



"What are you talking about?" said Ron, but Harry, sprinting across the grounds toward the forest, didn't answer.

Hagrid was sitting in an armchair outside his house; his trousers and sleeves were rolled up, and he was shelling peas into a large bowl.

"Hullo," he said, smiling. "Finished yer exams? Got time fer a drink?"

"Yes, please," said Ron, but Harry cut him off.

"No, were in a hurry. Hagrid, I've got to ask you something. You know that night you won Norbert? What did the stranger you were playing cards with look like?"

"Dunno," said Hagrid casually, "he wouldn' take his cloak off."

He saw the three of them look stunned and raised his eye-brows.

"It's not that unusual, yeh get a lot o' funny folk in the Hog's Head — that's one o' the pubs down in the village. Mighta bin a dragon dealer, mightn' he? I never saw his face, he kept his hood up."

Harry sank down next to the bowl of peas.

"What did you talk to him about, Hagrid? Did you mention Hogwarts at all?"

"Mighta come up," said Hagrid, frowning as he tried to remember. "Yeah ... he asked what I did, an' I told him I was gamekeeper here. ... He asked a bit about the sorta creatures I look after ... so I told him ... an' I said what I'd always really wanted was a dragon ... an' then ... I can' remember too well, 'cause he kept buyin' me drinks. ... Let's see ... yeah, then he said he had the dragon egg an' we could play cards fer it if I wanted ... but he had ter be sure I could handle it, he didn' want it ter go ter any old home. ... So I told him, after Fluffy, a dragon would be easy. ..."