

"Vernon! Oh my goodness — Vernon!"

They stared at each other, seeming to have forgotten that Harry and Dudley were still in the room. Dudley wasn't used to being ignored. He gave his father a sharp tap on the head with his Smelting stick.

"I want to read that letter," he said loudly.

"I want to read it," said Harry furiously, "as it's *mine*."

"Get out, both of you," croaked Uncle Vernon, stuffing the letter back inside its envelope.

Harry didn't move.

"I WANT MY LETTER!" he shouted.

"Let *me* see it!" demanded Dudley.

"OUT!" roared Uncle Vernon, and he took both Harry and Dudley by the scruffs of their necks and threw them into the hall, slamming the kitchen door behind them. Harry and Dudley promptly had a furious but silent fight over who would listen at the keyhole; Dudley won, so Harry, his glasses dangling from one ear, lay flat on his stomach to listen at the crack between door and floor.

"Vernon," Aunt Petunia was saying in a quivering voice, "look at the address — how could they possibly know where he sleeps? You don't think they're watching the house?"

"Watching — spying — might be following us," muttered Uncle Vernon wildly.

"But what should we do, Vernon? Should we write back? Tell them we don't want —"

Harry could see Uncle Vernon's shiny black shoes pacing up and down the kitchen.

"No," he said finally. "No, we'll ignore it. If they don't get an answer. ... Yes, that's best ... we won't do anything. ..." "But —"

"I'm not having one in the house, Petunia! Didn't we swear when we took him in we'd stamp out that dangerous nonsense?"