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Special Task

The night was cool for the end of July. The trees rustled in the light breeze. The street was deserted with only a few cars parked along the curb.

The silhouette of a cat stood out in front of the moon. The small black shape with pointed ears watched everything around it, on the lookout for potential prey to feast on for its dinner.

Suddenly, the feline's ears perked up, alert.

Something had caught its attention. Squinting to discern the shape in the darkness, the animal spotted three figures emerging from the alley.

Barely illuminated by the yellow light of the streetlamp, they hid in the darkness of the narrow street as if trying to remain unnoticed by any passerby.

Two men and a woman stood side by side, all dressed in very elegant black suits. They all had tanned skin and white hair. Their eyes were a very light green, close to yellow.

From their appearance, two of them seemed to be over forty. Although their features were fine and elegant, there were signs of aging in the fine wrinkles that lined their foreheads.

The last one, however, looked much younger. His slicked-back hair and smooth, slender jaw made it hard to believe he was twenty.

"Are you sure of the destination, Quintus?" asked the woman, looking around. "There are a few too many traces of Muggles around here for a meeting with Lucius Malfoy."

In the community, it was well known that Lucius Malfoy did not hold Muggles in high regard. The street lighting and the multiple cars lined up along the curb made it hard to believe that a secret meeting could take place here.

The street gently sloped up toward a small square in the center of which stood a fountain whose faint sound of water could be heard.

"I believe it's this way," he indicated to his wife and son.



They reached the fountain and looked around.

No one.

The cobblestone ground led to a large oak tree that covered part of the path, under which there was a bench and... another silhouette.

Quintus's gaze passed over it before returning as if he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

A tall man was sitting on the bench, a long pipe between his fingers, the embers glowing with each puff.

Quintus cast a troubled glance at his wife, who barely nodded.

"Wait here," he instructed the other two before crossing the street to join the only person present.

He approached the smoker and sat down next to him.

"What do you want?" the man spat as he saw Quintus approach his bench.

Quintus reached into his pocket and pulled out a business card, which he handed to the man.

"I'm looking for Lucius Malfoy," he explained. "He told me to give this to my guide, is that you?"

The man snatched the card from his hand and examined it curiously as if to ensure it was authentic. The small gray rectangle bore a serpent emerging from the gaping mouth of a human skull. He snapped his fingers, and the card burst into flames before disappearing in smoke.

Quintus moved as if to stop him, but the other raised a hand to calm him.

"Don't worry, old man," he reassured him. "There are instructions to prevent these cards from falling into the wrong hands."

While Quintus was talking with the other man, the boy who was watching from a distance tried to understand what they were saying.

"Are you ready, Attilius?" asked the woman, who was constantly smoothing the folds of her dress. "The Dark Lord wishes to entrust you with a very important task."

The boy said nothing. He didn't even pretend to nod. He wanted to get this pointless meeting over with. He turned his head towards the woman and gave her a reassuring smile.



"They're coming, Mother."

The woman turned around and saw her husband and the other man approaching them. The latter removed his hat, revealing his tangled hair cascading over his frail shoulders.

"My name is Scabior," he introduced himself. "I am your guide to the Malfoy Manor."

"How come we couldn't go directly to Lucius?" asked Quintus's wife.

"The place has become off-limits, Mrs. Malkin," Scabior declared. "You understand we can't allow the Dark Lord's headquarters to be tracked by Ministry Aurors?"

"True enough," she admitted. "And how are you planning to take us there?"

In response, Scabior extended his hand, palm open, toward the Malkins. In his palm, he held an old sock with green and white stripes running through it.

Mrs. Malkin snorted.

"Is this a joke?" she fumed.

A smile spread across their guide's lips.

"There's nothing more undetectable than a Portkey, Mother," declared Attilius.

"Your son is right, my dear," Scabior added. "These are the Dark Lord's orders, after all."

"I suppose the choice of object was also up to him," she retorted sarcastically.

Scabior's smile widened.

"No, that was my little personal contribution."

She shot a venomous glance at her husband and Lucius Malfoy's envoy, then deigned to place her leather-gloved finger on the shabby sock.

She was imitated by her husband and son.

As soon as Attilius placed his hand on the sock, a bluish light flared up, growing stronger from the worn sock, and sucked the four of them away from the small square. A hook seemed to have settled behind Attilius's navel. The world began to spin around them.

Everything became blurry.



The colors blended into an incomprehensible maelstrom before they landed in the middle of a dirt path.

Dead leaves flew up at their arrival. All around them, a path lined with trees extended. The bare earth led toward an immense gate as black as the night. On either side of the path, Attilius recognized the yew trees leading to the Malfoy Manor.

"I suppose I can leave you to continue on your own from here," Scabior announced. "I can't linger; I have another mission awaiting me."

Quintus made a gesture of thanks, but their guide had already disappeared in a swirl of dead leaves.

He turned to his family, and they silently advanced along the path until they reached a high wrought-iron gate. Far beyond, an immense manor stood proudly, illuminated by multiple braziers along the path leading to the three-meter-high entrance door.

A light caught their attention. A circle of light seemed to be moving toward them. The circle appeared to be emanating from the tip of a small wand held by a stout man. His face slipped between the bars of the gate. The light revealed a bald head with rodent-like features. The man seemed to have lost a lot of weight in a short time. His clothes hung miserably like a pile of dirty rags.

He placed a hand that shone like silver on the gate and hailed the group.

"Are you Mr. Malkin?" he asked.

One of the figures nodded.

"I am Quintus Malkin," he replied. "The Dark Lord has summoned me and my family. Lead us to him!"

The man gave a malevolent smile. The smile of someone who knows what awaits the visitors but wants to keep it a surprise.

He tapped the gate with his wand. It made a metallic click. He stepped aside and urged the Malkin family to follow him.

They passed through the wrought-iron bars as if they were made of smoke and followed the little man down the yew-lined path where peacocks with immaculate white plumage pecked, observing the newcomers with a curious gaze.

"Peacocks?!" exclaimed Mrs. Malkin. "Lucius Malfoy never denies himself anything."



The little man started to reply but was interrupted by her husband.

"The peacocks were here long before him," he noted. "His father, Abraxas, was already raising them when he was still at Hogwarts."

"When you know a bit about the Malfoys, you can understand why this bird is their symbol," Attilius remarked.

The little man chuckled at the comment but held back from saying more when he met Mrs. Malkin's dark gaze.

"Watch your language, will you! I'll remind you that he is my cousin," she imposed.

Attilius looked his mother up and down, from her perfectly coiffed head to her shoes polished to a shine.

"There is a certain resemblance."

Mrs. Malkin started to reply but stopped when she caught her husband's dark look. She pursed her lips and followed without a word.

"There must never be a dull moment in your family," their guide noted in his small, thin voice.

At the end of the alley, an elegant manor appeared in the darkness, with lights reflecting on the mullioned windows on the ground floor. Somewhere in the dark park, beyond the hedge, the sound of a fountain could be heard.

They hurried to the door, which swung inward as they approached without seeing anyone opening it.

The entrance hall, dimly lit, was vast and sumptuously decorated, with a magnificent rug covering most of the stone floor. The pale portraits hanging on the walls followed the group with their eyes as they advanced at a brisk pace.

They stopped in front of a heavy wooden door that led to the next room.

The little man bowed as he pushed open the door, revealing a salon filled with silent visitors.

A single figure was seated on an elegant chair, draped in a long black cloak, his face completely hidden by the shadows cast by the hood he wore.

His thin white hands rested on the arms of the chair. One held an elegant ebony wand, and the other toyed with a silver ring, embedded with an obsidian stone.

"Here are the guests I mentioned, my Lord," announced the little man.



Two long, thin, white fingers with almost translucent skin rose to the figure's chin, pushing back the hood and revealing an inhuman face. The vertical pupils of his snake-like eyes met Attilius's gaze, the sclera glowing red in the darkness of the room.

The Dark Lord, whose name most wizards no longer dared to speak, slowly turned his gaze to Quintus, his wife, and their son, who was standing just behind them.

A brief, thin smile appeared on his lips.

"Welcome, my dear Malkins," he said, his voice dripping with honey, all sweetness in appearance only. "Your reputation precedes you."

At the other end of the room, the door closed silently.

One of the guests, seated at the end of the room, bent toward a neighbor and whispered,

"Do you know what he's called?"

"No," the other replied, "I don't know his name, but I can tell you one thing."

"And that is?"

"The boy will soon be one of us."

Wormtail settled the boy in a garden lounge and, with a flick of his wand, conjured a tray holding sandwiches, a glass, and a silver carafe filled with pumpkin juice.

"You have everything you need?" he asked curtly.

The boy didn't even have time to respond before the small man turned on his heel and went back to his master.

He leaned forward to grab a sandwich and brought it to his lips before pausing. He sniffed it several times, searching for any sign of poison, but detected nothing suspicious.

"You can eat them without worry," said a voice. "There's no poison in those sandwiches."

Attilius looked around, trying to locate the source of the voice but saw no one.

"I'm up here, you dimwit," the voice said again. "Right above you."

Attilius raised his eyes and saw a man in a black robe with emerald highlights, standing in the middle of a painting that depicted an orchard.



“Abraxas?” he asked. “What are you doing here?”

“Mr. Malfoy, if you please, you little brat. Have you forgotten your manners in recent years?”

The portrait of Lucius Malfoy’s father had been placed right in the center of the small salon.

“I owe this new prime spot to that grumpy snake-faced man.”

Attilius smiled upon hearing the nickname given to He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Few people dared show such disrespect to such a powerful wizard.

However, Abraxas Malfoy was no ordinary wizard. When he was a student at Hogwarts, he met Tom Riddle. Being a few years older, he had witnessed the early misdeeds of the one who would become the greatest dark wizard of all time.

A great wizard of his era, Abraxas had been one of Professor Slughorn’s best students, who recommended him to join the Grand Assembly of Potion Masters.

“They didn’t want you in the main salon?” Attilius pressed.

“Let’s just say that my remarks annoyed the Dark Lord, and after trying to destroy my frame three times, Lucius preferred to move me to a safer place.”

Attilius nodded.

“And how is Draco?”

Abraxas grumbled.

“That little idiot is a lot like his father when he was young: always convinced he knows better than everyone else and certain of his superiority over those around him.” the young man smiled.

“He hasn’t changed, I see.”

The portrait shrugged.

“I am especially sad to see my family groveling before such a ridiculous half-blood. His ideas are interesting, but his servants are all more stupid than the next.”

He cleared his throat before continuing. “You’d better eat what’s been served to you, kid.

They’ll be coming to fetch you soon.”

Attilius hurriedly ate a few sandwiches before the little man named Wormtail came back to collect him.



“Follow me”, he ordered as they headed back to the main hall.

Attilius cast one last glance at Abraxas Malefoy, who had already left his portrait and gone off somewhere unknown. He passed through the hall where about a dozen other portraits followed him with their eyes. They whispered as he passed, and Wormtail silenced them with a wave of his wand.

They entered the grand hall. The doors closed behind them, and everyone fixed their gaze on the young man, waiting for what would come next.

Standing straight as a rod, Attilius waited patiently for the Dark Lord to invite him to join them.

With a slow gesture, the Dark Lord signaled him to advance.

The young man circled the table, meeting the stern gazes of several people, including the ones he recognized as the Malfoys.

He reached the end of the table where his parents were seated and met the gaze of their host.

“I’ve heard you’re a very talented wizard, ” said the Dark Lord in his drawling voice. “Your father told me you’ve never been to school, is that true?”

Attilius nodded.

The Dark Lord smiled.

“He also told me that you are an adept at Legilimency, is that correct?”

Another nod.

“Do you have any other talents?” he pressed.

Attilius glanced slightly downward at the serpent coiled around his master’s feet and began hissing between his teeth. The serpent reared up and slowly moved towards him, its tongue flicking out.

The young man extended his arm, and the animal coiled around him, moving up to his neck and resting its head on his shoulder.

The Dark Lord smiled.

“Fascinating”, he articulated.

His gaze shifted from Attilius to his parents.

“Your family hosts a Parselmouth. Your bloodline must be very pure.”



Mr. and Mrs. Malkin smiled haughtily. They looked proudly at the rest of the assembly, who responded with sneering smiles.

“I must say, I didn’t expect so many surprises from your son, Quintus. With Romulus and

Attilius, you have quite a lineage”, he said.

He turned his head to the left side of the table and locked eyes with a man barely over twenty who had the same green-yellow eyes as Attilius.

“Has your father explained what your mission will be?” he continued.

Attilius shook his head.

“He told me you wanted to entrust me with a mission but that he wasn’t allowed to say more because it’s a secret.”

The Dark Lord smiled.

“Your father is quite right. The mission you are to be given is very secretive. Now that Dumbledore is dead, the position of Headmaster at Hogwarts is vacant. Severus, whom you see here”, he said, indicating a man with greasy black hair, “will take the position and run the school as I see fit”.

He paused before continuing.

“However, I no longer have spies among the students. Draco revealed his allegiance by allowing my Death Eaters to infiltrate the school a few months ago. I need a new person to join Hogwarts to inform me about the actions of the students.”

Attilius nodded.

“You want me to mix with Harry Potter’s friends to find out what they’re up to, right?”

It was Voldemort’s turn to nod.

The young man fixed his green eyes on the Dark Lord’s, and a smile stretched across his lips, revealing a perfect set of teeth.

“When do I start?”

The meeting concluded, and all the Death Eaters left to return to their posts. As the hall emptied, the Malkins pretended to leave when their eldest son joined them.

“Good evening, Father”, he greeted. “Good evening, Mother.”



He gave his brother a venomous look.

"Attilius"

"Romulus", he replied in the same tone. "How are you?"

"Not too bad", his brother replied. "I have a lot of work at the Ministry, but things are progressing well. Scrimgeour should be leaving his position soon. I've already found a replacement who will be happy to follow the Dark Lord's orders. A real little puppet."

The younger brother laughed.

"What's so funny?"

"I just think it's a bit cheeky of you to talk about puppets, that's all."

Romulus reached into his robe pocket, but his master's voice interrupted him.

"You weren't planning to attack your brother, I hope?" he hissed.

The young man's hand froze as a long, flexible form wriggled between his feet.

"Of course not, master", he stammered.

He withdrew his hand from his pocket and bowed in submission.

"Good dog", joked his brother.

Romulus shot him a murderous look, but it didn't faze Attilius. He clicked his tongue as if calling a dog.

The eldest wanted to respond, but his master's dark gaze dissuaded him.

The Dark Lord approached Attilius to speak with him alone. Everyone else left the room without a word.

Once they were alone, Voldemort revealed another part of his mission to the young man.

They began speaking in Parseltongue so that no one could understand them, even if they pressed their ears to the door.

"I would like you to undertake another mission for me."

"Anything you wish, master."

Voldemort paused before continuing.

"I have doubts about Snape", he admitted. "Spending so much time with Dumbledore must have changed him. Even though his behavior suggests



otherwise, I don't want to risk having my plan compromised. Even by one of my Death Eaters."

Attilius nodded.

"It will be done as you wish, master."

Voldemort smiled.

"I'm surprised that your brother's threat didn't make you react. Many others would have already drawn their wands."

The young man smiled in return.

"I don't have a wand. I've never needed one."

He turned out the pockets of his robe to prove it.

You possess great magical powers for your age, but you will need to have a wand made if you want to blend in among the students at Hogwarts.

"Very well, Master", said Attilius, bowing.

They left the room and found the Malkins and the Malfoys in the lounge, discussing various matters.

"Wormtail!" Voldemort called out.

The little man standing in a corner approached.

"Take our friend to our guest. He needs a wand without delay."

"Yes, Master", the little man agreed.

He led Attilius down a staircase that descended to a cellar with a door. Behind it lay a large room lit by a single candle.

"Ollivander!" shouted the little man in his squeaky voice. "Ollivander, where are you?"

The sound of a chair scraping was heard, and a tall, frail figure hobbled toward the two men.

The light from the death eater's wand illuminated the face of an elderly man with white hair cascading over his shoulders.

"What is it?" he asked in a gravelly voice as if he hadn't spoken for a long time.

"The Master wants you to make a wand for this boy", Wormtail explained.

Ollivander stepped back.



“Why should I continue to make anything for you when you will never let me leave this place?” he protested.

Peter Pettigrew pointed his wand at Ollivander’s throat, and the light dimmed around them.

In the dim light, Attilius saw a predatory smile on the little man’s face. He could sense the pleasure Wormtail derived from having even a small amount of power over his victim.

From what he could see, Wormtail was regarded as an outcast among the Death Eaters. He was used as a slave for all undesirable tasks. So when given the chance to vent his frustration on someone helpless and unarmed, he didn’t hold back.

“I advise you to obey the Master’s orders if you don’t want us to resume our little torture session”, he chuckled.

Ollivander swallowed hard. Fear was evident in his eyes, but he showed a certain determination not to give in without resistance.

“I will not make any more wands for you, you monsters!” he squeaked. “You only seek to dominate others from your false throne of power. Wands are tools meant for good. They suffer when used as you do.”

The death eater pressed his wand harder under Ollivander’s chin. The light thus suffocated turned the room a reddish hue.

“Give me the pleasure”, he growled.

Attilius grabbed Wormtail’s arm and pulled him back with such force that the little man stumbled down the steps of the staircase.

“What’s the matter with you?!” he exclaimed.

“I don’t think the Dark Lord would be very pleased if we delay the making of my wand”, said the young man, not letting go of the little man’s wrist.

Wormtail tried to pull his arm away, but Attilius’s strength was far greater.

“I advise you not to insist”, said Attilius with an amused smile, “my hands are itching, and I’d be tempted to try out a few amusing curses.”

Wormtail squeaked.

“Leave us”, the young man ordered, throwing Peter into the staircase. “Tell the Master that I will come up as soon as the wand is ready.”



He watched the little man ascend the stairs, swearing, and waited for the door to close before conjuring green flames in his hands to illuminate Ollivander's waxy face.

"Please excuse this little dispute", he said. "I don't like it when someone threatens an unarmed person."

The elderly man rubbed his throat.

"Thank you", he said. "I don't know who you are, but you seem different from all the others I've had the misfortune of meeting."

Attilius smiled at him.

"Let's just say I've never been on a quest for power like them. I enjoy doing what I like, but I do have certain obligations sometimes."

With a snap of his fingers, he unlocked the door and opened it carefully so as not to startle the old man. The latter stepped back into the room, preferring to keep a reasonable distance from the young man.

"Don't worry", Attilius reassured him. "I'm not going to do you any harm. I absolutely need a wand to carry out a mission for the Dark Lord."

With a wave of his hand, he sent the burst of flames to ignite the candles lined up on the walls.

"There we go!" He smiled. Now we can see much better, don't you think?

Ollivander slumped onto the chair at his workbench, his head in his hands. Attilius approached and placed a friendly hand on his shoulder.

"I understand your reluctance", he admitted. "You are a brave person despite the mistreatment you've suffered here."

Ollivander looked up at the young man who smiled at him.

"Promise me you won't hurt anyone", he pleaded.

Attilius's smile vanished.

"Unfortunately, that's a promise I can't make. I don't know what obstacles I will face during my mission, but I can promise you that I will do my best to avoid using it as much as possible."

Whatever choice he made, he would not be able to oppose the decision of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. But something intrigued him about this young man.



He seemed to be of the same age as the young Malfoy, yet he appeared much more mature. He resembled that horrible man named Romulus Malkin, but his demeanor seemed far more composed. It seemed nothing could unsettle him. Not even the presence of the Dark Lord.

Ollivander sighed.

“It’s better than nothing”, he conceded.

He slammed his palm on the table to seal their promise. Attilius nodded in agreement.

“We need to take some measurements”, the old man explained.

He picked up a measuring tape from the workbench and measured the length of the young man’s arms, the width of his palm, his waist, and a few other measurements that made no sense to Attilius.

“What is your preferred hand?” he asked.

In response, Attilius raised his left hand. Ollivander’s eyes widened in surprise.

“When one is different, one is different all the way”, he recited with a smile.

Ollivander nodded.

“Let’s start with the heart of the wand”, he resumed.

He opened several drawers and pulled out unicorn hairs, dragon heartstrings, and a few slightly crumpled phoenix feathers.

“Do you have anything a bit more unusual?” Attilius asked, scanning the various samples.

Ollivander shook his head.

“These are the three types of cores I am accustomed to working with.”

Attilius shrugged and moved closer to examine the samples. He passed his hand over each one, closing his eyes. He seemed to be searching for something that his eyes alone could not distinguish.

After several passes, he held his hand still above a pile. His fingers felt the softness of the feathers. He sifted through the pile and pulled out a feather, presenting it to Ollivander.

“I’ll take this one”, he indicated.

Ollivander nodded and took the feather in his hands.



“Very well, let’s move on to the body of the wand.”

He put away the core samples and opened a new drawer containing about thirty different woods. He spread them out on the workbench and stepped back to let Attilius choose.

This time, however, he didn’t have to wait long. His hand stopped above a light-colored wood on his first pass. He took the piece in his hands and handed it to Ollivander.

“White oak”, noted the old man with curiosity.

Attilius frowned.

“Is there a problem?”

“Absolutely not”, replied Ollivander. “It’s a very rare choice. Great wizards had wands made from white oak.”

The young man smiled.

“That’s a good thing for me then.”

He watched the old man work for a few minutes before leaving the room. He locked the door behind him and went back up to the lounge where his family was waiting.

“Did everything go well?” his mother asked.

Attilius nodded with a smile.

“He just started working”.

The young man glanced at the corner of the room where Wormtail stood silently, preferring to look away.

Quintus seemed tense. According to what his older brother had told him, the head of the family had spent a long time with the Dark Lord to execute his plan.

He went back down about ten minutes later to collect the wand that Ollivander had just made. It measured twenty-six centimeters and was particularly flexible. The wood's grain made it perfectly suited to Attilius’s hand.

He thanked the wandmaker and went back up the stairs to the lounge where his family was waiting.

His brother was the first to pounce on him.

“Show me your wand”, he demanded.



The young man hesitated for a moment before handing over the slender piece of wood, which his brother took between his hands.

From his look, he seemed to recognize some quality in the wand. His own had been made by Ollivander years earlier, but it held a power rarely seen in a wizard of his age.

He took the wand between his hands and gave his brother a predatory smile.

“I could break it with a simple gesture.”

Attilius returned the smile with amusement.

“I don’t need it to kick your arse. I’ve never needed it to be better than you.”

Romulus scowled.

He pretended to respond when he met his father’s gaze, which silently instructed him not to retort.

Attilius smiled at his father. Romulus hesitated for a moment before returning the wand. He regretted involving his son in this mission, but only he still had the chance to save them. He needed to complete it to prevent his family from losing its status.

Romulus escorted his family to the gate, which he deactivated with a wave of his wand.

“See you very soon”, his mother said.

In response, he gave her a smile before heading back to the manor. Attilius watched him for a few moments before they disappeared home.

Safe and sound.

