

CHAPTER FOUR



THE KEEPER OF THE KEYS

BOOM. They knocked again. Dudley jerked awake.
“Where’s the cannon?” he said stupidly.

There was a crash behind them and Uncle Vernon came skidding into the room. He was holding a rifle in his hands — now they knew what had been in the long, thin package he had brought with them.

“Who’s there?” he shouted. “I warn you — I’m armed!”

There was a pause. Then —

SMASH!

The door was hit with such force that it swung clean off its hinges and with a deafening crash landed flat on the floor.

A giant of a man was standing in the doorway. His face was almost completely hidden by a long, shaggy mane of hair and a wild, tangled beard, but you could make out his eyes, glinting like black beetles under all the hair.

The giant squeezed his way into the hut, stooping so that his head just brushed the ceiling. He bent down, picked up the door, and fitted it easily back into its frame. The noise of the storm outside dropped a little. He turned to look at them all.

“Couldn’t make us a cup o’ tea, could yeh? It’s not been an easy

journey. . . .”

He strode over to the sofa where Dudley sat frozen with fear.

“Budge up, yeh great lump,” said the stranger.

Dudley squeaked and ran to hide behind his mother, who was crouching, terrified, behind Uncle Vernon.

“An’ here’s Harry!” said the giant.

Harry looked up into the fierce, wild, shadowy face and saw that the beetle eyes were crinkled in a smile.

“Las’ time I saw you, you was only a baby,” said the giant. “Yeh look a lot like yer dad, but yeh’ve got yer mum’s eyes.”

Uncle Vernon made a funny rasping noise.

“I demand that you leave at once, sir!” he said. “You are breaking and entering!”

“Ah, shut up, Dursley, yeh great prune,” said the giant; he reached over the back of the sofa, jerked the gun out of Uncle Vernon’s hands, bent it into a knot as easily as if it had been made of rubber, and threw it into a corner of the room.

Uncle Vernon made another funny noise, like a mouse being trodden on.

“Anyway — Harry,” said the giant, turning his back on the Dursleys, “a very happy birthday to yeh. Got summat fer yeh here — I mighta sat on it at some point, but it’ll taste all right.”

From an inside pocket of his black overcoat he pulled a slightly squashed box. Harry opened it with trembling fingers. Inside was a large, sticky chocolate cake with *Happy Birthday Harry* written on it in green icing.

Harry looked up at the giant. He meant to say thank you, but the words got lost on the way to his mouth, and what he said instead was, “Who are you?”

The giant chuckled.

“True, I haven’t introduced meself. Rubeus Hagrid, Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts.”

He held out an enormous hand and shook Harry's whole arm.

"What about that tea then, eh?" he said, rubbing his hands together. "I'd not say no ter summat stronger if yeh've got it, mind."

His eyes fell on the empty grate with the shriveled chip bags in it and he snorted. He bent down over the fireplace; they couldn't see what he was doing but when he drew back a second later, there was a roaring fire there. It filled the whole damp hut with flickering light and Harry felt the warmth wash over him as though he'd sunk into a hot bath.

The giant sat back down on the sofa, which sagged under his weight, and began taking all sorts of things out of the pockets of his coat: a copper kettle, a squashy package of sausages, a poker, a teapot, several chipped mugs, and a bottle of some amber liquid that he took a swig from before starting to make tea. Soon the hut was full of the sound and smell of sizzling sausage. Nobody said a thing while the giant was working, but as he slid the first six fat, juicy, slightly burnt sausages from the poker, Dudley fidgeted a little. Uncle Vernon said sharply, "Don't touch anything he gives you, Dudley."

The giant chuckled darkly.

"Yer great puddin' of a son don' need fattenin' anymore, Dursley, don' worry."

He passed the sausages to Harry, who was so hungry he had never tasted anything so wonderful, but he still couldn't take his eyes off the giant. Finally, as nobody seemed about to explain anything, he said, "I'm sorry, but I still don't really know who you are."

The giant took a gulp of tea and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Call me Hagrid," he said, "everyone does. An' like I told yeh, I'm Keeper of Keys at Hogwarts — yeh'll know all about Hogwarts, o' course."

"Er — no," said Harry.

Hagrid looked shocked.

"Sorry," Harry said quickly.

"Sorry?" barked Hagrid, turning to stare at the Dursleys, who shrank back

into the shadows. “It’s them as should be sorry! I knew yeh weren’t gettin’ yer letters but I never thought yeh wouldn’t even know abou’ Hogwarts, fer cryin’ out loud! Did yeh never wonder where yer parents learned it all?”

“All what?” asked Harry.

“ALL WHAT?” Hagrid thundered. “Now wait jus’ one second!”

He had leapt to his feet. In his anger he seemed to fill the whole hut. The Dursleys were cowering against the wall.

“Do you mean ter tell me,” he growled at the Dursleys, “that this boy — this boy! — knows nothin’ abou’ — about ANYTHING?”

Harry thought this was going a bit far. He had been to school, after all, and his marks weren’t bad.

“I know *some* things,” he said. “I can, you know, do math and stuff.”

But Hagrid simply waved his hand and said, “About *our* world, I mean. *Your* world. *My* world. *Yer* parents’ world.”

“What world?”

Hagrid looked as if he was about to explode.

“DURSLEY!” he boomed.

Uncle Vernon, who had gone very pale, whispered something that sounded like “Mimblewimble.” Hagrid stared wildly at Harry.

“But yeh must know about yer mum and dad,” he said. “I mean, they’re *famous*. You’re *famous*.”

“What? My — my mum and dad weren’t famous, were they?”

“Yeh don’ know . . . yeh don’ know . . .” Hagrid ran his fingers through his hair, fixing Harry with a bewildered stare.

“Yeh don’ know what yeh *are*?” he said finally.

Uncle Vernon suddenly found his voice.

“Stop!” he commanded. “Stop right there, sir! I forbid you to tell the boy anything!”

A braver man than Vernon Dursley would have quailed under the furious look Hagrid now gave him; when Hagrid spoke, his every syllable trembled with rage.

“You never told him? Never told him what was in the letter Dumbledore left fer him? I was there! I saw Dumbledore leave it, Dursley! An’ you’ve kept it from him all these years?”

“Kept *what* from me?” said Harry eagerly.

“STOP! I FORBID YOU!” yelled Uncle Vernon in panic.

Aunt Petunia gave a gasp of horror.

“Ah, go boil yer heads, both of yeh,” said Hagrid. “Harry — yer a wizard.”

There was silence inside the hut. Only the sea and the whistling wind could be heard.

“I’m a what?” gasped Harry.

“A wizard, o’ course,” said Hagrid, sitting back down on the sofa, which groaned and sank even lower, “an’ a thumpin’ good’un, I’d say, once yeh’ve been trained up a bit. With a mum an’ dad like yours, what else would yeh be? An’ I reckon it’s abou’ time yeh read yer letter.”

Harry stretched out his hand at last to take the yellowish envelope, addressed in emerald green to Mr. H. Potter, The Floor, Hut-on-the-Rock, The Sea. He pulled out the letter and read:

HOGWARTS SCHOOL
of WITCHCRAFT *and* WIZARDRY



Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore

*(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf. Warlock, Supreme
Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)*

Dear Mr. Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list

of all necessary books and equipment.

Term begins on September 1. We await your owl by no later than July 31.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Minerva McGonagall". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with a distinct loop at the end of the last name.

Minerva McGonagall,

Deputy Headmistress

Questions exploded inside Harry's head like fireworks and he couldn't decide which to ask first. After a few minutes he stammered, "What does it mean, they await my owl?"

"Gallopin' Gorgons, that reminds me," said Hagrid, clapping a hand to his forehead with enough force to knock over a cart horse, and from yet another pocket inside his overcoat he pulled an owl — a real, live, rather ruffled-looking owl — a long quill, and a roll of parchment. With his tongue between his teeth he scribbled a note that Harry could read upside down:

Dear Professor Dumbledore,

Given Harry his letter.

Taking him to buy his things tomorrow.

Weather's horrible. Hope you're well.

Hagrid

Hagrid rolled up the note, gave it to the owl, which clamped it in its beak, went to the door, and threw the owl out into the storm. Then he came back and sat down as though this was as normal as talking on the telephone.

Harry realized his mouth was open and closed it quickly.

"Where was I?" said Hagrid, but at that moment, Uncle Vernon, still ashen-faced but looking very angry, moved into the firelight.

"He's not going," he said.

Hagrid grunted.

“I’d like ter see a great Muggle like you stop him,” he said.

“A what?” said Harry, interested.

“A Muggle,” said Hagrid, “it’s what we call nonmagic folk like them. An’ it’s your bad luck you grew up in a family o’ the biggest Muggles I ever laid eyes on.”

“We swore when we took him in we’d put a stop to that rubbish,” said Uncle Vernon, “swore we’d stamp it out of him! Wizard indeed!”

“You *knew*?” said Harry. “You *knew* I’m a — a wizard?”

“Knew!” shrieked Aunt Petunia suddenly. “*Knew*! Of course we knew! How could you not be, my dratted sister being what she was? Oh, she got a letter just like that and disappeared off to that — that *school* — and came home every vacation with her pockets full of frog spawn, turning teacups into rats. I was the only one who saw her for what she was — a freak! But for my mother and father, oh no, it was Lily this and Lily that, they were proud of having a witch in the family!”

She stopped to draw a deep breath and then went ranting on. It seemed she had been wanting to say all this for years.

“Then she met that Potter at school and they left and got married and had you, and of course I knew you’d be just the same, just as strange, just as — as — *abnormal* — and then, if you please, she went and got herself blown up and we got landed with you!”

Harry had gone very white. As soon as he found his voice he said, “Blown up? You told me they died in a car crash!”

“CAR CRASH!” roared Hagrid, jumping up so angrily that the Dursleys scuttled back to their corner. “How could a car crash kill Lily an’ James Potter? It’s an outrage! A scandal! Harry Potter not knowin’ his own story when every kid in our world knows his name!”

“But why? What happened?” Harry asked urgently.

The anger faded from Hagrid’s face. He looked suddenly anxious.

“I never expected this,” he said, in a low, worried voice. “I had no idea, when Dumbledore told me there might be trouble gettin’ hold of yeh, how much yeh didn’t know. Ah, Harry, I don’ know if I’m the right person ter tell yeh — but someone’s gotta — yeh can’t go off ter Hogwarts not knowin’.”

He threw a dirty look at the Dursleys.

“Well, it’s best yeh know as much as I can tell yeh — mind, I can’t tell yeh everythin’, it’s a great myst’ry, parts of it. . . .”

He sat down, stared into the fire for a few seconds, and then said, “It begins, I suppose, with — with a person called — but it’s incredible yeh don’t know his name, everyone in our world knows —”

“Who?”

“Well — I don’ like sayin’ the name if I can help it. No one does.”

“Why not?”

“Gulpin’ gargoyles, Harry, people are still scared. Blimey, this is difficult. See, there was this wizard who went . . . bad. As bad as you could go. Worse. Worse than worse. His name was . . .”

Hagrid gulped, but no words came out.

“Could you write it down?” Harry suggested.

“Nah — can’t spell it. All right — *Voldemort*.” Hagrid shuddered. “Don’ make me say it again. Anyway, this — this wizard, about twenty years ago now, started lookin’ fer followers. Got ’em, too — some were afraid, some just wanted a bit o’ his power, ’cause he was gettin’ himself power, all right. Dark days, Harry. Didn’t know who ter trust, didn’t dare get friendly with strange wizards or witches . . . terrible things happened. He was takin’ over. ’Course, some stood up to him — an’ he killed ’em. Horribly. One o’ the only safe places left was Hogwarts. Reckon Dumbledore’s the only one You-Know-Who was afraid of. Didn’t dare try takin’ the school, not jus’ then, anyway.

“Now, yer mum an’ dad were as good a witch an’ wizard as I ever knew. Head boy an’ girl at Hogwarts in their day! Suppose the myst’ry is why You-

Know-Who never tried to get 'em on his side before . . . probably knew they were too close ter Dumbledore ter want anythin' ter do with the Dark Side.

“Maybe he thought he could persuade 'em . . . maybe he just wanted 'em outta the way. All anyone knows is, he turned up in the village where you was all living, on Halloween ten years ago. You was just a year old. He came ter yer house an'— an'— ”

Hagrid suddenly pulled out a very dirty, spotted handkerchief and blew his nose with a sound like a foghorn.

“Sorry,” he said. “But it's that sad — knew yer mum an' dad, an' nicer people yeh couldn't find — anyway . . .

“You-Know-Who killed 'em. An' then — an' this is the real myst'ry of the thing — he tried to kill you, too. Wanted ter make a clean job of it, I suppose, or maybe he just liked killin' by then. But he couldn't do it. Never wondered how you got that mark on yer forehead? That was no ordinary cut. That's what yeh get when a powerful, evil curse touches yeh — took care of yer mum an' dad an' yer house, even — but it didn't work on you, an' that's why yer famous, Harry. No one ever lived after he decided ter kill 'em, no one except you, an' he'd killed some o' the best witches an' wizards of the age — the McKinnons, the Bones, the Prewetts — an' you was only a baby, an' you lived.”

Something very painful was going on in Harry's mind. As Hagrid's story came to a close, he saw again the blinding flash of green light, more clearly than he had ever remembered it before — and he remembered something else, for the first time in his life: a high, cold, cruel laugh.

Hagrid was watching him sadly.

“Took yeh from the ruined house myself, on Dumbledore's orders. Brought yeh ter this lot . . .”

“Load of old tosh,” said Uncle Vernon. Harry jumped; he had almost forgotten that the Dursleys were there. Uncle Vernon certainly seemed to have got back his courage. He was glaring at Hagrid and his fists were clenched.

“Now, you listen here, boy,” he snarled, “I accept there's something strange

about you, probably nothing a good beating wouldn't have cured — and as for all this about your parents, well, they were weirdos, no denying it, and the world's better off without them in my opinion — asked for all they got, getting mixed up with these wizarding types — just what I expected, always knew they'd come to a sticky end —”

But at that moment, Hagrid leapt from the sofa and drew a battered pink umbrella from inside his coat. Pointing this at Uncle Vernon like a sword, he said, “I'm warning you, Dursley — I'm warning you — one more word . . .”

In danger of being speared on the end of an umbrella by a bearded giant, Uncle Vernon's courage failed again; he flattened himself against the wall and fell silent.

“That's better,” said Hagrid, breathing heavily and sitting back down on the sofa, which this time sagged right down to the floor.

Harry, meanwhile, still had questions to ask, hundreds of them.

“But what happened to Vol-, sorry — I mean, You-Know-Who?”

“Good question, Harry. Disappeared. Vanished. Same night he tried ter kill you. Makes yeh even more famous. That's the biggest myst'ry, see . . . he was gettin' more an' more powerful — why'd he go?

“Some say he died. Codswallop, in my opinion. Dunno if he had enough human left in him to die. Some say he's still out there, bidin' his time, like, but I don' believe it. People who was on his side came back ter ours. Some of 'em came outta kinda trances. Don' reckon they could've done if he was comin' back.

“Most of us reckon he's still out there somewhere but lost his powers. Too weak to carry on. 'Cause somethin' about you finished him, Harry. There was somethin' goin' on that night he hadn't counted on — *I* dunno what it was, no one does — but somethin' about you stumped him, all right.”

Hagrid looked at Harry with warmth and respect blazing in his eyes, but Harry, instead of feeling pleased and proud, felt quite sure there had been a horrible mistake. A wizard? Him? How could he possibly be? He'd spent his life being clouted by Dudley, and bullied by Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon;

if he was really a wizard, why hadn't they been turned into warty toads every time they'd tried to lock him in his cupboard? If he'd once defeated the greatest sorcerer in the world, how come Dudley had always been able to kick him around like a football?

"Hagrid," he said quietly, "I think you must have made a mistake. I don't think I can be a wizard."

To his surprise, Hagrid chuckled.

"Not a wizard, eh? Never made things happen when you was scared or angry?"

Harry looked into the fire. Now he came to think about it . . . every odd thing that had ever made his aunt and uncle furious with him had happened when he, Harry, had been upset or angry . . . chased by Dudley's gang, he had somehow found himself out of their reach . . . dreading going to school with that ridiculous haircut, he'd managed to make it grow back . . . and the very last time Dudley had hit him, hadn't he got his revenge, without even realizing he was doing it? Hadn't he set a boa constrictor on him?

Harry looked back at Hagrid, smiling, and saw that Hagrid was positively beaming at him.

"See?" said Hagrid. "Harry Potter, not a wizard — you wait, you'll be right famous at Hogwarts."

But Uncle Vernon wasn't going to give in without a fight.

"Haven't I told you he's not going?" he hissed. "He's going to Stonewall High and he'll be grateful for it. I've read those letters and he needs all sorts of rubbish — spell books and wands and —"

"If he wants ter go, a great Muggle like you won't stop him," growled Hagrid. "Stop Lily an' James Potter's son goin' ter Hogwarts! Yer mad. His name's been down ever since he was born. He's off ter the finest school of witchcraft and wizardry in the world. Seven years there and he won't know himself. He'll be with youngsters of his own sort, fer a change, an' he'll be under the greatest headmaster Hogwarts ever had, Albus Dumbled —"

"I AM NOT PAYING FOR SOME CRACKPOT OLD FOOL TO TEACH

HIM MAGIC TRICKS!” yelled Uncle Vernon.

But he had finally gone too far. Hagrid seized his umbrella and whirled it over his head, “NEVER —” he thundered, “— INSULT — ALBUS — DUMBLEDORE — IN — FRONT — OF — ME!”

He brought the umbrella swishing down through the air to point at Dudley — there was a flash of violet light, a sound like a firecracker, a sharp squeal, and the next second, Dudley was dancing on the spot with his hands clasped over his fat bottom, howling in pain. When he turned his back on them, Harry saw a curly pig’s tail poking through a hole in his trousers.

Uncle Vernon roared. Pulling Aunt Petunia and Dudley into the other room, he cast one last terrified look at Hagrid and slammed the door behind them.

Hagrid looked down at his umbrella and stroked his beard.

“Shouldn’ta lost me temper,” he said ruefully, “but it didn’t work anyway. Meant ter turn him into a pig, but I suppose he was so much like a pig anyway there wasn’t much left ter do.”

He cast a sideways look at Harry under his bushy eyebrows.

“Be grateful if yeh didn’t mention that ter anyone at Hogwarts,” he said. “I’m — er — not supposed ter do magic, strictly speakin’. I was allowed ter do a bit ter follow yeh an’ get yer letters to yeh an’ stuff — one o’ the reasons I was so keen ter take on the job —”

“Why aren’t you supposed to do magic?” asked Harry.

“Oh, well — I was at Hogwarts meself but I — er — got expelled, ter tell yeh the truth. In me third year. They snapped me wand in half an’ everything. But Dumbledore let me stay on as gamekeeper. Great man, Dumbledore.”

“Why were you expelled?”

“It’s gettin’ late and we’ve got lots ter do tomorrow,” said Hagrid loudly. “Gotta get up ter town, get all yer books an’ that.”

He took off his thick black coat and threw it to Harry.

“You can kip under that,” he said. “Don’ mind if it wriggles a bit, I think I still got a couple o’ dormice in one o’ the pockets.”

CHAPTER FIVE



DIAGON ALLEY

Harry woke early the next morning. Although he could tell it was daylight, he kept his eyes shut tight.

“It was a dream,” he told himself firmly. “I dreamed a giant called Hagrid came to tell me I was going to a school for wizards. When I open my eyes I’ll be at home in my cupboard.”

There was suddenly a loud tapping noise.

And there’s Aunt Petunia knocking on the door, Harry thought, his heart sinking. But he still didn’t open his eyes. It had been such a good dream.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

“All right,” Harry mumbled, “I’m getting up.”

He sat up and Hagrid’s heavy coat fell off him. The hut was full of sunlight, the storm was over, Hagrid himself was asleep on the collapsed sofa, and there was an owl rapping its claw on the window, a newspaper held in its beak.

Harry scrambled to his feet, so happy he felt as though a large balloon was swelling inside him. He went straight to the window and jerked it open. The owl swooped in and dropped the newspaper on top of Hagrid, who didn’t wake up. The owl then fluttered onto the floor and began to attack Hagrid’s

coat.

“Don’t do that.”

Harry tried to wave the owl out of the way, but it snapped its beak fiercely at him and carried on savaging the coat.

“Hagrid!” said Harry loudly. “There’s an owl —”

“Pay him,” Hagrid grunted into the sofa.

“What?”

“He wants payin’ fer deliverin’ the paper. Look in the pockets.”

Hagrid’s coat seemed to be made of nothing *but* pockets — bunches of keys, slug pellets, balls of string, peppermint humbugs, teabags . . . finally, Harry pulled out a handful of strange-looking coins.

“Give him five Knuts,” said Hagrid sleepily.

“Knuts?”

“The little bronze ones.”

Harry counted out five little bronze coins, and the owl held out his leg so Harry could put the money into a small leather pouch tied to it. Then he flew off through the open window.

Hagrid yawned loudly, sat up, and stretched.

“Best be off, Harry, lots ter do today, gotta get up ter London an’ buy all yer stuff fer school.”

Harry was turning over the wizard coins and looking at them. He had just thought of something that made him feel as though the happy balloon inside him had got a puncture.

“Um — Hagrid?”

“Mm?” said Hagrid, who was pulling on his huge boots.

“I haven’t got any money — and you heard Uncle Vernon last night . . . he won’t pay for me to go and learn magic.”

“Don’t worry about that,” said Hagrid, standing up and scratching his head.

“D’yeh think yer parents didn’t leave yeh anything?”

“But if their house was destroyed —”

“They didn’ keep their gold in the house, boy! Nah, first stop fer us is Gringotts. Wizards’ bank. Have a sausage, they’re not bad cold — an’ I wouldn’ say no teh a bit o’ yer birthday cake, neither.”

“Wizards have *banks*?”

“Just the one. Gringotts. Run by goblins.”

Harry dropped the bit of sausage he was holding.

“*Goblins*?”

“Yeah — so yeh’d be mad ter try an’ rob it, I’ll tell yeh that. Never mess with goblins, Harry. Gringotts is the safest place in the world fer anything yeh want ter keep safe —’cept maybe Hogwarts. As a matter o’ fact, I gotta visit Gringotts anyway. Fer Dumbledore. Hogwarts business.” Hagrid drew himself up proudly. “He usually gets me ter do important stuff fer him. Fetchin’ you — gettin’ things from Gringotts — knows he can trust me, see.

“Got everythin’? Come on, then.”

Harry followed Hagrid out onto the rock. The sky was quite clear now and the sea gleamed in the sunlight. The boat Uncle Vernon had hired was still there, with a lot of water in the bottom after the storm.

“How did you get here?” Harry asked, looking around for another boat.

“Flew,” said Hagrid.

“*Flew*?”

“Yeah — but we’ll go back in this. Not s’pposed ter use magic now I’ve got yeh.”

They settled down in the boat, Harry still staring at Hagrid, trying to imagine him flying.

“Seems a shame ter row, though,” said Hagrid, giving Harry another of his sideways looks. “If I was ter — er — speed things up a bit, would yeh mind not mentionin’ it at Hogwarts?”

“Of course not,” said Harry, eager to see more magic. Hagrid pulled out the pink umbrella again, tapped it twice on the side of the boat, and they sped off toward land.

“Why would you be mad to try and rob Gringotts?” Harry asked.

“Spells — enchantments,” said Hagrid, unfolding his newspaper as he spoke. “They say there’s dragons guardin’ the high-security vaults. And then yeh gotta find yer way — Gringotts is hundreds of miles under London, see. Deep under the Underground. Yeh’d die of hunger tryin’ ter get out, even if yeh did manage ter get yer hands on summat.”

Harry sat and thought about this while Hagrid read his newspaper, the *Daily Prophet*. Harry had learned from Uncle Vernon that people liked to be left alone while they did this, but it was very difficult, he’d never had so many questions in his life.

“Ministry o’ Magic messin’ things up as usual,” Hagrid muttered, turning the page.

“There’s a Ministry of Magic?” Harry asked, before he could stop himself.

“‘Course,” said Hagrid. “They wanted Dumbledore fer Minister, o’ course, but he’d never leave Hogwarts, so old Cornelius Fudge got the job. Bungler if ever there was one. So he pelts Dumbledore with owls every morning, askin’ fer advice.”

“But what does a Ministry of Magic *do*?”

“Well, their main job is to keep it from the Muggles that there’s still witches an’ wizards up an’ down the country.”

“Why?”

“Why? Blimey, Harry, everyone’d be wantin’ magic solutions to their problems. Nah, we’re best left alone.”

At this moment the boat bumped gently into the harbor wall. Hagrid folded up his newspaper, and they clambered up the stone steps onto the street.

Passersby stared a lot at Hagrid as they walked through the little town to the station. Harry couldn’t blame them. Not only was Hagrid twice as tall as

anyone else, he kept pointing at perfectly ordinary things like parking meters and saying loudly, “See that, Harry? Things these Muggles dream up, eh?”

“Hagrid,” said Harry, panting a bit as he ran to keep up, “did you say there are *dragons* at Gringotts?”

“Well, so they say,” said Hagrid. “Crikey, I’d like a dragon.”

“You’d *like* one?”

“Wanted one ever since I was a kid — here we go.”

They had reached the station. There was a train to London in five minutes’ time. Hagrid, who didn’t understand “Muggle money,” as he called it, gave the bills to Harry so he could buy their tickets.

People stared more than ever on the train. Hagrid took up two seats and sat knitting what looked like a canary-yellow circus tent.

“Still got yer letter, Harry?” he asked as he counted stitches.

Harry took the parchment envelope out of his pocket.

“Good,” said Hagrid. “There’s a list there of everything yeh need.”

Harry unfolded a second piece of paper he hadn’t noticed the night before, and read:

HOGWARTS SCHOOL
of WITCHCRAFT *and* WIZARDRY



UNIFORM

First-year students will require:

1. Three sets of plain work robes (black)
2. One plain pointed hat (black) for day wear
3. One pair of protective gloves (dragon hide or similar)
4. One winter cloak (black, silver fastenings)

Please note that all pupils’ clothes should carry name tags

COURSE BOOKS

All students should have a copy of each of the following:

The Standard Book of Spells (Grade 1) by Miranda Goshawk

A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot

Magical Theory by Adalbert Waffling

A Beginners' Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch

One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi by Phyllida Spore

Magical Draughts and Potions by Arsenius Jigger

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them by Newt Scamander

The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection by Quentin Trimble

OTHER EQUIPMENT

1 wand

1 cauldron (pewter, standard size 2)

1 set glass or crystal phials

1 telescope

1 set brass scales

Students may also bring an owl OR a cat OR a toad

PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT FIRST YEARS ARE NOT ALLOWED
THEIR OWN BROOMSTICKS

“Can we buy all this in London?” Harry wondered aloud.

“If yeh know where to go,” said Hagrid.

Harry had never been to London before. Although Hagrid seemed to know where he was going, he was obviously not used to getting there in an ordinary way. He got stuck in the ticket barrier on the Underground, and complained loudly that the seats were too small and the trains too slow.

“I don’t know how the Muggles manage without magic,” he said as they climbed a broken-down escalator that led up to a bustling road lined with

shops.

Hagrid was so huge that he parted the crowd easily; all Harry had to do was keep close behind him. They passed book shops and music stores, hamburger restaurants and cinemas, but nowhere that looked as if it could sell you a magic wand. This was just an ordinary street full of ordinary people. Could there really be piles of wizard gold buried miles beneath them? Were there really shops that sold spell books and broomsticks? Might this not all be some huge joke that the Dursleys had cooked up? If Harry hadn't known that the Dursleys had no sense of humor, he might have thought so; yet somehow, even though everything Hagrid had told him so far was unbelievable, Harry couldn't help trusting him.

"This is it," said Hagrid, coming to a halt, "the Leaky Cauldron. It's a famous place."

It was a tiny, grubby-looking pub. If Hagrid hadn't pointed it out, Harry wouldn't have noticed it was there. The people hurrying by didn't glance at it. Their eyes slid from the big book shop on one side to the record shop on the other as if they couldn't see the Leaky Cauldron at all. In fact, Harry had the most peculiar feeling that only he and Hagrid could see it. Before he could mention this, Hagrid had steered him inside.

For a famous place, it was very dark and shabby. A few old women were sitting in a corner, drinking tiny glasses of sherry. One of them was smoking a long pipe. A little man in a top hat was talking to the old bartender, who was quite bald and looked like a toothless walnut. The low buzz of chatter stopped when they walked in. Everyone seemed to know Hagrid; they waved and smiled at him, and the bartender reached for a glass, saying, "The usual, Hagrid?"

"Can't, Tom, I'm on Hogwarts business," said Hagrid, clapping his great hand on Harry's shoulder and making Harry's knees buckle.

"Good Lord," said the bartender, peering at Harry, "is this — can this be —?"

The Leaky Cauldron had suddenly gone completely still and silent.

“Bless my soul,” whispered the old bartender, “Harry Potter . . . what an honor.”

He hurried out from behind the bar, rushed toward Harry and seized his hand, tears in his eyes.

“Welcome back, Mr. Potter, welcome back.”

Harry didn’t know what to say. Everyone was looking at him. The old woman with the pipe was puffing on it without realizing it had gone out. Hagrid was beaming.

Then there was a great scraping of chairs and the next moment, Harry found himself shaking hands with everyone in the Leaky Cauldron.

“Doris Crockford, Mr. Potter, can’t believe I’m meeting you at last.”

“So proud, Mr. Potter, I’m just so proud.”

“Always wanted to shake your hand — I’m all of a flutter.”

“Delighted, Mr. Potter, just can’t tell you, Diggle’s the name, Dedalus Diggle.”

“I’ve seen you before!” said Harry, as Dedalus Diggle’s top hat fell off in his excitement. “You bowed to me once in a shop.”

“He remembers!” cried Dedalus Diggle, looking around at everyone. “Did you hear that? He remembers me!”

Harry shook hands again and again — Doris Crockford kept coming back for more.

A pale young man made his way forward, very nervously. One of his eyes was twitching.

“Professor Quirrell!” said Hagrid. “Harry, Professor Quirrell will be one of your teachers at Hogwarts.”

“P-P-Potter,” stammered Professor Quirrell, grasping Harry’s hand, “can’t tell you how pleased I am to meet you.”

“What sort of magic do you teach, Professor Quirrell?”

“D-Defense Against the D-D-Dark Arts,” muttered Professor Quirrell, as though he’d rather not think about it. “N-not that you n-need it, eh, P-P-Potter?” He laughed nervously. “You’ll be g-getting all your equipment, I suppose? I’ve g-got to p-pick up a new b-book on vampires, m-myself.” He looked terrified at the very thought.

But the others wouldn’t let Professor Quirrell keep Harry to himself. It took almost ten minutes to get away from them all. At last, Hagrid managed to make himself heard over the babble.

“Must get on — lots ter buy. Come on, Harry.”

Doris Crockford shook Harry’s hand one last time, and Hagrid led them through the bar and out into a small, walled courtyard, where there was nothing but a trash can and a few weeds.

Hagrid grinned at Harry.

“Told yeh, didn’t I? Told yeh you was famous. Even Professor Quirrell was tremblin’ ter meet yeh — mind you, he’s usually tremblin’.”

“Is he always that nervous?”

“Oh, yeah. Poor bloke. Brilliant mind. He was fine while he was studyin’ outta books but then he took a year off ter get some first-hand experience. . . . They say he met vampires in the Black Forest, and there was a nasty bit o’ trouble with a hag — never been the same since. Scared of the students, scared of his own subject — now, where’s me umbrella?”

Vampires? Hags? Harry’s head was swimming. Hagrid, meanwhile, was counting bricks in the wall above the trash can.

“Three up . . . two across . . .” he muttered. “Right, stand back, Harry.”

He tapped the wall three times with the point of his umbrella.

The brick he had touched quivered — it wriggled — in the middle, a small hole appeared — it grew wider and wider — a second later they were facing an archway large enough even for Hagrid, an archway onto a cobbled street that twisted and turned out of sight.

“Welcome,” said Hagrid, “to Diagon Alley.”