

“They didn’ keep their gold in the house, boy! Nah, first stop fer us is Gringotts. Wizards’ bank. Have a sausage, they’re not bad cold—an’ I wouldn’ say no teh a bit o’ yer birthday cake, neither.”

“Wizards have *banks*?”

“Just the one. Gringotts. Run by goblins.”

Harry dropped the bit of sausage he was holding.

“*Goblins*?”

“Yeah—so yeh’d be mad ter try an’ rob it, I’ll tell yeh that. Never mess with goblins, Harry. Gringotts is the safest place in the world fer anything yeh want ter keep safe—’cept maybe Hogwarts. As a matter o’ fact, I gotta visit Gringotts anyway. Fer Dumbledore. Hogwarts business.” Hagrid drew himself up proudly. “He usually gets me ter do important stuff fer him. Fetchin’ you—gettin’ things from Gringotts—knows he can trust me, see.

“Got everythin’? Come on, then.”

Harry followed Hagrid out onto the rock. The sky was quite clear now and the sea gleamed in the sunlight. The boat Uncle Vernon had hired was still there, with a lot of water in the bottom after the storm.

“How did you get here?” Harry asked, looking around for another boat.

“Flew,” said Hagrid.

“*Flew?*”

“Yeah—but we’ll go back in this. Not s’posed ter use magic now I’ve got yeh.”

They settled down in the boat, Harry still staring at Hagrid, trying to imagine him flying.

“Seems a shame ter row, though,” said Hagrid, giving Harry another of his sideways looks. “If I was ter—er—speed things up a bit, would yeh mind not mentionin’ it at Hogwarts?”

“Of course not,” said Harry, eager to see more magic. Hagrid pulled out the pink umbrella again, tapped it twice on the side of the boat, and they sped off toward land.

“Why would you be mad to try and rob Gringotts?” Harry asked.

“Spells—enchantments,” said Hagrid, unfolding his newspaper as he spoke. “They say there’s dragons guardin’ the high-security vaults. And then yeh gotta find yer way—Gringotts is hundreds of miles under London, see. Deep under the Underground. Yeh’d die of hunger tryin’ ter get out, even if yeh did manage ter get yer hands on summat.”

Harry sat and thought about this while Hagrid read his newspaper, the *Daily Prophet*. Harry had learned from Uncle Vernon that people liked to be left alone while they did this,

but it was very difficult, he'd never had so many questions in his life.

"Ministry o' Magic messin' things up as usual," Hagrid muttered, turning the page.

"There's a Ministry of Magic?" Harry asked, before he could stop himself.

"Course," said Hagrid. "They wanted Dumbledore fer Minister, o' course, but he'd never leave Hogwarts, so old Cornelius Fudge got the job. Bungler if ever there was one. So he pelts Dumbledore with owls every morning, askin' fer advice."

"But what does a Ministry of Magic *do*?"

"Well, their main job is to keep it from the Muggles that there's still witches an' wizards up an' down the country."

"Why?"

"*Why*? Blimey, Harry, everyone'd be wantin' magic solutions to their problems. Nah, we're best left alone."

At this moment the boat bumped gently into the harbor wall. Hagrid folded up his newspaper, and they clambered up the stone steps onto the street.

Passersby stared a lot at Hagrid as they walked through the little town to the station. Harry couldn't blame them. Not only was Hagrid twice as tall as anyone else, he kept pointing at

perfectly ordinary things like parking meters and saying loudly, “See that, Harry? Things these Muggles dream up, eh?”

“Hagrid,” said Harry, panting a bit as he ran to keep up, “did you say there are *dragons* at Gringotts?”

“Well, so they say,” said Hagrid. “Crikey, I’d like a dragon.”

“You’d *like* one?”

“Wanted one ever since I was a kid—here we go.”

They had reached the station. There was a train to London in five minutes’ time. Hagrid, who didn’t understand “Muggle money,” as he called it, gave the bills to Harry so he could buy their tickets.

People stared more than ever on the train. Hagrid took up two seats and sat knitting what looked like a canary-yellow circus tent.

“Still got yer letter, Harry?” he asked as he counted stitches.

Harry took the parchment envelope out of his pocket.

“Good,” said Hagrid. “There’s a list there of everything yeh need.”

Harry unfolded a second piece of paper he hadn’t noticed the night before, and read:

HOGWARTS SCHOOL *of* WITCHCRAFT *and* WIZARDRY

UNIFORM

First-year students will require:

1. Three sets of plain work robes (black)
2. One plain pointed hat (black) for day wear
3. One pair of protective gloves (dragon hide or similar)
4. One winter cloak (black, silver fastenings)

Please note that all pupils' clothes should carry name tags

## COURSE BOOKS

All students should have a copy of each of the following:

*The Standard Book of Spells (Grade 1)* by Miranda Goshawk

*A History of Magic* by Bathilda Bagshot

*Magical Theory* by Adalbert Waffling

*A Beginners' Guide to Transfiguration* by Emeric Switch

*One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi* by Phyllida Spore

*Magical Draughts and Potions* by Arsenius Jigger

*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* by Newt Scamander

*The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection* by Quentin Trimble

## OTHER EQUIPMENT

1 wand

1 cauldron (pewter, standard size 2)

1 set glass or crystal phials

1 telescope

1 set brass scales

Students may also bring an owl OR a cat OR a toad

PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT FIRST YEARS ARE NOT  
ALLOWED THEIR OWN BROOMSTICKS

“Can we buy all this in London?” Harry wondered aloud.

“If yeh know where to go,” said Hagrid.

Harry had never been to London before. Although Hagrid seemed to know where he was going, he was obviously not used to getting there in an ordinary way. He got stuck in the ticket barrier on the Underground, and complained loudly that the seats were too small and the trains too slow.

“I don’t know how the Muggles manage without magic,” he said as they climbed a broken-down escalator that led up to a bustling road lined with shops.

Hagrid was so huge that he parted the crowd easily; all Harry had to do was keep close behind him. They passed book shops and music stores, hamburger restaurants and cinemas, but nowhere that looked as if it could sell you a magic wand. This was just an ordinary street full of ordinary people. Could there really be piles of wizard gold buried miles beneath them? Were there really shops that sold spell books and broomsticks? Might this not all be some huge joke that the

Dursleys had cooked up? If Harry hadn't known that the Dursleys had no sense of humor, he might have thought so; yet somehow, even though everything Hagrid had told him so far was unbelievable, Harry couldn't help trusting him.

"This is it," said Hagrid, coming to a halt, "the Leaky Cauldron. It's a famous place."

It was a tiny, grubby-looking pub. If Hagrid hadn't pointed it out, Harry wouldn't have noticed it was there. The people hurrying by didn't glance at it. Their eyes slid from the big book shop on one side to the record shop on the other as if they couldn't see the Leaky Cauldron at all. In fact, Harry had the most peculiar feeling that only he and Hagrid could see it. Before he could mention this, Hagrid had steered him inside.

For a famous place, it was very dark and shabby. A few old women were sitting in a corner, drinking tiny glasses of sherry. One of them was smoking a long pipe. A little man in a top hat was talking to the old bartender, who was quite bald and looked like a toothless walnut. The low buzz of chatter stopped when they walked in. Everyone seemed to know Hagrid; they waved and smiled at him, and the bartender reached for a glass, saying, "The usual, Hagrid?"

"Can't, Tom, I'm on Hogwarts business," said Hagrid, clapping his great hand on Harry's shoulder and making

Harry's knees buckle.

"Good Lord," said the bartender, peering at Harry, "is this—can this be—?"

The Leaky Cauldron had suddenly gone completely still and silent.

"Bless my soul," whispered the old bartender, "Harry Potter...what an honor."

He hurried out from behind the bar, rushed toward Harry and seized his hand, tears in his eyes.

"Welcome back, Mr. Potter, welcome back."

Harry didn't know what to say. Everyone was looking at him. The old woman with the pipe was puffing on it without realizing it had gone out. Hagrid was beaming.

Then there was a great scraping of chairs and the next moment, Harry found himself shaking hands with everyone in the Leaky Cauldron.

"Doris Crockford, Mr. Potter, can't believe I'm meeting you at last."

"So proud, Mr. Potter, I'm just so proud."

"Always wanted to shake your hand—I'm all of a flutter."

"Delighted, Mr. Potter, just can't tell you, Diggle's the name, Dedalus Diggle."



“I’ve seen you before!” said Harry, as Dedalus Diggle’s top hat fell off in his excitement. “You bowed to me once in a shop.”

“He remembers!” cried Dedalus Diggle, looking around at everyone. “Did you hear that? He remembers me!”

Harry shook hands again and again—Doris Crockford kept coming back for more.

A pale young man made his way forward, very nervously. One of his eyes was twitching.

“Professor Quirrell!” said Hagrid. “Harry, Professor Quirrell will be one of your teachers at Hogwarts.”

“P-P-Potter,” stammered Professor Quirrell, grasping Harry’s hand, “c-can’t t-tell you how p-pleased I am to meet you.”

“What sort of magic do you teach, Professor Quirrell?”

“D-Defense Against the D-D-Dark Arts,” muttered Professor Quirrell, as though he’d rather not think about it. “N-not that you n-need it, eh, P-P-Potter?” He laughed nervously. “You’ll be g-getting all your equipment, I suppose? I’ve g-got to p-pick up a new b-book on vampires, m-myself.” He looked terrified at the very thought.

But the others wouldn’t let Professor Quirrell keep Harry to himself. It took almost ten minutes to get away from them all.

At last, Hagrid managed to make himself heard over the babble.

“Must get on—lots ter buy. Come on, Harry.”

Doris Crockford shook Harry’s hand one last time, and Hagrid led them through the bar and out into a small, walled courtyard, where there was nothing but a trash can and a few weeds.

Hagrid grinned at Harry.

“Told yeh, didn’t I? Told yeh you was famous. Even Professor Quirrell was tremblin’ ter meet yeh—mind you, he’s usually tremblin’.”

“Is he always that nervous?”

“Oh, yeah. Poor bloke. Brilliant mind. He was fine while he was studyin’ outta books but then he took a year off ter get some first-hand experience....They say he met vampires in the Black Forest, and there was a nasty bit o’ trouble with a hag—never been the same since. Scared of the students, scared of his own subject—now, where’s me umbrella?”

Vampires? Hags? Harry’s head was swimming. Hagrid, meanwhile, was counting bricks in the wall above the trash can.

“Three up...two across...” he muttered. “Right, stand back, Harry.”

He tapped the wall three times with the point of his umbrella.

The brick he had touched quivered—it wriggled—in the middle, a small hole appeared—it grew wider and wider—a second later they were facing an archway large enough even for Hagrid, an archway onto a cobbled street that twisted and turned out of sight.

“Welcome,” said Hagrid, “to Diagon Alley.”

He grinned at Harry's amazement. They stepped through the archway. Harry looked quickly over his shoulder and saw the archway shrink instantly back into solid wall.

The sun shone brightly on a stack of cauldrons outside the nearest shop. *Cauldrons—All Sizes—Copper, Brass, Pewter, Silver—Self-Stirring—Collapsible*, said a sign hanging over them.

"Yeah, you'll be needin' one," said Hagrid, "but we gotta get yer money first."

Harry wished he had about eight more eyes. He turned his head in every direction as they walked up the street, trying to look at everything at once: the shops, the things outside them, the people doing their shopping. A plump woman outside an Apothecary was shaking her head as they passed, saying, "Dragon liver, sixteen Sickles an ounce, they're mad...."

A low, soft hooting came from a dark shop with a sign saying Eeylops Owl Emporium—Tawny, Screech, Barn, Brown, and Snowy. Several boys of about Harry's age had their noses pressed against a window with broomsticks in it. "Look," Harry heard one of them say, "the new Nimbus Two Thousand—fastest ever—" There were shops selling robes, shops selling telescopes and strange silver instruments Harry had never seen before, windows stacked with barrels of bat spleens and

eels' eyes, tottering piles of spell books, quills, and rolls of parchment, potion bottles, globes of the moon....

“Gringotts,” said Hagrid.

They had reached a snowy white building that towered over the other little shops. Standing beside its burnished bronze doors, wearing a uniform of scarlet and gold, was—

“Yeah, that’s a goblin,” said Hagrid quietly as they walked up the white stone steps toward him. The goblin was about a head shorter than Harry. He had a swarthy, clever face, a pointed beard and, Harry noticed, very long fingers and feet. He bowed as they walked inside. Now they were facing a second pair of doors, silver this time, with words engraved upon them:

*Enter, stranger, but take heed  
Of what awaits the sin of greed,  
For those who take, but do not earn,  
Must pay most dearly in their turn.  
So if you seek beneath our floors  
A treasure that was never yours,  
Thief, you have been warned, beware  
Of finding more than treasure there.*

“Like I said, yeh’d be mad ter try an’ rob it,” said Hagrid.

A pair of goblins bowed them through the silver doors and they were in a vast marble hall. About a hundred more goblins were sitting on high stools behind a long counter, scribbling in large ledgers, weighing coins in brass scales, examining precious stones through eyeglasses. There were too many doors to count leading off the hall, and yet more goblins were showing people in and out of these. Hagrid and Harry made for the counter.

“Morning,” said Hagrid to a free goblin. “We’ve come ter take some money outta Mr. Harry Potter’s safe.”

“You have his key, sir?”

“Got it here somewhere,” said Hagrid, and he started emptying his pockets onto the counter, scattering a handful of moldy dog biscuits over the goblin’s book of numbers. The goblin wrinkled his nose. Harry watched the goblin on their right weighing a pile of rubies as big as glowing coals.

“Got it,” said Hagrid at last, holding up a tiny golden key.

The goblin looked at it closely.

“That seems to be in order.”

“An’ I’ve also got a letter here from Professor Dumbledore,” said Hagrid importantly, throwing out his chest. “It’s about the You-Know-What in vault seven hundred and thirteen.”

The goblin read the letter carefully.

“Very well,” he said, handing it back to Hagrid, “I will have someone take you down to both vaults. Griphook!”

Griphook was yet another goblin. Once Hagrid had crammed all the dog biscuits back inside his pockets, he and Harry followed Griphook toward one of the doors leading off the hall.

“What’s the You-Know-What in vault seven hundred and thirteen?” Harry asked.

“Can’t tell yeh that,” said Hagrid mysteriously. “Very secret. Hogwarts business. Dumbledore’s trusted me. More’n my job’s worth ter tell yeh that.”

Griphook held the door open for them. Harry, who had expected more marble, was surprised. They were in a narrow stone passageway lit with flaming torches. It sloped steeply downward and there were little railway tracks on the floor. Griphook whistled and a small cart came hurtling up the tracks toward them. They climbed in—Hagrid with some difficulty—and were off.

At first they just hurtled through a maze of twisting passages. Harry tried to remember, left, right, right, left, middle fork, right, left, but it was impossible. The rattling cart seemed to know its own way, because Griphook wasn’t steering.

Harry's eyes stung as the cold air rushed past them, but he kept them wide open. Once, he thought he saw a burst of fire at the end of a passage and twisted around to see if it was a dragon, but too late—they plunged even deeper, passing an underground lake where huge stalactites and stalagmites grew from the ceiling and floor.

"I never know," Harry called to Hagrid over the noise of the cart, "what's the difference between a stalagmite and a stalactite?"

"Stalagmite's got an 'm' in it," said Hagrid. "An' don' ask me questions just now, I think I'm gonna be sick."

He did look very green, and when the cart stopped at last beside a small door in the passage wall, Hagrid got out and had to lean against the wall to stop his knees from trembling.

Griphook unlocked the door. A lot of green smoke came billowing out, and as it cleared, Harry gasped. Inside were mounds of gold coins. Columns of silver. Heaps of little bronze Knuts.

"All yours," smiled Hagrid.

All Harry's—it was incredible. The Dursleys couldn't have known about this or they'd have had it from him faster than blinking. How often had they complained how much Harry



cost them to keep? And all the time there had been a small fortune belonging to him, buried deep under London.

Hagrid helped Harry pile some of it into a bag.

“The gold ones are Galleons,” he explained. “Seventeen silver Sickles to a Galleon and twenty-nine Knuts to a Sickle, it’s easy enough. Right, that should be enough fer a couple o’ terms, we’ll keep the rest safe for yeh.” He turned to Griphook. “Vault seven hundred and thirteen now, please, and can we go more slowly?”

“One speed only,” said Griphook.

They were going even deeper now and gathering speed. The air became colder and colder as they hurtled round tight corners. They went rattling over an underground ravine, and Harry leaned over the side to try to see what was down at the dark bottom, but Hagrid groaned and pulled him back by the scruff of his neck.

Vault seven hundred and thirteen had no keyhole.

“Stand back,” said Griphook importantly. He stroked the door gently with one of his long fingers and it simply melted away.

“If anyone but a Gringotts goblin tried that, they’d be sucked through the door and trapped in there,” said Griphook.

“How often do you check to see if anyone’s inside?” Harry asked.

“About once every ten years,” said Griphook with a rather nasty grin.

Something really extraordinary had to be inside this top security vault, Harry was sure, and he leaned forward eagerly, expecting to see fabulous jewels at the very least—but at first he thought it was empty. Then he noticed a grubby little package wrapped up in brown paper lying on the floor. Hagrid picked it up and tucked it deep inside his coat. Harry longed to know what it was, but knew better than to ask.

“Come on, back in this infernal cart, and don’t talk to me on the way back, it’s best if I keep me mouth shut,” said Hagrid.

One wild cart ride later they stood blinking in the sunlight outside Gringotts. Harry didn’t know where to run first now that he had a bag full of money. He didn’t have to know how many Galleons there were to a pound to know that he was holding more money than he’d had in his whole life—more money than even Dudley had ever had.

“Might as well get yer uniform,” said Hagrid, nodding toward Madam Malkin’s Robes for All Occasions. “Listen, Harry, would yeh mind if I slipped off fer a pick-me-up in the

Leaky Cauldron? I hate them Gringotts carts.” He did still look a bit sick, so Harry entered Madam Malkin’s shop alone, feeling nervous.

Madam Malkin was a squat, smiling witch dressed all in mauve.

“Hogwarts, dear?” she said, when Harry started to speak. “Got the lot here—another young man being fitted up just now, in fact.”

In the back of the shop, a boy with a pale, pointed face was standing on a footstool while a second witch pinned up his long black robes. Madam Malkin stood Harry on a stool next to him, slipped a long robe over his head, and began to pin it to the right length.

“Hello,” said the boy, “Hogwarts, too?”

“Yes,” said Harry.

“My father’s next door buying my books and Mother’s up the street looking at wands,” said the boy. He had a bored, drawling voice. “Then I’m going to drag them off to look at racing brooms. I don’t see why first years can’t have their own. I think I’ll bully Father into getting me one and I’ll smuggle it in somehow.”

Harry was strongly reminded of Dudley.

“Have *you* got your own broom?” the boy went on.

“No,” said Harry.

“Play Quidditch at all?”

“No,” Harry said again, wondering what on earth Quidditch could be.

“I do—Father says it’s a crime if I’m not picked to play for my House, and I must say, I agree. Know what House you’ll be in yet?”

“No,” said Harry, feeling more stupid by the minute.

“Well, no one really knows until they get there, do they, but I know I’ll be in Slytherin, all our family have been—imagine being in Hufflepuff, I think I’d leave, wouldn’t you?”

“Mmm,” said Harry, wishing he could say something a bit more interesting.

“I say, look at that man!” said the boy suddenly, nodding toward the front window. Hagrid was standing there, grinning at Harry and pointing at two large ice creams to show he couldn’t come in.

“That’s Hagrid,” said Harry, pleased to know something the boy didn’t. “He works at Hogwarts.”

“Oh,” said the boy, “I’ve heard of him. He’s a sort of servant, isn’t he?”

“He’s the gamekeeper,” said Harry. He was liking the boy less and less every second.

“Yes, exactly. I heard he’s a sort of *savage*—lives in a hut on the school grounds and every now and then he gets drunk, tries to do magic, and ends up setting fire to his bed.”

“I think he’s brilliant,” said Harry coldly.

“*Do you?*” said the boy, with a slight sneer. “Why is he with you? Where are your parents?”

“They’re dead,” said Harry shortly. He didn’t feel much like going into the matter with this boy.

“Oh, sorry,” said the other, not sounding sorry at all. “But they were *our* kind, weren’t they?”

“They were a witch and wizard, if that’s what you mean.”

“I really don’t think they should let the other sort in, do you? They’re just not the same, they’ve never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families. What’s your surname, anyway?”

But before Harry could answer, Madam Malkin said, “That’s you done, my dear,” and Harry, not sorry for an excuse to stop talking to the boy, hopped down from the footstool.

“Well, I’ll see you at Hogwarts, I suppose,” said the drawling boy.

Harry was rather quiet as he ate the ice cream Hagrid had bought him (chocolate and raspberry with chopped nuts).

“What’s up?” said Hagrid.

“Nothing,” Harry lied. They stopped to buy parchment and quills. Harry cheered up a bit when he found a bottle of ink that changed color as you wrote. When they had left the shop, he said, “Hagrid, what’s Quidditch?”

“Blimey, Harry, I keep forgettin’ how little yeh know—not knowin’ about Quidditch!”

“Don’t make me feel worse,” said Harry. He told Hagrid about the pale boy in Madam Malkin’s.

“—and he said people from Muggle families shouldn’t even be allowed in—”

“Yer not *from* a Muggle family. If he’d known who yeh *were*—he’s grown up knowin’ yer name if his parents are wizardin’ folk. You saw what everyone in the Leaky Cauldron was like when they saw yeh. Anyway, what does he know about it, some o’ the best I ever saw were the only ones with magic in ’em in a long line o’ Muggles—look at yer mum! Look what she had fer a sister!”

“So what *is* Quidditch?”

“It’s our sport. Wizard sport. It’s like—like soccer in the Muggle world—everyone follows Quidditch—played up in the

air on broomsticks and there's four balls—sorta hard ter explain the rules.”

“And what are Slytherin and Hufflepuff?”

“School Houses. There's four. Everyone says Hufflepuff are a lot o' duffers, but—”

“I bet I'm in Hufflepuff,” said Harry gloomily.

“Better Hufflepuff than Slytherin,” said Hagrid darkly. “There's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin. You-Know-Who was one.”

“Vol-, sorry—You-Know-Who was at Hogwarts?”

“Years an' years ago,” said Hagrid.

They bought Harry's school books in a shop called Flourish and Blotts where the shelves were stacked to the ceiling with books as large as paving stones bound in leather; books the size of postage stamps in covers of silk; books full of peculiar symbols and a few books with nothing in them at all. Even Dudley, who never read anything, would have been wild to get his hands on some of these. Hagrid almost had to drag Harry away from *Curses and Counter-curses (Bewitch Your Friends and Befuddle Your Enemies with the Latest Revenges: Hair Loss, Jelly-Legs, Tongue-Tying and Much, Much More)* by Professor Vindictus Viridian.

“I was trying to find out how to curse Dudley.”

“I’m not sayin’ that’s not a good idea, but yer not ter use magic in the Muggle world except in very special circumstances,” said Hagrid. “An’ anyway, yeh couldn’ work any of them curses yet, yeh’ll need a lot more study before yeh get ter that level.”

Hagrid wouldn’t let Harry buy a solid gold cauldron, either (“It says pewter on yer list”), but they got a nice set of scales for weighing potion ingredients and a collapsible brass telescope. Then they visited the Apothecary, which was fascinating enough to make up for its horrible smell, a mixture of bad eggs and rotted cabbages. Barrels of slimy stuff stood on the floor; jars of herbs, dried roots, and bright powders lined the walls; bundles of feathers, strings of fangs, and snarled claws hung from the ceiling. While Hagrid asked the man behind the counter for a supply of some basic potion ingredients for Harry, Harry himself examined silver unicorn horns at twenty-one Galleons each and minuscule, glittery-black beetle eyes (five Knuts a scoop).

Outside the Apothecary, Hagrid checked Harry’s list again.

“Just yer wand left—oh yeah, an’ I still haven’t got yeh a birthday present.”

Harry felt himself go red.

“You don’t have to—”



“I know I don’t have to. Tell yeh what, I’ll get yer animal. Not a toad, toads went outta fashion years ago, yeh’d be laughed at—an’ I don’ like cats, they make me sneeze. I’ll get yer an owl. All the kids want owls, they’re dead useful, carry yer mail an’ everythin’.”

Twenty minutes later, they left Eeylops Owl Emporium, which had been dark and full of rustling and flickering, jewel-bright eyes. Harry now carried a large cage that held a beautiful snowy owl, fast asleep with her head under her wing. He couldn’t stop stammering his thanks, sounding just like Professor Quirrell.

“Don’ mention it,” said Hagrid gruffly. “Don’ expect you’ve had a lotta presents from them Dursleys. Just Ollivanders left now—only place fer wands, Ollivanders, and yeh gotta have the best wand.”

A magic wand...this was what Harry had been really looking forward to.

The last shop was narrow and shabby. Peeling gold letters over the door read *Ollivanders: Makers of Fine Wands since 382 B.C.* A single wand lay on a faded purple cushion in the dusty window.

A tinkling bell rang somewhere in the depths of the shop as they stepped inside. It was a tiny place, empty except for a

single, spindly chair that Hagrid sat on to wait. Harry felt strangely as though he had entered a very strict library; he swallowed a lot of new questions that had just occurred to him and looked instead at the thousands of narrow boxes piled neatly right up to the ceiling. For some reason, the back of his neck prickled. The very dust and silence in here seemed to tingle with some secret magic.

“Good afternoon,” said a soft voice. Harry jumped. Hagrid must have jumped, too, because there was a loud crunching noise and he got quickly off the spindly chair.

An old man was standing before them, his wide, pale eyes shining like moons through the gloom of the shop.

“Hello,” said Harry awkwardly.

“Ah yes,” said the man. “Yes, yes. I thought I’d be seeing you soon. Harry Potter.” It wasn’t a question. “You have your mother’s eyes. It seems only yesterday she was in here herself, buying her first wand. Ten and a quarter inches long, swishy, made of willow. Nice wand for charm work.”

Mr. Ollivander moved closer to Harry. Harry wished he would blink. Those silvery eyes were a bit creepy.

“Your father, on the other hand, favored a mahogany wand. Eleven inches. Pliable. A little more power and excellent for

transfiguration. Well, I say your father favored it—it's really the wand that chooses the wizard, of course."

Mr. Ollivander had come so close that he and Harry were almost nose to nose. Harry could see himself reflected in those misty eyes.

"And that's where..."

Mr. Ollivander touched the lightning scar on Harry's forehead with a long, white finger.

"I'm sorry to say I sold the wand that did it," he said softly. "Thirteen-and-a-half inches. Yew. Powerful wand, very powerful, and in the wrong hands...well, if I'd known what that wand was going out into the world to do...."

He shook his head and then, to Harry's relief, spotted Hagrid.

"Rubeus! Rubeus Hagrid! How nice to see you again....Oak, sixteen inches, rather bendy, wasn't it?"

"It was, sir, yes," said Hagrid.

"Good wand, that one. But I suppose they snapped it in half when you got expelled?" said Mr. Ollivander, suddenly stern.

"Er—yes, they did, yes," said Hagrid, shuffling his feet. "I've still got the pieces, though," he added brightly.

"But you don't *use* them?" said Mr. Ollivander sharply.

“Oh, no, sir,” said Hagrid quickly. Harry noticed he gripped his pink umbrella very tightly as he spoke.

“Hmmm,” said Mr. Ollivander, giving Hagrid a piercing look. “Well, now—Mr. Potter. Let me see.” He pulled a long tape measure with silver markings out of his pocket. “Which is your wand arm?”

“Er—well, I’m right-handed,” said Harry.

“Hold out your arm. That’s it.” He measured Harry from shoulder to finger, then wrist to elbow, shoulder to floor, knee to armpit and round his head. As he measured, he said, “Every Ollivander wand has a core of a powerful magical substance, Mr. Potter. We use unicorn hairs, phoenix tail feathers, and the heartstrings of dragons. No two Ollivander wands are the same, just as no two unicorns, dragons, or phoenixes are quite the same. And of course, you will never get such good results with another wizard’s wand.”

Harry suddenly realized that the tape measure, which was measuring between his nostrils, was doing this on its own. Mr. Ollivander was flitting around the shelves, taking down boxes.

“That will do,” he said, and the tape measure crumpled into a heap on the floor. “Right then, Mr. Potter. Try this one.

Beechwood and dragon heartstring. Nine inches. Nice and flexible. Just take it and give it a wave.”

Harry took the wand and (feeling foolish) waved it around a bit, but Mr. Ollivander snatched it out of his hand almost at once.

“Maple and phoenix feather. Seven inches. Quite whippy. Try—”

Harry tried—but he had hardly raised the wand when it, too, was snatched back by Mr. Ollivander.

“No, no—here, ebony and unicorn hair, eight and a half inches, springy. Go on, go on, try it out.”

Harry tried. And tried. He had no idea what Mr. Ollivander was waiting for. The pile of tried wands was mounting higher and higher on the spindly chair, but the more wands Mr. Ollivander pulled from the shelves, the happier he seemed to become.

“Tricky customer, eh? Not to worry, we’ll find the perfect match here somewhere—I wonder, now—yes, why not—unusual combination—holly and phoenix feather, eleven inches, nice and supple.”

Harry took the wand. He felt a sudden warmth in his fingers. He raised the wand above his head, brought it swishing down through the dusty air and a stream of red and

gold sparks shot from the end like a firework, throwing dancing spots of light on to the walls. Hagrid whooped and clapped and Mr. Ollivander cried, "Oh, bravo! Yes, indeed, oh, very good. Well, well, well...how curious...how very curious..."

He put Harry's wand back into its box and wrapped it in brown paper, still muttering, "Curious...curious..."

"Sorry," said Harry, "but *what's* curious?"

Mr. Ollivander fixed Harry with his pale stare.

"I remember every wand I've ever sold, Mr. Potter. Every single wand. It so happens that the phoenix whose tail feather is in your wand, gave another feather—just one other. It is very curious indeed that you should be destined for this wand when its brother—why, its brother gave you that scar."

Harry swallowed.

"Yes, thirteen-and-a-half inches. Yew. Curious indeed how these things happen. The wand chooses the wizard, remember....I think we must expect great things from you, Mr. Potter....After all, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named did great things—terrible, yes, but great."

Harry shivered. He wasn't sure he liked Mr. Ollivander too much. He paid seven gold Galleons for his wand, and Mr. Ollivander bowed them from his shop.

The late afternoon sun hung low in the sky as Harry and Hagrid made their way back down Diagon Alley, back through the wall, back through the Leaky Cauldron, now empty. Harry didn't speak at all as they walked down the road; he didn't even notice how much people were gawking at them on the Underground, laden as they were with all their funny-shaped packages, with the snowy owl asleep in its cage on Harry's lap. Up another escalator, out into Paddington station; Harry only realized where they were when Hagrid tapped him on the shoulder.

"Got time fer a bite to eat before yer train leaves," he said.

He bought Harry a hamburger and they sat down on plastic seats to eat them. Harry kept looking around. Everything looked so strange, somehow.

"You all right, Harry? Yer very quiet," said Hagrid.

Harry wasn't sure he could explain. He'd just had the best birthday of his life—and yet—he chewed his hamburger, trying to find the words.

"Everyone thinks I'm special," he said at last. "All those people in the Leaky Cauldron, Professor Quirrell, Mr. Ollivander...but I don't know anything about magic at all. How can they expect great things? I'm famous and I can't even

remember what I'm famous for. I don't know what happened when Vol-, sorry—I mean, the night my parents died.”

Hagrid leaned across the table. Behind the wild beard and eyebrows he wore a very kind smile.

“Don’ you worry, Harry. You’ll learn fast enough. Everyone starts at the beginning at Hogwarts, you’ll be just fine. Just be yerself. I know it’s hard. Yeh’ve been singled out, an’ that’s always hard. But yeh’ll have a great time at Hogwarts—I did—still do, ’smatter of fact.”

Hagrid helped Harry on to the train that would take him back to the Dursleys, then handed him an envelope.

“Yer ticket fer Hogwarts,” he said. “First o’ September—King’s Cross—it’s all on yer ticket. Any problems with the Dursleys, send me a letter with yer owl, she’ll know where to find me....See yeh soon, Harry.”

The train pulled out of the station. Harry wanted to watch Hagrid until he was out of sight; he rose in his seat and pressed his nose against the window, but he blinked and Hagrid had gone.





**H**arry's last month with the Dursleys wasn't fun. True, Dudley was now so scared of Harry he wouldn't stay in the same room, while Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon didn't shut Harry in his cupboard, force him to do anything, or shout at him—in fact, they didn't speak to him at all. Half terrified, half furious, they acted as though any chair with Harry in it were empty. Although this was an improvement in many ways, it did become a bit depressing after a while.

Harry kept to his room, with his new owl for company. He had decided to call her Hedwig, a name he had found in *A History of Magic*. His school books were very interesting. He

lay on his bed reading late into the night, Hedwig swooping in and out of the open window as she pleased. It was lucky that Aunt Petunia didn't come in to vacuum anymore, because Hedwig kept bringing back dead mice. Every night before he went to sleep, Harry ticked off another day on the piece of paper he had pinned to the wall, counting down to September the first.

On the last day of August he thought he'd better speak to his aunt and uncle about getting to King's Cross station the next day, so he went down to the living room where they were watching a quiz show on television. He cleared his throat to let them know he was there, and Dudley screamed and ran from the room.

"Er—Uncle Vernon?"

Uncle Vernon grunted to show he was listening.

"Er—I need to be at King's Cross tomorrow to—to go to Hogwarts."

Uncle Vernon grunted again.

"Would it be all right if you gave me a lift?"

Grunt. Harry supposed that meant yes.

"Thank you."

He was about to go back upstairs when Uncle Vernon actually spoke.

“Funny way to get to a wizards’ school, the train. Magic carpets all got punctures, have they?”

Harry didn’t say anything.

“Where is this school, anyway?”

“I don’t know,” said Harry, realizing this for the first time. He pulled the ticket Hagrid had given him out of his pocket.

“I just take the train from platform nine and three-quarters at eleven o’clock,” he read.

His aunt and uncle stared.

“Platform what?”

“Nine and three-quarters.”

“Don’t talk rubbish,” said Uncle Vernon. “There is no platform nine and three-quarters.”

“It’s on my ticket.”

“Barking,” said Uncle Vernon, “howling mad, the lot of them. You’ll see. You just wait. All right, we’ll take you to King’s Cross. We’re going up to London tomorrow anyway, or I wouldn’t bother.”

“Why are you going to London?” Harry asked, trying to keep things friendly.

“Taking Dudley to the hospital,” growled Uncle Vernon. “Got to have that ruddy tail removed before he goes to Smeltings.”

Harry woke at five o'clock the next morning and was too excited and nervous to go back to sleep. He got up and pulled on his jeans because he didn't want to walk into the station in his wizard's robes—he'd change on the train. He checked his Hogwarts list yet again to make sure he had everything he needed, saw that Hedwig was shut safely in her cage, and then paced the room, waiting for the Dursleys to get up. Two hours later, Harry's huge, heavy trunk had been loaded into the Dursleys' car, Aunt Petunia had talked Dudley into sitting next to Harry, and they had set off.

They reached King's Cross at half past ten. Uncle Vernon dumped Harry's trunk onto a cart and wheeled it into the station for him. Harry thought this was strangely kind until Uncle Vernon stopped dead, facing the platforms with a nasty grin on his face.

"Well, there you are, boy. Platform nine—platform ten. Your platform should be somewhere in the middle, but they don't seem to have built it yet, do they?"

He was quite right, of course. There was a big plastic number nine over one platform and a big plastic number ten over the one next to it, and in the middle, nothing at all.

"Have a good term," said Uncle Vernon with an even nastier smile. He left without another word. Harry turned and saw

the Dursleys drive away. All three of them were laughing. Harry's mouth went rather dry. What on earth was he going to do? He was starting to attract a lot of funny looks, because of Hedwig. He'd have to ask someone.

He stopped a passing guard, but didn't dare mention platform nine and three-quarters. The guard had never heard of Hogwarts and when Harry couldn't even tell him what part of the country it was in, he started to get annoyed, as though Harry was being stupid on purpose. Getting desperate, Harry asked for the train that left at eleven o'clock, but the guard said there wasn't one. In the end the guard strode away, muttering about time wasters. Harry was now trying hard not to panic. According to the large clock over the arrivals board, he had ten minutes left to get on the train to Hogwarts and he had no idea how to do it; he was stranded in the middle of a station with a trunk he could hardly lift, a pocket full of wizard money, and a large owl.

Hagrid must have forgotten to tell him something you had to do, like tapping the third brick on the left to get into Diagon Alley. He wondered if he should get out his wand and start tapping the ticket inspector's stand between platforms nine and ten.

At that moment a group of people passed just behind him and he caught a few words of what they were saying.

“—packed with Muggles, of course—”

Harry swung round. The speaker was a plump woman who was talking to four boys, all with flaming red hair. Each of them was pushing a trunk like Harry’s in front of him—and they had an *owl*.

Heart hammering, Harry pushed his cart after them. They stopped and so did he, just near enough to hear what they were saying.

“Now, what’s the platform number?” said the boys’ mother.

“Nine and three-quarters!” piped a small girl, also red-headed, who was holding her hand. “Mum, can’t I go...”

“You’re not old enough, Ginny, now be quiet. All right, Percy, you go first.”

What looked like the oldest boy marched toward platforms nine and ten. Harry watched, careful not to blink in case he missed it—but just as the boy reached the dividing barrier between the two platforms, a large crowd of tourists came swarming in front of him and by the time the last backpack had cleared away, the boy had vanished.

“Fred, you next,” the plump woman said.

“I’m not Fred, I’m George,” said the boy. “Honestly, woman, you call yourself our mother? Can’t you *tell* I’m George?”

“Sorry, George, dear.”

“Only joking, I am Fred,” said the boy, and off he went. His twin called after him to hurry up, and he must have done so, because a second later, he had gone—but how had he done it?

Now the third brother was walking briskly toward the barrier—he was almost there—and then, quite suddenly, he wasn’t anywhere.

There was nothing else for it.

“Excuse me,” Harry said to the plump woman.

“Hello, dear,” she said. “First time at Hogwarts? Ron’s new, too.”

She pointed at the last and youngest of her sons. He was tall, thin, and gangling, with freckles, big hands and feet, and a long nose.

“Yes,” said Harry. “The thing is—the thing is, I don’t know how to—”

“How to get onto the platform?” she said kindly, and Harry nodded.

“Not to worry,” she said. “All you have to do is walk straight at the barrier between platforms nine and ten. Don’t stop and don’t be scared you’ll crash into it, that’s very important. Best

do it at a bit of a run if you're nervous. Go on, go now before Ron."

"Er—okay," said Harry.

He pushed his trolley around and stared at the barrier. It looked very solid.

He started to walk toward it. People jostled him on their way to platforms nine and ten. Harry walked more quickly. He was going to smash right into that barrier and then he'd be in trouble—leaning forward on his cart, he broke into a heavy run—the barrier was coming nearer and nearer—he wouldn't be able to stop—the cart was out of control—he was a foot away—he closed his eyes ready for the crash—

It didn't come...he kept on running...he opened his eyes.

A scarlet steam engine was waiting next to a platform packed with people. A sign overhead said Hogwarts Express, eleven o'clock. Harry looked behind him and saw a wrought-iron archway where the barrier had been, with the words *Platform Nine and Three-Quarters* on it. He had done it.

Smoke from the engine drifted over the heads of the chattering crowd, while cats of every color wound here and there between their legs. Owls hooted to one another in a disgruntled sort of way over the babble and the scraping of heavy trunks.



The first few carriages were already packed with students, some hanging out of the window to talk to their families, some fighting over seats. Harry pushed his cart off down the platform in search of an empty seat. He passed a round-faced boy who was saying, "Gran, I've lost my toad again."

"Oh, *Neville*," he heard the old woman sigh.

A boy with dreadlocks was surrounded by a small crowd.

"Give us a look, Lee, go on."

The boy lifted the lid of a box in his arms, and the people around him shrieked and yelled as something inside poked out a long, hairy leg.

Harry pressed on through the crowd until he found an empty compartment near the end of the train. He put Hedwig inside first and then started to shove and heave his trunk toward the train door. He tried to lift it up the steps but could hardly raise one end and twice he dropped it painfully on his foot.

"Want a hand?" It was one of the red-haired twins he'd followed through the barrier.

"Yes, please," Harry panted.

"Oy, Fred! C'mere and help!"

With the twins' help, Harry's trunk was at last tucked away in a corner of the compartment.

“Thanks,” said Harry, pushing his sweaty hair out of his eyes.

“What’s that?” said one of the twins suddenly, pointing at Harry’s lightning scar.

“Blimey,” said the other twin. “Are you—?”

“He *is*,” said the first twin. “Aren’t you?” he added to Harry.

“What?” said Harry.

“*Harry Potter*,” chorused the twins.

“Oh, him,” said Harry. “I mean, yes, I am.”

The two boys gawked at him, and Harry felt himself turning red. Then, to his relief, a voice came floating in through the train’s open door.

“Fred? George? Are you there?”

“Coming, Mum.”

With a last look at Harry, the twins hopped off the train.

Harry sat down next to the window where, half hidden, he could watch the red-haired family on the platform and hear what they were saying. Their mother had just taken out her handkerchief.

“Ron, you’ve got something on your nose.”

The youngest boy tried to jerk out of the way, but she grabbed him and began rubbing the end of his nose.

“*Mum—geroff.*” He wriggled free.

“Aaah, has ickle Ronnie got somefink on his nosie?” said one of the twins.

“Shut up,” said Ron.

“Where’s Percy?” said their mother.

“He’s coming now.”

The oldest boy came striding into sight. He had already changed into his billowing black Hogwarts robes, and Harry noticed a shiny red-and-gold badge on his chest with the letter P on it.

“Can’t stay long, Mother,” he said. “I’m up front, the prefects have got two compartments to themselves—”

“Oh, are you a *prefect*, Percy?” said one of the twins, with an air of great surprise. “You should have said something, we had no idea.”

“Hang on, I think I remember him saying something about it,” said the other twin. “Once—”

“Or twice—”

“A minute—”

“All summer—”

“Oh, shut up,” said Percy the Prefect.

“How come Percy gets new robes, anyway?” said one of the twins.

“Because he’s a *prefect*,” said their mother fondly. “All right, dear, well, have a good term—send me an owl when you get there.”

She kissed Percy on the cheek and he left. Then she turned to the twins.

“Now, you two—this year, you behave yourselves. If I get one more owl telling me you’ve—you’ve blown up a toilet or —”

“Blown up a toilet? We’ve never blown up a toilet.”

“Great idea though, thanks, Mum.”

“It’s *not funny*. And look after Ron.”

“Don’t worry, ickle Ronniekins is safe with us.”

“Shut up,” said Ron again. He was almost as tall as the twins already and his nose was still pink where his mother had rubbed it.

“Hey, Mum, guess what? Guess who we just met on the train?”

Harry leaned back quickly so they couldn’t see him looking.

“You know that black-haired boy who was near us in the station? Know who he is?”

“Who?”

“*Harry Potter!*”

Harry heard the little girl’s voice.

“Oh, Mum, can I go on the train and see him, Mum, oh please....”

“You’ve already seen him, Ginny, and the poor boy isn’t something you goggle at in a zoo. Is he really, Fred? How do you know?”

“Asked him. Saw his scar. It’s really there—like lightning.”

“Poor *dear*—no wonder he was alone, I wondered. He was ever so polite when he asked how to get onto the platform.”

“Never mind that, do you think he remembers what You-Know-Who looks like?”

Their mother suddenly became very stern.

“I forbid you to ask him, Fred. No, don’t you dare. As though he needs reminding of that on his first day at school.”

“All right, keep your hair on.”

A whistle sounded.

“Hurry up!” their mother said, and the three boys clambered onto the train. They leaned out of the window for her to kiss them good-bye, and their younger sister began to cry.

“Don’t, Ginny, we’ll send you loads of owls.”

“We’ll send you a Hogwarts toilet seat.”

“George!”

“Only joking, Mum.”

The train began to move. Harry saw the boys' mother waving and their sister, half laughing, half crying, running to keep up with the train until it gathered too much speed, then she fell back and waved.

Harry watched the girl and her mother disappear as the train rounded the corner. Houses flashed past the window. Harry felt a great leap of excitement. He didn't know what he was going to—but it had to be better than what he was leaving behind.

The door of the compartment slid open and the youngest redheaded boy came in.

"Anyone sitting there?" he asked, pointing at the seat opposite Harry. "Everywhere else is full."

Harry shook his head and the boy sat down. He glanced at Harry and then looked quickly out of the window, pretending he hadn't looked. Harry saw he still had a black mark on his nose.

"Hey, Ron."

The twins were back.

"Listen, we're going down the middle of the train—Lee Jordan's got a giant tarantula down there."

"Right," mumbled Ron.

“Harry,” said the other twin, “did we introduce ourselves? Fred and George Weasley. And this is Ron, our brother. See you later, then.”

“Bye,” said Harry and Ron. The twins slid the compartment door shut behind them.

“Are you really Harry Potter?” Ron blurted out.

Harry nodded.

“Oh—well, I thought it might be one of Fred and George’s jokes,” said Ron. “And have you really got—you know...”

He pointed at Harry’s forehead.

Harry pulled back his bangs to show the lightning scar. Ron stared.

“So that’s where You-Know-Who—?”

“Yes,” said Harry, “but I can’t remember it.”

“Nothing?” said Ron eagerly.

“Well—I remember a lot of green light, but nothing else.”

“Wow,” said Ron. He sat and stared at Harry for a few moments, then, as though he had suddenly realized what he was doing, he looked quickly out of the window again.

“Are all your family wizards?” asked Harry, who found Ron just as interesting as Ron found him.

“Er—yes, I think so,” said Ron. “I think Mum’s got a second cousin who’s an accountant, but we never talk about him.”

“So you must know loads of magic already.”

The Weasleys were clearly one of those old wizarding families the pale boy in Diagon Alley had talked about.

“I heard you went to live with Muggles,” said Ron. “What are they like?”

“Horrible—well, not all of them. My aunt and uncle and cousin are, though. Wish I’d had three wizard brothers.”

“Five,” said Ron. For some reason, he was looking gloomy. “I’m the sixth in our family to go to Hogwarts. You could say I’ve got a lot to live up to. Bill and Charlie have already left—Bill was head boy and Charlie was captain of Quidditch. Now Percy’s a prefect. Fred and George mess around a lot, but they still get really good marks and everyone thinks they’re really funny. Everyone expects me to do as well as the others, but if I do, it’s no big deal, because they did it first. You never get anything new, either, with five brothers. I’ve got Bill’s old robes, Charlie’s old wand, and Percy’s old rat.”

Ron reached inside his jacket and pulled out a fat gray rat, which was asleep.

“His name’s Scabbers and he’s useless, he hardly ever wakes up. Percy got an owl from my dad for being made a prefect, but they couldn’t aff—I mean, I got Scabbers instead.”



Ron's ears went pink. He seemed to think he'd said too much, because he went back to staring out of the window.

Harry didn't think there was anything wrong with not being able to afford an owl. After all, he'd never had any money in his life until a month ago, and he told Ron so, all about having to wear Dudley's old clothes and never getting proper birthday presents. This seemed to cheer Ron up.

"...and until Hagrid told me, I didn't know anything about being a wizard or about my parents or Voldemort—"

Ron gasped.

"What?" said Harry.

"*You said You-Know-Who's name!*" said Ron, sounding both shocked and impressed. "I'd have thought you, of all people—"

"I'm not trying to be *brave* or anything, saying the name," said Harry, "I just never knew you shouldn't. See what I mean? I've got loads to learn....I bet," he added, voicing for the first time something that had been worrying him a lot lately, "I bet I'm the worst in the class."

"You won't be. There's loads of people who come from Muggle families and they learn quick enough."

While they had been talking, the train had carried them out of London. Now they were speeding past fields full of cows and

sheep. They were quiet for a time, watching the fields and lanes flick past.

Around half past twelve there was a great clattering outside in the corridor and a smiling, dimpled woman slid back their door and said, “Anything off the cart, dears?”

Harry, who hadn’t had any breakfast, leapt to his feet, but Ron’s ears went pink again and he muttered that he’d brought sandwiches. Harry went out into the corridor.

He had never had any money for candy with the Dursleys, and now that he had pockets rattling with gold and silver he was ready to buy as many Mars Bars as he could carry—but the woman didn’t have Mars Bars. What she did have were Bertie Bott’s Every Flavor Beans, Drooble’s Best Blowing Gum, Chocolate Frogs, Pumpkin Pasties, Cauldron Cakes, Licorice Wands, and a number of other strange things Harry had never seen in his life. Not wanting to miss anything, he got some of everything and paid the woman eleven silver Sickles and seven bronze Knuts.

Ron stared as Harry brought it all back in to the compartment and tipped it onto an empty seat.

“Hungry, are you?”

“Starving,” said Harry, taking a large bite out of a pumpkin pasty.

Ron had taken out a lumpy package and unwrapped it. There were four sandwiches inside. He pulled one of them apart and said, "She always forgets I don't like corned beef."

"Swap you for one of these," said Harry, holding up a pasty. "Go on—"

"You don't want this, it's all dry," said Ron. "She hasn't got much time," he added quickly, "you know, with five of us."

"Go on, have a pasty," said Harry, who had never had anything to share before or, indeed, anyone to share it with. It was a nice feeling, sitting there with Ron, eating their way through all Harry's pasties, cakes, and candies (the sandwiches lay forgotten).

"What are these?" Harry asked Ron, holding up a pack of Chocolate Frogs. "They're not *really* frogs, are they?" He was starting to feel that nothing would surprise him.

"No," said Ron. "But see what the card is. I'm missing Agrippa."

"What?"

"Oh, of course, you wouldn't know—Chocolate Frogs have cards inside them, you know, to collect—famous witches and wizards. I've got about five hundred, but I haven't got Agrippa or Ptolemy."

Harry unwrapped his Chocolate Frog and picked up the card. It showed a man's face. He wore half-moon glasses, had a long, crooked nose, and flowing silver hair, beard, and mustache. Underneath the picture was the name Albus Dumbledore.

"So *this* is Dumbledore!" said Harry.

"Don't tell me you'd never heard of Dumbledore!" said Ron.

"Can I have a frog? I might get Agrippa—thanks—"

Harry turned over his card and read:

## ALBUS DUMBLEDORE

CURRENTLY HEADMASTER OF HOGWARTS

Considered by many the greatest wizard of modern times, Dumbledore is particularly famous for his defeat of the Dark wizard Grindelwald in 1945, for the discovery of the twelve uses of dragon's blood, and his work on alchemy with his partner, Nicolas Flamel. Professor Dumbledore enjoys chamber music and tenpin bowling.

Harry turned the card back over and saw, to his astonishment, that Dumbledore's face had disappeared.

"He's gone!"

"Well, you can't expect him to hang around all day," said Ron. "He'll be back. No, I've got Morgana again and I've got

about six of her...do you want it? You can start collecting.”

Ron’s eyes strayed to the pile of Chocolate Frogs waiting to be unwrapped.

“Help yourself,” said Harry. “But in, you know, the Muggle world, people just stay put in photos.”

“Do they? What, they don’t move at all?” Ron sounded amazed. “*Weird!*”

Harry stared as Dumbledore sidled back into the picture on his card and gave him a small smile. Ron was more interested in eating the frogs than looking at the Famous Witches and Wizards cards, but Harry couldn’t keep his eyes off them. Soon he had not only Dumbledore and Morgana, but Hengist of Woodcroft, Alberic Grunnion, Circe, Paracelsus, and Merlin. He finally tore his eyes away from the druidess Cliodna, who was scratching her nose, to open a bag of Bertie Bott’s Every Flavor Beans.

“You want to be careful with those,” Ron warned Harry. “When they say every flavor, they *mean* every flavor—you know, you get all the ordinary ones like chocolate and peppermint and marmalade, but then you can get spinach and liver and tripe. George reckons he had a booger-flavored one once.”

Ron picked up a green bean, looked at it carefully, and bit into a corner.

“Bleaaargh—see? Sprouts.”

They had a good time eating the Every Flavor Beans. Harry got toast, coconut, baked bean, strawberry, curry, grass, coffee, sardine, and was even brave enough to nibble the end off a funny gray one Ron wouldn’t touch, which turned out to be pepper.

The countryside now flying past the window was becoming wilder. The neat fields had gone. Now there were woods, twisting rivers, and dark green hills.

There was a knock on the door of their compartment and the round-faced boy Harry had passed on platform nine and three-quarters came in. He looked tearful.

“Sorry,” he said, “but have you seen a toad at all?”

When they shook their heads, he wailed, “I’ve lost him! He keeps getting away from me!”

“He’ll turn up,” said Harry.

“Yes,” said the boy miserably. “Well, if you see him...”

He left.

“Don’t know why he’s so bothered,” said Ron. “If I’d brought a toad I’d lose it as quick as I could. Mind you, I brought Scabbers, so I can’t talk.”

The rat was still snoozing on Ron's lap.

"He might have died and you wouldn't know the difference," said Ron in disgust. "I tried to turn him yellow yesterday to make him more interesting, but the spell didn't work. I'll show you, look..."

He rummaged around in his trunk and pulled out a very battered-looking wand. It was chipped in places and something white was glinting at the end.

"Unicorn hair's nearly poking out. Anyway—"

He had just raised his wand when the compartment door slid open again. The toadless boy was back, but this time he had a girl with him. She was already wearing her new Hogwarts robes.

"Has anyone seen a toad? Neville's lost one," she said. She had a bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair, and rather large front teeth.

"We've already told him we haven't seen it," said Ron, but the girl wasn't listening, she was looking at the wand in his hand.

"Oh, are you doing magic? Let's see it, then."

She sat down. Ron looked taken aback.

"Er—all right."

He cleared his throat.

*“Sunshine, daisies, butter mellow,  
Turn this stupid, fat rat yellow.”*

He waved his wand, but nothing happened. Scabbers stayed gray and fast asleep.

“Are you sure that’s a real spell?” said the girl. “Well, it’s not very good, is it? I’ve tried a few simple spells just for practice and it’s all worked for me. Nobody in my family’s magic at all, it was ever such a surprise when I got my letter, but I was ever so pleased, of course, I mean, it’s the very best school of witchcraft there is, I’ve heard—I’ve learned all our course books by heart, of course, I just hope it will be enough—I’m Hermione Granger, by the way, who are you?”

She said all this very fast.

Harry looked at Ron, and was relieved to see by his stunned face that he hadn’t learned all the course books by heart either.

“I’m Ron Weasley,” Ron muttered.

“Harry Potter,” said Harry.

“Are you really?” said Hermione. “I know all about you, of course—I got a few extra books for background reading, and you’re in *Modern Magical History* and *The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts and Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century*.”



“Am I?” said Harry, feeling dazed.

“Goodness, didn’t you know, I’d have found out everything I could if it was me,” said Hermione. “Do either of you know what House you’ll be in? I’ve been asking around, and I hope I’m in Gryffindor, it sounds by far the best; I hear Dumbledore himself was in it, but I suppose Ravenclaw wouldn’t be too bad....Anyway, we’d better go and look for Neville’s toad. You two had better change, you know, I expect we’ll be there soon.”

And she left, taking the toadless boy with her.

“Whatever House I’m in, I hope she’s not in it,” said Ron. He threw his wand back into his trunk. “Stupid spell—George gave it to me, bet he knew it was a dud.”

“What House are your brothers in?” asked Harry.

“Gryffindor,” said Ron. Gloom seemed to be settling on him again. “Mum and Dad were in it, too. I don’t know what they’ll say if I’m not. I don’t suppose Ravenclaw *would* be too bad, but imagine if they put me in Slytherin.”

“That’s the House Vol-, I mean, You-Know-Who was in?”

“Yeah,” said Ron. He flopped back into his seat, looking depressed.

“You know, I think the ends of Scabbers’ whiskers are a bit lighter,” said Harry, trying to take Ron’s mind off Houses. “So

what do your oldest brothers do now that they've left, anyway?"

Harry was wondering what a wizard did once he'd finished school.

"Charlie's in Romania studying dragons, and Bill's in Africa doing something for Gringotts," said Ron. "Did you hear about Gringotts? It's been all over the *Daily Prophet*, but I don't suppose you get that with the Muggles—someone tried to rob a high security vault."

Harry stared.

"Really? What happened to them?"

"Nothing, that's why it's such big news. They haven't been caught. My dad says it must've been a powerful Dark wizard to get round Gringotts, but they don't think they took anything, that's what's odd. 'Course, everyone gets scared when something like this happens in case You-Know-Who's behind it."

Harry turned this news over in his mind. He was starting to get a prickle of fear every time You-Know-Who was mentioned. He supposed this was all part of entering the magical world, but it had been a lot more comfortable saying "Voldemort" without worrying.

"What's your Quidditch team?" Ron asked.

“Er—I don’t know any,” Harry confessed.

“What!” Ron looked dumbfounded. “Oh, you wait, it’s the best game in the world—” And he was off, explaining all about the four balls and the positions of the seven players, describing famous games he’d been to with his brothers and the broomstick he’d like to get if he had the money. He was just taking Harry through the finer points of the game when the compartment door slid open yet again, but it wasn’t Neville the toadless boy, or Hermione Granger this time.

Three boys entered, and Harry recognized the middle one at once: It was the pale boy from Madam Malkin’s robe shop. He was looking at Harry with a lot more interest than he’d shown back in Diagon Alley.

“Is it true?” he said. “They’re saying all down the train that Harry Potter’s in this compartment. So it’s you, is it?”

“Yes,” said Harry. He was looking at the other boys. Both of them were thickset and looked extremely mean. Standing on either side of the pale boy, they looked like bodyguards.

“Oh, this is Crabbe and this is Goyle,” said the pale boy carelessly, noticing where Harry was looking. “And my name’s Malfoy, Draco Malfoy.”

Ron gave a slight cough, which might have been hiding a snigger. Draco Malfoy looked at him.

“Think my name’s funny, do you? No need to ask who you are. My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles, and more children than they can afford.”

He turned back to Harry. “You’ll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don’t want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there.”

He held out his hand to shake Harry’s, but Harry didn’t take it.

“I think I can tell who the wrong sort are for myself, thanks,” he said coolly.

Draco Malfoy didn’t go red, but a pink tinge appeared in his pale cheeks.

“I’d be careful if I were you, Potter,” he said slowly. “Unless you’re a bit politer you’ll go the same way as your parents. They didn’t know what was good for them, either. You hang around with riffraff like the Weasleys and that Hagrid, and it’ll rub off on you.”

Both Harry and Ron stood up.

“Say that again,” Ron said, his face as red as his hair.

“Oh, you’re going to fight us, are you?” Malfoy sneered.

“Unless you get out now,” said Harry, more bravely than he felt, because Crabbe and Goyle were a lot bigger than him or

Ron.

“But we don’t feel like leaving, do we, boys? We’ve eaten all our food and you still seem to have some.”

Goyle reached toward the Chocolate Frogs next to Ron—Ron leapt forward, but before he’d so much as touched Goyle, Goyle let out a horrible yell.

Scabbers the rat was hanging off his finger, sharp little teeth sunk deep into Goyle’s knuckle—Crabbe and Malfoy backed away as Goyle swung Scabbers round and round, howling, and when Scabbers finally flew off and hit the window, all three of them disappeared at once. Perhaps they thought there were more rats lurking among the sweets, or perhaps they’d heard footsteps, because a second later, Hermione Granger had come in.

“What *has* been going on?” she said, looking at the sweets all over the floor and Ron picking up Scabbers by his tail.

“I think he’s been knocked out,” Ron said to Harry. He looked closer at Scabbers. “No—I don’t believe it—he’s gone back to sleep.”

And so he had.

“You’ve met Malfoy before?”

Harry explained about their meeting in Diagon Alley.

“I’ve heard of his family,” said Ron darkly. “They were some of the first to come back to our side after You-Know-Who disappeared. Said they’d been bewitched. My dad doesn’t believe it. He says Malfoy’s father didn’t need an excuse to go over to the Dark Side.” He turned to Hermione. “Can we help you with something?”

“You’d better hurry up and put your robes on, I’ve just been up to the front to ask the conductor, and he says we’re nearly there. You haven’t been fighting, have you? You’ll be in trouble before we even get there!”

“Scabbers has been fighting, not us,” said Ron, scowling at her. “Would you mind leaving while we change?”

“All right—I only came in here because people outside are behaving very childishly, racing up and down the corridors,” said Hermione in a sniffy voice. “And you’ve got dirt on your nose, by the way, did you know?”

Ron glared at her as she left. Harry peered out of the window. It was getting dark. He could see mountains and forests under a deep purple sky. The train did seem to be slowing down.

He and Ron took off their jackets and pulled on their long black robes. Ron’s were a bit short for him, you could see his sneakers underneath them.

A voice echoed through the train: "We will be reaching Hogwarts in five minutes' time. Please leave your luggage on the train, it will be taken to the school separately."

Harry's stomach lurched with nerves and Ron, he saw, looked pale under his freckles. They crammed their pockets with the last of the sweets and joined the crowd thronging the corridor.

The train slowed right down and finally stopped. People pushed their way toward the door and out on to a tiny, dark platform. Harry shivered in the cold night air. Then a lamp came bobbing over the heads of the students, and Harry heard a familiar voice: "Firs' years! Firs' years over here! All right there, Harry?"

Hagrid's big hairy face beamed over the sea of heads.

"C'mon, follow me—any more firs' years? Mind yer step, now! Firs' years follow me!"

Slipping and stumbling, they followed Hagrid down what seemed to be a steep, narrow path. It was so dark on either side of them that Harry thought there must be thick trees there. Nobody spoke much. Neville, the boy who kept losing his toad, sniffed once or twice.

"Yeh'll get yer firs' sight o' Hogwarts in a sec," Hagrid called over his shoulder, "jus' round this bend here."

There was a loud “Ooooooh!”

The narrow path had opened suddenly onto the edge of a great black lake. Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers.

“No more’n four to a boat!” Hagrid called, pointing to a fleet of little boats sitting in the water by the shore. Harry and Ron were followed into their boat by Neville and Hermione.

“Everyone in?” shouted Hagrid, who had a boat to himself. “Right then—FORWARD!”

And the fleet of little boats moved off all at once, gliding across the lake, which was as smooth as glass. Everyone was silent, staring up at the great castle overhead. It towered over them as they sailed nearer and nearer to the cliff on which it stood.

“Heads down!” yelled Hagrid as the first boats reached the cliff; they all bent their heads and the little boats carried them through a curtain of ivy that hid a wide opening in the cliff face. They were carried along a dark tunnel, which seemed to be taking them right underneath the castle, until they reached a kind of underground harbor, where they clambered out onto rocks and pebbles.



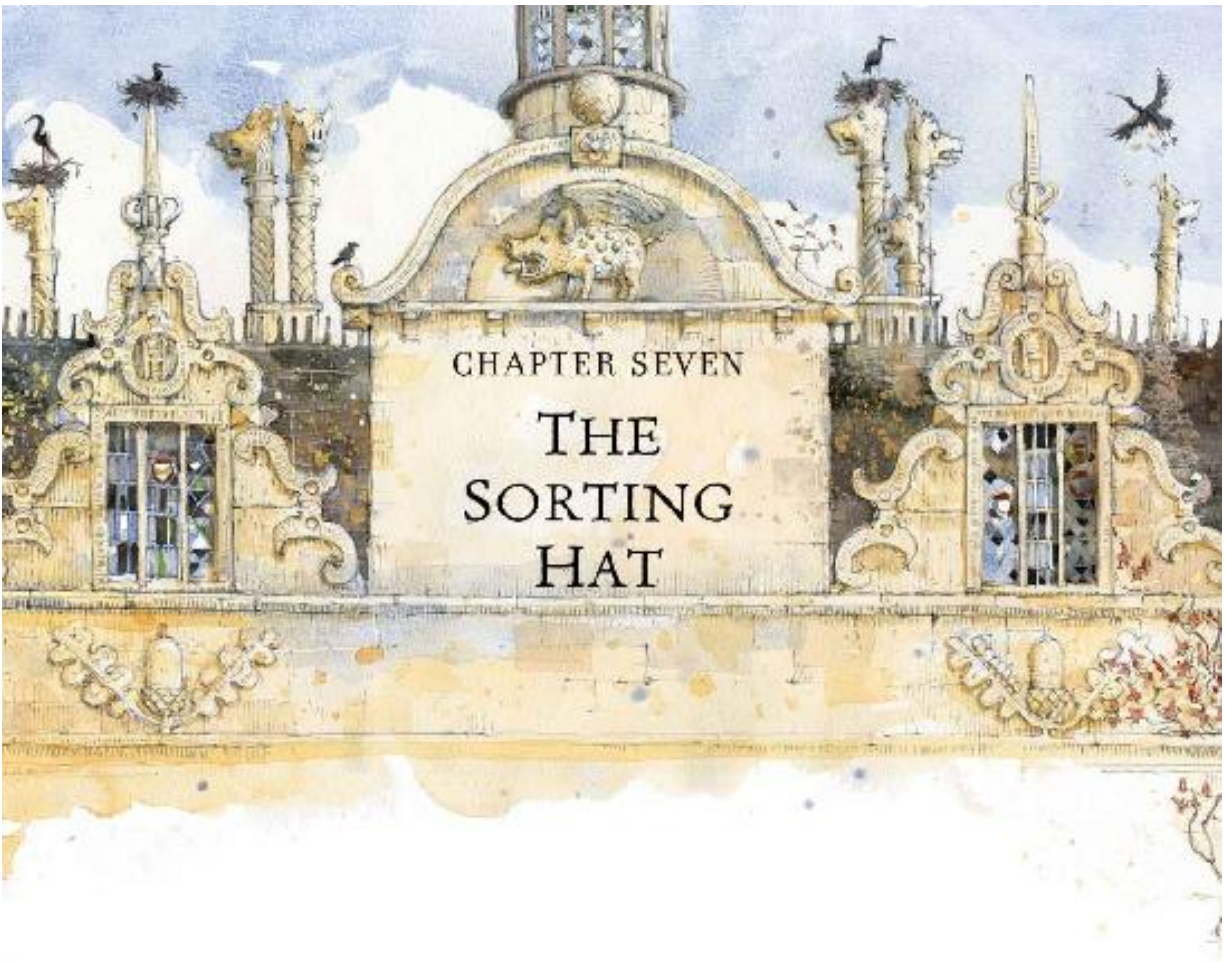
“Oy, you there! Is this your toad?” said Hagrid, who was checking the boats as people climbed out of them.

“Trevor!” cried Neville blissfully, holding out his hands. Then they clambered up a passageway in the rock after Hagrid’s lamp, coming out at last onto smooth, damp grass right in the shadow of the castle.

They walked up a flight of stone steps and crowded around the huge, oak front door.

“Everyone here? You there, still got yer toad?”

Hagrid raised a gigantic fist and knocked three times on the castle door.



**T**he door swung open at once. A tall, black-haired witch in emerald-green robes stood there. She had a very stern face and Harry's first thought was that this was not someone to cross.

"The first years, Professor McGonagall," said Hagrid.

"Thank you, Hagrid. I will take them from here."

She pulled the door wide. The entrance hall was so big you could have fit the whole of the Dursleys' house in it. The stone

walls were lit with flaming torches like the ones at Gringotts, the ceiling was too high to make out, and a magnificent marble staircase facing them led to the upper floors.

They followed Professor McGonagall across the flagged stone floor. Harry could hear the drone of hundreds of voices from a doorway to the right—the rest of the school must already be here—but Professor McGonagall showed the first years into a small, empty chamber off the hall. They crowded in, standing rather closer together than they would usually have done, peering about nervously.

“Welcome to Hogwarts,” said Professor McGonagall. “The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your Houses. The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your House will be something like your family within Hogwarts. You will have classes with the rest of your House, sleep in your House dormitory, and spend free time in your House common room.

“The four Houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Each House has its own noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards. While you are at Hogwarts, your triumphs will earn your House points, while any rule-breaking will lose House

points. At the end of the year, the House with the most points is awarded the House Cup, a great honor. I hope each of you will be a credit to whichever House becomes yours.

“The Sorting Ceremony will take place in a few minutes in front of the rest of the school. I suggest you all smarten yourselves up as much as you can while you are waiting.”

Her eyes lingered for a moment on Neville’s cloak, which was fastened under his left ear, and on Ron’s smudged nose. Harry nervously tried to flatten his hair.

“I shall return when we are ready for you,” said Professor McGonagall. “Please wait quietly.”

She left the chamber. Harry swallowed.

“How exactly do they sort us into Houses?” he asked Ron.

“Some sort of test, I think. Fred said it hurts a lot, but I think he was joking.”

Harry’s heart gave a horrible jolt. A test? In front of the whole school? But he didn’t know any magic yet—what on earth would he have to do? He hadn’t expected something like this the moment they arrived. He looked around anxiously and saw that everyone else looked terrified, too. No one was talking much except Hermione Granger, who was whispering very fast about all the spells she’d learned and wondering which one she’d need. Harry tried hard not to listen to her.

He'd never been more nervous, never, not even when he'd had to take a school report home to the Dursleys saying that he'd somehow turned his teacher's wig blue. He kept his eyes fixed on the door. Any second now, Professor McGonagall would come back and lead him to his doom.

Then something happened that made him jump about a foot in the air—several people behind him screamed.

“What the—?”

He gasped. So did the people around him. About twenty ghosts had just streamed through the back wall. Pearly-white and slightly transparent, they glided across the room talking to one another and hardly glancing at the first years. They seemed to be arguing. What looked like a fat little monk was saying: “Forgive and forget, I say, we ought to give him a second chance—”

“My dear Friar, haven't we given Peeves all the chances he deserves? He gives us all a bad name and you know, he's not really even a ghost—I say, what are you all doing here?”

A ghost wearing a ruff and tights had suddenly noticed the first years.

Nobody answered.

“New students!” said the Fat Friar, smiling around at them. “About to be Sorted, I suppose?”

A few people nodded mutely.

“Hope to see you in Hufflepuff!” said the Friar. “My old House, you know.”

“Move along now,” said a sharp voice. “The Sorting Ceremony’s about to start.”

Professor McGonagall had returned. One by one, the ghosts floated away through the opposite wall.

“Now, form a line,” Professor McGonagall told the first years, “and follow me.”

Feeling oddly as though his legs had turned to lead, Harry got into line behind a boy with sandy hair, with Ron behind him, and they walked out of the chamber, back across the hall, and through a pair of double doors into the Great Hall.

Harry had never even imagined such a strange and splendid place. It was lit by thousands and thousands of candles that were floating in midair over four long tables, where the rest of the students were sitting. These tables were laid with glittering golden plates and goblets. At the top of the hall was another long table where the teachers were sitting. Professor McGonagall led the first years up here, so that they came to a halt in a line facing the other students, with the teachers behind them. The hundreds of faces staring at them looked like pale lanterns in the flickering candlelight. Dotted

here and there among the students, the ghosts shone misty silver. Mainly to avoid all the staring eyes, Harry looked upward and saw a velvety black ceiling dotted with stars. He heard Hermione whisper, “It’s bewitched to look like the sky outside. I read about it in *Hogwarts: A History*.”

It was hard to believe there was a ceiling there at all, and that the Great Hall didn’t simply open on to the heavens.

Harry quickly looked down again as Professor McGonagall silently placed a four-legged stool in front of the first years. On top of the stool she put a pointed wizard’s hat. This hat was patched and frayed and extremely dirty. Aunt Petunia wouldn’t have let it in the house.

*Maybe they had to try and get a rabbit out of it*, Harry thought wildly, that seemed the sort of thing—noticing that everyone in the hall was now staring at the hat, he stared at it, too. For a few seconds, there was complete silence. Then the hat twitched. A rip near the brim opened wide like a mouth—and the hat began to sing:

*“Oh, you may not think I’m pretty,*

*But don’t judge on what you see,*

*I’ll eat myself if you can find*

*A smarter hat than me.*

*You can keep your bowlers black,  
Your top hats sleek and tall,  
For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat  
And I can cap them all.  
There's nothing hidden in your head  
The Sorting Hat can't see,  
So try me on and I will tell you  
Where you ought to be.  
You might belong in Gryffindor,  
Where dwell the brave at heart,  
Their daring, nerve, and chivalry  
Set Gryffindors apart;  
You might belong in Hufflepuff,  
Where they are just and loyal,  
Those patient Hufflepuffs are true  
And unafraid of toil;  
Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,  
If you've a ready mind,  
Where those of wit and learning,  
Will always find their kind;  
Or perhaps in Slytherin  
You'll make your real friends,  
Those cunning folk use any means*



*To achieve their ends.  
So put me on! Don't be afraid!  
And don't get in a flap!  
You're in safe hands (though I have none)  
For I'm a Thinking Cap!"*

The whole hall burst into applause as the hat finished its song. It bowed to each of the four tables and then became quite still again.

"So we've just got to try on the hat!" Ron whispered to Harry. "I'll kill Fred, he was going on about wrestling a troll."

Harry smiled weakly. Yes, trying on the hat was a lot better than having to do a spell, but he did wish they could have tried it on without everyone watching. The hat seemed to be asking rather a lot; Harry didn't feel brave or quick-witted or any of it at the moment. If only the hat had mentioned a House for people who felt a bit queasy, that would have been the one for him.

Professor McGonagall now stepped forward holding a long roll of parchment.

"When I call your name, you will put on the hat and sit on the stool to be sorted," she said. "Abbott, Hannah!"

A pink-faced girl with blonde pigtails stumbled out of line, put on the hat, which fell right down over her eyes, and sat down. A moment's pause—

“HUFFLEPUFF!” shouted the hat.

The table on the right cheered and clapped as Hannah went to sit down at the Hufflepuff table. Harry saw the ghost of the Fat Friar waving merrily at her.

“Bones, Susan!”

“HUFFLEPUFF!” shouted the hat again, and Susan scuttled off to sit next to Hannah.

“Boot, Terry!”

“RAVENCLAW!”

The table second from the left clapped this time; several Ravenclaws stood up to shake hands with Terry as he joined them.

“Brocklehurst, Mandy” went to Ravenclaw too, but “Brown, Lavender” became the first new Gryffindor, and the table on the far left exploded with cheers; Harry could see Ron's twin brothers catcalling.

“Bulstrode, Millicent” then became a Slytherin. Perhaps it was Harry's imagination, after all he'd heard about Slytherin, but he thought they looked like an unpleasant lot.

He was starting to feel definitely sick now. He remembered being picked for teams during gym at his old school. He had always been last to be chosen, not because he was no good, but because no one wanted Dudley to think they liked him.

“Finch-Fletchley, Justin!”

“HUFFLEPUFF!”

Sometimes, Harry noticed, the hat shouted out the House at once, but at others it took a little while to decide. “Finnigan, Seamus,” the sandy-haired boy next to Harry in the line, sat on the stool for almost a whole minute before the hat declared him a Gryffindor.

“Granger, Hermione!”

Hermione almost ran to the stool and jammed the hat eagerly on her head.

“GRYFFINDOR!” shouted the hat. Ron groaned.

A horrible thought struck Harry, as horrible thoughts always do when you’re very nervous. What if he wasn’t chosen at all? What if he just sat there with the hat over his eyes for ages, until Professor McGonagall jerked it off his head and said there had obviously been a mistake and he’d better get back on the train?

When Neville Longbottom, the boy who kept losing his toad, was called, he fell over on his way to the stool. The hat took a

long time to decide with Neville. When it finally shouted, “GRYFFINDOR,” Neville ran off still wearing it, and had to jog back amid gales of laughter to give it to “MacDougal, Morag.”

Malfoy swaggered forward when his name was called and got his wish at once: the hat had barely touched his head when it screamed, “SLYTHERIN!”

Malfoy went to join his friends Crabbe and Goyle, looking pleased with himself.

There weren’t many people left now.

“Moon”..., “Nott”..., “Parkinson”..., then a pair of twin girls, “Patil” and “Patil”..., then “Perks, Sally-Anne”..., and then, at last

—

“Potter, Harry!”

As Harry stepped forward, whispers suddenly broke out like little hissing fires all over the hall.

*“Potter, did she say?”*

*“The Harry Potter?”*

The last thing Harry saw before the hat dropped over his eyes was the hall full of people craning to get a good look at him. Next second he was looking at the black inside of the hat. He waited.

“Hmm,” said a small voice in his ear. “Difficult. Very difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind either.

There's talent, oh my goodness, yes—and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting....So where shall I put you?"

Harry gripped the edges of the stool and thought, *Not Slytherin, not Slytherin.*

"Not Slytherin, eh?" said the small voice. "Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that—no? Well, if you're sure—better be GRYFFINDOR!"

Harry heard the hat shout the last word to the whole hall. He took off the hat and walked shakily toward the Gryffindor table. He was so relieved to have been chosen and not put in Slytherin, he hardly noticed that he was getting the loudest cheer yet. Percy the Prefect got up and shook his hand vigorously, while the Weasley twins yelled, "We got Potter! We got Potter!" Harry sat down opposite the ghost in the ruff he'd seen earlier. The ghost patted his arm, giving Harry the sudden, horrible feeling he'd just plunged it into a bucket of ice-cold water.

He could see the High Table properly now. At the end nearest him sat Hagrid, who caught his eye and gave him the thumbs up. Harry grinned back. And there, in the center of the High Table, in a large gold chair, sat Albus Dumbledore. Harry recognized him at once from the card he'd gotten out of

the Chocolate Frog on the train. Dumbledore's silver hair was the only thing in the whole hall that shone as brightly as the ghosts. Harry spotted Professor Quirrell, too, the nervous young man from the Leaky Cauldron. He was looking very peculiar in a large purple turban.

And now there were only three people left to be sorted. "Turpin, Lisa," became a Ravenclaw and then it was Ron's turn. He was pale green by now. Harry crossed his fingers under the table and a second later the hat had shouted, "GRYFFINDOR!"

Harry clapped loudly with the rest as Ron collapsed into the chair next to him.

"Well done, Ron, excellent," said Percy Weasley pompously across Harry as "Zabini, Blaise," was made a Slytherin. Professor McGonagall rolled up her scroll and took the Sorting Hat away.

Harry looked down at his empty gold plate. He had only just realized how hungry he was. The pumpkin pasties seemed ages ago.

Albus Dumbledore had gotten to his feet. He was beaming at the students, his arms opened wide, as if nothing could have pleased him more than to see them all there.

“Welcome!” he said. “Welcome to a new year at Hogwarts! Before we begin our banquet, I would like to say a few words. And here they are: Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak!

“Thank you!”

He sat back down. Everybody clapped and cheered. Harry didn’t know whether to laugh or not.

“Is he—a bit mad?” he asked Percy uncertainly.

“Mad?” said Percy airily. “He’s a genius! Best wizard in the world! But he is a bit mad, yes. Potatoes, Harry?”

Harry’s mouth fell open. The dishes in front of him were now piled with food. He had never seen so many things he liked to eat on one table: roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, sausages, bacon and steak, boiled potatoes, roast potatoes, fries, Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots, gravy, ketchup, and, for some strange reason, peppermint humbugs.

The Dursleys had never exactly starved Harry, but he’d never been allowed to eat as much as he liked. Dudley had always taken anything that Harry really wanted, even if it made him sick. Harry piled his plate with a bit of everything except the peppermints and began to eat. It was all delicious.

“That does look good,” said the ghost in the ruff sadly, watching Harry cut up his steak.

“Can’t you—?”

“I haven’t eaten for nearly five hundred years,” said the ghost. “I don’t need to, of course, but one does miss it. I don’t think I’ve introduced myself? Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington at your service. Resident ghost of Gryffindor Tower.”

“I know who you are!” said Ron suddenly. “My brothers told me about you—you’re Nearly Headless Nick!”

“I would *prefer* you to call me Sir Nicholas de Mimsy—” the ghost began stiffly, but sandy-haired Seamus Finnigan interrupted.

“*Nearly* Headless? How can you be *nearly* headless?”

Sir Nicholas looked extremely miffed, as if their little chat wasn’t going at all the way he wanted.

“Like *this*,” he said irritably. He seized his left ear and pulled. His whole head swung off his neck and fell onto his shoulder as if it was on a hinge. Someone had obviously tried to behead him, but not done it properly. Looking pleased at the stunned looks on their faces, Nearly Headless Nick flipped his head back onto his neck, coughed, and said, “So—new Gryffindors! I hope you’re going to help us win the House Championship this year? Gryffindors have never gone so long without winning. Slytherins have got the Cup six years in a row! The Bloody



Baron's becoming almost unbearable—he's the Slytherin ghost."

Harry looked over at the Slytherin table and saw a horrible ghost sitting there, with blank staring eyes, a gaunt face, and robes stained with silver blood. He was right next to Malfoy who, Harry was pleased to see, didn't look too pleased with the seating arrangements.

"How did he get covered in blood?" asked Seamus with great interest.

"I've never asked," said Nearly Headless Nick delicately.

When everyone had eaten as much as they could, the remains of the food faded from the plates, leaving them sparkling clean as before. A moment later the desserts appeared. Blocks of ice cream in every flavor you could think of, apple pies, treacle tarts, chocolate éclairs and jam doughnuts, trifle, strawberries, Jell-O, rice pudding...

As Harry helped himself to a treacle tart, the talk turned to their families.

"I'm half-and-half," said Seamus. "Me dad's a Muggle. Mum didn't tell him she was a witch 'til after they were married. Bit of a nasty shock for him."

The others laughed.

"What about you, Neville?" said Ron.

“Well, my gran brought me up and she’s a witch,” said Neville, “but the family thought I was all-Muggle for ages. My Great Uncle Algie kept trying to catch me off my guard and force some magic out of me—he pushed me off the end of Blackpool pier once, I nearly drowned—but nothing happened until I was eight. Great Uncle Algie came round for dinner, and he was hanging me out of an upstairs window by the ankles when my Great Auntie Enid offered him a meringue and he accidentally let go. But I bounced—all the way down the garden and into the road. They were all really pleased, Gran was crying, she was so happy. And you should have seen their faces when I got in here—they thought I might not be magic enough to come, you see. Great Uncle Algie was so pleased he bought me my toad.”

On Harry’s other side, Percy Weasley and Hermione were talking about lessons (“I *do* hope they start right away, there’s so much to learn, I’m particularly interested in Transfiguration, you know, turning something into something else, of course, it’s supposed to be very difficult—”; “You’ll be starting small, just matches into needles and that sort of thing—”).

Harry, who was starting to feel warm and sleepy, looked up at the High Table again. Hagrid was drinking deeply from his

goblet. Professor McGonagall was talking to Professor Dumbledore. Professor Quirrell, in his absurd turban, was talking to a teacher with greasy black hair, a hooked nose, and sallow skin.

It happened very suddenly. The hook-nosed teacher looked past Quirrell's turban straight into Harry's eyes—and a sharp, hot pain shot across the scar on Harry's forehead.

“Ouch!” Harry clapped a hand to his head.

“What is it?” asked Percy.

“N-nothing.”

The pain had gone as quickly as it had come. Harder to shake off was the feeling Harry had gotten from the teacher's look—a feeling that he didn't like Harry at all.

“Who's that teacher talking to Professor Quirrell?” he asked Percy.

“Oh, you know Quirrell already, do you? No wonder he's looking so nervous, that's Professor Snape. He teaches Potions, but he doesn't want to—everyone knows he's after Quirrell's job. Knows an awful lot about the Dark Arts, Snape.”

Harry watched Snape for a while, but Snape didn't look at him again.

At last, the desserts too disappeared, and Professor Dumbledore got to his feet again. The hall fell silent.

“Ahem—just a few more words now that we are all fed and watered. I have a few start-of-term notices to give you.

“First years should note that the forest on the grounds is forbidden to all pupils. And a few of our older students would do well to remember that as well.”

Dumbledore’s twinkling eyes flashed in the direction of the Weasley twins.

“I have also been asked by Mr. Filch, the caretaker, to remind you all that no magic should be used between classes in the corridors.

“Quidditch trials will be held in the second week of the term. Anyone interested in playing for their House teams should contact Madam Hooch.

“And finally, I must tell you that this year, the third-floor corridor on the right-hand side is out of bounds to everyone who does not wish to die a very painful death.”

Harry laughed, but he was one of the few who did.

“He’s not serious?” he muttered to Percy.

“Must be,” said Percy, frowning at Dumbledore. “It’s odd, because he usually gives us a reason why we’re not allowed to go somewhere—the forest’s full of dangerous beasts, everyone knows that. I do think he might have told us prefects, at least.”

“And now, before we go to bed, let us sing the school song!” cried Dumbledore. Harry noticed that the other teachers’ smiles had become rather fixed.

Dumbledore gave his wand a little flick, as if he was trying to get a fly off the end, and a long golden ribbon flew out of it, which rose high above the tables and twisted itself, snakelike, into words.

“Everyone pick their favorite tune,” said Dumbledore, “and off we go!”

And the school bellowed:

*“Hogwarts, Hogwarts, Hoggy Warty Hogwarts,  
Teach us something please,  
Whether we be old and bald  
Or young with scabby knees,  
Our heads could do with filling  
With some interesting stuff,  
For now they’re bare and full of air,  
Dead flies and bits of fluff,  
So teach us things worth knowing  
Bring back what we’ve forgot,  
Just do your best, we’ll do the rest,  
And learn until our brains all rot.”*

Everybody finished the song at different times. At last, only the Weasley twins were left singing along to a very slow funeral march. Dumbledore conducted their last few lines with his wand and when they had finished, he was one of those who clapped loudest.

“Ah, music,” he said, wiping his eyes. “A magic beyond all we do here! And now, bedtime. Off you trot!”

The Gryffindor first years followed Percy through the chattering crowds, out of the Great Hall, and up the marble staircase. Harry’s legs were like lead again, but only because he was so tired and full of food. He was too sleepy even to be surprised that the people in the portraits along the corridors whispered and pointed as they passed, or that twice Percy led them through doorways hidden behind sliding panels and hanging tapestries. They climbed more staircases, yawning and dragging their feet, and Harry was just wondering how much farther they had to go when they came to a sudden halt.

A bundle of walking sticks was floating in midair ahead of them, and as Percy took a step toward them they started throwing themselves at him.

“Peeves,” Percy whispered to the first years. “A poltergeist.” He raised his voice, “Peeves—show yourself.”