

“Harry Potter sir’s friends are in London,” he confirmed brightly.

He transported Ginny and Neville, then quickly returned for Harry and Luna. Harry squeezed his eyes shut against the strange sensation of elf travel, and when he opened them he was stood in a dirty side-street somewhere in London, watching Susan walk over to a heavily vandalised telephone box.

“Can Dobby do anything else for Harry Potter and his friends?”

“Don’t tell Professor Umbridge where we are, if she asks. Or anyone else, honestly.” Dobby nodded eagerly, and Harry grinned. “Thanks so much for this, Dobby. I really appreciate it.”

“Dobby is glad to help,” the elf chirped, and then vanished.

“I never realised house elves could transport people,” Daphne said, faintly surprised.

“House elves can do a lot of things people don’t think about,” Harry told her. Then he looked to Susan, eyebrows raised. “Where’s this entrance, then?”

“Right here.” The Hufflepuff patted the phone box. “It’ll be a tight squeeze, so I hope you don’t mind getting cosy.”

It was indeed a tight squeeze, all six of them in the booth, and Susan peered out from her place trapped against the corner of the glass. “Whoever can reach the phone, dial ‘6-2-4-4-2’.”

Harry, whose ribcage was pressed right against the phone, snorted. “Very clever.” He dialled the numbers, and a cool voice spoke over an invisible speaker, asking them to state their name and business. Susan spoke before he could, declaring all six of them ‘John Smith’ with the business of ‘Ministry Evaluation’. The badges were a surprise, clattering into the coin slot, and with a warning about needing to submit their wands for a security check, suddenly the phone box began to move. It sank below the pavement, and before long it was pitch black.

“I hate this bit,” Susan muttered. Harry wasn’t a fan of it either, his brain throwing up memories of being locked in his cupboard. Luckily, it didn’t last long; soon golden light began to spill from the area near their feet, slowly increasing until they were no longer in a dark tunnel but instead lowering into the middle of what Harry could only assume was the Ministry atrium. There was a fountain in the centre with a large gold statue of various magical creatures being presided over by a witch and wizard, and a whole lot of marble elsewhere. It was incredibly pompous, as buildings went.

It was also completely empty.

“This isn’t right,” Susan murmured. “There should be a security team.”

The phone box touched the ground, and they spilled out into the atrium, stretching out their aching limbs from the awkward journey.

“D’you think they’re dead? Or just... gone?” Ginny asked dubiously. Harry frowned.