

of the Weird Sisters and hardly any mention of Harry save for the bit about the champions opening the ball. It was brilliant.

“Maybe he was telling someone else, and she was eavesdropping. Still doesn’t explain what she was doing on school grounds, though.”

They didn’t have much time to talk about it, or they’d be late for Herbology, but with Care of Magical Creatures on his schedule for before lunch, Harry didn’t worry about it too much. That changed when he arrived at Hagrid’s hut with the rest of his class to find a woman waiting for them who was definitely not Hagrid.

Professor Grubbly-Plank was a perfectly competent teacher. Possibly even a more competent teacher than Hagrid. But that didn’t mean Harry was going to sit back and let Hagrid be bullied out of his job by that awful Skeeter woman. He hung back once class was over, knocking on Hagrid’s door. “Hagrid, it’s me!” he called, knocking louder. “Come on, Hagrid. You *know* I don’t care about all that. Just let me in.” He kept knocking, and let out a frustrated noise. “Hagrid, for the love of Merlin, if you don’t let me in I’m breaking the door down.” That got a reaction. The lock clicked, and the door opened the tiniest crack, just enough for Hagrid to glare through with one bloodshot eye.

“Go away, ‘Arry,” he muttered. Harry jammed his foot in the doorway, shouldering his way into the cabin. Hagrid clearly didn’t want him gone that bad, or he would’ve tried harder to keep him out.

“Nope, sorry, not listening.” He looked up at the enormous man, his heart clenching at the tear-streaked skin hidden behind his mass of hair. “Hagrid. You can’t really think people care about that sort of thing, do you?”

“Those people do,” Hagrid retorted, gesturing to his table, where a stack of letters sat, most of them opened. “Those people ‘ave a *lot* to say about it.” He choked out another sob, and Harry threw his arms around the man the best he could.

“Hagrid, if there’s one thing I’ve learnt from the media, it’s that you can’t win over everyone. And unfortunately, the loudest voices are also usually the worst ones. For all these letters on your table, I bet there’s fifty people who read that article, shrugged, and got on with their day.”

Hagrid didn’t look convinced. “They won’t want me teachin’ their kids, not knowin’ what I am.”

“My first ever Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher *literally* had Voldemort in the back of his head, and no one complained about him.” Of course, no one *knew* about him, but the point still stood. “No one in this castle knows more about creatures than you do, Hagrid. Sometimes your judgement about what’s class appropriate is a little... off.” Hagrid snorted, unable to help himself. “But you’re a brilliant teacher. Grubbly-Plank’s alright, yeah, but she’s not you. She’d never let me ride a hippogriff,” Harry added, grinning.

“Not sure if tha’s a good thing,” Hagrid pointed out dubiously. Harry shrugged; it had been a good thing for him.