

Chapter 6

"This is so boring," Harry groaned.

Slamming his book closed, he sat back in his chair, arms folded over his chest, and stared out across the library.

"What is?" Tonks asked distractedly, her quill scratching away as she wrote her essay for Charms.

Most professors eased their students into the new year, but the Charms instructor, Professor Wilkinson, was always eager to get started.

"I know it can be a little boring in the beginning," Amanda said, smiling at him from across the table. "But you need to learn the basics first. You'll get to the fun stuff soon. Besides, think of all the trouble you can get into by levitating things."

Sighing, Harry flicked his wand lazily, causing the book next to her to float into the air. Amanda and Jennifer stared at him with open mouths as it drifted smoothly back down without a sound.

"Where the hell did you learn to do that?" Jennifer asked incredulously. "It's the second day of school!"

"Harry used to steal any wand he could get his hands on," Tonks replied without looking up from her parchment. "He's been able to levitate things since he was six."

"But—" Amanda stammered, a lock of red hair falling in front of her eyes. "But he did it silently."

"I got caught when I used incantation, so I stopped," Harry shrugged, before climbing to his feet. "I'm going to go find something better to read."

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Sitting at the top of the Clock Tower, Harry studied the copy of *Chadwick's Charms, Year Seven* he had open on the wooden floor and looked back up at the old Comet two-sixty a few feet away. Over the last two days, after discovering a much more interesting book on Charms in the library, Harry had taken one of the non-functioning brooms from the school shed, stripped all the Charms off of it, and carefully applied his own.

"I think it's ready," he said, getting to his feet and picking up the broom.

Clicking her beak, Levina looked over at him curiously.

"It'll be fine," Harry assured her. "Not only will it work, I bet it'll be faster than my Lockheed."

Mounting the broom, he grinned widely as it hovered perfectly in place. Looking out at the dark, star-filled sky, he gripped the handle tightly.

"Watch this," Harry said.

As he leaned forward slightly, the broom took off like it was shot out of a canon. Harry had no hope of holding on. The broom was ripped out from under him, and he had just enough time to see it become a speck in the distance before gravity took hold, and he landed hard on his back. Groaning, he slowly climbed to his feet while Levina stared at the point where the broom had disappeared, tilted her head to the side, and blinked.

"Well, I was right," Harry said, getting the closest thing to an incredulous look a Thunderbird could give. "What? I was! There's no way my Lockheed could move that fast!"

Blinking slowly, Levina cawed softly and shrugged her shoulders.

“Alright, so maybe I should’ve limited the acceleration a bit,” Harry admitted. “At least I don’t have to worry about getting in trouble. There’s no way they find that broom.”

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Sirius and Frank touched down softly in the middle of a cornfield in Iowa. M.F.B.I agents had the entire area sealed off with yellow tape.

“This better be good to get me out of bed at two in the bloody morning,” Sirius grumbled.

He and Frank wound their way through the rows of corn for a couple of minutes before Sirius nearly stumbled into a fifteen-foot wide, eight-foot-deep crater gouged out of the soil.

“What the fuck happened here?” Sirius asked, looking at the impressively large hole.

“Not sure, yet,” one of the female agents responded while looking over a clipboard. “The No-maj military picked up an unidentified flying object traveling at Mach seven about fifteen minutes ago. They lost track of it two minutes after picking it up but couldn’t tell where it had gone. Our sensors picked up a large release of magic about the same time the local police got reports of a meteor impact in this field. Local Aurors knew nothing until we got here.”

“Anything in the hole?” Sirius asked, gazing over the edge.

“We haven’t checked yet,” the woman responded. “We just finished checking for curses. It’s clean. Whatever caused this used up all of its magic when it hit.”

“I’m not surprised,” Sirius nodded, then turned to Frank, holding out his fist. “Paper, rock, scissors?”

Frank stared at him for a long moment, receiving only a grin in response. With a sigh, he held up his hand.

“One, two, three!” Sirius counted.

The smile on his face fell when Frank countered his scissors with rock. Grumbling, Sirius took off his suit jacket and slid down into the hole.

“Careful,” the woman called. “Whatever’s down there might still be hot.”

Patting the dirt off of his pants as best he could, Sirius waved his acknowledgment and lit his wand. After a couple of minutes of searching, he saw nothing that looked out of place. Just as he was about to try a Detection Charm, he caught a glint of gold out of the corner of his eyes. Gently wiping the dirt out of the way, he carefully picked up the broken and burned shard of wood.

Property of Ilvermorny

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Sirius sighed.

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Harry followed Professor Wilkinson, the Charms professor and his Head of House, to the Headmistress’ office, trying to think of all the reasons he could be in trouble. That thought process came to a screeching halt when he walked in to find Professor Turner sitting at her desk with Sirius and Aunt Andi sitting across from her.

“Thank you for coming, Harry,” Professor Turner said, smiling softly. “Please, have a seat.”

“Is everything alright?” Harry asked, looking at Sirius worriedly.

“You tell us,” Andi said, staring at him hard. “Sirius got called into work late last night because, somehow, a broom belonging to this school found its way to a cornfield in Iowa without a rider.”

“Wait, what, exactly, happened?” Professor Wilkinson asked as he and Harry took seats.

Reaching into his pocket, Sirius pulled out part of a burned and broken broom shaft in a plastic bag marked with red evidence tape and set it on the desk. Harry internally cursed when he saw the words *Property of Ilvermorny* still legible.

“Last night, the No-maj military picked up an object traveling at Mach seven across their airspace,” he said. “A few minutes later, we detected a magical explosion a few hundred miles away in the same direction of travel. When we got to the sight, we found a bloody great crater and bits of shattered broom laying all over some poor blokes cornfield.”

“Mach seven!?” Professor Wilkinson asked incredulously. “How?”

“That’s what we were wondering,” Sirius said, turning to his Godson. “Is there anything you’d like to tell us, Harry?”

Harry immediately knew he was cornered. Sirius wouldn’t ask a question like that unless he already knew the answer. He didn’t know a great deal about all the tools the M.F.B.I had to track magic, but he knew they could. Likely, they had already tracked the Charms on the broom to the magical signature of his wand. Or, if they hadn’t, they could and were just waiting to see if he’d lie first.

“Fine, it was me,” Harry admitted.

“How on Earth did you make a broom go that fast?” Professor Wilkinson asked.

“And why?” Andi added with a glare. “What were you thinking!?”

"I was bored," Harry shrugged. "I was looking through the library for something more interesting to read than my school books when I found a section on Charms used to make brooms, so I decided to give it a try."

"You caused all of this because you were bored?" Andi asked incredulously.

"Well, I really wanted to see if I could break the speed of sound on a broom, but it took off too fast," Harry told her. "It was an accident. I fell off when I tried to fly it, and it just kept going."

"It's a good thing you did," Sirius said, shaking his head. "We think that, at that speed, the broom caught fire mid-flight and went into a dive when the Charms failed. It put an eight-foot-deep hole in some guy's cornfield. Gave the No-maj's a fright, too."

"Sorry," Harry said. "I'll pay for the damages and the broom. It was one of the ones they don't use anyway. The Charms were falling apart on it."

"That doesn't mean you can just take it!" Andi yelled, throwing her hand up in the air. "What am I going to do with you?"

"How does the M.F.B.I plan on dealing with this?" Professor Turner asked, leaning on her desk with her fingers steepled.

"So long as it doesn't happen again, they're willing to consider it an experiment gone wrong," Sirius said, trying his best and failing to look disapproving. "If it happens again, they may decide on a harsher punishment."

Harry had to repress a snort. He knew that was a lie. Short of killing someone, Sirius wouldn't let him get in any real trouble.

“Very well,” Professor Turner said, turning to Harry. “I believe a week's worth of detention with Professor Wilkinson is in order. If you're going to be using magic like this, it's best if you learn how to do so safely.”

“Absolutely,” Professor Wilkinson nodded. “Despite the dangers you put yourself and others in, Mach seven is extremely impressive. I think that might be the fastest anyone has ever made anything move with magic.”

“I give up,” Andi muttered in defeat.

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“Ah, I see what happened,” Professor Wilkinson said, looking over the notes Harry had made about his broom. “You didn't have any acceleration control. You said you got the idea from Chadwick's Charm?”

“Yeah,” Harry replied.

“That's really not the best book for you to use for this sort of enchanting,” Professor Wilkinson told him. “Chadwick's really only gives you the basics on how brooms work. It doesn't go into detail. For that, you really want Advanced Charms volume eighteen. As the name suggests, this sort of thing is pretty advanced. Are you sure you want to get into something like this?”

Harry shrugged, “I just thought it would be something cool to do. I don't plan on making racing brooms for a living or anything. Besides, it doesn't look that hard. You just need to layer the Control Charms over the Propulsion and Braking Charms for them to work, right?”

“Well, yes, but it can be a bit more complicated than that in certain instances,” Professor Wilkinson said, blinking in surprise.

“I’ll need to add some sort of Shielding Charm, too,” Harry said. “I didn’t last time because I just wanted to see if I could get the broom to work. But if I’m going to break the speed of sound, I’ll need something to protect me from the wind. Probably the heat, too.”

“Let’s slow down and just work on getting the broom to fly controllably, first,” Professor Wilkinson told him with a nervous glance. “Why are you so set on breaking the speed of sound?”

“I just want to see if I can do it,” Harry said.

“I get that, but why?” he asked again.

“My Aunt says I like to push limits,” Harry shrugged with a smirk.

“You like testing yourself?” Professor Wilkinson asked, arching an eyebrow when he got a nod in response. “Tell me, Harry, have you ever thought about picking up dueling?”

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea, Professor,” Harry admitted with a smile. “I’ve never really been one to follow the rules.”

Professor Wilkinson grinned, “Dueling isn’t about following the rules. It’s about finding creative ways to break them.”

Harry stared at his Charms professor contemplatively for a long moment before shrugging.

“I’ll give it a shot.”

“Aren’t you going to do your homework?” Michelle asked Harry softly.

They were sitting on a comfortable couch in the Thunderbird common room. While Michelle worked on her Transfigurations essay that was due at the end of the week, he was putting the finishing touches on his latest broom. Over the last two months, he’d gone through four different versions, each working better than the last. Professor Wilkinson got a little annoyed with him in the beginning when Harry refused his offer of advice, but that changed when he realized he liked the challenge of figuring out the problem himself. Now, he only stepped in if something looked a bit too dangerous.

Of course, the professor’s idea of dangerous and Harry’s were two entirely different things.

“I finished it,” Harry told her.

“You’re not going to give Professor Harper another short essay, are you?” Michelle asked.

“I made it as long as it needs to be,” Harry said. “Come on, even you have to admit there’s no reason to know when, where, and who invented a certain spell. It’s a waste of time. And anyways, it’s not like those grades matter much.”

“Only if you want to get a job doing something other than cleaning toilets,” she told him snarkily.

Sitting back, Harry turned to Michelle and smiled. It had taken her a while to relax around him enough to start joking, but he enjoyed how out of character her biting comments could be when she was annoyed.

“Really? Then why do they assign classes based on LAMP scores instead of our class grades?” Harry asked. “And why do employers only look at SALEM scores?”

Michelle furrowed her brow, glaring at him as she tried to think of a response.

“Look, you want to ace all your tests, then by all means, go ahead,” he told her with a smile. “But while you’re learning all those useless facts about who, when, and where, I’ll focus on learning something new.”

“I hate it when you make sense like that,” Michelle sighed.

“Yeah, he’s annoying when he does that,” Dora said as she fell onto the couch next to Harry tiredly. “How’s the broom coming?”

“Good,” Harry grinned. “Next test flight is tomorrow.”

“Just don’t kill yourself,” she told him. “Or start a war by accidentally launching your broom at China or something.”

Harry rolled his eyes as Michelle giggled next to him.

“Do you have a date for the next Salem visit?” Dora asked suddenly.

“No,” he replied. “You?”

“Ben asked me to go with him,” she said.

Harry ignored the gnawing feeling in his stomach and looked at her with a raised eyebrow.

“Ben Shaffer?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Dora said, a touch defensively. “What’s wrong with Ben?”

“Nothing, I guess,” Harry shrugged. “I just think you can do better. He’s not the brightest crayon in the box.”

“Yeah, well, the last time I went for better, it didn’t work out too well,” Dora reminded him. “This time, I’m going for attractively average.”

“If you say so,” Harry shrugged.

Silently, he wondered if Dora would get too suspicious if Ben came down with a sudden case of explosive diarrhea on Saturday.

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“Seriously?” Harry asked, thoroughly unimpressed with the MFAA supervisors the government had sent over to keep an eye on him.

“It couldn’t be helped,” Professor Wilkinson told him.

Sighing, Harry made his way into the Great Hall with his broom on his shoulder. A black man with greying hair, a mustache, and a clipboard in his hands looked up and made his way over to him.

“Mr. Potter,” he said. “I’m Marcus Denninger. There are just a few things we need to go over before your flight. You’ll need to stay at an altitude below twelve thousand feet at all times. Any and all attempts to break the sound barrier must be done at least one mile from land. We have safety swimmers on brooms stationed at intervals going for two miles off the coast. There’s also a red flag indicating where you need to stop and turn back. Intentionally violating any of these requirements will result in a minimum fine of five hundred Galleons and a maximum of up to five thousand. Do you have any questions before we begin?”

“What’s with the box?” Harry asked.

The woman standing behind the man who’d been speaking looked up and smiled.

“Radar,” she replied. “It’s just so we can keep track of where you are and how fast you’re going.”

“Does anyone know the fastest anyone’s ever gone on a broom before?” Harry asked.

“Three hundred and twenty-seven miles an hour,” the woman replied. “It was set by a British Wizard named Paul Whitworth in 1968.”

Harry snorted, “That’ll be easy to beat.”

Without waiting for a response, Harry marched outside. Everyone, from staff to students, was already on the front lawn waiting. He wasn’t too sure what they were hoping to see. He’d be too far away and going too fast for anyone to watch.

Spotting two more MFAA workers waiting with brooms, Harry sighed. He was about to ask what they were hoping to do when their brooms couldn’t hope to keep up with his but stopped when he spotted Sirius, Andi, and Ted waiting with Dora.

“Hey, what are you guys doing here?” Harry asked, accepting a hug from Andi.

“You didn’t think we’d come to see you make history?” Ted asked with a grin as he patted him on the back.

“Are you sure you want to do this, Harry?” Andi asked nervously.

"I don't really care about the record. I just want to see if I can do it," Harry shrugged. "Don't worry, Aunt Andi, I'll be fine."

"Harry has a talisman that will protect him if anything goes wrong," Professor Wilkinson assured her. "As soon as the enchantments stop him safely, he'll be Portkeyed directly to the Medical Wing, where Nurse Powers is waiting if needed."

"I'm not going to crash," Harry said firmly, rolling his eyes.

"Just be careful," Dora said, hugging him tightly.

As she stepped away, Sirius took her place, hugging him tightly and patting him on the back.

"International waters are two miles from shore, right?" Harry asked softly.

"Yeah," Sirius said, then paused and pulled back with suspicious look. "Why?"

"Just curious," Harry grinned. "See you guys soon."

Stepping on the footrest, Harry ascended into the air, loud cheers drowning out his Godfather's shouts. As the MFAA workers joined him, he mounted the broom properly and flew towards the bay. A relieving warmth washed over him as the Charms on the broom kicked in, shielding him from the cold November air.

More MFAA workers were waiting for him out over the water. There was a line of more than twenty going out into the distance, all with yellow flags dangling from the backs of their brooms. At the end, two miles away, he could just make out the large red banner signaling the end. As Harry flew to the starting position, grinning in anticipation, Levina circled overhead.

Gripping the shaft of his broom, Harry leaned forward and took off like a shot.

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“He’s started,” The woman with the radar announced with a smile. “Mach zero point three... five... seven... mach zero point eight... zero point nine... He’s done it! Mach one!”

As the crowd roared and cheered, a rumble like thunder could be heard in the distance.

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Harry grunted, his muscles straining as he accelerated so fast the Charms designed to dampen the G-forces couldn’t keep up. He was just glad they worked at all. Even a No-maj plane would be torn apart by the forces his magic was dealing with.

As he sliced through the air, he could see clouds of condensed air bouncing off the edges of the shield protecting him from the wind. Unfortunately, he had no idea how fast he was going, so he just kept pushing.

In seconds, he reached the red flag that marked the end of his MFAA-approved route. Harry grinned as he blew right past it, the shockwave of his passage ripping the fabric from whatever magic held it in place.

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“He’s still going,” the woman called, still smiling slightly. “Mach one point one at three miles... mach one point two at four miles...”

“Dammit, Harry,” Sirius sighed.

“That boy is grounded until he’s thirty,” Andi muttered.

"I told you," Dora said, holding out her hand expectantly. "Pay up."

With a muttered curse, Ted pulled out a couple of Galleons and placed them in his daughter's hand.

"Are you kidding me?" Andi yelled, hands on her hips as she glared at both of them. "Can you two be serious?"

Just as Sirius opened his mouth with a smirk, she turned on him with her wand in hand.

"Don't," she said with deadly calm.

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Harry pushed his broom as fast as it could go. As it neared its top speed, it started to buck and lose forward momentum suddenly. Deciding he'd done all he could, he slowed down.

"Well, time to head back and get yelled at," he said to himself.

Looking down at the water to judge his speed, he waited until he was moving slowly enough that it was safe to turn and headed back to the distant shore. Grinning to himself, he figured if he was already in trouble, what would a bit more hurt? Gripping his broom, he took off once more.

The shore approached with startling speed. Pulling up a few thousand feet, Harry flew straight for Mount Greylock. If his classmates were going to sit out in the cold, they might as well get a show. Passing directly over the front lawn, he slowed back down and circled around to land. His classmates stood and swarmed around him as he landed.

“Dude! You shook every window in the castle!” someone yelled.

“That was sick!”

“You’re crazy!” Johnny grinned, clapping him on the back.

Before Harry could respond to his old friend, Dora jumped into his arms and wrapped her legs around his waist.

“You did it!” she yelled.

Harry laughed and spun her around excitedly.

“Do you have any idea how dangerous that was!?” Denninger yelled, glaring with his arms folded over his chest.

“Yeah, yeah,” Harry said, setting Tonks down and waving him off as he looked at the woman with the radar. “How fast did I go?”

“Mach one point seven,” the woman told him.

“And you went *twelve miles* past your designated stopping point,” Denninger growled. “Do you have any idea how many laws you just broke?”

“Well, technically, when I did that, I was in international airspace,” Harry told him.

Denninger sputtered, his mouth working silently for several moments.

“He does have a point,” the woman said.

“Yeah, well, that doesn’t cover what he did on the way back,” Denninger argued. “You were strictly told not to attempt to break the sound barrier over land, which you did.”

“Just send me the bill,” Harry told him dismissively.

Turning away from the flabbergasted man, he pulled Dora over to their family to celebrate.

“Did you have to say that?” Andi asked frustratedly. “He’s going to fine you as much as he can now. Just because you make money from those books doesn’t mean you should waste it.”

“I’m not going to,” Harry grinned. “I got a letter from Lockheed last night. They offered to pay me fifty thousand Galleons for access to any and all research I conduct on brooms. I sent Uncle Ted a copy this morning. It’s probably still on the way.”

“Fifty thousand!?” Dora gasped.

“How much of it did you read?” Ted asked.

“I skimmed it,” Harry said.

“So, that’s a no,” Ted smiled. “Most likely, they're only offering that much if you give them the rights to keep the full profits from anything they develop using your research. If you ask for a cut of the royalties, you’ll get less to start with but a lot more in the long run if they use it. I’ll look it over when it gets delivered.”

Harry shrugged, “I don’t really care about the money. Just make whatever deal you think is best. I trust you.”