

Exploding Snap with Neville would've been more fun. At least Harry got Ron to buy him some stuff at Honeydukes, slipping him money from beneath the cloak.

Ron led the way up towards the Shrieking Shack, telling Harry all about the rumours of it being haunted, when he heard a voice from the other side of the hill. As the voice drew closer, Harry's stomach sank. "Father had to go to the hearing, of course, to tell them about my arm." It was Draco, flanked by Crabbe and Goyle, laughing over Hagrid and Buckbeak. It sent a sharp pain through Harry's ribs, but he shook it off. Draco had made it pretty clear that those two were as much his babysitters as his bodyguards, keeping an eye on Draco and reporting back to their fathers, who would turn to Draco's father if he didn't like what he heard. They weren't as dumb as they looked.

"What are you doing, Weasley?" Draco's voice cut through Harry's thoughts, and he saw Ron's hands clench into fists at his sides. Draco looked up at the shack. "Bet you'd love to live here, wouldn't you? Practically a palace compared to that hovel you live in now." Crabbe and Goyle both laughed, and Harry had to grab the back of Ron's robes to stop him from charging at Draco.

"Leave him to me," he hissed under his breath. Ron would never forgive him if he didn't take the opportunity. Besides, Draco *was* being a bit of a prick. Even if it was an act.

Sneaking off to the side, he flicked his wand from his holster, levitating a particularly gross patch of mud up. SPLAT!

It slammed into the back of Draco's robes, covering all three Slytherins in foul-smelling muck. Draco yelped. "What was that?"

SPLAT!

Harry sent another ball of mud flying from the other side, hitting Goyle clean in the face. "Who's there?" Crabbe called, whipping around with his wand in his hand. He started lumbering forward, half-blinded by mud, and Harry stuck a foot out to trip him as he passed. The enormous Slytherin went crashing to the ground — and on the way down, his foot caught on the corner of Harry's cloak.

Suddenly, his head was exposed, and all three Slytherins and Ron were staring at him with varying degrees of fury and horror. Harry stumbled back, quickly pulling the hood back up, and without saying anything to Ron he sprinted back towards Honeydukes.

If it had just been Draco, Harry wouldn't have worried, but Crabbe and Goyle saw him too. There was no way they wouldn't tell a teacher. *Shit*, he was in so much trouble.

When he reached the passage in Honeydukes' cellar, he did a quick cleaning charm to get the mud off his boots and scrambled back up to clamber out of the one-eyed witch, hoping he didn't look as out of breath as he felt. If anyone asked, he could just say he'd been out flying. He left the cloak and his bag in the passageway and shut the witch's hump behind him, hoping to slide right back into the trickle of students going about their day. He could come back and get them later. Quick footsteps echoed down the corridor. The blood drained from Harry's face.