

"Not fast enough," said Hagrid. "It's not easy ter catch a uni-corn, they're powerful magic creatures. I never knew one ter be hurt before."

They walked past a mossy tree stump. Harry could hear running water; there must be a stream somewhere close by. There were still spots of unicorn blood here and there along the winding path.

"You all right, Hermione?" Hagrid whispered. "Don' worry, it can't've gone far if it's this badly hurt, an' then we'll be able ter — GET BEHIND THAT TREE!"

Hagrid seized Harry and Hermione and hoisted them off the path behind a towering oak. He pulled out an arrow and fitted it into his crossbow, raising it, ready to fire. The three of them listened. Something was slithering over dead leaves nearby: it sounded like a cloak trailing along the ground. Hagrid was squint-ing up the dark path, but after a few seconds, the sound faded away.

"I knew it," he murmured. "There's summat in here that shouldn' be."

"A werewolf?" Harry suggested.

"That wasn' no werewolf an' it wasn' no unicorn, neither," said Hagrid grimly. "Right, follow me, but careful, now."

They walked more slowly, ears straining for the faintest sound. Suddenly, in a clearing ahead, something definitely moved.

"Who's there?" Hagrid called. "Show yerself — I'm armed!"

And into the clearing came — was it a man, or a horse? To the waist, a man, with red hair and beard, but below that was a horse's gleaming chestnut body with a long, reddish tail. Harry and Hermione's jaws dropped.

"Oh, it's you, Ronan," said Hagrid in relief. "How are yeh?"

He walked forward and shook the centaur's hand.

"Good evening to you, Hagrid," said Ronan. He had a deep, sorrowful voice. "Were you going to shoot me?"