

“There’s always the appeal,” Ron said, when it looked like Hagrid might burst into tears, walking the class back up to the castle. “Don’t give up hope yet, Hagrid. We’ll figure something out.”

They bid goodbye to Hagrid at the castle doors, and the large man blew his nose loudly, thanking them again for offering to help. It was clear he was expecting the worst.

“You’d think he could pull it together!” The voice made Harry’s heart sink. Just inside the doors, Draco stood with Crabbe and Goyle, watching Hagrid leave. The two huge boys were sniggering. “It’s not like it’s his bloody dog or anything. It’s just a beast.” Behind the false sneer, Harry could see the regret in Draco’s eyes. As if he could’ve done *anything* to stop Lucius Malfoy on a crusade.

“How *dare* you!” Hermione roared, stalking across the entrance hall towards Draco. His grey eyes widened in alarm at her ferocity, and Harry hurried after her. “You foul, evil little—“

SMACK!

Harry wasn’t fast enough. Before he could do anything, Hermione had reeled back a fist and punched Draco square in the jaw. He fell back into Goyle, blinking dazedly. “*Don’t* talk about Hagrid like that.” With that, she turned on her heel and left. “Come on, boys. We’ll be late for Charms.”

Harry sent an apologetic glance back at Draco, who seemed utterly stunned, and hurried after Hermione, Ron hot on his tail. “Hermione!” Ron exclaimed. “You just punched Malfoy!”

“He deserved it,” she declared firmly. “Harry, make sure you beat them at quidditch, won’t you? I couldn’t stand to see him win.”

“Uh, yeah, Hermione,” Harry said after a beat. He shared a look with Ron, both of them thinking *did that really just happen??* “I’ll try my best.”

She huffed, continuing on the way to class. Harry eased the door open to the classroom, praying they weren’t late, and Professor Flitwick smiled up at them. “There you are, boys! Settle down, now, take your seats.”

Harry looked over his shoulder — Hermione was nowhere to be seen. Where had she gone?

“She was just behind us,” Ron muttered, just as confused as Harry. “Maybe she dropped something?”

But Hermione didn’t reappear. She was absent for the entire class. Harry frowned; what was going on with her?

.-.-.-.

Clearly Hermione was on a roll, Harry thought as he watched her storm out of the Divination classroom. When the class finished, he turned to Ron.

“She’s having a bit of a day, isn’t he?” the redhead remarked. “Blimey.”