and *fucking perfect* against his own. There were words whispered into the intimate connection of mouths, things unsaid swallowed down whole in gulping, hungry kisses and gentle sweeps of tongue, and Harry felt an almost painful warmth start in his chest, spilling outward and overflowing into every part of him until he was a gasping, melted mass of sensation and emotion in Draco's arms.

The pull back to reality came slowly, adding sensation and sound by degrees; cold water lapping against his body where Malfoy wasn't touching him, the sound of hollering and applause from a crowd of more than a thousand people watching every movement from the platform stands.

Oh. Oh.

He pulled away from the kiss, heart racing and stomach plummeting as he took in the myriad faces cheering down at them. He could see Rita Skeeter in the front row, Quick-Quotes Quill writing away so fast it was almost shredding the parchment. Cameras were flashing like crazy, and he suddenly realised how very, very public this precise moment was.

"Oh, God!" he panted, panic rising inside him as he made to pull away. Draco's hands tightened in his hair, keeping their foreheads closely together.

"Did you mean it?" he asked urgently, voice breaking a little. "Harry..."

The way Draco said his name made something break inside the darker boy, and he leapt forward, taking the blond's lips in another bruising kiss.

"Yes," he breathed fervently, taking another kiss, and then another. "Yes. God, yes."

Draco smiled, wide and beaming, and then pulled back, releasing his hold on Harry's hair.

"Then come on," he whispered, pulling Harry with him through the water. "Let's get this over with."

Harry followed, and together they made it over to the platform and out of the cold water. The second they hit solid ground, people closed in on them, wrapping them in thick blankets (Madam Pomfrey), bombarding them with questions (Rita Skeeter and her colleagues) or just smirking knowingly from a distance (Pansy). There was a blur of motion when Fleur Delacour descended on them, placing wet kisses on their cheeks in thanks for saving her sister, and a blur of sound as the results were read from the judges' table.

In the end, Harry ended up disqualified from the task, his underwater rescue labelled 'sabotage' against the other champions. For some reason, this made Mad-Eye Moody go completely around the bend, pulling out his wand to attack Harry in front of the entire school. Luckily, Snape was quick to react as always, and the old wizard was soon floated off the premises, Stunned and bound.

Draco protested wildly against the disqualification until Harry bodily shut him up, smothering the angry words with his lips.

"Leave it, Malfoy," he murmured. "I'm happy to be out."

"But..."

"I never wanted it to start with," Harry reminded him softly. "I already have more money than I can spend...even with you as a boyfriend...and I...what?"

"Nothing." Draco's smile was radiant, the kind Harry had only seen a couple of times over the four years they had known one another. "Boyfriend, you say?"

Harry blushed, spluttering something unintelligible in the general direction of his feet. Draco laughed, loud and happy, and scooped up Harry's right hand with both of his, bringing it smoothly to his lips.

"Harry Potter," he said softly, sliding his lips across the knuckles in a way that made Harry shiver slightly. "Are you declaring your intentions?" Harry's blush deepened, and Draco laughed again, slipping his arm around Harry's back and pulling him with him towards the castle. Behind them, people were still staring and talking excitedly; Harry could feel their eyes burning a hole at the back of his neck. With his arm around Draco's waist and his head resting snugly against the other boy's shoulder as they walked back to the school, however, Harry decided that he didn't much care anymore.

THE END

A/N: A big thanks to Lariope, as always. Hope you liked it. Please review. :-)