

A Different Harry

by Lissy

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Prologue

Chapter 1 of 1

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Prologue

Petunia Dursley wrung her hands together, anxiety settling in the pit of her stomach. Her heart was pounding furiously, and she found it a little difficult to swallow. Vernon, her husband, noticed how nervous she was and took one of her hands in his meaty one. Her thin lips curled into a smile as she squeezed his hand. Vernon returned the gesture and kept his gaze on the road, driving one-handedly. Petunia couldn't help but look through the rear-view mirror.

In the back seat of the car, a young boy slept. His hair stuck out in all directions, looking much like a bird's nest. He had ivory-pale skin and a slightly chubby face. Hiding his bright emerald eyes were long, black eyelashes. Every time Petunia looked at him, she was reminded of *them*. Her eyes watered slightly and she looked away from the boy, scowling. Vernon pulled to the side of the road near a rather large building, looking at it with indifference. Petunia breathed deeply and stepped out of the car, willing her hands to stop shaking. Opening the rear passenger door, she started to wake the boy up.

"Aunt Petunia?" he murmured sleepily, opening his eyes.

"Get up, boy," she said quietly, holding onto his hand. She led him out of the car and up the steps to the tall, oak door of the building. A square, golden plaque at the side of the door read, 'Orphanage for Boys, since 1864.' Petunia scowled at the sign that reminded her of what she was about to do. Her knuckles rapped on the door sharply, and in just a few minutes, the door opened and a middle-aged woman stepped out, dressed in a robe.

"May I help you?" she asked, obviously surprised to see company so late at night.

"Here," Petunia said stiffly, handing the woman the small boy in her hand. "We can't care for him anymore. His name is Harry Potter; please find a good home for him."

Petunia turned and started walking down the steps when a hand stopped her.

"Ma'am, you can't just leave your son here! You have to sign paperwork, give up your right—" the woman started.

"He," Petunia interrupted, practically snarling, "is *not* my son!"

"Aunt Petunia, please don't leave me here!" the small boy cried, now aware of what was happening. "I promise I'll be good!"

Petunia ignored both her nephew and the woman's cries and hurried into the car. Vernon immediately drove away. He placed his hand on Petunia's knee, squeezing it reassuringly. She probably didn't realize she was crying.

"Jack, wake up," the woman at the orphanage hissed.

"Leave me alone, Lydia," Jack groaned. "'S late and I wanna sleep!"

"Jack, this is important! Some lady just left her nephew here!"

"Say what?" Jack sat up and looked at her incredulously.

"You heard me; this lady handed me her nephew, told me she couldn't take care of him, and left! She didn't even listen to the poor dear when he begged her not to leave him," Lydia explained sadly, frowning.

"Where is he?"

"In the waiting room; poor thing's still crying."

Jack wrapped himself in his own robe and hurried downstairs, careful to be quiet so the staff and children wouldn't wake. He saw the boy as soon as he went into the room: he had his knees to his chest and his shoulders were shaking. Jack's heart immediately went out to the boy as he walked towards him. He sat in the chair next to the boy, causing the child to look up and sniffle.

"Hi there," Jack said warmly.

"Hi," the boy responded hesitantly, looking at the man cautiously.

"My name is Jack Carpenter; what's yours?"

"Harry Potter. It's nice to meet you," the boy replied in a small voice, his eyes watering up. Jack's eyes widened. Harry Potter? As in the Boy Who Lived? The Savior of the Wizarding world? Why the hell was he just abandoned in a Muggle orphanage? Hiding his confusion and shock, Jack smiled at Harry.

"That's a very nice name," he commented, making Harry blush. "Say, Harry, would you like to be my friend?"

"I don't have any friends," Harry confessed, still blushing.

"I'd really like to be your friend," Jack pressed, offering the small boy a grin.

"Okay," Harry said, offering Jack his own grin, which the older man found absolutely adorable.

"Are you tired?"

Harry nodded his head, yawning slightly. "Yes, sir."

"Hey, I'm not that old! And we're friends; call me Jack. Now, Lydia here will show you where you can sleep and tomorrow morning, we'll have a nice talk, okay?"

Jack motioned for Lydia to come over from her place near the door and she smiled at Harry. Harry recognized her as the lady that Aunt Petunia gave him to and who told him to sit down when they came inside the orphanage. He smiled hesitantly and she returned it ten-fold. Lydia gently grabbed his hand and led him up the stairs. Jack watched them go and quickly walked over to the main office of the orphanage. He grabbed the phone and quickly punched in a number.

"Carpenter residence. Please explain to me why you're calling at 11:30 in the evening," a groggy voice demanded.

"Dad, it's Jack. Put mom on the phone."

"Jack? What's wrong? Are you hurt?" Phil Carpenter asked, now very much awake. Jack smiled; even when he was a grown man, his father still got worried about him.

"I'm fine, Dad. I need Mom for advice—magical advice," Jack said tiredly, rubbing the bridge of his nose. Phil made a small noise of acknowledgment before giving the phone to his wife.

"Jack, what is it?"

"I have a situation and I need you to listen and give me some advice," he said into the phone.

"Alright, what is it?"

"Earlier today, about ten minutes ago, a little boy was left here. His aunt said she couldn't take care of him any longer and just left. Normally, we'd contact the authorities but there's a slight problem. The kid that was left here was Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived himself."

"Oh, dear," Emily Carpenter said, feeling a little light-headed. "The poor child; he must feel terrible."

"What do I do, Mom? I can't let him go to a Muggle household; he'll need to be taught all about magic, you know. At the same time, I can't give him up to a Wizarding family. More than likely they'll be more concerned with upping their social status and smuggling the Potter fortune into their own Gringotts vaults."

"I can see why you need advice," Emily mused. "Well, you know I've always wanted grandchildren."

"Mom, you know I'm not ready for that," Jack said quietly. "That's why the engagement with Matt was called off."

"I know, dear, but just hear me out," Emily pleaded. "Just get to know the little one; spend time with him. If you still feel you aren't ready for a child after a week at the very least, your dad and I will take care of him."

Jack sighed inaudibly and rubbed his temples. "Fine. He'll stay with me for one week. I suggest getting a room prepared, though."

"Will you bring the little dear over tomorrow? I want to see him," Emily replied, choosing to ignore Jack's last statement.

"Yeah, sure. I'll bring him over for lunch. Thanks, mom. Goodnight," Jack said.

"Don't worry about it, dear. Get to bed; it's late."

Jack chuckled. "Yes, mom. I love you and I'll see you tomorrow."

Hanging up the phone, Jack sank into his chair. His heart ached with the thought of Matt, his ex-fiancé. Everything had been great between them. Matt was very accepting of him; he didn't care that his mom was a witch. Of course, he was surprised that magic had existed, but he accepted him. And since he was a Muggle, he neither knew nor cared that he was only a half-blood. He loved Jack all the same. The main problem was Matt wanted to adopt children, and Jack wasn't quite ready for that.

Sure, he helped run this Muggle orphanage, but having a kid of your own was something totally different. He was incredibly insecure about his own abilities as a parent and thus their engagement went spiraling downwards. Matt still visited the children every week, making it even harder on Jack to move on. Bringing his hand up to rub the back of his neck, Jack sighed tiredly and stood up. He was going to go to bed; after all, his mom told him to, and mothers knew best.