

to fetch a mug while Fang bounded over to Harry, suggested he might have a broken rib or two.

Harry obligingly scratched the slobbery boarhound behind the ears. "You had an eventful trip, then?"

"Aye, it was certainly that," Hagrid agreed, pouring two cups of tea and reaching up in the cupboard for the biscuit tin, only wincing a little. "Surprised you're out here on your own. You still on the outs with Ron and Hermione?" He was frowning, which made the cuts on his face look even more gruesome.

"Yeah, that's a pretty permanent thing by this point. Rough summer."

If possible, Hagrid's face got more upset. "I 'eard what 'appened to Dudley." Harry's shoulders tensed. It had been months since anyone had brought that up. "Kid might've bin a brat, but with parents like his 'e didn't have much of a choice. There was still plenty o' growin' up to do. No one deserves what 'appened to him, least of all a boy his age." His huge hand came down gently on Harry's shoulder. "Still, lucky it weren't worse, I s'pose. Could'a bin the whole town, with how long Dumbledore said it took fer the Aurors to show up."

"Yeah." Harry shrugged, desperately wanting to move the conversation along. Somehow it was harder coming from Hagrid, who had actually *met* Dudley. "You've seen Dumbledore since you got back, then?"

"Aye, soon as I got in last night." Hagrid sipped his tea, frowning. "Had a visit from some Ministry lass, too. New Defence teacher, she called 'erself. Umbridge. Said summat about inspectin' teachers." He shook his head, shaggy hair getting even more haphazard. "Got awful nosy about where I'd been all term."

Harry's stomach turned. "I bet she did," he muttered. "You've got a lot to catch up on, Hagrid."

"I'll put some sausages on," Hagrid declared. At Harry's knee, Fang perked up at the word. "You can tell me all about it over breakfast."

He looked to be in some serious pain as he moved, and just looking at him made Harry wince. "Is there nothing Pomfrey can do for you?" He knew giants, and therefore half-giants, were resistant to a lot of forms of magic. He wasn't sure if that included healing spells, too.

"I'll swing by and pick up some Bruise Balm at lunch," Hagrid assured dismissively. "The rest'll heal in its own time. Now, tell me more about this Umbridge woman."

Harry explained what had happened since the beginning of the year; Umbridge's speech at the welcoming feast, her appointment as High Inquisitor, the inspections and Trelawney's probation. He carefully edged around the endless detentions, merely mentioning that she had it out for him and Dumbledore both. "She's a blood purist," Harry told him, "she made all these laws that made it impossible for Remus to get a job. And she's been needling Professor Flitwick about his *heritage* since she got here."