

The Dursleys often spoke about Harry like this, as though he wasn't there — or rather, as though he was something very nasty that couldn't understand them, like a slug.

"What about what's-her-name, your friend — Yvonne?"

"On vacation in Majorca," snapped Aunt Petunia.

"You could just leave me here," Harry put in hopefully (he'd be able to watch what he wanted on television for a change and maybe even have a go on Dudley's computer).

Aunt Petunia looked as though she'd just swallowed a lemon.

"And come back and find the house in ruins?" she snarled.

"I won't blow up the house," said Harry, but they weren't listening.

"I suppose we could take him to the zoo," said Aunt Petunia slowly, "... and leave him in the car. ..."

"That car's new, he's not sitting in it alone. ..."

Dudley began to cry loudly. In fact, he wasn't really crying — it had been years since he'd really cried — but he knew that if he screwed up his face and wailed, his mother would give him anything he wanted.

"Dinky Duddydums, don't cry, Mummy won't let him spoil your special day!" she cried, flinging her arms around him.

"I ... don't ... want ... him ... t-t-to come!" Dudley yelled between huge, pretend sobs. "He always sp-spoils everything!" He shot Harry a nasty grin through the gap in his mother's arms.

Just then, the doorbell rang — "Oh, good Lord, they're here!" said Aunt Petunia frantically — and a moment later, Dudley's best friend, Piers Polkiss, walked in with his mother. Piers was a scrawny boy with a face like a rat. He was usually the one who held people's arms behind their backs while Dudley hit them. Dudley stopped pretending to cry at once.