

"Oh, I'm so glad we know what it's called, that's a great help," snarled Ron, leaning back, trying to stop the plant from curling around his neck.

"Shut up, I'm trying to remember how to kill it!" said Her-mione.

"Well, hurry up, I can't breathe!" Harry gasped, wrestling with it as it curled around his chest.

"Devil's Snare, Devil's Snare ... what did Professor Sprout say? — it likes the dark and the damp —"

"So light a fire!" Harry choked.

"Yes — of course — but there's no wood!" Hermione cried, wringing her hands.

"HAVE YOU GONE MAD?" Ron bellowed. "ARE YOU A WITCH OR NOT?"

"Oh, right!" said Hermione, and she whipped out her wand, waved it, muttered something, and sent a jet of the same bluebell flames she had used on Snape at the plant. In a matter of seconds, the two boys felt it loosening its grip as it cringed away from the light and warmth. Wriggling and flailing, it unraveled itself from their bodies, and they were able to pull free.

"Lucky you pay attention in Herbology, Hermione," said Harry as he joined her by the wall, wiping sweat off his face.

"Yeah," said Ron, "and lucky Harry doesn't lose his head in a crisis — 'there's no wood,' *honestly*."

"This way," said Harry, pointing down a stone passageway, which was the only way forward.

All they could hear apart from their footsteps was the gentle drip of water trickling down the walls. The passageway sloped down-ward, and Harry was reminded of Gringotts. With an unpleasant jolt of the heart, he remembered the dragons said to be guarding vaults in the wizards' bank. If they met a dragon, a fully-grown dragon — Norbert had been bad enough ...

"Can you hear something?" Ron whispered.