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Time ticked by as he enjoyed his ice cream and carefully listened to his Transfiguration professor. His gaze wandered to the street, searching for young, familiar faces. He recognised quite a few, but there were plenty of unfamiliar ones. That didn't mean much, though. Beyond those of his year, the Quidditch teams, and the DA, Harry barely knew other Hogwarts students.

"Your father and his friends gave me a lot of my grey hairs," Minerva said with a drawn-out sigh as she finished the last of her pistachio and strawberry ice cream. "Let's go pick up your wand, Mr Potter. We've been talking for an hour, and it's getting rather late."

A wave of relief washed over him. Things were not too different in this world—his parents seemed to have been the same people.

The day was dwindling, and by now the crowds had thinned, leaving the cobbled streets of the alley empty.

"Three hundred galleons for a simple enchanted necklace? Bonkers, the lot of them," a man muttered furiously after quickly leaving a small yet posh-looking jewellery store Harry had not noticed before.

In a minute, they faced the familiar shabby shop front again.

"I shall wait for you outside while you receive your wand, Mr Potter."

Harry nodded to McGonagall, then slipped inside, feeling the tingling of magic on his skin the moment he stepped through the doorway.

"Greetings once again, Mr Potter. Just in time—it's done." The wandmaker motioned to the counter.

A lone, elongated box lay there. It was plain and ordinary, no different from the others, but he couldn't feel a sense of foreboding.

What if this wand, too, rejected him? Things tended to take a turn for the worse when he was involved. Swallowing, Harry reached out, shaky hand removing the wooden cover. There it was. A pale, elegant piece of wood looked ghastly in the bed of red velvet. His fingers curled around the handle, and Harry knew this was the one.

The air immediately thickened, and he felt searing heat in his palm, jolting up his arm. As he swished, a wave of black-and-white sparks from the tip. For a short, fleeting moment, he felt full of power, as if he could take on the whole world and win.

But it went as quickly as it came.

It took him a few moments to push aside the vague emptiness in his chest. Stars had appeared in his eyes, and Harry had to blink a few times to chase them away. A parchment on his desk had been set on fire, but the wandmaker extinguished it with a flick of his wand.

“Extraordinary, Mr Potter!” A soft, genuine smile graced Ollivander’s face, who seemed unperturbed by his singed eyebrows. “Twelve inches and three-quarters, Yew and Thestral hair, reasonably supple. One of my finest creations to date… I myself tried it and received a rather faint but volatile response. I suspect this would be the case for anyone else attempting to use it, but it matches you perfectly!”

“Thank you, sir,” Harry said tightly, still trying to shake off the turmoil in his mind. “How much?”

“That would be seven galleons, Mr Potter.”

He placed the coins on the counter and paused for a moment. That was quite a paltry sum for something as valuable as a fitted wand, yet he had never considered it. He vaguely remembered unicorn tail hair being sold for ten galleons a piece.

“Are all your wands so inexpensive?” he blurted out.

“An interesting query for one so young.” The wandmaker rubbed his chin thoughtfully as his pale eyes settled on Harry with interest. “Usually, most children care little about costs, especially after paying. But to answer your question, only the first wand of children under seventeen costs seven galleons. That alone is far from inexpensive. Everyone else has to pay forty-nine galleons to get a wand from me.”

“First wand? Does that mean I can take a second?”

“No, Mr Potter. The ministry requires the registration of every spare wand, or the owner will face a heavy fine. And despite not being truly sentient, wands have a sliver of pride. It’s nearly impossible for a second wand to choose an already bonded wizard. My creations are not easy to break, but it does happen that a wizard manages to lose their wands or even destroy them.” Ollivander’s voice was laden with disapproval, and then his face turned grim. “Of course, there are very rare cases in which the wizard or witch in question manages to change so irrevocably, so drastically, that their original wand no longer responds, and they need to procure a new one.”

Harry wondered if that was what happened to make him lose the connection to his Holly Wand. His death? This odd, unexplainable form of time travel? Or maybe even the lack of a Horcrux in his scar? He couldn’t help but grimace. What if his original wand had only chosen him because of the piece of soul in his head? But no, housing the soul of the Dark Lord did not compare to being tossed back in time to a different dimension.

It didn’t matter in the end. Harry had no way of knowing, and he had spent far too much time dwelling on ‘what-ifs’.

His hand mechanically moved towards his back pocket.

Don’t put your wand there, boy! Better wizards than you have lost buttocks, you know...

Moody’s warning rang in his head, and his right hand froze just as it was about to place the wand in his oversized jeans. The retired auror might have been paranoid, but he had a point. Did he want to risk it?

No, Harry liked his buttocks the way they were, thank you very much.

“Do you have anything… to place my wand in, Mr Ollivander?”

Ollivander let out a low laugh. “I do sell wand holsters, Mr Potter. Anything from simple leather to dragon hide or enchanted bicorn skin.”

“Enchanted how, sir?” He had no memory of wand holsters in his previous world. Was this something unique here, or was he simply ignorant after being raised in a Muggle household?

“Transparency enchantment, a charm to prevent breaking, protection against misfiring, and more. Invisible to nearly everyone else after you strap it to your leg or forearm, and just by willing it, your wand will appear in your hand immediately.”

This sounded darn bloody useful. Why wasn't everyone using wand holsters?

“What’s the difference between bicorn leather and dragon hide?”

“Dragonhide is extremely magic resistant,” the wandmaker said, “and any enchantments placed on it wouldn’t hold for too long even if you managed to enchant it. On the other hand, bicorn leather is somewhat physically tough and a great conductor of magic.”

Harry weighed his wand in his palm and then gave it a few taste flicks. It felt right. “How much for your finest enchanted holster?”

“Two hundred and seventy galleons.”

The amused response had the boy gaping like a fish. Harry was by no means poor, but this sum alone was bigger than years of spending in his last life.

“My best is made out of the finest bicorn hide, which is incredibly resilient. The enchantments were seamlessly woven in a way that would last for many decades, unlike the… cheaper versions made of inferior materials. It comes with a repair guarantee for the next twenty years. A normal leather wand holster with no enchantments costs two galleons.”

Harry shuffled his weight from one leg to the other. *‘Should I buy this?’*

He had more than enough gold, and his vault was overflowing. But if he started spending freely like this, he could quickly end up with nearly nothing. But Ollivander would not dupe him.

“I’ll take it,” he declared as his throat went dry. Harry quickly piled golden coins next to the seven gold coins on the counter.

A few minutes later, the wandmaker looked at the mound of gold before him with exasperation. Harry graciously received a sleek black holster with an intricate silver lining and was just about to strap it to his hip.

“From a particularly vicious bicorn. This one is best worn on your forearm, though you can place it above the knee, be it under or over your clothes, Mr Potter.” Seeing his confused expression, the wandmaker quickly tapped the straps. “The insides are bigger than they look.”

Harry quickly attached it to his forearm instead. It felt completely weightless, and he would not even know it was there if he didn’t see it with his own eyes. The yew wand, which was longer than his forearm, effortlessly disappeared inside. He cautiously moved his limb; it did not stick out or impair the movement in any way, nor could he feel any additional weight.

With a simple thought, his new wand was instantly back in his hand; it was easier than calling a broom. A smile bloomed on his face as he holstered his wand back in; this was worth every galleon. Harry felt foolish spending seven years without this.

“Do you sell wand-care kits?”

“I do. Oh no, the kit will be on me. Consider it a gift,” Ollivander hurriedly said as Harry reached for his mokeskin bag again.

“Thank you, sir.”

After handing him a small, varnished box, the wandmaker’s face turned deathly serious, and his pale eyes bore into him like a pair of drills.

“There is not a single shred of doubt in my mind that you’re destined for great things, Mr Potter. Do not make me regret crafting this wand.”

Harry gulped and left the store with mixed feelings and an emptier purse. Deep down, he still yearned to be a normal boy, but it was not meant to be in this life either. He had not started the first year yet, but he already possessed a unique wand with a legendary core, second only to the Death Stick.

As soon as he came outside, the Transfiguration Mistress looked him up and down. “Did you get your wand, Mr Potter?”

“Yes, professor.”

“It’s time to return you home. Hold on tight.” McGonagall grasped his hand before Harry could say anything; he was being squeezed through a straw. He barely landed on his shaky feet, and the professor handed him a standard school trunk. “All your books and the ticket for Hogwarts Express are in here. It leaves at 11 AM sharp, so be there on time.”

A loud crack echoed, and a dazed Harry was standing alone with his trunk on the front lawn of Privet Drive Number Six. A hoarse laugh bubbled in his throat. She had not told him how to get to Platform Nine and Three-Quarters either.

Harry stared up at the house before him, and just the look of it made him feel tired, and it had nothing to do with the exhaustion of going through Diagon and two bouts of Apparition. While it was not the same house as the one in his previous life, it was similar. Way too similar to the point that it was indistinguishable. The only true difference was the address.

He hated it here. Harry had already taken his goodbyes with the Dursleys and intended never to see them again. Hell, even living in a magical tent as a fugitive was preferable to staying in the tender care of his relatives.

A million questions ran through his head, and Harry was confused and desperately needed rest and quiet. There was this nagging feeling in the corner of his mind that he had forgotten something. His head felt too muddled to come up with any profound plans, but there was a quite simple and obvious solution. He had done this before, after all.

Turning around to face the street, the yew wand appeared in his grasp, and Harry raised his arm first to the road and then towards the skies.

26th of July, 1991

His stomach grumbled and twisted, demanding sustenance and forcing Harry to open his eyes. A rustic wooden ceiling greeted him, along with the faint scent of soap and perfume. All he wanted to do was lie down and fall asleep, but his guts' persistent, noisy protests kept him from returning to the sweet embrace of nothingness. Sleeping without any nightmares or visions was simply blissful.

His hand mechanically wandered towards the oaken nightstand and froze. A small measure of joy rose within him when he remembered that he no longer needed glasses.

Harry forced his stiff limbs to move, got up, and went to freshen up in the bathroom. The cold water jolted him fully awake, and his eyes wandered towards the mirror again. He looked small, scrawny, and pale. A weird sight, especially without the round glasses, but at least he could see properly now. Every small curve or corner in the lavatory, the faint, barely noticeable scar on the middle of his brow, or every single tear in his crumpled, oversized shirt. Usually, he would be celebrating, but…

His fingers pinched his leg, and a hiss escaped from his throat. Good. This was not some dream.

The reality hit him like a bludger.

Why him? Why always him? He faced so many perils, fought so hard, only to die, and now he had to do it all over again?!

Anger bubbled up within him, and he wanted to scream and shout and rage against the injustice, but he found himself gritting his teeth and squashing it all down. Harry knew well enough that being angry solved nothing and that the world was unfair. Crying or sulking was of even less use.

He was already a deft hand at being in a crappy situation and could only accept it as it was and force himself to keep going.

As Harry sluggishly put on his robe and wand holster, an errant thought made him halt. Maybe this was the real world, and he had been having strange dreams from another life altogether.

This made his heart skip a bit, but he realised it was something easily checked. Harry carefully strapped his holster to his forearm, and the pale wand appeared in his grasp again and froze.

He was underage again, and the pesky Trace was probably applied to his wand. But…was it? He had no idea how it worked. He vividly remembered Dobby getting him into trouble in the summer after the first year. Hell, didn't Dumbledore explain that the Ministry had no way of tracking who cast the spell, just the location?

Regardless of where the Trace was applied, if he used magic here and now, could the Ministry know that he was the one to cast it and not… one of the adult wizards and witches in the Leaky Cauldron below?

With a grin, Harry pointed the wand at the small candlestick on his nightstand. Swish and flick.

"Wingardium Leviosa!" Harry felt a small pull in his gut, and the candlestick uneasily floated up as he slowly raised his wand. The spell felt choppy, clumsy, and taxing, but it worked well enough.

Casting with this wand felt… odd and different in a way he could not put his finger on, but not unpleasant. It didn't matter. He smiled despite himself; his memories were most definitely not a product of his imagination but rather something he had lived through. He stopped the channelling, and the candlestick fell sharply with a loud *thunk.*

Minutes ticked as he tensely looked at the window… but no owl with a letter from the Improper Use of Magic Office came. Only the morning sun was shyly peaking over a handful of clouds to the east. All this time… he could have avoided the Dursleys and cast magic freely just by staying in Diagon Alley.

Harry let out a self-deprecating laugh; he had not felt so foolish in quite a while. At least he had made the right decision to come here.

Yet there was a niggling feeling at the back of his mind; wand aside, spells and magic itself felt *different*.

His gaze settled on the pale yew in his hand. Harry carefully spun it between his fingers, but it felt awkward as it was longer than his former Holly wand, and his fingers were smaller. Harry grasped it strongly before gently jabbing while twisting the tip of his wand.

"Ignis Sectum!"

His insides lurched, and his wand belched out a small, misshapen streak of fire that fizzled out harmlessly in the air half a second later. Harry, however, fell on the ground, heaving heavily. Large beads of sweat had formed upon his brow, and his heart was beating like a drum, making him feel as if he had been running for hours. His stomach twisted painfully before grumbling loudly in protest.

'Bloody fucking hell!' he cursed inwardly for a few seconds more as he gasped for breath while facing the wooden floor up close.

Nearly seven years of effort gone just like that. Wasted. Harry angrily slammed his fist on the floor, and the sharp pain in his hand jolted his weary mind.

It was not necessarily for nought. All the knowledge of magic and know-how of spells from his studies was still there; now, he just had to practice again. Just casting magic during the summer would help him along even further. But it was not enough. He vividly remembered Voldemort demolishing him as if it were child's play. The memory of Dumbledore's fight against the Dark Lord in the Ministry was even more sobering. He had a long road ahead of him.

Shaking his head, Harry forced his weary limbs to get up; he had no idea what to do now. His guts twisted painfully with hunger again, reminding him he did not remember the last time he had a decent meal. With a thought, the yew wand was returned to the holster; Harry stumbled out of the room and headed down the wooden staircase.

Tom nodded at him as soon as he entered the pub proper. Aside from a pair of old wizards playing chess in a dark corner, the Leaky was empty. Harry approached a table near the fireplace and waved the barman over.

"Mr Creevy." Tom gave him a wide, toothless smile, and Harry stared in incomprehension for a moment. Right, he had indeed introduced himself as Evans Creevy. "How was yer sleep, lad?"

“Very good, sir,” Harry said, only for his stomach to rumble loudly in hunger, making his cheeks redden slightly. “What’s for breakfast?”

“Bacon ‘n eggs,” Tom chortled with amusement. “I still have shepherd’s pie left over from last night if you want some.”

“I’ll take a large portion of both.”

As he watched the man move towards the kitchen, the nagging feeling that he had forgotten something appeared again in the back of his head, but nothing came to his mind, no matter how hard he tried to remember.

Voldemort was on the cusp of victory.

But on All Hallows’ Eve in 1981, the Dark Lord attacked the Potters in their cottage in Godric’s Hollow. James and Lily Potter were easily killed, but when the Dark Lord attempted to slay their son, a fifteen-month-old baby, something went wrong. Nobody knows what or how, and there has been much speculation ever since. The only certain thing was that Harry James Potter survived the Killing Curse, and the Dark Lord was defeated.

He slammed ‘The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts’ shut.

Lily! Take Harry and go! It’s him! Run! I’ll hold him off!

Crack!

The sharp sound brought him back to reality. He stared at the nearby vase, which was covered in fissures. His breathing was laboured, and he became acutely aware of the pain in his right hand. It was painfully balled in a fist, and his nails were digging into his flesh, drawing blood. Harry slowly unclenched his hand and carefully looked around to check if someone had noticed his outburst. Thankfully, nobody had seen, so he carefully grasped his wand and spun the tip.

“Reparo!”

Some of the cracks disappeared, but a large portion stayed as if to mock him. Harry had to cast two more times before the vase looked… unbroken. Even then, when he approached, there were faint lines where the cracks had been.

He shook his head, wiped the beads of sweat that had formed upon his brow, returned the wand to his holster, and went back to the book. Compared to what he was used to, he got tired too quickly when casting simple magic. Hopefully, this would be easily fixed with enough practice.

It took him a few minutes of shuffling through the chronology, but he finally found the entry he sought.

On the third of November, 1981, Sirius Black, the notorious right-hand of the Dark Lord, was apprehended after killing twelve Muggles and Peter Pettigrew, of whom only a single finger was left. He has also been rumoured to be the Secret Keeper to the Potters and the man who betrayed their location to the Dark Lord. He resides in the high-security wing of Azkaban Prison, along with the Dark Lord’s most dangerous followers.

It seemed that some things did not change. His faint scar was a dead giveaway, but he had secretly hoped things were different. Now, he had to somehow free his godfather in a way that did not involve breaking him out of Azkaban. And that would probably require him to capture Peter Pettigrew. Harry grimaced at the yellow pages, closed the book, and returned it to the shelf. He was unsure if he could be so merciful to the rat again this time. But he had no idea where to start. Was Pettigrew even still at the Weasleys?

He had to check later.

Harry had skimmed through his school books earlier, and things looked mostly the same. He did not truly remember many details from the first-year material, but nothing seemed different. Last time, he had studied religiously and practised hard for seven years, but in the end, Voldemort was still way out of his league. He could fight his Death Eaters just fine, but the Dark Lord easily toyed with him. Maybe Voldemort never made Horcruxes here?

'As if I'd ever be so lucky,' he snorted inwardly.

Knowing his luck, Tom Riddle was still alive, after his head, and probably more powerful than in his world. Harry had to consciously fight off the desire to return to his bed and fall asleep or run away from Britain altogether. Ignoring that Harry had never gone outside Britain before, pretending that his problems didn't exist or running away from them did not make them go away. He had ample experience in this regard. Not that he could successfully escape from Voldemort even if he wanted to. Not with the prophecy hanging ominously over his head.

The Dark Lord believed it enough to go and kill a fifteen-month-old baby personally.

Maybe Harry could run away. But where? He didn't even know other languages! He could maybe learn, but that would take time, and he had no idea where to start. And, even if he went to America and somehow enrolled in Ilvermorny, there was no guarantee that Voldemort would let him go. Did Harry want to spend the rest of his life looking over his shoulder for the Dark Lord or his followers?

He vigorously shook his head. The memory of being on a run and not daring to show his face in public like some rat was all too vivid in his mind. Never again.

And the only way to deter Voldemort was strength. The Dark Lord avoided confronting Dumbledore. Harry also remembered that Voldemort seemed just as monstrously powerful despite his training and efforts. Thankfully, the Dark Lord was probably still a shade right now.

Or maybe possessing the DADA teacher…

It would be great if Harry could get rid of Voldemort before he regained his body, but he doubted it. The Horcruxes were hidden behind deadly protections if they were even in the same items and locations as before. The last time, it was mostly luck that Harry destroyed anything.

But what if his luck ran out this time? He would not drag a young Ron and Hermione into this whole mess. Not to mention that his spells all felt shoddy right now.

For a moment, he entertained the idea of going to Dumbledore and securing his assistance. Surely, the headmaster could do something more with Harry's knowledge from his previous life. Perhaps he could solve it all.

A strangled scoff escaped his throat, and Harry tiredly ran his hand through his unruly black hair. A few days ago, he would have gladly done it. But now… now he simply did not trust him. He wanted to; he truly wanted to have faith in Albus Dumbledore, but… he simply couldn't anymore.

Perhaps he could pretend he was a normal kid, enjoy school, and try to make friends with the eleven-year-olds whose greatest problems were detentions from the teachers. Harry's gaze slid towards a young boy his age who was animatedly trying to convince his mother to buy him 'Quidditch Through the Ages'.

Could he forget the spiral of desperation and terror he had experienced in the last three years? For a short moment, he imagined himself sitting there, trying to convince Lily Potter to buy him his favourite book…

But such a thing would never come to pass.

Harry Potter would never see his mother and father because they gave their lives so he could live.

Magic is Might!

A forlorn sigh tore from his lips, and he shook his head. Harry grimaced and looked at the vast shelves laden heavily with all sorts of books. Doing what he did last time would not cut it. If the standard books of spells were enough to defeat the Dark Lord, he would have been apprehended by a pair of Aurors. His self-made spell was all well and good, but Voldemort had simply stepped out of the way. Harry needed something different. Something more.

Nearly two hours later, Harry left Flourish and Blots with a loaded trunk. He had forced himself to fork out another three hundred galleons for an enchanted trunk with a vast library space that could fit hundreds of tomes and another two hundred galleons to buy every book that seemed remotely useful.

It was early afternoon outside, and the cobbled streets were brimming with people. Harry walked slowly and relished in the hubbub as nobody even spared him more than a glance. With scar almost completely faded and glasses gone, he looked quite different from his past self. Or from James Potter. Perhaps only those who had been close friends with his father would recognise him.

In front of Quality Quidditch Supplies, he even saw a young man, probably just out of Hogwarts, fully dressed in black leather and surrounded by a group of swooning witches. He was quite pretty, better looking than the fraud Lockhart, even. Then, the man's hair lengthened and changed from black to silvery, and if you asked Harry later, he would deny gaping like a fish out of water.

"Eros, marry me!" shouted a red-haired witch, and Harry almost choked while the other witches went crazy.

The man simply smiled, pulled the redhead into his arms and leaned in for a deep kiss, eliciting sighs and squeals from the crowd.

It took him a few moments, but Harry quickly rushed away, unwilling to watch this… show any further. And who the hell would name their son Eros?

A few moments later, the nagging feeling that he was forgetting something important appeared again. He had his wand and his ticket for the Hogwarts Express. Harry had carefully checked his trunk earlier;

McGonagall had purchased all his necessary school supplies, from pewter cauldrons to dragonhide gloves.

So if he had everything, what in the bloody hell was he missing?

A moment later, Harry froze on the spot, face rapidly paling. He spun around and rushed towards the Eeylops Owl Emporium. How the bloody hell could he have forgotten about Hedwig?!

Author's endnote: Harry has had enough of the Dursleys.

He also finally makes up his mind about what to do after some introspection.