

"Daddy's gone mad, hasn't he?" Dudley asked Aunt Petunia dully late that afternoon. Uncle Vernon had parked at the coast, locked them all inside the car, and disappeared.


It started to rain. Great drops beat on the roof of the car. Dudley sniveled.

"It's Monday," he told his mother. "The Great Humberto's on tonight. I want to stay somewhere with a *television*."

Monday. This reminded Harry of something. If it *was* Monday — and you could usually count on Dudley to know the days of the week, because of television — then tomorrow, Tuesday, was Harry's eleventh birthday. Of course, his birthdays were never exactly fun — last year, the Dursleys had given him a coat hanger and a pair of Uncle Vernon's old socks. Still, you weren't eleven every day.

Uncle Vernon was back and he was smiling. He was also carrying a long, thin package and didn't answer Aunt Petunia when she asked what he'd bought.

"Found the perfect place!" he said. "Come on! Everyone out!"

It was very cold outside the car. Uncle Vernon was pointing at what looked like a large rock way out at sea. Perched on top of the rock was the most miserable little shack you could imagine. One thing was certain, there was no television in there. 

"Storm forecast for tonight!" said Uncle Vernon gleefully, clapping his hands together. "And this gentleman's kindly agreed to lend us his boat!"

A toothless old man came ambling up to them, pointing, with a rather wicked grin, at an old rowboat bobbing in the iron-gray water below them.

"I've already got us some rations," said Uncle Vernon, "so all aboard!"

