

Hagrid came striding toward them out of the dark, Fang at his heel. He was carrying his large crossbow, and a quiver of arrows hung over his shoulder.

"Abou' time," he said. "I bin waitin' fer half an hour already. All right, Harry, Hermione?"

"I shouldn't be too friendly to them, Hagrid," said Filch coldly, "they're here to be punished, after all."

"That's why yer late, is it?" said Hagrid, frowning at Filch. "Bin lecturin' them, eh? 'Snot your place ter do that. Yeh've done yer bit, I'll take over from here."

"I'll be back at dawn," said Filch, "for what's left of them," he added nastily, and he turned and started back toward the castle, his lamp bobbing away in the darkness.

Malfoy now turned to Hagrid.

"I'm not going in that forest," he said, and Harry was pleased to hear the note of panic in his voice.

"Yeh are if yeh want ter stay at Hogwarts," said Hagrid fiercely. "Yeh've done wrong an' now yeh've got ter pay fer it."

"But this is servant stuff, it's not for students to do. I thought we'd be copying lines or something, if my father knew I was doing this, he'd —"

"— tell yer that's how it is at Hogwarts," Hagrid growled. "Copyin' lines! What good's that ter anyone? Yeh'll do summat useful or yeh'll get out. If yeh think yer father'd rather you were expelled, then get back off ter the castle an' pack. Go on!"

Malfoy didn't move. He looked at Hagrid furiously, but then dropped his gaze.

"Right then," said Hagrid, "now, listen carefully, 'cause it's dangerous what were gonna do tonight, an' I don' want no one takin' risks. Follow me over here a moment."