



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."