

tugged him away towards the other end of the bar. The man looked baffled by the turn of events, and Harry snickered.

“Nice one, Gin.” Ginny smiled with dimpled cheeks.

“I don’t trust that one. He still hasn’t paid the twins their winnings from the World Cup — I caught them writing to him about it the other week.”

As if summoned by their names, Fred and George entered the pub, and upon spotting Bagman, made a beeline for him. Bagman’s blue eyes went wide, and he hurried back to the table full of goblins after a brief conversation with the twins that left them both looking disappointed. Harry thought about calling them over, but then glanced at Ginny and Neville, and stayed silent. They didn’t deserve teasing, not while they were still figuring things out.

Instead, he leaned on the bar and flagged down Madam Rosmerta to order their drinks, elbowing Neville out of the way when the boy tried to split the bill. “No, shush, this round is mine,” Harry insisted, handing over the coins before Neville could use his extra height to reach over him. Rosmerta giggled, shaking her head at their antics.

“Thanks, Harry,” Ginny chirped, sipping at her raspberry fizz.

Crowded at the bar due to lack of seats, Harry had to fight down a grin when Ginny started leaning against Neville, not looking like she even realised she was doing it. It was funny, watching two people start gravitating towards each other like that — after years of watching Ron and Hermione circle in the most uncomfortable orbit in the world, he’d forgotten what it was like for normal people to get together. He didn’t say a word about it, keeping up the conversation about the new player the Harpies had just signed.

Where he was stood, Harry had a perfect view of the door, and thus he couldn’t miss it when Rita Skeeter walked in, wearing bright yellow robes and trailing her photographer behind her. She didn’t seem to notice Harry as she ordered drinks at a small table nearby.

“What’s he doing with a pack of goblins in tow, anyway?” Skeeter was saying to the photographer, smirking. “‘Showing them the sights’, what tosh. He was always a bad liar. Think we should do a bit of digging? There’s bound to be something that’ll make a good headline — *Disgraced Ex-Head of Magical Sports, Ludo Bagman* — We just need to find a story to fit it.”

Harry scowled, stepping forward before he even knew what he was doing. “Trying to ruin someone else’s life?” he said loudly, glaring at the blonde woman. Around them, the pub went quiet. Skeeter beamed.

“Harry! How lovely to see you — have you changed your mind about an interview? Come, come sit!”

“I’m not going *anywhere* near you,” Harry insisted. “How dare you write that article about Hagrid! No one cares that he’s half-giant!”