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Nearly ten years had passed since the Dursleys had woken up to find their nephew on the front step, but Privet Drive had hardly changed at all. The sun rose on the same tidy front gardens and lit up the brass number four on the Dursleys' front door; it crept into their living-room, which was almost exactly the same as it had been on the night when Mr Dursley had seen that fateful news report about owls. Only the photographs on the mantelpiece¹ really showed how much time had passed. Ten years ago, there had been lots of pictures of what looked like a large pink beach ball wearing different-coloured bobble hats² – but Dudley Dursley was no longer a baby, and now the photographs showed a large, blond boy riding his first bicycle, on a roundabout³ at the fair, playing a computer game with his father, being hugged and kissed by his mother. The room held no sign at all that another boy lived in the house, too.

Yet Harry Potter was still there, asleep at the moment, but not for long. His Aunt Petunia was awake and it was her shrill⁴ voice which made the first noise of the day.

'Up! Get up! Now!'

Harry woke with a start. His aunt rapped on the door again.

'Up!' she screeched⁵. Harry heard her walking towards the kitchen and then the sound of the frying pan being put on the cooker. He rolled on to his back and tried to remember the dream he had been having. It had been a good one. There had been a flying motorbike in it. He had a funny feeling he'd had the same dream before.

His aunt was back outside the door.

'Are you up yet?' she demanded.

'Nearly', said Harry.

'Well get a move on, I want you to look after the bacon. And don't you dare let it burn, I want everything perfect on Duddy's birthday.'

Harry groaned.

'What did you say?' his aunt snapped⁶ through the door.

'Nothing, nothing...'

Dudley's birthday – how could he have forgotten? Harry got slowly out of bed and started looking for socks. He found a pair under his bed and, after pulling a spider off one of them, put them on. Harry was used to spiders, because the cupboard under the stairs was full of them, and that was where he slept.

When he was dressed he went down the hall into the kitchen. The table was almost hidden beneath all Dudley's birthday presents. It looked as though Dudley had got the new computer he wanted, not to mention the second television and the racing bike. Exactly why Dudley wanted a racing bike was a mystery to Harry, as Dudley was very fat and hated exercise – unless of course it involved punching somebody. Dudley's favourite punch-bag was Harry, but he couldn't often catch him. Harry didn't look it, but he was very fast.

Perhaps it had something to do with living in a dark cupboard, but Harry had always been small and skinny for his age. He looked even smaller and skinnier than he really was because all he had to wear were old clothes of Dudley's and Dudley was about four times bigger than he was. Harry had a thin face, knobby knees, black hair and bright-green eyes. He wore round glasses held together with a lot of Sellotape because of all the times Dudley had punched him on the nose. The only thing Harry liked about his appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning. He had had it as long as he could remember and the first question he could ever remember asking his Aunt Petunia was how he had got it.

'In the car crash when your parents died,' she had said. 'And don't ask questions.'

Don't ask questions – that was the first rule for a quiet life with the Dursleys.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,
J. K. Rowling, 1997 ■

1. mantelpiece: shelf above the fire place – 2. bobble hat: knitted hat with a ball on top – 3. roundabout: a ride for children usually with animals or vehicles – 4. shrill: high-pitched and piercing – 5. screeched: said in a high, strident voice – 6. snapped: said in an angry voice

