

As it turned out, having an escaped convict for a godfather was surprisingly good for Harry's continued existence at the Dursleys. By which he meant Uncle Vernon had only smacked him around a little bit for what he'd done to Aunt Marge, rather than beating Harry within an inch of his life like he'd expected.

Of course, he didn't expect things to last, once Vernon clocked on to the fact that, being an escaped convict, Sirius would have a difficult time coming to Harry's rescue should anything terrible happen. But until that fact dawned, Harry was happy to live with his relatives in a state of uneasy truce. With any luck, he could get permission to go to the Weasleys' before things got truly awful.

Two days into Harry's summer break, at approximately five-fifteen in the evening, the doorbell rang.

Harry — who was up in his room, staring at the ceiling and debating maybe getting a headstart on his Transfiguration homework — didn't think much of the interruption, though he heard Uncle Vernon muttering about how rude it was to call at such an hour, shouting for his wife to get the door. Harry rolled over on his bed, wincing when it jarred one of the bruises on his back.

Then Aunt Petunia screamed.

On his feet like a shot, Harry hurried down the stairs, wand flicking out of the invisible holster on his wrist. Had Voldemort found him already?

To his utter astonishment, the person in the doorway was not Voldemort. It was Professor Snape, dressed like a muggle in black trousers and a black button-up shirt, his dark eyes fixed on Harry's aunt and a smirk tugging at his lips. "Hello, Petunia," he drawled.

"*You*," Aunt Petunia gasped, one hand clutching at her chest in shock. "How— you're— that *awful* Snape boy." The vitriol was clear in her tone. Harry gaped.

"You two know each other?"

Snape's eyes flicked away from Petunia to look at Harry, his smirk widening a fraction. "Your aunt and I are old friends, Potter."

Petunia let out a strange sort of squawking sound. "*Friends!* As if I ever would have been friends with a freak like you. Telling Lily all about that horrible school until she couldn't wait to go with you, coming home every summer and flaunting your *abnormality* all over the place."

Harry had known Snape and his mother were friends in school — Lupin had told him that ages ago — but he hadn't realised they'd known each other *before* Hogwarts.

"May I come in?" Snape requested, already stepping inside and shutting the door behind him, nudging past a still-horrified Petunia. By now, both Vernon and Dudley were in the living room doorway, Dudley's beady little eyes screwed up in confusion.