Of Quidditch Prejudice and Prideful Intentions

By Haley Luther

Did You Hear?

Lyddie’s arm landed hard upon the *Daily Prophet*, startling the other students from their after-feast comas. The entire Gryffindor house was in bed for the evening, and those remaining were some fifth years prepping for their O.W.Ls. Parchment and quills were scattered around on the carpet and other surfaces. The three Beckett sisters were the only ones left to enjoy themselves, Ellie and Rose being fourth years, Lyddie just in her second.

Leaning forward to glimpse at the paper, Rose wanted to see what caused such excitement. “What is it, Lyddie?” she asked, craning her neck for a look.

“Never mind all that,” Lyddie redirected Rose’s attention away from updates over the Dark Mark at the Quidditch World Cup, and instead toward a smaller, sideways article at the right.

Ellie knew better than to ask. Cozied up in one of the big red arm chairs, she didn’t want to pry her attention away from her book just to hear more on what she already knew—boys. It always had something to do with boys. What else could it have been? Lyddie’s excitement had no bounds; it was too late and—more than likely—just too unimportant in Ellie’s mind to stir much curiosity. She turned the page, but couldn’t help perking an ear out of idle curiosity.

Lyddie fussed with the wrinkled edges of the *Prophet* to show Rose the dancing glow of an emerald goblet. There was so much excitement contained within her delicate frame that her curls bounced with her enthusiasm. “It’s happening!” she squealed. “Didn’t you hear?”

Rose smiled politely, encouraging her younger sister, but still seemed confused. She quickly set to skim the article. “Hear what?”

“The TriWizard tournament, Rose! It’s *actually* happening. And this year, too! But you’re not asking about the best part yet. Neither of you have. Don’t you want to know, Ellie?”

“You want to tell me, and I doubt I’ll have say in it otherwise,” Ellie said in the best impersonation of her father.

Lyddie rolled her eyes. “Didn’t you listen to a word Dumbledore said?”

“Yes, yes I heard him.” She responded with a resigned sigh. “But then why should I remember when you are so clearly going to remind me?”

Rose did her best to conceal her smile. Not very often did Ellie impersonate the likeness of their father, but when she did, it was spot on. She buried herself deeper into the article, curling the paper edges to hide her face.

Unfortunately for Lyddie, the impersonation went right over her head. “The TriWizard Tournament happens to be a contest, just so you know,” Lyddie said with only mild condescension. “A contest that requires three magical schools to compete. *Eternal glory* Dumbledore said! I hear Cedric Diggory wants to put his name into the Goblet. Then who knows, that Harry Potter stands a good chance of it.”

Ellie made no answer and went back to her book.

“But anyway, that’s not what matters-”

“Oh?” The book fell flat against her chest. “So three students from three schools competing possibly unto death in a meaningless competition doesn’t matter? How could that possibly affect us?”

Lyddie shifted forward, resting her hand upon her sister’s knee. “One of the schools coming just so happens to be Durmstrang. A magical school for *boys,* Ellie.”

“We have plenty of those here for you to mess around with, why do there have to be more? You’re not going to bother them with your silly jokes.” Horror struck her instantly, her eyes widening with what was bound to come. “Lyddie, please, none of your nonsense. I beg of you. The last thing we need is for McGonagall to scold you for lose behavior again, then send it off to mother. Her nerves couldn’t handle it. Neither would you with such a Howler.”

“Surely you must know that I intend for all of us to be matched?”

“Matched!” Ellie’s brows raised. “*You* intend? So instead of wreaking havoc upon our mother’s nerves, you intend to act in her stead?”

“You must introduce us.” Lyddie’s hand tightened upon her knee. “You must.”

“Me? Why me?”

“Don’t be so annoying,” Lyddie dismissed. “I can’t exactly go up and just introduce myself, now can I? I’m a second year; all the cute ones will surely be fourth years or older.”

“I will do no such thing; I have no desire to see any of them. They’re only coming for this stupid tournament and nothing else. Do you think this is their reason for coming here? Surely not.” Ellie sat back in her chair, shaking her head. “No, that cannot be their design.”

“Design!” Lyddie scoffed. “How could you say such a thing? You sound so much like father it makes me sick. You must consider *us*. Lavender and Parvati are going to make moves on the best ones, almost as soon as they arrive, even though they hardly ever go out of their ways to meet anyone new who comes to the school. We have to make a move before they do.”

“Those two have nothing much to recommend themselves, but I’m sure they will catch some poor fool’s eye at some point. And, at any rate, we lot are not much better. Especially *you,* Lyddie. You act as if they are our rightful property. If you could just focus on something other than boys for five minutes—”

“You know,” Lyddie twisted in her seat, staring off dreamily as she turned towards Rose. “I did hear about one of the students. A Mr. Dimitri and his friends. I overheard Lavender telling Parvati just this morning. He’s a Chaser! Can’t you imagine? A famous Quidditch player, *here*, at Hogwarts.”

Rose perked up just a little, and though the expression on her face displayed only mild interest, Ellie knew her well enough to see the light of interest in her eye. “What team?” Rose asked. She and all the sisters had gone to the Quidditch World Cup a few months ago.

“Bulgaria, of course,” Lyddie said, knowing full well that Rose was a Bulgaria fan. “All three in Mr. Dimitri’s party play on the team. Still in school, too. None of this will be of use to us if twenty such boys should come this way, since Ellie will not see them.”

“If twenty Quidditch players come at all to Hogwarts all at once, with ideas of matching themselves with humble Gryffindor’s, then trust me, my dear sister—I will introduce you to all of them.”

Furious for not sharing her enthusiasm, Lyddie broke off with Rose to talk Quidditch plays and strategies that Ellie didn’t care to understand. Ellie sighed, content with blocking out the excited squeals coming now from both her sisters. She picked up her book that had fallen into the side of the chair, *Tales of Beedle the Bard.* She needed to give it back to Hermione before too long…but of course, that could always happen *after* she found a way to introduce her sisters to whomever these Quidditch players were. Even she was mildly curious.

Arrival at Hogwarts

“Faster, Ellie, faster! Rose! We’re going to miss it!”

Excited chatter drowned Lyddie’s excitement as she tugged her sisters along toward the bridge, fearlessly forcing their way through the crowd of clamoring students. Ellie jumped and tripped over obstacles that lie in her way, thankful they found an empty window quickly. They were soon, however, accompanied by Hermione and her friends. Ron and Harry leaned against the opposite side of the window, Hermione opting to stand next to Ellie’s free side. She smiled at her, looked as if to start asking a question (knowing her, it had to be about the book) but was drowned out by the rising noise of horses.

“Look, look!” a first year cried, jabbing a finger towards the pewter stained sky. What once was a tiny spec slowly grew into a light-blue ornate carriage pulled by a dozen winged horses. The carriage was bouncing around the sky, twisting and jolting around on cables. Ellie wondered how it stayed attached to the horses’ reigns.

The Gamekeeper, Hagrid, was down by the shore at the base of the castle, waving what looked like caution paddles to direct the carriage to a landing space. “Clear the runway!” he shouted, right before having to duck for safety as the carriage narrowly missed his head.

“That must be the Beauxbatons,” Ellie overheard Hermione tell her friends.

Out towards the middle of the lake, something began to appear out of the water. As a mast rose high out from underneath the water, an entire ship emerged, creaking and spewing water from its submerged journey.

To Ellie’s amazement, Lyddie’s following squeal rose higher than all the rest. “Look over there,” Ellie leaned down to whisper into her youngest sister’s ear, enjoying the ridiculousness of her enthusiasm. “That’ll be your Durmstrang men, then.”

Rose gently smacked her arm. “One of these days someone is going to catch your eye, believe it or not,” she scolded. “Let her have her fun.”

Ellie paid her no mind, and resorted herself to leaning back against the cold stone of the bridge. She watched idly as the strange ship docked on the shore. *Sure,* Ellie thought. These men would certainly have to be extraordinary to catch *her* attention.

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While the Durmstrang men and the Beauxbatons ladies were disembarking from their journey, making their way slowly inside—*very* slowly per the opinions of other students—everyone else was rushing to try and get the first glimpse of the foreign visitors. No one had seen any of them yet, thanks to the nasty caretaker Mr. Filch. There was to be a grand show or exhibit on the student’s behalf, and they had to wait. Not that Filch would trouble himself with being hospitable to the Hogwarts guests. He just didn’t want to have to accommodate them and fight off nosy Hogwarts students at the same time.

Ellie didn’t see what all the fuss was about. Certainly these students couldn’t be any different than themselves.

“Nothing but parading birds, if you ask me,” she mumbled to herself, settling down at the Gryffindor table next to Hermione Granger. She’d like to have a chance to talk to her about that book, if she ever had the opportunity. Her sisters, never too far away, took their places on her other side and across the table. Lyddie was discussing all the different rumors going around about the Durmstrang men, especially in regard with the three mysterious Quidditch players.

To Lyddie’s own horror, she had discovered nothing—not even with the assistance of Lavender, Parvati, and Eloise Migden—that could clear up the description she was desperately trying to piece together. In typical Lyddie style, she attacked everyone she thought might know something, making sure there was nothing they were holding back. Ellie knew it must be driving Lyddie crazy to not know the ins and outs about these schools first hand. She resorted to hearing second hand gossip from a Slytherin girl, who knew someone who knew someone in Durmstrang.

The report that came back was highly favorable—at least when it came to the person Lyddie was most curious about. The Mr. Dimitri was heard to be very handsome, quite young, and have an extremely happy manner—not a common trait at Durmstrang. The Slytherin girl, however, had no description in regards to Mr. Dimitri’s party.

“This is great news!” Lyddie proclaimed, talking as animatedly as ever and entertaining all those who were watching. Her closest friend, Katie (who might as well have been another Beckett sister), listened adamantly.

“Why so?” Katie asked.

“Because, a party of men means a party of men willing to dance. And Dumbledore mentioned something about there being a Yule Ball at the end of term. A ball is the surest step toward finding someone to fall in love with!”

“Oh, Lyddie, be realistic,” Ellie moaned, sharing a glance with Rose, whose excitement had tapered down into more understandable expectations. “If it happens it happens, don’t force anything.”

“You just wait and see,” Lyddie said, turning to face the aisle as Dumbledore stood up and beckoned everyone’s attention. The foreign visitors were ready, so it seemed, to make their grand entrance.

Yet to everyone’s (mostly the girl’s) dismay, the Ladies from Beauxbatons Academy for Magic went first. They twisted and twirled down the aisles, singing lovely songs and dancing in their bright blue robes and heels. Fairies twittered around the men’s heads, all but putting hearts in their eyes. The giantess Madame Maxime’s entrance came at the end, but the applause that followed was only for her girls.

Ellie overheard Ron exclaim, “Bloody Hell,” and rolled her eyes. It would not be a surprise to her if only but a few Hogwarts students caught the eyes of the ladies from Beauxbatons. The same probably went for the men at Durmstrang.

If she could just see one of her sisters happy—well, that would be enough to wish for. Or, at least, worth the incessant chatter that was bound to surround the halls for the next several weeks.

Dumbledore ran up to the podium once again and silenced the cheers with a wave.

“And now our friends from the North, please welcome the proud sons of Durmstrang, and their High Master Igor Karkaroff.”

The sounds of rhythmic pounding across the stone floor drew everyone’s attention from Dumbledore to the other side of the hall, where in a row of two, Durmstrang men marched of the Great Hall. They were chanting in unison, banging their rods and causing sparks to fly in sync. The chants and the foreboding stares upon their faces silenced the room, everyone staring in awe as they made down the aisle. In elaborate choreography, canes were twisted and tossed into the air, ramming one final time upon the ground before abandoned together.

Everything broke out into a flurry of excitement. Everyone tossed their canes onto the ground with a final slam, and those at the front of the line burst into a sprint. They began to do flips and cartwheels while the others began to line up at the front. Ellie was finally able to get a good look at them, now that so many of them weren’t moving. All of them were dressed richly in heavy furs and hats that came down over their ears. None of them, however, were half dressed so nice as the three at the end of the party.

At the back of the line emerged the anticipated members, marching in with their high master on their heels. Two of them, whose names Ellie had not heard before, looked almost as sullen as the others—if not more so. The other one in their party that they walked with a more agreeable air about him, and Ellie was sure that this man was Mr. Dimitri.

Lyddie was all but bouncing in her seat, but Ellie couldn’t help but notice the way Rose perked up just as Mr. Dimitri shifted towards her side of the aisle.

The others in the party, however, soon drew the attention of the room—as the last to emerge was a tall, brooding man, handsomer than even Mr. Dimitri in his features. He immediately gave off the air of how reluctant he was to be there.

This idea came further into fruition not two minutes after his entrance into the hall, where rumors about his identity morphed into that of known fact.

“Ugh,” Lavender moaned from down the table.

“What nerve,” Parvati chimed in.

Ellie leaned onto the table to look down at where the other Gryffindor girls sat. “Who are they?” she asked, nudging her chin down the aisle.

“That’s Dimitri’s brother, Valko, a Bulgarian Beater. That’s with them is their friend Adrien Dobrev. He’s Bulgaria’s Seeker,” Hermione said. Not two seats down, George Weasley and his brother Fred were hooting and shouting as Adrien and Valko passed them.

“Adrien’s wicked fast, he is,” Fred cried. “One of the best Seekers in the world. Saw him just last month at the Cup.”

“He was there?” Ellie asked.

“Was he there, she asks,” George laughed with a nudge in the ribs to his brother. “He’s the one who caught the snitch at the end. Bloody shame they still lost.”

Ellie didn’t understand why, if he was half as great as everyone proclaimed him to be, why nobody could stand him. “So what’s wrong with him, then?”

That was where Hermione filled her in. It was discovered—from her observations, not her opinion on the matter— that he was indeed known to be the most pompous, rude, and disrespectful man in all of Durmstrang. Ellie thought about her father, and how he would proclaim him to be proud and above being pleased. Not all his skills as a Seeker could save him from having the most deplorable countenance compared with that of his friend. Ellie surmised that if Adrien were to leave present company, it was safe to say neither school would miss him.

“What a difference between him and his friend, and what reward it must be to stand as the most miserable man in Durmstrang,” Ellie murmured to herself as he stormed by. His anguished countenance and brooding stare at the empty prospects ahead struck her as comical, unfortunately resulting in her bursting into a fit of giggles. She tried to cover her mouth and muffle the sound.

“*Ellie,”* Rose whispered, grasping her by the arm and twisting slightly. *“He’s looking at you*.”

Ellie, however, was unfazed at the prospect. She lifted her head and indeed saw the back of Drago’s head as it whipped around into its neutral, stiff position.

“Let him,” Ellie said, laughter still heavy in her voice. She leaned upon her sister’s arm. “Unless he wants to scare me with his contempt, I know that I am most likely not handsome enough to tempt *him.* Let him ask out a Slytherin girl, they’re prideful enough for him, I’m sure.”

Adrien made his way down the aisle toward the front with the others. Ellie was left with no cordial feelings or gratitude for his momentary direction of attention. Who was she to care if he looked at her, either with contempt or with something more? She was a Beckett, and had other matters to attend to. Still, she told the story later with great excitement among her friends in the common room; for her character greatly enjoyed retelling the stories of anything she found remotely ridiculous.