

by *AcaciaJules*

Chapter 1 of 1

*I make up my own rules here. That means, what I say goes. Why? Because it's **my** universe and I can do what ever I damn well please with it . . . thank you. Not that I change the essential Potter universe rules. I'll pretty much follow the first four books. Most of the time.*

I will eventually write out a Character 'sourcebook', to explain out how all the characters match with their past lives. I have it written out, but it's just not typed up. I'll probably post it on my website, and have a link or something.

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**** Surrey, England ****

**** July, 1995 ****

The neighborhood *looked* just like any other in England, and it's house just like any other normal house . . . though ~~perhaps~~ it was just a *bit* neater than most. Anyone who might look wouldn't be able to tell by looking at the house that numerous protection spells had been placed upon it and the surrounding area.

It looked very normal and orderly on the inside too, though the pictures that lined the walls and mantles showed no sign of the very boy for whom those precise protection spells had been placed. He was currently residing in the smallest bedroom of the house, behind a locked door to which only his Aunt and Uncle had the key.

The boy's name was Harry Potter, and though he was 14, practically 15, he was unusually small for his age, due to malnutrition throughout his childhood, because his relatives loathed his very existence and attempted to starve him. Vernon and Petunia Dursley had always treated him like dirt, ever since he'd arrived on their doorstep 14 years before with just a note and a scar on his forehead, a result of the attack by Voldemort on his parents, both of whom had died trying to protect him. For *10 years*, he had lived in the cupboard under the stairs. His uncle had knocked him around a bit, his cousin a lot, but as soon as his letter came, the beatings had stopped.

Or they had. Until this summer that was.

It seemed that the threat of Harry's convict godfather no longer rang true for Vernon Dursley, and after the events of last summer, he had decided it was time to teach the boy some manners once more.

So that was how Harry found himself once again spending his days, doing backbreaking "chores" from a list given to him every morning. He had seen the evil gleam in his uncle's eye when he'd gotten picked up at King's Cross, so he was doing his damndest to do everything on the lists everyday.

It had been three weeks, and so far, he'd escaped unscathed. Vernon was not pleased, so he kept having Petunia cut back on Harry's food supply. Harry had noticed this a week and a half ago, and he was getting quite nervous, because it was getting harder and harder to stay conscious while doing his work, especially outside. At night, his nightmares were constantly waking him so he was only getting four hours of sleep a night, *tops*. As a consequence, the likelihood of Harry being able to keep up the pace he had been were quite slim.

In the short time he'd been back from Hogwarts, he'd already begun to return to his emaciated look of the previous summers, but the onset was coming on much more quickly this year. On top of that, his eyes held a haunted look lately, and seemed dimmed, not to mention the dark circles under them.

Harry quietly made breakfast for the Dursleys' and was given a single slice of burnt toast for himself.

He ate quickly; in effort to steer clear of doing anything that would upset them, washed the dishes, and then accepted his daily chore list from Uncle Vernon. He risked a quick look up, and the gleam in the man's eye shook Harry. He didn't know what to do, but averted his eyes and hurried outside.

As he worked, Harry contemplated his situation and his limited options. Around noon, while he weeded the garden for the second time that week, he realized that his only option was to write Sirius. And if *he* couldn't help, Harry was leaving. It was more dangerous *in this house* than it was outside the wards he was *positive* were set up around the area to protect him from the Death Eaters. He could escape the Death Eaters, or fight them if he had to. He'd done it before. In this house though, he was trapped, with no way to fight back.

That night, Harry sat at Dudley's old broken desk with a piece of parchment and an eagle-feather quill, writing to his godfather via the meager light of the small lamp across the room next his bed. It had been a very difficult letter to write. He really hated to bother Sirius and there was that immense fear in Harry's heart that Sirius would over-react if he said something wrong

Dear Padfoot,

I really don't want to be writing this, but the situation

here at the Dursleys' isn't very good. In fact, to be honest

conditions are getting quite bad and . . . I don't know how much

longer I can hold out with the way things are, and I'm pretty

sure they're about to get worse. It's Vernon, he . . . there's a

look in his eyes, Padfoot

I just don't know what to do.

Your Godson,

Harry

Harry rolled up the parchment and attached it to Hedwig's leg.

He opened the window, which he was quite grateful that his uncle hadn't thought to nail down, or put bars on yet. He looked down at his long time snowy companion and stroked her head. "Fly quickly, girl. I don't know how much time we've got" then tossed her out the window. He stared out into the night for a long time afterwards before going to bed.

**** Seven a.m. ****

Following yet *another* long night of night terrors, Harry stumbled out of bed when his aunt pounded on the bedroom door and unlocked it from the outside. He threw on some of his 'Dudley castoffs' and then went downstairs to make breakfast for the Dursleys'.

After eating his ¼ of grapefruit, Harry took his chore list.

Plant the new flowers in the flowerbed

Mow the lawn

Paint the fence

Paint the garage door

Wash the windows

"You'd better have this done by the time I get home boy, or else!" Vernon threatened.

Harry immediately went to work, knowing in his heart how serious that threat was. The sun rose higher and higher into the sky and began to beat down mercilessly upon him. It was only after a short time he relieved himself of his shirt.

The blazing sun had made quick work of his pale, fair skin early in the summer. Giving him terrible, painful sunburns initially, but these days all that remained was a wonderful, deep, golden tan from all his hard work. Plus his hair had lightened several shades from the sun.

The sun was unrelenting and often triggered dizzy spells from dehydration. But Harry couldn't let himself take many breaks. He had to complete the list before Uncle Vernon came home.

**** Several hours later ****

Harry had *just* finished washing the windows and was about to put away the buckets when he'd heard **SPLAT, SPLAT**.

His heart sank and he turned to see mud splattered all over the bay windows and Dudley hurrying inside as fast as his fat legs could carry him, laughing.

Harry groaned, then went over to wash them again. He was just starting the second one for the *second time* when Vernon pulled in the drive. Harry's heart froze as his uncle's words from that morning echoed through his head.

A predatory look graced the bulky man's face as he charged over to his nephew. Harry knew it was going to be bad. Worse than it had ever been before

Vernon grabbed him by the back of his neck and dragged Harry across the yard and threw him through the front door.

Harry landed on the stairs upon his arm, which gave a familiar **CRACK** and pain lanced through out it. Harry had felt worse though, so he never took his eyes off his uncle. Rule #1 was to never take your eyes off your enemy.

"Boy, didn't I tell you to be done before I got home?"

"Yes, but . . ." Harry tried to explain, scrambling to get up.

SMACK Harry's cheek hurt from being backhanded, the force of the blow sending him staggering again.

"But nothing! Did you think you could get away with it boy?" Vernon questioned.

There was a wild gleam in his advancing uncle's eyes that the teen had not seen before. Harry knew right then, he was in a lot of trouble.

**** That night ****

Harry slowly returned to consciousness on the floor of his room, having passed out midway through his uncle's 'punishment.'

Something was nipping at his fingers. He slowly opened his eyes to see the blurry form of Hedwig, with a note attached to her leg. At first he couldn't remember what had happened; then he abruptly became aware of was massive amounts of pain radiating throughout his entire body as his mind woke up. Slowly, he attempted to move his arm without jostling any of the newly broken ribs, courtesy of Dudley's Smelting stick. He tried to reach to the parchment, but the pain overwhelmed him before he could obtain the letter, and the boy once more was lifeless, his hand falling on top of the snowy owl and leaving a bloody print.

Now, Hedwig was not like most wizard owls; on the contrary, she was much brighter, and quite protective *of* her human. She knew he needed help and that the Muggles he lived with would never give it to him. She immediately flew back out into the night, the note on her leg unopened, to return from whence she came. She could sense that the two men there cared for her boy, much more than those *things* he lived with now.

Hedwig knew they could aid her boy. They could make him better.

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**** Moony's Manor ****

Sirius, who had been staying at Remus Lupin's ancestral family home, had been feeling like something was wrong all day. That something had happened. Presently, he couldn't sleep because of the awful feeling gnawing at him.

The note he'd gotten from Harry had shaken him, as it had Moony, who'd read the letter at Sirius's insistence. Both agreed that it seemed as though things were beginning to get unsafe for Harry at the Dursley's, because both men knew that Harry wasn't one to ask for help or complain. That if anything, Harry was one who typically played down things, so things at the Dursley's were most likely even worse than Harry had made them seem.

Sirius had wanted to immediately go and get Harry, but Remus had managed to talk him into popping in to visit the Dursley's, during the day, in two days. It had taken a lot of fighting and whining (Sirius) and being quite firm on Remus's part before they had agreed to that proposal; then they'd sent Hedwig back with a note informing Harry of the plan.

But ever since letting Hedwig go, there had been a dreadful feeling growing in the pit of Sirius' stomach that something was very wrong. He just couldn't sleep because of it, and he'd been up pacing because of it. Remus had stayed up in sympathy and because the noise Sirius made kept him awake.

Both jumped when something tapped at the window. Sirius quickly opened it and was shocked, yet at the same time on some level not, when he saw what was there.

"It's Hedwig! What's she doing back so soon?" That's when Sirius saw the parchment. "Remus, this is my note, and what's this handprint on her wing?" He questioned fearfully.

Remus's heightened senses had recognized the scent of blood immediately. "Sirius, that's blood, Harry's blood. He was injured enough times during his third year for me to recognize it right away."

"No. Please, God, no. That's it, Remus, we're going over there right now. Grab your wand."

This time, Remus didn't argue. One of his pack had been hurt and Moony wasn't going to stand for it.

"Wait, Padfoot, before you do anything stupid, there are wards around the house, so we can't just Apparate there."

"Do you know where the wards end?"

"Yeah, Arabella Figg's house."

"Then we have a plan then. Apparate to Arabella's, get to the Dursley's, get in, get Harry, get his stuff, get out as quick as we can, then take him home."

"Sounds good to me." Remus agreed, not wanting to argue. Plus he had to admit, it was a pretty simple plan. Now all they had to do was not get caught. But they were Marauders, highly trained experts in the field of being places they shouldn't be.

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**** Earlier at the Dursley's ****

Harry wasn't quite sure when, but at some point after Hedwig had left, Uncle Vernon had come back for another session.

He'd proceeded to whip Harry's bare back with his belt, the sharp edge cutting into his skin. It was soon a bloody mess. Vernon had then grabbed Harry around the middle of his upper arm and yanked him up. Harry had managed to control his screaming before then, but his uncle had not only grabbed Harry's broken arm and jostled his broken ribs, but Vernon also pulled Harry's arm out of the socket as well. His uncle ignored his scream of pain, as usual, dragging him down the hall. Dudley watched from his bedroom, snickering. Once they reached the stairs, Vernon tossed Harry down them. Harry tumbled down the stairs, bright colors flashed in his eyes as each broken bone hit a stair, there was a sudden sharp pain in his chest, and dark spots danced in his eyes as he teetered on the edge of consciousness once more. It was just getting too painful to stay awake, the darkness was just so inviting. . . . Harry only dimly heard Vernon Dursley storming down the stairs. He did register slightly more clearly the sensation of being slightly lifted and dragged to the cupboard under the stairs and thrown in, though he never really heard him clearly. Everything was muffled. He did, however, feel himself slamming into the ground on his freshly whipped back quite notably though, and his head cracking against the wall of the confined space. Then everything was silent, dark, and painless.

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**** Somewhere along Privet Drive ****

**** A while later that night ****

"Ouch!" a voice muttered. Then a few seconds later, "Hey! Don't poke me."

"Shhhhhhhhh!!! Will you be quiet, Sirius! Do you want to get caught?"

"Well if you wouldn't step on my foot, and then when I comment about it, poke me with your wand, yes, I would," Sirius informed him pompously.

Remus rolled his eyes. "How in the name of Merlin did we ever get pranks done at Hogwarts?"

"James."

"Oh, right."

"Now, which house is it again?"

"Number four," Sirius told him, exasperated.

"Right, I knew that," Remus said, drawing himself up.

"Of course you did, Remy."

"Don't call me that. You know I hate that."

"That's why I do it. . . ." Sirius stopped short, causing Remus to walk into him. "There it is, Moony. . . ."

Remus looked past his long time friend and saw for the first time the home of Harry Potter. In the moonlight, a ways off, was number four, Privet Drive, which now stood quiet and dark.

Sirius stared at the house, which he knew held his godson. He could still remember the first time he'd been to Privet Drive. It had been almost two years ago, right after Harry's 13th birthday, soon after he'd escaped from Azkaban. . . .

**** Flashback ****

**** Surrey, England ****

**** After Sunset ****

Sirius Black had known that he should immediately get on his search for that traitorous, scumbag Peter, but he just had to see ~~him~~ **him**. Sirius just had to have a glimpse of the boy who he was **supposed** to be raising. The little boy who had always had an easy grin, messy jet-black hair, and emerald green eyes that had always been able to persuade his father and Sirius to give him anything he wanted. Sirius needed at least one look, in case he never got to see the boy again. He had to see what the baby he'd been taking up on his motorcycle had turned into, rides which to him seemed as though occurred just last week. He had to see which of Harry's parents the boy had grown up to look like, if Harry was still a mini-Prong with Lily's eyes.

So that was how he'd ended up in the alleyway on Privet drive, waiting, longing, for just one little glance, maybe two. When his canine senses picked up screaming coming from number four, he began to get worried. He could hear a man yelling, "COME BACK IN HERE! COME BACK AND PUT HER RIGHT!" Padfoot cocked his shaggy head. From the sound of things, Harry had done something to some and pissed his Uncle off. Padfoot knew he'd better get a closer look, and carefully got closer, staying in the shadows.

Straining his senses, he could hear his godson's breathless response, and the boy sounded quite angry as well.

"She deserved it," Harry said, breathing very fast. "She deserved what she got." There was a moment of silence, then the muffled voice continued as it opened the door, "I'm going. I've had enough."

Light spilled out onto the night, quiet street, and Padfoot could hear his godson tugging a heavy object out the front door with all his might, Padfoot surmised it to be his trunk. Keeping to the shadows, he followed his godson, living up to his nickname of Padfoot and not making a sound. As he followed he wondered what could have happened to make Harry run away like he was. What had the Muggles done to make him so angry? But Padfoot couldn't dwell on that at the moment, there were too many other things to think about. Like the fact that his godson was walking before him. A boy he hadn't seen in 12 long, hellish years.

He still hadn't gotten a good look at Harry either. It was quite dark, and the street lamps didn't provide much illumination.

Padfoot hid in a nearby alleyway when Harry collapsed against a wall, several streets away from Privet Drive. The schoolboy was wheezing from the effort of dragging his heavy trunk, and Padfoot longed to go over and comfort him. Harry seemed completely lost, and he looked so bleak, which was killing Sirius. His desires to go and help Harry were mounting; he'd never been able to stand seeing Harry in any kind of pain. Padfoot's enhanced senses could hear Harry's breathing rate increase. He knew that meant Harry was starting to panic. And as he watched, the boy shivered, and looked up and down the street.

Padfoot fought an internal battle to control himself. What was he going to do? He couldn't just let Harry stay out here! He was only 13! A little boy! It was dangerous, plus

Peter was on the loose free to get near to Harry at any time, not to mention all the Death Eaters . . .

Movement from Harry shocked Sirius out of these thoughts; the adolescent had opened his trunk again and was digging around . . . when suddenly, he straightened, and looked all around the surrounding area. This made Padfoot's heart jump into his throat. Had Harry sensed him? James had always been able to as well. He slowly backed further between the garage and the fence. Harry bent back over his trunk, but then almost immediately stood up again with his wand clenched in his fist. The boy turned and looked into the alley where Padfoot hid. Padfoot was shocked. He **knew** he hadn't made any noise. The grim-like Animagus froze.

"Lumos." Harry muttered, and a bright light appeared, almost blinding Padfoot, who wasn't ready for such a thing. He'd only been in darkness for many years.

Harry stumbled backwards, his legs hit his trunk, and he tripped. As the boy flung his arm out to break his fall, his wand flew out of his hand, and he landed in the gutter.

Padfoot winced. The fall looked like a bad one. Then there was a loud **BANG**. Padfoot's heart was once again in his stomach as the Knight Bus appeared. Harry only just rolled out of the way in time. Ten seconds later, and he would have been flattened.

Padfoot watched the proceedings, and as Harry got on the Knight Bus, he knew somehow that this was for the best. Or at least he hoped it would be. At least this way, Harry was safe on his way to London, and Padfoot could concentrate on his hunt for the RAT.

He watched until the Knight Bus disappeared with a **BANG**, then Padfoot darted off back into the night, to continue his search. He just hoped he could catch Peter quickly, to get his revenge, so the truth of that night would be known, and he could keep his promise to take care of Harry. He owed this to James and Lily. And to Harry.

****End of Flashback ****

"Sirius . . . Sirius . . . SIRIUS!" Remus hissed, trying to get his friend's attention. When his friend had seen the house, he'd gone into a trance like state. "Bugger, I knew this would happen one day. You've taken total leave of your senses, but of all the days . . ."

"Wha - . . . Moony! You swore!" Sirius gasped.

Remus took a deep breath and counted to ten. They didn't have time to get into *that* argument. "Sirius, I have been trying to get your attention for the past several minutes. Now that you're back in the land of the living, can we please discuss how the hell to get past these damn wards?"

"Oh, right, of course my good Moony . . .," Sirius said complacently. "First a question, where do the wards for the house begin?"

"Around the yard, and driveway." Remus informed him, having been told a while ago by Dumbledore.

The two friends were already in the street next to the driveway, so they saw no reason to move.

"Alright then, ways to get through . . ." Sirius was silent for a couple moments, and then turned to Remus. "Um, any suggestions?"

"Why do I have to come up with the way in?" Remus demanded.

"Cause you're typically the one who's read a book on the subject of whatever we're doing."

Remus was exasperated. "Padfoot, I have not read every book in the library."

"Could have fooled me. With the amount of time you spent there during school, and the number of books you have lining the walls and stacked on the floors at home . . ."

Remus' eyes narrowed and he punched Sirius in the shoulder; he was very short-tempered when it came to his books. Sirius' jaw dropped, then he punched Remus in the shoulder back. "Hey!" With that, Remus shoved Sirius away from him. Sirius lost his balance, and fell onto the driveway of number four . . .

Remus stared at his friend in amazement and cocked his head. "Huh, I guess the wards don't keep *us* out. Just evil wizards."

"Ohhhhhhhh, *now* you tell me," Sirius groaned from the ground where he lay.

"I'm not truly sure, and I'm just hypothesizing. It doesn't really matter presently, does it? Let's go get Harry." Remus instructed, helping Sirius up.

His determination rekindled, as he was briefly dazed after his fall on the concrete, Sirius was once again a man with a mission. "Right, Harry. Come on Moony. This has taken far too long. He needs us. Who knows how bad those Muggles have hurt him? He could be dying for all we know."

He had no idea how true those words were.

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Please, I want replies, I know it sounds pathetic, but I live for feedback, good or bad! I need to know what you think so I know where to go with this.

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