

Ending Maker: Fate Wizardry

Chapter Intro:

*This fic's premise is inspired by the webtoon titled **Ending Maker**/엔딩메이커 by **Chwiryong** and their illustrator **chyan**. Please check them out.*

Story Starts

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Ch 8.3 - Pardon my French

The bell above Ollivander's door gave a sharp, crystalline jingle as Harry pushed through. The sound cut through the low hum of Diagon Alley behind them and died in the heavy, still air of the shop.

Harry stepped inside and the smell hit him first. Old paper, aged timber, something faintly chemical—like varnish left open too long in a warm room. Thousands of narrow boxes lined the walls from floor to ceiling in columns so tight they seemed structural, as though removing one might bring the whole façade tumbling down. Dust motes caught the thin light from the single front window, drifting in lazy spirals.

Hermione entered behind him, then Fleur. Tonks slipped in last, her hair a cheerful bubblegum pink beneath a pointed hat she'd picked up somewhere between Flourish and Blotts and here. Moody planted himself outside by the door, magical eye swivelling in its socket. Gascon took the opposite flank. The second Delacour guard, Rémy, wasn't with them today—assigned to Apolline's detail at L'Ultima Cena. Squat and stone-faced, Rémy had spent decades standing outside doors and had long since stopped being curious about what happened behind them. Or so Harry had gleaned—though most of the guards no longer gave him challenging stares, for some reason.

The shop was smaller than Harry had expected. Three people made it cosy. Five made it cramped. Tonks knocked a box from a low shelf with her elbow before they'd been inside ten seconds.

"Oops."

Harry caught it and slid it back into place. Tonks grinned at him, unrepentant.

"Marvellous reflexes," said a voice from nowhere in particular.

Harry's hand twitched—fingers curling around a grip that wasn't there. Instinct. He released it before anything could form.

A figure emerged from the narrow gap between two towering shelves at the rear of the shop, gliding forward on soft-soled shoes with a silence that bordered on theatrical.

Ollivander looked precisely as the books described. Pale, wide eyes that caught and held the light like a cat's. White hair that had retreated to the sides and back of his head, leaving a high, smooth dome. Skin like parchment stretched across sharp cheekbones. He was shorter than Harry had imagined—barely taller than Hermione—but the way he occupied space made the shop feel like his extension, every shelf an arm, every box a fingertip.

Those moon-wide eyes swept across them in a single, unhurried pass.

"Good afternoon," Ollivander said. The words carried a weight of ceremony, as though he'd been expecting them—not these specific people, perhaps, but the next customers who'd walk through his door, whoever they happened to be, because the door always opened eventually and the wands always waited.

"Afternoon," Harry said.

"We're first-years at Hogwarts," Hermione added, stepping forward with the bright politeness she deployed when she wanted to control the shape of a conversation from its opening line. "Starting this term."

"First-years." Ollivander's gaze drifted to Harry. It lingered, then rose—slowly, deliberately—to the brim of the navy baseball cap pulled low over his forehead. Hermione had shoved it onto his head forty minutes ago outside a Muggle sports shop on Charing Cross Road, after a crowd of witches had cornered them near Madam Malkin's. A disguise born of necessity—though the handlebar-moustached wizard who'd tried to kiss Fleur's hand for the third time had been the final straw.

Harry resisted the urge to adjust the cap.

Those pale eyes narrowed a fraction. Not suspicion, exactly—he'd spotted a loose thread and was deciding whether to pull it.

"Harry Potter," Harry said, extending his hand.

Ollivander took it. His grip was dry and surprisingly firm, fingers calloused at the tips in patterns Harry recognised from his own. Fine tools, raw materials, decades of both. A craftsman's hand.

"Mr Potter," Ollivander murmured. "I did wonder when you might visit."

Hermione introduced herself next, then Fleur, who tipped her cap with two fingers in a gesture that managed to be both casual and regal. Even beneath the cap, silver-blond strands escaped at her temples and nape, and the passive enchantment they carried seeped into the air like perfume from an uncorked bottle. Nothing overwhelming—Fleur kept the worst of her allure leashed, a lifetime of practice lately sharpened by a summer of exercises under Apolline's guidance—but enough to make the average person's thoughts stumble.

Ollivander, to his credit, merely blinked twice and moved on.

"Three first-years," he said. "Three wands to find." He paused. His gaze dropped—not to their faces, but to their forearms. Both Harry's and Fleur's sleeves sat a touch too carefully arranged, fabric smooth where it should have bunched at the wrist. Hermione's autumn jacket covered hers entirely, but Ollivander's attention had already found what it sought.

"Or perhaps," he said, his voice dropping half a register, "three wands to add to a collection already begun."

Hermione's smile didn't falter. "You can sense them?"

"My dear." Ollivander pressed a hand to his chest. "I have spent the better part of a lifetime in this shop. I can feel a wand through three inches of English oak and dragon-hide leather. Whatever holsters you've purchased—and they are fine holsters, I'll grant—they do not muffle the song."

He extended his hand, palm up, fingers slightly curled. An invitation.

"May I?"

Harry glanced at Hermione. She gave the smallest nod. Harry drew his Boisvert wand from the holster strapped to his inner forearm and laid it across Ollivander's palm.

The wandmaker's fingers closed around it with reverence. He raised it to eye level, rotating it slowly. The apple wood gleamed with a reddish warmth in the shop's dim light, the grain running in long, sinuous curves that seemed to shift as the angle changed. The garnet set into the base of the handle caught a stray beam from the window and threw a scatter of deep crimson across the nearest shelf of boxes.

"Apple," Ollivander breathed. "Thirteen inches. Firm, with a flexibility at the tip—Boisvert's signature. She favours the slight give." He brought it closer to his face, practically pressing his nose to the wood. "Manticore heartstring as the primary core. And... Veela hair? No—two organic cores and a blood binding. Triple-layered. The gem serves as a reservoir and a stabiliser."

He looked up at Harry.

"You killed the manticore yourself."

It wasn't a question. Harry noted the absence of surprise—just confirmation. Ollivander had already read the answer from the wand before asking.

"It was trying to eat me at the time," Harry said.

"A conquest core," Ollivander said, turning the wand again. "The heartstring yields to the hand that stopped its beating. Fiercely loyal. It will never perform well for another wizard." He glanced at Fleur. "And the Veela hair bridges the gap between the beast's aggression and..." He trailed off, his eyes flicking between the three of them.

Harry felt the wandmaker's gaze linger on the points where his shoulder touched Hermione's, where Fleur's knee rested against his thigh. Ollivander was piecing it together. Harry watched him choose not to say it aloud.

He returned the wand to Harry without another word.

Ollivander extended his hand towards Hermione.

Hermione drew her Boisvert wand. Hazel wood, elegant and straight, the indigo gem in the handle pulsing with its faint inner light. Ollivander received it with the same focused attention.

"Hazel," he murmured, his fingers tracing the length. "Eleven and a quarter inches. Carbuncle heartstring—exquisite. I have not worked with one myself; they are exceedingly rare outside South America. The gem-creature's affinity for crystalline structures pairs beautifully with the charged reservoir." He held the gem up to the light. The indigo deepened, then flared, then settled into a steady glow. "This gem. It has been artificially charged."

"Since I was nine," Hermione said.

Ollivander stared at the gem for a long moment. Then he returned the wand with a nod that carried the weight of professional respect.

"I would very much like to learn that process. Would you be willing to share the technique?"

Something shifted behind Hermione's eyes—the scholar retreating, the Tohsaka advancing. Harry recognised the transition. He'd seen it before, usually moments before someone's wallet suffered.

"Students are allowed off-grounds during free periods," Hermione said. "I could demonstrate. For a percentage of the profits, naturally."

Fleur and Harry exchanged a look. Ollivander chuckled.

"I'm sure we could reach an arrangement."

"Excellent. I'll have my guy contact your guy."

Ollivander gave her a mysterious smile and turned to Fleur.

Fleur's wand came last. Apple wood again—the same species but distinct in character, the grain tighter, the colour deeper, the sapphire in the handle a cold blue that offset the warmth of the wood.

"Apple once more," Ollivander said. He turned it slowly, studying the grain. "But older growth. And the Veela hair—"

"My grandmozzers'," Fleur supplied.

"A familiar anchor. Traditional French wandmaking at its finest." He paused at the second core, and stilled. "Feu Drak heartstring. She found one?" Genuine surprise flickered across his face—the first unguarded reaction Harry had seen from the man all afternoon. "The French fairy dragons have not been seen in the Pyrenees for decades. To obtain a heartstring—willingly given, I presume?"

"*Oui*."

"Apple wood complementing the fairy dragon heartstring," Ollivander murmured, almost to himself. "The dual nature of the cores mirrors..." He stopped. Drew a breath. Handed the wand back.

"Remarkable work," he said. "All three. Vivienne Boisvert remains one of the finest wandcrafters on the Continent, and I say that with full knowledge that she would claim the same of herself." A thin smile.

"Her methods differ from mine. She builds wands as one builds a symphony—multiple voices in harmony. I prefer the soloist." He straightened,

and the territorial edge crept into his posture, shoulders squaring, chin lifting. "A single wood. A single core. The wand chooses the wizard, and the wizard does not commission the choosing."

"We're aware," Hermione said smoothly. "Which is why Harry wanted to purchase from you as well. It's tradition, isn't it? British-born wizards matched by Ollivander. Harry wouldn't want to miss the experience."

Flattery and framing in a single sentence. Harry kept his face neutral. *'There she goes.'*

"And since Harry's purchasing a second wand," Hermione continued, "Fleur and I thought we might as well see what chooses us, too."

Ollivander studied her. Those pale eyes missed very little, and Harry suspected the old wandmaker heard every note Hermione wasn't playing. But the prospect of matching three unusual wizards—and the implicit challenge of complementing Boisvert's work—won out over whatever reservations lingered.

"Very well." He clapped his hands once, the sound snapping through the shop. "Who first?"

Hermione and Fleur both looked at Harry.

"Very well." Ollivander retrieved a silver tape measure from his pocket—or perhaps from the air itself; Harry didn't see where it came from. "Hold out your wand arm."

"I'm ambidextrous."

He extended both hands. The tape measure sprang to life, wrapping itself around his forearm, his bicep, the span of his fingers, the distance between his nostrils for no discernible reason. Ollivander watched it work for a moment, then turned and vanished between the shelves.

Boxes began floating from the stacks. Three. Five. Eight. They drifted to the counter in a neat queue, lids lifting in sequence.

"Beech and unicorn hair, ten inches. Give it a wave."

Harry picked it up. The wood felt inert in his hand—not hostile, just uninterested. He waved it. Nothing happened. Not even a spark.

"No, no." Ollivander plucked it away before Harry had finished the arc. "Maple and dragon heartstring, eleven inches."

A faint warmth this time, but it curdled at the point of contact, the wand vibrating as though trying to shake free of his grip. Harry set it down.

"Curious," Ollivander murmured. He pulled another box. "Vine and phoenix feather, ten and three-quarter inches."

Nothing. The wand might as well have been a stick.

Three more followed in rapid succession—ebony with unicorn tail, ash with dragon heartstring, yew with phoenix feather. Each one wrong in its own way. Too cold, too wild, too fragile, too reluctant. Harry could feel his circuits cycling with each attempt, reaching for a resonance that never came—his magic looking for something to latch onto and finding only dead air. It was the opposite of Boisvert's process. She had built a wand around his magic. Ollivander was asking his magic to recognise something that already existed.

Ollivander's movements quickened, his pale eyes brightening with each rejection. He was enjoying this.

"Tricky customer," he said, and Harry heard genuine pleasure in the words. "Let me think."

He disappeared into the back of the shop. The silence stretched. Tonks, who had been lounging against the doorframe watching with open fascination, raised her eyebrows at Harry. Harry shrugged.

Ollivander returned with a single box. Older than the others—the cardboard slightly yellowed, the edges soft with age. He set it on the counter and lifted the lid slowly, with both hands, as though the contents might wake.

"Holly and phoenix feather. Eleven inches. Nice and supple."

Harry picked it up.

The shop disappeared.

The wand hummed in his palm like a struck bell, the vibration running up his arm and settling somewhere behind his sternum—warm and bright and certain. Golden sparks erupted from the tip, cascading across the counter and drifting to the floor where they winked out like dying fireflies. The air in the shop pressed outward, then eased, as though the building itself had exhaled.

Harry held the wand up. The holly gleamed. The balance was immaculate—but different from the Boisvert wand's deliberate, engineered harmony. That had been a conversation between craftsman and wielder. This was something older. A resonance that existed before the wand touched his hand, before he'd been born, perhaps before the phoenix had shed the feather. Waiting for the circuit to close.

"Oh, bravo," Ollivander whispered. "Yes. Yes, indeed."

Harry glanced at Hermione. Her eyes were fixed on the wand, calculation flickering behind them. She'd predicted this. They both had—it was in the books, after all. But knowing something was written and holding the proof in your hand were different animals entirely.

"Curious," Ollivander said again, but this time the word carried a heavier freight. "Very curious."

Harry lowered the wand. "What's curious?"

"I remember every wand I've ever sold, Mr Potter. Every one. The phoenix whose tail feather resides in your wand gave another feather—just one other. It is curious that you should be destined for this wand, when its brother gave you that scar."

The shop went very quiet.

Harry felt Fleur tense beside him. Hermione's right hand slipped towards her holster—not reaching, just reassuring herself it was there.

"Voldemort's wand," Harry said. No inflection.

Ollivander flinched at the name—a full-body shudder that ran from his shoulders to his fingertips. "We do not speak—"

"I do," Harry said.

The wandmaker stared at him. Several seconds passed. Then Ollivander inclined his head—not quite a nod, not quite a bow. Something in between.

"Yew and phoenix feather. Thirteen and a half inches. I sold it decades ago to a young man who was, at the time, most charming." His voice had gone distant. "I think we must expect great things from you, Mr Potter. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named did great things. Terrible, yes. But great."

Harry set seven Galleons on the counter.

"Right then," Hermione said, snapping the silence in two. "My turn."

The tape measure accosted her with enthusiasm. Ollivander shook off his reverie and retreated into the shelves, returning with an armful of boxes. The first wand—birch and unicorn hair—sent a jet of sparks sideways into a shelf, toppling three boxes. Tonks caught one. The second—elm and dragon heartstring—crackled with barely contained force before Hermione winced and put it down.

"Too much aggression in the core," Ollivander muttered. "Your magic wants precision, not brute force."

He wasn't wrong. Harry watched Hermione cycle through another four wands, each one closer but not quite right. The vine and phoenix feather produced a pleasant hum but lacked depth. The rosewood and unicorn hair felt cooperative but bland. Hermione's brow furrowed with each rejection. Not frustration, exactly—impatience. She understood the mechanism, and she

couldn't force it to engage, and the gap between those two facts was intolerable.

The seventh wand silenced the room.

"Walnut and dragon heartstring," Ollivander said. "Twelve and a quarter inches. Quite rigid."

Hermione picked it up. A cascade of silver and violet sparks spiralled from the tip, forming a brief, tight helix before dissolving. The light caught the angles of her face—the sharp jaw, the slight upturn of her nose, the focused intensity behind her eyes—and for an instant she looked exactly as Harry remembered. Not Hermione Granger, bookworm, dentist's daughter. Rin Tohsaka, standing in the basement of the Tohsaka mansion, circuits blazing, command seals bright on her hand, daring the universe to blink first.

Harry breathed out. *'There you are.'*

"Walnut," Ollivander said, satisfaction warming his voice. "The wood of the brilliant and the adaptable. Dragon heartstring for power and versatility. This wand will serve you exceptionally well, Miss Granger, provided you give it the intellectual engagement it demands. A walnut wand in the hands of a lazy witch is a dull instrument. In yours..." He let the sentence complete itself.

Hermione's fingers tightened around the handle. She gave it a second, deliberate wave—controlled this time—and a ribbon of emerald light unfurled from the tip, circling the shop once before fading.

"I'll take it," she said. That tone brooked no argument.

Seven more Galleons on the counter.

Ollivander boxed Hermione's wand and turned to Fleur.

"Mademoiselle Delacour."

Fleur removed her cap and shook out her hair. The allure swelled. Tonks blinked twice and grabbed the doorframe. Ollivander didn't react.

"I 'ave been looking forward to zis," Fleur said.

The tape measure wound around her with unusual thoroughness. Ollivander watched the measurements with a thoughtful expression, then vanished into the shelves for considerably longer than he had for Harry or Hermione. Harry heard boxes shifting, the scrape of wood on wood, a soft hum that might have been Ollivander talking to himself.

He returned with five boxes.

"Rosewood and Veela hair," he said, presenting the first.

Fleur picked it up. A single, sullen spark dropped from the tip and expired on the counter.

"*Non.*"

"No indeed." Ollivander whisked it away. "Cedar and unicorn hair."

Nothing whatsoever. The wand sat in Fleur's hand like a pencil.

"Willow and phoenix feather."

A brief, bright flare—Fleur's eyes widened—then the light guttered. Close, but not quite. The phoenix feather wanted her, but the wood refused.

"Interesting," Ollivander said. His movements had slowed. He set aside the fourth box unopened and reached for the fifth, which Harry noticed he'd placed slightly apart from the others. The cardboard was darker, aged to a deep umber, and the corners were reinforced with what looked like bronze rivets.

"This wand," Ollivander said, and his voice had changed—gone reverent, almost reluctant, "has been in my family's keeping for a very long time. My great-grandfather crafted it. I have offered it to precisely four customers in my career. None were chosen."

He lifted the lid.

The wand inside rested on a bed of faded crimson silk. Oak—unmistakably oak, the grain bold and deep, the colour a rich tawny brown with darker striations running along its length. Twelve inches, perhaps twelve and a quarter, with a slight taper towards the tip that gave it an almost martial profile. The handle was unadorned. Functional. Severe.

"Oak and dragon heartstring," Ollivander said. "Twelve inches. Unyielding."

He paused.

"Ze dragon 'eartstring," Fleur said. "What kind?"

Ollivander met her gaze.

"Welsh Red," he said. "The last of her kind. The breed has been extinct for three hundred years. My great-grandfather obtained the heartstring when the dragon died of old age on the slopes of Cadair Idris. He used it once—for this wand. It is, to my knowledge, the last Welsh Red heartstring in existence."

The shop held its breath.

Fleur lifted the wand from its silk bed.

The reaction wasn't dramatic the way Harry's had been—no cascade of sparks, no golden fireworks. Instead, the air in the shop changed. The temperature dropped. The dust motes froze mid-drift. The boxes on the shelves hummed—all of them, every single wand in the shop singing in response to the power that flowed through the oak like water through a broken dam.

A wind rose from nowhere—a clean, sharp gust that smelled of rain and cut grass and something older, something that made Avalon flare against Harry's ribs like a second heartbeat. He knew that scent. Camelot. The hill. The sword in the stone.

Fleur's hair lifted, silver-blond catching the light and blazing like a banner. Her eyes—blue and ancient and fierce—fixed on the wand. Her lips parted.

A single flame bloomed from the tip. Not gold or red but white—searingly, impossibly white—and within it, Harry caught the impression of wings spread wide, a long serpentine neck, jaws parted in a silent roar. The ghost of a dragon three centuries dead, acknowledging the hand that held its heart.

The flame folded in on itself and vanished. The temperature returned. The dust motes resumed their drift.

Fleur's hand trembled. Just once.

'The Pendragon's dragon,' Harry thought, *'chose the Pendragon.'*

"Three centuries," Ollivander said softly into the silence. "Four failed matchings. And now—this."

Fleur turned the oak wand in her fingers. The severity of the handle suited her grip—she held it the way she'd held Excalibur in another life, Harry thought. Natural as breathing.

"Ow much?" Fleur asked.

Ollivander hesitated—truly hesitated, for the first time all afternoon. His fingers twitched, as though he wanted to reach for the wand and return it to its box, its shelf, its long vigil. Three centuries of waiting. Four failed matchings. The last heartstring of an extinct species, crafted by the hands of his great-grandfather.

"Seven Galleons," Ollivander said. The same price as every other wand. His voice was steady.

Fleur placed the coins on the counter.

"Merci," she said softly.

She slid the wand into the holster on her right forearm—opposite to the Boisvert wand on her left—and the oak disappeared beneath her sleeve.

Ollivander watched it vanish. A complicated expression crossed his face—loss and satisfaction and something Harry might have called relief.

"Three extraordinary matches," the wandmaker said after a moment, gathering himself. "In fifty-seven years of service, I have had perhaps a dozen afternoons to rival this one." He looked at each of them in turn—Harry, Hermione, Fleur. "I trust you will treat them well."

"We will," Harry said.

He gathered the boxed wands—his holly in its aged cardboard, Hermione's walnut in its newer case—and turned towards the door. Hermione was already there, holding it open, the late afternoon light of Diagon Alley flooding in and washing the shop's dusty interior in gold.

"Mr Potter."

Harry paused.

Ollivander stood behind his counter, hands clasped before him, pale eyes luminous in the backlight.

"The brother wands," he said. "Holly and yew. Life and death. Remember that."

Harry held the old man's gaze for a moment. Then he nodded, and stepped into the sunlight.

Hermione fell into step on his left. Fleur on his right. Tonks bounded after them, hair flickering from pink to electric blue with excitement.

"That," Tonks declared, throwing an arm around Harry's shoulder and nearly unbalancing him, "was the single most mental wand shopping trip I've ever witnessed, and I once watched a bloke try forty-three wands before Ollivander found one that didn't set his trousers on fire."

Harry glanced back at the shop. Through the grimy window, he could just make out Ollivander's silhouette, still standing behind the counter, watching them go.

The bell jingled as the door swung shut.

Moody grunted from his post by the entrance.

"Took your time."

"Three wands," Harry said. "Three matches."

"Good." Moody's magical eye fixed on Harry's forearm where the holly wand sat in its holster, then swivelled to Fleur's right arm, then Hermione's. "Brother to the Dark Lord's. You planned that."

"Hermione planned it."

'Another confirmation that the books got it right, even with a lot of deviations.'

Harry filed it away. The meta-knowledge was currency—spent carefully, it bought them advantage. Spent carelessly, it bought them scrutiny they couldn't afford.

"Same thing." Moody's scarred lip twitched—the closest thing to a smile Harry had ever seen from the man. "Another one your divination got right."

Harry said nothing. Every confirmation made the cover story more convincing and the truth more impossible to explain. *'We read it in a children's book in a previous life'* wasn't the kind of thing that inspired confidence—only existential dread, a padded room in St Mungo's, or a cell in the Department of Mysteries.

"Let's move. Andromeda's already sent two Patronuses from L'Ultima Cena asking where we are."

They stepped into the flow of Diagon Alley, Gascon closing in behind them. Harry pulled his cap lower and felt the comfortable weight of two wands on his forearms—one crafted for him, one that had chosen him. Apple and holly. Manticore and phoenix. "The forge and the garden," Boisvert had said.

He reached out and took Hermione's hand. On his other side, Fleur's fingers brushed his elbow—brief, warm, then gone.

They walked towards L'Ultima Cena, three abreast, whilst the afternoon crowds of Diagon Alley parted around them. Behind them, Gascon grunted—still avoiding Harry's eyes.

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The late afternoon sun painted Diagon Alley in amber and copper as Fleur stepped through the arched doorway of L'Ultima Cena. Behind her, Harry held the door for Hermione and Andromeda, whilst Moody's magical eye was already sweeping the street in its ceaseless orbit.

The restaurant had been a pleasant surprise—warm terracotta walls, enchanted candles that smelled of rosemary, and a wine list that even Father had acknowledged with a grudging nod. The Zabini family, as Andromeda had explained between courses, was one of those old Continental wizarding dynasties that had thoroughly threaded themselves through the fabric of magical Europe. Though neither Andromeda nor anyone else would say a word about the current matriarch.

Fleur's lip curled as she recalled the expression on their waiter's face. The poor boy—who looked a little younger than they were—had watched her order the *pappardelle al cinghiale* that served four, a Florentine steak thick as a grimoire, and a *porchetta* sandwich large enough to require both hands. His quill had hovered over his pad, trembling, whilst he glanced between her slender frame and the menu as though one of them must be lying.

Harry had pressed his knuckles against his mouth. Hermione hadn't even bothered to hide it—she'd thrown her head back and laughed until her eyes watered, that sharp, musical cackle that Fleur remembered from evenings in Fuyuki when Rin would catch Shirou doing something absurd.

"I'm a growing woman," Fleur had said, chin raised, which only made them laugh harder.

She had earned the appetite. Three mornings a week she flew circuits around the estate before dawn—broom, not carpet, because Apolline had banned

carpets after an incident involving Gabrielle, a Persian rug, and the roof of the local church. Twice weekly, a Muggle woman named Isabelle drove up from Aix-en-Provence to spar with her. Historical European martial arts, in the converted barn behind the stables. Isabelle was a former national champion who asked no questions about why a teenage girl fought with the instincts of a veteran, which suited Fleur perfectly.

Fleur didn't need the instruction. But skills left unpractised dulled, and she refused to let hers deteriorate.

The group assembled on the cobblestones outside the restaurant. Quite a procession, really. Harry and Hermione flanked her. Moody stumped along at the rear, his wooden leg striking the stones in a rhythm that scattered pedestrians more effectively than any clearing charm. Andromeda walked beside Apolline, the two women deep in conversation about potion ingredients. Gascon and Rémy took up positions at the group's edges, their eyes scanning the crowds.

And Father. Jean-Paul Delacour strode at the head of their formation. He had spent the morning navigating both the British Ministry and the labyrinthine politics of Gringotts, and would rather have done neither. It showed in his stride.

"I have opened an account in your name," he had announced over dessert, not looking at Harry. "At the goblin bank. For convenience."

The emphasis on the final word had been surgical. Because what had prompted this act of paternal generosity was Harry's casual mention, a day prior during dinner, that Fleur was welcome to a copy of his vault key.

Father's fork had frozen mid-motion. The vein in his temple—the one Fleur privately called *le petit volcan*—had begun its slow, inevitable ascent.

"That won't be necessary," Jean-Paul had said through his teeth.

"It's no trouble, sir. Ragnok can have one cut in—"

"I said." Father's knife had met the plate with a precise clink. "That won't be necessary."

Fleur had reached under the table and squeezed Harry's knee. He'd opened his mouth to continue, caught the pressure of her fingers, and wisely redirected his attention to his plate.

But the damage was done. Hermione, who had been methodically working through her chocolate soufflé, set down her spoon with deliberate slowness. Somewhere behind her eyes, an argument was assembling itself.

"You offered Fleur a copy of your key."

Harry blinked. "Yes?"

"You offered Fleur a copy. Of your vault key."

"...Yes?"

Hermione's eyes had narrowed to slits that Fleur recognised from a previous life—the expression Rin Tohsaka wore just before something expensive detonated.

"And me? Your girlfriend of—how long has it been now, Harry? Months? The person who reorganised your entire financial portfolio with the goblins? The one who negotiated your inheritance claims? Built the spreadsheets? Balanced the ledger?"

Harry had the good sense to look sheepish, though Fleur noted the corner of his mouth twitching.

"Hermione, the reason should be rather obvious."

"Enlighten me."

"My vault wouldn't survive the first year if you had a copy."

The silence that followed was the kind that preceded natural disasters. Hermione's chair scraped back from the table, but she managed to compose

herself. Later that evening, she shot a point-blank Gandr at Harry's back whilst he was brushing his teeth.

So that was the night Hermione recruited Fleur and Gabrielle for the morning's shopping offensive—what Hermione called the Dickensian Manoeuvre, which amounted to spending Harry's money with theatrical enthusiasm until his contrition was deemed sufficient. Harry, of course, acquiesced. Typical Shirou.

At least now they were back to normal.

Father had purchased Apolline a hat—deep burgundy felt with an enchanted silver pin that shifted between the shapes of different flowers. It sat atop her mother's head at a fashionable angle, concealing the cascade of silvery-blond hair that would otherwise have stopped traffic, caused accidents, and probably started at least one duel. Fleur still wore the baseball cap Harry had bought her.

Even so. Even with their most distinctive feature hidden, both she and Apolline drew stares. A pair of wizards outside Flourish and Blotts walked into each other. A witch carrying a stack of cauldrons stumbled on nothing. A young man emerging from Quality Quidditch Supplies stopped so abruptly that his companion crashed into his back and sent a boxed broomstick servicing kit skittering across the cobbles.

Fleur had spent years learning to suppress the allure—could now hold it down to a faint shimmer that most people registered as mere attractiveness rather than the full, mind-dissolving radiance that came naturally. But suppression wasn't elimination. Beneath the cap, her face was still her face. High cheekbones, luminous skin, eyes that gathered the light. Her mother was the same. Two exceptionally beautiful women walking through a crowded street attracted attention regardless of magic.

Hermione fell into step beside her, the earlier irritation softened into something more companionable. She tilted her head, studying the cap with a critical eye.

"Harry and I could make something for you. A ring, maybe. Or a pendant." She gestured vaguely at Fleur's concealed hair. "Something that would

dampen the residual allure further, beyond what your active control already manages. Layer the effects."

Fleur raised an eyebrow.

"You just want my 'air down."

Hermione's expression remained studiously neutral. "I have no idea what you mean."

"You zink it is a waste to 'ide it."

"I said no such thing."

"You are zinking it right now. I can see it in your face."

Hermione's jaw tightened. She looked away, but not before Fleur caught the faintest bloom of colour along her cheekbones—Rin's tell, carried across lifetimes and bodies.

"I merely suggested a practical magical solution to an ongoing inconvenience," Hermione said, and held the stiff expression for exactly two more seconds before it cracked into a grin.

Fleur shook her head, smiling. Some things never changed.

Still, a ring or pendant wasn't a terrible idea. The allure was manageable in controlled environments, but Hogwarts would be different—hundreds of teenagers, hormones already volatile, the castle's ambient magic amplifying everything. She tucked the thought away for later discussion.

Ahead of them, Gabrielle had claimed Harry's left hand. Her small fingers wrapped around his with iron determination. Gabrielle had decided, with absolute and unshakeable conviction, that this particular person belonged to her, and eleven-year-olds did not renegotiate. She chattered up at him in rapid-fire French, gesticulating with her free hand, and Harry nodded along with an expression of concentrated effort. His French had improved over the

past week—Apolline's doing, mostly, supplemented by Fleur's somewhat less patient tutoring—but Gabrielle's pace still outran his comprehension.

Fleur watched them and felt the tension she carried in her shoulders ease—just slightly. Just enough.

She remembered the day they'd met. Not in the previous life—in this one. They had known each other for barely a week, a fact that made her declaration at dinner all the more deranged from her parents' perspective.

She remembered the receiving room filled with afternoon light. The doors opening. A young man with messy dark hair and green eyes standing beside a girl with brown curls and an expression of dawning recognition.

It had been six years since her memories returned. She'd been twelve—young enough that the flood of lifetimes had knocked her unconscious for three days, old enough that Apolline and Jean-Paul's panic had been monumental. When she woke, she carried Arturia Pendragon's entire existence layered atop Fleur Delacour's childhood. Camelot. The wars. The betrayals. The deal with Alaya. The Grail. All of it settled into her bones and refused to leave.

She'd managed. Barely. Arturia's steel discipline pressed into Fleur's body, Arturia's tactical mind applied to a world of wands and potions rather than swords and sorcery. The Veela heritage had been an adjustment. She'd been the King of Knights, an icon of restraint and duty, and then she'd hit puberty and discovered that her new body came equipped with a supernatural aura that made strangers walk into walls and stammer through sentences.

It wasn't that she'd overwritten who Fleur was. It was more that she was Fleur—and eventually learned she was Arturia as well.

But the hardest part—the part that had kept her awake on too many nights to count—was the solitude. Six years of not knowing. Whether Shirou and Rin had also been reborn, or whether she was alone in this strange world with a dead king's memories and no one who'd understand.

She knew about Harry Potter. Vaguely. Shirou and Rin had loved the stories—had read them cover to cover during those years in Fuyuki whilst preparing their application to the Clock Tower and practising their English. Fleur had helped them with conversation. The tongue she'd spoken at Camelot was fifteen centuries removed from modern English—nearer another language than a dialect—but the Grail had provided modern languages as part of her summoning, and even after the Grail's destruction, enough remained to smooth the rough edges of Rin and Shirou's pronunciation.

She'd watched the films with them, too. Saturday evenings in Shirou's living room, cross-legged on the floor with bowls of rice and whatever elaborate thing Shirou had cooked. Fleur had paid more attention to the food than the films, if she was honest. She remembered the broad strokes—a boy wizard, a school, a dark lord, a prophecy.

But none of it had clicked. Not when Gabrielle told her stories about the Boy-Who-Lived. Not when a guest called Sirius Black had visited the château. Not even when the details began to accumulate past the point of coincidence. She'd been too busy admiring Shirou's cooking to memorise the plot—she had her priorities.

So when she'd felt it—that sudden, blazing resonance in her chest, the song of Avalon thrumming through her ribcage as though someone had struck a tuning fork against her heart—she hadn't had a framework to process it. She'd been in her bedroom, sketching sword forms in a notebook, when the warmth had flooded through her. Familiar. Aching, impossibly familiar.

Avalon. The sheath. The connection she'd shared with Shirou across lifetimes and wars and the boundary of death itself.

Her heart had lurched. Hope and terror tangled together so tightly she couldn't separate them. She'd dropped the notebook. Her hands had trembled—her hands, which hadn't trembled since Camlann, which had held Excalibur steady against armies and dragons and the weight of a crumbling kingdom.

'Please. Let it be them. Let them be here.'

She'd torn through the château. Down the corridor, past her mother's startled exclamation, through the gallery where her grandmother's portrait called after her in confused French. The receiving room doors were heavy oak reinforced with iron bands, and she'd hit them with enough force to make the hinges sing.

And there, standing in a beam of afternoon sunlight beside a woman with brown curly hair and sharp hazel eyes, was a young man with green eyes and messy dark hair and a scar shaped like a lightning bolt. He looked nothing like Shirou Emiya. The colouring was wrong, the build was different, the face was someone else's entirely.

But the way he stood—weight slightly forward, shoulders relaxed, hands loose at his sides, ready for a blade that wasn't there—that was Shirou. And the way the girl beside him held herself—spine straight, chin elevated, gaze sharp enough to cut glass—that was Rin.

Their eyes had met. All three of them, in a triangle of recognition that bypassed faces and bodies and names and reached straight down to something fundamental.

'It's them.'

Every doubt. Every long night of uncertainty. Every carefully suppressed fear that she'd been alone in this new world—gone. Dissolved in the space between one heartbeat and the next.

And then Hermione had opened her mouth and said "Sex," and the moment had been thoroughly ruined, or perhaps perfected, depending on one's perspective. Rin had always possessed an extraordinary talent for puncturing solemnity at the worst possible moment.

Fleur smiled at the memory, watching Gabrielle tug Harry towards a shop window displaying enchanted telescopes. He let himself be pulled, bending down to look at whatever had caught her attention, and Gabrielle pressed her face to the glass with unrestrained enthusiasm.

The dinner that followed their reunion had been eventful. Fleur had still been vibrating with the intensity of it when they'd sat down at the long oak table in the Delacour dining room—the formal one, because Father insisted on formality when guests were present, even guests who'd arrived via Floo covered in soot and looking slightly stunned.

They'd made it through the soup course before Fleur had set down her spoon.

"I want to transfer to 'Ogwarts."

The table had gone still. Apolline's hand paused mid-reach for the bread basket. Jean-Paul's wine glass stopped halfway to his lips. Andromeda had looked at Fleur with an expression of dawning comprehension that suggested she'd begun to piece together something the rest of the room hadn't.

"Pardon?" Jean-Paul had said.

"I am not attending Beauxbatons. I wish to attend 'Ogwarts. With 'Arry and 'Ermione."

"Fleur." Her father's voice had been measured. Dangerously so. "You have been acquainted with these individuals for approximately four hours."

"Zat doesn't matter."

"You met them this afternoon."

The vein. *Le petit volcan*. Rising.

Apolline had intervened—she always did, reading the temperature of a room the way some people read books. She'd asked gentle, probing questions. Fleur had answered some and deflected others, and the conversation had circled and spiralled until Fleur played her final card.

"I am in love with both of zem."

The silence that followed could have filled cathedrals.

"Both," Jean-Paul had repeated, as though the word had been in a language he didn't speak.

"Both."

"You have known them for four hours."

"Papa—"

"Four. Hours."

The argument that erupted had shaken dust from the chandeliers. Fleur had inherited her father's stubbornness along with her mother's features, and Jean-Paul had met his match in the daughter he'd raised. They'd gone back and forth in rapid French that grew louder and more impassioned with each exchange, hands carving the air, whilst Apolline sipped her wine and Harry stared at his plate and Hermione's attention ping-ponged between the two Delacours, rapt, as though watching a particularly volatile tennis match.

It had ended—as these things often did in the Delacour household—with a compromise that satisfied no one completely and everyone partially. Fleur could transfer to Hogwarts. But she would return to Beauxbatons for her final year if the arrangement proved unsuitable. And her future daughters—a stipulation so specific it made Harry choke on his water—would attend Beauxbatons.

"Deal," Fleur had said, and extended her hand, and Jean-Paul had shaken it, grim-faced. He had lost a battle. He did not intend to lose the war.

Apolline had warmed to Harry faster. Mothers often saw what fathers missed. She'd observed Harry helping prepare breakfast the following morning—watched him move through the kitchen without a wasted motion, pans and knives finding his hands as though they'd been waiting for him—and her manner had softened. She'd begun speaking to him directly. Asking questions. Including him in conversation.

Jean-Paul's glare, meanwhile, had remained a fixed feature of the week. It followed Harry from room to room, a gravitational constant. Harry bore it with quiet patience. He was accustomed to far worse—which, Fleur reflected, was rather the problem. Shirou had always been too willing to accept suffering as his due. It was the thing about him that most infuriated her and most broke her heart, often simultaneously.

A tug at her sleeve pulled Fleur from her thoughts.

Hermione had stopped walking. Her hand gripped Fleur's forearm, and she was pointing across the street towards a building wedged between Flourish and Blotts and a shop selling enchanted stationery.

"The Magical Menagerie," Hermione said. "We should buy owls."

The shopfront was chaotic—cages stacked in the windows, eyes glinting from shadows, the occasional feathered shape shuffling along a perch. A hand-painted sign above the door depicted an owl, a cat, and something with far too many legs arranged in what the artist had probably intended as a charming tableau but which more closely resembled a hostage situation.

Jean-Paul glanced at his watch. "You still need Madam Malkin's, then the apothecary."

"This won't take long," Hermione said, already crossing the street.

The Magical Menagerie's interior was a sensory assault—hooting, hissing, chittering, and one low, sustained growl whose source Fleur couldn't identify and didn't want to. Cages lined every wall from floor to ceiling. Cats slunk between customers' ankles. A terrarium near the door contained something purple that blinked at Fleur with three eyes.

Harry moved through the shop with purpose, Gabrielle still attached to his hand. He stopped at the owl section—a long wall of perches and cages at the back, where dozens of birds sat in various states of alertness—and went still.

A snowy owl perched at the end of the row, separate from the others. Pure white feathers, golden eyes, head tilted at an angle that conveyed either curiosity or judgement. She watched Harry approach.

Harry extended his hand. The owl stepped onto his wrist without hesitation, her talons settling against his skin with precise, measured pressure. She ruffled her feathers once, fluffed her breast, and fixed Harry with a look of proprietary satisfaction.

"Hedwig," Harry said quietly.

Fleur saw his throat work. He'd known—even Fleur's patchy recollection of the films had kept the white owl—that somewhere in this world, this bird existed. But knowing and holding were not the same thing, and the way Harry's fingers curled protectively around the bird's talons told Fleur everything his voice didn't.

Hermione studied him for a moment longer, then turned briskly towards the perches.

"Right. I need one too."

Hermione's selection process was, predictably, exhaustive. She examined each bird with the systematic intensity she applied to everything—checking wingspan, feather condition, eye clarity, and temperament. She asked the shopkeeper detailed questions about flight speed, carrying capacity, weather hardiness, and dietary requirements. She rejected a tawny owl for being "too docile," a screech owl for being "too aggressive," and a barn owl for reasons she declined to specify but which Fleur suspected were aesthetic.

She settled, eventually, on a sleek brown owl with amber eyes and an alert, slightly imperious bearing. It regarded Hermione from its perch with an expression of cool appraisal, and Hermione regarded it right back.

"This one," she said.

Fleur approached the perches herself. The birds stirred at her presence—the allure affected animals differently from humans, drawing curiosity rather than infatuation. Several owls leaned forward, blinking rapidly. A large eagle owl spread its wings and puffed its chest.

But it was a smaller bird that caught Fleur's eye. A grey owl, slate-feathered, with eyes like polished silver coins. It sat perfectly still on its perch whilst the others preened and displayed.

Fleur held out her hand.

The owl considered. Then it stepped forward, one talon at a time, with the measured dignity of a knight approaching a liege, and settled onto her wrist.

"Ello," Fleur said softly.

The owl blinked its silver eyes and made a low, resonant sound—not a hoot, exactly. Something closer to acknowledgement.

Behind her, Gabrielle's voice rose to a pitch that could shatter crystal.

"Maman! Papa! Can I 'ave one too? Please? *S'il vous plaît?* 'Arry got one and Fleur got one and 'Ermione got one and—"

"*Non*," Jean-Paul said.

"But Papa—"

"When you are older, *ma petite*," Apolline said, her voice gentle but final. She placed a hand on Gabrielle's shoulder. "Perhaps when you begin school."

"But zat's years away!"

"*Oui*. And they will pass more quickly than you think."

Gabrielle's lower lip jutted out in a display of displeasure so magnificent it could have been weaponised. She turned to Harry, clearly hoping for an ally, but Harry—who had faced down manticores and dementors and the full

weight of Hermione Granger's temper—simply shrugged helplessly under Jean-Paul's withering gaze.

"Your father said when you're older, Gabby," Harry said.

Gabrielle released his hand. The gesture carried the full weight of an eleven-year-old's betrayal.

"*Traître*," she hissed, and stalked towards the cats.

Apolline followed, mouthing *merci* at Harry over her shoulder.

They paid for the owls—Hedwig, Hermione's unnamed companion, and Fleur's silver-eyed grey—and arranged for the birds to be sent to Grimmauld Place by the end of the day. The shopkeeper boxed up treats and care supplies with practised efficiency, and within fifteen minutes, they were back on the cobblestones.

Gabrielle had recovered from her betrayal enough to reclaim Harry's hand, though she pointedly refused to look at him.

Jean-Paul consulted his watch again and announced the division of forces. The hour had grown late—Boisvert's three-hour attunement had seen to that—and Gabrielle was overdue for the quiet of Grimmauld Place, whatever Gabrielle herself had to say on the matter. Andromeda would escort the elder party through the Leaky Cauldron's Floo, Gascon attached to Apolline's detail. Tonks and Moody would shadow the trio through the final two stops.

Detaching Gabrielle from Harry's hand required negotiation, the promise of exhibition Quidditch at the château over Christmas, and, ultimately, Apolline.

Fleur fell into step between Harry and Hermione as the three of them turned down the Alley, Jean-Paul's new hat purchase catching the last of the light as the elder party receded towards the Leaky Cauldron.

She reached out and took Hermione's hand. Hermione's fingers laced through hers without hesitation—warm, certain, familiar.

'Six years,' Fleur thought. *'Six years of waiting. And now this.'*

She decided the wait had been worth it.

-=&<o>&=-

End

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