"Hello, Ron," the sad man says.

Or, Ron and his imaginary friend/Quidditch coach/personal tutor, who’s probably a ghost from the future, take on canon.
Ron first sees him when he's four, crying in the corner because someone gave the twins toy brooms for their birthday and Mum says he's still too small to try one, even though he's way bigger than all the other kids his age in the village, and it's so unfair. He's getting ready to release another sob, his loudest one so far, but the sudden chill is enough to make him stop. When he looks up, he finds the saddest looking man he's ever seen, even sadder than Da at Uncle Timothy's funeral. He lets out a tiny squeak of surprise.

"Hello, Ron." The sad man says, and his try at a smile just makes him seem even more miserable. If Ron had been a muggle boy, raised in some big city like London or Cairo, he'd run as fast as he could from this stranger who somehow knows his name. But he's not. He's a wizarding boy from Ottery St. Catchpole, who never paid attention when Mum told him not to talk to men he didn't know because he had brothers to remind him.

And this man doesn't want to hurt him. Ron knows that deep down, the same way he knows his name. He's only lonely, just like Ron.

"Hi. Are you lost?" His lips twitch, as if he found what Ron said funny in the most tragic way possible.

"No. More like I don't have anywhere to go." Ron wraps the man in his tiny arms, like he does whenever Da looks like he's had a bad day, and says the words that'll change the rest of his life.

"You can stay with me." The man gazes at the boy with something bittersweet he's too young to recognize and seems closer to crying than ever. Ron wonders if he did something wrong.

"Are you sure? When you say something like that, it can never be taken back." Ron nods and grabs onto him tighter...

...And the man finally hugs back.
Ron realises the next day that no one else can see the man, when Fred and George tease him about his new "imaginary friend". But it's not until a week later, when they're playing catch in the yard and the man's happier than Ron's ever seen him, that he asks him why. He shrugs, seemingly incapable of further explanation.

"I don't know how you saw me either. No one's been able to before." He says, awe evident in his tone. Ron doesn't understand the nuances of the man's statement, but he knows he's calling him special. And Ron's never been called special before, not like first-girl-in-a-million-generations Ginny or cursebreaker prodigy Bill, and he thinks he rather likes it. He likes it a whole lot better than being just Ron. So he throws the ball faster than he's ever thrown it before, because someone just called him special and he can. The man catches it anyway, moving faster than Charlie even, and everyone always says he could play in the league.

"Wow. You should be a seeker! Have you played Quidditch before? It's the best thing ever." Ron says rapidly, not even stopping to breathe, looking at the man as if he's discovered his idol. The man snorts out a bitter excuse for a laugh.

"Yes, I have. And yes, I was a seeker. Captain of my house in fact. Should've figured that'd be what it took to get to a Weasley." Ron grabs his hand and tries out the face the twins always use when they're pestering Mum for something.

"Can you teach me? I promise I'll learn really, really fast. I don't have a broom yet but I will. Please." He begs, opening his eyes as wide as he can. He even lets out a few experimental tears, which the man hurriedly dabs with his sleeve, reminding Ron a bit of Mum's single friends who have no idea how to handle children.

"Well, I don't see why not. I'm here for a while, I think. Just don't cry." Ron cheers and swings their hands, bouncing on his heels.

"How about now?" The man sighs, but he's smiling a little and Ron figures he's not that upset. Then mum calls him in for supper and he runs back into the house. The man follows as always, quiet until Ron needs him not to be.