

Chapter 3

According to the books, the easiest way to become familiar with your magical core was meditation.

No wonder the spells on him had made him impulsive, restless. He never would have been able to do it, even if he'd had the urge.

With the spells gone, however, Harry found it easy to sink into his own mind, his breathing steady and his eyes closed. It was a little like the days back in his cupboard; falling into his imagination to pretend he was literally anywhere other than crammed under the Dursleys' staircase. Pretend he wasn't in pain, wasn't starving, wasn't cold.

Except the difference here was that he wasn't creating anything — his mind was empty and still. At least, he tried to be. It was hard, shoving away every little thought that crossed his mind. But after several days of dedicated practice before bed, he was starting to get the hang of it.

He relaxed his shoulders against the headboard, trying to sink deeper into his body. He could almost feel it, a warmth running through him, a spark. The book said he had to find that spark and follow it back to his core.

The book also said it was incredibly difficult, and took time.

Somewhere, Harry thought he could see a faint glow of light in the corner of his vision; a strange concept with his eyes closed. He tried to focus on it, draw it closer — and then, outside the room, there was a loud bang and a grumbled curse.

Harry's concentration was lost.

He scowled to himself, opening his eyes. When he glanced at his watch, he realised it was already nearly midnight — too late to try again. He'd just have to accept that progress for now, and keep trying tomorrow.

It wasn't going to happen overnight, he reminded himself. These things took practice.

But he couldn't help but feel like there was an hourglass somewhere, grains of sand running out far too quickly, counting down to the day when he would no longer have the freedom for practice and time.

Dumbledore — if it truly was Dumbledore, though he couldn't think of any other options — would eventually find out that Harry not only knew about the spells, but had broken them. He highly doubted he'd be able to play dumb until he was seventeen. Sometimes he doubted he'd be able to play dumb for more than a week after getting back to Hogwarts. But if there was one thing he knew, it was that he couldn't reveal his hand too early. He needed more information.