

Five came and went. Harry glanced up at the clock every few pages, biting his lip worriedly. The Dursleys would probably stay out most of the evening, just in case, but if they didn't... He had written back to Ron, but what if it hadn't made it in time? What if they weren't coming after all?

He thought of the two-way mirror sitting inside his trunk, at the very top. He could call Sirius if no one came. Snape would come get him. Things would be fine.

At half past, he was just starting to get truly anxious, when there was a loud whooshing noise and then several bangs in quick succession. The little electric fireplace rattled. Harry's eyes went wide in a sort of horrified amusement as he realised what must have happened.

"Ouch — Fred, no, go back, there's been a mistake. Tell George not to — ow, George, no, go tell Ron, I—"

"Mr Weasley?" Harry called hesitantly, trying not to laugh.

"Harry? Harry, is that you? What happened? We seem to be stuck!" Mr Weasley shouted back, remarkably cheerful considering his predicament. Harry could hear fists hammering on the boards of the wall.

"The fireplace has been blocked up, you won't be able to get through there!" Harry said, raising his voice to be heard over the racket.

"What on earth would they block up the fireplace for?" Mr Weasley sounded baffled.

"They've got an electric fire!" Harry explained, and heard the man make a noise of excitement.

"Oh, with a plug! How fascinating. Hold on a minute, Harry, I'm trying to... yes, I think I'll have to. Stand back, Harry!"

Harry crossed to stand behind the sofa, and all of a sudden the wall exploded outwards in a barrage of rubble and plaster dust, the electric fireplace slamming into the opposite wall. Harry winced; he *really* hoped that was fixable. Out of the dust cloud stumbled Mr Weasley, the twins, and Ron.

"Hiya, Harry!" the twins greeted in cheerful unison, then glanced around the room. "Where are the muggles at?"

"They went out for dinner," Harry explained. Mr Weasley made a quietly disappointed sound. The twins, too, looked disappointed, but Harry suspected for an entirely different reason.

"Shame, shame, I would've liked to meet them. Then again," Mr Weasley added, looking around at the destroyed living room, "perhaps it's, ah, for the best they weren't here."

Harry imagined what his uncle might have done in the face of such chaos and blatant magic, and was almost sad Snape had told them to leave.