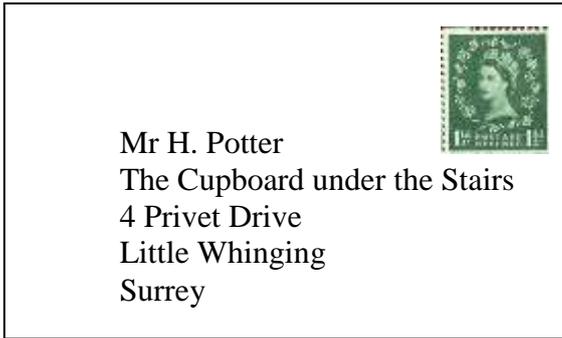


“GET THE POST, HARRY !”



Harry picked it up and stared at it, his heart twanging like a giant elastic band. No one, ever, in his whole life, had written to him. Who would? He had no friends, no other relatives – he didn't belong to the library so he'd never even got rude notes asking for books back. Yet here it was, a letter, addressed so plainly there could be no mistake /.../

The envelope was thick and heavy, made of yellowish parchment, and the address was written in emerald-green ink. There was no stamp.

Turning the envelope over, his hand trembling, Harry saw a purple wax seal bearing a coat of arms; a lion, an eagle, a badger and a snake surrounding a large letter 'H' /.../

Harry was on the point of unfolding his letter, which was written on the same heavy parchment as the envelope, when it was jerked sharply out of his hand by Uncle Vernon.

‘That’s *mine!*’ said Harry, trying to snatch it back.

‘Who’d be writing to you?’ sneered Uncle Vernon, shaking the letter open with one hand and glancing at it. His face went from red to green faster than a set of traffic lights. And it didn’t stop there. Within seconds it was the greyish white of old porridge.

‘P-P-Petunia!’ he gasped.

Dudley tried to grab the letter to read it, but Uncle Vernon held it high out of his reach. Aunt Petunia took it curiously and read the first line. For a moment it looked as though she might faint. She clutched her throat and made a choking noise.

‘Vernon! Oh my goodness – Vernon!’ /.../

‘I want to read that letter,’ Dudley said loudly.

‘I want to read it,’ said Harry furiously, ‘as it’s *mine.*’

‘Get out, both of you,’ croaked Uncle Vernon, stuffing the letter back inside its envelope.

Harry didn’t move.

‘I WANT MY LETTER!’ he shouted.

‘Let *me* see it!’ demanded Dudley.

‘OUT!’ roared Uncle Vernon /.../

Next morning at breakfast ... :

When the post arrived, Uncle Vernon, who seemed to be trying to be nice to Harry, made Dudley go and get it. They heard him banging things with his Smeltings stick all the way down the hall. Then he shouted, 'There's another one! *Mr Potter, The Smallest Bedroom, 4 Privet Drive-*'

With a strangled cry, Uncle Vernon leapt from his seat and ran down the hall /.../

On the following day ... :

Uncle Vernon had been lying at the foot of the front door in a sleeping bag, clearly making sure that Harry didn't do exactly what he'd been trying to do. He shouted at Harry for about half an hour and then told him to go and make a cup of tea. Harry shuffled miserably off into the kitchen, and by the time he got back, the post had arrived, right into Uncle Vernon's lap. Harry could see three letters addressed in green ink.

'I want –' he began, but Uncle Vernon was tearing the letters into pieces before his eyes.

Uncle Vernon didn't go to work that day. He stayed at home and nailed up the letter-box /.../

On Friday, no fewer than twelve letters arrived for Harry. As they couldn't go through the letter-box they had been pushed under the door, slotted through the sides and a few even forced through the small window in the downstairs toilet.

Uncle Vernon stayed at home again. After burning all the letters, he got out a hammer and nails and boarded up the cracks around the front and back doors so no one could go out /.../

On Saturday, things began to get out of hand. Twenty-four letters to Harry found their way into the house, rolled up and hidden inside each of the two dozen eggs that their very confused milkman had handed Aunt Petunia through the living-room window /.../

On Sunday morning, Uncle Vernon sat down at the breakfast table looking tired and rather ill, but happy.

'No post on Sundays,' he reminded them happily as he spread marmalade on his newspapers, 'no damn letters today-'

Something came whizzing down the kitchen chimney as he spoke and caught him sharply on the back of the head. Next moment, thirty or forty letters came pelting out of the fireplace like bullets /.../



/.../ Ten minutes later, they were in the car, speeding towards the motorway. They drove and they drove. They didn't stop to eat or drink all day /.../

Uncle Vernon stopped at last outside a gloomy-looking hotel on the outskirts of a big city.

On Monday morning, they had just finished their breakfast when the owner of the hotel came over to their table.

‘ ’Scuse me, but is one of you Mr H. Potter? Only I got about an ’undred of these at the front desk.’

She held up a letter so they could read the green ink address :

*Mr H. Potter
Room 17
Railview Hotel
Cokeworth*

Tuesday was Harry’s eleventh birthday /.../

‘Found the perfect place!’ Uncle Vernon 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 to sea. Perched on top of the rocks was the most miserable little house you could imagine. Uncle Vernon was in a very good mood. Obviously he thought nobody stood a chance of reaching them here in a storm to deliver post. Harry privately agreed, though the thought didn’t cheer him up at all.

HOMEWORK :

Now can you find out how many letters has Harry received ?

..... letters.

After leaving home, where did the Dursleys go ?

They went toand to