

Midnight Rendezvous

by shosier

Fred and George get caught breaking curfew their very first night at Hogwarts.
Second place winner for "Fred and George's First Encounter with Filch" contest at
The Leaky Cauldron.

1-Sep-89

Chapter 1 of 1

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September 1, 1989

Two perfectly identical figures crept into the night-black trophy room. Their wand tips aglow, casting a bluish light on their keen little faces, they peered through the glass of the first case, scanning Hogwarts' storied collection of Quidditch paraphernalia, searching for something.

"D'you think Charlie was having us on about Dai Llewellyn's broom bein' here?" one whispered after they'd examined the third one in a row without success.

The other responded with a shrug. "Might be. Still, what if it is? Don't you wanna ride on it?"

Both children jumped to hear a harsh *meer-oww* rend the silence.

"What's that?" one child hissed.

"Never mind," the other replied testily, turning away from the yellow-eyed creature. "It's only some dirty old cat. Come on!" he cried, returning to their task with renewed vigor.

Two seconds later, both children gasped and spun around guiltily when a malevolent voice murmured, "What's this we've found, my sweet? Naughty children where they don't belong their first night away from Mummy? My, my. Not very clever, are we?"

The twin boys made a show of false bravery, indignantly straightening up and jutting out their chins when Argus Filch stepped out of the shadows. Mrs. Norris leaped into his arms, and he scratched her chin lovingly, the way he knew she liked best, as a reward for her vigilance. They made an excellent team, he and his beloved feline. He liked to give the impression she was his familiar.

"Follow me," he growled. "And don't even *think* about tryin' anythin'." He spun on his heels and shuffled out of the room. Mrs. Norris perched on his shoulder, her front paws braced against his hunch, her glaring eyes on the troublemakers.

Sufficiently cowed, the youngsters silently followed Filch down the staircases to his office. His keys jangled in his hands as he unlocked it. When he pushed the door open, both boys' noses wrinkled in distaste, and one of them coughed, nearly gagging.

"Sit!" Filch barked, jabbing his finger at the two rickety stools before his desk, irritated by their theatrics.

The boys obeyed, but not quite meekly enough for Filch's taste. He sneered at them, baring his grey, snagged teeth, and ran his hand along the cool length of his horsewhip – bequeathed to him by his father – which hung in pride of place above the mantle. This drew the miscreants' attention to the extensive collection of implements of punishment hanging on his walls.

Their eyes widened appropriately, and Filch was pleased.

Mrs. Norris bounded gracefully onto his desk and stared the whelps down, her tail flicking with menace. Filch took his own seat, then withdrew a sheet of parchment from the left-hand drawer. He dipped a quill into the pot of ink and began to itemize their crimes upon the form in the designated section.

"Breaking curfew. Roaming corridors without authorization. Possible intent to vandalize artifacts..." he narrated as he scribbled.

"We weren't vandalizing anything!" one of them sputtered in protest, and Filch looked up, wearing his most suspicious leer. "We were only..."

But the other one jabbed the talker in the ribs, and he shut up.

"Name?" Filch spat, glaring at the elbow-throwing one.

"George Weasley, sir," he mumbled not-quite humbly.

Filch's quill scratched the parchment. "And you?" he demanded of the talkative one.

"Fred Weasley. That's F-R-E-D...."

"I know how to spell it!" Filch wheezed hoarsely, sensing he was somehow losing their respect by the moment but baffled as to why. Usually he could rely on firsties to cower properly before him. "House?"

"Gryffindor," they replied in unison, puffing proudly.

Filch harrumphed. "I ought to save Professor McGonagall the trouble of dealin' with the likes of you," he grumbled. He rolled his eyes skyward to the row of ferocious-looking hooks protruding from the ceiling, and the boys' eyes followed. "Yes, I ought," he hummed with dreamy delight.

To his horror, one of the boys snorted. "Then why ain't you got us strung up in 'em already?" he taunted boldly.

Filch ground his teeth, cursing Dumbledore and his weak stomach when it came to keeping order. "Discipline!" he thundered, pounding the desk with his fist. "That's what you lot need! Not these namby-pamby detentions!"

But neither boy so much as flinched. Instead, one nodded cheekily at the filing cabinets behind him. "What's in those?"

"None of your business," Filch snarled, his right eye twitching with fury, yearning to make an example of them.

The horrid little ginger monsters looked at each other, then grinned wickedly.