

Malfoy was only a few feet away and he had stopped dead to listen. How much had he heard? Harry didn't like the look on Malfoy's face at all.

Ron and Hermione argued all the way to Herbology and in the end, Hermione agreed to run down to Hagrid's with the other two during morning break. When the bell sounded from the castle at the end of their lesson, the three of them dropped their trowels at once and hurried through the grounds to the edge of the forest. Hagrid greeted them, looking flushed and excited.

"It's nearly out." He ushered them inside.

The egg was lying on the table. There were deep cracks in it. Something was moving inside; a funny clicking noise was coming from it.

They all drew their chairs up to the table and watched with bated breath.

All at once there was a scraping noise and the egg split open. The baby dragon flopped onto the table. It wasn't exactly pretty; Harry thought it looked like a crumpled, black umbrella. Its spiny wings were huge compared to its skinny jet body, it had a long snout with wide nostrils, the stubs of horns and bulging, orange eyes.

It sneezed. A couple of sparks flew out of its snout.

"Isn't he *beautiful*?" Hagrid murmured. He reached out a hand to stroke the dragon's head. It snapped at his fingers, showing pointed fangs.

"Bless him, look, he knows his mommy!" said Hagrid.

"Hagrid," said Hermione, "how fast do Norwegian Ridgebacks grow, exactly?"

Hagrid was about to answer when the color suddenly drained from his face — he leapt to his feet and ran to the window.