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Illustrated by Jim Kay

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

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J.K. ROWLING

HARRY POTTER

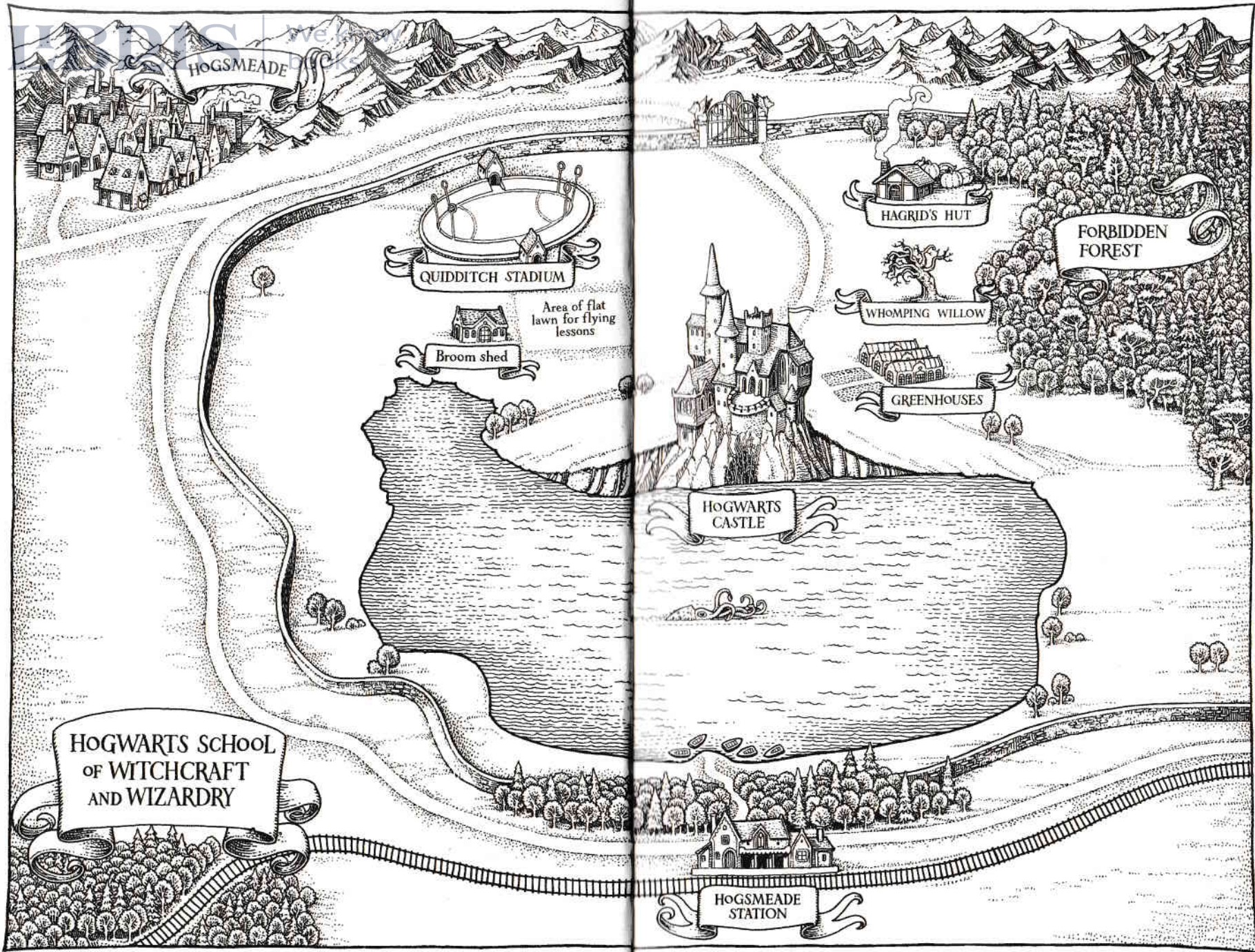
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Chamber of Secrets



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HOGSMEADE

QUIDDITCH STADIUM

Broom shed

Area of flat lawn for flying lessons

HAGRID'S HUT

WHOMPING WILLOW

GREENHOUSES

FORBIDDEN FOREST

HOGWARTS CASTLE

HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY

HOGSMEADE STATION

CHAPTER ONE

The Worst Birthday

Not for the first time, an argument had broken out over breakfast at number four, Privet Drive. Mr Vernon Dursley had been woken in the early hours of the morning by a loud, hooting noise from his nephew Harry's room.

'Third time this week!' he roared across the table. 'If you can't control that owl, it'll have to go!'

Harry tried, yet again, to explain.

'She's *bored*,' he said. 'She's used to flying around outside. If I could just let her out at night ...'

'Do I look stupid?' snarled Uncle Vernon, a bit of fried egg dangling from his bushy moustache. 'I know what'll happen if that owl's let out.'

He exchanged dark looks with his wife, Petunia.

Harry tried to argue back but his words were drowned by a long, loud belch from the Dursleys' son, Dudley.

'I want more bacon.'

Harry went back to school without any of his homework done? The Dursleys were what wizards called Muggles (not a drop of magical blood in their veins) and as far as they were concerned, having a wizard in the family was a matter of deepest shame. Uncle Vernon had even padlocked Harry's owl, Hedwig, inside her cage, to stop her carrying messages to anyone in the wizarding world.

Harry looked nothing like the rest of the family. Uncle Vernon was large and neckless, with an enormous black moustache; Aunt Petunia was horse-faced and bony; Dudley was blond, pink and porky. Harry, on the other hand, was small and skinny, with brilliant green eyes and jet-black hair that was always untidy. He wore round glasses, and on his forehead was a thin, lightning-shaped scar.

It was this scar that made Harry so particularly unusual, even for a wizard. This scar was the only hint of Harry's very mysterious past, of the reason he had been left on the Dursleys' doorstep eleven years before.

At the age of one, Harry had somehow survived a curse from the greatest dark sorcerer of all time, Lord Voldemort, whose name most witches and wizards still feared to speak. Harry's parents had died in Voldemort's attack, but Harry had escaped with his lightning scar, and somehow – nobody understood why – Voldemort's powers had been destroyed the instant he had failed to kill Harry.

So Harry had been brought up by his dead mother's sister and her husband. He had spent ten years with the Dursleys, never understanding why he kept making odd

things happen without meaning to, believing the Dursleys' story that he had got his scar in the car crash which had killed his parents.

And then, exactly a year ago, Hogwarts had written to Harry, and the whole story had come out. Harry had taken up his place at wizard school, where he and his scar were famous ... but now the school year was over, and he was back with the Dursleys for the summer, back to being treated like a dog that had rolled in something smelly.

The Dursleys hadn't even remembered that today happened to be Harry's twelfth birthday. Of course, his hopes hadn't been high; they'd never given him a proper present, let alone a cake – but to ignore it completely ...

At that moment, Uncle Vernon cleared his throat importantly and said, 'Now, as we all know, today is a very important day.'

Harry looked up, hardly daring to believe it.

'This could well be the day I make the biggest deal of my career,' said Uncle Vernon.

Harry went back to his toast. Of course, he thought bitterly, Uncle Vernon was talking about the stupid dinner party. He'd been talking of nothing else for a fortnight. Some rich builder and his wife were coming to dinner and Uncle Vernon was hoping to get a huge order from him (Uncle Vernon's company made drills).

'I think we should run through the schedule one more time,' said Uncle Vernon. 'We should all be in position at eight o'clock. Petunia, you will be –?'

Harry missed his best friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. They, however, didn't seem to be missing him at all. Neither of them had written to him all summer, even though Ron had said he was going to ask Harry to come and stay.

Countless times, Harry had been on the point of unlocking Hedwig's cage by magic and sending her to Ron and Hermione with a letter, but it wasn't worth the risk. Underage wizards weren't allowed to use magic outside school. Harry hadn't told the Dursleys this; he knew it was only their terror that he might turn them all into dung beetles that stopped them locking *him* in the cupboard under the stairs with his wand and broomstick. For the first couple of weeks back, Harry had enjoyed muttering nonsense words under his breath and watching Dudley tearing out of the room as fast as his fat legs would carry him. But the long silence from Ron and Hermione had made Harry feel so cut off from the magical world that even taunting Dudley had lost its appeal – and now Ron and Hermione had forgotten his birthday.

What wouldn't he give now for a message from Hogwarts? From any witch or wizard? He'd almost be glad of a sight of his arch-enemy, Draco Malfoy, just to be sure it hadn't all been a dream ...

Not that his whole year at Hogwarts had been fun. At the very end of last term, Harry had come face to face with none other than Lord Voldemort himself. Voldemort might be a ruin of his former self, but he was still terrifying, still cunning,

still determined to regain power. Harry had slipped through Voldemort's clutches for a second time, but it had been a narrow escape, and even now, weeks later, Harry kept waking in the night, drenched in cold sweat, wondering where Voldemort was now, remembering his livid face, his wide, mad eyes ...

Harry suddenly sat bolt upright on the garden bench. He had been staring absent-mindedly into the hedge – *and the hedge was staring back*. Two enormous green eyes had appeared among the leaves.

Harry jumped to his feet just as a jeering voice floated across the lawn.

'I know what day it is,' sang Dudley, waddling towards him.

The huge eyes blinked and vanished.

'What?' said Harry, not taking his eyes off the spot where they had been.

'I know what day it is,' Dudley repeated, coming right up to him.

'Well done,' said Harry. 'So you've finally learned the days of the week.'

'Today's your *birthday*,' sneered Dudley. 'How come you haven't got any cards? Haven't you even got friends at that freak place?'

'Better not let your mum hear you talking about my school,' said Harry coolly.

Dudley hitched up his trousers, which were slipping down his fat bottom.

'Why're you staring at the hedge?' he said suspiciously.

'I'm trying to decide what would be the best spell to set it on fire,' said Harry.

Dudley stumbled backwards at once, a look of panic on his fat face.

'You c-can't – Dad told you you're not to do m-magic – he said he'll chuck you out of the house – and you haven't got anywhere else to go – you haven't got any *friends* to take you –'

'*Jiggery pokery!*' said Harry in a fierce voice. 'Hocus pocus ... squiggly wiggly ...'

'MUUUUUUM!' howled Dudley, tripping over his feet as he dashed back towards the house. 'MUUUUM! He's doing you know what!'

Harry paid dearly for his moment of fun. As neither Dudley nor the hedge was in any way hurt, Aunt Petunia knew he hadn't really done magic, but he still had to duck as she aimed a heavy blow at his head with the soapy frying pan. Then she gave him work to do, with the promise he wouldn't eat again until he'd finished.

While Dudley lolled around watching and eating ice-creams, Harry cleaned the windows, washed the car, mowed the lawn, trimmed the flowerbeds, pruned and watered the roses and repainted the garden bench. The sun blazed overhead, burning the back of his neck. Harry knew he shouldn't have risen to Dudley's bait, but Dudley had said the very thing Harry had been thinking himself ... maybe he *didn't* have any friends at Hogwarts ...

'Wish they could see famous Harry Potter now,' he thought savagely, as he spread manure on the flowerbeds, his back aching, sweat running down his face.

It was half past seven in the evening when at last, exhausted, he heard Aunt Petunia calling him.

'Get in here! And walk on the newspaper!'

Harry moved gladly into the shade of the gleaming kitchen. On top of the fridge stood tonight's pudding: a huge mound of whipped cream and sugared violets. A joint of roast pork was sizzling in the oven.

'Eat quickly! The Masons will be here soon!' snapped Aunt Petunia, pointing to two slices of bread and a lump of cheese on the kitchen table. She was already wearing a salmon-pink cocktail dress.

Harry washed his hands and bolted down his pitiful supper. The moment he had finished, Aunt Petunia whisked away his plate. 'Upstairs! Hurry!'

As he passed the door to the living room, Harry caught a glimpse of Uncle Vernon and Dudley in bow-ties and dinner jackets. He had only just reached the upstairs landing when the doorbell rang and Uncle Vernon's furious face appeared at the foot of the stairs.

'Remember, boy – one sound ...'

Harry crossed to his bedroom on tiptoe, slipped inside, closed the door and turned to collapse on his bed.

The trouble was, there was already someone sitting on it.

CHAPTER TWO

Dobby's Warning

Harry managed not to shout out, but it was a close thing. The little creature on the bed had large, bat-like ears and bulging green eyes the size of tennis balls. Harry knew instantly that this was what had been watching him out of the garden hedge that morning.

As they stared at each other, Harry heard Dudley's voice from the hall.

'May I take your coats, Mr and Mrs Mason?'

The creature slipped off the bed and bowed so low that the end of its long thin nose touched the carpet. Harry noticed that it was wearing what looked like an old pillowcase, with rips for arm and leg holes.

'Er – hello,' said Harry nervously.

'Harry Potter!' said the creature, in a high-pitched voice Harry was sure would carry down the stairs. 'So long has Dobby wanted to meet you, sir ... Such an honour it is ...'

'Th-thank you,' said Harry, edging along the wall and sinking into his desk chair, next to Hedwig, who was asleep in her large cage. He wanted to ask, 'What are you?' but thought it would sound too rude, so instead he said, 'Who are you?'

'Dobby, sir. Just Dobby. Dobby the house-elf,' said the creature.

'Oh – really?' said Harry. 'Er – I don't want to be rude or anything, but – this isn't a great time for me to have a house-elf in my bedroom.'

Aunt Petunia's high, false laugh sounded from the living room. The elf hung his head.

'Not that I'm not pleased to meet you,' said Harry quickly, 'but, er, is there any particular reason you're here?'

'Oh, yes, sir,' said Dobby earnestly. 'Dobby has come to tell you, sir ... it is difficult, sir ... Dobby wonders where to begin ...'

'Sit down,' said Harry politely, pointing at the bed.

To his horror, the elf burst into tears – very noisy tears.

'S-sit down!' he wailed. 'Never ... never ever ...'

Harry thought he heard the voices downstairs falter.

'I'm sorry,' he whispered, 'I didn't mean to offend you or anything.'

'Offend Dobby!' choked the elf. 'Dobby has *never* been asked to sit down by a wizard – like an *equal* –'

Harry, trying to say 'Shh!' and look comforting at the same time, ushered Dobby back onto the bed, where he sat hiccupping, looking like a large and very ugly doll. At last he