I

\*

THE DARK LORD ASCENDING

The two men appeared out of nowhere, a few yards

apart in the narrow, moonlit lane. For a second they

stood quite still, wands directed at each other’s

chests; then, recognizing each other, they stowed

their wands beneath their cloaks and started walking

briskly in the same direction.

“News?” asked the taller of the two.

“The best,” replied Severus Snape.

The lane was bordered on the left by wild, low-

growing brambles, on the right by a high, neatly

manicured hedge. The men’s long cloaks flapped

around their ankles as they marched.

“Thought I might be late,” said Yaxley, his blunt

features sliding in and out of sight as the branches of

overhanging trees broke the moonlight. “It was a little

trickier than I expected. But I hope he will be

satisfied. You sound confident that your reception will

be good?”

Page | 2 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Snape nodded, but did not elaborate. They turned

right, into a wide driveway that led off the lane. The

high hedge curved with them, running off into the

distance beyond the pair of impressive wrought-iron

gates barring the men’s way. Neither of them broke

step: In silence both raised their left arms in a kind of

salute and passed straight through, as though the

dark metal were smoke.

The yew hedges muffled the sound of the men’s

footsteps. There was a rustle somewhere to their

right: Yaxley drew his wand again, pointing it over his

companion’s head, but the source of the noise proved

to be nothing more than a pure-white peacock,

strutting majestically along the top of the hedge.

“He always did himself well, Lucius. Peacocks ...”

Yaxley thrust his wand back under his cloak with a

snort.

A handsome manor house grew out of the darkness at

the end of the straight drive, lights glinting in the

diamond-paned downstairs windows. Somewhere in

the dark garden beyond the hedge a fountain was

playing. Gravel crackled beneath their feet as Snape

and Yaxley sped toward the front door, which swung

inward at their approach, though nobody had visibly

opened it.

The hallway was large, dimly lit, and sumptuously

decorated, with a magnificent carpet covering most of

the stone floor. The eyes of the pale-faced portraits on

the walls followed Snape and Yaxley as they strode

past. The two men halted at a heavy wooden door

leading into the next room, hesitated for the space of

a heartbeat, then Snape turned the bronze handle.

The drawing room was full of silent people, sitting at a

long and ornate table. The room’s usual furniture had

Page | 3 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

been pushed carelessly up against the walls.

Illumination came from a roaring fire beneath a

handsome marble mantelpiece surmounted by a

gilded mirror. Snape and Yaxley lingered for a

moment on the threshold. As their eyes grew

accustomed to the lack of light, they were drawn

upward to the strangest feature of the scene: an

apparently unconscious human figure hanging upside

down over the table, revolving slowly as if suspended

by an invisible rope, and reflected in the mirror and in

the bare, polished surface of the table below. None of

the people seated underneath this singular sight was

looking at it except for a pale young man sitting

almost directly below it. He seemed unable to prevent

himself from glancing upward every minute or so.

“Yaxley. Snape,” said a high, clear voice from the head

of the table. “You are very nearly late.”

The speaker was seated directly in front of the

fireplace, so that it was difficult, at first, for the new

arrivals to make out more than his silhouette. As they

drew nearer, however, his face shone through the

gloom, hairless, snakelike, with slits for nostrils and

gleaming red eyes whose pupils were vertical. He was

so pale that he seemed to emit a pearly glow.

“Severus, here,” said Voldemort, indicating the seat

on his immediate right. “Yaxley — beside Dolohov.”

The two men took their allotted places. Most of the

eyes around the table followed Snape, and it was to

him that Voldemort spoke first.

“So?”

“My Lord, the Order of the Phoenix intends to move

Harry Potter from his current place of safety on

Saturday next, at nightfall.”

Page | 4 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The interest around the table sharpened palpably:

Some stiffened, others fidgeted, all gazing at Snape

and Voldemort.

“Saturday ... at nightfall,” repeated Voldemort. His

red eyes fastened upon Snape ’s black ones with such

intensity that some of the watchers looked away,

apparently fearful that they themselves would be

scorched by the ferocity of the gaze. Snape, however,

looked calmly back into Voldemort’s face and, after a

moment or two, Voldemort’s lipless mouth curved into

something like a smile.

“Good. Very good. And this information comes — ”

“ — from the source we discussed,” said Snape.

“My Lord.”

Yaxley had leaned forward to look down the long table

at Voldemort and Snape. All faces turned to him.

“My Lord, I have heard differently.”

Yaxley waited, but Voldemort did not speak, so he

went on, “Dawlish, the Auror, let slip that Potter will

not be moved until the thirtieth, the night before the

boy turns seventeen.”

Snape was smiling.

“My source told me that there are plans to lay a false

trail; this must be it. No doubt a Confundus Charm

has been placed upon Dawlish. It would not be the

first time; he is known to be susceptible.”

“I assure you, my Lord, Dawlish seemed quite

certain,” said Yaxley.

Page | 5 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“If he has been Confunded, naturally he is certain,”

said Snape. “I assure you, Yaxley, the Auror Office

will play no further part in the protection of Harry

Potter. The Order believes that we have infiltrated the

Ministry.”

“The Order’s got one thing right, then, eh?” said a

squat man sitting a short distance from Yaxley; he

gave a wheezy giggle that was echoed here and there

along the table.

Voldemort did not laugh. His gaze had wandered

upward to the body revolving slowly overhead, and he

seemed to be lost in thought.

“My Lord,” Yaxley went on, “Dawlish believes an

entire party of Aurors will be used to transfer the boy

Voldemort held up a large white hand, and Yaxley

subsided at once, watching resentfully as Voldemort

turned back to Snape.

“Where are they going to hide the boy next?”

“At the home of one of the Order,” said Snape. “The

place, according to the source, has been given every

protection that the Order and Ministry together could

provide. I think that there is little chance of taking

him once he is there, my Lord, unless, of course, the

Ministry has fallen before next Saturday, which might

give us the opportunity to discover and undo enough

of the enchantments to break through the rest.”

“Well, Yaxley?” Voldemort called down the table, the

firelight glinting strangely in his red eyes. “Will the

Ministry have fallen by next Saturday?”

Page | 6 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Once again, all heads turned. Yaxley squared his

shoulders.

“My Lord, I have good news on that score. I have —

with difficulty, and after great effort — suceeded in

placing an Imperius Curse upon Pius Thicknesse.”

Many of those sitting around Yaxley looked

impressed; his neighbor, Dolohov, a man with a long,

twisted face, clapped him on the back.

“It is a start,” said Voldemort. “But Thicknesse is only

one man. Scrimgeour must be surrounded by our

people before I act. One failed attempt on the

Minister’s life will set me back a long way.”

“Yes — my Lord, that is true — but you know, as

Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement,

Thicknesse has regular contact not only with the

Minister himself, but also with the Heads of all the

other Ministry departments. It will, I think, be easy

now that we have such a high-ranking official under

our control, to subjugate the others, and then they

can all work together to bring Scrimgeour down.”

“As long as our friend Thicknesse is not discovered

before he has converted the rest,” said Voldemort. “At

any rate, it remains unlikely that the Ministry will be

mine before next Saturday. If we cannot touch the

boy at his destination, then it must be done while he

travels.”

“We are at an advantage there, my Lord,” said Yaxley,

who seemed determined to receive some portion of

approval. “We now have several people planted within

the Department of Magical Transport. If Potter

Apparates or uses the Floo Network, we shall know

immediately.”

Page | 7 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“He will not do either,” said Snape. “The Order is

eschewing any form of transport that is controlled or

regulated by the Ministry; they mistrust everything to

do with the place.”

“All the better,” said Voldemort. “He will have to move

in the open. Easier to take, by far.”

Again, Voldemort looked up at the slowly revolving

body as he went on, “I shall attend to the boy in

person. There have been too many mistakes where

Harry Potter is concerned. Some of them have been

my own. That Potter lives is due more to my errors

than to his triumphs.”

The company around the table watched Voldemort

apprehensively, each of them, by his or her

expression, afraid that they might be blamed for

Harry Potter’s continued existence. Voldemort,

however, seemed to be speaking more to himself than

to any of them, still addressing the unconscious body

above him.

“I have been careless, and so have been thwarted by

luck and chance, those wreckers of all but the best-

laid plans. But I know better now. I understand those

things that I did not understand before. I must be the

one to kill Harry Potter, and I shall be.”

At these words, seemingly in response to them, a

sudden wail sounded, a terrible, drawn-out cry of

misery and pain. Many of those at the table looked

downward, startled, for the sound had seemed to

issue from below their feet.

“Wormtail,” said Voldemort, with no change in his

quiet, thoughtful tone, and without removing his eyes

from the revolving body above, “have I not spoken to

you about keeping our prisoner quiet?”

Page | 8 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Yes, m-my Lord,” gasped a small man halfway down

the table, who had been sitting so low in his chair

that it had appeared, at first glance, to be

unoccupied. Now he scrambled from his seat and

scurried from the room, leaving nothing behind him

but a curious gleam of silver.

“As I was saying,” continued Voldemort, looking again

at the tense faces of his followers, “I understand

better now. I shall need, for instance, to borrow a

wand from one of you before I go to kill Potter.”

The faces around him displayed nothing but shock;

he might have announced that he wanted to borrow

one of their arms.

“No volunteers?” said Voldemort. “Let’s see ... Lucius,

I see no reason for you to have a wand anymore.”

Lucius Malfoy looked up. His skin appeared yellowish

and waxy in the firelight, and his eyes were sunken

and shadowed. When he spoke, his voice was hoarse.

“My Lord?”

“Your wand, Lucius. I require your wand.”

Malfoy glanced sideways at his wife. She was staring

straight ahead, quite as pale as he was, her long

blonde hair hanging down her back, but beneath the

table her slim fingers closed briefly on his wrist. At

her touch, Malfoy put his hand into his robes,

withdrew a wand, and passed it along to Voldemort,

who held it up in front of his red eyes, examining it

closely.

“What is it?”

Page | 9 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Elm, my Lord,” whispered Malfoy.

“And the core?”

“Dragon — dragon heartstring.”

“Good,” said Voldemort. He drew out his own wand

and compared the lengths. Lucius Malfoy made an

involuntary movement; for a fraction of a second, it

seemed he expected to receive Voldemort’s wand in

exchange for his own. The gesture was not missed by

Voldemort, whose eyes widened maliciously.

“Give you my wand, Lucius? My wand?”

Some of the throng sniggered.

“I have given you your liberty, Lucius, is that not

enough for you? But I have noticed that you and your

family seem less than happy of late. ... What is it

about my presence in your home that displeases you,

Lucius?”

“Nothing — nothing, my Lord!”

“Such lies, Lucius ...”

The soft voice seemed to hiss on even after the cruel

mouth had stopped moving. One or two of the wizards

barely repressed a shudder as the hissing grew

louder; something heavy could be heard sliding

across the floor beneath the table.

The huge snake emerged to climb slowly up

Voldemort’s chair. It rose, seemingly endlessly, and

came to rest across Voldemort’s shoulders: its neck

the thickness of a man’s thigh; its eyes, with their

vertical slits for pupils, unblinking. Voldemort stroked

Page | 10 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the creature absently with long thin fingers, still

looking at Lucius Malfoy.

“Why do the Malfoys look so unhappy with their lot?

Is my return, my rise to power, not the very thing they

professed to desire for so many years?”

“Of course, my Lord,” said Lucius Malfoy. His hand

shook as he wiped sweat from his upper lip. “We did

desire it — we do.”

To Malfoy’s left, his wife made an odd, stiff nod, her

eyes averted from Voldemort and the snake. To his

right, his son, Draco, who had been gazing up at the

inert body overhead, glanced quickly at Voldemort

and away again, terrified to make eye contact.

“My Lord,” said a dark woman halfway down the

table, her voice constricted with emotion, “it is an

honor to have you here, in our family’s house. There

can be no higher pleasure.”

She sat beside her sister, as unlike her in looks, with

her dark hair and heavily lidded eyes, as she was in

bearing and demeanor; where Narcissa sat rigid and

impassive, Bellatrix leaned toward Voldemort, for

mere words could not demonstrate her longing for

closeness.

“No higher pleasure,” repeated Voldemort, his head

tilted a little to one side as he considered Bellatrix.

“That means a great deal, Bellatrix, from you.”

Her face flooded with color; her eyes welled with tears

of delight.

“My Lord knows I speak nothing but the truth!”

Page | 11 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No higher pleasure ... even compared with the happy

event that, I hear, has taken place in your family this

week?”

She stared at him, her lips parted, evidently confused.

“I don’t know what you mean, my Lord.”

“I’m talking about your niece, Bellatrix. And yours,

Lucius and Narcissa. She has just married the

werewolf, Remus Lupin. You must be so proud.”

There was an eruption of jeering laughter from

around the table. Many leaned forward to exchange

gleeful looks; a few thumped the table with their fists.

The great snake, disliking the disturbance, opened its

mouth wide and hissed angrily, but the Death Eaters

did not hear it, so jubilant were they at Bellatrix and

the Malfoys’ humiliation. Bellatrix’s face, so recently

flushed with happiness, had turned an ugly, blotchy

red.

“She is no niece of ours, my Lord,” she cried over the

outpouring of mirth. “We — Narcissa and I — have

never set eyes on our sister since she married the

Mudblood. This brat has nothing to do with either of

us, nor any beast she marries.”

“What say you, Draco?” asked Voldemort, and though

his voice was quiet, it carried clearly through the

catcalls and jeers. “Will you babysit the cubs?”

The hilarity mounted; Draco Malfoy looked in terror at

his father, who was staring down into his own lap,

then caught his mother’s eye. She shook her head

almost imperceptibly, then resumed her own deadpan

stare at the opposite wall.

Page | 12 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Enough,” said Voldemort, stroking the angry snake.

“Enough.”

And the laughter died at once.

“Many of our oldest family trees become a little

diseased over time,” he said as Bellatrix gazed at him,

breathless and imploring. “You must prune yours,

must you not, to keep it healthy? Cut away those

parts that threaten the health of the rest.”

“Yes, my Lord,” whispered Bellatrix, and her eyes

swam with tears of gratitude again. “At the first

chance!”

“You shall have it,” said Voldemort. “And in your

family, so in the world . . . we shall cut away the

canker that infects us until only those of the true

blood remain. ...”

Voldemort raised Lucius Malfoy’s wand, pointed it

directly at the slowly revolving figure suspended over

the table, and gave it a tiny flick. The figure came to

life with a groan and began to struggle against

invisible bonds.

“Do you recognize our guest, Severus?” asked

Voldemort.

Snape raised his eyes to the upside-down face. All of

the Death Eaters were looking up at the captive now,

as though they had been given permission to show

curiosity. As she revolved to face the firelight, the

woman said in a cracked and terrified voice, “Severus!

Help me!”

“Ah, yes,” said Snape as the prisoner turned slowly

away again.

Page | 13 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“And you, Draco?” asked Voldemort, stroking the

snake’s snout with his wand-free hand. Draco shook

his head jerkily. Now that the woman had woken, he

seemed unable to look at her anymore.

“But you would not have taken her classes,” said

Voldemort. “For those of you who do not know, we are

joined here tonight by Charity Burbage who, until

recently, taught at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and

Wizardry.”

There were small noises of comprehension around the

table. A broad, hunched woman with pointed teeth

cackled.

“Yes . . . Professor Burbage taught the children of

witches and wizards all about Muggles . . . how they

are not so different from us ...”

One of the Death Eaters spat on the floor. Charity

Burbage revolved to face Snape again.

“Severus ... please ... please ...”

“Silence,” said Voldemort, with another twitch of

Malfoy’s wand, and Charity fell silent as if gagged.

“Not content with corrupting and polluting the minds

of Wizarding children, last week Professor Burbage

wrote an impassioned defense of Mudbloods in the

Daily Prophet Wizards, she says, must accept these

thieves of their knowledge and magic. The dwindling

of the purebloods is, says Professor Burbage, a most

desirable circumstance. ... She would have us all

mate with Muggles ... or, no doubt, werewolves. ...”

Nobody laughed this time: There was no mistaking

the anger and contempt in Voldemort’s voice. For the

third time, Charity Burbage revolved to face Snape.

Tears were pouring from her eyes into her hair. Snape

Page | 14 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

looked back at her, quite impassive, as she turned

slowly away from him again.

“Avada Kedavra.”

The flash of green light illuminated every corner of the

room. Charity fell, with a resounding crash, onto the

table below, which trembled and creaked. Several of

the Death Eaters leapt back in their chairs. Draco fell

out of his onto the floor.

“Dinner, Nagini,” said Voldemort softly, and the great

snake swayed and slithered from his shoulders onto

the polished wood.

Page | 15 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

IN MEMORIAM

Harry was bleeding. Clutching his right hand in his

left and swearing under his breath, he shouldered

open his bedroom door. There was a crunch of

breaking china: He had trodden on a cup of cold tea

that had been sitting on the floor outside his bedroom

door.

“What the — ?”

He looked around; the landing of number four, Privet

Drive, was deserted. Possibly the cup of tea was

Dudley’s idea of a clever booby trap. Keeping his

bleeding hand elevated, Harry scraped the fragments

of cup together with the other hand and threw them

into the already crammed bin just visible inside his

bedroom door. Then he tramped across to the

bathroom to run his finger under the tap.

It was stupid, pointless, irritating beyond belief that

he still had four days left of being unable to perform

magic . . . but he had to admit to himself that this

jagged cut in his finger would have defeated him. He

Page | 16 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

had never learned how to repair wounds, and now he

came to think of it — particularly in light of his

immediate plans — this seemed a serious flaw in his

magical education. Making a mental note to ask

Hermione how it was done, he used a large wad of

toilet paper to mop up as much of the tea as he could,

before returning to his bedroom and slamming the

door behind him.

Harry had spent the morning completely emptying his

school trunk for the first time since he had packed it

six years ago. At the start of the intervening school

years, he had merely skimmed off the topmost three

quarters of the contents and replaced or updated

them, leaving a layer of general debris at the bottom

— old quills, desiccated beetle eyes, single socks that

no longer fit. Minutes previously, Harry had plunged

his hand into this mulch, experienced a stabbing pain

in the fourth finger of his right hand, and withdrawn

it to see a lot of blood.

He now proceeded a little more cautiously. Kneeling

down beside the trunk again, he groped around in the

bottom and, after retrieving an old badge that

flickered feebly between Support CEDRIC DIGGORY

and POTTER STINKS , a cracked and worn-out

Sneakoscope, and a gold locket inside which a note

signed R.A.B. had been hidden, he finally discovered

the sharp edge that had done the damage. He

recognized it at once. It was a two-inch-long fragment

of the enchanted mirror that his dead godfather,

Sirius, had given him. Harry laid it aside and felt

cautiously around the trunk for the rest, but nothing

more remained of his godfather’s last gift except

powdered glass, which clung to the deepest layer of

debris like glittering grit.

Harry sat up and examined the jagged piece on which

he had cut himself, seeing nothing but his own bright

Page | 17 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

green eye reflected back at him. Then he placed the

fragment on top of that morning’s Daily Prophet,

which lay unread on the bed, and attempted to stem

the sudden upsurge of bitter memories, the stabs of

regret and of longing the discovery of the broken

mirror had occasioned, by attacking the rest of the

rubbish in the trunk.

It took another hour to empty it completely, throw

away the useless items, and sort the remainder in

piles according to whether or not he would need them

from now on. His school and Quidditch robes,

cauldron, parchment, quills, and most of his

textbooks were piled in a corner, to be left behind. He

wondered what his aunt and uncle would do with

them; burn them in the dead of night, probably, as if

they were the evidence of some dreadful crime. His

Muggle clothing, Invisibility Cloak, potion-making kit,

certain books, the photograph album Hagrid had once

given him, a stack of letters, and his wand had been

repacked into an old rucksack. In a front pocket were

the Marauder’s Map and the locket with the note

signed R.A.B. inside it. The locket was accorded this

place of honor not because it was valuable — in all

usual senses it was worthless — but because of what

it had cost to attain it.

This left a sizable stack of newspapers sitting on his

desk beside his snowy owl, Hedwig: one for each of

the days Harry had spent at Privet Drive this

summer.

He got up off the floor, stretched, and moved across to

his desk. Hedwig made no movement as he began to

flick through the newspapers, throwing them onto the

rubbish pile one by one. The owl was asleep, or else

faking; she was angry with Harry about the limited

amount of time she was allowed out of her cage at the

moment.

Page | 18 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

As he neared the bottom of the pile of newspapers,

Harry slowed down, searching for one particular issue

that he knew had arrived shortly after he had

returned to Privet Drive for the summer; he

remembered that there had been a small mention on

the front about the resignation of Charity Burbage,

the Muggle Studies teacher at Hogwarts. At last he

found it. Turning to page ten, he sank into his desk

chair and reread the article he had been looking for.

ALBUS DUMBLEDORE REMEMBERED

by Elphias Doge

I met Albus Dumbledore at the age of eleven, on our

first day at Hogwarts. Our mutual attraction was

undoubtedly due to the fact that we both felt

ourselves to be outsiders. I had contracted dragon

pox shortly before arriving at school, and while I was

no longer contagious, my pockmarked visage and

greenish hue did not encourage many to approach

me. For his part, Albus had arrived at Hogwarts

under the burden of unwanted notoriety. Scarcely a

year previously, his father, Percival, had been

convicted of a savage and well-publicized attack upon

three young Muggles.

Albus never attempted to deny that his father (who

was to die in Azkaban) had committed this crime; on

the contrary, when I plucked up courage to ask him, he

assured me that he knew his father to be guilty.

Beyond that, Dumbledore refused to speak of the sad

business, though many attempted to make him do so.

Some, indeed, were disposed to praise his father’s

action and assumed that Albus too was a Muggle-

hater. They could not have been more mistaken: As

anybody who knew Albus would attest, he never

revealed the remotest anti-Muggle tendency. Indeed,

Page | 19 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

his determined support for Muggle rights gained him

many enemies in subsequent years.

In a matter of months, however, Albus’s own fame

had begun to eclipse that of his father. By the end of

his first year he would never again be known as the

son of a Muggle-hater, but as nothing more or less

than the most brilliant student ever seen at the

school. Those of us who were privileged to be his

friends benefited from his example, not to mention his

help and encouragement, with which he was always

generous. He confessed to me in later life that he

knew even then that his greatest pleasure lay in

teaching.

He not only won every prize of note that the school

offered, he was soon in regular correspondence with

the most notable magical names of the day, including

Nicolas Flamel, the celebrated alchemist ; Bathilda

Bagshot, the noted historian; and Adalbert Waffling,

the magical theoretician. Several of his papers found

their way into learned publications such as

Transfiguration Today, Challenges in Charming, and

The Practical Potioneer. Dumbledore’s future career

seemed likely to be meteoric, and the only question

that remained was when he would become Minister of

Magic. Though it was often predicted in later years that

he was on the point of taking the job, however, he

never had Ministerial ambitions.

Three years after we had started at Hogwarts, Albus’s

brother, Aberforth, arrived at school. They were not

alike; Aberforth was never bookish and, unlike Albus,

preferred to settle arguments by dueling rather than

through reasoned discussion. However, it is quite

wrong to suggest, as some have, that the brothers

were not friends. They rubbed along as comfortably as

two such different boys could do. In fairness to

Aberforth, it must be admitted that living in Albus’s

Page | 20 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

shadow cannot have been an altogether comfortable

experience. Being continually outshone was an

occupational hazard of being his friend and cannot

have been any more pleasurable as a brother.

When Albus and I left Hogwarts we intended to take

the then- traditional tour of the world together, visiting

and observing foreign wizards, before pursuing our

separate careers. However, tragedy intervened. On the

very eve of our trip, Albus’s mother, Kendra, died,

leaving Albus the head, and sole breadwinner, of the

family. I postponed my departure long enough to pay

my respects at Kendra’s funeral, then left for what

was now to be a solitary journey. With a younger

brother and sister to care for, and little gold left to

them, there could no longer be any question of Albus

accompanying me.

That was the period of our lives when we had least

contact. I wrote to Albus, describing, perhaps

insensitively, the wonders of my journey, from narrow

escapes from chimaeras in Greece to the experiments

of the Egyptian alchemists. His letters told me little of

his day-to-day life, which I guessed to be frustratingly

dull for such a brilliant wizard. Immersed in my own

experiences, it was with horror that I heard, toward

the end of my year’s travels, that yet another tragedy

had struck the Dumbledores: the death of his sister,

Ariana.

Though Ariana had been in poor health for a long

time, the blow, coming so soon after the loss of their

mother, had a profound effect on both of her

brothers. All those closest to Albus — and I count

myself one of that lucky number — agree that

Ariana ’s death, and Albus’s feeling of personal

responsibility for it (though, of course, he was

guiltless), left their mark upon him forevermore.

Page | 21 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

I returned home to find a young man who had

experienced a much older person’s suffering. Albus

was more reserved than before, and much less light-

hearted. To add to his misery, the loss of Ariana had

led, not to a renewed closeness between Albus and

Aberforth, but to an estrangement. (In time this would

lift — in later years they reestablished, if not a close

relationship, then certainly a cordial one.) However,

he rarely spoke of his parents or of Ariana from then

on, and his friends learned not to mention them.

Other quills will describe the triumphs of the following

years. Dumbledore’s innumerable contributions to the

store of Wizarding knowledge, including his discovery

of the twelve uses of dragon’s blood, will benefit

generations to come, as will the wisdom he displayed

in the many judgments he made while Chief Warlock of

the Wizengamot. They say, still, that no Wizarding duel

ever matched that between Dumbledore and

Grindelwald in 1 945. Those who witnessed it have

written of the terror and the awe they felt as they

watched these two extraordinary wizards do battle.

Dumbledore’s triumph, and its consequences for the

Wizarding world, are considered a turning point in

magical history to match the introduction of the

International Statute of Secrecy or the downfall of He-

Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.

Albus Dumbledore was never proud or vain; he could

find something to value in anyone, however

apparently insignificant or wretched, and I believe

that his early losses endowed him with great

humanity and sympathy. I shall miss his friendship

more than I can say, but my loss is as nothing

compared to the Wizarding world’s. That he was the

most inspiring and the best loved of all Hogwarts

headmasters cannot be in question. He died as he

lived: working always for the greater good and, to his

last hour, as willing to stretch out a hand to a small

Page | 22 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

boy with dragon pox as he was on the day that I met

him.

Harry finished reading but continued to gaze at the

picture accompanying the obituary. Dumbledore was

wearing his familiar, kindly smile, but as he peered

over the top of his half-moon spectacles, he gave the

impression, even in newsprint, of X-raying Harry,

whose sadness mingled with a sense of humiliation.

He had thought he knew Dumbledore quite well, but

ever since reading this obituary he had been forced to

recognize that he had barely known him at all. Never

once had he imagined Dumbledore ’s childhood or

youth; it was as though he had sprung into being as

Harry had known him, venerable and silver-haired

and old. The idea of a teenage Dumbledore was

simply odd, like trying to imagine a stupid Hermione

or a friendly Blast-Ended Skrewt.

He had never thought to ask Dumbledore about his

past. No doubt it would have felt strange, impertinent

even, but after all, it had been common knowledge

that Dumbledore had taken part in that legendary

duel with Grindelwald, and Harry had not thought to

ask Dumbledore what that had been like, nor about

any of his other famous achievements. No, they had

always discussed Harry, Harry’s past, Harry’s future,

Harry’s plans ... and it seemed to Harry now, despite

the fact that his future was so dangerous and so

uncertain, that he had missed irreplaceable

opportunities when he had failed to ask Dumbledore

more about himself, even though the only personal

question he had ever asked his headmaster was also

the only one he suspected that Dumbledore had not

answered honestly:

“ What do you see when you look in the mirror?”

Page | 23 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“/? I see myself holding a pair of thick, woolen socks.”

After several minutes’ thought, Harry tore the

obituary out of the Prophet, folded it carefully, and

tucked it inside the first volume of Practical Defensive

Magic and Its Use Against the Dark Arts. Then he

threw the rest of the newspaper onto the rubbish pile

and turned to face the room. It was much tidier. The

only things left out of place were today’s Daily

Prophet, still lying on the bed, and on top of it, the

piece of broken mirror.

Harry moved across the room, slid the mirror

fragment off today’s Prophet, and unfolded the

newspaper. He had merely glanced at the headline

when he had taken the rolled-up paper from the

delivery owl early that morning and thrown it aside,

after noting that it said nothing about Voldemort.

Harry was sure that the Ministry was leaning on the

Prophet to suppress news about Voldemort. It was

only now, therefore, that he saw what he had missed.

Across the bottom half of the front page a smaller

headline was set over a picture of Dumbledore

striding along looking harried:

DUMBLEDORE — THE TRUTH AT LAST?

Coming next week, the shocking story of the flawed

genius considered by many to be the greatest wizard

of his generation. Stripping away the popular image of

serene, silver-bearded wisdom, Rita Skeeter reveals

the disturbed childhood, the lawless youth, the

lifelong feuds, and the guilty secrets that Dumbledore

carried to his grave. WHY was the man tipped to be

Minister of Magic content to remain a mere

headmaster? WHAT was the real purpose of the secret

organization known as the Order of the Phoenix?

HOW did Dumbledore really meet his end?

Page | 24 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The answers to these and many more questions are

explored in the explosive new biography, The Life and

Lies of Albus Dumbledore, by Rita Skeeter, exclusively

interviewed by Betty Braithwaite, page 13, inside.

Harry ripped open the paper and found page thirteen.

The article was topped with a picture showing

another familiar face: a woman wearing jeweled

glasses with elaborately curled blonde hair, her teeth

bared in what was clearly supposed to be a winning

smile, wiggling her fingers up at him. Doing his best

to ignore this nauseating image, Harry read on.

In person, Rita Skeeter is much warmer and softer

than her famously ferocious quill-portraits might

suggest. Greeting me in the hallway of her cozy home,

she leads me straight into the kitchen for a cup of tea,

a slice of pound cake and, it goes without saying, a

steaming vat of freshest gossip.

“Well, of course, Dumbledore is a biographer’s dream,”

says Skeeter. “Such a long, full life. I’m sure my book

will be the first of very, very many.”

Skeeter was certainly quick off the mark. Her nine-

hundred-page book was completed a mere four weeks

after Dumbledore ’s mysterious death in June. I ask

her how she managed this superfast feat.

“Oh, when you’ve been a journalist as long as I have,

working to a deadline is second nature. I knew that

the Wizarding world was clamoring for the full story

and I wanted to be the first to meet that need.”

I mention the recent, widely publicized remarks of

Elphias Doge, Special Advisor to the Wizengamot and

longstanding friend of Albus Dumbledore’s, that

“Skeeter’s book contains less fact than a Chocolate

Frog card. ”

Page | 25 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Skeeter throws back her head and laughs.

“Darling Dodgy! I remember interviewing him a few

years back about merpeople rights, bless him.

Completely gaga, seemed to think we were sitting at

the bottom of Lake Windermere, kept telling me to

watch out for trout.”

And yet Elphias Doge’s accusations of inaccuracy

have been echoed in many places. Does Skeeter really

feel that four short weeks have been enough to gain a

full picture of Dumbledore’s long and extraordinary

life?

“Oh, my dear,” beams Skeeter, rapping me

affectionately across the knuckles, “you know as well

as I do how much information can be generated by a

fat bag of Galleons, a refusal to hear the word ‘no,’

and a nice sharp Quick-Quotes Quill! People were

queuing to dish the dirt on Dumbledore anyway. Not

everyone thought he was so wonderful, you know —

he trod on an awful lot of important toes. But old

Dodgy Doge can get off his high hippogriff, because

I’ve had access to a source most journalists would

swap their wands for, one who has never spoken in

public before and who was close to Dumbledore

during the most turbulent and disturbing phase of

his youth.”

The advance publicity for Skeeter’ s biography has

certainly suggested that there will be shocks in store

for those who believe Dumbledore to have led a

blameless life. What were the biggest surprises she

uncovered, I ask?

“Now, come off it, Betty, I’m not giving away all the

highlights before anybody’s bought the book!” laughs

Skeeter. “But I can promise that anybody who still

thinks Dumbledore was white as his beard is in for a

Page | 26 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

rude awakening! Let’s just say that nobody hearing

him rage against You-Know-Who would have dreamed

that he dabbled in the Dark Arts himself in his youth!

And for a wizard who spent his later years pleading

for tolerance, he wasn’t exactly broad-minded when

he was younger! Yes, Albus Dumbledore had an

extremely murky past, not to mention that very fishy

family, which he worked so hard to keep hushed up.”

I ask whether Skeeter is referring to Dumbledore ’s

brother, Aberforth, whose conviction by the

Wizengamot for misuse of magic caused a minor

scandal fifteen years ago.

“Oh, Aberforth is just the tip of the dung heap, ” laughs

Skeeter. “No, no, I’m talking about much worse than a

brother with a fondness for fiddling about with goats,

worse even than the Muggle-maiming father —

Dumbledore couldn’t keep either of them quiet anyway,

they were both charged by the Wizengamot. No, it’s the

mother and the sister that intrigued me, and a little

digging uncovered a positive nest of nastiness — but,

as I say, you’ll have to wait for chapters nine to twelve

for full details. All I can say now is, it’s no wonder

Dumbledore never talked about how his nose got

broken. ”

Family skeletons notwithstanding, does Skeeter deny

the brilliance that led to Dumbledore ’s many magical

discoveries?

“He had brains,” she concedes, “although many now

question whether he could really take full credit for all

of his supposed achievements. As I reveal in chapter

sixteen, Ivor Dillonsby claims he had already

discovered eight uses of dragon’s blood when

Dumbledore ‘borrowed’ his papers.”

Page | 27 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

But the importance of some of Dumbledore’s

achievements cannot, I venture, be denied. What of

his famous defeat of Grindelwald?

“Oh, now, I’m glad you mentioned Grindelwald,” says

Skeeter with a tantalizing smile. “I’m afraid those who

go dewy-eyed over Dumbledore’s spectacular victory

must brace themselves for a bombshell — or perhaps

a Dungbomb. Very dirty business indeed. All I’ll say

is, don’t be so sure that there really was the

spectacular duel of legend. After they’ve read my

book, people may be forced to conclude that

Grindelwald simply conjured a white handkerchief

from the end of his wand and came quietly!”

Skeeter refuses to give any more away on this

intriguing subject, so we turn instead to the

relationship that will undoubtedly fascinate her

readers more than any other.

“Oh yes,” says Skeeter, nodding briskly, “I devote an

entire chapter to the whole Potter-Dumbledore

relationship. It’s been called unhealthy, even sinister.

Again, your readers will have to buy my book for the

whole story, but there is no question that

Dumbledore took an unnatural interest in Potter from

the word go. Whether that was really in the boy’s best

interests — well, we’ll see. It’s certainly an open secret

that Potter has had a most troubled adolescence.”

I ask whether Skeeter is still in touch with Harry

Potter, whom she so famously interviewed last year: a

breakthrough piece in which Potter spoke exclusively

of his conviction that You-Know-Who had returned.

“Oh, yes, we’ve developed a close bond,” says Skeeter.

“Poor Potter has few real friends, and we met at one of

the most testing moments of his life — the Triwizard

Tournament. I am probably one of the only people

Page | 28 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

alive who can say that they know the real Harry

Potter.”

Which leads us neatly to the many rumors still

circulating about Dumbledore’s final hours. Does

Skeeter believe that Potter was there when

Dumbledore died?

“Well, I don’t want to say too much — it’s all in the

book — but eyewitnesses inside Hogwarts castle saw

Potter running away from the scene moments after

Dumbledore fell, jumped, or was pushed. Potter later

gave evidence against Severus Snape, a man against

whom he has a notorious grudge. Is everything as it

seems? That is for the Wizarding community to decide

— once they’ve read my book.”

On that intriguing note, I take my leave. There can be

no doubt that Skeeter has quilled an instant

bestseller. Dumbledore’s legions of admirers,

meanwhile, may well be trembling at what is soon to

emerge about their hero.

Harry reached the bottom of the article, but

continued to stare blankly at the page. Revulsion and

fury rose in him like vomit; he balled up the

newspaper and threw it, with all his force, at the wall,

where it joined the rest of the rubbish heaped around

his overflowing bin.

He began to stride blindly around the room, opening

empty drawers and picking up books only to replace

them on the same piles, barely conscious of what he

was doing, as random phrases from Rita’s article

echoed in his head: An entire chapter to the whole

Potter-Dumbledore relationship . . . It’s been called

unhealthy, even sinister. . . . He dabbled in the Dark

Arts himself in his youth . . . I’ve had access to a source

most journalists would swap their wands for ...

Page | 29 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Lies!” Harry bellowed, and through the window he

saw the next-door neighbor, who had paused to

restart his lawn mower, look up nervously.

Harry sat down hard on the bed. The broken bit of

mirror danced away from him; he picked it up and

turned it over in his fingers, thinking, thinking of

Dumbledore and the lies with which Rita Skeeter was

defaming him. ...

A flash of brightest blue. Harry froze, his cut finger

slipping on the jagged edge of the mirror again. He

had imagined it, he must have done. He glanced over

his shoulder, but the wall was a sickly peach color of

Aunt Petunia’s choosing: There was nothing blue

there for the mirror to reflect. He peered into the

mirror fragment again, and saw nothing but his own

bright green eye looking back at him.

He had imagined it, there was no other explanation;

imagined it, because he had been thinking of his dead

headmaster. If anything was certain, it was that the

bright blue eyes of Albus Dumbledore would never

pierce him again.

Page | 30 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

3

THE DURSLEYS DEPARTING

The sound of the front door slamming echoed up the

stairs and a voice yelled, “Oi! You!”

Sixteen years of being addressed thus left Harry in no

doubt whom his uncle was calling; nevertheless, he

did not immediately respond. He was still gazing at

the mirror fragment in which, for a split second, he

had thought he saw Dumbledore’s eye. It was not

until his uncle bellowed, “BOY!” that Harry got slowly

to his feet and headed for the bedroom door, pausing

to add the piece of broken mirror to the rucksack

filled with things he would be taking with him.

“You took your time!” roared Vernon Dursley when

Harry appeared at the top of the stairs. “Get down

here, I want a word!”

Harry strolled downstairs, his hands deep in his jeans

pockets. When he reached the living room he found

all three Dursleys. They were dressed for traveling:

Uncle Vernon in a fawn zip-up jacket, Aunt Petunia in

Page | 31 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

a neat salmon-colored coat, and Dudley, Harry’s

large, blond, muscular cousin, in his leather jacket.

“Yes?” asked Harry.

“Sit down!” said Uncle Vernon. Harry raised his

eyebrows. “Please!” added Uncle Vernon, wincing

slightly as though the word was sharp in his throat.

Harry sat. He thought he knew what was coming. His

uncle began to pace up and down, Aunt Petunia and

Dudley following his movements with anxious

expressions. Finally, his large purple face crumpled

with concentration, Uncle Vernon stopped in front of

Harry and spoke.

“I’ve changed my mind,” he said.

“What a surprise,” said Harry.

“Don’t you take that tone — ” began Aunt Petunia in a

shrill voice, but Vernon Dursley waved her down.

“It’s all a lot of claptrap,” said Uncle Vernon, glaring

at Harry with piggy little eyes. “I’ve decided I don’t

believe a word of it. We’re staying put, we’re not going

anywhere.”

Harry looked up at his uncle and felt a mixture of

exasperation and amusement. Vernon Dursley had

been changing his mind every twenty-four hours for

the past four weeks, packing and unpacking and

repacking the car with every change of heart. Harry’s

favorite moment had been the one when Uncle

Vernon, unaware that Dudley had added his

dumbbells to his case since the last time it had been

unpacked, had attempted to hoist it back into the

boot and collapsed with roars of pain and much

swearing.

Page | 32 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“According to you,” Vernon Dursley said now,

resuming his pacing up and down the living room,

“we — Petunia, Dudley, and I — are in danger. From

— from — ”

“Some of ‘my lot,’ right,” said Harry.

“Well, I don’t believe it,” repeated Uncle Vernon,

coming to a halt in front of Harry again. “I was awake

half the night thinking it all over, and I believe it’s a

plot to get the house.”

“The house?” repeated Harry. “What house?”

“ This house!” shrieked Uncle Vernon, the vein in his

forehead starting to pulse. “Our house! House prices

are skyrocketing around here! You want us out of the

way and then you’re going to do a bit of hocus-pocus

and before we know it the deeds will be in your name

and — ”

“Are you out of your mind?” demanded Harry. “A plot

to get this house? Are you actually as stupid as you

look?”

“Don’t you dare — !” squealed Aunt Petunia, but

again, Vernon waved her down: Slights on his

personal appearance were, it seemed, as nothing to

the danger he had spotted.

“Just in case you’ve forgotten,” said Harry, “I’ve

already got a house, my godfather left me one. So why

would I want this one? All the happy memories?”

There was silence. Harry thought he had rather

impressed his uncle with this argument.

“You claim,” said Uncle Vernon, starting to pace yet

again, “that this Lord Thing — ”

Page | 33 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ — Voldemort,” said Harry impatiently, “and we’ve

been through this about a hundred times already.

This isn’t a claim, it’s fact, Dumbledore told you last

year, and Kingsley and Mr. Weasley — ”

Vernon Dursley hunched his shoulders angrily, and

Harry guessed that his uncle was attempting to ward

off recollections of the unannounced visit, a few days

into Harry’s summer holidays, of two fully grown

wizards. The arrival on the doorstep of Kingsley

Shacklebolt and Arthur Weasley had come as a most

unpleasant shock to the Dursleys. Harry had to

admit, however, that as Mr. Weasley had once

demolished half of the living room, his reappearance

could not have been expected to delight Uncle

Vernon.

“ — Kingsley and Mr. Weasley explained it all as well,”

Harry pressed on remorselessly. “Once I’m seventeen,

the protective charm that keeps me safe will break,

and that exposes you as well as me. The Order is sure

Voldemort will target you, whether to torture you to

try and find out where I am, or because he thinks by

holding you hostage I’d come and try to rescue you.”

Uncle Vernon’s and Harry’s eyes met. Harry was sure

that in that instant they were both wondering the

same thing. Then Uncle Vernon walked on and Harry

resumed, “You’ve got to go into hiding and the Order

wants to help. You’re being offered serious protection,

the best there is.”

Uncle Vernon said nothing, but continued to pace up

and down. Outside the sun hung low over the privet

hedges. The next-door neighbor’s lawn mower stalled

again.

“I thought there was a Ministry of Magic?” asked

Vernon Dursley abruptly.

Page | 34 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“There is,” said Harry, surprised.

“Well, then, why can’t they protect us? It seems to me

that, as innocent victims, guilty of nothing more than

harboring a marked man, we ought to qualify for

government protection!”

Harry laughed; he could not help himself. It was so

very typical of his uncle to put his hopes in the

establishment, even within this world that he

despised and mistrusted.

“You heard what Mr. Weasley and Kingsley said,”

Harry replied. “We think the Ministry has been

infiltrated.”

Uncle Vernon strode to the fireplace and back,

breathing so heavily that his great black mustache

rippled, his face still purple with concentration.

“All right,” he said, stopping in front of Harry yet

again. “All right, let’s say, for the sake of argument,

we accept this protection. I still don’t see why we can’t

have that Kingsley bloke.”

Harry managed not to roll his eyes, but with difficulty.

This question had also been addressed half a dozen

times.

“As I’ve told you,” he said through gritted teeth,

“Kingsley is protecting the Mug — I mean, your Prime

Minister.”

“Exactly — he’s the best!” said Uncle Vernon, pointing

at the blank television screen. The Dursleys had

spotted Kingsley on the news, walking along

discreetly behind the Muggle Prime Minister as he

visited a hospital. This, and the fact that Kingsley had

mastered the knack of dressing like a Muggle, not to

Page | 35 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

mention a certain reassuring something in his slow,

deep voice, had caused the Dursleys to take to

Kingsley in a way that they had certainly not done

with any other wizard, although it was true that they

had never seen him with his earring in.

“Well, he’s taken,” said Harry. “But Hestia Jones and

Dedalus Diggle are more than up to the job — ”

“If we’d even seen CVs ...” began Uncle Vernon, but

Harry lost patience. Getting to his feet, he advanced

on his uncle, now pointing at the TV set himself.

“These accidents aren’t accidents — the crashes and

explosions and derailments and whatever else has

happened since we last watched the news. People are

disappearing and dying and he’s behind it —

Voldemort. I’ve told you this over and over again, he

kills Muggles for fun. Even the fogs — they’re caused

by dementors, and if you can’t remember what they

are, ask your son!”

Dudley’s hands jerked upward to cover his mouth.

With his parents’ and Harry’s eyes upon him, he

slowly lowered them again and asked, “There are . . .

more of them?”

“More?” laughed Harry. “More than the two that

attacked us, you mean? Of course there are, there are

hundreds, maybe thousands by this time, seeing as

they feed off fear and despair — ”

“All right, all right,” blustered Vernon Dursley.

“You’ve made your point — ”

“I hope so,” said Harry, “because once I’m seventeen,

all of them — Death Eaters, dementors, maybe even

Inferi — which means dead bodies enchanted by a

Dark wizard — will be able to find you and will

Page | 36 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

certainly attack you. And if you remember the last

time you tried to outrun wizards, I think you 11 agree

you need help.”

There was a brief silence in which the distant echo of

Hagrid smashing down a wooden front door seemed

to reverberate through the intervening years. Aunt

Petunia was looking at Uncle Vernon; Dudley was

staring at Harry. Finally Uncle Vernon blurted out,

“But what about my work? What about Dudley’s

school? I don’t suppose those things matter to a

bunch of layabout wizards — ”

“Don’t you understand?” shouted Harry. “They will

torture and kill you like they did my parents !”

“Dad,” said Dudley in a loud voice, “Dad — I’m going

with these Order people.”

“Dudley,” said Harry, “for the first time in your life,

you’re talking sense.”

He knew that the battle was won. If Dudley was

frightened enough to accept the Order’s help, his

parents would accompany him: There could be no

question of being separated from their Diddykins.

Harry glanced at the carriage clock on the

mantelpiece.

“They’ll be here in about five minutes,” he said, and

when none of the Dursleys replied, he left the room.

The prospect of parting — probably forever — from

his aunt, uncle, and cousin was one that he was able

to contemplate quite cheerfully, but there was

nevertheless a certain awkwardness in the air. What

did you say to one another at the end of sixteen years’

solid dislike?

Page | 37 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Back in his bedroom, Harry fiddled aimlessly with his

rucksack, then poked a couple of owl nuts through

the bars of Hedwig’s cage. They fell with dull thuds to

the bottom, where she ignored them.

“We’re leaving soon, really soon,” Harry told her. “And

then you’ll be able to fly again.”

The doorbell rang. Harry hesitated, then headed back

out of his room and downstairs. It was too much to

expect Hestia and Dedalus to cope with the Dursleys

on their own.

“Harry Potter!” squeaked an excited voice, the

moment Harry had opened the door; a small man in a

mauve top hat was sweeping him a deep bow. “An

honor, as ever!”

“Thanks, Dedalus,” said Harry, bestowing a small and

embarrassed smile upon the dark-haired Hestia. “It’s

really good of you to do this. ... They’re through here,

my aunt and uncle and cousin. ...”

“Good day to you, Harry Potter’s relatives!” said

Dedalus happily, striding into the living room. The

Dursleys did not look at all happy to be addressed

thus; Harry half expected another change of mind.

Dudley shrank nearer to his mother at the sight of

the witch and wizard.

“I see you are packed and ready. Excellent! The plan,

as Harry has told you, is a simple one,” said Dedalus,

pulling an immense pocket watch out of his waistcoat

and examining it. “We shall be leaving before Harry

does. Due to the danger of using magic in your house

— Harry being still underage, it could provide the

Ministry with an excuse to arrest him — we shall be

driving, say, ten miles or so, before Disapparating to

the safe location we have picked out for you. You

Page | 38 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

know how to drive, I take it?” he asked Uncle Vernon

politely.

“Know how to — ? Of course I ruddy well know how to

drive!” spluttered Uncle Vernon.

“Very clever of you, sir, very clever, I personally would

be utterly bamboozled by all those buttons and

knobs,” said Dedalus. He was clearly under the

impression that he was flattering Vernon Dursley,

who was visibly losing confidence in the plan with

every word Dedalus spoke.

“Can’t even drive,” he muttered under his breath, his

mustache rippling indignantly, but fortunately neither

Dedalus nor Hestia seemed to hear him.

“You, Harry,” Dedalus continued, “will wait here for

your guard. There has been a little change in the

arrangements — ”

“What d’you mean?” said Harry at once. “I thought

Mad-Eye was going to come and take me by Side-

Along- Apparition?”

“Can’t do it,” said Hestia tersely. “Mad-Eye will

explain.”

The Dursleys, who had listened to all of this with

looks of utter incomprehension on their faces, jumped

as a loud voice screeched, “Hurry up\” Harry looked

all around the room before realizing that the voice

had issued from Dedalus’s pocket watch.

“Quite right, we’re operating to a very tight schedule,”

said Dedalus, nodding at his watch and tucking it

back into his waistcoat. “We are attempting to time

your departure from the house with your family’s

Disapparition, Harry; thus, the charm breaks at the

Page | 39 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

moment you all head for safety.” He turned to the

Dursleys. “Well, are we all packed and ready to go?”

None of them answered him. Uncle Vernon was still

staring, appalled, at the bulge in Dedalus’s waistcoat

pocket.

“Perhaps we should wait outside in the hall,

Dedalus,” murmured Hestia. She clearly felt that it

would be tactless for them to remain in the room

while Harry and the Dursleys exchanged loving,

possibly tearful farewells.

“There’s no need,” Harry muttered, but Uncle Vernon

made any further explanation unnecessary by saying

loudly,

“Well, this is good-bye, then, boy.”

He swung his right arm upward to shake Harry’s

hand, but at the last moment seemed unable to face

it, and merely closed his fist and began swinging it

backward and forward like a metronome.

“Ready, Diddy?” asked Aunt Petunia, fussily checking

the clasp of her handbag so as to avoid looking at

Harry altogether.

Dudley did not answer, but stood there with his

mouth slightly ajar, reminding Harry a little of the

giant, Grawp.

“Come along, then,” said Uncle Vernon.

He had already reached the living room door when

Dudley mumbled, “I don’t understand.”

“What don’t you understand, popkin?” asked Aunt

Petunia, looking up at her son.

Page | 40 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Dudley raised a large, hamlike hand to point at

Harry.

“Why isn’t he coming with us?”

Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia froze where they

stood, staring at Dudley as though he had just

expressed a desire to become a ballerina.

“What?” said Uncle Vernon loudly.

“Why isn’t he coming too?” asked Dudley.

“Well, he — he doesn’t want to,” said Uncle Vernon,

turning to glare at Harry and adding, “You don’t want

to, do you?”

“Not in the slightest,” said Harry.

“There you are,” Uncle Vernon told Dudley. “Now

come on, we’re off.”

He marched out of the room. They heard the front

door open, but Dudley did not move and after a few

faltering steps Aunt Petunia stopped too.

“What now?” barked Uncle Vernon, reappearing in the

doorway.

It seemed that Dudley was struggling with concepts

too difficult to put into words. After several moments

of apparently painful internal struggle he said, “But

where’s he going to go?”

Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon looked at each other.

It was clear that Dudley was frightening them. Hestia

Jones broke the silence.

Page | 41 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But . . . surely you know where your nephew is

going?” she asked, looking bewildered.

“Certainly we know,” said Vernon Dursley. “He’s off

with some of your lot, isn’t he? Right, Dudley, let’s get

in the car, you heard the man, we’re in a hurry.”

Again, Vernon Dursley marched as far as the front

door, but Dudley did not follow.

“Off with some of our lot?”

Hestia looked outraged. Harry had met this attitude

before: Witches and wizards seemed stunned that his

closest living relatives took so little interest in the

famous Harry Potter.

“It’s fine,” Harry assured her. “It doesn’t matter,

honestly.”

“Doesn’t matter?” repeated Hestia, her voice rising

ominously. “Don’t these people realize what you’ve

been through? What danger you are in? The unique

position you hold in the hearts of the anti-Voldemort

movement?”

“Er — no, they don’t,” said Harry. “They think I’m a

waste of space, actually, but I’m used to — ”

“I don’t think you’re a waste of space.”

If Harry had not seen Dudley’s lips move, he might

not have believed it. As it was, he stared at Dudley for

several seconds before accepting that it must have

been his cousin who had spoken; for one thing,

Dudley had turned red. Harry was embarrassed and

astonished himself.

“Well ... er ... thanks, Dudley.”

Page | 42 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Again, Dudley appeared to grapple with thoughts too

unwieldy for expression before mumbling, “You saved

my life.”

“Not really,” said Harry. “It was your soul the

dementor would have taken. ...”

He looked curiously at his cousin. They had had

virtually no contact during this summer or last, as

Harry had come back to Privet Drive so briefly and

kept to his room so much. It now dawned on Harry,

however, that the cup of cold tea on which he had

trodden that morning might not have been a booby

trap at all. Although rather touched, he was

nevertheless quite relieved that Dudley appeared to

have exhausted his ability to express his feelings.

After opening his mouth once or twice more, Dudley

subsided into scarlet-faced silence.

Aunt Petunia burst into tears. Hestia Jones gave her

an approving look that changed to outrage as Aunt

Petunia ran forward and embraced Dudley rather

than Harry.

“S-so sweet, Dudders ...” she sobbed into his massive

chest. “S-such a lovely b-boy ... s-saying thank you

“But he hasn’t said thank you at all!” said Hestia

indignantly. “He only said he didn’t think Harry was a

waste of space!”

“Yeah, but coming from Dudley that’s like ‘I love you,’

” said Harry, torn between annoyance and a desire to

laugh as Aunt Petunia continued to clutch at Dudley

as if he had just saved Harry from a burning building.

Page | 43 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Are we going or not?” roared Uncle Vernon,

reappearing yet again at the living room door. “I

thought we were on a tight schedule!”

“Yes — yes, we are,” said Dedalus Diggle, who had

been watching these exchanges with an air of

bemusement and now seemed to pull himself

together. “We really must be off. Harry — ”

He tripped forward and wrung Harry’s hand with both

of his own.

“ — good luck. I hope we meet again. The hopes of the

Wizarding world rest upon your shoulders.”

“Oh,” said Harry, “right. Thanks.”

“Farewell, Harry,” said Hestia, also clasping his hand.

“Our thoughts go with you.”

“I hope everything’s okay,” said Harry with a glance

toward Aunt Petunia and Dudley.

“Oh, I’m sure we shall end up the best of chums,”

said Diggle brightly, waving his hat as he left the

room. Hestia followed him.

Dudley gently released himself from his mother’s

clutches and walked toward Harry, who had to

repress an urge to threaten him with magic. Then

Dudley held out his large, pink hand.

“Blimey, Dudley,” said Harry over Aunt Petunia’s

renewed sobs, “did the dementors blow a different

personality into you?”

“Dunno,” muttered Dudley. “See you, Harry.”

Page | 44 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Yeah ...” said Harry, taking Dudley’s hand and

shaking it. “Maybe. Take care, Big D.”

Dudley nearly smiled, then lumbered from the room.

Harry heard his heavy footfalls on the graveled drive,

and then a car door slammed.

Aunt Petunia, whose face had been buried in her

handkerchief, looked around at the sound. She did

not seem to have expected to find herself alone with

Harry. Hastily stowing her wet handkerchief into her

pocket, she said, “Well — good-bye,” and marched

toward the door without looking at him.

“Good-bye,” said Harry.

She stopped and looked back. For a moment Harry

had the strangest feeling that she wanted to say

something to him: She gave him an odd, tremulous

look and seemed to teeter on the edge of speech, but

then, with a little jerk of her head, she bustled out of

the room after her husband and son.

Page | 45 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE SEVEN POTTERS

Harry ran back upstairs to his bedroom, arriving at

the window just in time to see the Dursleys’ car

swinging out of the drive and off up the road.

Dedalus’s top hat was visible between Aunt Petunia

and Dudley in the backseat. The car turned right at

the end of Privet Drive, its windows burned scarlet for

a moment in the now setting sun, and then it was

gone.

Harry picked up Hedwig’s cage, his Firebolt, and his

rucksack, gave his unnaturally tidy bedroom one last

sweeping look, and then made his ungainly way back

downstairs to the hall, where he deposited cage,

broomstick, and bag near the foot of the stairs. The

light was fading rapidly now, the hall full of shadows

in the evening light. It felt most strange to stand here

in the silence and know that he was about to leave

the house for the last time. Long ago, when he had

been left alone while the Dursleys went out to enjoy

themselves, the hours of solitude had been a rare

treat: Pausing only to sneak something tasty from the

fridge, he had rushed upstairs to play on Dudley’s

Page | 46 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

computer, or put on the television and flicked through

the channels to his heart’s content. It gave him an

odd, empty feeling to remember those times; it was

like remembering a younger brother whom he had

lost.

“Don’t you want to take a last look at the place?” he

asked Hedwig, who was still sulking with her head

under her wing. “We’ll never be here again. Don’t you

want to remember all the good times? I mean, look at

this doormat. What memories ... Dudley puked on it

after I saved him from the dementors. ... Turns out he

was grateful after all, can you believe it? ... And last

summer, Dumbledore walked through that front door.

Harry lost the thread of his thoughts for a moment

and Hedwig did nothing to help him retrieve it, but

continued to sit with her head under her wing. Harry

turned his back on the front door.

“And under here, Hedwig” — Harry pulled open a door

under the stairs — “is where I used to sleep! You

never knew me then — Blimey, it’s small, I’d

forgotten. ...”

Harry looked around at the stacked shoes and

umbrellas, remembering how he used to wake every

morning looking up at the underside of the staircase,

which was more often than not adorned with a spider

or two. Those had been the days before he had known

anything about his true identity; before he had found

out how his parents had died or why such strange

things often happened around him. But Harry could

still remember the dreams that had dogged him, even

in those days: confused dreams involving flashes of

green light and once — Uncle Vernon had nearly

crashed the car when Harry had recounted it — a

flying motorbike . . .

Page | 47 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There was a sudden, deafening roar from somewhere

nearby. Harry straightened up with a jerk and

smacked the top of his head on the low door frame.

Pausing only to employ a few of Uncle Vernon’s

choicest swear words, he staggered back into the

kitchen, clutching his head and staring out of the

window into the back garden.

The darkness seemed to be rippling, the air itself

quivering. Then, one by one, figures began to pop into

sight as their Disillusionment Charms lifted.

Dominating the scene was Hagrid, wearing a helmet

and goggles and sitting astride an enormous

motorbike with a black sidecar attached. All around

him other people were dismounting from brooms and,

in two cases, skeletal, black winged horses.

Wrenching open the back door, Harry hurtled into

their midst. There was a general cry of greeting as

Hermione flung her arms around him, Ron clapped

him on the back, and Hagrid said, “All righ’, Harry?

Ready fer the off?”

“Definitely,” said Harry, beaming around at them all.

“But I wasn’t expecting this many of you!”

“Change of plan,” growled Mad-Eye, who was holding

two enormous, bulging sacks, and whose magical eye

was spinning from darkening sky to house to garden

with dizzying rapidity. “Let’s get undercover before we

talk you through it.”

Harry led them all back into the kitchen where,

laughing and chattering, they settled on chairs, sat

themselves upon Aunt Petunia’s gleaming work

surfaces, or leaned up against her spotless

appliances: Ron, long and lanky; Hermione, her

bushy hair tied back in a long plait; Fred and George,

grinning identically; Bill, badly scarred and long-

Page | 48 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

haired; Mr. Weasley, kind-faced, balding, his

spectacles a little awry; Mad-Eye, battle-worn, one-

legged, his bright blue magical eye whizzing in its

socket; Tonks, whose short hair was her favorite

shade of bright pink; Lupin, grayer, more lined; Fleur,

slender and beautiful, with her long silvery blonde

hair; Kingsley, bald, black, broad-shouldered; Hagrid,

with his wild hair and beard, standing hunchbacked

to avoid hitting his head on the ceiling; and

Mundungus Fletcher, small, dirty, and hangdog, with

his droopy basset hound’s eyes and matted hair.

Harry’s heart seemed to expand and glow at the sight:

He felt incredibly fond of all of them, even

Mundungus, whom he had tried to strangle the last

time they had met.

“Kingsley, I thought you were looking after the Muggle

Prime Minister?” he called across the room.

“He can get along without me for one night,” said

Kingsley. “You’re more important.”

“Harry, guess what?” said Tonks from her perch on

top of the washing machine, and she wiggled her left

hand at him; a ring glittered there.

“You got married?” Harry yelped, looking from her to

Lupin.

“I’m sorry you couldn’t be there, Harry, it was very

quiet.”

“That’s brilliant, congrat — ”

“All right, all right, we’ll have time for a cozy catch-up

later!” roared Moody over the hubbub, and silence fell

in the kitchen. Moody dropped his sacks at his feet

and turned to Harry. “As Dedalus probably told you,

we had to abandon Plan A. Pius Thicknesse has gone

Page | 49 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

over, which gives us a big problem. He’s made it an

imprisonable offense to connect this house to the Floo

Network, place a Portkey here, or Apparate in or out.

All done in the name of your protection, to prevent

You-Know-Who getting in at you. Absolutely

pointless, seeing as your mother’s charm does that

already. What he’s really done is to stop you getting

out of here safely.

“Second problem: You’re underage, which means

you’ve still got the Trace on you.”

“I don’t — ”

“The Trace, the Trace!” said Mad-Eye impatiently.

“The charm that detects magical activity around

under-seventeens, the way the Ministry finds out

about underage magic! If you, or anyone around you,

casts a spell to get you out of here, Thicknesse is

going to know about it, and so will the Death Eaters.

“We can’t wait for the Trace to break, because the

moment you turn seventeen you’ll lose all the

protection your mother gave you. In short: Pius

Thicknesse thinks he’s got you cornered good and

proper.”

Harry could not help but agree with the unknown

Thicknesse.

“So what are we going to do?”

“We’re going to use the only means of transport left to

us, the only ones the Trace can’t detect, because we

don’t need to cast spells to use them: brooms,

thestrals, and Hagrid’s motorbike.”

Page | 50 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry could see flaws in this plan; however, he held

his tongue to give Mad-Eye the chance to address

them.

“Now, your mother’s charm will only break under two

conditions: when you come of age, or” — Moody

gestured around the pristine kitchen — “you no

longer call this place home. You and your aunt and

uncle are going your separate ways tonight, in the full

understanding that you’re never going to live together

again, correct?”

Harry nodded.

“So this time, when you leave, there’ll be no going

back, and the charm will break the moment you get

outside its range. We’re choosing to break it early,

because the alternative is waiting for You-Know-Who

to come and seize you the moment you turn

seventeen.

“The one thing we’ve got on our side is that You-

Know-Who doesn’t know we’re moving you tonight.

We’ve leaked a fake trail to the Ministry: They think

you’re not leaving until the thirtieth. However, this is

You-Know-Who we’re dealing with, so we can’t just

rely on him getting the date wrong; he’s bound to

have a couple of Death Eaters patrolling the skies in

this general area, just in case. So, we’ve given a dozen

different houses every protection we can throw at

them. They all look like they could be the place we’re

going to hide you, they’ve all got some connection

with the Order: my house, Kingsley’s place, Molly’s

Auntie Muriel’s — you get the idea.”

“Yeah,” said Harry, not entirely truthfully, because he

could still spot a gaping hole in the plan.

Page | 51 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You’ll be going to Tonks’s parents. Once you’re

within the boundaries of the protective enchantments

we’ve put on their house, you’ll be able to use a

Portkey to the Burrow. Any questions?”

“Er — yes,” said Harry. “Maybe they won’t know

which of the twelve secure houses I’m heading for at

first, but won’t it be sort of obvious once” — he

performed a quick headcount — “fourteen of us fly off

toward Tonks’s parents’?”

“Ah,” said Moody, “I forgot to mention the key point.

Fourteen of us won’t be flying to Tonks’s parents’.

There will be seven Harry Potters moving through the

skies tonight, each of them with a companion, each

pair heading for a different safe house.”

From inside his cloak Moody now withdrew a flask of

what looked like mud. There was no need for him to

say another word; Harry understood the rest of the

plan immediately.

“No!” he said loudly, his voice ringing through the

kitchen. “No way!”

“I told them you’d take it like this,” said Hermione

with a hint of complacency.

“If you think I’m going to let six people risk their lives

— !”

“ — because it’s the first time for all of us,” said Ron.

“This is different, pretending to be me — ”

“Well, none of us really fancy it, Harry,” said Fred

earnestly. “Imagine if something went wrong and we

were stuck as specky, scrawny gits forever.”

Page | 52 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry did not smile.

“You can’t do it if I don’t cooperate, you need me to

give you some hair.”

“Well, that’s that plan scuppered,” said George.

“Obviously there’s no chance at all of us getting a bit

of your hair unless you cooperate.”

“Yeah, thirteen of us against one bloke who’s not

allowed to use magic; we’ve got no chance,” said Fred.

“Funny,” said Harry, “really amusing.”

“If it has to come to force, then it will,” growled

Moody, his magical eye now quivering a little in its

socket as he glared at Harry. “Everyone here’s

overage, Potter, and they’re all prepared to take the

risk.”

Mundungus shrugged and grimaced; the magical eye

swerved sideways to glare at him out of the side of

Moody’s head.

“Let’s have no more arguments. Time’s wearing on. I

want a few of your hairs, boy, now.”

“But this is mad, there’s no need — ”

“No need!” snarled Moody. “With You-Know-Who out

there and half the Ministry on his side? Potter, if

we’re lucky hell have swallowed the fake bait and

he’ll be planning to ambush you on the thirtieth, but

he’d be mad not to have a Death Eater or two keeping

an eye out, it’s what I’d do. They might not be able to

get at you or this house while your mother’s charm

holds, but it’s about to break and they know the

rough position of the place. Our only chance is to use

Page | 53 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

decoys. Even You-Know-Who can’t split himself into

seven.”

Harry caught Hermione’s eye and looked away at

once.

“So, Potter — some of your hair, if you please.”

Harry glanced at Ron, who grimaced at him in a just-

do-it sort of way.

“Now!” barked Moody.

With all of their eyes upon him, Harry reached up to

the top of his head, grabbed a hank of hair, and

pulled.

“Good,” said Moody, limping forward as he pulled the

stopper out of the flask of potion. “Straight in here, if

you please.”

Harry dropped the hair into the mudlike liquid. The

moment it made contact with its surface, the potion

began to froth and smoke, then, all at once, it turned

a clear, bright gold.

“Ooh, you look much tastier than Crabbe and Goyle,

Harry,” said Hermione, before catching sight of Ron’s

raised eyebrows, blushing slightly, and saying, “Oh,

you know what I mean — Goyle ’s potion looked like

bogies.”

“Right then, fake Potters line up over here, please,”

said Moody.

Ron, Hermione, Fred, George, and Fleur lined up in

front of Aunt Petunia’s gleaming sink.

“We’re one short,” said Lupin.

Page | 54 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Here,” said Hagrid gruffly, and he lifted Mundungus

by the scruff of the neck and dropped him down

beside Fleur, who wrinkled her nose pointedly and

moved along to stand between Fred and George

instead.

“I’ve toldjer, I’d sooner be a protector,” said

Mundungus.

“Shut it,” growled Moody. “As I’ve already told you,

you spineless worm, any Death Eaters we run into

will be aiming to capture Potter, not kill him.

Dumbledore always said You-Know-Who would want

to finish Potter in person. It’ll be the protectors who

have got the most to worry about, the Death Eaters’ll

want to kill them.”

Mundungus did not look particularly reassured, but

Moody was already pulling half a dozen eggcup-sized

glasses from inside his cloak, which he handed out,

before pouring a little Polyjuice Potion into each one.

“Altogether, then ...”

Ron, Hermione, Fred, George, Fleur, and Mundungus

drank. All of them gasped and grimaced as the potion

hit their throats: At once, their features began to

bubble and distort like hot wax. Hermione and

Mundungus were shooting upward; Ron, Fred, and

George were shrinking; their hair was darkening,

Hermione’s and Fleur’s appearing to shoot backward

into their skulls.

Moody, quite unconcerned, was now loosening the

ties of the large sacks he had brought with him. When

he straightened up again, there were six Harry Potters

gasping and panting in front of him.

Page | 55 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Fred and George turned to each other and said

together, “Wow — we’re identical!”

“I dunno, though, I think I’m still better-looking,” said

Fred, examining his reflection in the kettle.

“Bah,” said Fleur, checking herself in the microwave

door, “Bill, don’t look at me — I’m ’ideous.”

“Those whose clothes are a bit roomy, I’ve got smaller

here,” said Moody, indicating the first sack, “and vice

versa. Don’t forget the glasses, there’s six pairs in the

side pocket. And when you’re dressed, there’s luggage

in the other sack.”

The real Harry thought that this might just be the

most bizarre thing he had ever seen, and he had seen

some extremely odd things. He watched as his six

doppelgangers rummaged in the sacks, pulling out

sets of clothes, putting on glasses, stuffing their own

things away. He felt like asking them to show a little

more respect for his privacy as they all began

stripping off with impunity, clearly much more at ease

with displaying his body than they would have been

with their own.

“I knew Ginny was lying about that tattoo,” said Ron,

looking down at his bare chest.

“Harry, your eyesight really is awful,” said Hermione,

as she put on glasses.

Once dressed, the fake Harrys took rucksacks and

owl cages, each containing a stuffed snowy owl, from

the second sack.

“Good,” said Moody, as at last seven dressed,

bespectacled, and luggage-laden Harrys faced him.

Page | 56 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“The pairs will be as follows: Mundungus will be

traveling with me, by broom — ”

“Why’m I with you?” grunted the Harry nearest the

back door.

“Because you’re the one that needs watching,”

growled Moody, and sure enough, his magical eye did

not waver from Mundungus as he continued, “Arthur

and Fred — ”

“I’m George,” said the twin at whom Moody was

pointing. “Can’t you even tell us apart when we’re

Harry?”

“Sorry, George — ”

“I’m only yanking your wand, I’m Fred really — ”

“Enough messing around!” snarled Moody. “The other

one — George or Fred or whoever you are — you’re

with Remus. Miss Delacour — ”

“I’m taking Fleur on a thestral,” said Bill. “She’s not

that fond of brooms.”

Fleur walked over to stand beside him, giving him a

soppy, slavish look that Harry hoped with all his

heart would never appear on his face again.

“Miss Granger with Kingsley, again by thestral — ”

Hermione looked reassured as she answered

Kingsley’s smile; Harry knew that Hermione too

lacked confidence on a broomstick.

“Which leaves you and me, Ron!” said Tonks brightly,

knocking over a mug tree as she waved at him.

Page | 57 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ron did not look quite as pleased as Hermione.

“An’ you’re with me, Harry. That all righ’?” said

Hagrid, looking a little anxious. “We’ll be on the bike,

brooms an’ thestrals can’t take me weight, see. Not a

lot o’ room on the seat with me on it, though, so you’ll

be in the sidecar.”

“That’s great,” said Harry, not altogether truthfully.

“We think the Death Eaters will expect you to be on a

broom,” said Moody, who seemed to guess how Harry

was feeling. “Snape’s had plenty of time to tell them

everything about you he’s never mentioned before, so

if we do run into any Death Eaters, we’re betting

they’ll choose one of the Potters who look at home on

a broomstick. All right then,” he went on, tying up the

sack with the fake Potters’ clothes in it and leading

the way back to the door, “I make it three minutes

until we’re supposed to leave. No point locking the

back door, it won’t keep the Death Eaters out when

they come looking. ... Come on. ...”

Harry hurried into the hall to fetch his rucksack,

Firebolt, and Hedwig’s cage before joining the others

in the dark back garden. On every side broomsticks

were leaping into hands; Hermione had already been

helped up onto a great black thestral by Kingsley,

Fleur onto the other by Bill. Hagrid was standing

ready beside the motorbike, goggles on.

“Is this it? Is this Sirius’s bike?”

“The very same,” said Hagrid, beaming down at Harry.

“An’ the last time yeh was on it, Harry, I could fit yeh

in one hand!”

Harry could not help but feel a little humiliated as he

got into the sidecar. It placed him several feet below

Page | 58 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

everybody else: Ron smirked at the sight of him

sitting there like a child in a bumper car. Harry

stuffed his rucksack and broomstick down by his feet

and rammed Hedwig’s cage between his knees. It was

extremely uncomfortable.

“Arthur’s done a bit o’ tinkerin’,” said Hagrid, quite

oblivious to Harry’s discomfort. He settled himself

astride the motorcycle, which creaked slightly and

sank inches into the ground. “It’s got a few tricks up

its handlebars now. Tha’ one was my idea.”

He pointed a thick finger at a purple button near the

speedometer.

“Please be careful, Hagrid,” said Mr. Weasley, who

was standing beside them, holding his broomstick.

“I’m still not sure that was advisable and it’s certainly

only to be used in emergencies.”

“All right then,” said Moody. “Everyone ready, please;

I want us all to leave at exactly the same time or the

whole point of the diversion’s lost.”

Everybody mounted their brooms.

“Hold tight now, Ron,” said Tonks, and Harry saw

Ron throw a furtive, guilty look at Lupin before

placing his hands on either side of her waist. Hagrid

kicked the motorbike into life: It roared like a dragon,

and the sidecar began to vibrate.

“Good luck, everyone,” shouted Moody. “See you all in

about an hour at the Burrow. On the count of three.

One ... two ... THREE.”

There was a great roar from the motorbike, and Harry

felt the sidecar give a nasty lurch: He was rising

through the air fast, his eyes watering slightly, hair

Page | 59 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

whipped back off his face. Around him brooms were

soaring upward too; the long black tail of a thestral

flicked past. His legs, jammed into the sidecar by

Hedwig’s cage and his rucksack, were already sore

and starting to go numb. So great was his discomfort

that he almost forgot to take a last glimpse of number

four, Privet Drive; by the time he looked over the edge

of the sidecar he could no longer tell which one it

was. Higher and higher they climbed into the sky —

And then, out of nowhere, out of nothing, they were

surrounded. At least thirty hooded figures, suspended

in midair, formed a vast circle in the midst of which

the Order members had risen, oblivious —

Screams, a blaze of green light on every side: Hagrid

gave a yell and the motorbike rolled over. Harry lost

any sense of where they were: Streetlights above him,

yells around him, he was clinging to the sidecar for

dear life. Hedwig’s cage, the Firebolt, and his

rucksack slipped from beneath his knees —

“No — HEDWIG!”

The broomstick spun to earth, but he just managed

to seize the strap of his rucksack and the top of the

cage as the motorbike swung the right way up again.

A second’s relief, and then another burst of green

light. The owl screeched and fell to the floor of the

cage.

“No — NO!”

The motorbike zoomed forward; Harry glimpsed

hooded Death Eaters scattering as Hagrid blasted

through their circle.

“Hedwig — Hedwig — ”

Page | 60 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

But the owl lay motionless and pathetic as a toy on

the floor of her cage. He could not take it in, and his

terror for the others was paramount. He glanced over

his shoulder and saw a mass of people moving, flares

of green light, two pairs of people on brooms soaring

off into the distance, but he could not tell who they

were —

“Hagrid, we’ve got to go back, we’ve got to go back!” he

yelled over the thunderous roar of the engine, pulling

out his wand, ramming Hedwig’s cage onto the floor,

refusing to believe that she was dead. “Hagrid, TURN

AROUND!”

“My job’s ter get you there safe, Harry!” bellowed

Hagrid, and he opened the throttle.

“Stop — STOP!” Harry shouted, but as he looked back

again two jets of green light flew past his left ear: Four

Death Eaters had broken away from the circle and

were pursuing them, aiming for Hagrid ’s broad back.

Hagrid swerved, but the Death Eaters were keeping

up with the bike; more curses shot after them, and

Harry had to sink low into the sidecar to avoid them.

Wriggling around he cried, “Stupefy\” and a red bolt of

light shot from his own wand, cleaving a gap between

the four pursuing Death Eaters as they scattered to

avoid it.

“Hold on, Harry, this’ll do for ’em!” roared Hagrid, and

Harry looked up just in time to see Hagrid slamming

a thick finger into a green button near the fuel gauge.

A wall, a solid brick wall, erupted out of the exhaust

pipe. Craning his neck, Harry saw it expand into

being in midair. Three of the Death Eaters swerved

and avoided it, but the fourth was not so lucky: He

vanished from view and then dropped like a boulder

from behind it, his broomstick broken into pieces.

Page | 61 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

One of his fellows slowed up to save him, but they

and the airborne wall were swallowed by darkness as

Hagrid leaned low over the handlebars and sped up.

More Killing Curses flew past Harry’s head from the

two remaining Death Eaters’ wands; they were aiming

for Hagrid. Harry responded with further Stunning

Spells: Red and green collided in midair in a shower

of multicolored sparks, and Harry thought wildly of

fireworks, and the Muggles below who would have no

idea what was happening —

“Here we go again, Harry, hold on!” yelled Hagrid, and

he jabbed at a second button. This time a great net

burst from the bike’s exhaust, but the Death Eaters

were ready for it. Not only did they swerve to avoid it,

but the companion who had slowed to save their

unconscious friend had caught up. He bloomed

suddenly out of the darkness and now three of them

were pursuing the motorbike, all shooting curses after

it.

“This’ll do it, Harry, hold on tight!” yelled Hagrid, and

Harry saw him slam his whole hand onto the purple

button beside the speedometer.

With an unmistakable bellowing roar, dragon fire

burst from the exhaust, white-hot and blue, and the

motorbike shot forward like a bullet with a sound of

wrenching metal. Harry saw the Death Eaters swerve

out of sight to avoid the deadly trail of flame, and at

the same time felt the sidecar sway ominously: Its

metal connections to the bike had splintered with the

force of acceleration.

“It’s all righ’, Harry!” bellowed Hagrid, now thrown flat

onto his back by the surge of speed; nobody was

steering now, and the sidecar was starting to twist

violently in the bike’s slipstream.

Page | 62 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

‘Tm on it, Harry, don’ worry!” Hagrid yelled, and from

inside his jacket pocket he pulled his flowery pink

umbrella.

“Hagrid! No! Let me!”

“REPAROl”

There was a deafening bang and the sidecar broke

away from the bike completely: Harry sped forward,

propelled by the impetus of the bike’s flight, then the

sidecar began to lose height —

In desperation Harry pointed his wand at the sidecar

and shouted, “Wingardium Leviosal”

The sidecar rose like a cork, unsteerable but at least

still airborne: He had but a split second’s relief,

however, as more curses streaked past him: The three

Death Eaters were closing in.

“I’m cornin’, Harry!” Hagrid yelled from out of the

darkness, but Harry could feel the sidecar beginning

to sink again: Crouching as low as he could, he

pointed at the middle of the oncoming figures and

yelled, “Impedimental”

The jinx hit the middle Death Eater in the chest: For

a moment the man was absurdly spread-eagled in

midair as though he had hit an invisible barrier: One

of his fellows almost collided with him —

Then the sidecar began to fall in earnest, and the

remaining Death Eater shot a curse so close to Harry

that he had to duck below the rim of the car,

knocking out a tooth on the edge of his seat —

“I’m cornin’, Harry, I’m cornin’!”

Page | 63 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

A huge hand seized the back of Harry’s robes and

hoisted him out of the plummeting sidecar; Harry

pulled his rucksack with him as he dragged himself

onto the motorbike’s seat and found himself back-to-

back with Hagrid. As they soared upward, away from

the two remaining Death Eaters, Harry spat blood out

of his mouth, pointed his wand at the falling sidecar,

and yelled, “Confringo\”

He knew a dreadful, gut-wrenching pang for Hedwig

as it exploded; the Death Eater nearest it was blasted

off his broom and fell from sight; his companion fell

back and vanished.

“Harry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” moaned Hagrid, “I

shouldn’ta tried ter repair it meself — yeh’ve got no

room — ”

“It’s not a problem, just keep flying!” Harry shouted

back, as two more Death Eaters emerged out of the

darkness, drawing closer.

As the curses came shooting across the intervening

space again, Hagrid swerved and zigzagged: Harry

knew that Hagrid did not dare use the dragon-fire

button again, with Harry seated so insecurely. Harry

sent Stunning Spell after Stunning Spell back at their

pursuers, barely holding them off. He shot another

blocking jinx at them: The closest Death Eater

swerved to avoid it and his hood slipped, and by the

red light of his next Stunning Spell, Harry saw the

strangely blank face of Stanley Shunpike — Stan —

“ ExpelliarmusV’ Harry yelled.

“That’s him, it’s him, it’s the real one!”

The hooded Death Eater’s shout reached Harry even

above the thunder of the motorbike’s engine: Next

Page | 64 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

moment, both pursuers had fallen back and

disappeared from view.

“Harry, what’s happened?” bellowed Hagrid.

“Where Ve they gone?”

“I don’t know!”

But Harry was afraid: The hooded Death Eater had

shouted “It’s the real one!”; how had he known? He

gazed around at the apparently empty darkness and

felt its menace. Where were they?

He clambered around on the seat to face forward and

seized hold of the back of Hagrid ’s jacket.

“Hagrid, do the dragon-fire thing again, let’s get out of

here!”

“Hold on tight, then, Harry!”

There was a deafening, screeching roar again and the

white-blue fire shot from the exhaust: Harry felt

himself slipping backward off what little of the seat he

had, Hagrid flung backward upon him, barely

maintaining his grip on the handlebars —

“I think we’ve lost ’em Harry, I think we’ve done it!”

yelled Hagrid.

But Harry was not convinced: Fear lapped at him as

he looked left and right for pursuers he was sure

would come. ... Why had they fallen back? One of

them had still had a wand. ... It’s him ... it’s the real

one. . . . They had said it right after he had tried to

Disarm Stan. ...

“We’re nearly there, Harry, we’ve nearly made it!”

shouted Hagrid.

Page | 65 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry felt the bike drop a little, though the lights

down on the ground still seemed remote as stars.

Then the scar on his forehead burned like fire; as a

Death Eater appeared on either side of the bike, two

Killing Curses missed Harry by millimeters, cast from

behind —

And then Harry saw him. Voldemort was flying like

smoke on the wind, without broomstick or thestral to

hold him, his snakelike face gleaming out of the

blackness, his white fingers raising his wand again —

Hagrid let out a bellow of fear and steered the

motorbike into a vertical dive. Clinging on for dear

life, Harry sent Stunning Spells flying at random into

the whirling night. He saw a body fly past him and

knew he had hit one of them, but then he heard a

bang and saw sparks from the engine; the motorbike

spiraled through the air, completely out of control —

Green jets of light shot past them again. Harry had no

idea which way was up, which down: His scar was

still burning; he expected to die at any second. A

hooded figure on a broomstick was feet from him, he

saw it raise its arm —

“NO!”

With a shout of fury Hagrid launched himself off the

bike at the Death Eater; to his horror, Harry saw both

Hagrid and the Death Eater falling out of sight, their

combined weight too much for the broomstick —

Barely gripping the plummeting bike with his knees,

Harry heard Voldemort scream, “Mine\”

Page | 66 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

It was over: He could not see or hear where Voldemort

was; he glimpsed another Death Eater swooping out

of the way and heard, “Avada — ”

As the pain from Harry’s scar forced his eyes shut,

his wand acted of its own accord. He felt it drag his

hand around like some great magnet, saw a spurt of

golden fire through his half-closed eyelids, heard a

crack and a scream of fury. The remaining Death

Eater yelled; Voldemort screamed, “ No\ Somehow,

Harry found his nose an inch from the dragon-fire

button. He punched it with his wand-free hand and

the bike shot more flames into the air, hurtling

straight toward the ground.

“Hagrid!” Harry called, holding on to the bike for dear

life. “Hagrid — Accio Hagridl”

The motorbike sped up, sucked toward the earth.

Face level with the handlebars, Harry could see

nothing but distant lights growing nearer and nearer:

He was going to crash and there was nothing he could

do about it. Behind him came another scream, “Your

wand, Selwyn, give me your wand\”

He felt Voldemort before he saw him. Looking

sideways, he stared into the red eyes and was sure

they would be the last thing he ever saw: Voldemort

preparing to curse him once more —

And then Voldemort vanished. Harry looked down

and saw Hagrid spread-eagled on the ground below

him. He pulled hard at the handlebars to avoid hitting

him, groped for the brake, but with an earsplitting,

ground-trembling crash, he smashed into a muddy

pond.

Page | 67 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

5

FALLEN WARRIOR

“Hagrid?”

Harry struggled to raise himself out of the debris of

metal and leather that surrounded him; his hands

sank into inches of muddy water as he tried to stand.

He could not understand where Voldemort had gone

and expected him to swoop out of the darkness at any

moment. Something hot and wet was trickling down

his chin and from his forehead. He crawled out of the

pond and stumbled toward the great dark mass on

the ground that was Hagrid.

“Hagrid? Hagrid, talk to me — ”

But the dark mass did not stir.

“Who’s there? Is it Potter? Are you Harry Potter?”

Harry did not recognize the man’s voice. Then a

woman shouted, “They’ve crashed, Ted! Crashed in

the garden!”

Page | 68 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry’s head was swimming.

“Hagrid,” he repeated stupidly, and his knees

buckled.

The next thing he knew, he was lying on his back on

what felt like cushions, with a burning sensation in

his ribs and right arm. His missing tooth had been

regrown. The scar on his forehead was still throbbing.

“Hagrid?”

He opened his eyes and saw that he was lying on a

sofa in an unfamiliar, lamplit sitting room. His

rucksack lay on the floor a short distance away, wet

and muddy. A fair-haired, big-bellied man was

watching Harry anxiously.

“Hagrid’s fine, son,” said the man, “the wife’s seeing

to him now. How are you feeling? Anything else

broken? I’ve fixed your ribs, your tooth, and your

arm. I’m Ted, by the way, Ted Tonks — Dora’s father.”

Harry sat up too quickly: Lights popped in front of his

eyes and he felt sick and giddy.

“Voldemort — ”

“Easy, now,” said Ted Tonks, placing a hand on

Harry’s shoulder and pushing him back against the

cushions. “That was a nasty crash you just had. What

happened, anyway? Something go wrong with the

bike? Arthur Weasley overstretch himself again, him

and his Muggle contraptions?”

“No,” said Harry, as his scar pulsed like an open

wound. “Death Eaters, loads of them — we were

chased — ”

Page | 69 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Death Eaters?” said Ted sharply. “What d’you mean,

Death Eaters? I thought they didn’t know you were

being moved tonight, I thought — ”

“They knew,” said Harry.

Ted Tonks looked up at the ceiling as though he could

see through it to the sky above.

“Well, we know our protective charms hold, then,

don’t we? They shouldn’t be able to get within a

hundred yards of the place in any direction.”

Now Harry understood why Voldemort had vanished;

it had been at the point when the motorbike crossed

the barrier of the Order’s charms. He only hoped they

would continue to work: He imagined Voldemort, a

hundred yards above them as they spoke, looking for

a way to penetrate what Harry visualized as a great

transparent bubble.

He swung his legs off the sofa; he needed to see

Hagrid with his own eyes before he would believe that

he was alive. He had barely stood up, however, when

a door opened and Hagrid squeezed through it, his

face covered in mud and blood, limping a little but

miraculously alive.

“Harry!”

Knocking over two delicate tables and an aspidistra,

he covered the floor between them in two strides and

pulled Harry into a hug that nearly cracked his newly

repaired ribs. “Blimey, Harry, how did yeh get out o’

that? I thought we were both goners.”

“Yeah, me too. I can’t believe — ”

Page | 70 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry broke off. He had just noticed the woman who

had entered the room behind Hagrid.

“You!” he shouted, and he thrust his hand into his

pocket, but it was empty.

“Your wand’s here, son,” said Ted, tapping it on

Harry’s arm. “It fell right beside you, I picked it up.

And that’s my wife you’re shouting at.”

“Oh, I’m — I’m sorry.”

As she moved forward into the room, Mrs. Tonks’s

resemblance to her sister Bellatrix became much less

pronounced: Her hair was a light, soft brown and her

eyes were wider and kinder. Nevertheless, she looked

a little haughty after Harry’s exclamation.

“What happened to our daughter?” she asked. “Hagrid

said you were ambushed; where is Nymphadora?”

“I don’t know,” said Harry. “We don’t know what

happened to anyone else.”

She and Ted exchanged looks. A mixture of fear and

guilt gripped Harry at the sight of their expressions; if

any of the others had died, it was his fault, all his

fault. He had consented to the plan, given them his

hair. ...

“The Portkey,” he said, remembering all of a sudden.

“We’ve got to get back to the Burrow and find out —

then well be able to send you word, or — or Tonks

will, once she’s — ”

“Dora’ll be okay, ’Dromeda,” said Ted. “She knows her

stuff, she’s been in plenty of tight spots with the

Aurors. The Portkey ’s through here,” he added to

Page | 71 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry. “It’s supposed to leave in three minutes, if you

want to take it.”

“Yeah, we do,” said Harry. He seized his rucksack,

swung it onto his shoulders. “I — ”

He looked at Mrs. Tonks, wanting to apologize for the

state of fear in which he left her and for which he felt

so terribly responsible, but no words occurred to him

that did not seem hollow and insincere.

“Ill tell Tonks — Dora — to send word, when she ...

Thanks for patching us up, thanks for everything. I —

He was glad to leave the room and follow Ted Tonks

along a short hallway and into a bedroom. Hagrid

came after them, bending low to avoid hitting his

head on the door lintel.

“There you go, son. That’s the Portkey.”

Mr. Tonks was pointing to a small, silver-backed

hairbrush lying on the dressing table.

“Thanks,” said Harry, reaching out to place a finger

on it, ready to leave.

“Wait a moment,” said Hagrid, looking around.

“Harry, where’s Hedwig?”

“She ... she got hit,” said Harry.

The realization crashed over him: He felt ashamed of

himself as the tears stung his eyes. The owl had been

his companion, his one great link with the magical

world whenever he had been forced to return to the

Dursleys.

Page | 72 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Hagrid reached out a great hand and patted him

painfully on the shoulder.

“Never mind,” he said gruffly. “Never mind. She had a

great old life — ”

“Hagrid!” said Ted Tonks warningly, as the hairbrush

glowed bright blue, and Hagrid only just got his

forefinger to it in time.

With a jerk behind the navel as though an invisible

hook and line had dragged him forward, Harry was

pulled into nothingness, spinning uncontrollably, his

finger glued to the Portkey as he and Hagrid hurtled

away from Mr. Tonks. Seconds later Harry’s feet

slammed onto hard ground and he fell onto his hands

and knees in the yard of the Burrow. He heard

screams. Throwing aside the no longer glowing

hairbrush, Harry stood up, swaying slightly, and saw

Mrs. Weasley and Ginny running down the steps by

the back door as Hagrid, who had also collapsed on

landing, clambered laboriously to his feet.

“Harry? You are the real Harry? What happened?

Where are the others?” cried Mrs. Weasley.

“What d’you mean? Isn’t anyone else back?” Harry

panted.

The answer was clearly etched in Mrs. Weasley ’s pale

face.

“The Death Eaters were waiting for us,” Harry told

her. “We were surrounded the moment we took off —

they knew it was tonight — I don’t know what

happened to anyone else, four of them chased us, it

was all we could do to get away, and then Voldemort

caught up with us — ”

Page | 73 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He could hear the self-justifying note in his voice, the

plea for her to understand why he did not know what

had happened to her sons, but —

“Thank goodness you’re all right,” she said, pulling

him into a hug he did not feel he deserved.

“Haven’t go’ any brandy, have yeh, Molly?” asked

Hagrid a little shakily. “Fer medicinal purposes?”

She could have summoned it by magic, but as she

hurried back toward the crooked house, Harry knew

that she wanted to hide her face. He turned to Ginny

and she answered his unspoken plea for information

at once.

“Ron and Tonks should have been back first, but they

missed their Portkey, it came back without them,” she

said, pointing at a rusty oil can lying on the ground

nearby. “And that one,” she pointed at an ancient

sneaker, “should have been Dad and Fred’s, they

were supposed to be second. You and Hagrid were

third and,” she checked her watch, “if they made it,

George and Lupin ought to be back in about a

minute.”

Mrs. Weasley reappeared carrying a bottle of brandy,

which she handed to Hagrid. He uncorked it and

drank it straight down in one.

“Mum!” shouted Ginny, pointing to a spot several feet

away.

A blue light had appeared in the darkness: It grew

larger and brighter, and Lupin and George appeared,

spinning and then falling. Harry knew immediately

that there was something wrong: Lupin was

supporting George, who was unconscious and whose

face was covered in blood.

Page | 74 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry ran forward and seized George’s legs. Together,

he and Lupin carried George into the house and

through the kitchen to the sitting room, where they

laid him on the sofa. As the lamplight fell across

George’s head, Ginny gasped and Harry’s stomach

lurched: One of George’s ears was missing. The side

of his head and neck were drenched in wet,

shockingly scarlet blood.

No sooner had Mrs. Weasley bent over her son than

Lupin grabbed Harry by the upper arm and dragged

him, none too gently, back into the kitchen, where

Hagrid was still attempting to ease his bulk through

the back door.

“Oi!” said Hagrid indignantly. “Le’ go of him! Le’ go of

Harry!”

Lupin ignored him.

“What creature sat in the corner the first time that

Harry Potter visited my office at Hogwarts?” he said,

giving Harry a small shake. “Answer me!”

“A — a grindylow in a tank, wasn’t it?”

Lupin released Harry and fell back against a kitchen

cupboard.

“Wha’ was tha’ about?” roared Hagrid.

“I’m sorry, Harry, but I had to check,” said Lupin

tersely. “We’ve been betrayed. Voldemort knew that

you were being moved tonight and the only people

who could have told him were directly involved in the

plan. You might have been an impostor.”

“So why aren’ you checkin’ me?” panted Hagrid, still

struggling to fit through the door.

Page | 75 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You’re half-giant,” said Lupin, looking up at Hagrid.

“The Polyjuice Potion is designed for human use

only.”

“None of the Order would have told Voldemort we

were moving tonight,” said Harry. The idea was

dreadful to him, he could not believe it of any of them.

“Voldemort only caught up with me toward the end,

he didn’t know which one I was in the beginning. If

he’d been in on the plan he’d have known from the

start I was the one with Hagrid.”

“Voldemort caught up with you?” said Lupin sharply.

“What happened? How did you escape?”

Harry explained briefly how the Death Eaters

pursuing them had seemed to recognize him as the

true Harry, how they had abandoned the chase, how

they must have summoned Voldemort, who had

appeared just before he and Hagrid had reached the

sanctuary of Tonks’s parents.

“They recognized you? But how? What had you

done?”

“I ...” Harry tried to remember; the whole journey

seemed like a blur of panic and confusion. “I saw

Stan Shunpike. ... You know, the bloke who was the

conductor on the Knight Bus? And I tried to Disarm

him instead of — well, he doesn’t know what he’s

doing, does he? He must be Imperiused!”

Lupin looked aghast.

“Harry, the time for Disarming is past! These people

are trying to capture and kill you! At least Stun if you

aren’t prepared to kill!”

Page | 76 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We were hundreds of feet up! Stan’s not himself, and

if I Stunned him and he’d fallen, he’d have died the

same as if I’d used Avada Kedavra! Expelliarmus

saved me from Voldemort two years ago,” Harry added

defiantly. Lupin was reminding him of the sneering

Hufflepuff Zacharias Smith, who had jeered at Harry

for wanting to teach Dumbledore’s Army how to

Disarm.

“Yes, Harry,” said Lupin with painful restraint, “and a

great number of Death Eaters witnessed that

happening! Forgive me, but it was a very unusual

move then, under imminent threat of death.

Repeating it tonight in front of Death Eaters who

either witnessed or heard about the first occasion was

close to suicidal!”

“So you think I should have killed Stan Shunpike?”

said Harry angrily.

“Of course not,” said Lupin, “but the Death Eaters —

frankly, most people! — would have expected you to

attack back! Expelliarmus is a useful spell, Harry, but

the Death Eaters seem to think it is your signature

move, and I urge you not to let it become so!”

Lupin was making Harry feel idiotic, and yet there

was still a grain of defiance inside him.

“I won’t blast people out of my way just because

they’re there,” said Harry. “That’s Voldemort’s job.”

Lupin’s retort was lost: Finally succeeding in

squeezing through the door, Hagrid staggered to a

chair and sat down; it collapsed beneath him.

Ignoring his mingled oaths and apologies, Harry

addressed Lupin again.

“Will George be okay?”

Page | 77 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

All Lupin’s frustration with Harry seemed to drain

away at the question.

“I think so, although there’s no chance of replacing

his ear, not when it’s been cursed off — ”

There was a scuffling from outside. Lupin dived for

the back door; Harry leapt over Hagrid’s legs and

sprinted into the yard.

Two figures had appeared in the yard, and as Harry

ran toward them he realized they were Hermione, now

returning to her normal appearance, and Kingsley,

both clutching a bent coat hanger. Hermione flung

herself into Harry’s arms, but Kingsley showed no

pleasure at the sight of any of them. Over Hermione ’s

shoulder Harry saw him raise his wand and point it

at Lupin’s chest.

“The last words Albus Dumbledore spoke to the pair

of us?”

“ ‘Harry is the best hope we have. Trust him,’ ” said

Lupin calmly.

Kingsley turned his wand on Harry, but Lupin said,

“It’s him, I’ve checked!”

“All right, all right!” said Kingsley, stowing his wand

back beneath his cloak. “But somebody betrayed us!

They knew, they knew it was tonight!”

“So it seems,” replied Lupin, “but apparently they did

not realize that there would be seven Harrys.”

“Small comfort!” snarled Kingsley. “Who else is back?”

“Only Harry, Hagrid, George, and me.”

Page | 78 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Hermione stifled a little moan behind her hand.

“What happened to you?” Lupin asked Kingsley.

“Followed by five, injured two, might’ve killed one,”

Kingsley reeled off, “and we saw You-Know-Who as

well, he joined the chase halfway through but

vanished pretty quickly. Remus, he can — ”

“Fly,” supplied Harry. “I saw him too, he came after

Hagrid and me.”

“So that’s why he left, to follow you!” said Kingsley. “I

couldn’t understand why he’d vanished. But what

made him change targets?”

“Harry behaved a little too kindly to Stan Shunpike,”

said Lupin.

“Stan?” repeated Hermione. “But I thought he was in

Azkaban?”

Kingsley let out a mirthless laugh.

“Hermione, there’s obviously been a mass breakout

which the Ministry has hushed up. Travers’s hood fell

off when I cursed him, he’s supposed to be inside too.

But what happened to you, Remus? Where’s George?”

“He lost an ear,” said Lupin.

“Lost an — ?” repeated Hermione in a high voice.

“Snape’s work,” said Lupin.

“ Snape ?” shouted Harry. “You didn’t say — ”

“He lost his hood during the chase. Sectumsempra

was always a specialty of Snape’s. I wish I could say

Page | 79 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

I’d paid him back in kind, but it was all I could do to

keep George on the broom after he was injured, he

was losing so much blood.”

Silence fell between the four of them as they looked

up at the sky. There was no sign of movement; the

stars stared back, unblinking, indifferent,

unobscured by flying friends. Where was Ron? Where

were Fred and Mr. Weasley? Where were Bill, Fleur,

Tonks, Mad-Eye, and Mundungus?

“Harry, give us a hand!” called Hagrid hoarsely from

the door, in which he was stuck again. Glad of

something to do, Harry pulled him free, then headed

through the empty kitchen and back into the sitting

room, where Mrs. Weasley and Ginny were still

tending to George. Mrs. Weasley had staunched his

bleeding now, and by the lamplight Harry saw a

clean, gaping hole where George’s ear had been.

“How is he?”

Mrs. Weasley looked around and said, “I can’t make it

grow back, not when it’s been removed by Dark

Magic. But it could have been so much worse. ... He’s

alive.”

“Yeah,” said Harry. “Thank God.”

“Did I hear someone else in the yard?” Ginny asked.

“Hermione and Kingsley,” said Harry.

“Thank goodness,” Ginny whispered. They looked at

each other; Harry wanted to hug her, hold on to her;

he did not even care much that Mrs. Weasley was

there, but before he could act on the impulse there

was a great crash from the kitchen.

Page | 80 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I’ll prove who I am, Kingsley, after I’ve seen my son,

now back off if you know what’s good for you!”

Harry had never heard Mr. Weasley shout like that

before. He burst into the living room, his bald patch

gleaming with sweat, his spectacles askew, Fred right

behind him, both pale but uninjured.

“Arthur!” sobbed Mrs. Weasley. “Oh thank goodness!”

“How is he?”

Mr. Weasley dropped to his knees beside George. For

the first time since Harry had known him, Fred

seemed to be lost for words. He gaped over the back

of the sofa at his twin’s wound as if he could not

believe what he was seeing.

Perhaps roused by the sound of Fred and their

father’s arrival, George stirred.

“How do you feel, Georgie?” whispered Mrs. Weasley.

George’s fingers groped for the side of his head.

“Saintlike,” he murmured.

“What’s wrong with him?” croaked Fred, looking

terrified. “Is his mind affected?”

“Saintlike,” repeated George, opening his eyes and

looking up at his brother. “You see ... I’m holy. Hole v,

Fred, geddit?”

Mrs. Weasley sobbed harder than ever. Color flooded

Fred’s pale face.

Page | 81 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Pathetic,” he told George. “Pathetic! With the whole

wide world of ear-related humor before you, you go for

holey?”

“Ah well,” said George, grinning at his tear-soaked

mother. “You’ll be able to tell us apart now, anyway,

Mum.”

He looked around.

“Hi, Harry — you are Harry, right?”

“Yeah, I am,” said Harry, moving closer to the sofa.

“Well, at least we got you back okay,” said George.

“Why aren’t Ron and Bill huddled round my sickbed?”

“They’re not back yet, George,” said Mrs. Weasley.

George’s grin faded.

Harry glanced at Ginny and motioned to her to

accompany him back outside. As they walked through

the kitchen she said in a low voice, “Ron and Tonks

should be back by now. They didn’t have a long

journey; Auntie Muriel’s not that far from here.”

Harry said nothing. He had been trying to keep fear at

bay ever since reaching the Burrow, but now it

enveloped him, seeming to crawl over his skin,

throbbing in his chest, clogging his throat. As they

walked down the back steps into the dark yard, Ginny

took his hand.

Kingsley was striding backward and forward, glancing

up at the sky every time he turned. Harry was

reminded of Uncle Vernon pacing the living room a

million years ago. Hagrid, Hermione, and Lupin stood

shoulder to shoulder, gazing upward in silence. None

Page | 82 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

of them looked around when Harry and Ginny joined

their silent vigil.

The minutes stretched into what might as well have

been years. The slightest breath of wind made them

all jump and turn toward the whispering bush or tree

in the hope that one of the missing Order members

might leap unscathed from its leaves —

And then a broom materialized directly above them

and streaked toward the ground —

“It’s them!” screamed Hermione.

Tonks landed in a long skid that sent earth and

pebbles everywhere.

“Remus!” Tonks cried as she staggered off the broom

into Lupin’s arms. His face was set and white: He

seemed unable to speak. Ron tripped dazedly toward

Harry and Hermione.

“You’re okay,” he mumbled, before Hermione flew at

him and hugged him tightly.

“I thought — I thought — ”

“ ’M all right,” said Ron, patting her on the back. “ ’M

fine.”

“Ron was great,” said Tonks warmly, relinquishing

her hold on Lupin. “Wonderful. Stunned one of the

Death Eaters, straight to the head, and when you’re

aiming at a moving target from a flying broom — ”

“You did?” said Hermione, gazing up at Ron with her

arms still around his neck.

Page | 83 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Always the tone of surprise,” he said a little

grumpily, breaking free. “Are we the last back?”

“No,” said Ginny, “we’re still waiting for Bill and Fleur

and Mad-Eye and Mundungus. I’m going to tell Mum

and Dad you’re okay, Ron — ”

She ran back inside.

“So what kept you? What happened?” Lupin sounded

almost angry at Tonks.

“Bellatrix,” said Tonks. “She wants me quite as much

as she wants Harry, Remus, she tried very hard to kill

me. I just wish I’d got her, I owe Bellatrix. But we

definitely injured Rodolphus. ... Then we got to Ron’s

Auntie Muriel’s and we’d missed our Portkey and she

was fussing over us — ”

A muscle was jumping in Lupin’s jaw. He nodded, but

seemed unable to say anything else.

“So what happened to you lot?” Tonks asked, turning

to Harry, Hermione, and Kingsley.

They recounted the stories of their own journeys, but

all the time the continued absence of Bill, Fleur, Mad-

Eye, and Mundungus seemed to lie upon them like a

frost, its icy bite harder and harder to ignore.

“I’m going to have to get back to Downing Street, I

should have been there an hour ago,” said Kingsley

finally, after a last sweeping gaze at the sky. “Let me

know when they’re back.”

Lupin nodded. With a wave to the others, Kingsley

walked away into the darkness toward the gate. Harry

thought he heard the faintest pop as Kingsley

Disapparated just beyond the Burrow’s boundaries.

Page | 84 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Mr. and Mrs. Weasley came racing down the back

steps, Ginny behind them. Both parents hugged Ron

before turning to Lupin and Tonks.

“Thank you,” said Mrs. Weasley, “for our sons.”

“Don’t be silly, Molly,” said Tonks at once.

“How’s George?” asked Lupin.

“What’s wrong with him?” piped up Ron.

“He’s lost — ”

But the end of Mrs. Weasley ’s sentence was drowned

in a general outcry: A thestral had just soared into

sight and landed a few feet from them. Bill and Fleur

slid from its back, windswept but unhurt.

“Bill! Thank God, thank God — ”

Mrs. Weasley ran forward, but the hug Bill bestowed

upon her was perfunctory. Looking directly at his

father, he said, “Mad-Eye’s dead.”

Nobody spoke, nobody moved. Harry felt as though

something inside him was falling, falling through the

earth, leaving him forever.

“We saw it,” said Bill; Fleur nodded, tear tracks

glittering on her cheeks in the light from the kitchen

window. “It happened just after we broke out of the

circle: Mad-Eye and Dung were close by us, they were

heading north too. Voldemort — he can fly — went

straight for them. Dung panicked, I heard him cry

out, Mad-Eye tried to stop him, but he Disapparated.

Voldemort’s curse hit Mad-Eye full in the face, he fell

backward off his broom and — there was nothing we

Page | 85 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

could do, nothing, we had half a dozen of them on our

own tail — ”

Bill’s voice broke.

“Of course you couldn’t have done anything,” said

Lupin.

They all stood looking at each other. Harry could not

quite comprehend it. Mad-Eye dead; it could not be.

... Mad-Eye, so tough, so brave, the consummate

survivor ...

At last it seemed to dawn on everyone, though nobody

said it, that there was no point waiting in the yard

anymore, and in silence they followed Mr. and Mrs.

Weasley back into the Burrow, and into the living

room, where Fred and George were laughing together.

“What’s wrong?” said Fred, scanning their faces as

they entered. “What’s happened? Who’s — ?”

“Mad-Eye,” said Mr. Weasley. “Dead.”

The twins’ grins turned to grimaces of shock. Nobody

seemed to know what to do. Tonks was crying silently

into a handkerchief: She had been close to Mad-Eye,

Harry knew, his favorite and his protegee at the

Ministry of Magic. Hagrid, who had sat down on the

floor in the corner where he had most space, was

dabbing at his eyes with his tablecloth-sized

handkerchief.

Bill walked over to the sideboard and pulled out a

bottle of fire-whisky and some glasses.

“Here,” he said, and with a wave of his wand he sent

twelve full glasses soaring through the room to each

of them, holding the thirteenth aloft. “Mad-Eye.”

Page | 86 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Mad-Eye,” they all said, and drank.

“Mad-Eye,” echoed Hagrid, a little late, with a hiccup.

The firewhisky seared Harry’s throat. It seemed to

burn feeling back into him, dispelling the numbness

and sense of unreality, firing him with something that

was like courage.

“So Mundungus disappeared?” said Lupin, who had

drained his own glass in one.

The atmosphere changed at once. Everybody looked

tense, watching Lupin, both wanting him to go on, it

seemed to Harry, and slightly afraid of what they

might hear.

“I know what you’re thinking,” said Bill, “and I

wondered that too, on the way back here, because

they seemed to be expecting us, didn’t they? But

Mundungus can’t have betrayed us. They didn’t know

there would be seven Harrys, that confused them the

moment we appeared, and in case you’ve forgotten, it

was Mundungus who suggested that little bit of

skullduggery. Why wouldn’t he have told them the

essential point? I think Dung panicked, it’s as simple

as that. He didn’t want to come in the first place, but

Mad-Eye made him, and You-Know-Who went

straight for them. It was enough to make anyone

panic.”

“You-Know-Who acted exactly as Mad-Eye expected

him to,” sniffed Tonks. “Mad-Eye said he’d expect the

real Harry to be with the toughest, most skilled

Aurors. He chased Mad-Eye first, and when

Mundungus gave them away he switched to Kingsley.

Page | 87 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Yes, and zat eez all very good,” snapped Fleur, “but

still eet does not explain ’ow zey knew we were moving

’Arry tonight, does eet? Somebody must ’ave been

careless. Somebody let slip ze date to an outsider. It is

ze only explanation for zem knowing ze date but not

ze ’ole plan.”

She glared around at them all, tear tracks still etched

on her beautiful face, silently daring any of them to

contradict her. Nobody did. The only sound to break

the silence was that of Hagrid hiccuping from behind

his handkerchief. Harry glanced at Hagrid, who had

just risked his own life to save Harry’s — Hagrid,

whom he loved, whom he trusted, who had once been

tricked into giving Voldemort crucial information in

exchange for a dragon’s egg. ...

“No,” Harry said aloud, and they all looked at him,

surprised: The firewhisky seemed to have amplified

his voice. “I mean ... if somebody made a mistake,”

Harry went on, “and let something slip, I know they

didn’t mean to do it. It’s not their fault,” he repeated,

again a little louder than he would usually have

spoken. “We’ve got to trust each other. I trust all of

you, I don’t think anyone in this room would ever sell

me to Voldemort.”

More silence followed his words. They were all looking

at him; Harry felt a little hot again, and drank some

more firewhisky for something to do. As he drank, he

thought of Mad-Eye. Mad-Eye had always been

scathing about Dumbledore’s willingness to trust

people.

“Well said, Harry,” said Fred unexpectedly.

“Yeah, ’ear, ’ear,” said George, with half a glance at

Fred, the corner of whose mouth twitched.

Page | 88 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Lupin was wearing an odd expression as he looked at

Harry. It was close to pitying.

“You think I’m a fool?” demanded Harry.

“No, I think you’re like James,” said Lupin, “who

would have regarded it as the height of dishonor to

mistrust his friends.”

Harry knew what Lupin was getting at: that his father

had been betrayed by his friend, Peter Pettigrew. He

felt irrationally angry. He wanted to argue, but Lupin

had turned away from him, set down his glass upon a

side table, and addressed Bill, “There’s work to do. I

can ask Kingsley whether — ”

“No,” said Bill at once, “I’ll do it, I’ll come.”

“Where are you going?” said Tonks and Fleur

together.

“Mad-Eye’s body,” said Lupin. “We need to recover it.”

“Can’t it — ?” began Mrs. Weasley with an appealing

look at Bill.

“Wait?” said Bill. “Not unless you’d rather the Death

Eaters took it?”

Nobody spoke. Lupin and Bill said good-bye and left.

The rest of them now dropped into chairs, all except

for Harry, who remained standing. The suddenness

and completeness of death was with them like a

presence.

“I’ve got to go too,” said Harry.

Ten pairs of startled eyes looked at him.

Page | 89 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Don’t be silly, Harry,” said Mrs. Weasley. “What are

you talking about?”

“I can’t stay here.”

He rubbed his forehead; it was prickling again, it had

not hurt like this for more than a year.

“You’re all in danger while I’m here. I don’t want — ”

“But don’t be so silly!” said Mrs. Weasley. “The whole

point of tonight was to get you here safely, and thank

goodness it worked. And Fleur’s agreed to get married

here rather than in France, we’ve arranged everything

so that we can all stay together and look after you — ”

She did not understand; she was making him feel

worse, not better.

“If Voldemort finds out I’m here — ”

“But why should he?” asked Mrs. Weasley.

“There are a dozen places you might be now, Harry,”

said Mr. Weasley. “He’s got no way of knowing which

safe house you’re in.”

“It’s not me I’m worried for!” said Harry.

“We know that,” said Mr. Weasley quietly, “but it

would make our efforts tonight seem rather pointless

if you left.”

“Yer not goin’ anywhere,” growled Hagrid. “Blimey,

Harry, after all we wen’ through ter get you here?”

“Yeah, what about my bleeding ear?” said George,

hoisting himself up on his cushions.

Page | 90 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I know that — ”

“Mad-Eye wouldn’t want — ”

“I KNOW!” Harry bellowed.

He felt beleaguered and blackmailed: Did they think

he did not know what they had done for him, didn’t

they understand that it was for precisely that reason

that he wanted to go now, before they had to suffer

any more on his behalf? There was a long and

awkward silence in which his scar continued to

prickle and throb, and which was broken at last by

Mrs. Weasley.

“Where’s Hedwig, Harry?” she said coaxingly. “We can

put her up with Pigwidgeon and give her something to

eat.”

His insides clenched like a fist. He could not tell her

the truth. He drank the last of his firewhisky to avoid

answering.

“Wait till it gets out yeh did it again, Harry,” said

Hagrid. “Escaped him, fought him off when he was

right on top of yeh!”

“It wasn’t me,” said Harry flatly. “It was my wand. My

wand acted of its own accord.”

After a few moments, Hermione said gently, “But

that’s impossible, Harry. You mean that you did

magic without meaning to; you reacted instinctively.”

“No,” said Harry. “The bike was falling, I couldn’t have

told you where Voldemort was, but my wand spun in

my hand and found him and shot a spell at him, and

it wasn’t even a spell I recognized. I’ve never made

gold flames appear before.”

Page | 91 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Often,” said Mr. Weasley, “when you’re in a

pressured situation you can produce magic you never

dreamed of. Small children often find, before they’re

trained — ”

“It wasn’t like that,” said Harry through gritted teeth.

His scar was burning: He felt angry and frustrated; he

hated the idea that they were all imagining him to

have power to match Voldemort’s.

No one said anything. He knew that they did not

believe him. Now that he came to think of it, he had

never heard of a wand performing magic on its own

before.

His scar seared with pain; it was all he could do not

to moan aloud. Muttering about fresh air, he set

down his glass and left the room.

As he crossed the dark yard, the great skeletal

thestral looked up, rustled its enormous batlike

wings, then resumed its grazing. Harry stopped at the

gate into the garden, staring out at its overgrown

plants, rubbing his pounding forehead and thinking

of Dumbledore.

Dumbledore would have believed him, he knew it.

Dumbledore would have known how and why Harry’s

wand had acted independently, because Dumbledore

always had the answers; he had known about wands,

had explained to Harry the strange connection that

existed between his wand and Voldemort’s. ... But

Dumbledore, like Mad-Eye, like Sirius, like his

parents, like his poor owl, all were gone where Harry

could never talk to them again. He felt a burning in

his throat that had nothing to do with firewhisky . . .

Page | 92 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

And then, out of nowhere, the pain in his scar

peaked. As he clutched his forehead and closed his

eyes, a voice screamed inside his head.

“ You told me the problem would be solved by using

another’s wand\”

And into his mind burst the vision of an emaciated

old man lying in rags upon a stone floor, screaming, a

horrible, drawn-out scream, a scream of unendurable

agony. ...

“No! No! I beg you, I beg you. ...”

“You lied to Lord Voldemort, Ollivander!”

“I did not. ... I swear I did not. ...”

“You sought to help Potter, to help him escape me!”

“I swear I did not. ... I believed a different wand would

work. ...”

“Explain, then, what happened. Lucius’s wand is

destroyed!”

“I cannot understand. ... The connection ... exists

only ... between your two wands. ...”

“Lies!”

“Please ... I beg you. ...”

And Harry saw the white hand raise its wand and felt

Voldemort ’s surge of vicious anger, saw the frail old

man on the floor writhe in agony —

“Harry?”

Page | 93 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

It was over as quickly as it had come: Harry stood

shaking in the darkness, clutching the gate into the

garden, his heart racing, his scar still tingling. It was

several moments before he realized that Ron and

Hermione were at his side.

“Harry, come back in the house,” Hermione

whispered. “You aren’t still thinking of leaving?”

“Yeah, you’ve got to stay, mate,” said Ron, thumping

Harry on the back.

“Are you all right?” Hermione asked, close enough

now to look into Harry’s face. “You look awful!”

“Well,” said Harry shakily, “I probably look better

than Ollivander. ...”

When he had finished telling them what he had seen,

Ron looked appalled, but Hermione downright

terrified.

“But it was supposed to have stopped! Your scar — it

wasn’t supposed to do this anymore! You mustn’t let

that connection open up again — Dumbledore wanted

you to close your mind!”

When he did not reply, she gripped his arm.

“Harry, he’s taking over the Ministry and the

newspapers and half the Wizarding world! Don’t let

him inside your head too!”

Page | 94 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

6

THE GHOUL IN PAJAMAS

The shock of losing Mad-Eye hung over the house in

the days that followed; Harry kept expecting to see

him stumping in through the back door like the other

Order members, who passed in and out to relay news.

Harry felt that nothing but action would assuage his

feelings of guilt and grief and that he ought to set out

on his mission to find and destroy Horcruxes as soon

as possible.

“Well, you can’t do anything about the” — Ron

mouthed the word Horcruxes — “till you’re seventeen.

You’ve still got the Trace on you. And we can plan

here as well as anywhere, can’t we? Or,” he dropped

his voice to a whisper, “d’you reckon you already

know where the You-Know-Whats are?”

“No,” Harry admitted.

“I think Hermione’s been doing a bit of research,” said

Ron. “She said she was saving it for when you got

here.”

Page | 95 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

They were sitting at the breakfast table; Mr. Weasley

and Bill had just left for work. Mrs. Weasley had gone

upstairs to wake Hermione and Ginny, while Fleur

had drifted off to take a bath.

“The Trace’ll break on the thirty- first,” said Harry.

“That means I only need to stay here four days. Then

I can — ”

“Five days,” Ron corrected him firmly. “We’ve got to

stay for the wedding. They’ll kill us if we miss it.”

Harry understood “they” to mean Fleur and Mrs.

Weasley.

“It’s one extra day,” said Ron, when Harry looked

mutinous.

“Don’t they realize how important — ?”

“ ’Course they don’t,” said Ron. “They haven’t got a

clue. And now you mention it, I wanted to talk to you

about that.”

Ron glanced toward the door into the hall to check

that Mrs. Weasley was not returning yet, then leaned

in closer to Harry.

“Mum’s been trying to get it out of Hermione and me.

What we’re off to do. She’ll try you next, so brace

yourself. Dad and Lupin ’ve both asked as well, but

when we said Dumbledore told you not to tell anyone

except us, they dropped it. Not Mum, though. She’s

determined.”

Ron’s prediction came true within hours. Shortly

before lunch, Mrs. Weasley detached Harry from the

others by asking him to help identify a lone man’s

sock that she thought might have come out of his

Page | 96 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

rucksack. Once she had him cornered in the tiny

scullery off the kitchen, she started.

“Ron and Hermione seem to think that the three of

you are dropping out of Hogwarts,” she began in a

light, casual tone.

“Oh,” said Harry. “Well, yeah. We are.”

The mangle turned of its own accord in a corner,

wringing out what looked like one of Mr. Weasley’s

vests.

“May I ask why you are abandoning your education?”

said Mrs. Weasley.

“Well, Dumbledore left me ... stuff to do,” mumbled

Harry. “Ron and Hermione know about it, and they

want to come too.”

“What sort of ‘stuff’?”

“I’m sorry, I can’t — ”

“Well, frankly, I think Arthur and I have a right to

know, and I’m sure Mr. and Mrs. Granger would

agree!” said Mrs. Weasley. Harry had been afraid of

the “concerned parent” attack. He forced himself to

look directly into her eyes, noticing as he did so that

they were precisely the same shade of brown as

Ginny’s. This did not help.

“Dumbledore didn’t want anyone else to know, Mrs.

Weasley. I’m sorry. Ron and Hermione don’t have to

come, it’s their choice — ”

“I don’t see that you have to go either!” she snapped,

dropping all pretense now. “You’re barely of age, any

of you! It’s utter nonsense, if Dumbledore needed

Page | 97 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

work doing, he had the whole Order at his command!

Harry, you must have misunderstood him. Probably

he was telling you something he wanted done, and

you took it to mean that he wanted you — ”

“I didn’t misunderstand,” said Harry flatly. “It’s got to

be me.”

He handed her back the single sock he was supposed

to be identifying, which was patterned with golden

bulrushes.

“And that’s not mine, I don’t support Puddlemere

United.”

“Oh, of course not,” said Mrs. Weasley with a sudden

and rather unnerving return to her casual tone. “I

should have realized. Well, Harry, while we’ve still got

you here, you won’t mind helping with the

preparations for Bill and Fleur’s wedding, will you?

There’s still so much to do.”

“No — I — of course not,” said Harry, disconcerted by

this sudden change of subject.

“Sweet of you,” she replied, and she smiled as she left

the scullery.

From that moment on, Mrs. Weasley kept Harry, Ron,

and Hermione so busy with preparations for the

wedding that they hardly had any time to think. The

kindest explanation of this behavior would have been

that Mrs. Weasley wanted to distract them all from

thoughts of Mad-Eye and the terrors of their recent

journey. After two days of nonstop cutlery cleaning, of

color-matching favors, ribbons, and flowers, of de-

gnoming the garden and helping Mrs. Weasley cook

vast batches of canapes, however, Harry started to

suspect her of a different motive. All the jobs she

Page | 98 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

handed out seemed to keep him, Ron, and Hermione

away from one another; he had not had a chance to

speak to the two of them alone since the first night,

when he had told them about Voldemort torturing

Ollivander.

“I think Mum thinks that if she can stop the three of

you getting together and planning, she’ll be able to

delay you leaving,” Ginny told Harry in an undertone,

as they laid the table for dinner on the third night of

his stay.

“And then what does she think’s going to happen?”

Harry muttered. “Someone else might kill off

Voldemort while she’s holding us here making vol-au-

vents?”

He had spoken without thinking, and saw Ginny’s

face whiten.

“So it’s true?” she said. “That’s what you’re trying to

do?”

“I — not — I was joking,” said Harry evasively.

They stared at each other, and there was something

more than shock in Ginny’s expression. Suddenly

Harry became aware that this was the first time that

he had been alone with her since those stolen hours

in secluded corners of the Hogwarts grounds. He was

sure she was remembering them too. Both of them

jumped as the door opened, and Mr. Weasley,

Kingsley, and Bill walked in.

They were often joined by other Order members for

dinner now, because the Burrow had replaced

number twelve, Grimmauld Place as the

headquarters. Mr. Weasley had explained that after

the death of Dumbledore, their Secret-Keeper, each of

Page | 99 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the people to whom Dumbledore had confided

Grimmauld Place’s location had become a Secret-

Keeper in turn.

“And as there are around twenty of us, that greatly

dilutes the power of the Fidelius Charm. Twenty times

as many opportunities for the Death Eaters to get the

secret out of somebody. We can’t expect it to hold

much longer.”

“But surely Snape will have told the Death Eaters the

address by now?” asked Harry.

“Well, Mad-Eye set up a couple of curses against

Snape in case he turns up there again. We hope

they’ll be strong enough both to keep him out and to

bind his tongue if he tries to talk about the place, but

we can’t be sure. It would have been insane to keep

using the place as headquarters now that its

protection has become so shaky.”

The kitchen was so crowded that evening it was

difficult to maneuver knives and forks. Harry found

himself crammed beside Ginny; the unsaid things

that had just passed between them made him wish

they had been separated by a few more people. He

was trying so hard to avoid brushing her arm he

could barely cut his chicken.

“No news about Mad-Eye?” Harry asked Bill.

“Nothing,” replied Bill.

They had not been able to hold a funeral for Moody,

because Bill and Lupin had failed to recover his body.

It had been difficult to know where he might have

fallen, given the darkness and the confusion of the

battle.

Page | 100 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“The Daily Prophet hasn’t said a word about him

dying or about finding the body,” Bill went on. “But

that doesn’t mean much. It’s keeping a lot quiet these

days.”

“And they still haven’t called a hearing about all the

underage magic I used escaping the Death Eaters?”

Harry called across the table to Mr. Weasley, who

shook his head.

“Because they know I had no choice or because they

don’t want me to tell the world Voldemort attacked

me?”

“The latter, I think. Scrimgeour doesn’t want to admit

that You-Know-Who is as powerful as he is, nor that

Azkaban’s seen a mass breakout.”

“Yeah, why tell the public the truth?” said Harry,

clenching his knife so tightly that the faint scars on

the back of his right hand stood out, white against his

skin: I must not tell lies.

“Isn’t anyone at the Ministry prepared to stand up to

him?” asked Ron angrily.

“Of course, Ron, but people are terrified,” Mr. Weasley

replied, “terrified that they will be next to disappear,

their children the next to be attacked! There are nasty

rumors going around; I for one don’t believe the

Muggle Studies professor at Hogwarts resigned. She

hasn’t been seen for weeks now. Meanwhile

Scrimgeour remains shut up in his office all day: I

just hope he’s working on a plan.”

There was a pause in which Mrs. Weasley magicked

the empty plates onto the work surface and served

apple tart.

Page | 101 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We must decide ’ow you will be disguised, ’Arry,” said

Fleur, once everyone had pudding. “For ze wedding,”

she added, when he looked confused. “Of course,

none of our guests are Death Eaters, but we cannot

guarantee zat zey will not let something slip after zey

’ave ’ad champagne.”

From this, Harry gathered that she still suspected

Hagrid.

“Yes, good point,” said Mrs. Weasley from the top of

the table, where she sat, spectacles perched on the

end of her nose, scanning an immense list of jobs that

she had scribbled on a very long piece of parchment.

“Now, Ron, have you cleaned out your room yet?”

“ Why?” exclaimed Ron, slamming his spoon down and

glaring at his mother. “Why does my room have to be

cleaned out? Harry and I are fine with it the way it is!”

“We are holding your brother’s wedding here in a few

days’ time, young man — ”

“And are they getting married in my bedroom?” asked

Ron furiously. “No! So why in the name of Merlin’s

saggy left — ”

“Don’t talk to your mother like that,” said Mr. Weasley

firmly. “And do as you’re told.”

Ron scowled at both his parents, then picked up his

spoon and attacked the last few mouthfuls of his

apple tart.

“I can help, some of it’s my mess,” Harry told Ron,

but Mrs. Weasley cut across him.

“No, Harry, dear, I’d much rather you helped Arthur

muck out the chickens, and Hermione, I’d be ever so

Page | 102 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

grateful if you’d change the sheets for Monsieur and

Madame Delacour; you know they’re arriving at

eleven tomorrow morning.”

But as it turned out, there was very little to do for the

chickens. “There’s no need to, er, mention it to Molly,”

Mr. Weasley told Harry, blocking his access to the

coop, “but, er, Ted Tonks sent me most of what was

left of Sirius’s bike and, er, I’m hiding — that’s to say,

keeping — it in here. Fantastic stuff: There’s an

exhaust gaskin, as I believe it’s called, the most

magnificent battery, and it’ll be a great opportunity to

find out how brakes work. I’m going to try and put it

all back together again when Molly’s not — I mean,

when I’ve got time.”

When they returned to the house, Mrs. Weasley was

nowhere to be seen, so Harry slipped upstairs to

Ron’s attic bedroom.

“I’m doing it, I’m doing — ! Oh, it’s you,” said Ron in

relief, as Harry entered the room. Ron lay back down

on the bed, which he had evidently just vacated. The

room was just as messy as it had been all week; the

only change was that Hermione was now sitting in the

far corner, her fluffy ginger cat, Crookshanks, at her

feet, sorting books, some of which Harry recognized

as his own, into two enormous piles.

“Hi, Harry,” she said, as he sat down on his camp

bed.

“And how did you manage to get away?”

“Oh, Ron’s mum forgot that she asked Ginny and me

to change the sheets yesterday,” said Hermione. She

threw Numerology and Grammatica onto one pile and

The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts onto the other.

Page | 103 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We were just talking about Mad-Eye,” Ron told

Harry. “I reckon he might have survived.”

“But Bill saw him hit by the Killing Curse,” said

Harry.

“Yeah, but Bill was under attack too,” said Ron. “How

can he be sure what he saw?”

“Even if the Killing Curse missed, Mad-Eye still fell

about a thousand feet,” said Hermione, now weighing

Quidditch Teams of Britain and Ireland in her hand.

“He could have used a Shield Charm — ”

“Fleur said his wand was blasted out of his hand,”

said Harry.

“Well, all right, if you want him to be dead,” said Ron

grumpily, punching his pillow into a more

comfortable shape.

“Of course we don’t want him to be dead!” said

Hermione, looking shocked. “It’s dreadful that he’s

dead! But we’re being realistic!”

For the first time, Harry imagined Mad-Eye’s body,

broken as Dumbledore’s had been, yet with that one

eye still whizzing in its socket. He felt a stab of

revulsion mixed with a bizarre desire to laugh.

“The Death Eaters probably tidied up after

themselves, that’s why no one’s found him,” said Ron

wisely.

“Yeah,” said Harry. “Like Barty Crouch, turned into a

bone and buried in Hagrid’s front garden. They

probably transfigured Moody and stuffed him — ”

Page | 104 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Don’t!” squealed Hermione. Startled, Harry looked

over just in time to see her burst into tears over her

copy of Spellman’s Syllabary.

“Oh no,” said Harry, struggling to get up from the old

camp bed. “Hermione, I wasn’t trying to upset — ”

But with a great creaking of rusty bedsprings, Ron

bounded off the bed and got there first. One arm

around Hermione, he fished in his jeans pocket and

withdrew a revolting-looking handkerchief that he

had used to clean out the oven earlier. Hastily pulling

out his wand, he pointed it at the rag and said,

“ Tergeo .”

The wand siphoned off most of the grease. Looking

rather pleased with himself, Ron handed the slightly

smoking handkerchief to Hermione.

“Oh ... thanks, Ron. ... I’m sorry. ...” She blew her

nose and hiccuped. “It’s just so awf-ful, isn’t it? R-

right after Dumbledore ... I j-just n-never imagined

Mad-Eye dying, somehow, he seemed so tough!”

“Yeah, I know,” said Ron, giving her a squeeze. “But

you know what he’d say to us if he was here?”

“ ‘C-constant vigilance,’ ” said Hermione, mopping her

eyes.

“That’s right,” said Ron, nodding. “He’d tell us to learn

from what happened to him. And what I’ve learned is

not to trust that cowardly little squit, Mundungus.”

Hermione gave a shaky laugh and leaned forward to

pick up two more books. A second later, Ron had

snatched his arm back from around her shoulders;

she had dropped The Monster Book of Monsters on his

Page | 105 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

foot. The book had broken free from its restraining

belt and snapped viciously at Ron’s ankle.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry!” Hermione cried as Harry

wrenched the book from Ron’s leg and retied it shut.

“What are you doing with all those books anyway?”

Ron asked, limping back to his bed.

“Just trying to decide which ones to take with us,”

said Hermione. “When we’re looking for the

Horcruxes.”

“Oh, of course,” said Ron, clapping a hand to his

forehead. “I forgot we’ll be hunting down Voldemort in

a mobile library.”

“Ha ha,” said Hermione, looking down at Spellman’s

Syllabary. “I wonder ... will we need to translate

runes? It’s possible. ... I think we’d better take it, to

be safe.”

She dropped the syllabary onto the larger of the two

piles and picked up Hogwarts, A History.

“Listen,” said Harry.

He had sat up straight. Ron and Hermione looked at

him with similar mixtures of resignation and defiance.

“I know you said after Dumbledore’s funeral that you

wanted to come with me,” Harry began.

“Here he goes,” Ron said to Hermione, rolling his eyes.

“As we knew he would,” she sighed, turning back to

the books. “You know, I think I will take Hogwarts, A

History. Even if we’re not going back there, I don’t

think I’d feel right if I didn’t have it with — ”

Page | 106 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Listen!” said Harry again.

“No, Harry, you listen,” said Hermione. “We’re coming

with you. That was decided months ago — years,

really.”

“But — ”

“Shut up,” Ron advised him.

“ — are you sure you’ve thought this through?” Harry

persisted.

“Let’s see,” said Hermione, slamming Travels with

Trolls onto the discarded pile with a rather fierce look.

“I’ve been packing for days, so we’re ready to leave at

a moment’s notice, which for your information has

included doing some pretty difficult magic, not to

mention smuggling Mad-Eye’s whole stock of

Polyjuice Potion right under Ron’s mum’s nose.

“I’ve also modified my parents’ memories so that

they’re convinced they’re really called Wendell and

Monica Wilkins, and that their life’s ambition is to

move to Australia, which they have now done. That’s

to make it more difficult for Voldemort to track them

down and interrogate them about me — or you,

because unfortunately, I’ve told them quite a bit

about you.

“Assuming I survive our hunt for the Horcruxes, I’ll

find Mum and Dad and lift the enchantment. If I don’t

— well, I think I’ve cast a good enough charm to keep

them safe and happy. Wendell and Monica Wilkins

don’t know that they’ve got a daughter, you see.”

Hermione’s eyes were swimming with tears again. Ron

got back off the bed, put his arm around her once

more, and frowned at Harry as though reproaching

Page | 107 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

him for lack of tact. Harry could not think of anything

to say, not least because it was highly unusual for

Ron to be teaching anyone else tact.

“I — Hermione, I’m sorry — I didn’t — ”

“Didn’t realize that Ron and I know perfectly well

what might happen if we come with you? Well, we do.

Ron, show Harry what you’ve done.”

“Nah, he’s just eaten,” said Ron.

“Go on, he needs to know!”

“Oh, all right. Harry, come here.”

For the second time Ron withdrew his arm from

around Hermione and stumped over to the door.

“C’mon.”

“Why?” Harry asked, following Ron out of the room

onto the tiny landing.

“ Descendo,” muttered Ron, pointing his wand at the

low ceiling. A hatch opened right over their heads and

a ladder slid down to their feet. A horrible, half-

sucking, half-moaning sound came out of the square

hole, along with an unpleasant smell like open drains.

“That’s your ghoul, isn’t it?” asked Harry, who had

never actually met the creature that sometimes

disrupted the nightly silence.

“Yeah, it is,” said Ron, climbing the ladder. “Come

and have a look at him.”

Harry followed Ron up the few short steps into the

tiny attic space. His head and shoulders were in the

Page | 108 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

room before he caught sight of the creature curled up

a few feet from him, fast asleep in the gloom with its

large mouth wide open.

“But it ... it looks ... do ghouls normally wear

pajamas?”

“No,” said Ron. “Nor have they usually got red hair or

that number of pustules.”

Harry contemplated the thing, slightly revolted. It was

human in shape and size, and was wearing what, now

that Harry’s eyes became used to the darkness, was

clearly an old pair of Ron’s pajamas. He was also sure

that ghouls were generally rather slimy and bald,

rather than distinctly hairy and covered in angry

purple blisters.

“He’s me, see?” said Ron.

“No,” said Harry. “I don’t.”

“I’ll explain it back in my room, the smell’s getting to

me,” said Ron. They climbed back down the ladder,

which Ron returned to the ceiling, and rejoined

Hermione, who was still sorting books.

“Once we’ve left, the ghoul’s going to come and live

down here in my room,” said Ron. “I think he’s really

looking forward to it — well, it’s hard to tell, because

all he can do is moan and drool — but he nods a lot

when you mention it. Anyway, he’s going to be me

with spattergroit. Good, eh?”

Harry merely looked his confusion.

“It is!” said Ron, clearly frustrated that Harry had not

grasped the brilliance of the plan. “Look, when we

three don’t turn up at Hogwarts again, everyone’s

Page | 109 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

going to think Hermione and I must be with you,

right? Which means the Death Eaters will go straight

for our families to see if they’ve got information on

where you are.”

“But hopefully it’ll look like I’ve gone away with Mum

and Dad; a lot of Muggle-borns are talking about

going into hiding at the moment,” said Hermione.

“We can’t hide my whole family, it’ll look too fishy and

they can’t all leave their jobs,” said Ron. “So we’re

going to put out the story that I’m seriously ill with

spattergroit, which is why I can’t go back to school. If

anyone comes calling to investigate, Mum or Dad can

show them the ghoul in my bed, covered in pustules.

Spattergroit ’s really contagious, so they’re not going

to want to go near him. It won’t matter that he can’t

say anything, either, because apparently you can’t

once the fungus has spread to your uvula.”

“And your mum and dad are in on this plan?” asked

Harry.

“Dad is. He helped Fred and George transform the

ghoul. Mum ... well, you’ve seen what she’s like. She

won’t accept we’re going till we’ve gone.”

There was silence in the room, broken only by gentle

thuds as Hermione continued to throw books onto

one pile or the other. Ron sat watching her, and Harry

looked from one to the other, unable to say anything.

The measures they had taken to protect their families

made him realize, more than anything else could have

done, that they really were going to come with him

and that they knew exactly how dangerous that would

be. He wanted to tell them what that meant to him,

but he simply could not find words important enough.

Page | 110 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Through the silence came the muffled sounds of Mrs.

Weasley shouting from four floors below.

“Ginny’s probably left a speck of dust on a poxy

napkin ring,” said Ron. “I dunno why the Delacours

have got to come two days before the wedding.”

“Fleur’s sister’s a bridesmaid, she needs to be here for

the rehearsal, and she’s too young to come on her

own,” said Hermione, as she pored indecisively over

Break with a Banshee.

“Well, guests aren’t going to help Mum’s stress levels,”

said Ron.

“What we really need to decide,” said Hermione,

tossing Defensive Magical Theory into the bin without

a second glance and picking up An Appraisal of

Magical Education in Europe, “is where we’re going

after we leave here. I know you said you wanted to go

to Godric’s Hollow first, Harry, and I understand why,

but ... well ... shouldn’t we make the Horcruxes our

priority?”

“If we knew where any of the Horcruxes were, I’d

agree with you,” said Harry, who did not believe that

Hermione really understood his desire to return to

Godric’s Hollow. His parents’ graves were only part of

the attraction: He had a strong, though inexplicable,

feeling that the place held answers for him. Perhaps it

was simply because it was there that he had survived

Voldemort’s Killing Curse; now that he was facing the

challenge of repeating the feat, Harry was drawn to

the place where it had happened, wanting to

understand.

“Don’t you think there’s a possibility that Voldemort’s

keeping a watch on Godric’s Hollow?” Hermione

asked. “He might expect you to go back and visit your

Page | 111 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

parents’ graves once you’re free to go wherever you

like?”

This had not occurred to Harry. While he struggled to

find a counterargument, Ron spoke up, evidently

following his own train of thought.

“This R.A.B. person,” he said. “You know, the one who

stole the real locket?”

Hermione nodded.

“He said in his note he was going to destroy it, didn’t

he?”

Harry dragged his rucksack toward him and pulled

out the fake Horcrux in which R.A.B. ’s note was still

folded.

“ ‘ I have stolen the real Horcrux and intend to destroy

it as soon as I can,’ ” Harry read out.

“Well, what if he did finish it off?” said Ron.

“Or she,” interposed Hermione.

“Whichever,” said Ron, “it’d be one less for us to do!”

“Yes, but we’re still going to have to try and trace the

real locket, aren’t we?” said Hermione, “to find out

whether or not it’s destroyed.”

“And once we get hold of it, how do you destroy a

Horcrux?” asked Ron.

“Well,” said Hermione, “I’ve been researching that.”

“How?” asked Harry. “I didn’t think there were any

books on Horcruxes in the library?”

Page | 112 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“There weren’t,” said Hermione, who had turned pink.

“Dumbledore removed them all, but he — he didn’t

destroy them.”

Ron sat up straight, wide-eyed.

“How in the name of Merlin’s pants have you

managed to get your hands on those Horcrux books?”

“It — it wasn’t stealing!” said Hermione, looking from

Harry to Ron with a kind of desperation. “They were

still library books, even if Dumbledore had taken

them off the shelves. Anyway, if he really didn’t want

anyone to get at them, I’m sure he would have made

it much harder to — ”

“Get to the point!” said Ron.

“Well ... it was easy,” said Hermione in a small voice.

“I just did a Summoning Charm. You know — Accio.

And — they zoomed out of Dumbledore ’s study

window right into the girls’ dormitory.”

“But when did you do this?” Harry asked, regarding

Hermione with a mixture of admiration and

incredulity.

“Just after his — Dumbledore’s — funeral,” said

Hermione in an even smaller voice. “Right after we

agreed we’d leave school and go and look for the

Horcruxes. When I went back upstairs to get my

things it — it just occurred to me that the more we

knew about them, the better it would be ... and I was

alone in there ... so I tried ... and it worked. They flew

straight in through the open window and I — I packed

them.”

She swallowed and then said imploringly, “I can’t

believe Dumbledore would have been angry, it’s not

Page | 113 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

as though we’re going to use the information to make

a Horcrux, is it?”

“Can you hear us complaining?” said Ron. “Where are

these books anyway?”

Hermione rummaged for a moment and then

extracted from the pile a large volume, bound in faded

black leather. She looked a little nauseated and held

it as gingerly as if it were something recently dead.

“This is the one that gives explicit instructions on how

to make a Horcrux. Secrets of the Darkest Art — it’s a

horrible book, really awful, full of evil magic. I wonder

when Dumbledore removed it from the library. ... If he

didn’t do it until he was headmaster, I bet Voldemort

got all the instruction he needed from here.”

“Why did he have to ask Slughorn how to make a

Horcrux, then, if he’d already read that?” asked Ron.

“He only approached Slughorn to find out what would

happen if you split your soul into seven,” said Harry.

“Dumbledore was sure Riddle already knew how to

make a Horcrux by the time he asked Slughorn about

them. I think you’re right, Hermione, that could easily

have been where he got the information.”

“And the more I’ve read about them,” said Hermione,

“the more horrible they seem, and the less I can

believe that he actually made six. It warns in this

book how unstable you make the rest of your soul by

ripping it, and that’s just by making one Horcrux!”

Harry remembered what Dumbledore had said about

Voldemort moving beyond “usual evil.”

“Isn’t there any way of putting yourself back

together?” Ron asked.

Page | 114 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Yes,” said Hermione with a hollow smile, “but it

would be excruciatingly painful.”

“Why? How do you do it?” asked Harry.

“Remorse,” said Hermione. “You’ve got to really feel

what you’ve done. There’s a footnote. Apparently the

pain of it can destroy you. I can’t see Voldemort

attempting it somehow, can you?”

“No,” said Ron, before Harry could answer. “So does it

say how to destroy Horcruxes in that book?”

“Yes,” said Hermione, now turning the fragile pages as

if examining rotting entrails, “because it warns Dark

wizards how strong they have to make the

enchantments on them. From all that I’ve read, what

Harry did to Riddle’s diary was one of the few really

foolproof ways of destroying a Horcrux.”

“What, stabbing it with a basilisk fang?” asked Harry.

“Oh well, lucky we’ve got such a large supply of

basilisk fangs, then,” said Ron. “I was wondering

what we were going to do with them.”

“It doesn’t have to be a basilisk fang,” said Hermione

patiently. “It has to be something so destructive that

the Horcrux can’t repair itself. Basilisk venom only

has one antidote, and it’s incredibly rare — -□

“ — phoenix tears,” said Harry, nodding.

“Exactly,” said Hermione. “Our problem is that there

are very few substances as destructive as basilisk

venom, and they’re all dangerous to carry around

with you. That’s a problem we’re going to have to

solve, though, because ripping, smashing, or

Page | 115 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

crushing a Horcrux won’t do the trick. You’ve got to

put it beyond magical repair.”

“But even if we wreck the thing it lives in,” said Ron,

“why can’t the bit of soul in it just go and live in

something else?”

“Because a Horcrux is the complete opposite of a

human being.”

Seeing that Harry and Ron looked thoroughly

confused, Hermione hurried on, “Look, if I picked up

a sword right now, Ron, and ran you through with it,

I wouldn’t damage your soul at all.”

“Which would be a real comfort to me, I’m sure,” said

Ron. Harry laughed.

“It should be, actually! But my point is that whatever

happens to your body, your soul will survive,

untouched,” said Hermione. “But it’s the other way

round with a Horcrux. The fragment of soul inside it

depends on its container, its enchanted body, for

survival. It can’t exist without it.”

“That diary sort of died when I stabbed it,” said Harry,

remembering ink pouring like blood from the

punctured pages, and the screams of the piece of

Voldemort’s soul as it vanished.

“And once the diary was properly destroyed, the bit of

soul trapped in it could no longer exist. Ginny tried to

get rid of the diary before you did, flushing it away,

but obviously it came back good as new.”

“Hang on,” said Ron, frowning. “The bit of soul in that

diary was possessing Ginny, wasn’t it? How does that

work, then?”

Page | 116 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“While the magical container is still intact, the bit of

soul inside it can flit in and out of someone if they get

too close to the object. I don’t mean holding it for too

long, it’s nothing to do with touching it,” she added

before Ron could speak. “I mean close emotionally.

Ginny poured her heart out into that diary, she made

herself incredibly vulnerable. You’re in trouble if you

get too fond of or dependent on the Horcrux.”

“I wonder how Dumbledore destroyed the ring?” said

Harry. “Why didn’t I ask him? I never really ...”

His voice tailed away: He was thinking of all the

things he should have asked Dumbledore, and of

how, since the headmaster had died, it seemed to

Harry that he had wasted so many opportunities

when Dumbledore had been alive, to find out more ...

to find out everything. . . .

The silence was shattered as the bedroom door flew

open with a wall-shaking crash. Hermione shrieked

and dropped Secrets of the Darkest Art; Crookshanks

streaked under the bed, hissing indignantly; Ron

jumped off the bed, skidded on a discarded Chocolate

Frog wrapper, and smacked his head on the opposite

wall; and Harry instinctively dived for his wand before

realizing that he was looking up at Mrs. Weasley,

whose hair was disheveled and whose face was

contorted with rage.

“I’m so sorry to break up this cozy little gathering,”

she said, her voice trembling. “I’m sure you all need

your rest . . . but there are wedding presents stacked

in my room that need sorting out and I was under the

impression that you had agreed to help.”

“Oh yes,” said Hermione, looking terrified as she leapt

to her feet, sending books flying in every direction,

“we will ... we’re sorry ...”

Page | 117 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

With an anguished look at Harry and Ron, Hermione

hurried out of the room after Mrs. Weasley.

“It’s like being a house-elf,” complained Ron in an

undertone, still massaging his head as he and Harry

followed. “Except without the job satisfaction. The

sooner this wedding’s over, the happier I’ll be.”

“Yeah,” said Harry, “then we’ll have nothing to do

except find Horcruxes. ... It’ll be like a holiday, won’t

it?”

Ron started to laugh, but at the sight of the enormous

pile of wedding presents waiting for them in Mrs.

Weasley’s room, stopped quite abruptly.

The Delacours arrived the following morning at eleven

o’clock. Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Ginny were feeling

quite resentful toward Fleur’s family by this time, and

it was with ill grace that Ron stumped back upstairs

to put on matching socks, and Harry attempted to

flatten his hair. Once they had all been deemed smart

enough, they trooped out into the sunny backyard to

await the visitors.

Harry had never seen the place looking so tidy. The

rusty cauldrons and old Wellington boots that usually

littered the steps by the back door were gone,

replaced by two new Flutterby bushes standing either

side of the door in large pots; though there was no

breeze, the leaves waved lazily, giving an attractive

rippling effect. The chickens had been shut away, the

yard had been swept, and the nearby garden had

been pruned, plucked, and generally spruced up,

although Harry, who liked it in its overgrown state,

thought that it looked rather forlorn without its usual

contingent of capering gnomes.

Page | 118 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He had lost track of how many security enchantments

had been placed upon the Burrow by both the Order

and the Ministry; all he knew was that it was no

longer possible for anybody to travel by magic directly

into the place. Mr. Weasley had therefore gone to

meet the Delacours on top of a nearby hill, where they

were to arrive by Portkey. The first sound of their

approach was an unusually high-pitched laugh,

which turned out to be coming from Mr. Weasley, who

appeared at the gate moments later, laden with

luggage and leading a beautiful blonde woman in

long, leaf-green robes, who could only be Fleur’s

mother.

“Maman!” cried Fleur, rushing forward to embrace

her. “Papa!”

Monsieur Delacour was nowhere near as attractive as

his wife; he was a head shorter and extremely plump,

with a little, pointed black beard. However, he looked

good-natured. Bouncing toward Mrs. Weasley on

high-heeled boots, he kissed her twice on each cheek,

leaving her flustered.

“You ’ave been to much trouble,” he said in a deep

voice. “Fleur tells us you ’ave been working very ’ard.”

“Oh, it’s been nothing, nothing!” trilled Mrs. Weasley.

“No trouble at all!”

Ron relieved his feelings by aiming a kick at a gnome

who was peering out from behind one of the new

Flutterby bushes.

“Dear lady!” said Monsieur Delacour, still holding

Mrs. Weasley’s hand between his own two plump

ones and beaming. “We are most honored at the

approaching union of our two families! Let me present

my wife, Apolline.”

Page | 119 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Madame Delacour glided forward and stooped to kiss

Mrs. Weasley too.

“ Enchantee,” she said. “Your ’usband ’as been telling

us such amusing stories!”

Mr. Weasley gave a maniacal laugh; Mrs. Weasley

threw him a look, upon which he became immediately

silent and assumed an expression appropriate to the

sickbed of a close friend.

“And, of course, you ’ave met my leetle daughter,

Gabrielle!” said Monsieur Delacour. Gabrielle was

Fleur in miniature; eleven years old, with waist-length

hair of pure, silvery blonde, she gave Mrs. Weasley a

dazzling smile and hugged her, then threw Harry a

glowing look, batting her eyelashes. Ginny cleared her

throat loudly.

“Well, come in, do!” said Mrs. Weasley brightly, and

she ushered the Delacours into the house, with many

“No, please!”s and “After you!”s and “Not at all!”s.

The Delacours, it soon transpired, were helpful,

pleasant guests. They were pleased with everything

and keen to assist with the preparations for the

wedding. Monsieur Delacour pronounced everything

from the seating plan to the bridesmaids’ shoes

“Charmanti” Madame Delacour was most

accomplished at household spells and had the oven

properly cleaned in a trice; Gabrielle followed her

elder sister around, trying to assist in any way she

could and jabbering away in rapid French.

On the downside, the Burrow was not built to

accommodate so many people. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley

were now sleeping in the sitting room, having shouted

down Monsieur and Madame Delacour’s protests and

insisted they take their bedroom. Gabrielle was

Page | 120 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

sleeping with Fleur in Percy’s old room, and Bill

would be sharing with Charlie, his best man, once

Charlie arrived from Romania. Opportunities to make

plans together became virtually nonexistent, and it

was in desperation that Harry, Ron, and Hermione

took to volunteering to feed the chickens just to

escape the overcrowded house.

“But she still won’t leave us alone!” snarled Ron, as

their second attempt at a meeting in the yard was

foiled by the appearance of Mrs. Weasley carrying a

large basket of laundry in her arms.

“Oh, good, you’ve fed the chickens,” she called as she

approached them. “We’d better shut them away again

before the men arrive tomorrow ... to put up the tent

for the wedding,” she explained, pausing to lean

against the henhouse. She looked exhausted.

“Millamant’s Magic Marquees ... they’re very good,

Bill’s escorting them. ... You’d better stay inside while

they’re here, Harry. I must say it does complicate

organizing a wedding, having all these security spells

around the place.”

“I’m sorry,” said Harry humbly.

“Oh, don’t be silly, dear!” said Mrs. Weasley at once. “I

didn’t mean — well, your safety’s much more

important! Actually, I’ve been wanting to ask you how

you want to celebrate your birthday, Harry.

Seventeen, after all, it’s an important day. ...”

“I don’t want a fuss,” said Harry quickly, envisaging

the additional strain this would put on them all.

“Really, Mrs. Weasley, just a normal dinner would be

fine. ... It’s the day before the wedding. ...”

“Oh, well, if you’re sure, dear. I’ll invite Remus and

Tonks, shall I? And how about Hagrid?”

Page | 121 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“That’d be great,” said Harry. “But please don’t go to

loads of trouble.”

“Not at all, not at all ... It’s no trouble. ...”

She looked at him, a long, searching look, then smiled

a little sadly, straightened up, and walked away.

Harry watched as she waved her wand near the

washing line, and the damp clothes rose into the air

to hang themselves up, and suddenly he felt a great

wave of remorse for the inconvenience and the pain

he was giving her.

Page | 122 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

7

THE WILL OF ALBUS DUMBLEDORE

He was walking along a mountain road in the cool

blue light of dawn. Far below, swathed in mist, was

the shadow of a small town. Was the man he sought

down there, the man he needed so badly he could

think of little else, the man who held the answer, the

answer to his problem . . . ?

“Oi, wake up.”

Harry opened his eyes. He was lying again on the

camp bed in Ron’s dingy attic room. The sun had not

yet risen and the room was still shadowy. Pigwidgeon

was asleep with his head under his tiny wing. The

scar on Harry’s forehead was prickling.

“You were muttering in your sleep.”

“Was I?”

“Yeah. ‘Gregorovitch.’ You kept saying ‘Gregorovitch.’

Page | 123 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry was not wearing his glasses; Ron’s face

appeared slightly blurred.

“Who’s Gregorovitch?”

“I dunno, do I? You were the one saying it.”

Harry rubbed his forehead, thinking. He had a vague

idea he had heard the name before, but he could not

think where.

“I think Voldemort’s looking for him.”

“Poor bloke,” said Ron fervently.

Harry sat up, still rubbing his scar, now wide awake.

He tried to remember exactly what he had seen in the

dream, but all that came back was a mountainous

horizon and the outline of the little village cradled in a

deep valley.

“I think he’s abroad.”

“Who, Gregorovitch?”

“Voldemort. I think he’s somewhere abroad, looking

for Gregorovitch. It didn’t look like anywhere in

Britain.”

“You reckon you were seeing into his mind again?”

Ron sounded worried.

“Do me a favor and don’t tell Hermione,” said Harry.

“Although how she expects me to stop seeing stuff in

my sleep ...”

He gazed up at little Pigwidgeon’s cage, thinking ...

Why was the name “Gregorovitch” familiar?

Page | 124 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I think,” he said slowly, “he’s got something to do

with Quidditch. There’s some connection, but I can’t

— I can’t think what it is.”

“Quidditch?” said Ron. “Sure you’re not thinking of

Gorgovitch?”

“Who?”

“Dragomir Gorgovitch, Chaser, transferred to the

Chudley Cannons for a record fee two years ago.

Record holder for most Quaffle drops in a season.”

“No,” said Harry. “I’m definitely not thinking of

Gorgovitch.”

“I try not to either,” said Ron. “Well, happy birthday

anyway.”

“Wow — that’s right, I forgot! I’m seventeen!”

Harry seized the wand lying beside his camp bed,

pointed it at the cluttered desk where he had left his

glasses, and said, “Accio Glasses!” Although they were

only around a foot away, there was something

immensely satisfying about seeing them zoom toward

him, at least until they poked him in the eye.

“Slick,” snorted Ron.

Reveling in the removal of his Trace, Harry sent Ron’s

possessions flying around the room, causing

Pigwidgeon to wake up and flutter excitedly around

his cage. Harry also tried tying the laces of his

trainers by magic (the resultant knot took several

minutes to untie by hand) and, purely for the

pleasure of it, turned the orange robes on Ron’s

Chudley Cannons posters bright blue.

Page | 125 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I’d do your fly by hand, though,” Ron advised Harry,

sniggering when Harry immediately checked it.

“Here’s your present. Unwrap it up here, it’s not for

my mother’s eyes.”

“A book?” said Harry as he took the rectangular

parcel. “Bit of a departure from tradition, isn’t it?”

“This isn’t your average book,” said Ron. “It’s pure

gold: Twelve Fail-Safe Ways to Charm Witches.

Explains everything you need to know about girls. If

only I’d had this last year I’d have known exactly how

to get rid of Lavender and I would’ve known how to

get going with ... Well, Fred and George gave me a

copy, and I’ve learned a lot. You’d be surprised, it’s

not all about wandwork, either.”

When they arrived in the kitchen they found a pile of

presents waiting on the table. Bill and Monsieur

Delacour were finishing their breakfasts, while Mrs.

Weasley stood chatting to them over the frying pan.

“Arthur told me to wish you a happy seventeenth,

Harry,” said Mrs. Weasley, beaming at him. “He had

to leave early for work, but hell be back for dinner.

That’s our present on top.”

Harry sat down, took the square parcel she had

indicated, and unwrapped it. Inside was a watch very

like the one Mr. and Mrs. Weasley had given Ron for

his seventeenth; it was gold, with stars circling

around the face instead of hands.

“It’s traditional to give a wizard a watch when he

comes of age,” said Mrs. Weasley, watching him

anxiously from beside the cooker. “I’m afraid that one

isn’t new like Ron’s, it was actually my brother

Fabian’s and he wasn’t terribly careful with his

possessions, it’s a bit dented on the back, but — ”

Page | 126 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The rest of her speech was lost; Harry had got up and

hugged her. He tried to put a lot of unsaid things into

the hug and perhaps she understood them, because

she patted his cheek clumsily when he released her,

then waved her wand in a slightly random way,

causing half a pack of bacon to flop out of the frying

pan onto the floor.

“Happy birthday, Harry!” said Hermione, hurrying

into the kitchen and adding her own present to the

top of the pile. “It’s not much, but I hope you like it.

What did you get him?” she added to Ron, who

seemed not to hear her.

“Come on, then, open Hermione’s!” said Ron.

She had bought him a new Sneakoscope. The other

packages contained an enchanted razor from Bill and

Fleur (“Ah yes, zis will give you ze smoothest shave

you will ever ’ave,” Monsieur Delacour assured him,

“but you must tell it clearly what you want . . .

ozzerwise you might find you ’ave a leetle less hair

zan you would like. ...”), chocolates from the

Delacours, and an enormous box of the latest

Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes merchandise from Fred

and George.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione did not linger at the table,

as the arrival of Madame Delacour, Fleur, and

Gabrielle made the kitchen uncomfortably crowded.

“I’ll pack these for you,” Hermione said brightly,

taking Harry’s presents out of his arms as the three of

them headed back upstairs. “I’m nearly done, I’m just

waiting for the rest of your underpants to come out of

the wash, Ron — ”

Ron’s splutter was interrupted by the opening of a

door on the first-floor landing.

Page | 127 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry, will you come in here a moment?”

It was Ginny. Ron came to an abrupt halt, but

Hermione took him by the elbow and tugged him on

up the stairs. Feeling nervous, Harry followed Ginny

into her room.

He had never been inside it before. It was small, but

bright. There was a large poster of the Wizarding

band the Weird Sisters on one wall, and a picture of

Gwenog Jones, Captain of the all-witch Quidditch

team the Holyhead Harpies, on the other. A desk

stood facing the open window, which looked out over

the orchard where he and Ginny had once played

two-a-side Quidditch with Ron and Hermione, and

which now housed a large, pearly white marquee. The

golden flag on top was level with Ginny’s window.

Ginny looked up into Harry’s face, took a deep breath,

and said, “Happy seventeenth.”

“Yeah ... thanks.”

She was looking at him steadily; he, however, found it

difficult to look back at her; it was like gazing into a

brilliant light.

“Nice view,” he said feebly, pointing toward the

window.

She ignored this. He could not blame her.

“I couldn’t think what to get you,” she said.

“You didn’t have to get me anything.”

She disregarded this too.

Page | 128 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I didn’t know what would be useful. Nothing too big,

because you wouldn’t be able to take it with you.”

He chanced a glance at her. She was not tearful; that

was one of the many wonderful things about Ginny,

she was rarely weepy. He had sometimes thought that

having six brothers must have toughened her up.

She took a step closer to him.

“So then I thought, I’d like you to have something to

remember me by, you know, if you meet some veela

when you’re off doing whatever you’re doing.”

“I think dating opportunities are going to be pretty

thin on the ground, to be honest.”

“There’s the silver lining I’ve been looking for,” she

whispered, and then she was kissing him as she had

never kissed him before, and Harry was kissing her

back, and it was blissful oblivion, better than

firewhisky; she was the only real thing in the world,

Ginny, the feel of her, one hand at her back and one

in her long, sweet-smelling hair —

The door banged open behind them and they jumped

apart.

“Oh,” said Ron pointedly. “Sorry.”

“Ron!” Hermione was just behind him, slightly out of

breath. There was a strained silence, then Ginny said

in a flat little voice,

“Well, happy birthday anyway, Harry.”

Ron’s ears were scarlet; Hermione looked nervous.

Harry wanted to slam the door in their faces, but it

felt as though a cold draft had entered the room when

Page | 129 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the door opened, and his shining moment had popped

like a soap bubble. All the reasons for ending his

relationship with Ginny, for staying well away from

her, seemed to have slunk inside the room with Ron,

and all happy forgetfulness was gone.

He looked at Ginny, wanting to say something,

though he hardly knew what, but she had turned her

back on him. He thought that she might have

succumbed, for once, to tears. He could not do

anything to comfort her in front of Ron.

“I’ll see you later,” he said, and followed the other two

out of the bedroom.

Ron marched downstairs, through the still-crowded

kitchen and into the yard, and Harry kept pace with

him all the way, Hermione trotting along behind them

looking scared.

Once he reached the seclusion of the freshly mown

lawn, Ron rounded on Harry.

“You ditched her. What are you doing now, messing

her around?”

“I’m not messing her around,” said Harry, as

Hermione caught up with them.

“Ron — ”

But Ron held up a hand to silence her.

“She was really cut up when you ended it — ”

“So was I. You know why I stopped it, and it wasn’t

because I wanted to.”

Page | 130 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Yeah, but you go snogging her now and she’s just

going to get her hopes up again — ”

“She’s not an idiot, she knows it can’t happen, she’s

not expecting us to — to end up married, or — ”

As he said it, a vivid picture formed in Harry’s mind of

Ginny in a white dress, marrying a tall, faceless, and

unpleasant stranger. In one spiraling moment it

seemed to hit him: Her future was free and

unencumbered, whereas his ... he could see nothing

but Voldemort ahead.

“If you keep groping her every chance you get — ”

“It won’t happen again,” said Harry harshly. The day

was cloudless, but he felt as though the sun had gone

in. “Okay?”

Ron looked half resentful, half sheepish; he rocked

backward and forward on his feet for a moment, then

said, “Right then, well, that’s ... yeah.”

Ginny did not seek another one-to-one meeting with

Harry for the rest of the day, nor by any look or

gesture did she show that they had shared more than

polite conversation in her room. Nevertheless,

Charlie’s arrival came as a relief to Harry. It provided

a distraction, watching Mrs. Weasley force Charlie

into a chair, raise her wand threateningly, and

announce that he was about to get a proper haircut.

As Harry’s birthday dinner would have stretched the

Burrow’s kitchen to breaking point even before the

arrival of Charlie, Lupin, Tonks, and Hagrid, several

tables were placed end to end in the garden. Fred and

George bewitched a number of purple lanterns, all

emblazoned with a large number 17, to hang in

midair over the guests. Thanks to Mrs. Weasley’s

Page | 131 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

ministrations, George’s wound was neat and clean,

but Harry was not yet used to the dark hole in the

side of his head, despite the twins’ many jokes about

it.

Hermione made purple and gold streamers erupt from

the end of her wand and drape themselves artistically

over the trees and bushes.

“Nice,” said Ron, as with one final flourish of her

wand, Hermione turned the leaves on the crabapple

tree to gold. “You’ve really got an eye for that sort of

thing.”

“Thank you, Ron!” said Hermione, looking both

pleased and a little confused. Harry turned away,

smiling to himself. He had a funny notion that he

would find a chapter on compliments when he found

time to peruse his copy of Twelve Fail-Safe Ways to

Charm Witches; he caught Ginny’s eye and grinned at

her before remembering his promise to Ron and

hurriedly striking up a conversation with Monsieur

Delacour.

“Out of the way, out of the way!” sang Mrs. Weasley,

coming through the gate with what appeared to be a

giant, beach-ball-sized Snitch floating in front of her.

Seconds later Harry realized that it was his birthday

cake, which Mrs. Weasley was suspending with her

wand, rather than risk carrying it over the uneven

ground. When the cake had finally landed in the

middle of the table, Harry said, “That looks amazing,

Mrs. Weasley.”

“Oh, it’s nothing, dear,” she said fondly. Over her

shoulder, Ron gave Harry the thumbs-up and

mouthed, Good one.

Page | 132 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

By seven o’clock all the guests had arrived, led into

the house by Fred and George, who had waited for

them at the end of the lane. Hagrid had honored the

occasion by wearing his best, and horrible, hairy

brown suit. Although Lupin smiled as he shook

Harry’s hand, Harry thought he looked rather

unhappy. It was all very odd; Tonks, beside him,

looked simply radiant.

“Happy birthday, Harry,” she said, hugging him

tightly.

“Seventeen, eh!” said Hagrid as he accepted a bucket-

sized glass of wine from Fred. “Six years ter the day

since we met, Harry, d’yeh remember it?”

“Vaguely,” said Harry, grinning up at him. “Didn’t you

smash down the front door, give Dudley a pig’s tail,

and tell me I was a wizard?”

“I forge’ the details,” Hagrid chortled. “All righ’, Ron,

Hermione?”

“We’re fine,” said Hermione. “How are you?”

“Ar, not bad. Bin busy, we got some newborn

unicorns, I’ll show yeh when yeh get back — ” Harry

avoided Ron’s and Hermione’s gazes as Hagrid

rummaged in his pocket. “Here, Harry — couldn’

think what ter get yeh, but then I remembered this.”

He pulled out a small, slightly furry drawstring pouch

with a long string, evidently intended to be worn

around the neck. “Mokeskin. Hide anythin’ in there

an’ no one but the owner can get it out. They’re rare,

them.”

“Hagrid, thanks!”

Page | 133 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ ’S’nothin’,” said Hagrid with a wave of a dustbin-lid-

sized hand. “An’ there’s Charlie! Always liked him —

hey! Charlie!”

Charlie approached, running his hand slightly

ruefully over his new, brutally short haircut. He was

shorter than Ron, thickset, with a number of burns

and scratches up his muscley arms.

“Hi, Hagrid, how’s it going?”

“Bin meanin’ ter write fer ages. How’s Norbert doin’?”

“Norbert?” Charlie laughed. “The Norwegian

Ridgeback? We call her Norberta now.”

“Wha — Norbert’s a girl?”

“Oh yeah,” said Charlie.

“How can you tell?” asked Hermione.

“They’re a lot more vicious,” said Charlie. He looked

over his shoulder and dropped his voice. “Wish Dad

would hurry up and get here. Mum’s getting edgy.”

They all looked over at Mrs. Weasley. She was trying

to talk to Madame Delacour while glancing repeatedly

at the gate.

“I think we’d better start without Arthur,” she called

to the garden at large after a moment or two. “He

must have been held up at — oh!”

They all saw it at the same time: a streak of light that

came flying across the yard and onto the table, where

it resolved itself into a bright silver weasel, which

stood on its hind legs and spoke with Mr. Weasley’s

voice.

Page | 134 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Minister of Magic coming with me.”

The Patronus dissolved into thin air, leaving Fleur’s

family peering in astonishment at the place where it

had vanished.

“We shouldn’t be here,” said Lupin at once. “Harry —

I’m sorry — I’ll explain another time — ”

He seized Tonks’s wrist and pulled her away; they

reached the fence, climbed over it, and vanished from

sight. Mrs. Weasley looked bewildered.

“The Minister — but why — ? I don’t understand — ”

But there was no time to discuss the matter; a second

later, Mr. Weasley had appeared out of thin air at the

gate, accompanied by Rufus Scrimgeour, instantly

recognizable by his mane of grizzled hair.

The two newcomers marched across the yard toward

the garden and the lantern- lit table, where everybody

sat in silence, watching them draw closer. As

Scrimgeour came within range of the lantern light,

Harry saw that he looked much older than the last

time they had met, scraggy and grim.

“Sorry to intrude,” said Scrimgeour, as he limped to a

halt before the table. “Especially as I can see that I

am gate-crashing a party.”

His eyes lingered for a moment on the giant Snitch

cake.

“Many happy returns.”

“Thanks,” said Harry.

Page | 135 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I require a private word with you,” Scrimgeour went

on. “Also with Mr. Ronald Weasley and Miss

Hermione Granger.”

“Us?” said Ron, sounding surprised. “Why us?”

“I shall tell you that when we are somewhere more

private,” said Scrimgeour. “Is there such a place?” he

demanded of Mr. Weasley.

“Yes, of course,” said Mr. Weasley, who looked

nervous. “The, er, sitting room, why don’t you use

that?”

“You can lead the way,” Scrimgeour said to Ron.

“There will be no need for you to accompany us,

Arthur.”

Harry saw Mr. Weasley exchange a worried look with

Mrs. Weasley as he, Ron, and Hermione stood up. As

they led the way back to the house in silence, Harry

knew that the other two were thinking the same as he

was: Scrimgeour must, somehow, have learned that

the three of them were planning to drop out of

Hogwarts.

Scrimgeour did not speak as they all passed through

the messy kitchen and into the Burrow’s sitting room.

Although the garden had been full of soft golden

evening light, it was already dark in here: Harry

flicked his wand at the oil lamps as he entered and

they illuminated the shabby but cozy room.

Scrimgeour sat himself in the sagging armchair that

Mr. Weasley normally occupied, leaving Harry, Ron,

and Hermione to squeeze side by side onto the sofa.

Once they had done so, Scrimgeour spoke.

“I have some questions for the three of you, and I

think it will be best if we do it individually. If you two”

Page | 136 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

— he pointed at Harry and Hermione — “can wait

upstairs, I will start with Ronald.”

“We’re not going anywhere,” said Harry, while

Hermione nodded vigorously. “You can speak to us

together, or not at all.”

Scrimgeour gave Harry a cold, appraising look. Harry

had the impression that the Minister was wondering

whether it was worthwhile opening hostilities this

early.

“Very well then, together,” he said, shrugging. He

cleared his throat. “I am here, as I’m sure you know,

because of Albus Dumbledore’s will.”

Harry, Ron, and Hermione looked at one another.

“A surprise, apparently! You were not aware then that

Dumbledore had left you anything?”

“A-all of us?” said Ron. “Me and Hermione too?”

“Yes, all of—”

But Harry interrupted.

“Dumbledore died over a month ago. Why has it taken

this long to give us what he left us?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” said Hermione, before Scrimgeour

could answer. “They wanted to examine whatever he’s

left us. You had no right to do that!” she said, and her

voice trembled slightly.

“I had every right,” said Scrimgeour dismissively. “The

Decree for Justifiable Confiscation gives the Ministry

the power to confiscate the contents of a will — ”

Page | 137 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“That law was created to stop wizards passing on

Dark artifacts,” said Hermione, “and the Ministry is

supposed to have powerful evidence that the

deceased’s possessions are illegal before seizing them!

Are you telling me that you thought Dumbledore was

trying to pass us something cursed?”

“Are you planning to follow a career in Magical Law,

Miss Granger?” asked Scrimgeour.

“No, I’m not,” retorted Hermione. “I’m hoping to do

some good in the world!”

Ron laughed. Scrimgeour ’s eyes flickered toward him

and away again as Harry spoke.

“So why have you decided to let us have our things

now? Can’t think of a pretext to keep them?”

“No, it’ll be because the thirty-one days are up,” said

Hermione at once. “They can’t keep the objects longer

than that unless they can prove they’re dangerous.

Right?”

“Would you say you were close to Dumbledore,

Ronald?” asked Scrimgeour, ignoring Hermione. Ron

looked startled.

“Me? Not — not really ... It was always Harry who ...”

Ron looked around at Harry and Hermione, to see

Hermione giving him a stop-talking-now\ sort of look,

but the damage was done: Scrimgeour looked as

though he had heard exactly what he had expected,

and wanted, to hear. He swooped like a bird of prey

upon Ron’s answer.

“If you were not very close to Dumbledore, how do you

account for the fact that he remembered you in his

Page | 138 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

will? He made exceptionally few personal bequests.

The vast majority of his possessions — his private

library, his magical instruments, and other personal

effects — were left to Hogwarts. Why do you think you

were singled out?”

“I ... dunno,” said Ron. “I ... when I say we weren’t

close ... I mean, I think he liked me. ...”

“You’re being modest, Ron,” said Hermione.

“Dumbledore was very fond of you.”

This was stretching the truth to breaking point; as far

as Harry knew, Ron and Dumbledore had never been

alone together, and direct contact between them had

been negligible. However, Scrimgeour did not seem to

be listening. He put his hand inside his cloak and

drew out a drawstring pouch much larger than the

one Hagrid had given Harry. From it, he removed a

scroll of parchment which he unrolled and read

aloud.

“ ‘The Last Will and Testament of Albus Percival

Wulfric Brian Dumbledore’ ... Yes, here we are. ... ‘To

Ronald Bilius Weasley, I leave my Deluminator, in the

hope that he will remember me when he uses it.’ ”

Scrimgeour took from the bag an object that Harry

had seen before: It looked something like a silver

cigarette lighter, but it had, he knew, the power to

suck all light from a place, and restore it, with a

simple click. Scrimgeour leaned forward and passed

the Deluminator to Ron, who took it and turned it

over in his fingers, looking stunned.

“That is a valuable object,” said Scrimgeour, watching

Ron. “It may even be unique. Certainly it is of

Dumbledore’s own design. Why would he have left

you an item so rare?”

Page | 139 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ron shook his head, looking bewildered.

“Dumbledore must have taught thousands of

students,” Scrimgeour persevered. “Yet the only ones

he remembered in his will are you three. Why is that?

To what use did he think you would put his

Deluminator, Mr. Weasley?”

“Put out lights, I s’pose,” mumbled Ron. “What else

could I do with it?”

Evidently Scrimgeour had no suggestions. After

squinting at Ron for a moment or two, he turned back

to Dumbledore’s will.

“ To Miss Hermione Jean Granger, I leave my copy of

The Tales of Beedle the Bard, in the hope that she will

find it entertaining and instructive.’ ”

Scrimgeour now pulled out of the bag a small book

that looked as ancient as the copy of Secrets of the

Darkest Art upstairs. Its binding was stained and

peeling in places. Hermione took it from Scrimgeour

without a word. She held the book in her lap and

gazed at it. Harry saw that the title was in runes; he

had never learned to read them. As he looked, a tear

splashed onto the embossed symbols.

“Why do you think Dumbledore left you that book,

Miss Granger?” asked Scrimgeour.

“He ... he knew I liked books,” said Hermione in a

thick voice, mopping her eyes with her sleeve.

“But why that particular book?”

“I don’t know. He must have thought I’d enjoy it.”

Page | 140 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Did you ever discuss codes, or any means of passing

secret messages, with Dumbledore?”

“No, I didn’t,” said Hermione, still wiping her eyes on

her sleeve. “And if the Ministry hasn’t found any

hidden codes in this book in thirty-one days, I doubt

that I will.”

She suppressed a sob. They were wedged together so

tightly that Ron had difficulty extracting his arm to

put it around Hermione ’s shoulders. Scrimgeour

turned back to the will.

“ ‘To Harry James Potter,’ ” he read, and Harry’s

insides contracted with a sudden excitement, “ ‘I leave

the Snitch he caught in his first Quidditch match at

Hogwarts, as a reminder of the rewards of

perseverance and skill.’ ”

As Scrimgeour pulled out the tiny, walnut-sized

golden ball, its silver wings fluttered rather feebly,

and Harry could not help feeling a definite sense of

anticlimax.

“Why did Dumbledore leave you this Snitch?” asked

Scrimgeour.

“No idea,” said Harry. “For the reasons you just read

out, I suppose ... to remind me what you can get if

you ... persevere and whatever it was.”

“You think this a mere symbolic keepsake, then?”

“I suppose so,” said Harry. “What else could it be?”

“I’m asking the questions,” said Scrimgeour, shifting

his chair a little closer to the sofa. Dusk was really

falling outside now; the marquee beyond the windows

towered ghostly white over the hedge.

Page | 141 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

“I notice that your birthday cake is in the shape of a

Snitch,” Scrimgeour said to Harry. “Why is that?”

Hermione laughed derisively.

“Oh, it can’t be a reference to the fact Harry’s a great

Seeker, that’s way too obvious,” she said. “There must

be a secret message from Dumbledore hidden in the

icing!”

“I don’t think there’s anything hidden in the icing,”

said Scrimgeour, “but a Snitch would be a very good

hiding place for a small object. You know why, I’m

sure?”

Harry shrugged. Hermione, however, answered: Harry

thought that answering questions correctly was such

a deeply ingrained habit she could not suppress the

urge.

“Because Snitches have flesh memories,” she said.

“What?” said Harry and Ron together; both

considered Hermione ’s Quidditch knowledge

negligible.

“Correct,” said Scrimgeour. “A Snitch is not touched

by bare skin before it is released, not even by the

maker, who wears gloves. It carries an enchantment

by which it can identify the first human to lay hands

upon it, in case of a disputed capture. This Snitch” —

he held up the tiny golden ball — “will remember your

touch, Potter. It occurs to me that Dumbledore, who

had prodigious magical skill, whatever his other

faults, might have enchanted this Snitch so that it

will open only for you.”

Page | 142 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry’s heart was beating rather fast. He was sure

that Scrimgeour was right. How could he avoid taking

the Snitch with his bare hand in front of the Minister?

“You don’t say anything,” said Scrimgeour. “Perhaps

you already know what the Snitch contains?”

“No,” said Harry, still wondering how he could appear

to touch the Snitch without really doing so. If only he

knew Legilimency, really knew it, and could read

Hermione’s mind; he could practically hear her brain

whirring beside him.

“Take it,” said Scrimgeour quietly.

Harry met the Minister’s yellow eyes and knew he had

no option but to obey. He held out his hand, and

Scrimgeour leaned forward again and placed the

Snitch, slowly and deliberately, into Harry’s palm.

Nothing happened. As Harry’s fingers closed around

the Snitch, its tired wings fluttered and were still.

Scrimgeour, Ron, and Hermione continued to gaze

avidly at the now partially concealed ball, as if still

hoping it might transform in some way.

“That was dramatic,” said Harry coolly. Both Ron and

Hermione laughed.

“That’s all, then, is it?” asked Hermione, making to

prise herself off the sofa.

“Not quite,” said Scrimgeour, who looked bad-

tempered now. “Dumbledore left you a second

bequest, Potter.”

“What is it?” asked Harry, excitement rekindling.

Page | 143 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Scrimgeour did not bother to read from the will this

time.

“The sword of Godric Gryffindor,” he said.

Hermione and Ron both stiffened. Harry looked

around for a sign of the ruby-encrusted hilt, but

Scrimgeour did not pull the sword from the leather

pouch, which in any case looked much too small to

contain it.

“So where is it?” Harry asked suspiciously.

“Unfortunately,” said Scrimgeour, “that sword was

not Dumbledore ’s to give away. The sword of Godric

Gryffindor is an important historical artifact, and as

such, belongs — ”

“It belongs to Harry!” said Hermione hotly. “It chose

him, he was the one who found it, it came to him out

of the Sorting Hat — ”

“According to reliable historical sources, the sword

may present itself to any worthy Gryffindor,” said

Scrimgeour. “That does not make it the exclusive

property of Mr. Potter, whatever Dumbledore may

have decided.” Scrimgeour scratched his badly

shaven cheek, scrutinizing Harry. “Why do you think

— ?”

“ — Dumbledore wanted to give me the sword?” said

Harry, struggling to keep his temper. “Maybe he

thought it would look nice on my wall.”

“This is not a joke, Potter!” growled Scrimgeour. “Was

it because Dumbledore believed that only the sword of

Godric Gryffindor could defeat the Heir of Slytherin?

Did he wish to give you that sword, Potter, because he

Page | 144 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

believed, as do many, that you are the one destined to

destroy He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named?”

“Interesting theory,” said Harry. “Has anyone ever

tried sticking a sword in Voldemort? Maybe the

Ministry should put some people onto that, instead of

wasting their time stripping down Deluminators or

covering up breakouts from Azkaban. So is this what

you’ve been doing, Minister, shut up in your office,

trying to break open a Snitch? People are dying — I

was nearly one of them — Voldemort chased me

across three counties, he killed Mad-Eye Moody, but

there’s been no word about any of that from the

Ministry, has there? And you still expect us to

cooperate with you!”

“You go too far!” shouted Scrimgeour, standing up;

Harry jumped to his feet too. Scrimgeour limped

toward Harry and jabbed him hard in the chest with

the point of his wand: It singed a hole in Harry’s T-

shirt like a lit cigarette.

“Oi!” said Ron, jumping up and raising his own wand,

but Harry said,

“No! D’you want to give him an excuse to arrest us?”

“Remembered you’re not at school, have you?” said

Scrimgeour, breathing hard into Harry’s face.

“Remembered that I am not Dumbledore, who forgave

your insolence and insubordination? You may wear

that scar like a crown, Potter, but it is not up to a

seventeen-year-old boy to tell me how to do my job!

It’s time you learned some respect!”

“It’s time you earned it,” said Harry.

Page | 145 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The floor trembled; there was a sound of running

footsteps, then the door to the sitting room burst

open and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley ran in.

“We — we thought we heard — ” began Mr. Weasley,

looking thoroughly alarmed at the sight of Harry and

the Minister virtually nose to nose.

“ — raised voices,” panted Mrs. Weasley.

Scrimgeour took a couple of steps back from Harry,

glancing at the hole he had made in Harry’s T-shirt.

He seemed to regret his loss of temper.

“It — it was nothing,” he growled. “I ... regret your

attitude,” he said, looking Harry full in the face once

more. “You seem to think that the Ministry does not

desire what you — what Dumbledore — desired. We

ought to be working together.”

“I don’t like your methods, Minister,” said Harry.

“Remember?”

For the second time, he raised his right fist and

displayed to Scrimgeour the scars that still showed

white on the back of it, spelling I must not tell lies.

Scrimgeour ’s expression hardened. He turned away

without another word and limped from the room. Mrs.

Weasley hurried after him; Harry heard her stop at

the back door. After a minute or so she called, “He’s

gone!”

“What did he want?” Mr. Weasley asked, looking

around at Harry, Ron, and Hermione as Mrs. Weasley

came hurrying back to them.

“To give us what Dumbledore left us,” said Harry.

“They’ve only just released the contents of his will.”

Page | 146 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Outside in the garden, over the dinner tables, the

three objects Scrimgeour had given them were passed

from hand to hand. Everyone exclaimed over the

Deluminator and The Tales of Beedle the Bard and

lamented the fact that Scrimgeour had refused to

pass on the sword, but none of them could offer any

suggestion as to why Dumbledore would have left

Harry an old Snitch. As Mr. Weasley examined the

Deluminator for the third or fourth time, Mrs.

Weasley said tentatively, “Harry, dear, everyone’s

awfully hungry, we didn’t like to start without you. ...

Shall I serve dinner now?”

They all ate rather hurriedly and then, after a hasty

chorus of “Happy Birthday” and much gulping of

cake, the party broke up. Hagrid, who was invited to

the wedding the following day, but was far too bulky

to sleep in the overstretched Burrow, left to set up a

tent for himself in a neighboring field.

“Meet us upstairs,” Harry whispered to Hermione,

while they helped Mrs. Weasley restore the garden to

its normal state. “After everyone’s gone to bed.”

Up in the attic room, Ron examined his Deluminator,

and Harry filled Hagrid’s mokeskin purse, not with

gold, but with those items he most prized, apparently

worthless though some of them were: the Marauder’s

Map, the shard of Sirius’s enchanted mirror, and

R.A.B.’s locket. He pulled the strings tight and slipped

the purse around his neck, then sat holding the old

Snitch and watching its wings flutter feebly. At last,

Hermione tapped on the door and tiptoed inside.

“ Muffliato,” she whispered, waving her wand in the

direction of the stairs.

“Thought you didn’t approve of that spell?” said Ron.

Page | 147 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Times change,” said Hermione. “Now, show us that

Deluminator.”

Ron obliged at once. Holding it up in front of him, he

clicked it. The solitary lamp they had lit went out at

once.

“The thing is,” whispered Hermione through the dark,

“we could have achieved that with Peruvian Instant

Darkness Powder.”

There was a small click, and the ball of light from the

lamp flew back to the ceiling and illuminated them all

once more.

“Still, it’s cool,” said Ron, a little defensively. “And

from what they said, Dumbledore invented it himself!”

“I know, but surely he wouldn’t have singled you out

in his will just to help us turn out the lights!”

“D’you think he knew the Ministry would confiscate

his will and examine everything he’d left us?” asked

Harry.

“Definitely,” said Hermione. “He couldn’t tell us in the

will why he was leaving us these things, but that still

doesn’t explain ...”

"... why he couldn’t have given us a hint when he was

alive?” asked Ron.

“Well, exactly,” said Hermione, now flicking through

The Tales of Beedle the Bard. “If these things are

important enough to pass on right under the nose of

the Ministry, you’d think he’d have let us know why

... unless he thought it was obvious?”

Page | 148 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Thought wrong, then, didn’t he?” said Ron. “I always

said he was mental. Brilliant and everything, but

cracked. Leaving Harry an old Snitch — what the hell

was that about?”

“I’ve no idea,” said Hermione. “When Scrimgeour

made you take it, Harry, I was so sure that something

was going to happen!”

“Yeah, well,” said Harry, his pulse quickening as he

raised the Snitch in his fingers. “I wasn’t going to try

too hard in front of Scrimgeour, was I?”

“What do you mean?” asked Hermione.

“The Snitch I caught in my first ever Quidditch

match?” said Harry. “Don’t you remember?”

Hermione looked simply bemused. Ron, however,

gasped, pointing frantically from Harry to the Snitch

and back again until he found his voice.

“That was the one you nearly swallowed!”

“Exactly,” said Harry, and with his heart beating fast,

he pressed his mouth to the Snitch.

It did not open. Frustration and bitter disappointment

welled up inside him: He lowered the golden sphere,

but then Hermione cried out.

“Writing! There’s writing on it, quick, look!”

He nearly dropped the Snitch in surprise and

excitement. Hermione was quite right. Engraved upon

the smooth golden surface, where seconds before

there had been nothing, were five words written in the

thin, slanting handwriting that Harry recognized as

Dumbledore’s:

Page | 149 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

I open at the close.

He had barely read them when the words vanished

again.

“ ‘I open at the close ...’ What’s that supposed to

mean?”

Hermione and Ron shook their heads, looking blank.

“I open at the close ... at the close ... I open at the

close ...”

But no matter how often they repeated the words,

with many different inflections, they were unable to

wring any more meaning from them.

“And the sword,” said Ron finally, when they had at

last abandoned their attempts to divine meaning in

the Snitch’s inscription. “Why did he want Harry to

have the sword?”

“And why couldn’t he just have told me?” Harry said

quietly. “It was there, it was right there on the wall of

his office during all our talks last year! If he wanted

me to have it, why didn’t he just give it to me then?”

He felt as though he were sitting in an examination

with a question he ought to have been able to answer

in front of him, his brain slow and unresponsive. Was

there something he had missed in the long talks with

Dumbledore last year? Ought he to know what it all

meant? Had Dumbledore expected him to

understand?

“And as for this book,” said Hermione, “The Tales of

Beedle the Bard ... I’ve never even heard of them!”

Page | 150 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You’ve never heard of The Tales of Beedle the Bard?”

said Ron incredulously. “You’re kidding, right?”

“No, I’m not!” said Hermione in surprise. “Do you

know them, then?”

“Well, of course I do!”

Harry looked up, diverted. The circumstance of Ron

having read a book that Hermione had not was

unprecedented. Ron, however, looked bemused by

their surprise.

“Oh come on! All the old kids’ stories are supposed to

be Beedle ’s, aren’t they? The Fountain of Fair

Fortune’ ... The Wizard and the Hopping Pot’ ...

‘Babbitty Rabbitty and her Cackling Stump’ ...”

“Excuse me?” said Hermione, giggling. “What was that

last one?

“Come off it!” said Ron, looking in disbelief from Harry

to Hermione. “You must’ve heard of Babbitty Rabbitty

“Ron, you know full well Harry and I were brought up

by Muggles!” said Hermione. “We didn’t hear stories

like that when we were little, we heard ‘Snow White

and the Seven Dwarfs’ and ‘Cinderella’ — ”

“What’s that, an illness?” asked Ron.

“So these are children’s stories?” asked Hermione,

bending again over the runes.

“Yeah,” said Ron uncertainly, “I mean, that’s just

what you hear, you know, that all these old stories

came from Beedle. I dunno what they’re like in the

original versions.”

Page | 151 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But I wonder why Dumbledore thought I should read

them?”

Something creaked downstairs.

“Probably just Charlie, now Mum’s asleep, sneaking

off to regrow his hair,” said Ron nervously.

“All the same, we should get to bed,” whispered

Hermione. “It wouldn’t do to oversleep tomorrow.”

“No,” agreed Ron. “A brutal triple murder by the

bridegroom’s mother might put a bit of a damper on

the wedding. I’ll get the lights.”

And he clicked the Deluminator once more as

Hermione left the room.

Page | 152 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE WEDDING

Three o’clock on the following afternoon found Harry,

Ron, Fred, and George standing outside the great

white marquee in the orchard, awaiting the arrival of

the wedding guests. Harry had taken a large dose of

Polyjuice Potion and was now the double of a

redheaded Muggle boy from the local village, Ottery

St. Catchpole, from whom Fred had stolen hairs using

a Summoning Charm. The plan was to introduce

Harry as “Cousin Barny” and trust to the great

number of Weasley relatives to camouflage him.

All four of them were clutching seating plans, so that

they could help show people to the right seats. A host

of white-robed waiters had arrived an hour earlier,

along with a golden-jacketed band, and all of these

wizards were currently sitting a short distance away

under a tree; Harry could see a blue haze of pipe

smoke issuing from the spot.

Behind Harry, the entrance to the marquee revealed

rows and rows of fragile golden chairs set on either

side of a long purple carpet. The supporting poles

Page | 153 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

were entwined with white and gold flowers. Fred and

George had fastened an enormous bunch of golden

balloons over the exact point where Bill and Fleur

would shortly become husband and wife. Outside,

butterflies and bees were hovering lazily over the

grass and hedgerow. Harry was rather uncomfortable.

The Muggle boy whose appearance he was affecting

was slightly fatter than him, and his dress robes felt

hot and tight in the full glare of a summer’s day.

“When I get married,” said Fred, tugging at the collar

of his own robes, “I won’t be bothering with any of

this nonsense. You can all wear what you like, and I’ll

put a full Body-Bind Curse on Mum until it’s all

over.”

“She wasn’t too bad this morning, considering,” said

George. “Cried a bit about Percy not being here, but

who wants him? Oh blimey, brace yourselves — here

they come, look.”

Brightly colored figures were appearing, one by one,

out of nowhere at the distant boundary of the yard.

Within minutes a procession had formed, which

began to snake its way up through the garden toward

the marquee. Exotic flowers and bewitched birds

fluttered on the witches’ hats, while precious gems

glittered from many of the wizards’ cravats; a hum of

excited chatter grew louder and louder, drowning the

sound of the bees as the crowd approached the tent.

“Excellent, I think I see a few veela cousins,” said

George, craning his neck for a better look. “They’ll

need help understanding our English customs, I’ll

look after them. ...”

“Not so fast, Your Holeyness,” said Fred, and darting

past the gaggle of middle-aged witches heading the

procession, he said, “Here — permettez-moi to assister

Page | 154 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

vous,” to a pair of pretty French girls, who giggled and

allowed him to escort them inside. George was left to

deal with the middle-aged witches and Ron took

charge of Mr. Weasley’s old Ministry colleague

Perkins, while a rather deaf old couple fell to Harry’s

lot.

“Wotcher,” said a familiar voice as he came out of the

marquee again and found Tonks and Lupin at the

front of the queue. She had turned blonde for the

occasion. “Arthur told us you were the one with the

curly hair. Sorry about last night,” she added in a

whisper as Harry led them up the aisle. “The

Ministry’s being very anti-werewolf at the moment

and we thought our presence might not do you any

favors.”

“It’s fine, I understand,” said Harry, speaking more to

Lupin than Tonks. Lupin gave him a swift smile, but

as they turned away, Harry saw Lupin’s face fall again

into lines of misery. He did not understand it, but

there was no time to dwell on the matter: Hagrid was

causing a certain amount of disruption. Having

misunderstood Fred’s directions he had sat himself,

not upon the magically enlarged and reinforced seat

set aside for him in the back row, but on five seats

that now resembled a large pile of golden

matchsticks.

While Mr. Weasley repaired the damage and Hagrid

shouted apologies to anybody who would listen, Harry

hurried back to the entrance to find Ron face-to-face

with a most eccentric-looking wizard. Slightly cross-

eyed, with shoulder-length white hair the texture of

candyfloss, he wore a cap whose tassel dangled in

front of his nose and robes of an eye-watering shade

of egg-yolk yellow. An odd symbol, rather like a

triangular eye, glistened from a golden chain around

his neck.

Page | 155 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Xenophilius Lovegood,” he said, extending a hand to

Harry, “my daughter and I live just over the hill, so

kind of the good Weasleys to invite us. But I think

you know my Luna?” he added to Ron.

“Yes,” said Ron. “Isn’t she with you?”

“She lingered in that charming little garden to say

hello to the gnomes, such a glorious infestation! How

few wizards realize just how much we can learn from

the wise little gnomes — or, to give them their correct

name, the Gernumbli gardensi.”

“Ours do know a lot of excellent swear words,” said

Ron, “but I think Fred and George taught them

those.”

He led a party of warlocks into the marquee as Luna

rushed up.

“Hello, Harry!” she said.

“Er — my name’s Barny,” said Harry, flummoxed.

“Oh, have you changed that too?” she asked brightly.

“How did you know — ?”

“Oh, just your expression,” she said.

Like her father, Luna was wearing bright yellow

robes, which she had accessorized with a large

sunflower in her hair. Once you got over the

brightness of it all, the general effect was quite

pleasant. At least there were no radishes dangling

from her ears.

Xenophilius, who was deep in conversation with an

acquaintance, had missed the exchange between

Page | 156 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Luna and Harry. Bidding the wizard farewell, he

turned to his daughter, who held up her finger and

said, “Daddy, look — one of the gnomes actually bit

me!”

“How wonderful! Gnome saliva is enormously

beneficial!” said Mr. Lovegood, seizing Luna’s

outstretched finger and examining the bleeding

puncture marks. “Luna, my love, if you should feel

any burgeoning talent today — perhaps an

unexpected urge to sing opera or to declaim in

Mermish — do not repress it! You may have been

gifted by the Gernumblies!”

Ron, passing them in the opposite direction, let out a

loud snort.

“Ron can laugh,” said Luna serenely as Harry led her

and Xenophilius toward their seats, “but my father

has done a lot of research on Gernumbli magic.”

“Really?” said Harry, who had long since decided not

to challenge Luna or her father’s peculiar views. “Are

you sure you don’t want to put anything on that bite,

though?”

“Oh, it’s fine,” said Luna, sucking her finger in a

dreamy fashion and looking Harry up and down. “You

look smart. I told Daddy most people would probably

wear dress robes, but he believes you ought to wear

sun colors to a wedding, for luck, you know.”

As she drifted off after her father, Ron reappeared

with an elderly witch clutching his arm. Her beaky

nose, red-rimmed eyes, and feathery pink hat gave

her the look of a bad-tempered flamingo.

"... and your hair’s much too long, Ronald, for a

moment I thought you were Ginevra. Merlin’s beard,

Page | 157 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

what is Xenophilius Lovegood wearing? He looks like

an omelet. And who are you?” she barked at Harry.

“Oh yeah, Auntie Muriel, this is our cousin Barny.”

“Another Weasley? You breed like gnomes. Isn’t Harry

Potter here? I was hoping to meet him. I thought he

was a friend of yours, Ronald, or have you merely

been boasting?”

“No — he couldn’t come — ”

“Hmm. Made an excuse, did he? Not as gormless as

he looks in press photographs, then. I’ve just been

instructing the bride on how best to wear my tiara,”

she shouted at Harry. “Goblin-made, you know, and

been in my family for centuries. She’s a good-looking

girl, but still — French. Well, well, find me a good

seat, Ronald, I am a hundred and seven and I ought

not to be on my feet too long.”

Ron gave Harry a meaningful look as he passed and

did not reappear for some time: When next they met

at the entrance, Harry had shown a dozen more

people to their places. The marquee was nearly full

now, and for the first time there was no queue

outside.

“Nightmare, Muriel is,” said Ron, mopping his

forehead on his sleeve. “She used to come for

Christmas every year, then, thank God, she took

offense because Fred and George set off a Dung-bomb

under her chair at dinner. Dad always says she’ll

have written them out of her will — like they care,

they’re going to end up richer than anyone in the

family, rate they’re going. ... Wow,” he added, blinking

rather rapidly as Hermione came hurrying toward

them. “You look great!”

Page | 158 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Always the tone of surprise,” said Hermione, though

she smiled. She was wearing a floaty, lilac-colored

dress with matching high heels; her hair was sleek

and shiny. “Your Great-Aunt Muriel doesn’t agree, I

just met her upstairs while she was giving Fleur the

tiara. She said, ‘Oh dear, is this the Muggle-born?’

and then, ‘Bad posture and skinny ankles.’ ”

“Don’t take it personally, she’s rude to everyone,” said

Ron.

“Talking about Muriel?” inquired George, reemerging

from the marquee with Fred. “Yeah, she’s just told me

my ears are lopsided. Old bat. I wish old Uncle Bilius

was still with us, though; he was a right laugh at

weddings.”

“Wasn’t he the one who saw a Grim and died twenty-

four hours later?” asked Hermione.

“Well, yeah, he went a bit odd toward the end,”

conceded George.

“But before he went loopy he was the life and soul of

the party,” said Fred. “He used to down an entire

bottle of firewhisky, then run onto the dance floor,

hoist up his robes, and start pulling bunches of

flowers out of his — ”

“Yes, he sounds a real charmer,” said Hermione,

while Harry roared with laughter.

“Never married, for some reason,” said Ron.

“You amaze me,” said Hermione.

They were all laughing so much that none of them

noticed the latecomer, a dark-haired young man with

a large, curved nose and thick black eyebrows, until

Page | 159 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

he held out his invitation to Ron and said, with his

eyes on Hermione, “You look vunderful.”

“Viktor!” she shrieked, and dropped her small beaded

bag, which made a loud thump quite disproportionate

to its size. As she scrambled, blushing, to pick it up,

she said, “I didn’t know you were — goodness — it’s

lovely to see — how are you?”

Ron’s ears had turned bright red again. After glancing

at Krum’s invitation as if he did not believe a word of

it, he said, much too loudly, “How come you’re here?”

“Fleur invited me,” said Krum, eyebrows raised.

Harry, who had no grudge against Krum, shook

hands; then, feeling that it would be prudent to

remove Krum from Ron’s vicinity, offered to show him

his seat.

“Your friend is not pleased to see me,” said Krum as

they entered the now packed marquee. “Or is he a

relative?” he added with a glance at Harry’s red curly

hair.

“Cousin,” Harry muttered, but Krum was not really

listening. His appearance was causing a stir,

particularly amongst the veela cousins: He was, after

all, a famous Quidditch player. While people were still

craning their necks to get a good look at him, Ron,

Hermione, Fred, and George came hurrying down the

aisle.

“Time to sit down,” Fred told Harry, “or we’re going to

get run over by the bride.”

Harry, Ron, and Hermione took their seats in the

second row behind Fred and George. Hermione looked

rather pink and Ron’s ears were still scarlet. After a

Page | 160 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

few moments he muttered to Harry, “Did you see he’s

grown a stupid little beard?”

Harry gave a noncommittal grunt.

A sense of jittery anticipation had filled the warm

tent, the general murmuring broken by occasional

spurts of excited laughter. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley

strolled up the aisle, smiling and waving at relatives;

Mrs. Weasley was wearing a brand-new set of

amethyst-colored robes with a matching hat.

A moment later Bill and Charlie stood up at the front

of the marquee, both wearing dress robes, with large

white roses in their buttonholes; Fred wolf-whistled

and there was an outbreak of giggling from the veela

cousins. Then the crowd fell silent as music swelled

from what seemed to be the golden balloons.

“Ooooh!” said Hermione, swiveling around in her seat

to look at the entrance.

A great collective sigh issued from the assembled

witches and wizards as Monsieur Delacour and Fleur

came walking up the aisle, Fleur gliding, Monsieur

Delacour bouncing and beaming. Fleur was wearing a

very simple white dress and seemed to be emitting a

strong, silvery glow. While her radiance usually

dimmed everyone else by comparison, today it

beautified everybody it fell upon. Ginny and Gabrielle,

both wearing golden dresses, looked even prettier

than usual, and once Fleur had reached him, Bill did

not look as though he had ever met Fenrir Greyback.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” said a slightly singsong

voice, and with a slight shock, Harry saw the same

small, tufty-haired wizard who had presided at

Dumbledore’s funeral, now standing in front of Bill

Page | 161 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

and Fleur. “We are gathered here today to celebrate

the union of two faithful souls ...”

“Yes, my tiara sets off the whole thing nicely,” said

Auntie Muriel in a rather carrying whisper. “But I

must say, Ginevra’s dress is far too low cut.”

Ginny glanced around, grinning, winked at Harry,

then quickly faced the front again. Harry’s mind

wandered a long way from the marquee, back to

afternoons spent alone with Ginny in lonely parts of

the school grounds. They seemed so long ago; they

had always seemed too good to be true, as though he

had been stealing shining hours from a normal

person’s life, a person without a lightning-shaped

scar on his forehead. ...

“Do you, William Arthur, take Fleur Isabelle ... ?”

In the front row, Mrs. Weasley and Madame Delacour

were both sobbing quietly into scraps of lace.

Trumpetlike sounds from the back of the marquee

told everyone that Hagrid had taken out one of his

own tablecloth-sized handkerchiefs. Hermione turned

and beamed at Harry; her eyes too were full of tears.

"... then I declare you bonded for life.”

The tufty-haired wizard waved his wand high over the

heads of Bill and Fleur and a shower of silver stars

fell upon them, spiraling around their now entwined

figures. As Fred and George led a round of applause,

the golden balloons overhead burst: Birds of paradise

and tiny golden bells flew and floated out of them,

adding their songs and chimes to the din.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” called the tufty-haired

wizard. “If you would please stand up!”

Page | 162 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

They all did so, Auntie Muriel grumbling audibly; he

waved his wand again. The seats on which they had

been sitting rose gracefully into the air as the canvas

walls of the marquee vanished, so that they stood

beneath a canopy supported by golden poles, with a

glorious view of the sunlit orchard and surrounding

countryside. Next, a pool of molten gold spread from

the center of the tent to form a gleaming dance floor;

the hovering chairs grouped themselves around

small, white-clothed tables, which all floated

gracefully back to earth around it, and the golden-

jacketed band trooped toward a podium.

“Smooth,” said Ron approvingly as the waiters popped

up on all sides, some bearing silver trays of pumpkin

juice, butterbeer, and firewhisky, others tottering

piles of tarts and sandwiches.

“We should go and congratulate them!” said

Hermione, standing on tiptoe to see the place where

Bill and Fleur had vanished amid a crowd of well-

wishers.

“Well have time later,” shrugged Ron, snatching three

butter-beers from a passing tray and handing one to

Harry. “Hermione, cop hold, let’s grab a table. ... Not

there! Nowhere near Muriel — ”

Ron led the way across the empty dance floor,

glancing left and right as he went: Harry felt sure that

he was keeping an eye out for Krum. By the time they

had reached the other side of the marquee, most of

the tables were occupied: The emptiest was the one

where Luna sat alone.

“All right if we join you?” asked Ron.

“Oh yes,” she said happily. “Daddy’s just gone to give

Bill and Fleur our present.”

Page | 163 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“What is it, a lifetime’s supply of Gurdyroots?” asked

Ron.

Hermione aimed a kick at him under the table, but

caught Harry instead. Eyes watering in pain, Harry

lost track of the conversation for a few moments.

The band had begun to play. Bill and Fleur took to

the dance floor first, to great applause; after a while,

Mr. Weasley led Madame Delacour onto the floor,

followed by Mrs. Weasley and Fleur’s father.

“I like this song,” said Luna, swaying in time to the

waltzlike tune, and a few seconds later she stood up

and glided onto the dance floor, where she revolved

on the spot, quite alone, eyes closed and waving her

arms.

“She’s great, isn’t she?” said Ron admiringly. “Always

good value.”

But the smile vanished from his face at once: Viktor

Krum had dropped into Luna’s vacant seat. Hermione

looked pleasurably flustered, but this time Krum had

not come to compliment her. With a scowl on his face

he said, “Who is that man in the yellow?”

“That’s Xenophilius Lovegood, he’s the father of a

friend of ours,” said Ron. His pugnacious tone

indicated that they were not about to laugh at

Xenophilius, despite the clear provocation. “Come and

dance,” he added abruptly to Hermione.

She looked taken aback, but pleased too, and got up.

They vanished together into the growing throng on

the dance floor.

“Ah, they are together now?” asked Krum,

momentarily distracted.

Page | 164 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Er — sort of,” said Harry.

“Who are you?” Krum asked.

“Barny Weasley.”

They shook hands.

“You, Barny — you know this man Lovegood veil?”

“No, I only met him today. Why?”

Krum glowered over the top of his drink, watching

Xenophilius, who was chatting to several warlocks on

the other side of the dance floor.

“Because,” said Krum, “if he vos not a guest of

Fleur’s, I vould duel him, here and now, for vearing

that filthy sign upon his chest.”

“Sign?” said Harry, looking over at Xenophilius too.

The strange triangular eye was gleaming on his chest.

“Why? What’s wrong with it?”

“Grindelvald. That is Grindelvald’s sign.”

“Grindelwald . . . the Dark wizard Dumbledore

defeated?”

“Exactly.”

Krum’s jaw muscles worked as if he were chewing,

then he said, “Grindelvald killed many people, my

grandfather, for instance. Of course, he vos never

poverful in this country, they said he feared

Dumbledore — and rightly, seeing how he vos

finished. But this” — he pointed a finger at

Xenophilius — “this is his symbol, I recognized it at

vunce: Grindelvald carved it into a vail at Durmstrang

Page | 165 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

ven he vos a pupil there. Some idiots copied it onto

their books and clothes, thinking to shock, make

themselves impressive — until those of us who had

lost family members to Grindelvald taught them

better.”

Krum cracked his knuckles menacingly and glowered

at Xenophilius. Harry felt perplexed. It seemed

incredibly unlikely that Luna’s father was a supporter

of the Dark Arts, and nobody else in the tent seemed

to have recognized the triangular, runelike shape.

“Are you — er — quite sure it’s Grindelwald’s — ?”

“I am not mistaken,” said Krum coldly. “I valked past

that sign for several years, I know it veil.”

“Well, there’s a chance,” said Harry, “that Xenophilius

doesn’t actually know what the symbol means. The

Lovegoods are quite ... unusual. He could easily have

picked it up somewhere and think it’s a cross section

of the head of a Crumple-Horned Snorkack or

something.”

“The cross section of a vot?”

“Well, I don’t know what they are, but apparently he

and his daughter go on holiday looking for them. ...”

Harry felt he was doing a bad job explaining Luna and

her father.

“That’s her,” he said, pointing at Luna, who was still

dancing alone, waving her arms around her head like

someone attempting to beat off midges.

“Vy is she doing that?” asked Krum.

Page | 166 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Probably trying to get rid of a Wrackspurt,” said

Harry, who recognized the symptoms.

Krum did not seem to know whether or not Harry was

making fun of him. He drew his wand from inside his

robes and tapped it menacingly on his thigh; sparks

flew out of the end.

“Gregorovitch!” said Harry loudly, and Krum started,

but Harry was too excited to care; the memory had

come back to him at the sight of Krum’s wand:

Ollivander taking it and examining it carefully before

the Triwizard Tournament.

“Vot about him?” asked Krum suspiciously.

“He’s a wandmaker!”

“I know that,” said Krum.

“He made your wand! That’s why I thought —

Quidditch — ”

Krum was looking more and more suspicious.

“How do you know Gregorovitch made my vand?”

“I ... I read it somewhere, I think,” said Harry. “In a —

a fan magazine,” he improvised wildly and Krum

looked mollified.

“I had not realized I ever discussed my vand with

fans,” he said.

“So ... er ... where is Gregorovitch these days?”

Krum looked puzzled.

Page | 167 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“He retired several years ago. I vos one of the last to

purchase a Gregorovitch vand. They are the best —

although I know, of course, that you Britons set much

store by Ollivander.”

Harry did not answer. He pretended to watch the

dancers, like Krum, but he was thinking hard. So

Voldemort was looking for a celebrated wandmaker,

and Harry did not have to search far for a reason: It

was surely because of what Harry’s wand had done

on the night that Voldemort had pursued him across

the skies. The holly and phoenix feather wand had

conquered the borrowed wand, something that

Ollivander had not anticipated or understood. Would

Gregorovitch know better? Was he truly more skilled

than Ollivander, did he know secrets of wands that

Ollivander did not?

“This girl is very nice-looking,” Krum said, recalling

Harry to his surroundings. Krum was pointing at

Ginny, who had just joined Luna. “She is also a

relative of yours?”

“Yeah,” said Harry, suddenly irritated, “and she’s

seeing someone. Jealous type. Big bloke. You

wouldn’t want to cross him.”

Krum grunted.

“Vot,” he said, draining his goblet and getting to his

feet again, “is the point of being an international

Quidditch player if all the good-looking girls are

taken?”

And he strode off, leaving Harry to take a sandwich

from a passing waiter and make his way around the

edge of the crowded dance floor. He wanted to find

Ron, to tell him about Gregorovitch, but Ron was

dancing with Hermione out in the middle of the floor.

Page | 168 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry leaned up against one of the golden pillars and

watched Ginny, who was now dancing with Fred and

George’s friend Lee Jordan, trying not to feel resentful

about the promise he had given Ron.

He had never been to a wedding before, so he could

not judge how Wizarding celebrations differed from

Muggle ones, though he was pretty sure that the

latter would not involve a wedding cake topped with

two model phoenixes that took flight when the cake

was cut, or bottles of champagne that floated

unsupported through the crowd. As evening drew in,

and moths began to swoop under the canopy, now lit

with floating golden lanterns, the revelry became

more and more uncontained. Fred and George had

long since disappeared into the darkness with a pair

of Fleur’s cousins; Charlie, Hagrid, and a squat

wizard in a purple porkpie hat were singing “Odo the

Hero” in a corner.

Wandering through the crowd so as to escape a

drunken uncle of Ron’s who seemed unsure whether

or not Harry was his son, Harry spotted an old wizard

sitting alone at a table. His cloud of white hair made

him look rather like an aged dandelion clock and was

topped by a moth-eaten fez. He was vaguely familiar:

Racking his brains, Harry suddenly realized that this

was Elphias Doge, member of the Order of the

Phoenix and the writer of Dumbledore’s obituary.

Harry approached him.

“May I sit down?”

“Of course, of course,” said Doge; he had a rather

high-pitched, wheezy voice.

Harry leaned in.

Page | 169 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Mr. Doge, I’m Harry Potter.”

Doge gasped.

“My dear boy! Arthur told me you were here,

disguised. ... I am so glad, so honored!”

In a flutter of nervous pleasure Doge poured Harry a

goblet of champagne.

“I thought of writing to you,” he whispered, “after

Dumbledore ... the shock ... and for you, I am sure

Doge’s tiny eyes filled with sudden tears.

“I saw the obituary you wrote for the Daily Prophet,”

said Harry. “I didn’t realize you knew Professor

Dumbledore so well.”

“As well as anyone,” said Doge, dabbing his eyes with

a napkin. “Certainly I knew him longest, if you don’t

count Aberforth — and somehow, people never do

seem to count Aberforth.”

“Speaking of the Daily Prophet ... I don’t know

whether you saw, Mr. Doge — ?”

“Oh, please call me Elphias, dear boy.”

“Elphias, I don’t know whether you saw the interview

Rita Skeeter gave about Dumbledore?”

Doge’s face flooded with angry color.

“Oh yes, Harry, I saw it. That woman, or vulture

might be a more accurate term, positively pestered me

to talk to her. I am ashamed to say that I became

rather rude, called her an interfering trout, which

Page | 170 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

resulted, as you may have seen, in aspersions cast

upon my sanity.”

“Well, in that interview,” Harry went on, “Rita Skeeter

hinted that Professor Dumbledore was involved in the

Dark Arts when he was young.”

“Don’t believe a word of it!” said Doge at once. “Not a

word, Harry! Let nothing tarnish your memories of

Albus Dumbledore!”

Harry looked into Doge’s earnest, pained face and felt,

not reassured, but frustrated. Did Doge really think it

was that easy, that Harry could simply choose not to

believe? Didn’t Doge understand Harry’s need to be

sure, to know everything?

Perhaps Doge suspected Harry’s feelings, for he

looked concerned and hurried on, “Harry, Rita

Skeeter is a dreadful — ”

But he was interrupted by a shrill cackle.

“Rita Skeeter? Oh, I love her, always read her!”

Harry and Doge looked up to see Auntie Muriel

standing there, the plumes dancing on her hat, a

goblet of champagne in her hand. “She’s written a

book about Dumbledore, you know!”

“Hello, Muriel,” said Doge. “Yes, we were just

discussing — ”

“You there! Give me your chair, I’m a hundred and

seven!”

Another redheaded Weasley cousin jumped off his

seat, looking alarmed, and Auntie Muriel swung it

Page | 171 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

around with surprising strength and plopped herself

down upon it between Doge and Harry.

“Hello again, Barry, or whatever your name is,” she

said to Harry. “Now, what were you saying about Rita

Skeeter, Elphias? You know she’s written a biography

of Dumbledore? I can’t wait to read it, I must

remember to place an order at Flourish and Blotts!”

Doge looked stiff and solemn at this, but Auntie

Muriel drained her goblet and clicked her bony fingers

at a passing waiter for a replacement. She took

another large gulp of champagne, belched, and then

said, “There’s no need to look like a pair of stuffed

frogs! Before he became so respected and respectable

and all that tosh, there were some mighty funny

rumors about Albus!”

“Ill-informed sniping,” said Doge, turning radish-

colored again.

“You would say that, Elphias,” cackled Auntie Muriel.

“I noticed how you skated over the sticky patches in

that obituary of yours!”

“I’m sorry you think so,” said Doge, more coldly still.

“I assure you I was writing from the heart.”

“Oh, we all know you worshipped Dumbledore; I

daresay you’ll still think he was a saint even if it does

turn out that he did away with his Squib sister!”

“Muriell” exclaimed Doge.

A chill that had nothing to do with the iced

champagne was stealing through Harry’s chest.

“What do you mean?” he asked Muriel. “Who said his

sister was a Squib? I thought she was ill?”

Page | 172 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Thought wrong, then, didn’t you, Barry!” said Auntie

Muriel, looking delighted at the effect she had

produced. “Anyway, how could you expect to know

anything about it? It all happened years and years

before you were even thought of, my dear, and the

truth is that those of us who were alive then never

knew what really happened. That’s why I can’t wait to

find out what Skeeter’s unearthed! Dumbledore kept

that sister of his quiet for a long time!”

“Untrue!” wheezed Doge. “Absolutely untrue!”

“He never told me his sister was a Squib,” said Harry,

without thinking, still cold inside.

“And why on earth would he tell you?” screeched

Muriel, swaying a little in her seat as she attempted

to focus upon Harry.

“The reason Albus never spoke about Ariana,” began

Elphias in a voice stiff with emotion, “is, I should have

thought, quite clear. He was so devastated by her

death — ”

“Why did nobody ever see her, Elphias?” squawked

Muriel. “Why did half of us never even know she

existed, until they carried the coffin out of the house

and held a funeral for her? Where was saintly Albus

while Ariana was locked in the cellar? Off being

brilliant at Hogwarts, and never mind what was going

on in his own house!”

“What d’you mean, locked in the cellar?” asked Harry.

“What is this?”

Doge looked wretched. Auntie Muriel cackled again

and answered Harry.

Page | 173 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Dumbledore’s mother was a terrifying woman, simply

terrifying. Muggle-born, though I heard she pretended

otherwise — ”

“She never pretended anything of the sort! Kendra

was a fine woman,” whispered Doge miserably, but

Auntie Muriel ignored him.

“ — proud and very domineering, the sort of witch who

would have been mortified to produce a Squib — ”

“Ariana was not a Squib!” wheezed Doge.

“So you say, Elphias, but explain, then, why she

never attended Hogwarts!” said Auntie Muriel. She

turned back to Harry. “In our day, Squibs were often

hushed up, though to take it to the extreme of

actually imprisoning a little girl in the house and

pretending she didn’t exist — ”

“I tell you, that’s not what happened!” said Doge, but

Auntie Muriel steamrollered on, still addressing

Harry.

“Squibs were usually shipped off to Muggle schools

and encouraged to integrate into the Muggle

community . . . much kinder than trying to find them a

place in the Wizarding world, where they must always

be second class; but naturally Kendra Dumbledore

wouldn’t have dreamed of letting her daughter go to a

Muggle school — ”

“Ariana was delicate!” said Doge desperately. “Her

health was always too poor to permit her — ”

“ — to permit her to leave the house?” cackled Muriel.

“And yet she was never taken to St. Mungo’s and no

Healer was ever summoned to see her!”

Page | 174 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Really, Muriel, how you can possibly know whether

“For your information, Elphias, my cousin Lancelot

was a Healer at St. Mungo’s at the time, and he told

my family in strictest confidence that Ariana had

never been seen there. All most suspicious, Lancelot

thought!”

Doge looked to be on the verge of tears. Auntie Muriel,

who seemed to be enjoying herself hugely, snapped

her fingers for more champagne. Numbly Harry

thought of how the Dursleys had once shut him up,

locked him away, kept him out of sight, all for the

crime of being a wizard. Had Dumbledore’s sister

suffered the same fate in reverse: imprisoned for her

lack of magic? And had Dumbledore truly left her to

her fate while he went off to Hogwarts, to prove

himself brilliant and talented?

“Now, if Kendra hadn’t died first,” Muriel resumed,

“I’d have said that it was she who finished off Ariana

“How can you, Muriel?” groaned Doge. “A mother kill

her own daughter? Think what you are saying!”

“If the mother in question was capable of imprisoning

her daughter for years on end, why not?” shrugged

Auntie Muriel. “But as I say, it doesn’t fit, because

Kendra died before Ariana — of what, nobody ever

seemed sure — ”

“Oh, no doubt Ariana murdered her,” said Doge with

a brave attempt at scorn. “Why not?”

“Yes, Ariana might have made a desperate bid for

freedom and killed Kendra in the struggle,” said

Auntie Muriel thoughtfully. “Shake your head all you

Page | 175 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

like, Elphias! You were at Ariana’s funeral, were you

not?”

“Yes I was,” said Doge, through trembling lips. “And a

more desperately sad occasion I cannot remember.

Albus was heartbroken — ”

“His heart wasn’t the only thing. Didn’t Aberforth

break Albus ’s nose halfway through the service?”

If Doge had looked horrified before this, it was

nothing to how he looked now. Muriel might have

stabbed him. She cackled loudly and took another

swig of champagne, which dribbled down her chin.

“How do you — ?” croaked Doge.

“My mother was friendly with old Bathilda Bagshot,”

said Auntie Muriel happily. “Bathilda described the

whole thing to Mother while I was listening at the

door. A coffin-side brawl! The way Bathilda told it,

Aberforth shouted that it was all Albus ’s fault that

Ariana was dead and then punched him in the face.

According to Bathilda, Albus did not even defend

himself, and that’s odd enough in itself, Albus could

have destroyed Aberforth in a duel with both hands

tied behind his back.”

Muriel swigged yet more champagne. The recitation of

these old scandals seemed to elate her as much as

they horrified Doge. Harry did not know what to

think, what to believe: He wanted the truth, and yet

all Doge did was sit there and bleat feebly that Ariana

had been ill. Harry could hardly believe that

Dumbledore would not have intervened if such

cruelty was happening inside his own house, and yet

there was undoubtedly something odd about the

story.

Page | 176 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“And I’ll tell you something else,” Muriel said,

hiccuping slightly as she lowered her goblet. “I think

Bathilda has spilled the beans to Rita Skeeter. All

those hints in Skeeter’s interview about an important

source close to the Dumbledores — goodness knows

she was there all through the Ariana business, and it

would fit!”

“Bathilda would never talk to Rita Skeeter!” whispered

Doge.

“Bathilda Bagshot?” Harry said. “The author of A

History of Magic?”

The name was printed on the front of one of Harry’s

textbooks, though admittedly not one of the ones he

had read most attentively.

“Yes,” said Doge, clutching at Harry’s question like a

drowning man at a life belt. “A most gifted magical

historian and an old friend of Albus’s.”

“Quite gaga these days, I’ve heard,” said Auntie

Muriel cheerfully.

“If that is so, it is even more dishonorable for Skeeter

to have taken advantage of her,” said Doge, “and no

reliance can be placed on anything Bathilda may have

said!”

“Oh, there are ways of bringing back memories, and

I’m sure Rita Skeeter knows them all,” said Auntie

Muriel. “But even if Bathilda’s completely cuckoo, I’m

sure she’d still have old photographs, maybe even

letters. She knew the Dumbledores for years. ... Well

worth a trip to Godric’s Hollow, I’d have thought.”

Harry, who had been taking a sip of butterbeer,

choked. Doge banged him on the back as Harry

Page | 177 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

coughed, looking at Auntie Muriel through streaming

eyes. Once he had control of his voice again, he

asked, “Bathilda Bagshot lives in Godric’s Hollow?”

“Oh yes, she’s been there forever! The Dumbledores

moved there after Percival was imprisoned, and she

was their neighbor.”

“The Dumbledores lived in Godric’s Hollow?”

“Yes, Barry, that’s what I just said,” said Auntie

Muriel testily.

Harry felt drained, empty. Never once, in six years,

had Dumbledore told Harry that they had both lived

and lost loved ones in Godric’s Hollow. Why? Were

Lily and James buried close to Dumbledore ’s mother

and sister? Had Dumbledore visited their graves,

perhaps walked past Lily’s and James’s to do so? And

he had never once told Harry . . . never bothered to say

And why it was so important, Harry could not explain

even to himself, yet he felt it had been tantamount to

a lie not to tell him that they had this place and these

experiences in common. He stared ahead of him,

barely noticing what was going on around him, and

did not realize that Hermione had appeared out of the

crowd until she drew up a chair beside him.

“I simply can’t dance anymore,” she panted, slipping

off one of her shoes and rubbing the sole of her foot.

“Ron’s gone looking to find more butterbeers. It’s a bit

odd, I’ve just seen Viktor storming away from Luna’s

father, it looked like they’d been arguing — ” She

dropped her voice, staring at him. “Harry, are you

okay?”

Page | 178 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry did not know where to begin, but it did not

matter. At that moment, something large and silver

came falling through the canopy over the dance floor.

Graceful and gleaming, the lynx landed lightly in the

middle of the astonished dancers. Heads turned, as

those nearest it froze absurdly in mid-dance. Then

the Patronus’s mouth opened wide and it spoke in the

loud, deep, slow voice of Kingsley Shacklebolt.

“The Ministry has fallen. Scrimgeour is dead. They are

coming.”

Page | 179 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

9

A PLACE TO HIDE

Everything seemed fuzzy, slow. Harry and Hermione

jumped to their feet and drew their wands. Many

people were only just realizing that something strange

had happened; heads were still turning toward the

silver cat as it vanished. Silence spread outward in

cold ripples from the place where the Patronus had

landed. Then somebody screamed.

Harry and Hermione threw themselves into the

panicking crowd. Guests were sprinting in all

directions; many were Disapparating; the protective

enchantments around the Burrow had broken.

“Ron!” Hermione cried. “Ron, where are you?”

As they pushed their way across the dance floor,

Harry saw cloaked and masked figures appearing in

the crowd; then he saw Lupin and Tonks, their wands

raised, and heard both of them shout, “Protego\”, a

cry that was echoed on all sides —

Page | 180 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Ron! Ron!” Hermione called, half sobbing as she and

Harry were buffeted by terrified guests: Harry seized

her hand to make sure they weren’t separated as a

streak of light whizzed over their heads, whether a

protective charm or something more sinister he did

not know —

And then Ron was there. He caught hold of

Hermione ’s free arm, and Harry felt her turn on the

spot; sight and sound were extinguished as darkness

pressed in upon him; all he could feel was Hermione’s

hand as he was squeezed through space and time,

away from the Burrow, away from the descending

Death Eaters, away, perhaps, from Voldemort

himself. ...

“Where are we?” said Ron’s voice.

Harry opened his eyes. For a moment he thought they

had not left the wedding after all: They still seemed to

be surrounded by people.

“Tottenham Court Road,” panted Hermione. “Walk,

just walk, we need to find somewhere for you to

change.”

Harry did as she asked. They half walked, half ran up

the wide dark street thronged with late-night revelers

and lined with closed shops, stars twinkling above

them. A double-decker bus rumbled by and a group

of merry pub-goers ogled them as they passed; Harry

and Ron were still wearing dress robes.

“Hermione, we haven’t got anything to change into,”

Ron told her, as a young woman burst into raucous

giggles at the sight of him.

Page | 181 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Why didn’t I make sure I had the Invisibility Cloak

with me?” said Harry, inwardly cursing his own

stupidity. “All last year I kept it on me and — ”

“It’s okay, I’ve got the Cloak, I’ve got clothes for both

of you,” said Hermione. “Just try and act naturally

until — this will do.”

She led them down a side street, then into the shelter

of a shadowy alleyway.

“When you say you’ve got the Cloak, and clothes ...”

said Harry, frowning at Hermione, who was carrying

nothing except her small beaded handbag, in which

she was now rummaging.

“Yes, they’re here,” said Hermione, and to Harry and

Ron’s utter astonishment, she pulled out a pair of

jeans, a sweatshirt, some maroon socks, and finally

the silvery Invisibility Cloak.

“How the ruddy hell — ?”

“Undetectable Extension Charm,” said Hermione.

“Tricky, but I think I’ve done it okay; anyway, I

managed to fit everything we need in here.” She gave

the fragile-looking bag a little shake and it echoed like

a cargo hold as a number of heavy objects rolled

around inside it. “Oh, damn, that’ll be the books,” she

said, peering into it, “and I had them all stacked by

subject. ... Oh well. ... Harry, you’d better take the

Invisibility Cloak. Ron, hurry up and change. ...”

“When did you do all this?” Harry asked as Ron

stripped off his robes.

“I told you at the Burrow, I’ve had the essentials

packed for days, you know, in case we needed to

make a quick getaway. I packed your rucksack this

Page | 182 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

morning, Harry, after you changed, and put it in here.

... I just had a feeling. ...”

“You’re amazing, you are,” said Ron, handing her his

bundled-up robes.

“Thank you,” said Hermione, managing a small smile

as she pushed the robes into the bag. “Please, Harry,

get that Cloak on!”

Harry threw the Invisibility Cloak around his

shoulders and pulled it up over his head, vanishing

from sight. He was only just beginning to appreciate

what had happened.

“The others — everyone at the wedding — ”

“We can’t worry about that now,” whispered

Hermione. “It’s you they’re after, Harry, and we’ll just

put everyone in even more danger by going back.”

“She’s right,” said Ron, who seemed to know that

Harry was about to argue, even if he could not see his

face. “Most of the Order was there, they’ll look after

everyone.”

Harry nodded, then remembered that they could not

see him, and said, “Yeah.” But he thought of Ginny,

and fear bubbled like acid in his stomach.

“Come on, I think we ought to keep moving,” said

Hermione.

They moved back up the side street and onto the

main road again, where a group of men on the

opposite side was singing and weaving across the

pavement.

Page | 183 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Just as a matter of interest, why Tottenham Court

Road?” Ron asked Hermione.

“I’ve no idea, it just popped into my head, but I’m

sure we’re safer out in the Muggle world, it’s not

where they’ll expect us to be.”

“True,” said Ron, looking around, “but don’t you feel a

bit — exposed?”

“Where else is there?” asked Hermione, cringing as

the men on the other side of the road started wolf-

whistling at her. “We can hardly book rooms at the

Leaky Cauldron, can we? And Grimmauld Place is out

if Snape can get in there. ... I suppose we could try

my parents’ house, though I think there’s a chance

they might check there. ... Oh, I wish they’d shut up!”

“All right, darling?” the drunkest of the men on the

other pavement was yelling. “Fancy a drink? Ditch

ginger and come and have a pint!”

“Let’s sit down somewhere,” Hermione said hastily as

Ron opened his mouth to shout back across the road.

“Look, this will do, in here!”

It was a small and shabby all-night cafe. A light layer

of grease lay on all the Formica- topped tables, but it

was at least empty. Harry slipped into a booth first

and Ron sat next to him opposite Hermione, who had

her back to the entrance and did not like it: She

glanced over her shoulder so frequently she appeared

to have a twitch. Harry did not like being stationary;

walking had given the illusion that they had a goal.

Beneath the Cloak he could feel the last vestiges of

Polyjuice leaving him, his hands returning to their

usual length and shape. He pulled his glasses out of

his pocket and put them on again.

Page | 184 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

After a minute or two, Ron said, “You know, we’re not

far from the Leaky Cauldron here, it’s only in Charing

Cross — ”

“Ron, we can’t!” said Hermione at once.

“Not to stay there, but to find out what’s going on!”

“We know what’s going on! Voldemort’s taken over the

Ministry, what else do we need to know?”

“Okay, okay, it was just an idea!”

They relapsed into a prickly silence. The gum-chewing

waitress shuffled over and Hermione ordered two

cappuccinos: As Harry was invisible, it would have

looked odd to order him one. A pair of burly workmen

entered the cafe and squeezed into the next booth.

Hermione dropped her voice to a whisper.

“I say we find a quiet place to Disapparate and head

for the countryside. Once we’re there, we could send a

message to the Order.”

“Can you do that talking Patronus thing, then?”

asked Ron.

“I’ve been practicing and I think so,” said Hermione.

“Well, as long as it doesn’t get them into trouble,

though they might’ve been arrested already. God,

that’s revolting,” Ron added after one sip of the

foamy, grayish coffee. The waitress had heard; she

shot Ron a nasty look as she shuffled off to take the

new customers’ orders. The larger of the two

workmen, who was blond and quite huge, now that

Harry came to look at him, waved her away. She

stared, affronted.

Page | 185 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Let’s get going, then, I don’t want to drink this

muck,” said Ron. “Hermione, have you got Muggle

money to pay for this?”

“Yes, I took out all my Building Society savings before

I came to the Burrow. I’ll bet all the change is at the

bottom,” sighed Hermione, reaching for her beaded

bag.

The two workmen made identical movements, and

Harry mirrored them without conscious thought: All

three of them drew their wands. Ron, a few seconds

late in realizing what was going on, lunged across the

table, pushing Hermione sideways onto her bench.

The force of the Death Eaters’ spells shattered the

tiled wall where Ron’s head had just been, as Harry,

still invisible, yelled, “Stupefyl”

The great blond Death Eater was hit in the face by a

jet of red light: He slumped sideways, unconscious.

His companion, unable to see who had cast the spell,

fired another at Ron: Shining black ropes flew from

his wand-tip and bound Ron head to foot — the

waitress screamed and ran for the door — Harry sent

another Stunning Spell at the Death Eater with the

twisted face who had tied up Ron, but the spell

missed, rebounded on the window, and hit the

waitress, who collapsed in front of the door.

“Expulsol” bellowed the Death Eater, and the table

behind which Harry was standing blew up: The force

of the explosion slammed him into the wall and he felt

his wand leave his hand as the Cloak slipped off him.

“Petrificus TotalusV’ screamed Hermione from out of

sight, and the Death Eater fell forward like a statue to

land with a crunching thud on the mess of broken

china, table, and coffee. Hermione crawled out from

Page | 186 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

underneath the bench, shaking bits of glass ashtray

out of her hair and trembling all over.

“D-diffindo,” she said, pointing her wand at Ron, who

roared in pain as she slashed open the knee of his

jeans, leaving a deep cut. “Oh, I’m so sorry, Ron, my

hand’s shaking! Diffindol”

The severed ropes fell away. Ron got to his feet,

shaking his arms to regain feeling in them. Harry

picked up his wand and climbed over all the debris to

where the large blond Death Eater was sprawled

across the bench.

“I should’ve recognized him, he was there the night

Dumbledore died,” he said. He turned over the darker

Death Eater with his foot; the man’s eyes moved

rapidly between Harry, Ron, and Hermione.

“That’s Dolohov,” said Ron. “I recognize him from the

old wanted posters. I think the big one’s Thorfinn

Rowle.”

“Never mind what they’re called!” said Hermione a

little hysterically. “How did they find us? What are we

going to do?”

Somehow her panic seemed to clear Harry’s head.

“Lock the door,” he told her, “and Ron, turn out the

lights.”

He looked down at the paralyzed Dolohov, thinking

fast as the lock clicked and Ron used the

Deluminator to plunge the cafe into darkness. Harry

could hear the men who had jeered at Hermione

earlier, yelling at another girl in the distance.

Page | 187 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“What are we going to do with them?” Ron whispered

to Harry through the dark; then, even more quietly,

“Kill them? They’d kill us. They had a good go just

now.”

Hermione shuddered and took a step backward.

Harry shook his head.

“We just need to wipe their memories,” said Harry.

“It’s better like that, it’ll throw them off the scent. If

we killed them it’d be obvious we were here.”

“You’re the boss,” said Ron, sounding profoundly

relieved. “But I’ve never done a Memory Charm.”

“Nor have I,” said Hermione, “but I know the theory.”

She took a deep, calming breath, then pointed her

wand at Dolohov’s forehead and said, “Obliviate.”

At once, Dolohov’s eyes became unfocused and

dreamy.

“Brilliant!” said Harry, clapping her on the back.

“Take care of the other one and the waitress while

Ron and I clear up.”

“Clear up?” said Ron, looking around at the partly

destroyed cafe. “Why?”

“Don’t you think they might wonder what’s happened

if they wake up and find themselves in a place that

looks like it’s just been bombed?”

“Oh right, yeah ...”

Ron struggled for a moment before managing to

extract his wand from his pocket.

Page | 188 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“It’s no wonder I can’t get it out, Hermione, you

packed my old jeans, they’re tight.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” hissed Hermione, and as she

dragged the waitress out of sight of the windows,

Harry heard her mutter a suggestion as to where Ron

could stick his wand instead.

Once the cafe was restored to its previous condition,

they heaved the Death Eaters back into their booth

and propped them up facing each other.

“But how did they find us?” Hermione asked, looking

from one inert man to the other. “How did they know

where we were?”

She turned to Harry.

“You — you don’t think you’ve still got your Trace on

you, do you, Harry?”

“He can’t have,” said Ron. “The Trace breaks at

seventeen, that’s Wizarding law, you can’t put it on

an adult.”

“As far as you know,” said Hermione. “What if the

Death Eaters have found a way to put it on a

seventeen-year-old?”

“But Harry hasn’t been near a Death Eater in the last

twenty-four hours. Who’s supposed to have put a

Trace back on him?”

Hermione did not reply. Harry felt contaminated,

tainted: Was that really how the Death Eaters had

found them?

“If I can’t use magic, and you can’t use magic near

me, without us giving away our position — ” he began.

Page | 189 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We’re not splitting up!” said Hermione firmly.

“We need a safe place to hide,” said Ron. “Give us

time to think things through.”

“Grimmauld Place,” said Harry.

The other two gaped.

“Don’t be silly, Harry, Snape can get in there!”

“Ron’s dad said they’ve put up jinxes against him —

and even if they haven’t worked,” he pressed on as

Hermione began to argue, “so what? I swear, I’d like

nothing better than to meet Snape!”

“But — ”

“Hermione, where else is there? It’s the best chance

we’ve got. Snape’s only one Death Eater. If I’ve still

got the Trace on me, we’ll have whole crowds of them

on us wherever else we go.”

She could not argue, though she looked as if she

would have liked to. While she unlocked the cafe

door, Ron clicked the Deluminator to release the

cafe’s light. Then, on Harry’s count of three, they

reversed the spells upon their three victims, and

before the waitress or either of the Death Eaters could

do more than stir sleepily, Harry, Ron, and Hermione

had turned on the spot and vanished into the

compressing darkness once more.

Seconds later Harry’s lungs expanded gratefully and

he opened his eyes: They were now standing in the

middle of a familiar small and shabby square. Tall,

dilapidated houses looked down on them from every

side. Number twelve was visible to them, for they had

been told of its existence by Dumbledore, its Secret-

Page | 190 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Keeper, and they rushed toward it, checking every few

yards that they were not being followed or observed.

They raced up the stone steps, and Harry tapped the

front door once with his wand. They heard a series of

metallic clicks and the clatter of a chain, then the

door swung open with a creak and they hurried over

the threshold.

As Harry closed the door behind them, the old-

fashioned gas lamps sprang into life, casting

flickering light along the length of the hallway. It

looked just as Harry remembered it: eerie,

cobwebbed, the outlines of the house-elf heads on the

wall throwing odd shadows up the staircase. Long

dark curtains concealed the portrait of Sirius’s

mother. The only thing that was out of place was the

troll’s leg umbrella stand, which was lying on its side

as if Tonks had just knocked it over again.

“I think somebody’s been in here,” Hermione

whispered, pointing toward it.

“That could’ve happened as the Order left,” Ron

murmured back.

“So where are these jinxes they put up against

Snape?” Harry asked.

“Maybe they’re only activated if he shows up?”

suggested Ron.

Yet they remained close together on the doormat,

backs against the door, scared to move farther into

the house.

“Well, we can’t stay here forever,” said Harry, and he

took a step forward.

“Severus Snape?”

Page | 191 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Mad-Eye Moody’s voice whispered out of the

darkness, making all three of them jump back in

fright. “We’re not Snape!” croaked Harry, before

something whooshed over him like cold air and his

tongue curled backward on itself, making it

impossible to speak. Before he had time to feel inside

his mouth, however, his tongue had unraveled again.

The other two seemed to have experienced the same

unpleasant sensation. Ron was making retching

noises; Hermione stammered, “That m-must have b-

been the T-Tongue-Tying Curse Mad-Eye set up for

Snape!”

Gingerly Harry took another step forward. Something

shifted in the shadows at the end of the hall, and

before any of them could say another word, a figure

had risen up out of the carpet, tall, dust-colored, and

terrible: Hermione screamed and so did Mrs. Black,

her curtains flying open; the gray figure was gliding

toward them, faster and faster, its waist-length hair

and beard streaming behind it, its face sunken,

fleshless, with empty eye sockets: Horribly familiar,

dreadfully altered, it raised a wasted arm, pointing at

Harry.

“No!” Harry shouted, and though he had raised his

wand no spell occurred to him. “No! It wasn’t us! We

didn’t kill you — ”

On the word kill, the figure exploded in a great cloud

of dust: Coughing, his eyes watering, Harry looked

around to see Hermione crouched on the floor by the

door with her arms over her head, and Ron, who was

shaking from head to foot, patting her clumsily on the

shoulder and saying, “It’s all r-right. ... It’s g-gone. ...”

Dust swirled around Harry like mist, catching the

blue gaslight, as Mrs. Black continued to scream.

Page | 192 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Mudbloods, filth, stains of dishonor, taint of shame on

the house of my fathers — ”

“SHUT UP!” Harry bellowed, directing his wand at her,

and with a bang and a burst of red sparks, the

curtains swung shut again, silencing her.

“That ... that was ...” Hermione whimpered, as Ron

helped her to her feet.

“Yeah,” said Harry, “but it wasn’t really him, was it?

Just something to scare Snape.”

Had it worked, Harry wondered, or had Snape already

blasted the horror-figure aside as casually as he had

killed the real Dumbledore? Nerves still tingling, he

led the other two up the hall, half-expecting some new

terror to reveal itself, but nothing moved except for a

mouse skittering along the skirting board.

“Before we go any farther, I think we’d better check,”

whispered Hermione, and she raised her wand and

said, “Homenum revelio.”

Nothing happened.

“Well, you’ve just had a big shock,” said Ron kindly.

“What was that supposed to do?”

“It did what I meant it to do!” said Hermione rather

crossly. “That was a spell to reveal human presence,

and there’s nobody here except us!”

“And old Dusty,” said Ron, glancing at the patch of

carpet from which the corpse-figure had risen.

“Let’s go up,” said Hermione with a frightened look at

the same spot, and she led the way up the creaking

stairs to the drawing room on the first floor.

Page | 193 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Hermione waved her wand to ignite the old gas lamps,

then, shivering slightly in the drafty room, she

perched on the sofa, her arms wrapped tightly around

her. Ron crossed to the window and moved the heavy

velvet curtain aside an inch.

“Can’t see anyone out there,” he reported. “And you’d

think, if Harry still had a Trace on him, they’d have

followed us here. I know they can’t get in the house,

but — what’s up, Harry?”

Harry had given a cry of pain: His scar had burned

again as something flashed across his mind like a

bright light on water. He saw a large shadow and felt

a fury that was not his own pound through his body,

violent and brief as an electric shock.

“What did you see?” Ron asked, advancing on Harry.

“Did you see him at my place?”

“No, I just felt anger — he’s really angry — ”

“But that could be at the Burrow,” said Ron loudly.

“What else? Didn’t you see anything? Was he cursing

someone?”

“No, I just felt anger — I couldn’t tell — ”

Harry felt badgered, confused, and Hermione did not

help as she said in a frightened voice, “Your scar,

again? But what’s going on? I thought that

connection had closed!”

“It did, for a while,” muttered Harry; his scar was still

painful, which made it hard to concentrate. “I — I

think it’s started opening again whenever he loses

control, that’s how it used to — ”

Page | 194 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But then you’ve got to close your mind!” said

Hermione shrilly. “Harry, Dumbledore didn’t want you

to use that connection, he wanted you to shut it

down, that’s why you were supposed to use

Occlumency! Otherwise Voldemort can plant false

images in your mind, remember — ”

“Yeah, I do remember, thanks,” said Harry through

gritted teeth; he did not need Hermione to tell him

that Voldemort had once used this selfsame

connection between them to lead him into a trap, nor

that it had resulted in Sirius’s death. He wished that

he had not told them what he had seen and felt; it

made Voldemort more threatening, as though he were

pressing against the window of the room, and still the

pain in his scar was building and he fought it: It was

like resisting the urge to be sick.

He turned his back on Ron and Hermione, pretending

to examine the old tapestry of the Black family tree on

the wall. Then Hermione shrieked: Harry drew his

wand again and spun around to see a silver Patronus

soar through the drawing room window and land

upon the floor in front of them, where it solidified into

the weasel that spoke with the voice of Ron’s father.

“Family safe, do not reply, we are being watched.”

The Patronus dissolved into nothingness. Ron let out

a noise between a whimper and a groan and dropped

onto the sofa: Hermione joined him, gripping his arm.

“They’re all right, they’re all right!” she whispered,

and Ron half laughed and hugged her.

“Harry,” he said over Hermione’s shoulder, “I — ”

“It’s not a problem,” said Harry, sickened by the pain

in his head. “It’s your family, ’course you’re worried.

Page | 195 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

I’d feel the same way.” He thought of Ginny. “I do feel

the same way.”

The pain in his scar was reaching a peak, burning as

it had done in the garden of the Burrow. Faintly he

heard Hermione say, “I don’t want to be on my own.

Could we use the sleeping bags I’ve brought and

camp in here tonight?”

He heard Ron agree. He could not fight the pain much

longer: He had to succumb.

“Bathroom,” he muttered, and he left the room as fast

as he could without running.

He barely made it: Bolting the door behind him with

trembling hands, he grasped his pounding head and

fell to the floor, then in an explosion of agony, he felt

the rage that did not belong to him possess his soul,

saw a long room lit only by firelight, and the great

blond Death Eater on the floor, screaming and

writhing, and a slighter figure standing over him,

wand outstretched, while Harry spoke in a high, cold,

merciless voice.

“More, Rowle, or shall we end it and feed you to

Nagini? Lord Voldemort is not sure that he will forgive

this time. ... You called me back for this, to tell me

that Harry Potter has escaped again? Draco, give

Rowle another taste of our displeasure. ... Do it, or

feel my wrath yourself!”

A log fell in the fire: Flames reared, their light darting

across a terrified, pointed white face — with a sense

of emerging from deep water, Harry drew heaving

breaths and opened his eyes.

He was spread-eagled on the cold black marble floor,

his nose inches from one of the silver serpent tails

Page | 196 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

that supported the large bathtub. He sat up. Malfoy’s

gaunt, petrified face seemed branded on the inside of

his eyes. Harry felt sickened by what he had seen, by

the use to which Draco was now being put by

Voldemort.

There was a sharp rap on the door, and Harry jumped

as Hermione’s voice rang out.

“Harry, do you want your toothbrush? I’ve got it

here.”

“Yeah, great, thanks,” he said, fighting to keep his

voice casual as he stood up to let her in.

Page | 197 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

10

KREACHER’S TALE

Harry woke early next morning, wrapped in a sleeping

bag on the drawing room floor. A chink of sky was

visible between the heavy curtains: It was the cool,

clear blue of watered ink, somewhere between night

and dawn, and everything was quiet except for Ron

and Hermione’s slow, deep breathing. Harry glanced

over at the dark shapes they made on the floor beside

him. Ron had had a fit of gallantry and insisted that

Hermione sleep on the cushions from the sofa, so that

her silhouette was raised above his. Her arm curved

to the floor, her fingers inches from Ron’s. Harry

wondered whether they had fallen asleep holding

hands. The idea made him feel strangely lonely.

He looked up at the shadowy ceiling, the cobwebbed

chandelier. Less than twenty-four hours ago, he had

been standing in the sunlight at the entrance to the

marquee, waiting to show in wedding guests. It

seemed a lifetime away. What was going to happen

now? He lay on the floor and he thought of the

Horcruxes, of the daunting, complex mission

Dumbledore had left him. ... Dumbledore ...

Page | 198 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

The grief that had possessed him since Dumbledore’s

death felt different now. The accusations he had

heard from Muriel at the wedding seemed to have

nested in his brain like diseased things, infecting his

memories of the wizard he had idolized. Could

Dumbledore have let such things happen? Had he

been like Dudley, content to watch neglect and abuse

as long as it did not affect him? Could he have turned

his back on a sister who was being imprisoned and

hidden?

Harry thought of Godric’s Hollow, of graves

Dumbledore had never mentioned there; he thought

of mysterious objects left without explanation in

Dumbledore’s will, and resentment swelled in the

darkness. Why hadn’t Dumbledore told him? Why

hadn’t he explained? Had Dumbledore actually cared

about Harry at all? Or had Harry been nothing more

than a tool to be polished and honed, but not trusted,

never confided in?

Harry could not stand lying there with nothing but

bitter thoughts for company. Desperate for something

to do, for distraction, he slipped out of his sleeping

bag, picked up his wand, and crept out of the room.

On the landing he whispered, “Lumos,” and started to

climb the stairs by wandlight.

On the second landing was the bedroom in which he

and Ron had slept last time they had been here; he

glanced into it. The wardrobe doors stood open and

the bedclothes had been ripped back. Harry

remembered the overturned troll leg downstairs.

Somebody had searched the house since the Order

had left. Snape? Or perhaps Mundungus, who had

pilfered plenty from this house both before and after

Sirius died? Harry’s gaze wandered to the portrait

that sometimes contained Phineas Nigellus Black,

Sirius’s great-great-grandfather, but it was empty,

Page | 199 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

showing nothing but a stretch of muddy backdrop.

Phineas Nigellus was evidently spending the night in

the headmaster’s study at Hogwarts.

Harry continued up the stairs until he reached the

topmost landing, where there were only two doors.

The one facing him bore a nameplate reading SIRIUS.

Harry had never entered his godfather’s bedroom

before. He pushed open the door, holding his wand

high to cast light as widely as possible. The room was

spacious and must once have been handsome. There

was a large bed with a carved wooden headboard, a

tall window obscured by long velvet curtains, and a

chandelier thickly coated in dust with candle stubs

still resting in its sockets, solid wax hanging in

frostlike drips. A fine film of dust covered the pictures

on the walls and the bed’s headboard; a spider’s web

stretched between the chandelier and the top of the

large wooden wardrobe, and as Harry moved deeper

into the room, he heard a scurrying of disturbed mice.

The teenage Sirius had plastered the walls with so

many posters and pictures that little of the walls’

silvery-gray silk was visible. Harry could only assume

that Sirius’s parents had been unable to remove the

Permanent Sticking Charm that kept them on the

wall, because he was sure they would not have

appreciated their eldest son’s taste in decoration.

Sirius seemed to have gone out of his way to annoy

his parents. There were several large Gryffindor

banners, faded scarlet and gold, just to underline his

difference from all the rest of the Slytherin family.

There were many pictures of Muggle motorcycles, and

also (Harry had to admire Sirius’s nerve) several

posters of bikini-clad Muggle girls; Harry could tell

that they were Muggles because they remained quite

stationary within their pictures, faded smiles and

glazed eyes frozen on the paper. This was in contrast

to the only Wizarding photograph on the walls, which

Page | 200 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

was a picture of four Hogwarts students standing arm

in arm, laughing at the camera.

With a leap of pleasure, Harry recognized his father;

his untidy black hair stuck up at the back like

Harry’s, and he too wore glasses. Beside him was

Sirius, carelessly handsome, his slightly arrogant face

so much younger and happier than Harry had ever

seen it alive. To Sirius’s right stood Pettigrew, more

than a head shorter, plump and watery-eyed, flushed

with pleasure at his inclusion in this coolest of gangs,

with the much-admired rebels that James and Sirius

had been. On James’s left was Lupin, even then a

little shabby-looking, but he had the same air of

delighted surprise at finding himself liked and

included ... or was it simply because Harry knew how

it had been, that he saw these things in the picture?

He tried to take it from the wall; it was his now, after

all, Sirius had left him everything, but it would not

budge. Sirius had taken no chances in preventing his

parents from redecorating his room.

Harry looked around at the floor. The sky outside was

growing brighter: A shaft of light revealed bits of

paper, books, and small objects scattered over the

carpet. Evidently Sirius’s bedroom had been searched

too, although its contents seemed to have been

judged mostly, if not entirely, worthless. A few of the

books had been shaken roughly enough to part

company with their covers, and sundry pages littered

the floor.

Harry bent down, picked up a few of the pieces of

paper, and examined them. He recognized one as part

of an old edition of A History of Magic, by Bathilda

Bagshot, and another as belonging to a motorcycle

maintenance manual. The third was handwritten and

crumpled. He smoothed it out.

Page | 201 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Dear Padfoot,

Thank you, thank you, for Harry’s birthday present! It

was his favorite by far. One year old and already

zooming along on a toy broomstick, he looked so

pleased with himself, I’m enclosing a picture so you

can see. You know it only rises about two feet off the

ground, but he nearly killed the cat and he smashed a

horrible vase Petunia sent me for Christmas (no

complaints there). Of course, James thought it was so

funny, says he’s going to be a great Quidditch player,

but we’ve had to pack away all the ornaments and

make sure we don’t take our eyes off him when he gets

going.

We had a very quiet birthday tea, just us and old

Bathilda, who has always been sweet to us and who

dotes on Harry. We were so sorry you couldn’t come,

but the Order’s got to come first, and Harry’s not old

enough to know it’s his birthday anyway! James is

getting a bit frustrated shut up here, he tries not to

show it but I can tell — also, Dumbledore’s still got his

Invisibility Cloak, so no chance of little excursions. If

you could visit, it would cheer him up so much. Wormy

was here last weekend, I thought he seemed down,

but that was probably the news about the McKinnons;

I cried all evening when I heard.

Bathilda drops in most days, she’s a fascinating old

thing with the most amazing stories about Dumbledore,

I’m not sure he’d be pleased if he knew! I don’t know

how much to believe, actually, because it seems

incredible that Dumbledore

Harry’s extremities seemed to have gone numb. He

stood quite still, holding the miraculous paper in his

nerveless fingers while inside him a kind of quiet

eruption sent joy and grief thundering in equal

Page | 202 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

measure through his veins. Lurching to the bed, he

sat down.

He read the letter again, but could not take in any

more meaning than he had done the first time, and

was reduced to staring at the handwriting itself. She

had made her “g”s the same way he did: He searched

through the letter for every one of them, and each felt

like a friendly little wave glimpsed from behind a veil.

The letter was an incredible treasure, proof that Lily

Potter had lived, really lived, that her warm hand had

once moved across this parchment, tracing ink into

these letters, these words, words about him, Harry,

her son.

Impatiently brushing away the wetness in his eyes, he

reread the letter, this time concentrating on the

meaning. It was like listening to a half-remembered

voice.

They had had a cat . . . perhaps it had perished, like

his parents, at Godric’s Hollow ... or else fled when

there was nobody left to feed it. ... Sirius had bought

him his first broomstick. . . . His parents had known

Bathilda Bagshot; had Dumbledore introduced them?

DumblecLore’s still got his Invisibility Cloak ... There

was something funny there. ...

Harry paused, pondering his mother’s words. Why

had Dumbledore taken James’s Invisibility Cloak?

Harry distinctly remembered his headmaster telling

him years before, “I don’t need a cloak to become

invisible.” Perhaps some less gifted Order member

had needed its assistance, and Dumbledore had acted

as carrier? Harry passed on. ...

Wormy was here . . . Pettigrew, the traitor, had seemed

“down,” had he? Was he aware that he was seeing

James and Lily alive for the last time?

Page | 203 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

And finally Bathilda again, who told incredible stories

about Dumbledore. It seems incredible that

Dumbledore —

That Dumbledore what? But there were any number

of things that would seem incredible about

Dumbledore; that he had once received bottom marks

in a Transfiguration test, for instance, or had taken

up goat-charming like Aberforth. ...

Harry got to his feet and scanned the floor: Perhaps

the rest of the letter was here somewhere. He seized

papers, treating them, in his eagerness, with as little

consideration as the original searcher; he pulled open

drawers, shook out books, stood on a chair to run his

hand over the top of the wardrobe, and crawled under

the bed and armchair.

At last, lying facedown on the floor, he spotted what

looked like a torn piece of paper under the chest of

drawers. When he pulled it out, it proved to be most

of the photograph Lily had described in her letter. A

black-haired baby was zooming in and out of the

picture on a tiny broom, roaring with laughter, and a

pair of legs that must have belonged to James was

chasing after him. Harry tucked the photograph into

his pocket with Lily’s letter and continued to look for

the second sheet.

After another quarter of an hour, however, he was

forced to conclude that the rest of his mother’s letter

was gone. Had it simply been lost in the sixteen years

that had elapsed since it had been written, or had it

been taken by whoever had searched the room? Harry

read the first sheet again, this time looking for clues

as to what might have made the second sheet

valuable. His toy broomstick could hardly be

considered interesting to the Death Eaters. ... The

only potentially useful thing he could see here was

Page | 204 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

possible information on Dumbledore. It seems

incredible that Dumbledore — what?

“Harry? Harry! HarryV’

“I’m here!” he called. “What’s happened?”

There was a clatter of footsteps outside the door, and

Hermione burst inside.

“We woke up and didn’t know where you were!” she

said breathlessly. She turned and shouted over her

shoulder, “Ron! I’ve found him!”

Ron’s annoyed voice echoed distantly from several

floors below.

“Good! Tell him from me he’s a git!”

“Harry, don’t just disappear, please, we were terrified!

Why did you come up here anyway?” She gazed

around the ransacked room. “What have you been

doing?”

“Look what I’ve just found.”

He held out his mother’s letter. Hermione took it and

read it while Harry watched her. When she reached

the end of the page she looked up at him.

“Oh, Harry ...”

“And there’s this too.”

He handed her the torn photograph, and Hermione

smiled at the baby zooming in and out of sight on the

toy broom.

Page | 205 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I’ve been looking for the rest of the letter,” Harry

said, “but it’s not here.”

Hermione glanced around.

“Did you make all this mess, or was some of it done

when you got here?”

“Someone had searched before me,” said Harry.

“I thought so. Every room I looked into on the way up

had been disturbed. What were they after, do you

think?”

“Information on the Order, if it was Snape.”

“But you’d think he’d already have all he needed, I

mean, he was in the Order, wasn’t he?”

“Well then,” said Harry, keen to discuss his theory,

“what about information on Dumbledore? The second

page of this letter, for instance. You know this

Bathilda my mum mentions, you know who she is?”

“Who?”

“Bathilda Bagshot, the author of — ”

“A History of Magic,” said Hermione, looking

interested. “So your parents knew her? She was an

incredible magical historian.”

“And she’s still alive,” said Harry, “and she lives in

Godric’s Hollow, Ron’s Auntie Muriel was talking

about her at the wedding. She knew Dumbledore ’s

family too. Be pretty interesting to talk to, wouldn’t

she?”

Page | 206 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There was a little too much understanding in the

smile Hermione gave him for Harry’s liking. He took

back the letter and the photograph and tucked them

inside the pouch around his neck, so as not to have

to look at her and give himself away.

“I understand why you’d love to talk to her about your

mum and dad, and Dumbledore too,” said Hermione.

“But that wouldn’t really help us in our search for the

Horcruxes, would it?” Harry did not answer, and she

rushed on, “Harry, I know you really want to go to

Godric’s Hollow, but I’m scared, I’m scared at how

easily those Death Eaters found us yesterday. It just

makes me feel more than ever that we ought to avoid

the place where your parents are buried, I’m sure

they’d be expecting you to visit it.”

“It’s not just that,” Harry said, still avoiding looking at

her. “Muriel said stuff about Dumbledore at the

wedding. I want to know the truth. ...”

He told Hermione everything that Muriel had told

him. When he had finished, Hermione said, “Of

course, I can see why that’s upset you, Harry — ”

“I’m not upset,” he lied, “I’d just like to know whether

or not it’s true or — ”

“Harry, do you really think you’ll get the truth from a

malicious old woman like Muriel, or from Rita

Skeeter? How can you believe them? You knew

Dumbledore!”

“I thought I did,” he muttered.

“But you know how much truth there was in

everything Rita wrote about you! Doge is right, how

can you let these people tarnish your memories of

Dumbledore?”

Page | 207 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He looked away, trying not to betray the resentment

he felt. There it was again: Choose what to believe. He

wanted the truth. Why was everybody so determined

that he should not get it?

“Shall we go down to the kitchen?” Hermione

suggested after a little pause. “Find something for

breakfast?”

He agreed, but grudgingly, and followed her out onto

the landing and past the second door that led off it.

There were deep scratch marks in the paintwork

below a small sign that he had not noticed in the

dark. He paused at the top of the stairs to read it. It

was a pompous little sign, neatly lettered by hand,

the sort of thing that Percy Weasley might have stuck

on his bedroom door:

Do Not Enter

Without the Express Permission of

Regulus Arcturus Black

Excitement trickled through Harry, but he was not

immediately sure why. He read the sign again.

Hermione was already a flight of stairs below him.

“Hermione,” he said, and he was surprised that his

voice was so calm. “Come back up here.”

“What’s the matter?”

“R.A.B. I think I’ve found him.”

There was a gasp, and then Hermione ran back up

the stairs.

“In your mum’s letter? But I didn’t see — ”

Page | 208 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry shook his head, pointing at Regulus’s sign. She

read it, then clutched Harry’s arm so tightly that he

winced.

“Sirius’s brother?” she whispered.

“He was a Death Eater,” said Harry, “Sirius told me

about him, he joined up when he was really young

and then got cold feet and tried to leave — so they

killed him.”

“That fits!” gasped Hermione. “If he was a Death Eater

he had access to Voldemort, and if he became

disenchanted, then he would have wanted to bring

Voldemort down!”

She released Harry, leaned over the banister, and

screamed, “Ron! RON! Get up here, quick!”

Ron appeared, panting, a minute later, his wand

ready in his hand.

“What’s up? If it’s massive spiders again I want

breakfast before I — ”

He frowned at the sign on Regulus’s door, to which

Hermione was silently pointing.

“What? That was Sirius’s brother, wasn’t it? Regulus

Arcturus ... Regulus ... R.A.B.l The locket — you don’t

reckon — ?”

“Let’s find out,” said Harry. He pushed the door: It

was locked. Hermione pointed her wand at the handle

and said, “Alohomora.” There was a click, and the

door swung open.

They moved over the threshold together, gazing

around. Regulus’s bedroom was slightly smaller than

Page | 209 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Sirius’s, though it had the same sense of former

grandeur. Whereas Sirius had sought to advertise his

difference from the rest of the family, Regulus had

striven to emphasize the opposite. The Slytherin

colors of emerald and silver were everywhere, draping

the bed, the walls, and the windows. The Black family

crest was painstakingly painted over the bed, along

with its motto, TOU JOURS PUR. Beneath this was a

collection of yellow newspaper cuttings, all stuck

together to make a ragged collage. Hermione crossed

the room to examine them.

“They’re all about Voldemort,” she said. “Regulus

seems to have been a fan for a few years before he

joined the Death Eaters. ...”

A little puff of dust rose from the bedcovers as she sat

down to read the clippings. Harry, meanwhile, had

noticed another photograph; a Hogwarts Quidditch

team was smiling and waving out of the frame. He

moved closer and saw the snakes emblazoned on

their chests: Slytherins. Regulus was instantly

recognizable as the boy sitting in the middle of the

front row: He had the same dark hair and slightly

haughty look of his brother, though he was smaller,

slighter, and rather less handsome than Sirius had

been.

“He played Seeker,” said Harry.

“What?” said Hermione vaguely; she was still

immersed in Voldemort’s press clippings.

“He’s sitting in the middle of the front row, that’s

where the Seeker ... Never mind,” said Harry, realizing

that nobody was listening: Ron was on his hands and

knees, searching under the wardrobe. Harry looked

around the room for likely hiding places and

approached the desk. Yet again, somebody had

Page | 210 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

searched before them. The drawers’ contents had

been turned over recently, the dust disturbed, but

there was nothing of value there: old quills, out-of-

date textbooks that bore evidence of being roughly

handled, a recently smashed ink bottle, its sticky

residue covering the contents of the drawer.

“There’s an easier way,” said Hermione, as Harry

wiped his inky fingers on his jeans. She raised her

wand and said, “Accio Locked.”

Nothing happened. Ron, who had been searching the

folds of the faded curtains, looked disappointed.

“Is that it, then? It’s not here?”

“Oh, it could still be here, but under counter-

enchantments,” said Hermione. “Charms to prevent it

being summoned magically, you know.”

“Like Voldemort put on the stone basin in the cave,”

said Harry, remembering how he had been unable to

Summon the fake locket.

“How are we supposed to find it then?” asked Ron.

“We search manually,” said Hermione.

“That’s a good idea,” said Ron, rolling his eyes, and he

resumed his examination of the curtains.

They combed every inch of the room for more than an

hour, but were forced, finally, to conclude that the

locket was not there.

The sun had risen now; its light dazzled them even

through the grimy landing windows.

Page | 211 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“It could be somewhere else in the house, though,”

said Hermione in a rallying tone as they walked back

downstairs: As Harry and Ron had become more

discouraged, she seemed to have become more

determined. “Whether he’d managed to destroy it or

not, he’d want to keep it hidden from Voldemort,

wouldn’t he? Remember all those awful things we had

to get rid of when we were here last time? That clock

that shot bolts at everyone and those old robes that

tried to strangle Ron; Regulus might have put them

there to protect the locket’s hiding place, even though

we didn’t realize it at ... at ...”

Harry and Ron looked at her. She was standing with

one foot in midair, with the dumbstruck look of one

who had just been Obliviated; her eyes had even

drifted out of focus.

"... at the time,” she finished in a whisper.

“Something wrong?” asked Ron.

“There was a locket.”

“What?” said Harry and Ron together.

“In the cabinet in the drawing room. Nobody could

open it. And we ... we ...”

Harry felt as though a brick had slid down through

his chest into his stomach. He remembered: He had

even handled the thing as they passed it around, each

trying in turn to prise it open. It had been tossed into

a sack of rubbish, along with the snuffbox of Wartcap

powder and the music box that had made everyone

sleepy. ...

“Kreacher nicked loads of things back from us,” said

Harry. It was the only chance, the only slender hope

Page | 212 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

left to them, and he was going to cling to it until

forced to let go. “He had a whole stash of stuff in his

cupboard in the kitchen. C’mon.”

He ran down the stairs taking two steps at a time, the

other two thundering along in his wake. They made

so much noise that they woke the portrait of Sirius’s

mother as they passed through the hall.

“Filth). Mudbloods\ Scum)” she screamed after them as

they dashed down into the basement kitchen and

slammed the door behind them.

Harry ran the length of the room, skidded to a halt at

the door of Kreacher’s cupboard, and wrenched it

open. There was the nest of dirty old blankets in

which the house-elf had once slept, but they were no

longer glittering with the trinkets Kreacher had

salvaged. The only thing there was an old copy of

Nature’s Nobility: A Wizarding Genealogy. Refusing to

believe his eyes, Harry snatched up the blankets and

shook them. A dead mouse fell out and rolled

dismally across the floor. Ron groaned as he threw

himself into a kitchen chair; Hermione closed her

eyes.

“It’s not over yet,” said Harry, and he raised his voice

and called, “ Kreacherl”

There was a loud crack and the house-elf that Harry

had so reluctantly inherited from Sirius appeared out

of nowhere in front of the cold and empty fireplace:

tiny, half human-sized, his pale skin hanging off him

in folds, white hair sprouting copiously from his

batlike ears. He was still wearing the filthy rag in

which they had first met him, and the contemptuous

look he bent upon Harry showed that his attitude to

his change of ownership had altered no more than his

outfit.

Page | 213 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Master,” croaked Kreacher in his bullfrog’s voice, and

he bowed low, muttering to his knees, “back in my

Mistress’s old house with the blood-traitor Weasley

and the Mudblood — ”

“I forbid you to call anyone ‘blood traitor’ or

‘Mudblood,’ ” growled Harry. He would have found

Kreacher, with his snoutlike nose and bloodshot eyes,

a distinctly unlovable object even if the elf had not

betrayed Sirius to Voldemort.

“I’ve got a question for you,” said Harry, his heart

beating rather fast as he looked down at the elf, “and

I order you to answer it truthfully. Understand?”

“Yes, Master,” said Kreacher, bowing low again: Harry

saw his lips moving soundlessly, undoubtedly framing

the insults he was now forbidden to utter.

“Two years ago,” said Harry, his heart now

hammering against his ribs, “there was a big gold

locket in the drawing room upstairs. We threw it out.

Did you steal it back?”

There was a moment’s silence, during which Kreacher

straightened up to look Harry full in the face. Then he

said, “Yes.”

“Where is it now?” asked Harry jubilantly as Ron and

Hermione looked gleeful.

Kreacher closed his eyes as though he could not bear

to see their reactions to his next word.

“Gone.”

“Gone?” echoed Harry, elation flooding out of him.

“What do you mean, it’s gone?”

Page | 214 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The elf shivered. He swayed.

“Kreacher,” said Harry fiercely, “I order you — ”

“Mundungus Fletcher,” croaked the elf, his eyes still

tight shut. “Mundungus Fletcher stole it all: Miss

Bella’s and Miss Cissy’s pictures, my Mistress’s

gloves, the Order of Merlin, First Class, the goblets

with the family crest, and — and — ”

Kreacher was gulping for air: His hollow chest was

rising and falling rapidly, then his eyes flew open and

he uttered a bloodcurdling scream.

“ — and the locket, Master Regulus’s locket, Kreacher

did wrong, Kreacher failed in his orders!”

Harry reacted instinctively: As Kreacher lunged for

the poker standing in the grate, he launched himself

upon the elf, flattening him. Hermione’s scream

mingled with Kreacher’s, but Harry bellowed louder

than both of them: “Kreacher, I order you to stay

still!”

He felt the elf freeze and released him. Kreacher lay

flat on the cold stone floor, tears gushing from his

sagging eyes.

“Harry, let him up!” Hermione whispered.

“So he can beat himself up with the poker?” snorted

Harry, kneeling beside the elf. “I don’t think so. Right,

Kreacher, I want the truth: How do you know

Mundungus Fletcher stole the locket?”

“Kreacher saw him!” gasped the elf as tears poured

over his snout and into his mouth full of graying

teeth. “Kreacher saw him coming out of Kreacher’s

cupboard with his hands full of Kreacher’s treasures.

Page | 215 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Kreacher told the sneak thief to stop, but Mundungus

Fletcher laughed and r-ran. ...”

“You called the locket ‘Master Regulus ’s,’ ” said Harry.

“Why? Where did it come from? What did Regulus

have to do with it? Kreacher, sit up and tell me

everything you know about that locket, and

everything Regulus had to do with it!”

The elf sat up, curled into a ball, placed his wet face

between his knees, and began to rock backward and

forward. When he spoke, his voice was muffled but

quite distinct in the silent, echoing kitchen.

“Master Sirius ran away, good riddance, for he was a

bad boy and broke my Mistress’s heart with his

lawless ways. But Master Regulus had proper pride;

he knew what was due to the name of Black and the

dignity of his pure blood. For years he talked of the

Dark Lord, who was going to bring the wizards out of

hiding to rule the Muggles and the Muggle-borns . . .

and when he was sixteen years old, Master Regulus

joined the Dark Lord. So proud, so proud, so happy to

serve ...

“And one day, a year after he had joined, Master

Regulus came down to the kitchen to see Kreacher.

Master Regulus always liked Kreacher. And Master

Regulus said ... he said ...”

The old elf rocked faster than ever.

"... he said that the Dark Lord required an elf.”

“Voldemort needed an elf?” Harry repeated, looking

around at Ron and Hermione, who looked just as

puzzled as he did.

Page | 216 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Oh yes,” moaned Kreacher. “And Master Regulus had

volunteered Kreacher. It was an honor, said Master

Regulus, an honor for him and for Kreacher, who

must be sure to do whatever the Dark Lord ordered

him to do ... and then to c-come home.”

Kreacher rocked still faster, his breath coming in

sobs.

“So Kreacher went to the Dark Lord. The Dark Lord

did not tell Kreacher what they were to do, but took

Kreacher with him to a cave beside the sea. And

beyond the cave there was a cavern, and in the

cavern was a great black lake ...”

The hairs on the back of Harry’s neck stood up.

Kreacher’s croaking voice seemed to come to him from

across that dark water. He saw what had happened

as clearly as though he had been present.

"... There was a boat ...”

Of course there had been a boat; Harry knew the

boat, ghostly green and tiny, bewitched so as to carry

one wizard and one victim toward the island in the

center. This, then, was how Voldemort had tested the

defenses surrounding the Horcrux: by borrowing a

disposable creature, a house-elf ...

“There was a b-basin full of potion on the island. The

D-Dark Lord made Kreacher drink it. ...”

The elf quaked from head to foot.

“Kreacher drank, and as he drank, he saw terrible

things. ... Kreacher’s insides burned. ... Kreacher

cried for Master Regulus to save him, he cried for his

Mistress Black, but the Dark Lord only laughed. ...

He made Kreacher drink all the potion. ... He dropped

Page | 217 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

a locket into the empty basin. ... He filled it with more

potion.

“And then the Dark Lord sailed away, leaving

Kreacher on the island. ...”

Harry could see it happening. He watched

Voldemort’s white, snakelike face vanishing into

darkness, those red eyes fixed pitilessly on the

thrashing elf whose death would occur within

minutes, whenever he succumbed to the desperate

thirst that the burning potion caused its victim. ...

But here, Harry’s imagination could go no further, for

he could not see how Kreacher had escaped.

“Kreacher needed water, he crawled to the island’s

edge and he drank from the black lake ... and hands,

dead hands, came out of the water and dragged

Kreacher under the surface. ...”

“How did you get away?” Harry asked, and he was not

surprised to hear himself whispering.

Kreacher raised his ugly head and looked at Harry

with his great, bloodshot eyes.

“Master Regulus told Kreacher to come back,” he

said.

“I know — but how did you escape the Inferi?”

Kreacher did not seem to understand.

“Master Regulus told Kreacher to come back,” he

repeated.

“I know, but — ”

Page | 218 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Well, it’s obvious, isn’t it, Harry?” said Ron. “He

Disapparated!”

“But ... you couldn’t Apparate in and out of that

cave,” said Harry, “otherwise Dumbledore — ”

“Elf magic isn’t like wizard’s magic, is it?” said Ron. “I

mean, they can Apparate and Disapparate in and out

of Hogwarts when we can’t.”

There was silence as Harry digested this. How could

Voldemort have made such a mistake? But even as he

thought this, Hermione spoke, and her voice was icy.

“Of course, Voldemort would have considered the

ways of house-elves far beneath his notice, just like

all the purebloods who treat them like animals. ... It

would never have occurred to him that they might

have magic that he didn’t.”

“The house-elf’s highest law is his Master’s bidding,”

intoned Kreacher. “Kreacher was told to come home,

so Kreacher came home. ...”

“Well, then, you did what you were told, didn’t you?”

said Hermione kindly. “You didn’t disobey orders at

all!”

Kreacher shook his head, rocking as fast as ever.

“So what happened when you got back?” Harry asked.

“What did Regulus say when you told him what had

happened?”

“Master Regulus was very worried, very worried,”

croaked Kreacher. “Master Regulus told Kreacher to

stay hidden and not to leave the house. And then ... it

was a little while later . . . Master Regulus came to find

Kreacher in his cupboard one night, and Master

Page | 219 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Regulus was strange, not as he usually was,

disturbed in his mind, Kreacher could tell . . . and he

asked Kreacher to take him to the cave, the cave

where Kreacher had gone with the Dark Lord. ...”

And so they had set off. Harry could visualize them

quite clearly, the frightened old elf and the thin, dark

Seeker who had so resembled Sirius. ... Kreacher

knew how to open the concealed entrance to the

underground cavern, knew how to raise the tiny boat;

this time it was his beloved Regulus who sailed with

him to the island with its basin of poison. ...

“And he made you drink the potion?” said Harry,

disgusted.

But Kreacher shook his head and wept. Hermione’s

hands leapt to her mouth: She seemed to have

understood something.

“M-Master Regulus took from his pocket a locket like

the one the Dark Lord had,” said Kreacher, tears

pouring down either side of his snoutlike nose. “And

he told Kreacher to take it and, when the basin was

empty, to switch the lockets. ...”

Kreacher’s sobs came in great rasps now; Harry had

to concentrate hard to understand him.

“And he ordered — Kreacher to leave — without him.

And he told Kreacher — to go home — and never to

tell my Mistress — what he had done — but to

destroy — the first locket. And he drank — all the

potion — and Kreacher swapped the lockets — and

watched ... as Master Regulus . . . was dragged

beneath the water ... and ...”

“Oh, Kreacher!” wailed Hermione, who was crying.

She dropped to her knees beside the elf and tried to

Page | 220 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

hug him. At once he was on his feet, cringing away

from her, quite obviously repulsed.

“The Mudblood touched Kreacher, he will not allow it,

what would his Mistress say?”

“I told you not to call her ‘Mudblood’!” snarled Harry,

but the elf was already punishing himself: He fell to

the ground and banged his forehead on the floor.

“Stop him — stop him!” Hermione cried. “Oh, don’t

you see now how sick it is, the way they’ve got to

obey?”

“Kreacher — stop, stop!” shouted Harry.

The elf lay on the floor, panting and shivering, green

mucus glistening around his snout, a bruise already

blooming on his pallid forehead where he had struck

himself, his eyes swollen and bloodshot and

swimming in tears. Harry had never seen anything so

pitiful.

“So you brought the locket home,” he said

relentlessly, for he was determined to know the full

story. “And you tried to destroy it?”

“Nothing Kreacher did made any mark upon it,”

moaned the elf. “Kreacher tried everything, everything

he knew, but nothing, nothing would work. ... So

many powerful spells upon the casing, Kreacher was

sure the way to destroy it was to get inside it, but it

would not open. . . . Kreacher punished himself, he

tried again, he punished himself, he tried again.

Kreacher failed to obey orders, Kreacher could not

destroy the locket! And his Mistress was mad with

grief, because Master Regulus had disappeared, and

Kreacher could not tell her what had happened, no,

Page | 221 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

because Master Regulus had f-f-forbidden him to tell

any of the f-f-family what happened in the c-cave. ...”

Kreacher began to sob so hard that there were no

more coherent words. Tears flowed down Hermione’s

cheeks as she watched Kreacher, but she did not dare

touch him again. Even Ron, who was no fan of

Kreacher’s, looked troubled. Harry sat back on his

heels and shook his head, trying to clear it.

“I don’t understand you, Kreacher,” he said finally.

“Voldemort tried to kill you, Regulus died to bring

Voldemort down, but you were still happy to betray

Sirius to Voldemort? You were happy to go to

Narcissa and Bellatrix, and pass information to

Voldemort through them. ...”

“Harry, Kreacher doesn’t think like that,” said

Hermione, wiping her eyes on the back of her hand.

“He’s a slave; house-elves are used to bad, even

brutal treatment; what Voldemort did to Kreacher

wasn’t that far out of the common way. What do

wizard wars mean to an elf like Kreacher? He’s loyal

to people who are kind to him, and Mrs. Black must

have been, and Regulus certainly was, so he served

them willingly and parroted their beliefs. I know what

you’re going to say,” she went on as Harry began to

protest, “that Regulus changed his mind . . . but he

doesn’t seem to have explained that to Kreacher, does

he? And I think I know why. Kreacher and Regulus ’s

family were all safer if they kept to the old pure-blood

line. Regulus was trying to protect them all.”

“Sirius — ”

“Sirius was horrible to Kreacher, Harry, and it’s no

good looking like that, you know it’s true. Kreacher

had been alone for a long time when Sirius came to

live here, and he was probably starving for a bit of

Page | 222 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

affection. I’m sure ‘Miss Cissy’ and ‘Miss Bella’ were

perfectly lovely to Kreacher when he turned up, so he

did them a favor and told them everything they

wanted to know. I’ve said all along that wizards would

pay for how they treat house-elves. Well, Voldemort

did ... and so did Sirius.”

Harry had no retort. As he watched Kreacher sobbing

on the floor, he remembered what Dumbledore had

said to him, mere hours after Sirius’s death: I do not

think Sirius ever saw Kreacher as a being with feelings

as acute as a human’s. ...

“Kreacher,” said Harry after a while, “when you feel

up to it, er ... please sit up.”

It was several minutes before Kreacher hiccuped

himself into silence. Then he pushed himself into a

sitting position again, rubbing his knuckles into his

eyes like a small child.

“Kreacher, I am going to ask you to do something,”

said Harry. He glanced at Hermione for assistance. He

wanted to give the order kindly, but at the same time,

he could not pretend that it was not an order.

However, the change in his tone seemed to have

gained her approval: She smiled encouragingly.

“Kreacher, I want you, please, to go and find

Mundungus Fletcher. We need to find out where the

locket — where Master Regulus’s locket is. It’s really

important. We want to finish the work Master

Regulus started, we want to — er — ensure that he

didn’t die in vain.”

Kreacher dropped his fists and looked up at Harry.

“Find Mundungus Fletcher?” he croaked.

Page | 223 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“And bring him here, to Grimmauld Place,” said

Harry. “Do you think you could do that for us?”

As Kreacher nodded and got to his feet, Harry had a

sudden inspiration. He pulled out Hagrid’s purse and

took out the fake Horcrux, the substitute locket in

which Regulus had placed the note to Voldemort.

“Kreacher, I’d, er, like you to have this,” he said,

pressing the locket into the elf’s hand. “This belonged

to Regulus and I’m sure he’d want you to have it as a

token of gratitude for what you — ”

“Overkill, mate,” said Ron as the elf took one look at

the locket, let out a howl of shock and misery, and

threw himself back onto the ground.

It took them nearly half an hour to calm down

Kreacher, who was so overcome to be presented with

a Black family heirloom for his very own that he was

too weak at the knees to stand properly. When finally

he was able to totter a few steps they all accompanied

him to his cupboard, watched him tuck up the locket

safely in his dirty blankets, and assured him that

they would make its protection their first priority

while he was away. He then made two low bows to

Harry and Ron, and even gave a funny little spasm in

Hermione’s direction that might have been an attempt

at a respectful salute, before Disapparating with the

usual loud crack.

Page | 224 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE BRIBE

If Kreacher could escape a lake full of Inferi, Harry

was confident that the capture of Mundungus would

take a few hours at most, and he prowled the house

all morning in a state of high anticipation. However,

Kreacher did not return that morning or even that

afternoon. By nightfall, Harry felt discouraged and

anxious, and a supper composed largely of moldy

bread, upon which Hermione had tried a variety of

unsuccessful Transfigurations, did nothing to help.

Kreacher did not return the following day, nor the day

after that. However, two cloaked men had appeared in

the square outside number twelve, and they remained

there into the night, gazing in the direction of the

house that they could not see.

“Death Eaters, for sure,” said Ron, as he, Harry, and

Hermione watched from the drawing room windows.

“Reckon they know we’re in here?”

Page | 225 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I don’t think so,” said Hermione, though she looked

frightened, “or they’d have sent Snape in after us,

wouldn’t they?”

“D’you reckon he’s been in here and had his tongue

tied by Moody’s curse?” asked Ron.

“Yes,” said Hermione, “otherwise he’d have been able

to tell that lot how to get in, wouldn’t he? But they’re

probably watching to see whether we turn up. They

know that Harry owns the house, after all.”

“How do they — ?” began Harry.

“Wizarding wills are examined by the Ministry,

remember? They’ll know Sirius left you the place.”

The presence of the Death Eaters outside increased

the ominous mood inside number twelve. They had

not heard a word from anyone beyond Grimmauld

Place since Mr. Weasley’s Patronus, and the strain

was starting to tell. Restless and irritable, Ron had

developed an annoying habit of playing with the

Deluminator in his pocket: This particularly

infuriated Hermione, who was whiling away the wait

for Kreacher by studying The Tales of Beedle the Bard

and did not appreciate the way the lights kept

flashing on and off.

“Will you stop it!” she cried on the third evening of

Kreacher’s absence, as all light was sucked from the

drawing room yet again.

“Sorry, sorry!” said Ron, clicking the Deluminator and

restoring the lights. “I don’t know I’m doing it!”

“Well, can’t you find something useful to occupy

yourself?”

Page | 226 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“What, like reading kids’ stories?”

“Dumbledore left me this book, Ron — ”

“ — and he left me the Deluminator, maybe I’m

supposed to use it!”

Unable to stand the bickering, Harry slipped out of

the room unnoticed by either of them. He headed

downstairs toward the kitchen, which he kept visiting

because he was sure that was where Kreacher was

most likely to reappear. Halfway down the flight of

stairs into the hall, however, he heard a tap on the

front door, then metallic clicks and the grinding of the

chain.

Every nerve in his body seemed to tauten: He pulled

out his wand, moved into the shadows beside the

decapitated elf heads, and waited. The door opened:

He saw a glimpse of the lamplit square outside, and a

cloaked figure edged into the hall and closed the door

behind it. The intruder took a step forward, and

Moody’s voice asked, “Severus Snape ?” Then the dust

figure rose from the end of the hall and rushed him,

raising its dead hand.

“It was not I who killed you, Albus,” said a quiet voice.

The jinx broke: The dust-figure exploded again, and it

was impossible to make out the newcomer through

the dense gray cloud it left behind.

Harry pointed his wand into the middle of it.

“Don’t move!”

He had forgotten the portrait of Mrs. Black: At the

sound of his yell, the curtains hiding her flew open

Page | 227 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

and she began to scream, “Mudbloods and filth

dishonoring my house — ”

Ron and Hermione came crashing down the stairs

behind Harry, wands pointing, like his, at the

unknown man now standing with his arms raised in

the hall below.

“Hold your fire, it’s me, Remus!”

“Oh, thank goodness,” said Hermione weakly,

pointing her wand at Mrs. Black instead; with a bang,

the curtains swished shut again and silence fell. Ron

too lowered his wand, but Harry did not.

“Show yourself!” he called back.

Lupin moved forward into the lamplight, hands still

held high in a gesture of surrender.

“I am Remus John Lupin, werewolf, sometimes known

as Moony, one of the four creators of the Marauder’s

Map, married to Nymphadora, usually known as

Tonks, and I taught you how to produce a Patronus,

Harry, which takes the form of a stag.”

“Oh, all right,” said Harry, lowering his wand, “but I

had to check, didn’t I?”

“Speaking as your ex-Defense Against the Dark Arts

teacher, I quite agree that you had to check. Ron,

Hermione, you shouldn’t be quite so quick to lower

your defenses.”

They ran down the stairs toward him. Wrapped in a

thick black traveling cloak, he looked exhausted, but

pleased to see them.

“No sign of Severus, then?” he asked.

Page | 228 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No,” said Harry. “What’s going on? Is everyone

okay?”

“Yes,” said Lupin, “but we’re all being watched. There

are a couple of Death Eaters in the square outside — ”

“We know — ”

“I had to Apparate very precisely onto the top step

outside the front door to be sure that they would not

see me. They can’t know you’re in here or I’m sure

they’d have more people out there; they’re staking out

everywhere that’s got any connection with you, Harry.

Let’s go downstairs, there’s a lot to tell you, and I

want to know what happened after you left the

Burrow.”

They descended into the kitchen, where Hermione

pointed her wand at the grate. A fire sprang up

instantly: It gave the illusion of coziness to the stark

stone walls and glistened off the long wooden table.

Lupin pulled a few butterbeers from beneath his

traveling cloak and they sat down.

“I’d have been here three days ago but I needed to

shake off the Death Eater tailing me,” said Lupin. “So,

you came straight here after the wedding?”

“No,” said Harry, “only after we ran into a couple of

Death Eaters in a cafe on Tottenham Court Road.”

Lupin slopped most of his butterbeer down his front.

“ What ?”

They explained what had happened; when they had

finished, Lupin looked aghast.

Page | 229 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But how did they find you so quickly? It’s impossible

to track anyone who Apparates, unless you grab hold

of them as they disappear!”

“And it doesn’t seem likely they were just strolling

down Tottenham Court Road at the time, does it?”

said Harry.

“We wondered,” said Hermione tentatively, “whether

Harry could still have the Trace on him?”

“Impossible,” said Lupin. Ron looked smug, and

Harry felt hugely relieved. “Apart from anything else,

they’d know for sure Harry was here if he still had the

Trace on him, wouldn’t they? But I can’t see how they

could have tracked you to Tottenham Court Road,

that’s worrying, really worrying.”

He looked disturbed, but as far as Harry was

concerned, that question could wait.

“Tell us what happened after we left, we haven’t heard

a thing since Ron’s dad told us the family were safe.”

“Well, Kingsley saved us,” said Lupin. “Thanks to his

warning most of the wedding guests were able to

Disapparate before they arrived.”

“Were they Death Eaters or Ministry people?”

interjected Hermione.

“A mixture; but to all intents and purposes they’re the

same thing now,” said Lupin. “There were about a

dozen of them, but they didn’t know you were there,

Harry. Arthur heard a rumor that they tried to torture

your whereabouts out of Scrimgeour before they killed

him; if it’s true, he didn’t give you away.”

Page | 230 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry looked at Ron and Hermione; their expressions

reflected the mingled shock and gratitude he felt. He

had never liked Scrimgeour much, but if what Lupin

said was true, the man’s final act had been to try to

protect Harry.

“The Death Eaters searched the Burrow from top to

bottom,” Lupin went on. “They found the ghoul, but

didn’t want to get too close — and then they

interrogated those of us who remained for hours.

They were trying to get information on you, Harry, but

of course nobody apart from the Order knew that you

had been there.

“At the same time that they were smashing up the

wedding, more Death Eaters were forcing their way

into every Order-connected house in the country. No

deaths,” he added quickly, forestalling the question,

“but they were rough. They burned down Dedalus

Diggle’s house, but as you know he wasn’t there, and

they used the Cruciatus Curse on Tonks’s family.

Again, trying to find out where you went after you

visited them. They’re all right — shaken, obviously,

but otherwise okay.”

“The Death Eaters got through all those protective

charms?” Harry asked, remembering how effective

these had been on the night he had crashed in

Tonks’s parents’ garden.

“What you’ve got to realize, Harry, is that the Death

Eaters have got the full might of the Ministry on their

side now,” said Lupin. “They’ve got the power to

perform brutal spells without fear of identification or

arrest. They managed to penetrate every defensive

spell we’d cast against them, and once inside, they

were completely open about why they’d come.”

Page | 231 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“And are they bothering to give an excuse for

torturing Harry’s whereabouts out of people?” asked

Hermione, an edge to her voice.

“Well,” said Lupin. He hesitated, then pulled out a

folded copy of the Daily Prophet

“Here,” he said, pushing it across the table to Harry,

“you’ll know sooner or later anyway. That’s their

pretext for going after you.”

Harry smoothed out the paper. A huge photograph of

his own face filled the front page. He read the

headline over it:

WANTED FOR QUESTIONING ABOUT

THE DEATH OF ALBUS DUMBLEDORE

Ron and Hermione gave roars of outrage, but Harry

said nothing. He pushed the newspaper away; he did

not want to read any more: He knew what it would

say. Nobody but those who had been on top of the

tower when Dumbledore died knew who had really

killed him and, as Rita Skeeter had already told the

Wizarding world, Harry had been seen running from

the place moments after Dumbledore had fallen.

“I’m sorry, Harry,” Lupin said.

“So Death Eaters have taken over the Daily Prophet

too?” asked Hermione furiously.

Lupin nodded.

“But surely people realize what’s going on?”

“The coup has been smooth and virtually silent,” said

Lupin. “The official version of Scrimgeour’s murder is

Page | 232 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

that he resigned; he has been replaced by Pius

Thicknesse, who is under the Imperius Curse.”

“Why didn’t Voldemort declare himself Minister of

Magic?” asked Ron.

Lupin laughed.

“He doesn’t need to, Ron. Effectively he is the

Minister, but why should he sit behind a desk at the

Ministry? His puppet, Thicknesse, is taking care of

everyday business, leaving Voldemort free to extend

his power beyond the Ministry.

“Naturally many people have deduced what has

happened: There has been such a dramatic change in

Ministry policy in the last few days, and many are

whispering that Voldemort must be behind it.

However, that is the point: They whisper. They daren’t

confide in each other, not knowing whom to trust;

they are scared to speak out, in case their suspicions

are true and their families are targeted. Yes,

Voldemort is playing a very clever game. Declaring

himself might have provoked open rebellion:

Remaining masked has created confusion,

uncertainty, and fear.”

“And this dramatic change in Ministry policy,” said

Harry, “involves warning the Wizarding world against

me instead of Voldemort?”

“That’s certainly part of it,” said Lupin, “and it is a

masterstroke. Now that Dumbledore is dead, you —

the Boy Who Lived — were sure to be the symbol and

rallying point for any resistance to Voldemort. But by

suggesting that you had a hand in the old hero’s

death, Voldemort has not only set a price upon your

head, but sown doubt and fear amongst many who

would have defended you.

Page | 233 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Meanwhile, the Ministry has started moving against

Muggle-borns.”

Lupin pointed at the Daily Prophet

“Look at page two.”

Hermione turned the pages with much the same

expression of distaste she had worn when handling

Secrets of the Darkest Art

“ ‘Muggle-born Register,’ ” she read aloud. “ ‘The

Ministry of Magic is undertaking a survey of so-called

“Muggle-borns,” the better to understand how they

came to possess magical secrets.

“ ‘Recent research undertaken by the Department of

Mysteries reveals that magic can only be passed from

person to person when Wizards reproduce. Where no

proven Wizarding ancestry exists, therefore, the so-

called Muggle-born is likely to have obtained magical

power by theft or force.

“ ‘The Ministry is determined to root out such usurpers

of magical power, and to this end has issued an

invitation to every so-called Muggle-born to present

themselves for interview by the newly appointed

Muggle-born Registration Commission.’ ”

“People won’t let this happen,” said Ron.

“It is happening, Ron,” said Lupin. “Muggle-borns are

being rounded up as we speak.”

“But how are they supposed to have ‘stolen’ magic?”

said Ron. “It’s mental, if you could steal magic there

wouldn’t be any Squibs, would there?”

Page | 234 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I know,” said Lupin. “Nevertheless, unless you can

prove that you have at least one close Wizarding

relative, you are now deemed to have obtained your

magical power illegally and must suffer the

punishment.”

Ron glanced at Hermione, then said, “What if

purebloods and half-bloods swear a Muggle-born’s

part of their family? I’ll tell everyone Hermione ’s my

cousin — ”

Hermione covered Ron’s hand with hers and squeezed

it.

“Thank you, Ron, but I couldn’t let you — ”

“You won’t have a choice,” said Ron fiercely, gripping

her hand back. “I’ll teach you my family tree so you

can answer questions on it.

Hermione gave a shaky laugh.

“Ron, as we’re on the run with Harry Potter, the most

wanted person in the country, I don’t think it matters.

If I was going back to school it would be different.

What’s Voldemort planning for Hogwarts?” she asked

Lupin.

“Attendance is now compulsory for every young witch

and wizard,” he replied. “That was announced

yesterday. It’s a change, because it was never

obligatory before. Of course, nearly every witch and

wizard in Britain has been educated at Hogwarts, but

their parents had the right to teach them at home or

send them abroad if they preferred. This way,

Voldemort will have the whole Wizarding population

under his eye from a young age. And it’s also another

way of weeding out Muggle-borns, because students

must be given Blood Status — meaning that they

Page | 235 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

have proven to the Ministry that they are of Wizard

descent — before they are allowed to attend.”

Harry felt sickened and angry: At this moment,

excited eleven-year-olds would be poring over stacks

of newly purchased spell-books, unaware that they

would never see Hogwarts, perhaps never see their

families again either.

“It’s ... it’s ...” he muttered, struggling to find words

that did justice to the horror of his thoughts, but

Lupin said quietly,

“I know.”

Lupin hesitated.

“I’ll understand if you can’t confirm this, Harry, but

the Order is under the impression that Dumbledore

left you a mission.”

“He did,” Harry replied, “and Ron and Hermione are

in on it and they’re coming with me.”

“Can you confide in me what the mission is?”

Harry looked into the prematurely lined face, framed

in thick but graying hair, and wished that he could

return a different answer.

“I can’t, Remus, I’m sorry. If Dumbledore didn’t tell

you I don’t think I can.”

“I thought you’d say that,” said Lupin, looking

disappointed. “But I might still be of some use to you.

You know what I am and what I can do. I could come

with you to provide protection. There would be no

need to tell me exactly what you were up to.”

Page | 236 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry hesitated. It was a very tempting offer, though

how they would be able to keep their mission secret

from Lupin if he were with them all the time he could

not imagine.

Hermione, however, looked puzzled.

“But what about Tonks?” she asked.

“What about her?” said Lupin.

“Well,” said Hermione, frowning, “you’re married! How

does she feel about you going away with us?”

“Tonks will be perfectly safe,” said Lupin. “She’ll be at

her parents’ house.”

There was something strange in Lupin’s tone; it was

almost cold. There was also something odd in the idea

of Tonks remaining hidden at her parents’ house; she

was, after all, a member of the Order and, as far as

Harry knew, was likely to want to be in the thick of

the action.

“Remus,” said Hermione tentatively, “is everything all

right . . . you know . . . between you and — ”

“Everything is fine, thank you,” said Lupin pointedly.

Hermione turned pink. There was another pause, an

awkward and embarrassed one, and then Lupin said,

with an air of forcing himself to admit something

unpleasant, “Tonks is going to have a baby.”

“Oh, how wonderful!” squealed Hermione.

“Excellent!” said Ron enthusiastically.

“Congratulations,” said Harry.

Page | 237 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Lupin gave an artificial smile that was more like a

grimace, then said, “So ... do you accept my offer?

Will three become four? I cannot believe that

Dumbledore would have disapproved, he appointed

me your Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, after

all. And I must tell you that I believe that we are

facing magic many of us have never encountered or

imagined.”

Ron and Hermione both looked at Harry.

“Just — just to be clear,” he said. “You want to leave

Tonks at her parents’ house and come away with us?”

“She’ll be perfectly safe there, they’ll look after her,”

said Lupin. He spoke with a finality bordering on

indifference. “Harry, I’m sure James would have

wanted me to stick with you.”

“Well,” said Harry slowly, “I’m not. I’m pretty sure my

father would have wanted to know why you aren’t

sticking with your own kid, actually.”

Lupin’s face drained of color. The temperature in the

kitchen might have dropped ten degrees. Ron stared

around the room as though he had been bidden to

memorize it, while Hermione ’s eyes swiveled

backward and forward from Harry to Lupin.

“You don’t understand,” said Lupin at last.

“Explain, then,” said Harry.

Lupin swallowed.

“I — I made a grave mistake in marrying Tonks. I did

it against my better judgment and I have regretted it

very much ever since.”

Page | 238 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I see,” said Harry, “so you’re just going to dump her

and the kid and run off with us?”

Lupin sprang to his feet: His chair toppled over

backward, and he glared at them so fiercely that

Harry saw, for the first time ever, the shadow of the

wolf upon his human face.

“Don’t you understand what I’ve done to my wife and

my unborn child? I should never have married her,

I’ve made her an outcast!”

Lupin kicked aside the chair he had overturned.

“You have only ever seen me amongst the Order, or

under Dumbledore’s protection at Hogwarts! You

don’t know how most of the Wizarding world sees

creatures like me! When they know of my affliction,

they can barely talk to me! Don’t you see what I’ve

done? Even her own family is disgusted by our

marriage, what parents want their only daughter to

marry a werewolf? And the child — the child — ”

Lupin actually seized handfuls of his own hair; he

looked quite deranged.

“My kind don’t usually breed! It will be like me, I am

convinced of it — how can I forgive myself, when I

knowingly risked passing on my own condition to an

innocent child? And if, by some miracle, it is not like

me, then it will be better off, a hundred times so,

without a father of whom it must always be

ashamed!”

“Remus!” whispered Hermione, tears in her eyes.

“Don’t say that — how could any child be ashamed of

you?”

Page | 239 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Oh, I don’t know, Hermione,” said Harry. “I’d be

pretty ashamed of him.”

Harry did not know where his rage was coming from,

but it had propelled him to his feet too. Lupin looked

as though Harry had hit him.

“If the new regime thinks Muggle-borns are bad,”

Harry said, “what will they do to a half-werewolf

whose father’s in the Order? My father died trying to

protect my mother and me, and you reckon he’d tell

you to abandon your kid to go on an adventure with

us?”

“How — how dare you?” said Lupin. “This is not about

a desire for — for danger or personal glory — how

dare you suggest such a — ”

“I think you’re feeling a bit of a daredevil,” Harry said.

“You fancy stepping into Sirius’s shoes — ”

“Harry, no!” Hermione begged him, but he continued

to glare into Lupin’s livid face.

“I’d never have believed this,” Harry said. “The man

who taught me to fight dementors — a coward.”

Lupin drew his wand so fast that Harry had barely

reached for his own; there was a loud bang and he

felt himself flying backward as if punched; as he

slammed into the kitchen wall and slid to the floor, he

glimpsed the tail of Lupin’s cloak disappearing

around the door.

“Remus, Remus, come back!” Hermione cried, but

Lupin did not respond. A moment later they heard the

front door slam.

“Harry!” wailed Hermione. “How could you?”

Page | 240 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“It was easy,” said Harry. He stood up; he could feel a

lump swelling where his head had hit the wall. He

was still so full of anger he was shaking.

“Don’t look at me like that!” he snapped at Hermione.

“Don’t you start on her!” snarled Ron.

“No — no — we mustn’t fight!” said Hermione,

launching herself between them.

“You shouldn’t have said that stuff to Lupin,” Ron

told Harry.

“He had it coming to him,” said Harry. Broken images

were racing each other through his mind: Sirius

falling through the veil; Dumbledore suspended,

broken, in midair; a flash of green light and his

mother’s voice, begging for mercy ...

“Parents,” said Harry, “shouldn’t leave their kids

unless — unless they’ve got to.”

“Harry — ” said Hermione, stretching out a consoling

hand, but he shrugged it off and walked away, his

eyes on the fire Hermione had conjured. He had once

spoken to Lupin out of that fireplace, seeking

reassurance about James, and Lupin had consoled

him. Now Lupin’s tortured white face seemed to swim

in the air before him. He felt a sickening surge of

remorse. Neither Ron nor Hermione spoke, but Harry

felt sure that they were looking at each other behind

his back, communicating silently.

He turned around and caught them turning hurriedly

away from each other.

“I know I shouldn’t have called him a coward.”

Page | 241 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No, you shouldn’t,” said Ron at once.

“But he’s acting like one.”

“All the same ...” said Hermione.

“I know,” said Harry. “But if it makes him go back to

Tonks, it’ll be worth it, won’t it?”

He could not keep the plea out of his voice. Hermione

looked sympathetic, Ron uncertain. Harry looked

down at his feet, thinking of his father. Would James

have backed Harry in what he had said to Lupin, or

would he have been angry at how his son had treated

his old friend?

The silent kitchen seemed to hum with the shock of

the recent scene and with Ron and Hermione ’s

unspoken reproaches. The Daily Prophet Lupin had

brought was still lying on the table, Harry’s own face

staring up at the ceiling from the front page. He

walked over to it and sat down, opened the paper at

random, and pretended to read. He could not take in

the words; his mind was still too full of the encounter

with Lupin. He was sure that Ron and Hermione had

resumed their silent communications on the other

side of the Prophet He turned a page loudly, and

Dumbledore’s name leapt out at him. It was a

moment or two before he took in the meaning of the

photograph, which showed a family group. Beneath

the photograph were the words: The Dumbledore

family, left to right: Albus; Percival, holding newborn

Ariana; Kendra; and Aberforth.

His attention caught, Harry examined the picture

more carefully. Dumbledore’s father, Percival, was a

good-looking man with eyes that seemed to twinkle

even in this faded old photograph. The baby, Ariana,

was little longer than a loaf of bread and no more

Page | 242 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

distinctive-looking. The mother, Kendra, had jet-black

hair pulled into a high bun. Her face had a carved

quality about it. Harry thought of photos of Native

Americans he’d seen as he studied her dark eyes,

high cheekbones, and straight nose, formally

composed above a high-necked silk gown. Albus and

Aberforth wore matching lacy collared jackets and

had identical, shoulder-length hairstyles. Albus

looked several years older, but otherwise the two boys

looked very alike, for this was before Albus ’s nose had

been broken and before he started wearing glasses.

The family looked quite happy and normal, smiling

serenely up out of the newspaper. Baby Ariana’s arm

waved vaguely out of her shawl. Harry looked above

the picture and saw the headline:

EXCLUSIVE EXTRACT FROM THE UPCOMING

BIOGRAPHY OF ALBUS DUMBLEDORE

by Rita Skeeter

Thinking that it could hardly make him feel any worse

than he already did, Harry began to read:

Proud and haughty, Kendra Dumbledore could not

bear to remain in Mould-on-the-Wold after her

husband Percival’s well-publicized arrest and

imprisonment in Azkaban. She therefore decided to

uproot the family and relocate to Godric’s Hollow, the

village that was later to gain fame as the scene of

Harry Potter’s strange escape from You-Know-Who.

Like Mould-on-the-Wold, Godric’s Hollow was home to

a number of Wizarding families, but as Kendra knew

none of them, she would be spared the curiosity

about her husband’s crime she had faced in her

former village. By repeatedly rebuffing the friendly

Page | 243 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

advances of her new Wizarding neighbors, she soon

ensured that her family was left well alone.

“Slammed the door in my face when I went around to

welcome her with a batch of homemade Cauldron

Cakes,” says Bathilda Bagshot. “The first year they

were there I only ever saw the two boys. Wouldn’t

have known there was a daughter if I hadn’t been

picking Plangentines by moonlight the winter after they

moved in, and saw Kendra leading Ariana out into the

back garden. Walked her round the lawn once, keeping

a firm grip on her, then took her back inside. Didn’t

know what to make of it. ”

It seems that Kendra thought the move to Godric’s

Hollow was the perfect opportunity to hide Ariana

once and for all, something she had probably been

planning for years. The timing was significant. Ariana

was barely seven years old when she vanished from

sight, and seven is the age by which most experts

agree that magic will have revealed itself, if present.

Nobody now alive remembers Ariana ever

demonstrating even the slightest sign of magical

ability. It seems clear, therefore, that Kendra made a

decision to hide her daughter’s existence rather than

suffer the shame of admitting that she had produced

a Squib. Moving away from the friends and neighbors

who knew Ariana would, of course, make imprisoning

her all the easier. The tiny number of people who

henceforth knew of Ariana’s existence could be

counted upon to keep the secret, including her two

brothers, who deflected awkward questions with the

answer their mother had taught them: “My sister is

too frail for school.”

Next week: Albus Dumbledore at Hogwarts — the

Prizes and the Pretense.

Page | 244 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry had been wrong: What he had read had indeed

made him feel worse. He looked back at the

photograph of the apparently happy family. Was it

true? How could he find out? He wanted to go to

Godric’s Hollow, even if Bathilda was in no fit state to

talk to him; he wanted to visit the place where he and

Dumbledore had both lost loved ones. He was in the

process of lowering the newspaper, to ask Ron’s and

Hermione’s opinions, when a deafening crack echoed

around the kitchen.

For the first time in three days Harry had forgotten all

about Kreacher. His immediate thought was that

Lupin had burst back into the room, and for a split

second, he did not take in the mass of struggling

limbs that had appeared out of thin air right beside

his chair. He hurried to his feet as Kreacher

disentangled himself and, bowing low to Harry,

croaked, “Kreacher has returned with the thief

Mundungus Fletcher, Master.”

Mundungus scrambled up and pulled out his wand;

Hermione, however, was too quick for him.

“Expelliarmusl”

Mundungus ’s wand soared into the air, and Hermione

caught it. Wild-eyed, Mundungus dived for the stairs:

Ron rugby-tackled him and Mundungus hit the stone

floor with a muffled crunch.

“What?” he bellowed, writhing in his attempts to free

himself from Ron’s grip. “Wha’ve I done? Setting a

bleedin’ ’ouse-elf on me, what are you playing at,

wha’ve I done, lemme go, lemme go, or — ”

“You’re not in much of a position to make threats,”

said Harry. He threw aside the newspaper, crossed

the kitchen in a few strides, and dropped to his knees

Page | 245 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

beside Mundungus, who stopped struggling and

looked terrified. Ron got up, panting, and watched as

Harry pointed his wand deliberately at Mundungus ’s

nose. Mundungus stank of stale sweat and tobacco

smoke: His hair was matted and his robes stained.

“Kreacher apologizes for the delay in bringing the

thief, Master,” croaked the elf. “Fletcher knows how to

avoid capture, has many hidey-holes and

accomplices. Nevertheless, Kreacher cornered the

thief in the end.”

“You’ve done really well, Kreacher,” said Harry, and

the elf bowed low.

“Right, we’ve got a few questions for you,” Harry told

Mundungus, who shouted at once,

“I panicked, okay? I never wanted to come along, no

offense, mate, but I never volunteered to die for you,

an’ that was bleedin’ You-Know-Who come flying at

me, anyone woulda got outta there, I said all along I

didn’t wanna do it — ”

“For your information, none of the rest of us

Disapparated,” said Hermione.

“Well, you’re a bunch of bleedin’ ’eroes then, aren’t

you, but I never pretended I was up for killing meself

“We’re not interested in why you ran out on Mad-

Eye,” said Harry, moving his wand a little closer to

Mundungus’s baggy, bloodshot eyes. “We already

knew you were an unreliable bit of scum.”

“Well then, why the ’ell am I being ’unted down by

’ouse-elves? Or is this about them goblets again? I

ain’t got none of ’em left, or you could ’ave ’em — ”

Page | 246 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“It’s not about the goblets either, although you’re

getting warmer,” said Harry. “Shut up and listen.”

It felt wonderful to have something to do, someone of

whom he could demand some small portion of truth.

Harry’s wand was now so close to the bridge of

Mundungus’s nose that Mundungus had gone cross-

eyed trying to keep it in view.

“When you cleaned out this house of anything

valuable,” Harry began, but Mundungus interrupted

him again.

“Sirius never cared about any of the junk — ”

There was the sound of pattering feet, a blaze of

shining copper, an echoing clang, and a shriek of

agony: Kreacher had taken a run at Mundungus and

hit him over the head with a saucepan.

“Call ’im off, call ’im off, ’e should be locked up!”

screamed Mundungus, cowering as Kreacher raised

the heavy-bottomed pan again.

“Kreacher, no!” shouted Harry.

Kreacher’s thin arms trembled with the weight of the

pan, still held aloft.

“Perhaps just one more, Master Harry, for luck?”

Ron laughed.

“We need him conscious, Kreacher, but if he needs

persuading you can do the honors,” said Harry.

“Thank you very much, Master,” said Kreacher with a

bow, and he retreated a short distance, his great pale

eyes still fixed upon Mundungus with loathing.

Page | 247 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“When you stripped this house of all the valuables

you could find,” Harry began again, “you took a

bunch of stuff from the kitchen cupboard. There was

a locket there.” Harry’s mouth was suddenly dry: He

could sense Ron and Hermione’s tension and

excitement too. “What did you do with it?”

“Why?” asked Mundungus. “Is it valuable?”

“You’ve still got it!” cried Hermione.

“No, he hasn’t,” said Ron shrewdly. “He’s wondering

whether he should have asked more money for it.”

“More?” said Mundungus. “That wouldn’t have been

effing difficult ... bleedin’ gave it away, di’n’ I? No

choice.”

“What do you mean?”

“I was selling in Diagon Alley and she come up to me

and asks if I’ve got a license for trading in magical

artifacts. Bleedin’ snoop. She was gonna fine me, but

she took a fancy to the locket an’ told me she’d take it

and let me off that time, and to fink meself lucky.”

“Who was this woman?” asked Harry.

“I dunno, some Ministry hag.”

Mundungus considered for a moment, brow wrinkled.

“Little woman. Bow on top of ’er head.”

He frowned and then added, “Looked like a toad.”

Harry dropped his wand: It hit Mundungus on the

nose and shot red sparks into his eyebrows, which

ignited.

Page | 248 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Aguamenti\” screamed Hermione, and a jet of water

streamed from her wand, engulfing a spluttering and

choking Mundungus.

Harry looked up and saw his own shock reflected in

Ron’s and Hermione’s faces. The scars on the back of

his right hand seemed to be tingling again.

Page | 249 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

MAGIC IS MIGHT

As August wore on, the square of unkempt grass in

the middle of Grimmauld Place shriveled in the sun

until it was brittle and brown. The inhabitants of

number twelve were never seen by anybody in the

surrounding houses, and nor was number twelve

itself. The Muggles who lived in Grimmauld Place had

long since accepted the amusing mistake in the

numbering that had caused number eleven to sit

beside number thirteen.

And yet the square was now attracting a trickle of

visitors who seemed to find the anomaly most

intriguing. Barely a day passed without one or two

people arriving in Grimmauld Place with no other

purpose, or so it seemed, than to lean against the

railings facing numbers eleven and thirteen, watching

the join between the two houses. The lurkers were

never the same two days running, although they all

seemed to share a dislike for normal clothing. Most of

the Londoners who passed them were used to

eccentric dressers and took little notice, though

occasionally one of them might glance back,

Page | 250 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

wondering why anyone would wear such long cloaks

in this heat.

The watchers seemed to be gleaning little satisfaction

from their vigil. Occasionally one of them started

forward excitedly, as if they had seen something

interesting at last, only to fall back looking

disappointed.

On the first day of September there were more people

lurking in the square than ever before. Half a dozen

men in long cloaks stood silent and watchful, gazing

as ever at houses eleven and thirteen, but the thing

for which they were waiting still appeared elusive. As

evening drew in, bringing with it an unexpected gust

of chilly rain for the first time in weeks, there

occurred one of those inexplicable moments when

they appeared to have seen something interesting.

The man with the twisted face pointed and his closest

companion, a podgy, pallid man, started forward, but

a moment later they had relaxed into their previous

state of inactivity, looking frustrated and

disappointed.

Meanwhile, inside number twelve, Harry had just

entered the hall. He had nearly lost his balance as he

Apparated onto the top step just outside the front

door, and thought that the Death Eaters might have

caught a glimpse of his momentarily exposed elbow.

Shutting the front door carefully behind him, he

pulled off the Invisibility Cloak, draped it over his

arm, and hurried along the gloomy hallway toward

the door that led to the basement, a stolen copy of the

Daily Prophet clutched in his hand.

The usual low whisper of “Severus Snape?” greeted

him, the chill wind swept him, and his tongue rolled

up for a moment.

Page | 251 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I didn’t kill you,” he said, once it had unrolled, then

held his breath as the dusty jinx-figure exploded. He

waited until he was halfway down the stairs to the

kitchen, out of earshot of Mrs. Black and clear of the

dust cloud, before calling, “I’ve got news, and you

won’t like it.”

The kitchen was almost unrecognizable. Every surface

now shone: Copper pots and pans had been

burnished to a rosy glow; the wooden tabletop

gleamed; the goblets and plates already laid for

dinner glinted in the light from a merrily blazing fire,

on which a cauldron was simmering. Nothing in the

room, however, was more dramatically different than

the house-elf who now came hurrying toward Harry,

dressed in a snowy-white towel, his ear hair as clean

and fluffy as cotton wool, Regulus’s locket bouncing

on his thin chest.

“Shoes off, if you please, Master Harry, and hands

washed before dinner,” croaked Kreacher, seizing the

Invisibility Cloak and slouching off to hang it on a

hook on the wall, beside a number of old-fashioned

robes that had been freshly laundered.

“What’s happened?” Ron asked apprehensively. He

and Hermione had been poring over a sheaf of

scribbled notes and hand-drawn maps that littered

the end of the long kitchen table, but now they

watched Harry as he strode toward them and threw

down the newspaper on top of their scattered

parchment.

A large picture of a familiar, hook-nosed, black-haired

man stared up at them all, beneath a headline that

read:

SEVERUS SNAPE CONFIRMED AS HOGWARTS

HEADMASTER

Page | 252 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No!” said Ron and Hermione loudly.

Hermione was quickest; she snatched up the

newspaper and began to read the accompanying story

out loud.

“ ‘Severus Snape, long-standing Potions master at

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, was

today appointed headmaster in the most important of

several staffing changes at the ancient school.

Following the resignation of the previous Muggle

Studies teacher, Alecto Carrow will take over the post

while her brother, Amycus, fills the position of Defense

Against the Dark Arts professor.

“ 7 welcome the opportunity to uphold our finest

Wizarding traditions and values — ’ Like committing

murder and cutting off people’s ears, I suppose!

Snape, headmaster! Snape in Dumbledore’s study —

Merlin’s pants!” she shrieked, making both Harry and

Ron jump. She leapt up from the table and hurtled

from the room, shouting as she went, “I’ll be back in a

minute!”

“ ‘Merlin’s pants?” repeated Ron, looking amused.

“She must be upset.” He pulled the newspaper toward

him and perused the article about Snape.

“The other teachers won’t stand for this. McGonagall

and Flitwick and Sprout all know the truth, they

know how Dumbledore died. They won’t accept Snape

as headmaster. And who are these Carrows?”

“Death Eaters,” said Harry. “There are pictures of

them inside. They were at the top of the tower when

Snape killed Dumbledore, so it’s all friends together.

And,” Harry went on bitterly, drawing up a chair, “I

can’t see that the other teachers have got any choice

but to stay. If the Ministry and Voldemort are behind

Page | 253 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Snape it’ll be a choice between staying and teaching,

or a nice few years in Azkaban — and that’s if they’re

lucky. I reckon they’ll stay to try and protect the

students.”

Kreacher came bustling to the table with a large

tureen in his hands, and ladled out soup into pristine

bowls, whistling between his teeth as he did so.

“Thanks, Kreacher,” said Harry, flipping over the

Prophet so as not to have to look at Snape ’s face.

“Well, at least we know exactly where Snape is now.”

He began to spoon soup into his mouth. The quality

of Kreacher’s cooking had improved dramatically ever

since he had been given Regulus’s locket: Today’s

French onion was as good as Harry had ever tasted.

“There are still a load of Death Eaters watching the

house,” he told Ron as he ate, “more than usual. It’s

like they’re hoping we’ll march out carrying our

school trunks and head off for the Hogwarts Express.”

Ron glanced at his watch.

“I’ve been thinking about that all day. It left nearly six

hours ago. Weird, not being on it, isn’t it?”

In his mind’s eye Harry seemed to see the scarlet

steam engine as he and Ron had once followed it by

air, shimmering between fields and hills, a rippling

scarlet caterpillar. He was sure Ginny, Neville, and

Luna were sitting together at this moment, perhaps

wondering where he, Ron, and Hermione were, or

debating how best to undermine Snape ’s new regime.

“They nearly saw me coming back in just now,” Harry

said. “I landed badly on the top step, and the Cloak

slipped.”

Page | 254 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I do that every time. Oh, here she is,” Ron added,

craning around in his seat to watch Hermione

reentering the kitchen. “And what in the name of

Merlin’s most baggy Y Fronts was that about?”

“I remembered this,” Hermione panted.

She was carrying a large, framed picture, which she

now lowered to the floor before seizing her small,

beaded bag from the kitchen sideboard. Opening it,

she proceeded to force the painting inside, and

despite the fact that it was patently too large to fit

inside the tiny bag, within a few seconds it had

vanished, like so much else, into the bag’s capacious

depths.

“Phineas Nigellus,” Hermione explained as she threw

the bag onto the kitchen table with the usual

sonorous, clanking crash.

“Sorry?” said Ron, but Harry understood. The painted

image of Phineas Nigellus Black was able to flit

between his portrait in Grimmauld Place and the one

that hung in the headmaster’s office at Hogwarts: the

circular tower-top room where Snape was no doubt

sitting right now, in triumphant possession of

Dumbledore’s collection of delicate, silver magical

instruments, the stone Pensieve, the Sorting Hat and,

unless it had been moved elsewhere, the sword of

Gryffindor.

“Snape could send Phineas Nigellus to look inside this

house for him,” Hermione explained to Ron as she

resumed her seat. “But let him try it now, all Phineas

Nigellus will be able to see is the inside of my

handbag.”

“Good thinking!” said Ron, looking impressed.

Page | 255 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Thank you,” smiled Hermione, pulling her soup

toward her. “So, Harry, what else happened today?”

“Nothing,” said Harry. “Watched the Ministry entrance

for seven hours. No sign of her. Saw your dad,

though, Ron. He looks fine.”

Ron nodded his appreciation of this news. They had

agreed that it was far too dangerous to try and

communicate with Mr. Weasley while he walked in

and out of the Ministry, because he was always

surrounded by other Ministry workers. It was,

however, reassuring to catch these glimpses of him,

even if he did look very strained and anxious.

“Dad always told us most Ministry people use the

Floo Network to get to work,” Ron said. “That’s why

we haven’t seen Umbridge, she’d never walk, she’d

think she’s too important.”

“And what about that funny old witch and that little

wizard in the navy robes?” Hermione asked.

“Oh yeah, the bloke from Magical Maintenance,” said

Ron.

“How do you know he works for Magical

Maintenance?” Hermione asked, her soupspoon

suspended in midair.

“Dad said everyone from Magical Maintenance wears

navy blue robes.”

“But you never told us that!”

Hermione dropped her spoon and pulled toward her

the sheaf of notes and maps that she and Ron had

been examining when Harry had entered the kitchen.

Page | 256 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“There’s nothing in here about navy blue robes,

nothing!” she said, flipping feverishly through the

pages.

“Well, does it really matter?”

“Ron, it all matters! If we’re going to get into the

Ministry and not give ourselves away when they’re

bound to be on the lookout for intruders, every little

detail matters! We’ve been over and over this, I mean,

what’s the point of all these reconnaissance trips if

you aren’t even bothering to tell us — ”

“Blimey, Hermione, I forget one little thing — ”

“You do realize, don’t you, that there’s probably no

more dangerous place in the whole world for us to be

right now than the Ministry of — ”

“I think we should do it tomorrow,” said Harry.

Hermione stopped dead, her jaw hanging; Ron choked

a little over his soup.

“Tomorrow?” repeated Hermione. “You aren’t serious,

Harry?”

“I am,” said Harry. “I don’t think we’re going to be

much better prepared than we are now even if we

skulk around the Ministry entrance for another

month. The longer we put it off, the farther away that

locket could be. There’s already a good chance

Umbridge has chucked it away; the thing doesn’t

open.”

“Unless,” said Ron, “she’s found a way of opening it

and she’s now possessed.”

Page | 257 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Wouldn’t make any difference to her, she was so evil

in the first place,” Harry shrugged.

Hermione was biting her lip, deep in thought.

“We know everything important,” Harry went on,

addressing Hermione. “We know they’ve stopped

Apparition in and out of the Ministry. We know only

the most senior Ministry members are allowed to

connect their homes to the Floo Network now,

because Ron heard those two Unspeakables

complaining about it. And we know roughly where

Umbridge’s office is, because of what you heard that

bearded bloke saying to his mate — ”

“ ‘I’ll be up on level one, Dolores wants to see me,’ ”

Hermione recited immediately.

“Exactly,” said Harry. “And we know you get in using

those funny coins, or tokens, or whatever they are,

because I saw that witch borrowing one from her

friend — ”

“But we haven’t got any!”

“If the plan works, we will have,” Harry continued

calmly.

“I don’t know, Harry, I don’t know. ... There are an

awful lot of things that could go wrong, so much

relies on chance. ...”

“That’ll be true even if we spend another three

months preparing,” said Harry. “It’s time to act.”

He could tell from Ron’s and Hermione’s faces that

they were scared; he was not particularly confident

himself, and yet he was sure the time had come to

put their plan into operation.

Page | 258 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

They had spent the previous four weeks taking it in

turns to don the Invisibility Cloak and spy on the

official entrance to the Ministry, which Ron, thanks to

Mr. Weasley, had known since childhood. They had

tailed Ministry workers on their way in, eavesdropped

on their conversations, and learned by careful

observation which of them could be relied upon to

appear, alone, at the same time every day.

Occasionally there had been a chance to sneak a

Daily Prophet out of somebody’s briefcase. Slowly they

had built up the sketchy maps and notes now stacked

in front of Hermione.

“All right,” said Ron slowly, “let’s say we go for it

tomorrow. ... I think it should just be me and Harry.”

“Oh, don’t start that again!” sighed Hermione. “I

thought we’d settled this.”

“It’s one thing hanging around the entrances under

the Cloak, but this is different, Hermione.” Ron

jabbed a finger at a copy of the Daily Prophet dated

ten days previously. “You’re on the list of Muggle-

borns who didn’t present themselves for

interrogation!”

“And you’re supposed to be dying of spattergroit at

the Burrow! If anyone shouldn’t go, it’s Harry, he’s got

a ten-thousand-Galleon price on his head — ”

“Fine, I’ll stay here,” said Harry. “Let me know if you

ever defeat Voldemort, won’t you?”

As Ron and Hermione laughed, pain shot through the

scar on Harry’s forehead. His hand jumped to it: He

saw Hermione’s eyes narrow, and he tried to pass off

the movement by brushing his hair out of his eyes.

Page | 259 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Well, if all three of us go well have to Disapparate

separately,” Ron was saying. “We can’t all fit under

the Cloak anymore.”

Harry’s scar was becoming more and more painful.

He stood up. At once, Kreacher hurried forward.

“Master has not finished his soup, would Master

prefer the savory stew, or else the treacle tart to

which Master is so partial?”

“Thanks, Kreacher, but I’ll be back in a minute — er

— bathroom.”

Aware that Hermione was watching him suspiciously,

Harry hurried up the stairs to the hall and then to the

first landing, where he dashed into the bathroom and

bolted the door again. Grunting with pain, he

slumped over the black basin with its taps in the form

of open-mouthed serpents and closed his eyes. ...

He was gliding along a twilit street. The buildings on

either side of him had high, timbered gables; they

looked like gingerbread houses.

He approached one of them, then saw the whiteness

of his own long-fingered hand against the door. He

knocked. He felt a mounting excitement. ...

The door opened: A laughing woman stood there. Her

face fell as she looked into Harry’s face: humor gone,

terror replacing it. ...

“Gregorovitch?” said a high, cold voice.

She shook her head: She was trying to close the door.

A white hand held it steady, prevented her shutting

him out. ...

Page | 260 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I want Gregorovitch.”

“Er wohnt hier nicht mehr\” she cried, shaking her

head. “He no live here! He no live here! I know him

not!”

Abandoning the attempt to close the door, she began

to back away down the dark hall, and Harry followed,

gliding toward her, and his long-fingered hand had

drawn his wand.

“Where is he?”

“Das weifi ich nichti He move! I know not, I know not!”

He raised the wand. She screamed. Two young

children came running into the hall. She tried to

shield them with her arms. There was a flash of green

light —

“Harry! HARRY!”

He opened his eyes; he had sunk to the floor.

Hermione was pounding on the door again.

“Harry, open up!”

He had shouted out, he knew it. He got up and

unbolted the door; Hermione toppled inside at once,

regained her balance, and looked around

suspiciously. Ron was right behind her, looking

unnerved as he pointed his wand into the corners of

the chilly bathroom.

“What were you doing?” asked Hermione sternly.

“What d’you think I was doing?” asked Harry with

feeble bravado.

Page | 261 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You were yelling your head off!” said Ron.

“Oh yeah ... I must’ve dozed off or — ”

“Harry, please don’t insult our intelligence,” said

Hermione, taking deep breaths. “We know your scar

hurt downstairs, and you’re white as a sheet.”

Harry sat down on the edge of the bath.

“Fine. I’ve just seen Voldemort murdering a woman.

By now he’s probably killed her whole family. And he

didn’t need to. It was Cedric all over again, they were

just there. ...”

“Harry, you aren’t supposed to let this happen

anymore!” Hermione cried, her voice echoing through

the bathroom. “Dumbledore wanted you to use

Occlumency! He thought the connection was

dangerous — Voldemort can use it, Harry! What good

is it to watch him kill and torture, how can it help?”

“Because it means I know what he’s doing,” said

Harry.

“So you’re not even going to try to shut him out?”

“Hermione, I can’t. You know I’m lousy at

Occlumency, I never got the hang of it.”

“You never really tried!” she said hotly. “I don’t get it,

Harry — do you like having this special connection or

relationship or what — whatever — ”

She faltered under the look he gave her as he stood

up.

“Like it?” he said quietly. “Would you like it?”

Page | 262 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I — no — I’m sorry, Harry, I didn’t mean — ”

“I hate it, I hate the fact that he can get inside me,

that I have to watch him when he’s most dangerous.

But I’m going to use it.”

“Dumbledore — ”

“Forget Dumbledore. This is my choice, nobody else’s.

I want to know why he’s after Gregorovitch.”

“Who?”

“He’s a foreign wandmaker,” said Harry. “He made

Krum’s wand and Krum reckons he’s brilliant.”

“But according to you,” said Ron, “Voldemort’s got

Ollivander locked up somewhere. If he’s already got a

wandmaker, what does he need another one for?”

“Maybe he agrees with Krum, maybe he thinks

Gregorovitch is better ... or else he thinks

Gregorovitch will be able to explain what my wand did

when he was chasing me, because Ollivander didn’t

know.”

Harry glanced into the cracked, dusty mirror and saw

Ron and Hermione exchanging skeptical looks behind

his back.

“Harry, you keep talking about what your wand did,”

said Hermione, “but you made it happen! Why are

you so determined not to take responsibility for your

own power?”

“Because I know it wasn’t me! And so does Voldemort,

Hermione! We both know what really happened!”

Page | 263 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

They glared at each other: Harry knew that he had

not convinced Hermione and that she was marshaling

counterarguments, against both his theory on his

wand and the fact that he was permitting himself to

see into Voldemort’s mind. To his relief, Ron

intervened.

“Drop it,” he advised her. “It’s up to him. And if we’re

going to the Ministry tomorrow, don’t you reckon we

should go over the plan?”

Reluctantly, as the other two could tell, Hermione let

the matter rest, though Harry was quite sure she

would attack again at the first opportunity. In the

meantime, they returned to the basement kitchen,

where Kreacher served them all stew and treacle tart.

They did not get to bed until late that night, after

spending hours going over and over their plan until

they could recite it, word perfect, to each other.

Harry, who was now sleeping in Sirius’s room, lay in

bed with his wandlight trained on the old photograph

of his father, Sirius, Lupin, and Pettigrew, and

muttered the plan to himself for another ten minutes.

As he extinguished his wand, however, he was

thinking not of Polyjuice Potion, Puking Pastilles, or

the navy blue robes of Magical Maintenance; he

thought of Gregorovitch the wandmaker, and how

long he could hope to remain hidden while Voldemort

sought him so determinedly.

Dawn seemed to follow midnight with indecent haste.

“You look terrible,” was Ron’s greeting as he entered

the room to wake Harry.

“Not for long,” said Harry, yawning.

Page | 264 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

They found Hermione downstairs in the kitchen. She

was being served coffee and hot rolls by Kreacher and

wearing the slightly manic expression that Harry

associated with exam review.

“Robes,” she said under her breath, acknowledging

their presence with a nervous nod and continuing to

poke around in her beaded bag, “Polyjuice Potion ...

Invisibility Cloak ... Decoy Detonators ... You should

each take a couple just in case. ... Puking Pastilles,

Nosebleed Nougat, Extendable Ears ...”

They gulped down their breakfast, then set off

upstairs, Kreacher bowing them out and promising to

have a steak-and-kidney pie ready for them when

they returned.

“Bless him,” said Ron fondly, “and when you think I

used to fantasize about cutting off his head and

sticking it on the wall.”

They made their way onto the front step with

immense caution: They could see a couple of puffy-

eyed Death Eaters watching the house from across

the misty square.

Hermione Disapparated with Ron first, then came

back for Harry.

After the usual brief spell of darkness and near

suffocation, Harry found himself in the tiny alleyway

where the first phase of their plan was scheduled to

take place. It was as yet deserted, except for a couple

of large bins; the first Ministry workers did not

usually appear here until at least eight o’clock.

“Right then,” said Hermione, checking her watch.

“She ought to be here in about five minutes. When

I’ve Stunned her — ”

Page | 265 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Hermione, we know,” said Ron sternly. “And I

thought we were supposed to open the door before

she got here?”

Hermione squealed.

“I nearly forgot! Stand back — ”

She pointed her wand at the padlocked and heavily

graffitied fire door beside them, which burst open

with a crash. The dark corridor behind it led, as they

knew from their careful scouting trips, into an empty

theater. Hermione pulled the door back toward her, to

make it look as though it was still closed.

“And now,” she said, turning back to face the other

two in the alleyway, “we put on the Cloak again — ”

“ — and we wait,” Ron finished, throwing it over

Hermione ’s head like a blanket over a birdcage and

rolling his eyes at Harry.

Little more than a minute later, there was a tiny pop

and a little Ministry witch with flyaway gray hair

Apparated feet from them, blinking a little in the

sudden brightness; the sun had just come out from

behind a cloud. She barely had time to enjoy the

unexpected warmth, however, before Hermione ’s

silent Stunning Spell hit her in the chest and she

toppled over.

“Nicely done, Hermione,” said Ron, emerging from

behind a bin beside the theater door as Harry took off

the Invisibility Cloak. Together they carried the little

witch into the dark passageway that led backstage.

Hermione plucked a few hairs from the witch’s head

and added them to a flask of muddy Polyjuice Potion

she had taken from the beaded bag. Ron was

rummaging through the little witch’s handbag.

Page | 266 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“She’s Mafalda Hopkirk,” he said, reading a small

card that identified their victim as an assistant in the

Improper Use of Magic Office. “You’d better take this,

Hermione, and here are the tokens.”

He passed her several small golden coins, all

embossed with the letters M.O.M., which he had

taken from the witch’s purse.

Hermione drank the Polyjuice Potion, which was now

a pleasant heliotrope color, and within seconds stood

before them, the double of Mafalda Hopkirk. As she

removed Mafalda’s spectacles and put them on, Harry

checked his watch.

“We’re running late, Mr. Magical Maintenance will be

here any second.”

They hurried to close the door on the real Mafalda;

Harry and Ron threw the Invisibility Cloak over

themselves but Hermione remained in view, waiting.

Seconds later there was another pop, and a small,

ferrety-looking wizard appeared before them.

“Oh, hello, Mafalda.”

“Hello!” said Hermione in a quavery voice. “How are

you today?”

“Not so good, actually,” replied the little wizard, who

looked thoroughly downcast.

As Hermione and the wizard headed for the main

road, Harry and Ron crept along behind them.

“I’m sorry to hear you’re under the weather,” said

Hermione, talking firmly over the little wizard as he

tried to expound upon his problems; it was essential

Page | 267 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

to stop him from reaching the street. “Here, have a

sweet.”

“Eh? Oh, no thanks — ”

“I insist!” said Hermione aggressively, shaking the bag

of pastilles in his face. Looking rather alarmed, the

little wizard took one.

The effect was instantaneous. The moment the

pastille touched his tongue, the little wizard started

vomiting so hard that he did not even notice as

Hermione yanked a handful of hairs from the top of

his head.

“Oh dear!” she said, as he splattered the alley with

sick. “Perhaps you’d better take the day off!”

“No — no!” He choked and retched, trying to continue

on his way despite being unable to walk straight. “I

must — today — must go — ”

“But that’s just silly!” said Hermione, alarmed. “You

can’t go to work in this state — I think you ought to

go to St. Mungo’s and get them to sort you out!”

The wizard had collapsed, heaving, onto all fours, still

trying to crawl toward the main street.

“You simply can’t go to work like this!” cried

Hermione.

At last he seemed to accept the truth of her words.

Using a repulsed Hermione to claw his way back into

a standing position, he turned on the spot and

vanished, leaving nothing behind but the bag Ron

had snatched from his hand as he went and some

flying chunks of vomit.

Page | 268 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Urgh,” said Hermione, holding up the skirts of her

robe to avoid the puddles of sick. “It would have made

much less mess to Stun him too.”

“Yeah,” said Ron, emerging from under the cloak

holding the wizard’s bag, “but I still think a whole pile

of unconscious bodies would have drawn more

attention. Keen on his job, though, isn’t he? Chuck us

the hair and the potion, then.”

Within two minutes, Ron stood before them, as small

and ferrety as the sick wizard, and wearing the navy

blue robes that had been folded in his bag.

“Weird he wasn’t wearing them today, wasn’t it,

seeing how much he wanted to go? Anyway, I’m Reg

Cattermole, according to the label in the back.”

“Now wait here,” Hermione told Harry, who was still

under the Invisibility Cloak, “and we’ll be back with

some hairs for you.”

He had to wait ten minutes, but it seemed much

longer to Harry, skulking alone in the sick-splattered

alleyway beside the door concealing the Stunned

Mafalda. Finally Ron and Hermione reappeared.

“We don’t know who he is,” Hermione said, passing

Harry several curly black hairs, “but he’s gone home

with a dreadful nosebleed! Here, he’s pretty tall, you’ll

need bigger robes. ...”

She pulled out a set of the old robes Kreacher had

laundered for them, and Harry retired to take the

potion and change.

Once the painful transformation was complete he was

more than six feet tall and, from what he could tell

from his well-muscled arms, powerfully built. He also

Page | 269 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

had a beard. Stowing the Invisibility Cloak and his

glasses inside his new robes, he rejoined the other

two.

“Blimey, that’s scary,” said Ron, looking up at Harry,

who now towered over him.

“Take one of Mafalda’s tokens,” Hermione told Harry,

“and let’s go, it’s nearly nine.”

They stepped out of the alleyway together. Fifty yards

along the crowded pavement there were spiked black

railings flanking two flights of steps, one labeled

GENTLEMEN, the other LADIES.

“See you in a moment, then,” said Hermione

nervously, and she tottered off down the steps to

LADIES. Harry and Ron joined a number of oddly

dressed men descending into what appeared to be an

ordinary underground public toilet, tiled in grimy

black and white.

“Morning, Reg!” called another wizard in navy blue

robes as he let himself into a cubicle by inserting his

golden token into a slot in the door. “Blooming pain in

the bum, this, eh? Forcing us all to get to work this

way! Who are they expecting to turn up, Harry

Potter?”

The wizard roared with laughter at his own wit. Ron

gave a forced chuckle.

“Yeah,” he said, “stupid, isn’t it?”

And he and Harry let themselves into adjoining

cubicles.

To Harry’s left and right came the sound of flushing.

He crouched down and peered through the gap at the

Page | 270 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

bottom of the cubicle, just in time to see a pair of

booted feet climbing into the toilet next door. He

looked left and saw Ron blinking at him.

“We have to flush ourselves in?” he whispered.

“Looks like it,” Harry whispered back; his voice came

out deep and gravelly.

They both stood up. Feeling exceptionally foolish,

Harry clambered into the toilet.

He knew at once that he had done the right thing;

though he appeared to be standing in water, his

shoes, feet, and robes remained quite dry. He reached

up, pulled the chain, and next moment had zoomed

down a short chute, emerging out of a fireplace into

the Ministry of Magic.

He got up clumsily; there was a lot more of his body

than he was accustomed to. The great Atrium seemed

darker than Harry remembered it. Previously a golden

fountain had filled the center of the hall, casting

shimmering spots of light over the polished wooden

floor and walls. Now a gigantic statue of black stone

dominated the scene. It was rather frightening, this

vast sculpture of a witch and a wizard sitting on

ornately carved thrones, looking down at the Ministry

workers toppling out of fireplaces below them.

Engraved in foot-high letters at the base of the statue

were the words MAGIC IS MIGHT.

Harry received a heavy blow on the back of the legs:

Another wizard had just flown out of the fireplace

behind him.

“Out of the way, can’t y — oh, sorry, Runcorn!”

Page | 271 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Clearly frightened, the balding wizard hurried away.

Apparently the man whom Harry was impersonating,

Runcorn, was intimidating.

“Psst!” said a voice, and he looked around to see a

wispy little witch and the ferrety wizard from Magical

Maintenance gesturing to him from over beside the

statue. Harry hastened to join them.

“You got in all right, then?” Hermione whispered to

Harry.

“No, he’s still stuck in the bog,” said Ron.

“Oh, very funny ... It’s horrible, isn’t it?” she said to

Harry, who was staring up at the statue. “Have you

seen what they’re sitting on?

Harry looked more closely and realized that what he

had thought were decoratively carved thrones were

actually mounds of carved humans: hundreds and

hundreds of naked bodies, men, women, and

children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted

and pressed together to support the weight of the

handsomely robed wizards.

“Muggles,” whispered Hermione. “In their rightful

place. Come on, let’s get going.”

They joined the stream of witches and wizards moving

toward the golden gates at the end of the hall, looking

around as surreptitiously as possible, but there was

no sign of the distinctive figure of Dolores Umbridge.

They passed through the gates and into a smaller

hall, where queues were forming in front of twenty

golden grilles housing as many lifts. They had barely

joined the nearest one when a voice said,

“Cattermole!”

Page | 272 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

They looked around: Harry’s stomach turned over.

One of the Death Eaters who had witnessed

Dumbledore’s death was striding toward them. The

Ministry workers beside them fell silent, their eyes

downcast; Harry could feel fear rippling through

them. The man’s scowling, slightly brutish face was

somehow at odds with his magnificent, sweeping

robes, which were embroidered with much gold

thread. Someone in the crowd around the lifts called

sycophantically, “Morning, Yaxley!” Yaxley ignored

them.

“I requested somebody from Magical Maintenance to

sort out my office, Cattermole. It’s still raining in

there.”

Ron looked around as though hoping somebody else

would intervene, but nobody spoke.

“Raining ... in your office? That’s — that’s not good, is

it?”

Ron gave a nervous laugh. Yaxley’s eyes widened.

“You think it’s funny, Cattermole, do you?”

A pair of witches broke away from the queue for the

lift and bustled off.

“No,” said Ron, “no, of course — ”

“You realize that I am on my way downstairs to

interrogate your wife, Cattermole? In fact, I’m quite

surprised you’re not down there holding her hand

while she waits. Already given her up as a bad job,

have you? Probably wise. Be sure and marry a

pureblood next time.”

Page | 273 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Hermione had let out a little squeak of horror. Yaxley

looked at her. She coughed feebly and turned away.

“I — I — ” stammered Ron.

“But if my wife were accused of being a Mudblood,”

said Yaxley, “ — not that any woman I married would

ever be mistaken for such filth — and the Head of the

Department of Magical Law Enforcement needed a job

doing, I would make it my priority to do that job,

Cattermole. Do you understand me?”

“Yes,” whispered Ron.

“Then attend to it, Cattermole, and if my office is not

completely dry within an hour, your wife’s Blood

Status will be in even graver doubt than it is now.”

The golden grille before them clattered open. With a

nod and unpleasant smile to Harry, who was

evidently expected to appreciate this treatment of

Cattermole, Yaxley swept away toward another lift.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione entered theirs, but nobody

followed them: It was as if they were infectious. The

grilles shut with a clang and the lift began to move

upward.

“What am I going to do?” Ron asked the other two at

once; he looked stricken. “If I don’t turn up, my wife

— I mean, Cattermole ’s wife — ”

“Well come with you, we should stick together — ”

began Harry, but Ron shook his head feverishly.

“That’s mental, we haven’t got much time. You two

find Umbridge, I’ll go and sort out Yaxley’s office —

but how do I stop it raining?”

Page | 274 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Try Finite Incantatem,” said Hermione at once, “that

should stop the rain if it’s a hex or curse; if it doesn’t,

something’s gone wrong with an Atmospheric Charm,

which will be more difficult to fix, so as an interim

measure try Impervius to protect his belongings — ”

“Say it again, slowly — ” said Ron, searching his

pockets desperately for a quill, but at that moment

the lift juddered to a halt. A disembodied female voice

said, “Level four, Department for the Regulation and

Control of Magical Creatures, incorporating Beast,

Being, and Spirit Divisions, Goblin Liaison Office, and

Pest Advisory Bureau,” and the grilles slid open again,

admitting a couple of wizards and several pale violet

paper airplanes that fluttered around the lamp in the

ceiling of the lift.

“Morning, Albert,” said a bushily whiskered man,

smiling at Harry. He glanced over at Ron and

Hermione as the lift creaked upward once more;

Hermione was now whispering frantic instructions to

Ron. The wizard leaned toward Harry, leering, and

muttered, “Dirk Cresswell, eh? From Goblin Liaison?

Nice one, Albert. I’m pretty confident I’ll get his job

now!”

He winked. Harry smiled back, hoping that this would

suffice. The lift stopped; the grilles opened once more.

“Level two, Department of Magical Law Enforcement,

including the Improper Use of Magic Office, Auror

Headquarters, and Wizengamot Administration

Services,” said the disembodied witch’s voice.

Harry saw Hermione give Ron a little push and he

hurried out of the lift, followed by the other wizards,

leaving Harry and Hermione alone. The moment the

golden door had closed Hermione said, very fast,

“Actually, Harry, I think I’d better go after him, I don’t

Page | 275 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

think he knows what he’s doing and if he gets caught

the whole thing — ”

“Level one, Minister of Magic and Support Staff.”

The golden grilles slid apart again and Hermione

gasped. Four people stood before them, two of them

deep in conversation: a longhaired wizard wearing

magnificent robes of black and gold, and a squat,

toadlike witch wearing a velvet bow in her short hair

and clutching a clipboard to her chest.

Page | 276 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE MUGGLE-BORN REGISTRATION

COMMISSION

“Ah, Mafalda!” said Umbridge, looking at Hermione.

“Travers sent you, did he?”

“Y-yes,” squeaked Hermione.

“Good, youll do perfectly well.” Umbridge spoke to the

wizard in black and gold. “That’s that problem solved,

Minister, if Mafalda can be spared for record-keeping

we shall be able to start straightaway.” She consulted

her clipboard. “Ten people today and one of them the

wife of a Ministry employee! Tut, tut ... even here, in

the heart of the Ministry!” She stepped into the lift

beside Hermione, as did the two wizards who had

been listening to Umbridge’s conversation with the

Minister. “We’ll go straight down, Mafalda, you’ll find

everything you need in the courtroom. Good morning,

Albert, aren’t you getting out?”

“Yes, of course,” said Harry in Runcorn’s deep voice.

Page | 277 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry stepped out of the lift. The golden grilles

clanged shut behind him. Glancing over his shoulder,

Harry saw Hermione’s anxious face sinking back out

of sight, a tall wizard on either side of her, Umbridge’s

velvet hair-bow level with her shoulder.

“What brings you up here, Runcorn?” asked the new

Minister of Magic. His long black hair and beard were

streaked with silver, and a great overhanging

forehead shadowed his glinting eyes, putting Harry in

mind of a crab looking out from beneath a rock.

“Needed a quick word with,” Harry hesitated for a

fraction of a second, “Arthur Weasley. Someone said

he was up on level one.”

“Ah,” said Pius Thicknesse. “Has he been caught

having contact with an Undesirable?”

“No,” said Harry, his throat dry. “No, nothing like

that.”

“Ah, well. It’s only a matter of time,” said Thicknesse.

“If you ask me, the blood traitors are as bad as the

Mudbloods. Good day, Runcorn.”

“Good day, Minister.”

Harry watched Thicknesse march away along the

thickly carpeted corridor. The moment the Minister

had passed out of sight, Harry tugged the Invisibility

Cloak out from under his heavy black cloak, threw it

over himself, and set off along the corridor in the

opposite direction. Runcorn was so tall that Harry

was forced to stoop to make sure his big feet were

hidden.

Panic pulsed in the pit of his stomach. As he passed

gleaming wooden door after gleaming wooden door,

Page | 278 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

each bearing a small plaque with the owner’s name

and occupation upon it, the might of the Ministry, its

complexity, its impenetrability, seemed to force itself

upon him so that the plan he had been carefully

concocting with Ron and Hermione over the past four

weeks seemed laughably childish. They had

concentrated all their efforts on getting inside without

being detected: They had not given a moment’s

thought to what they would do if they were forced to

separate. Now Hermione was stuck in court

proceedings, which would undoubtedly last hours;

Ron was struggling to do magic that Harry was sure

was beyond him, a woman’s liberty possibly

depending on the outcome; and he, Harry, was

wandering around on the top floor when he knew

perfectly well that his quarry had just gone down in

the lift.

He stopped walking, leaned against a wall, and tried

to decide what to do. The silence pressed upon him:

There was no bustling or talk or swift footsteps here;

the purple-carpeted corridors were as hushed as

though the Muffliato charm had been cast over the

place.

Her office must be up here, Harry thought.

It seemed most unlikely that Umbridge would keep

her jewelry in her office, but on the other hand it

seemed foolish not to search it to make sure. He

therefore set off along the corridor again, passing

nobody but a frowning wizard who was murmuring

instructions to a quill that floated in front of him,

scribbling on a trail of parchment.

Now paying attention to the names on the doors,

Harry turned a corner. Halfway along the next

corridor he emerged into a wide, open space where a

dozen witches and wizards sat in rows at small desks

Page | 279 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

not unlike school desks, though much more highly

polished and free from graffiti. Harry paused to watch

them, for the effect was quite mesmerizing. They were

all waving and twiddling their wands in unison, and

squares of colored paper were flying in every direction

like little pink kites. After a few seconds, Harry

realized that there was a rhythm to the proceedings,

that the papers all formed the same pattern; and after

a few more seconds he realized that what he was

watching was the creation of pamphlets — that the

paper squares were pages, which, when assembled,

folded, and magicked into place, fell into neat stacks

beside each witch or wizard.

Harry crept closer, although the workers were so

intent on what they were doing that he doubted they

would notice a carpet-muffled footstep, and he slid a

completed pamphlet from the pile beside a young

witch. He examined it beneath the Invisibility Cloak.

Its pink cover was emblazoned with a golden title:

MUDBLOODS

and the Dangers They Pose to

a Peaceful Pure-Blood Society

Beneath the title was a picture of a red rose with a

simpering face in the middle of its petals, being

strangled by a green weed with fangs and a scowl.

There was no author’s name upon the pamphlet, but

again, the scars on the back of his right hand seemed

to tingle as he examined it. Then the young witch

beside him confirmed his suspicion as she said, still

waving and twirling her wand, “Will the old hag be

interrogating Mudbloods all day, does anyone know?”

Page | 280 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Careful,” said the wizard beside her, glancing around

nervously; one of his pages slipped and fell to the

floor.

“What, has she got magic ears as well as an eye,

now?”

The witch glanced toward the shining mahogany door

facing the space full of pamphlet-makers; Harry

looked too, and rage reared in him like a snake.

Where there might have been a peephole on a Muggle

front door, a large, round eye with a bright blue iris

had been set into the wood — an eye that was

shockingly familiar to anybody who had known

Alastor Moody.

For a split second Harry forgot where he was and

what he was doing there: He even forgot that he was

invisible. He strode straight over to the door to

examine the eye. It was not moving: It gazed blindly

upward, frozen. The plaque beneath it read:

DOLORES UMBRIDGE

SENIOR UNDERSECRETARY TO THE MINISTER

Below that, a slightly shinier new plaque read:

HEAD OF THE MUGGLE-BORN

REGISTRATION COMMISSION

Harry looked back at the dozen pamphlet-makers:

Though they were intent upon their work, he could

hardly suppose that they would not notice if the door

of an empty office opened in front of them. He

therefore withdrew from an inner pocket an odd

object with little waving legs and a rubber-bulbed

Page | 281 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

horn for a body. Crouching down beneath the Cloak,

he placed the Decoy Detonator on the ground.

It scuttled away at once through the legs of the

witches and wizards in front of him. A few moments

later, during which Harry waited with his hand upon

the doorknob, there came a loud bang and a great

deal of acrid black smoke billowed from a corner. The

young witch in the front row shrieked: Pink pages

flew everywhere as she and her fellows jumped up,

looking around for the source of the commotion.

Harry turned the doorknob, stepped into Umbridge’s

office, and closed the door behind him.

He felt he had stepped back in time. The room was

exactly like Umbridge’s office at Hogwarts: Lace

draperies, doilies, and dried flowers covered every

available surface. The walls bore the same

ornamental plates, each featuring a highly colored,

beribboned kitten, gamboling and frisking with

sickening cuteness. The desk was covered with a

flouncy, flowered cloth. Behind Mad-Eye’s eye, a

telescopic attachment enabled Umbridge to spy on

the workers on the other side of the door. Harry took

a look through it and saw that they were all still

gathered around the Decoy Detonator. He wrenched

the telescope out of the door, leaving a hole behind,

pulled the magical eyeball out of it, and placed it in

his pocket. Then he turned to face the room again,

raised his wand, and murmured, “Accio Locket.”

Nothing happened, but he had not expected it to; no

doubt Umbridge knew all about protective charms

and spells. He therefore hurried behind her desk and

began pulling open the drawers. He saw quills and

notebooks and Spellotape; enchanted paper clips that

coiled snakelike from their drawer and had to be

beaten back; a fussy little lace box full of spare hair

bows and clips; but no sign of a locket.

Page | 282 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There was a filing cabinet behind the desk: Harry set

to searching it. Like Filch ’s filing cabinets at

Hogwarts, it was full of folders, each labeled with a

name. It was not until Harry reached the bottommost

drawer that he saw something to distract him from

his search: Mr. Weasley’s file.

He pulled it out and opened it.

ARTHUR WEASLEY

BLOOD STATUS: Pureblood, but with unacceptable

pro-Muggle leanings. Known member of the Order of

the Phoenix.

FAMILY: Wife (pureblood), seven children, two

youngest at Hogwarts. NB: Youngest son currently at

home, seriously ill, Ministry inspectors have

confirmed.

SECURITY STATUS: TRACKED. All movements are

being monitored. Strong likelihood Undesirable No. 1

will contact (has stayed with Weasley family

previously)

“Undesirable Number One,” Harry muttered under his

breath as he replaced Mr. Weasley’s folder and shut

the drawer. He had an idea he knew who that was,

and sure enough, as he straightened up and glanced

around the office for fresh hiding places, he saw a

poster of himself on the wall, with the words

undesirable no. 1 emblazoned across his chest. A

little pink note was stuck to it with a picture of a

kitten in the corner. Harry moved across to read it

and saw that Umbridge had written, “To be punished.”

Page | 283 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Angrier than ever, he proceeded to grope in the

bottoms of the vases and baskets of dried flowers, but

was not at all surprised that the locket was not there.

He gave the office one last sweeping look, and his

heart skipped a beat. Dumbledore was staring at him

from a small rectangular mirror, propped up on a

bookcase beside the desk.

Harry crossed the room at a run and snatched it up,

but realized the moment he touched it that it was not

a mirror at all. Dumbledore was smiling wistfully out

of the front cover of a glossy book. Harry had not

immediately noticed the curly green writing across his

hat — The Life and Lies ofAlbus Dumbledore — nor

the slightly smaller writing across his chest: “by Rita

Skeeter, bestselling author of Armando Dippet: Master

or Moron?”

Harry opened the book at random and saw a full-page

photograph of two teenage boys, both laughing

immoderately with their arms around each other’s

shoulders. Dumbledore, now with elbow-length hair,

had grown a tiny wispy beard that recalled the one on

Krum’s chin that had so annoyed Ron. The boy who

roared in silent amusement beside Dumbledore had a

gleeful, wild look about him. His golden hair fell in

curls to his shoulders. Harry wondered whether it

was a young Doge, but before he could check the

caption, the door of the office opened.

If Thicknesse had not been looking over his shoulder

as he entered, Harry would not have had time to pull

the Invisibility Cloak over himself. As it was, he

thought Thicknesse might have caught a glimpse of

movement, because for a moment or two he remained

quite still, staring curiously at the place where Harry

had just vanished. Perhaps deciding that all he had

seen was Dumbledore scratching his nose on the

front of the book, for Harry had hastily replaced it

Page | 284 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

upon the shelf, Thicknesse finally walked to the desk

and pointed his wand at the quill standing ready in

the ink pot. It sprang out and began scribbling a note

to Umbridge. Very slowly, hardly daring to breathe,

Harry backed out of the office into the open area

beyond.

The pamphlet-makers were still clustered around the

remains of the Decoy Detonator, which continued to

hoot feebly as it smoked. Harry hurried off up the

corridor as the young witch said, “I bet it sneaked up

here from Experimental Charms, they’re so careless,

remember that poisonous duck?”

Speeding back toward the lifts, Harry reviewed his

options. It had never been likely that the locket was

here at the Ministry, and there was no hope of

bewitching its whereabouts out of Umbridge while she

was sitting in a crowded court. Their priority now had

to be to leave the Ministry before they were exposed,

and try again another day. The first thing to do was to

find Ron, and then they could work out a way of

extracting Hermione from the courtroom.

The lift was empty when it arrived. Harry jumped in

and pulled off the Invisibility Cloak as it started its

descent. To his enormous relief, when it rattled to a

halt at level two, a soaking-wet and wild-eyed Ron got

in.

“M-morning,” he stammered to Harry as the lift set off

again.

“Ron, it’s me, Harry!”

“Harry! Blimey, I forgot what you looked like — why

isn’t Hermione with you?”

Page | 285 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“She had to go down to the courtrooms with

Umbridge, she couldn’t refuse, and — ”

But before Harry could finish the lift had stopped

again: The doors opened and Mr. Weasley walked

inside, talking to an elderly witch whose blonde hair

was teased so high it resembled an anthill.

"... I quite understand what you’re saying, Wakanda,

but I’m afraid I cannot be party to — ”

Mr. Weasley broke off; he had noticed Harry. It was

very strange to have Mr. Weasley glare at him with

that much dislike. The lift doors closed and the four

of them trundled downward once more.

“Oh, hello, Reg,” said Mr. Weasley, looking around at

the sound of steady dripping from Ron’s robes. “Isn’t

your wife in for questioning today? Er — what’s

happened to you? Why are you so wet?”

“Yaxley’s office is raining,” said Ron. He addressed

Mr. Weasley’s shoulder, and Harry felt sure he was

scared that his father might recognize him if they

looked directly into each other’s eyes. “I couldn’t stop

it, so they’ve sent me to get Bernie — Pillsworth, I

think they said — ”

“Yes, a lot of offices have been raining lately,” said Mr.

Weasley. “Did you try Meteolojinx Recanto? It worked

for Bletchley.”

“Meteolojinx Recanto?” whispered Ron. “No, I didn’t.

Thanks, D — I mean, thanks, Arthur.”

The lift doors opened; the old witch with the anthill

hair left, and Ron darted past her out of sight. Harry

made to follow him, but found his path blocked as

Page | 286 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Percy Weasley strode into the lift, his nose buried in

some papers he was reading.

Not until the doors had clanged shut again did Percy

realize he was in a lift with his father. He glanced up,

saw Mr. Weasley, turned radish red, and left the lift

the moment the doors opened again. For the second

time, Harry tried to get out, but this time found his

way blocked by Mr. Weasley’s arm.

“One moment, Runcorn.”

The lift doors closed and as they clanked down

another floor, Mr. Weasley said, “I hear you laid

information about Dirk Cresswell.”

Harry had the impression that Mr. Weasley’s anger

was no less because of the brush with Percy. He

decided his best chance was to act stupid.

“Sorry?” he said.

“Don’t pretend, Runcorn,” said Mr. Weasley fiercely.

“You tracked down the wizard who faked his family

tree, didn’t you?”

“I — so what if I did?” said Harry.

“So Dirk Cresswell is ten times the wizard you are,”

said Mr. Weasley quietly, as the lift sank ever lower.

“And if he survives Azkaban, you 11 have to answer to

him, not to mention his wife, his sons, and his friends

“Arthur,” Harry interrupted, “you know you’re being

tracked, don’t you?”

“Is that a threat, Runcorn?” said Mr. Weasley loudly.

Page | 287 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No,” said Harry, “it’s a fact! They’re watching your

every move — ”

The lift doors opened. They had reached the Atrium.

Mr. Weasley gave Harry a scathing look and swept

from the lift. Harry stood there, shaken. He wished he

was impersonating somebody other than Runcorn. ...

The lift doors clanged shut.

Harry pulled out the Invisibility Cloak and put it back

on. He would try to extricate Hermione on his own

while Ron was dealing with the raining office. When

the doors opened, he stepped out into a torch-lit

stone passageway quite different from the wood-

paneled and carpeted corridors above. As the lift

rattled away again, Harry shivered slightly, looking

toward the distant black door that marked the

entrance to the Department of Mysteries.

He set off, his destination not the black door, but the

doorway he remembered on the left-hand side, which

opened onto the flight of stairs down to the court

chambers. His mind grappled with possibilities as he

crept down them: He still had a couple of Decoy

Detonators, but perhaps it would be better to simply

knock on the courtroom door, enter as Runcorn, and

ask for a quick word with Mafalda? Of course, he did

not know whether Runcorn was sufficiently important

to get away with this, and even if he managed it,

Hermione ’s non-reappearance might trigger a search

before they were clear of the Ministry. . . .

Lost in thought, he did not immediately register the

unnatural chill that was creeping over him, as if he

were descending into fog. It was becoming colder and

colder with every step he took: a cold that reached

right down into his throat and tore at his lungs. And

then he felt that stealing sense of despair, of

hopelessness, filling him, expanding inside him. ...

Page | 288 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Dementors, he thought.

And as he reached the foot of the stairs and turned to

his right he saw a dreadful scene. The dark passage

outside the courtrooms was packed with tall, black-

hooded figures, their faces completely hidden, their

ragged breathing the only sound in the place. The

petrified Muggle-borns brought in for questioning sat

huddled and shivering on hard wooden benches. Most

of them were hiding their faces in their hands,

perhaps in an instinctive attempt to shield themselves

from the dementors’ greedy mouths. Some were

accompanied by families, others sat alone. The

dementors were gliding up and down in front of them,

and the cold, and the hopelessness, and the despair

of the place laid themselves upon Harry like a curse.

Fight it, he told himself, but he knew that he could

not conjure a Patronus here without revealing himself

instantly. So he moved forward as silently as he

could, and with every step he took numbness seemed

to steal over his brain, but he forced himself to think

of Hermione and of Ron, who needed him.

Moving through the towering black figures was

terrifying: The eyeless faces hidden beneath their

hoods turned as he passed, and he felt sure that they

sensed him, sensed, perhaps, a human presence that

still had some hope, some resilience. ...

And then, abruptly and shockingly amid the frozen

silence, one of the dungeon doors on the left of the

corridor was flung open and screams echoed out of it.

“No, no, I’m half-blood, I’m half-blood, I tell you! My

father was a wizard, he was, look him up, Arkie

Alderton, he’s a well-known broomstick designer, look

Page | 289 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

him up, I tell you — get your hands off me, get your

hands off—”

“This is your final warning,” said Umbridge’s soft

voice, magically magnified so that it sounded clearly

over the man’s desperate screams. “If you struggle,

you will be subjected to the Dementor’s Kiss.”

The man’s screams subsided, but dry sobs echoed

through the corridor.

“Take him away,” said Umbridge.

Two dementors appeared in the doorway of the

courtroom, their rotting, scabbed hands clutching the

upper arms of a wizard who appeared to be fainting.

They glided away down the corridor with him, and the

darkness they trailed behind them swallowed him

from sight.

“Next — Mary Cattermole,” called Umbridge.

A small woman stood up; she was trembling from

head to foot. Her dark hair was smoothed back into a

bun and she wore long, plain robes. Her face was

completely bloodless. As she passed the dementors,

Harry saw her shudder.

He did it instinctively, without any sort of plan,

because he hated the sight of her walking alone into

the dungeon: As the door began to swing closed, he

slipped into the courtroom behind her.

It was not the same room in which he had once been

interrogated for improper use of magic. This one was

much smaller, though the ceiling was quite as high; it

gave the claustrophobic sense of being stuck at the

bottom of a deep well.

Page | 290 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There were more dementors in here, casting their

freezing aura over the place; they stood like faceless

sentinels in the corners farthest from the high, raised

platform. Here, behind a balustrade, sat Umbridge,

with Yaxley on one side of her, and Hermione, quite

as white-faced as Mrs. Cattermole, on the other. At

the foot of the platform, a bright-silver, long-haired

cat prowled up and down, up and down, and Harry

realized that it was there to protect the prosecutors

from the despair that emanated from the dementors:

That was for the accused to feel, not the accusers.

“Sit down,” said Umbridge in her soft, silky voice.

Mrs. Cattermole stumbled to the single seat in the

middle of the floor beneath the raised platform. The

moment she had sat down, chains clinked out of the

arms of the chair and bound her there.

“You are Mary Elizabeth Cattermole?” asked

Umbridge.

Mrs. Cattermole gave a single, shaky nod.

“Married to Reginald Cattermole of the Magical

Maintenance Department?”

Mrs. Cattermole burst into tears.

“I don’t know where he is, he was supposed to meet

me here!”

Umbridge ignored her.

“Mother to Maisie, Ellie, and Alfred Cattermole?”

Mrs. Cattermole sobbed harder than ever.

Page | 291 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“They’re frightened, they think I might not come home

“Spare us,” spat Yaxley. “The brats of Mudbloods do

not stir our sympathies.”

Mrs. Cattermole’s sobs masked Harry’s footsteps as

he made his way carefully toward the steps that led

up to the raised platform. The moment he had passed

the place where the Patronus cat patrolled, he felt the

change in temperature: It was warm and comfortable

here. The Patronus, he was sure, was Umbridge’s,

and it glowed brightly because she was so happy

here, in her element, upholding the twisted laws she

had helped to write. Slowly and very carefully he

edged his way along the platform behind Umbridge,

Yaxley, and Hermione, taking a seat behind the latter.

He was worried about making Hermione jump. He

thought of casting the Muffliato charm upon

Umbridge and Yaxley, but even murmuring the word

might cause Hermione alarm. Then Umbridge raised

her voice to address Mrs. Cattermole, and Harry

seized his chance.

“I’m behind you,” he whispered into Hermione’s ear.

As he had expected, she jumped so violently she

nearly overturned the bottle of ink with which she

was supposed to be recording the interview, but both

Umbridge and Yaxley were concentrating upon Mrs.

Cattermole, and this went unnoticed.

“A wand was taken from you upon your arrival at the

Ministry today, Mrs. Cattermole,” Umbridge was

saying. “Eight-and-three-quarter inches, cherry,

unicorn-hair core. Do you recognize that description?”

Mrs. Cattermole nodded, mopping her eyes on her

sleeve.

Page | 292 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Could you please tell us from which witch or wizard

you took that wand?”

“T-took?” sobbed Mrs. Cattermole. “I didn’t t-take it

from anybody. I b-bought it when I was eleven years

old. It — it — it — chose me.”

She cried harder than ever.

Umbridge laughed a soft girlish laugh that made

Harry want to attack her. She leaned forward over the

barrier, the better to observe her victim, and

something gold swung forward too, and dangled over

the void: the locket.

Hermione had seen it; she let out a little squeak, but

Umbridge and Yaxley, still intent upon their prey,

were deaf to everything else.

“No,” said Umbridge, “no, I don’t think so, Mrs.

Cattermole. Wands only choose witches or wizards.

You are not a witch. I have your responses to the

questionnaire that was sent to you here — Mafalda,

pass them to me.”

Umbridge held out a small hand: She looked so

toadlike at that moment that Harry was quite

surprised not to see webs between the stubby fingers.

Hermione ’s hands were shaking with shock. She

fumbled in a pile of documents balanced on the chair

beside her, finally withdrawing a sheaf of parchment

with Mrs. Cattermole’s name on it.

“That’s — that’s pretty, Dolores,” she said, pointing at

the pendant gleaming in the ruffled folds of

Umbridge’s blouse.

“What?” snapped Umbridge, glancing down. “Oh yes

— an old family heirloom,” she said, patting the locket

Page | 293 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

lying on her large bosom. “The S stands for Selwyn. ...

I am related to the Selwyns. ... Indeed, there are few

pure-blood families to whom I am not related. ... A

pity,” she continued in a louder voice, flicking

through Mrs. Cattermole’s questionnaire, “that the

same cannot be said for you. ‘Parents’ professions:

greengrocers.’ ”

Yaxley laughed jeeringly. Below, the fluffy silver cat

patrolled up and down, and the dementors stood

waiting in the corners.

It was Umbridge’s lie that brought the blood surging

into Harry’s brain and obliterated his sense of caution

— that the locket she had taken as a bribe from a

petty criminal was being used to bolster her own

pure-blood credentials. He raised his wand, not even

troubling to keep it concealed beneath the Invisibility

Cloak, and said, “Stupefyl”

There was a flash of red light; Umbridge crumpled

and her forehead hit the edge of the balustrade: Mrs.

Cattermole’s papers slid off her lap onto the floor and,

down below, the prowling silver cat vanished. Ice-cold

air hit them like an oncoming wind: Yaxley, confused,

looked around for the source of the trouble and saw

Harry’s disembodied hand and wand pointing at him.

He tried to draw his own wand, but too late:

“Stupefyl”

Yaxley slid to the ground to lie curled on the floor.

“Harry!”

“Hermione, if you think I was going to sit here and let

her pretend — ”

“Harry, Mrs. Cattermole!”

Page | 294 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry whirled around, throwing off the Invisibility

Cloak; down below, the dementors had moved out of

their corners; they were gliding toward the woman

chained to the chair: Whether because the Patronus

had vanished or because they sensed that their

masters were no longer in control, they seemed to

have abandoned restraint. Mrs. Cattermole let out a

terrible scream of fear as a slimy, scabbed hand

grasped her chin and forced her face back.

“EXPECTO PATRONUM”

The silver stag soared from the tip of Harry’s wand

and leaped toward the dementors, which fell back and

melted into the dark shadows again. The stag’s light,

more powerful and more warming than the cat’s

protection, filled the whole dungeon as it cantered

around and around the room.

“Get the Horcrux,” Harry told Hermione.

He ran back down the steps, stuffing the Invisibility

Cloak back into his bag, and approached Mrs.

Cattermole.

“You?” she whispered, gazing into his face. “But —

but Reg said you were the one who submitted my

name for questioning!”

“Did I?” muttered Harry, tugging at the chains

binding her arms. “Well, I’ve had a change of heart.

Diffindol” Nothing happened. “Hermione, how do I get

rid of these chains?”

“Wait, I’m trying something up here — ”

“Hermione, we’re surrounded by dementors!”

Page | 295 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I know that, Harry, but if she wakes up and the

locket’s gone — I need to duplicate it — Geminio\

There ... That should fool her. ...”

Hermione came running downstairs.

“Let’s see. ... Relashiol”

The chains clinked and withdrew into the arms of the

chair. Mrs. Cattermole looked just as frightened as

ever before.

“I don’t understand,” she whispered.

“You’re going to leave here with us,” said Harry,

pulling her to her feet. “Go home, grab your children,

and get out, get out of the country if you’ve got to.

Disguise yourselves and run. You’ve seen how it is,

you won’t get anything like a fair hearing here.”

“Harry,” said Hermione, “how are we going to get out

of here with all those dementors outside the door?”

“Patronuses,” said Harry, pointing his wand at his

own: The stag slowed and walked, still gleaming

brightly, toward the door. “As many as we can

muster; do yours, Hermione.”

“Expec — Expecto patronum,” said Hermione. Nothing

happened.

“It’s the only spell she ever has trouble with,” Harry

told a completely bemused Mrs. Cattermole. “Bit

unfortunate, really ... Come on, Hermione. ...”

“Expecto patronum).”

A silver otter burst from the end of Hermione ’s wand

and swam gracefully through the air to join the stag.

Page | 296 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“C’mon,” said Harry, and he led Hermione and Mrs.

Cattermole to the door.

When the Patronuses glided out of the dungeon there

were cries of shock from the people waiting outside.

Harry looked around; the dementors were falling back

on both sides of them, melding into the darkness,

scattering before the silver creatures.

“It’s been decided that you should all go home and go

into hiding with your families,” Harry told the waiting

Muggle-borns, who were dazzled by the light of the

Patronuses and still cowering slightly. “Go abroad if

you can. Just get well away from the Ministry. That’s

the — er — new official position. Now, if you’ll just

follow the Patronuses, you’ll be able to leave from the

Atrium.”

They managed to get up the stone steps without being

intercepted, but as they approached the lifts Harry

started to have misgivings. If they emerged into the

Atrium with a silver stag, an otter soaring alongside

it, and twenty or so people, half of them accused

Muggle-borns, he could not help feeling that they

would attract unwanted attention. He had just

reached this unwelcome conclusion when the lift

clanged to a halt in front of them.

“Reg!” screamed Mrs. Cattermole, and she threw

herself into Ron’s arms. “Runcorn let me out, he

attacked Umbridge and Yaxley, and he’s told all of us

to leave the country, I think we’d better do it, Reg, I

really do, let’s hurry home and fetch the children and

— why are you so wet?”

“Water,” muttered Ron, disengaging himself. “Harry,

they know there are intruders inside the Ministry,

something about a hole in Umbridge’s office door, I

reckon we’ve got five minutes if that — ”

Page | 297 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Hermione ’s Patronus vanished with a pop as she

turned a horror-struck face to Harry.

“Harry, if we’re trapped here — !”

“We won’t be if we move fast,” said Harry. He

addressed the silent group behind them, who were all

gawping at him.

“Who’s got wands?”

About half of them raised their hands.

“Okay, all of you who haven’t got wands need to

attach yourself to somebody who has. We’ll need to be

fast before they stop us. Come on.”

They managed to cram themselves into two lifts.

Harry’s Patronus stood sentinel before the golden

grilles as they shut and the lifts began to rise.

“Level eight,” said the witch’s cool voice, “Atrium.”

Harry knew at once that they were in trouble. The

Atrium was full of people moving from fireplace to

fireplace, sealing them off.

“Harry!” squeaked Hermione. “What are we going to —

?”

“STOP!” Harry thundered, and the powerful voice of

Runcorn echoed through the Atrium: The wizards

sealing the fireplaces froze. “Follow me,” he whispered

to the group of terrified Muggle-borns, who moved

forward in a huddle, shepherded by Ron and

Hermione.

Page | 298 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“What’s up, Albert?” said the same balding wizard

who had followed Harry out of the fireplace earlier. He

looked nervous.

“This lot need to leave before you seal the exits,” said

Harry with all the authority he could muster.

The group of wizards in front of him looked at one

another.

“We’ve been told to seal all exits and not let anyone —

“ Are you contradicting me?” Harry blustered. “Would

you like me to have your family tree examined, like I

had Dirk Cresswell’s?”

“Sorry!” gasped the balding wizard, backing away. “I

didn’t mean nothing, Albert, but I thought ... I

thought they were in for questioning and ...”

“Their blood is pure,” said Harry, and his deep voice

echoed impressively through the hall. “Purer than

many of yours, I daresay. Off you go,” he boomed to

the Muggle-borns, who scurried forward into the

fireplaces and began to vanish in pairs. The Ministry

wizards hung back, some looking confused, others

scared and resentful. Then:

“Mary!”

Mrs. Cattermole looked over her shoulder. The real

Reg Cattermole, no longer vomiting but pale and wan,

had just come running out of a lift.

“R-Reg?”

She looked from her husband to Ron, who swore

loudly.

Page | 299 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The balding wizard gaped, his head turning

ludicrously from one Reg Cattermole to the other.

“Hey — what’s going on? What is this?”

“Seal the exit! SEAL IT!”

Yaxley had burst out of another lift and was running

toward the group beside the fireplaces, into which all

of the Muggle-borns but Mrs. Cattermole had now

vanished. As the balding wizard lifted his wand, Harry

raised an enormous fist and punched him, sending

him flying through the air.

“He’s been helping Muggle-borns escape, Yaxley!”

Harry shouted.

The balding wizard’s colleagues set up an uproar,

under cover of which Ron grabbed Mrs. Cattermole,

pulled her into the still-open fireplace, and

disappeared. Confused, Yaxley looked from Harry to

the punched wizard, while the real Reg Cattermole

screamed, “My wife! Who was that with my wife?

What’s going on?”

Harry saw Yaxley’s head turn, saw an inkling of the

truth dawn in that brutish face.

“Come on!” Harry shouted at Hermione; he seized her

hand and they jumped into the fireplace together as

Yaxley’s curse sailed over Harry’s head. They spun for

a few seconds before shooting up out of a toilet into a

cubicle. Harry flung open the door; Ron was standing

there beside the sinks, still wrestling with Mrs.

Cattermole.

“Reg, I don’t understand — ”

“Let go, I’m not your husband, you’ve got to go home!”

Page | 300 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There was a noise in the cubicle behind them; Harry

looked around; Yaxley had just appeared.

“LET’S GO!” Harry yelled. He seized Hermione by the

hand and Ron by the arm and turned on the spot.

Darkness engulfed them, along with the sensation of

compressing bands, but something was wrong. ...

Hermione ’s hand seemed to be sliding out of his grip.

He wondered whether he was going to suffocate; he

could not breathe or see and the only solid things in

the world were Ron’s arm and Hermione ’s fingers,

which were slowly slipping away. . . .

And then he saw the door of number twelve,

Grimmauld Place, with its serpent door knocker, but

before he could draw breath, there was a scream and

a flash of purple light; Hermione ’s hand was suddenly

vicelike upon his and everything went dark again.

Page | 301 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE THIEF

Harry opened his eyes and was dazzled by gold and

green; he had no idea what had happened, he only

knew that he was lying on what seemed to be leaves

and twigs. Struggling to draw breath into lungs that

felt flattened, he blinked and realized that the gaudy

glare was sunlight streaming through a canopy of

leaves far above him. Then an object twitched close to

his face. He pushed himself onto his hands and

knees, ready to face some small, fierce creature, but

saw that the object was Ron’s foot. Looking around,

Harry saw that they and Hermione were lying on a

forest floor, apparently alone.

Harry’s first thought was of the Forbidden Forest, and

for a moment, even though he knew how foolish and

dangerous it would be for them to appear in the

grounds of Hogwarts, his heart leapt at the thought of

sneaking through the trees to Hagrid’s hut. However,

in the few moments it took for Ron to give a low groan

and Harry to start crawling toward him, he realized

that this was not the Forbidden Forest: The trees

Page | 302 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

looked younger, they were more widely spaced, the

ground clearer.

He met Hermione, also on her hands and knees, at

Ron’s head. The moment his eyes fell upon Ron, all

other concerns fled Harry’s mind, for blood drenched

the whole of Ron’s left side and his face stood out,

grayish- white, against the leaf-strewn earth. The

Polyjuice Potion was wearing off now: Ron was

halfway between Cattermole and himself in

appearance, his hair turning redder and redder as his

face drained of the little color it had left.

“What’s happened to him?”

“Splinched,” said Hermione, her fingers already busy

at Ron’s sleeve, where the blood was wettest and

darkest.

Harry watched, horrified, as she tore open Ron’s

shirt. He had always thought of Splinching as

something comical, but this . . . His insides crawled

unpleasantly as Hermione laid bare Ron’s upper arm,

where a great chunk of flesh was missing, scooped

cleanly away as though by a knife.

“Harry, quickly, in my bag, there’s a small bottle

labeled ‘Essence of Dittany’ — ”

“Bag — right — ”

Harry sped to the place where Hermione had landed,

seized the tiny beaded bag, and thrust his hand

inside it. At once, object after object began presenting

itself to his touch: He felt the leather spines of books,

woolly sleeves of jumpers, heels of shoes —

“Quickly\”

Page | 303 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He grabbed his wand from the ground and pointed it

into the depths of the magical bag.

“Accio Dittany\”

A small brown bottle zoomed out of the bag; he

caught it and hastened back to Hermione and Ron,

whose eyes were now half-closed, strips of white

eyeball all that were visible between his lids.

“He’s fainted,” said Hermione, who was also rather

pale; she no longer looked like Mafalda, though her

hair was still gray in places. “Unstopper it for me,

Harry, my hands are shaking.”

Harry wrenched the stopper off the little bottle,

Hermione took it and poured three drops of the potion

onto the bleeding wound. Greenish smoke billowed

upward and when it had cleared, Harry saw that the

bleeding had stopped. The wound now looked several

days old; new skin stretched over what had just been

open flesh.

“Wow,” said Harry.

“It’s all I feel safe doing,” said Hermione shakily.

“There are spells that would put him completely right,

but I daren’t try in case I do them wrong and cause

more damage. ... He’s lost so much blood already. ...”

“How did he get hurt? I mean” — Harry shook his

head, trying to clear it, to make sense of whatever had

just taken place — “why are we here? I thought we

were going back to Grimmauld Place?”

Hermione took a deep breath. She looked close to

tears.

Page | 304 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry, I don’t think we’re going to be able to go back

there.”

“What d’you — ?”

“As we Disapparated, Yaxley caught hold of me and I

couldn’t get rid of him, he was too strong, and he was

still holding on when we arrived at Grimmauld Place,

and then — well, I think he must have seen the door,

and thought we were stopping there, so he slackened

his grip and I managed to shake him off and I brought

us here instead!”

“But then, where’s he? Hang on. ... You don’t mean

he’s at Grimmauld Place? He can’t get in there?”

Her eyes sparkled with unshed tears as she nodded.

“Harry, I think he can. I — I forced him to let go with

a Revulsion Jinx, but I’d already taken him inside the

Fidelius Charm’s protection. Since Dumbledore died,

we’re Secret-Keepers, so I’ve given him the secret,

haven’t I?”

There was no pretending; Harry was sure she was

right. It was a serious blow. If Yaxley could now get

inside the house, there was no way that they could

return. Even now, he could be bringing other Death

Eaters in there by Apparition. Gloomy and oppressive

though the house was, it had been their one safe

refuge: even, now that Kreacher was so much happier

and friendlier, a kind of home. With a twinge of regret

that had nothing to do with food, Harry imagined the

house-elf busying himself over the steak-and-kidney

pie that Harry, Ron, and Hermione would never eat.

“Harry, I’m sorry, I’m so sorry!”

Page | 305 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Don’t be stupid, it wasn’t your fault! If anything, it

was mine. ...”

Harry put his hand in his pocket and drew out Mad-

Eye’s eye. Hermione recoiled, looking horrified.

“Umbridge had stuck it to her office door, to spy on

people. I couldn’t leave it there ... but that’s how they

knew there were intruders.”

Before Hermione could answer, Ron groaned and

opened his eyes. He was still gray and his face

glistened with sweat.

“How d’you feel?” Hermione whispered.

“Lousy,” croaked Ron, wincing as he felt his injured

arm. “Where are we?”

“In the woods where they held the Quidditch World

Cup,” said Hermione. “I wanted somewhere enclosed,

undercover, and this was — ”

“ — the first place you thought of,” Harry finished for

her, glancing around at the apparently deserted

glade. He could not help remembering what had

happened the last time they had Apparated to the

first place Hermione had thought of — how Death

Eaters had found them within minutes. Had it been

Legilimency? Did Voldemort or his henchmen know,

even now, where Hermione had taken them?

“D’you reckon we should move on?” Ron asked Harry,

and Harry could tell by the look on Ron’s face that he

was thinking the same.

“I dunno.”

Page | 306 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ron still looked pale and clammy. He had made no

attempt to sit up and it looked as though he was too

weak to do so. The prospect of moving him was

daunting.

“Let’s stay here for now,” Harry said.

Looking relieved, Hermione sprang to her feet.

“Where are you going?” asked Ron.

“If we’re staying, we should put some protective

enchantments around the place,” she replied, and

raising her wand, she began to walk in a wide circle

around Harry and Ron, murmuring incantations as

she went. Harry saw little disturbances in the

surrounding air: It was as if Hermione had cast a

heat haze upon their clearing.

“Salvio Hexia ... Protego Totalum ... Repello Muggletum

... Muffliato ... You could get out the tent, Harry. ...”

“Tent?”

“In the bag!”

“In the ... of course,” said Harry.

He did not bother to grope inside it this time, but

used another Summoning Charm. The tent emerged

in a lumpy mass of canvas, rope, and poles. Harry

recognized it, partly because of the smell of cats, as

the same tent in which they had slept on the night of

the Quidditch World Cup.

“I thought this belonged to that bloke Perkins at the

Ministry?” he asked, starting to disentangle the tent

pegs.

Page | 307 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Apparently he didn’t want it back, his lumbago’s so

bad,” said Hermione, now performing complicated

figure-of-eight movements with her wand, “so Ron’s

dad said I could borrow it. ErectoV’ she added,

pointing her wand at the misshapen canvas, which in

one fluid motion rose into the air and settled, fully

constructed, onto the ground before Harry, out of

whose startled hands a tent peg soared, to land with

a final thud at the end of a guy rope.

“ Cave Inimicum,” Hermione finished with a skyward

flourish. “That’s as much as I can do. At the very

least, we should know they’re coming, I can’t

guarantee it will keep out Vol — ”

“Don’t say the name!” Ron cut across her, his voice

harsh.

Harry and Hermione looked at each other.

“I’m sorry,” Ron said, moaning a little as he raised

himself to look at them, “but it feels like a — a jinx or

something. Can’t we call him You-Know-Who —

please?”

“Dumbledore said fear of a name — ” began Harry.

“In case you hadn’t noticed, mate, calling You-Know-

Who by his name didn’t do Dumbledore much good in

the end,” Ron snapped back. “Just — just show You-

Know-Who some respect, will you?”

“Respect?” Harry repeated, but Hermione shot him a

warning look; apparently he was not to argue with

Ron while the latter was in such a weakened

condition.

Harry and Hermione half carried, half dragged Ron

through the entrance of the tent. The interior was

Page | 308 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

exactly as Harry remembered it: a small flat, complete

with bathroom and tiny kitchen. He shoved aside an

old armchair and lowered Ron carefully onto the lower

berth of a bunk bed. Even this very short journey had

turned Ron whiter still, and once they had settled him

on the mattress he closed his eyes again and did not

speak for a while.

“I’ll make some tea,” said Hermione breathlessly,

pulling kettle and mugs from the depths of her bag

and heading toward the kitchen.

Harry found the hot drink as welcome as the

firewhisky had been on the night that Mad-Eye had

died; it seemed to burn away a little of the fear

fluttering in his chest. After a minute or two, Ron

broke the silence.

“What d’you reckon happened to the Cattermoles?”

“With any luck, they’ll have got away,” said Hermione,

clutching her hot mug for comfort. “As long as Mr.

Cattermole had his wits about him, he’ll have

transported Mrs. Cattermole by Side-Along- Apparition

and they’ll be fleeing the country right now with their

children. That’s what Harry told her to do.”

“Blimey, I hope they escaped,” said Ron, leaning back

on his pillows. The tea seemed to be doing him good;

a little of his color had returned. “I didn’t get the

feeling Reg Cattermole was all that quick-witted,

though, the way everyone was talking to me when I

was him. God, I hope they made it. ... If they both end

up in Azkaban because of us ...”

Harry looked over at Hermione and the question he

had been about to ask — about whether Mrs.

Cattermole ’s lack of a wand would prevent her

Apparating alongside her husband — died in his

Page | 309 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

throat. Hermione was watching Ron fret over the fate

of the Cattermoles, and there was such tenderness in

her expression that Harry felt almost as if he had

surprised her in the act of kissing him.

“So, have you got it?” Harry asked her, partly to

remind her that he was there.

“Got — got what?” she said with a little start.

“What did we just go through all that for? The locket!

Where’s the locket?”

“ You got it?” shouted Ron, raising himself a little

higher on his pillows. “No one tells me anything!

Blimey, you could have mentioned it!”

“Well, we were running for our lives from the Death

Eaters, weren’t we?” said Hermione. “Here.”

And she pulled the locket out of the pocket of her

robes and handed it to Ron.

It was as large as a chicken’s egg. An ornate letter S,

inlaid with many small green stones, glinted dully in

the diffused light shining through the tent’s canvas

roof.

“There isn’t any chance someone’s destroyed it since

Kreacher had it?” asked Ron hopefully. “I mean, are

we sure it’s still a Horcrux?”

“I think so,” said Hermione, taking it back from him

and looking at it closely. “There ’d be some sign of

damage if it had been magically destroyed.”

She passed it to Harry, who turned it over in his

fingers. The thing looked perfect, pristine. He

remembered the mangled remains of the diary, and

Page | 310 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

how the stone in the Horcrux ring had been cracked

open when Dumbledore destroyed it.

“I reckon Kreacher’s right,” said Harry. “We’re going to

have to work out how to open this thing before we can

destroy it.”

Sudden awareness of what he was holding, of what

lived behind the little golden doors, hit Harry as he

spoke. Even after all their efforts to find it, he felt a

violent urge to fling the locket from him. Mastering

himself again, he tried to prise the locket apart with

his fingers, then attempted the charm Hermione had

used to open Regulus’s bedroom door. Neither

worked. He handed the locket back to Ron and

Hermione, each of whom did their best, but were no

more successful at opening it than he had been.

“Can you feel it, though?” Ron asked in a hushed

voice, as he held it tight in his clenched fist.

“What d’you mean?”

Ron passed the Horcrux to Harry. After a moment or

two, Harry thought he knew what Ron meant. Was it

his own blood pulsing through his veins that he could

feel, or was it something beating inside the locket, like

a tiny metal heart?

“What are we going to do with it?” Hermione asked.

“Keep it safe till we work out how to destroy it,” Harry

replied, and, little though he wanted to, he hung the

chain around his own neck, dropping the locket out

of sight beneath his robes, where it rested against his

chest beside the pouch Hagrid had given him.

“I think we should take it in turns to keep watch

outside the tent,” he added to Hermione, standing up

Page | 311 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

and stretching. “And we’ll need to think about some

food as well. You stay there,” he added sharply, as

Ron attempted to sit up and turned a nasty shade of

green.

With the Sneakoscope Hermione had given Harry for

his birthday set carefully upon the table in the tent,

Harry and Hermione spent the rest of the day sharing

the role of lookout. However, the Sneakoscope

remained silent and still upon its point all day, and

whether because of the protective enchantments and

Muggle-repelling charms Hermione had spread

around them, or because people rarely ventured this

way, their patch of wood remained deserted, apart

from occasional birds and squirrels. Evening brought

no change; Harry lit his wand as he swapped places

with Hermione at ten o’clock, and looked out upon a

deserted scene, noting the bats fluttering high above

him across the single patch of starry sky visible from

their protected clearing.

He felt hungry now, and a little light-headed.

Hermione had not packed any food in her magical

bag, as she had assumed that they would be

returning to Grimmauld Place that night, so they had

had nothing to eat except some wild mushrooms that

Hermione had collected from amongst the nearest

trees and stewed in a billycan. After a couple of

mouthfuls Ron had pushed his portion away, looking

queasy; Harry had only persevered so as not to hurt

Hermione ’s feelings.

The surrounding silence was broken by odd rustlings

and what sounded like crackings of twigs: Harry

thought that they were caused by animals rather than

people, yet he kept his wand held tight at the ready.

His insides, already uncomfortable due to their

inadequate helping of rubbery mushrooms, tingled

with unease.

Page | 312 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He had thought that he would feel elated if they

managed to steal back the Horcrux, but somehow he

did not; all he felt as he sat looking out at the

darkness, of which his wand lit only a tiny part, was

worry about what would happen next. It was as

though he had been hurtling toward this point for

weeks, months, maybe even years, but now he had

come to an abrupt halt, run out of road.

There were other Horcruxes out there somewhere, but

he did not have the faintest idea where they could be.

He did not even know what all of them were.

Meanwhile he was at a loss to know how to destroy

the only one that they had found, the Horcrux that

currently lay against the bare flesh of his chest.

Curiously, it had not taken heat from his body, but

lay so cold against his skin it might just have

emerged from icy water. From time to time Harry

thought, or perhaps imagined, that he could feel the

tiny heartbeat ticking irregularly alongside his own.

Nameless forebodings crept upon him as he sat there

in the dark: He tried to resist them, push them away,

yet they came at him relentlessly. Neither can live

while the other survives. Ron and Hermione, now

talking softly behind him in the tent, could walk away

if they wanted to: He could not. And it seemed to

Harry as he sat there trying to master his own fear

and exhaustion, that the Horcrux against his chest

was ticking away the time he had left. ... Stupid idea,

he told himself, don’t think that. ...

His scar was starting to prickle again. He was afraid

that he was making it happen by having these

thoughts, and tried to direct them into another

channel. He thought of poor Kreacher, who had

expected them home and had received Yaxley instead.

Would the elf keep silent or would he tell the Death

Eater everything he knew? Harry wanted to believe

Page | 313 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

that Kreacher had changed toward him in the past

month, that he would be loyal now, but who knew

what would happen? What if the Death Eaters

tortured the elf? Sick images swarmed into Harry’s

head and he tried to push these away too, for there

was nothing he could do for Kreacher: He and

Hermione had already decided against trying to

summon him; what if someone from the Ministry

came too? They could not count on elfish Apparition

being free from the same flaw that had taken Yaxley

to Grimmauld Place on the hem of Hermione ’s sleeve.

Harry’s scar was burning now. He thought that there

was so much they did not know: Lupin had been right

about magic they had never encountered or imagined.

Why hadn’t Dumbledore explained more? Had he

thought that there would be time; that he would live

for years, for centuries perhaps, like his friend Nicolas

Flamel? If so, he had been wrong. ... Snape had seen

to that. ... Snape, the sleeping snake, who had struck

at the top of the tower . . .

And Dumbledore had fallen ... fallen ...

“ Give it to me, Gregorovitch.”

Harry’s voice was high, clear, and cold, his wand held

in front of him by a long-fingered white hand. The

man at whom he was pointing was suspended upside

down in midair, though there were no ropes holding

him; he swung there, invisibly and eerily bound, his

limbs wrapped about him, his terrified face, on a level

with Harry’s, ruddy due to the blood that had rushed

to his head. He had pure-white hair and a thick,

bushy beard: a trussed-up Father Christmas.

“I have it not, I have it no more! It was, many years

ago, stolen from me!”

Page | 314 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Do not lie to Lord Voldemort, Gregorovitch. He

knows. ... He always knows.”

The hanging man’s pupils were wide, dilated with

fear, and they seemed to swell, bigger and bigger until

their blackness swallowed Harry whole —

And now Harry was hurrying along a dark corridor in

stout little Gregorovitch ’s wake as he held a lantern

aloft: Gregorovitch burst into the room at the end of

the passage and his lantern illuminated what looked

like a workshop; wood shavings and gold gleamed in

the swinging pool of light, and there on the window

ledge sat perched, like a giant bird, a young man with

golden hair. In the split second that the lantern’s light

illuminated him, Harry saw the delight upon his

handsome face, then the intruder shot a Stunning

Spell from his wand and jumped neatly backward out

of the window with a crow of laughter.

And Harry was hurtling back out of those wide,

tunnellike pupils and Gregorovitch ’s face was stricken

with terror.

“Who was the thief, Gregorovitch?” said the high cold

voice.

“I do not know, I never knew, a young man — no —

please — PLEASE !”

A scream that went on and on and then a burst of

green light —

“ Harryl ”

He opened his eyes, panting, his forehead throbbing.

He had passed out against the side of the tent, had

slid sideways down the canvas, and was sprawled on

the ground. He looked up at Hermione, whose bushy

Page | 315 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

hair obscured the tiny patch of sky visible through

the dark branches high above them.

“Dream,” he said, sitting up quickly and attempting to

meet Hermione ’s glower with a look of innocence.

“Must’ve dozed off, sorry.”

“I know it was your scar! I can tell by the look on your

face! You were looking into Vol — ”

“Don’t say his name!” came Ron’s angry voice from

the depths of the tent.

“Fine,” retorted Hermione. “You-Know-Who’s mind,

then!”

“I didn’t mean it to happen!” Harry said. “It was a

dream! Can you control what you dream about,

Hermione?”

“If you just learned to apply Occlumency — ”

But Harry was not interested in being told off; he

wanted to discuss what he had just seen.

“He’s found Gregorovitch, Hermione, and I think he’s

killed him, but before he killed him he read

Gregorovitch ’s mind and I saw — ”

“I think I’d better take over the watch if you’re so tired

you’re falling asleep,” said Hermione coldly.

“I can finish the watch!”

“No, you’re obviously exhausted. Go and lie down.”

She dropped down in the mouth of the tent, looking

stubborn. Angry, but wishing to avoid a row, Harry

ducked back inside.

Page | 316 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ron’s still-pale face was poking out from the lower

bunk; Harry climbed into the one above him, lay

down, and looked up at the dark canvas ceiling. After

several moments, Ron spoke in a voice so low that it

would not carry to Hermione, huddled in the

entrance.

“What’s You-Know-Who doing?”

Harry screwed up his eyes in the effort to remember

every detail, then whispered into the darkness.

“He found Gregorovitch. He had him tied up, he was

torturing him.”

“How’s Gregorovitch supposed to make him a new

wand if he’s tied up?”

“I dunno. ... It’s weird, isn’t it?”

Harry closed his eyes, thinking of all he had seen and

heard. The more he recalled, the less sense it made.

... Voldemort had said nothing about Harry’s wand,

nothing about the twin cores, nothing about

Gregorovitch making a new and more powerful wand

to beat Harry’s. ...

“He wanted something from Gregorovitch,” Harry

said, eyes still closed tight. “He asked him to hand it

over, but Gregorovitch said it had been stolen from

him ... and then ... then ...”

He remembered how he, as Voldemort, had seemed to

hurtle through Gregorovitch ’s eyes, into his

memories. ...

“He read Gregorovitch ’s mind, and I saw this young

bloke perched on a windowsill, and he fired a curse at

Gregorovitch and jumped out of sight. He stole it, he

Page | 317 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

stole whatever You-Know-Who’s after. And I ... I think

I’ve seen him somewhere. ...”

Harry wished he could have another glimpse of the

laughing boy’s face. The theft had happened many

years ago, according to Gregorovitch. Why did the

young thief look familiar?

The noises of the surrounding woods were muffled

inside the tent; all Harry could hear was Ron’s

breathing. After a while, Ron whispered, “Couldn’t

you see what the thief was holding?”

“No ... it must’ve been something small.”

“Harry?”

The wooden slats of Ron’s bunk creaked as he

repositioned himself in bed.

“Harry, you don’t reckon You-Know-Who’s after

something else to turn into a Horcrux?”

“I don’t know,” said Harry slowly. “Maybe. But

wouldn’t it be dangerous for him to make another

one? Didn’t Hermione say he had pushed his soul to

the limit already?”

“Yeah, but maybe he doesn’t know that.”

“Yeah ... maybe,” said Harry.

He had been sure that Voldemort had been looking

for a way around the problem of the twin cores, sure

that Voldemort sought a solution from the old

wandmaker . . . and yet he had killed him, apparently

without asking him a single question about wandlore.

Page | 318 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

What was Voldemort trying to find? Why, with the

Ministry of Magic and the Wizarding world at his feet,

was he far away, intent on the pursuit of an object

that Gregorovitch had once owned, and which had

been stolen by the unknown thief?

Harry could still see the blond-haired youth’s face; it

was merry, wild; there was a Fred and George-ish air

of triumphant trickery about him. He had soared from

the windowsill like a bird, and Harry had seen him

before, but he could not think where. ...

With Gregorovitch dead, it was the merry-faced thief

who was in danger now, and it was on him that

Harry’s thoughts dwelled, as Ron’s snores began to

rumble from the lower bunk and as he himself drifted

slowly into sleep once more.

Page | 319 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE GOBLIN’S REVENGE

Early next morning, before the other two were awake,

Harry left the tent to search the woods around them

for the oldest, most gnarled, and resilient-looking tree

he could find. There in its shadow he buried Mad-Eye

Moody’s eye and marked the spot by gouging a small

cross in the bark with his wand. It was not much, but

Harry felt that Mad-Eye would have much preferred

this to being stuck on Dolores Umbridge’s door. Then

he returned to the tent to wait for the others to wake,

and discuss what they were going to do next.

Harry and Hermione felt that it was best not to stay

anywhere too long, and Ron agreed, with the sole

proviso that their next move took them within reach

of a bacon sandwich. Hermione therefore removed the

enchantments she had placed around the clearing,

while Harry and Ron obliterated all the marks and

impressions on the ground that might show they had

camped there. Then they Disapparated to the

outskirts of a small market town.

Page | 320 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Once they had pitched the tent in the shelter of a

small copse of trees and surrounded it with freshly

cast defensive enchantments, Harry ventured out

under the Invisibility Cloak to find sustenance. This,

however, did not go as planned. He had barely

entered the town when an unnatural chill, a

descending mist, and a sudden darkening of the skies

made him freeze where he stood.

“But you can make a brilliant Patronus!” protested

Ron, when Harry arrived back at the tent empty-

handed, out of breath, and mouthing the single word,

dementors.

“I couldn’t ... make one,” he panted, clutching the

stitch in his side. “Wouldn’t ... come.”

Their expressions of consternation and

disappointment made Harry feel ashamed. It had

been a nightmarish experience, seeing the dementors

gliding out of the mist in the distance and realizing,

as the paralyzing cold choked his lungs and a distant

screaming filled his ears, that he was not going to be

able to protect himself. It had taken all Harry’s

willpower to uproot himself from the spot and run,

leaving the eyeless dementors to glide amongst the

Muggles who might not be able to see them, but

would assuredly feel the despair they cast wherever

they went.

“So we still haven’t got any food.”

“Shut up, Ron,” snapped Hermione. “Harry, what

happened? Why do you think you couldn’t make your

Patronus? You managed perfectly yesterday!”

“I don’t know.”

Page | 321 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He sat low in one of Perkins’s old armchairs, feeling

more humiliated by the moment. He was afraid that

something had gone wrong inside him. Yesterday

seemed a long time ago: Today he might have been

thirteen years old again, the only one who collapsed

on the Hogwarts Express.

Ron kicked a chair leg.

“What?” he snarled at Hermione. “I’m starving! All I’ve

had since I bled half to death is a couple of

toadstools!”

“You go and fight your way through the dementors,

then,” said Harry, stung.

“I would, but my arm’s in a sling, in case you hadn’t

noticed!”

“That’s convenient.”

“And what’s that supposed to — ?”

“Of course!” cried Hermione, clapping a hand to her

forehead and startling both of them into silence.

“Harry, give me the locket! Come on,” she said

impatiently, clicking her fingers at him when he did

not react, “the Horcrux, Harry, you’re still wearing it!”

She held out her hands, and Harry lifted the golden

chain over his head. The moment it parted contact

with Harry’s skin he felt free and oddly light. He had

not even realized that he was clammy or that there

was a heavy weight pressing on his stomach until

both sensations lifted.

“Better?” asked Hermione.

“Yeah, loads better!”

Page | 322 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry,” she said, crouching down in front of him and

using the kind of voice he associated with visiting the

very sick, “you don’t think you’ve been possessed, do

you?”

“What? No!” he said defensively. “I remember

everything we’ve done while I’ve been wearing it. I

wouldn’t know what I’d done if I’d been possessed,

would I? Ginny told me there were times when she

couldn’t remember anything.”

“Hmm,” said Hermione, looking down at the heavy

gold locket. “Well, maybe we ought not to wear it. We

can just keep it in the tent.”

“We are not leaving that Horcrux lying around,” Harry

stated firmly. “If we lose it, if it gets stolen — ”

“Oh, all right, all right,” said Hermione, and she

placed it around her own neck and tucked it out of

sight down the front of her shirt. “But we’ll take turns

wearing it, so nobody keeps it on too long.”

“Great,” said Ron irritably, “and now we’ve sorted that

out, can we please get some food?”

“Fine, but we’ll go somewhere else to find it,” said

Hermione with half a glance at Harry. “There’s no

point staying where we know dementors are swooping

around.”

In the end they settled down for the night in a far-

flung field belonging to a lonely farm, from which they

had managed to obtain eggs and bread.

“It’s not stealing, is it?” asked Hermione in a troubled

voice, as they devoured scrambled eggs on toast. “Not

if I left some money under the chicken coop?”

Page | 323 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ron rolled his eyes and said, with his cheeks bulging,

“ ’Er-my-nee, ’oo worry ’oo much. ’Elax!”

And, indeed, it was much easier to relax when they

were comfortably well fed: The argument about the

dementors was forgotten in laughter that night, and

Harry felt cheerful, even hopeful, as he took the first

of the three night watches.

This was their first encounter with the fact that a full

stomach meant good spirits; an empty one, bickering

and gloom. Harry was least surprised by this,

because he had suffered periods of near starvation at

the Dursleys’. Hermione bore up reasonably well on

those nights when they managed to scavenge nothing

but berries or stale biscuits, her temper perhaps a

little shorter than usual and her silences rather dour.

Ron, however, had always been used to three

delicious meals a day, courtesy of his mother or of the

Hogwarts house-elves, and hunger made him both

unreasonable and irascible. Whenever lack of food

coincided with Ron’s turn to wear the Horcrux, he

became downright unpleasant.

“So where next?” was his constant refrain. He did not

seem to have any ideas himself, but expected Harry

and Hermione to come up with plans while he sat and

brooded over the low food supplies. Accordingly Harry

and Hermione spent fruitless hours trying to decide

where they might find the other Horcruxes, and how

to destroy the one they had already got, their

conversations becoming increasingly repetitive as

they had no new information.

As Dumbledore had told Harry that he believed

Voldemort had hidden the Horcruxes in places

important to him, they kept reciting, in a sort of

dreary litany, those locations they knew that

Voldemort had lived or visited. The orphanage where

Page | 324 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

he had been born and raised; Hogwarts, where he had

been educated; Borgin and Burkes, where he had

worked after completing school; then Albania, where

he had spent his years of exile: These formed the

basis of their speculations.

“Yeah, let’s go to Albania. Shouldn’t take more than

an afternoon to search an entire country,” said Ron

sarcastically.

“There can’t be anything there. He’d already made five

of his Horcruxes before he went into exile, and

Dumbledore was certain the snake is the sixth,” said

Hermione. “We know the snake’s not in Albania, it’s

usually with Vol — ”

“Didn’t I ask you to stop saying that?”

“Fine! The snake is usually with You-Knotu-Who —

happy?”

“Not particularly.”

“I can’t see him hiding anything at Borgin and

Burkes,” said Harry, who had made this point many

times before, but said it again simply to break the

nasty silence. “Borgin and Burke were experts at

Dark objects, they would’ve recognized a Horcrux

straightaway.”

Ron yawned pointedly. Repressing a strong urge to

throw something at him, Harry plowed on, “I still

reckon he might have hidden something at

Hogwarts.”

Hermione sighed.

“But Dumbledore would have found it, Harry!”

Page | 325 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry repeated the argument he kept bringing out in

favor of this theory.

“Dumbledore said in front of me that he never

assumed he knew all of Hogwarts’s secrets. I’m telling

you, if there was one place Vol — ”

“Oi!”

“YOU-KNOW-WHO, then!” Harry shouted, goaded

past endurance. “If there was one place that was

really important to You-Know-Who, it was Hogwarts!”

“Oh, come on,” scoffed Ron. “His school?”

“Yeah, his school! It was his first real home, the place

that meant he was special; it meant everything to

him, and even after he left — ”

“This is You-Know-Who we’re talking about, right?

Not you?” inquired Ron. He was tugging at the chain

of the Horcrux around his neck: Harry was visited by

a desire to seize it and throttle him.

“You told us that You-Know-Who asked Dumbledore

to give him a job after he left,” said Hermione.

“That’s right,” said Harry.

“And Dumbledore thought he only wanted to come

back to try and find something, probably another

founder’s object, to make into another Horcrux?”

“Yeah,” said Harry.

“But he didn’t get the job, did he?” said Hermione. “So

he never got the chance to find a founder’s object

there and hide it in the school!”

Page | 326 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Okay, then,” said Harry, defeated. “Forget Hogwarts.”

Without any other leads, they traveled into London

and, hidden beneath the Invisibility Cloak, searched

for the orphanage in which Voldemort had been

raised. Hermione stole into a library and discovered

from their records that the place had been

demolished many years before. They visited its site

and found a tower block of offices.

“We could try digging in the foundations?” Hermione

suggested halfheartedly.

“He wouldn’t have hidden a Horcrux here,” Harry

said. He had known it all along: The orphanage had

been the place Voldemort had been determined to

escape; he would never have hidden a part of his soul

there. Dumbledore had shown Harry that Voldemort

sought grandeur or mystique in his hiding places;

this dismal gray corner of London was as far removed

as you could imagine from Hogwarts or the Ministry

or a building like Gringotts, the Wizarding bank, with

its golden doors and marble floors.

Even without any new ideas, they continued to move

through the countryside, pitching the tent in a

different place each night for security. Every morning

they made sure that they had removed all clues to

their presence, then set off to find another lonely and

secluded spot, traveling by Apparition to more woods,

to the shadowy crevices of cliffs, to purple moors,

gorse-covered mountainsides, and once a sheltered

and pebbly cove. Every twelve hours or so they

passed the Horcrux between them as though they

were playing some perverse, slow-motion game of

pass-the-parcel, where they dreaded the music

stopping because the reward was twelve hours of

increased fear and anxiety.

Page | 327 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry’s scar kept prickling. It happened most often,

he noticed, when he was wearing the Horcrux.

Sometimes he could not stop himself reacting to the

pain.

“What? What did you see?” demanded Ron, whenever

he noticed Harry wince.

“A face,” muttered Harry, every time. “The same face.

The thief who stole from Gregorovitch.”

And Ron would turn away, making no effort to hide

his disappointment. Harry knew that Ron was hoping

to hear news of his family or of the rest of the Order of

the Phoenix, but after all, he, Harry, was not a

television aerial; he could only see what Voldemort

was thinking at the time, not tune in to whatever took

his fancy. Apparently Voldemort was dwelling

endlessly on the unknown youth with the gleeful face,

whose name and whereabouts, Harry felt sure,

Voldemort knew no better than he did. As Harry’s

scar continued to burn and the merry, blond-haired

boy swam tantalizingly in his memory, he learned to

suppress any sign of pain or discomfort, for the other

two showed nothing but impatience at the mention of

the thief. He could not entirely blame them, when

they were so desperate for a lead on the Horcruxes.

As the days stretched into weeks, Harry began to

suspect that Ron and Hermione were having

conversations without, and about, him. Several times

they stopped talking abruptly when Harry entered the

tent, and twice he came accidentally upon them,

huddled a little distance away, heads together and

talking fast; both times they fell silent when they

realized he was approaching them and hastened to

appear busy collecting wood or water.

Page | 328 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry could not help wondering whether they had

only agreed to come on what now felt like a pointless

and rambling journey because they thought he had

some secret plan that they would learn in due course.

Ron was making no effort to hide his bad mood, and

Harry was starting to fear that Hermione too was

disappointed by his poor leadership. In desperation

he tried to think of further Horcrux locations, but the

only one that continued to occur to him was

Hogwarts, and as neither of the others thought this at

all likely, he stopped suggesting it.

Autumn rolled over the countryside as they moved

through it: They were now pitching the tent on

mulches of fallen leaves. Natural mists joined those

cast by the dementors; wind and rain added to their

troubles. The fact that Hermione was getting better at

identifying edible fungi could not altogether

compensate for their continuing isolation, the lack of

other people’s company, or their total ignorance of

what was going on in the war against Voldemort.

“My mother,” said Ron one night, as they sat in the

tent on a riverbank in Wales, “can make good food

appear out of thin air.”

He prodded moodily at the lumps of charred gray fish

on his plate. Harry glanced automatically at Ron’s

neck and saw, as he had expected, the golden chain

of the Horcrux glinting there. He managed to fight

down the impulse to swear at Ron, whose attitude

would, he knew, improve slightly when the time came

to take off the locket.

“Your mother can’t produce food out of thin air,” said

Hermione. “No one can. Food is the first of the five

Principal Exceptions to Gamp’s Law of Elemental

Transfigur — ”

Page | 329 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Oh, speak English, can’t you?” Ron said, prising a

fish bone out from between his teeth.

“It’s impossible to make good food out of nothing! You

can Summon it if you know where it is, you can

transform it, you can increase the quantity if you’ve

already got some — ”

“Well, don’t bother increasing this, it’s disgusting,”

said Ron.

“Harry caught the fish and I did my best with it! I

notice I’m always the one who ends up sorting out the

food, because I’m a girl, I suppose!”

“No, it’s because you’re supposed to be the best at

magic!” shot back Ron.

Hermione jumped up and bits of roast pike slid off

her tin plate onto the floor.

“ You can do the cooking tomorrow, Ron, you can find

the ingredients and try and charm them into

something worth eating, and I’ll sit here and pull

faces and moan and you can see how you — ”

“Shut up!” said Harry, leaping to his feet and holding

up both hands. “Shut up now\”

Hermione looked outraged.

“How can you side with him, he hardly ever does the

cook — ”

“Hermione, be quiet, I can hear someone!”

He was listening hard, his hands still raised, warning

them not to talk. Then, over the rush and gush of the

Page | 330 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

dark river beside them, he heard voices again. He

looked around at the Sneakoscope. It was not moving.

“You cast the Muffliato charm over us, right?” he

whispered to Hermione.

“I did everything,” she whispered back, “Muffliato,

Muggle-Repelling and Disillusionment Charms, all of

it. They shouldn’t be able to hear or see us, whoever

they are.”

Heavy scuffing and scraping noises, plus the sound of

dislodged stones and twigs, told them that several

people were clambering down the steep, wooded slope

that descended to the narrow bank where they had

pitched the tent. They drew their wands, waiting. The

enchantments they had cast around themselves

ought to be sufficient, in the near total darkness, to

shield them from the notice of Muggles and normal

witches and wizards. If these were Death Eaters, then

perhaps their defenses were about to be tested by

Dark Magic for the first time.

The voices became louder but no more intelligible as

the group of men reached the bank. Harry estimated

that their owners were fewer than twenty feet away,

but the cascading river made it impossible to tell for

sure. Hermione snatched up the beaded bag and

started to rummage; after a moment she drew out

three Extendable Ears and threw one each to Harry

and Ron, who hastily inserted the ends of the flesh-

colored strings into their ears and fed the other ends

out of the tent entrance.

Within seconds Harry heard a weary male voice.

“There ought to be a few salmon in here, or d’you

reckon it’s too early in the season? Accio Salmon).”

Page | 331 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There were several distinct splashes and then the

slapping sounds of fish against flesh. Somebody

grunted appreciatively. Harry pressed the Extendable

Ear deeper into his own: Over the murmur of the river

he could make out more voices, but they were not

speaking English or any human language he had ever

heard. It was a rough and unmelodious tongue, a

string of rattling, guttural noises, and there seemed to

be two speakers, one with a slightly lower, slower

voice than the other.

A fire danced into life on the other side of the canvas;

large shadows passed between tent and flames. The

delicious smell of baking salmon wafted tantalizingly

in their direction. Then came the clinking of cutlery

on plates, and the first man spoke again.

“Here, Griphook, Gornuk.”

Goblins\ Hermione mouthed at Harry, who nodded.

“Thank you,” said the goblins together in English.

“So, you three have been on the run how long?” asked

a new, mellow, and pleasant voice; it was vaguely

familiar to Harry, who pictured a round-bellied,

cheerful-faced man.

“Six weeks ... seven ... I forget,” said the tired man.

“Met up with Griphook in the first couple of days and

joined forces with Gornuk not long after. Nice to have

a bit of company.” There was a pause, while knives

scraped plates and tin mugs were picked up and

replaced on the ground. “What made you leave, Ted?”

continued the man.

“Knew they were coming for me,” replied mellow-

voiced Ted, and Harry suddenly knew who he was:

Tonks’s father. “Heard Death Eaters were in the area

Page | 332 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

last week and decided I’d better run for it. Refused to

register as a Muggle-born on principle, see, so I knew

it was a matter of time, knew I’d have to leave in the

end. My wife should be okay, she’s pure-blood. And

then I met Dean here, what, a few days ago, son?”

“Yeah,” said another voice, and Harry, Ron, and

Hermione stared at each other, silent but beside

themselves with excitement, sure they recognized the

voice of Dean Thomas, their fellow Gryffindor.

“Muggle-born, eh?” asked the first man.

“Not sure,” said Dean. “My dad left my mum when I

was a kid. I’ve got no proof he was a wizard, though.”

There was silence for a while, except for the sounds of

munching; then Ted spoke again.

“I’ve got to say, Dirk, I’m surprised to run into you.

Pleased, but surprised. Word was you’d been caught.”

“I was,” said Dirk. “I was halfway to Azkaban when I

made a break for it, Stunned Dawlish, and nicked his

broom. It was easier than you’d think; I don’t reckon

he’s quite right at the moment. Might be Confunded.

If so, I’d like to shake the hand of the witch or wizard

who did it, probably saved my life.”

There was another pause in which the fire crackled

and the river rushed on. Then Ted said, “And where

do you two fit in? I, er, had the impression the goblins

were for You-Know-Who, on the whole.”

“You had a false impression,” said the higher-voiced

of the goblins. “We take no sides. This is a wizards’

war.”

“How come you’re in hiding, then?”

Page | 333 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I deemed it prudent,” said the deeper-voiced goblin.

“Having refused what I considered an impertinent

request, I could see that my personal safety was in

jeopardy.”

“What did they ask you to do?” asked Ted.

“Duties ill-befitting the dignity of my race,” replied the

goblin, his voice rougher and less human as he said

it. “I am not a house-elf.”

“What about you, Griphook?”

“Similar reasons,” said the higher-voiced goblin.

“Gringotts is no longer under the sole control of my

race. I recognize no Wizarding master.”

He added something under his breath in

Gobbledegook, and Gornuk laughed.

“What’s the joke?” asked Dean.

“He said,” replied Dirk, “that there are things wizards

don’t recognize, either.”

There was a short pause.

“I don’t get it,” said Dean.

“I had my small revenge before I left,” said Griphook

in English.

“Good man — goblin, I should say,” amended Ted

hastily. “Didn’t manage to lock a Death Eater up in

one of the old high-security vaults, I suppose?”

“If I had, the sword would not have helped him break

out,” replied Griphook. Gornuk laughed again and

even Dirk gave a dry chuckle.

Page | 334 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Dean and I are still missing something here,” said

Ted.

“So is Severus Snape, though he does not know it,”

said Griphook, and the two goblins roared with

malicious laughter. Inside the tent Harry’s breathing

was shallow with excitement: He and Hermione stared

at each other, listening as hard as they could.

“Didn’t you hear about that, Ted?” asked Dirk. “About

the kids who tried to steal Gryffindor’s sword out of

Snape ’s office at Hogwarts?”

An electric current seemed to course through Harry,

jangling his every nerve as he stood rooted to the

spot.

“Never heard a word,” said Ted. “Not in the Prophet,

was it?”

“Hardly,” chortled Dirk. “Griphook here told me, he

heard about it from Bill Weasley who works for the

bank. One of the kids who tried to take the sword was

Bill’s younger sister.”

Harry glanced toward Hermione and Ron, both of

whom were clutching the Extendable Ears as tightly

as lifelines.

“She and a couple of friends got into Snape ’s office

and smashed open the glass case where he was

apparently keeping the sword. Snape caught them as

they were trying to smuggle it down the staircase.”

“Ah, God bless ’em,” said Ted. “What did they think,

that they’d be able to use the sword on You-Know-

Who? Or on Snape himself?”

Page | 335 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Well, whatever they thought they were going to do

with it, Snape decided the sword wasn’t safe where it

was,” said Dirk. “Couple of days later, once he’d got

the say-so from You-Know-Who, I imagine, he sent it

down to London to be kept in Gringotts instead.”

The goblins started to laugh again.

“I’m still not seeing the joke,” said Ted.

“It’s a fake,” rasped Griphook.

“The sword of Gryffindor!”

“Oh yes. It is a copy — an excellent copy, it is true —

but it was Wizard-made. The original was forged

centuries ago by goblins and had certain properties

only goblin-made armor possesses. Wherever the

genuine sword of Gryffindor is, it is not in a vault at

Gringotts bank.”

“I see,” said Ted. “And I take it you didn’t bother

telling the Death Eaters this?”

“I saw no reason to trouble them with the

information,” said Griphook smugly, and now Ted and

Dean joined in Gornuk and Dirk’s laughter.

Inside the tent, Harry closed his eyes, willing someone

to ask the question he needed answered, and after a

minute that seemed ten, Dean obliged; he was (Harry

remembered with a jolt) an ex-boyfriend of Ginny’s

too.

“What happened to Ginny and the others? The ones

who tried to steal it?”

“Oh, they were punished, and cruelly,” said Griphook

indifferently.

Page | 336 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“They’re okay, though?” asked Ted quickly. “I mean,

the Weasleys don’t need any more of their kids

injured, do they?”

“They suffered no serious injury, as far as I am

aware,” said Griphook.

“Lucky for them,” said Ted. “With Snape’s track

record I suppose we should just be glad they’re still

alive.”

“You believe that story, then, do you, Ted?” asked

Dirk. “You believe Snape killed Dumbledore?”

“ ’Course I do,” said Ted. “You’re not going to sit there

and tell me you think Potter had anything to do with

it?”

“Hard to know what to believe these days,” muttered

Dirk.

“I know Harry Potter,” said Dean. “And I reckon he’s

the real thing — the Chosen One, or whatever you

want to call it.”

“Yeah, there’s a lot would like to believe he’s that,

son,” said Dirk, “me included. But where is he? Run

for it, by the looks of things. You’d think, if he knew

anything we don’t, or had anything special going for

him, he’d be out there now fighting, rallying

resistance, instead of hiding. And you know, the

Prophet made a pretty good case against him — ”

“The Prophet?” scoffed Ted. “You deserve to be lied to

if you’re still reading that muck, Dirk. You want the

facts, try the Quibbler.”

There was a sudden explosion of choking and

retching, plus a good deal of thumping; by the sound

Page | 337 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

of it, Dirk had swallowed a fish bone. At last he

spluttered, “The Quibbler? That lunatic rag of Xeno

Lovegood’s?”

“It’s not so lunatic these days,” said Ted. “You want to

give it a look. Xeno is printing all the stuff the

Prophet’s ignoring, not a single mention of Crumple-

Horned Snorkacks in the last issue. How long they’ll

let him get away with it, mind, I don’t know. But Xeno

says, front page of every issue, that any wizard who’s

against You-Know-Who ought to make helping Harry

Potter their number-one priority.”

“Hard to help a boy who’s vanished off the face of the

earth,” said Dirk.

“Listen, the fact that they haven’t caught him yet’s

one hell of an achievement,” said Ted. “I’d take tips

from him gladly; it’s what we’re trying to do, stay free,

isn’t it?”

“Yeah, well, you’ve got a point there,” said Dirk

heavily. “With the whole of the Ministry and all their

informers looking for him I’d have expected him to be

caught by now. Mind, who’s to say they haven’t

already caught and killed him without publicizing it?”

“Ah, don’t say that, Dirk,” murmured Ted.

There was a long pause filled with more clattering of

knives and forks. When they spoke again it was to

discuss whether they ought to sleep on the bank or

retreat back up the wooded slope. Deciding the trees

would give better cover, they extinguished their fire,

then clambered back up the incline, their voices

fading away.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione reeled in the Extendable

Ears. Harry, who had found the need to remain silent

Page | 338 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

increasingly difficult the longer they eavesdropped,

now found himself unable to say more than, “Ginny

— the sword — ”

“I know!” said Hermione.

She lunged for the tiny beaded bag, this time sinking

her arm in it right up to the armpit.

“Here ... we ... are ...” she said between gritted teeth,

and she pulled at something that was evidently in the

depths of the bag. Slowly the edge of an ornate

picture frame came into sight. Harry hurried to help

her. As they lifted the empty portrait of Phineas

Nigellus free of Hermione’s bag, she kept her wand

pointing at it, ready to cast a spell at any moment.

“If somebody swapped the real sword for the fake

while it was in Dumbledore’s office,” she panted, as

they propped the painting against the side of the tent,

“Phineas Nigellus would have seen it happen, he

hangs right beside the case!”

“Unless he was asleep,” said Harry, but he still held

his breath as Hermione knelt down in front of the

empty canvas, her wand directed at its center, cleared

her throat, then said:

“Er — Phineas? Phineas Nigellus?”

Nothing happened.

“Phineas Nigellus?” said Hermione again. “Professor

Black? Please could we talk to you? Please?”

“ ‘Please’ always helps,” said a cold, snide voice, and

Phineas Nigellus slid into his portrait. At once,

Hermione cried:

Page | 339 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Obscuro\”

A black blindfold appeared over Phineas Nigellus’s

clever, dark eyes, causing him to bump into the frame

and shriek with pain.

“What — how dare — what are you — ?”

“I’m very sorry, Professor Black,” said Hermione, “but

it’s a necessary precaution!”

“Remove this foul addition at once! Remove it, I say!

You are ruining a great work of art! Where am I?

What is going on?”

“Never mind where we are,” said Harry, and Phineas

Nigellus froze, abandoning his attempts to peel off the

painted blindfold.

“Can that possibly be the voice of the elusive Mr.

Potter?”

“Maybe,” said Harry, knowing that this would keep

Phineas Nigellus’s interest. “We’ve got a couple of

questions to ask you — about the sword of

Gryffindor.”

“Ah,” said Phineas Nigellus, now turning his head this

way and that in an effort to catch sight of Harry, “yes.

That silly girl acted most unwisely there — ”

“Shut up about my sister,” said Ron roughly. Phineas

Nigellus raised supercilious eyebrows.

“Who else is here?” he asked, turning his head from

side to side. “Your tone displeases me! The girl and

her friends were foolhardy in the extreme. Thieving

from the headmaster!”

Page | 340 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“They weren’t thieving,” said Harry. “That sword isn’t

Snape’s.”

“It belongs to Professor Snape’s school,” said Phineas

Nigellus. “Exactly what claim did the Weasley girl

have upon it? She deserved her punishment, as did

the idiot Longbottom and the Lovegood oddity!”

“Neville is not an idiot and Luna is not an oddity!”

said Hermione.

“Where am I?” repeated Phineas Nigellus, starting to

wrestle with the blindfold again. “Where have you

brought me? Why have you removed me from the

house of my forebears?”

“Never mind that! How did Snape punish Ginny,

Neville, and Luna?” asked Harry urgently.

“Professor Snape sent them into the Forbidden Forest,

to do some work for the oaf, Hagrid.”

“Hagrid’s not an oaf!” said Hermione shrilly.

“And Snape might’ve thought that was a

punishment,” said Harry, “but Ginny, Neville, and

Luna probably had a good laugh with Hagrid. The

Forbidden Forest ... they’ve faced plenty worse than

the Forbidden Forest, big deal!”

He felt relieved; he had been imagining horrors, the

Cruciatus Curse at the very least.

“What we really wanted to know, Professor Black, is

whether anyone else has, um, taken out the sword at

all? Maybe it’s been taken away for cleaning or — or

something?”

Page | 341 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Phineas Nigellus paused again in his struggles to free

his eyes and sniggered.

“ Muggle-borns,” he said. “Goblin-made armor does not

require cleaning, simple girl. Goblins’ silver repels

mundane dirt, imbibing only that which strengthens

it.”

“Don’t call Hermione simple,” said Harry.

“I grow weary of contradiction,” said Phineas Nigellus.

“Perhaps it is time for me to return to the

headmaster’s office?”

Still blindfolded, he began groping the side of his

frame, trying to feel his way out of his picture and

back into the one at Hogwarts. Harry had a sudden

inspiration.

“Dumbledore! Can’t you bring us Dumbledore?”

“I beg your pardon?” asked Phineas Nigellus.

“Professor Dumbledore’s portrait — couldn’t you bring

him along, here, into yours?”

Phineas Nigellus turned his face in the direction of

Harry’s voice.

“Evidently it is not only Muggle-borns who are

ignorant, Potter. The portraits of Hogwarts may

commune with each other, but they cannot travel

outside the castle except to visit a painting of

themselves hanging elsewhere. Dumbledore cannot

come here with me, and after the treatment I have

received at your hands, I can assure you that I shall

not be making a return visit!”

Page | 342 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Slightly crestfallen, Harry watched Phineas redouble

his attempts to leave his frame.

“Professor Black,” said Hermione, “couldn’t you just

tell us, please, when was the last time the sword was

taken out of its case? Before Ginny took it out, I

mean?”

Phineas snorted impatiently.

“I believe that the last time I saw the sword of

Gryffindor leave its case was when Professor

Dumbledore used it to break open a ring.”

Hermione whipped around to look at Harry. Neither of

them dared say more in front of Phineas Nigellus, who

had at last managed to locate the exit.

“Well, good night to you,” he said a little waspishly,

and he began to move out of sight again. Only the

edge of his hat brim remained in view when Harry

gave a sudden shout.

“Wait! Have you told Snape you saw this?”

Phineas Nigellus stuck his blindfolded head back into

the picture.

“Professor Snape has more important things on his

mind than the many eccentricities of Albus

Dumbledore. Good-bye, Potter!”

And with that, he vanished completely, leaving behind

him nothing but his murky backdrop.

“Harry!” Hermione cried.

“I know!” Harry shouted. Unable to contain himself,

he punched the air; it was more than he had dared to

Page | 343 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

hope for. He strode up and down the tent, feeling that

he could have run a mile; he did not even feel hungry

anymore. Hermione was squashing Phineas Nigellus’s

portrait back into the beaded bag; when she had

fastened the clasp she threw the bag aside and raised

a shining face to Harry.

“The sword can destroy Horcruxes! Goblin-made

blades imbibe only that which strengthen them —

Harry, that sword’s impregnated with basilisk

venom!”

“And Dumbledore didn’t give it to me because he still

needed it, he wanted to use it on the locket — ”

“ — and he must have realized they wouldn’t let you

have it if he put it in his will — ”

“ — so he made a copy — ”

“ — and put a fake in the glass case — ”

“ — and he left the real one — where?”

They gazed at each other; Harry felt that the answer

was dangling invisibly in the air above them,

tantalizingly close. Why hadn’t Dumbledore told him?

Or had he, in fact, told Harry, but Harry had not

realized it at the time?

“Think!” whispered Hermione. “Think! Where would

he have left it?”

“Not at Hogwarts,” said Harry, resuming his pacing.

“Somewhere in Hogsmeade?” suggested Hermione.

“The Shrieking Shack?” said Harry. “Nobody ever goes

in there.”

Page | 344 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But Snape knows how to get in, wouldn’t that be a

bit risky?”

“Dumbledore trusted Snape,” Harry reminded her.

“Not enough to tell him that he had swapped the

swords,” said Hermione.

“Yeah, you’re right!” said Harry, and he felt even more

cheered at the thought that Dumbledore had had

some reservations, however faint, about Snape ’s

trustworthiness. “So, would he have hidden the sword

well away from Hogsmeade, then? What d’you reckon,

Ron? Ron?”

Harry looked around. For one bewildered moment he

thought that Ron had left the tent, then realized that

Ron was lying in the shadow of a lower bunk, looking

stony.

“Oh, remembered me, have you?” he said.

“What?”

Ron snorted as he stared up at the underside of the

upper bunk.

“You two carry on. Don’t let me spoil your fun.”

Perplexed, Harry looked to Hermione for help, but she

shook her head, apparently as nonplussed as he was.

“What’s the problem?” asked Harry.

“Problem? There’s no problem,” said Ron, still

refusing to look at Harry. “Not according to you,

anyway.”

Page | 345 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There were several plunks on the canvas over their

heads. It had started to rain.

“Well, you’ve obviously got a problem,” said Harry.

“Spit it out, will you?”

Ron swung his long legs off the bed and sat up. He

looked mean, unlike himself.

“All right, I’ll spit it out. Don’t expect me to skip up

and down the tent because there’s some other damn

thing we’ve got to find. Just add it to the list of stuff

you don’t know.”

“I don’t know?” repeated Harry, “I don’t know?”

Plunk, plunk, plunk. The rain was falling harder and

heavier; it pattered on the leaf-strewn bank all around

them and into the river chattering through the dark.

Dread doused Harry’s jubilation: Ron was saying

exactly what he had suspected and feared him to be

thinking.

“It’s not like I’m not having the time of my life here,”

said Ron, “you know, with my arm mangled and

nothing to eat and freezing my backside off every

night. I just hoped, you know, after we’d been

running round a few weeks, we’d have achieved

something.”

“Ron,” Hermione said, but in such a quiet voice that

Ron could pretend not to have heard it over the loud

tattoo the rain was now beating on the tent.

“I thought you knew what you’d signed up for,” said

Harry.

“Yeah, I thought I did too.”

Page | 346 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“So what part of it isn’t living up to your

expectations?” asked Harry. Anger was coming to his

defense now. “Did you think we’d be staying in five-

star hotels? Finding a Horcrux every other day? Did

you think you’d be back to Mummy by Christmas?”

“We thought you knew what you were doing!” shouted

Ron, standing up, and his words pierced Harry like

scalding knives. “We thought Dumbledore had told

you what to do, we thought you had a real plan!”

“Ron!” said Hermione, this time clearly audible over

the rain thundering on the tent roof, but again, he

ignored her.

“Well, sorry to let you down,” said Harry, his voice

quite calm even though he felt hollow, inadequate.

“I’ve been straight with you from the start, I told you

everything Dumbledore told me. And in case you

haven’t noticed, we’ve found one Horcrux — ”

“Yeah, and we’re about as near getting rid of it as we

are to finding the rest of them — nowhere effing near,

in other words!”

“Take off the locket, Ron,” Hermione said, her voice

unusually high. “Please take it off. You wouldn’t be

talking like this if you hadn’t been wearing it all day.”

“Yeah, he would,” said Harry, who did not want

excuses made for Ron. “D’you think I haven’t noticed

the two of you whispering behind my back? D’you

think I didn’t guess you were thinking this stuff?”

“Harry, we weren’t — ”

“Don’t lie!” Ron hurled at her. “You said it too, you

said you were disappointed, you said you’d thought

he had a bit more to go on than — ”

Page | 347 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I didn’t say it like that — Harry, I didn’t!” she cried.

The rain was pounding the tent, tears were pouring

down Hermione’s face, and the excitement of a few

minutes before had vanished as if it had never been, a

short-lived firework that had flared and died, leaving

everything dark, wet, and cold. The sword of

Gryffindor was hidden they knew not where, and they

were three teenagers in a tent whose only

achievement was not, yet, to be dead.

“So why are you still here?” Harry asked Ron.

“Search me,” said Ron.

“Go home then,” said Harry.

“Yeah, maybe I will!” shouted Ron, and he took

several steps toward Harry, who did not back away.

“Didn’t you hear what they said about my sister? But

you don’t give a rat’s fart, do you, it’s only the

Forbidden Forest, Harry I’ve-Faced-Worse Potter

doesn’t care what happens to her in here — well, I do,

all right, giant spiders and mental stuff — ”

“I was only saying — she was with the others, they

were with Hagrid — ”

“Yeah, I get it, you don’t care! And what about the

rest of my family, ‘the Weasleys don’t need another

kid injured,’ did you hear that?”

“Yeah, I — ”

“Not bothered what it meant, though?”

“Ron!” said Hermione, forcing her way between them.

“I don’t think it means anything new has happened,

anything we don’t know about; think, Ron, Bill’s

Page | 348 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

already scarred, plenty of people must have seen that

George has lost an ear by now, and you’re supposed

to be on your deathbed with spattergroit, I’m sure

that’s all he meant — ”

“Oh, you’re sure, are you? Right then, well, I won’t

bother myself about them. It’s all right for you two,

isn’t it, with your parents safely out of the way — ”

“My parents are dead).” Harry bellowed.

“And mine could be going the same way!” yelled Ron.

“Then GO!” roared Harry. “Go back to them, pretend

you’ve got over your spattergroit and Mummy’ll be

able to feed you up and — ”

Ron made a sudden movement: Harry reacted, but

before either wand was clear of its owner’s pocket,

Hermione had raised her own.

“Protego\” she cried, and an invisible shield expanded

between her and Harry on the one side and Ron on

the other; all of them were forced backward a few

steps by the strength of the spell, and Harry and Ron

glared from either side of the transparent barrier as

though they were seeing each other clearly for the

first time. Harry felt a corrosive hatred toward Ron:

Something had broken between them.

“Leave the Horcrux,” Harry said.

Ron wrenched the chain from over his head and cast

the locket into a nearby chair. He turned to

Hermione.

“What are you doing?”

“What do you mean?”

Page | 349 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Are you staying, or what?”

“I ...” She looked anguished. “Yes — yes, I’m staying.

Ron, we said we’d go with Harry, we said we’d help — ”

“I get it. You choose him.”

“Ron, no — please — come back, come back!”

She was impeded by her own Shield Charm; by the

time she had removed it he had already stormed into

the night. Harry stood quite still and silent, listening

to her sobbing and calling Ron’s name amongst the

trees.

After a few minutes she returned, her sopping hair

plastered to her face.

“He’s g-g-gone! Disapparated!”

She threw herself into a chair, curled up, and started

to cry.

Harry felt dazed. He stooped, picked up the Horcrux,

and placed it around his own neck. He dragged

blankets off Ron’s bunk and threw them over

Hermione. Then he climbed onto his own bed and

stared up at the dark canvas roof, listening to the

pounding of the rain.

Page | 350 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

GODRIC’S HOLLOW

When Harry woke the following day it was several

seconds before he remembered what had happened.

Then he hoped, childishly, that it had been a dream,

that Ron was still there and had never left. Yet by

turning his head on his pillow he could see Ron’s

deserted bunk. It was like a dead body in the way it

seemed to draw his eyes. Harry jumped down from

his own bed, keeping his eyes averted from Ron’s.

Hermione, who was already busy in the kitchen, did

not wish Harry good morning, but turned her face

away quickly as he went by.

He’s gone, Harry told himself. He’s gone. He had to

keep thinking it as he washed and dressed, as though

repetition would dull the shock of it. He’s gone and

he’s not coming back. And that was the simple truth

of it, Harry knew, because their protective

enchantments meant that it would be impossible,

once they vacated this spot, for Ron to find them

again.

Page | 351 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He and Hermione ate breakfast in silence. Hermione ’s

eyes were puffy and red; she looked as if she had not

slept. They packed up their things, Hermione

dawdling. Harry knew why she wanted to spin out

their time on the riverbank; several times he saw her

look up eagerly, and he was sure she had deluded

herself into thinking that she heard footsteps through

the heavy rain, but no red-haired figure appeared

between the trees. Every time Harry imitated her,

looked around (for he could not help hoping a little,

himself) and saw nothing but rain-swept woods,

another little parcel of fury exploded inside him. He

could hear Ron saying, “ We thought you knew what

you were doing \” , and he resumed packing with a

hard knot in the pit of his stomach.

The muddy river beside them was rising rapidly and

would soon spill over onto their bank. They had

lingered a good hour after they would usually have

departed their campsite. Finally having entirely

repacked the beaded bag three times, Hermione

seemed unable to find any more reasons to delay: She

and Harry grasped hands and Disapparated,

reappearing on a windswept heather-covered hillside.

The instant they arrived, Hermione dropped Harry’s

hand and walked away from him, finally sitting down

on a large rock, her face on her knees, shaking with

what he knew were sobs. He watched her, supposing

that he ought to go and comfort her, but something

kept him rooted to the spot. Everything inside him felt

cold and tight: Again he saw the contemptuous

expression on Ron’s face. Harry strode off through the

heather, walking in a large circle with the distraught

Hermione at its center, casting the spells she usually

performed to ensure their protection.

They did not discuss Ron at all over the next few

days. Harry was determined never to mention his

Page | 352 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

name again, and Hermione seemed to know that it

was no use forcing the issue, although sometimes at

night when she thought he was sleeping, he would

hear her crying. Meanwhile Harry had started

bringing out the Marauder’s Map and examining it by

wandlight. He was waiting for the moment when

Ron’s labeled dot would reappear in the corridors of

Hogwarts, proving that he had returned to the

comfortable castle, protected by his status of

pureblood. However, Ron did not appear on the map,

and after a while Harry found himself taking it out

simply to stare at Ginny’s name in the girls’

dormitory, wondering whether the intensity with

which he gazed at it might break into her sleep, that

she would somehow know he was thinking about her,

hoping that she was all right.

By day, they devoted themselves to trying to

determine the possible locations of Gryffindor’s

sword, but the more they talked about the places in

which Dumbledore might have hidden it, the more

desperate and far-fetched their speculation became.

Cudgel his brains though he might, Harry could not

remember Dumbledore ever mentioning a place in

which he might hide something. There were moments

when he did not know whether he was angrier with

Ron or with Dumbledore. We thought you knew what

you were doing. . . . We thought Dumbledore had told

you what to do. . . . We thought you had a real plan\

He could not hide it from himself: Ron had been right.

Dumbledore had left him with virtually nothing. They

had discovered one Horcrux, but they had no means

of destroying it: The others were as unattainable as

they had ever been. Hopelessness threatened to

engulf him. He was staggered now to think of his own

presumption in accepting his friends’ offers to

accompany him on this meandering, pointless

journey. He knew nothing, he had no ideas, and he

Page | 353 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

was constantly, painfully on the alert for any

indication that Hermione too was about to tell him

that she had had enough, that she was leaving.

They were spending many evenings in near silence,

and Hermione took to bringing out Phineas Nigellus’s

portrait and propping it up in a chair, as though he

might fill part of the gaping hole left by Ron’s

departure. Despite his previous assertion that he

would never visit them again, Phineas Nigellus did not

seem able to resist the chance to find out more about

what Harry was up to, and consented to reappear,

blindfolded, every few days or so. Harry was even glad

to see him, because he was company, albeit of a snide

and taunting kind. They relished any news about

what was happening at Hogwarts, though Phineas

Nigellus was not an ideal informer. He venerated

Snape, the first Slytherin headmaster since he

himself had controlled the school, and they had to be

careful not to criticize or ask impertinent questions

about Snape, or Phineas Nigellus would instantly

leave his painting.

However, he did let drop certain snippets. Snape

seemed to be facing a constant, low level of mutiny

from a hard core of students. Ginny had been banned

from going into Hogsmeade. Snape had reinstated

Umbridge’s old decree forbidding gatherings of three

or more students or any unofficial student societies.

From all of these things, Harry deduced that Ginny,

and probably Neville and Luna along with her, had

been doing their best to continue Dumbledore’s Army.

This scant news made Harry want to see Ginny so

badly it felt like a stomachache; but it also made him

think of Ron again, and of Dumbledore, and of

Hogwarts itself, which he missed nearly as much as

his ex-girlfriend. Indeed, as Phineas Nigellus talked

about Snape ’s crackdown, Harry experienced a split

Page | 354 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

second of madness when he imagined simply going

back to school to join the destabilization of Snape’s

regime: Being fed, and having a soft bed, and other

people being in charge, seemed the most wonderful

prospect in the world at that moment. But then he

remembered that he was Undesirable Number One,

that there was a ten-thousand-Galleon price on his

head, and that to walk into Hogwarts these days was

just as dangerous as walking into the Ministry of

Magic. Indeed, Phineas Nigellus inadvertently

emphasized this fact by slipping in leading questions

about Harry and Hermione’s whereabouts. Hermione

shoved him back inside the beaded bag every time he

did this, and Phineas Nigellus invariably refused to

reappear for several days after these unceremonious

good-byes.

The weather grew colder and colder. They did not

dare remain in any one area too long, so rather than

staying in the south of England, where a hard ground

frost was the worst of their worries, they continued to

meander up and down the country, braving a

mountainside, where sleet pounded the tent; a wide,

flat marsh, where the tent was flooded with chill

water; and a tiny island in the middle of a Scottish

loch, where snow half buried the tent in the night.

They had already spotted Christmas trees twinkling

from several sitting room windows before there came

an evening when Harry resolved to suggest, again,

what seemed to him the only unexplored avenue left

to them. They had just eaten an unusually good meal:

Hermione had been to a supermarket under the

Invisibility Cloak (scrupulously dropping the money

into an open till as she left), and Harry thought that

she might be more persuadable than usual on a

stomach full of spaghetti Bolognese and tinned pears.

He had also had the foresight to suggest that they

take a few hours’ break from wearing the Horcrux,

Page | 355 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

which was hanging over the end of the bunk beside

him.

“Hermione?”

“Hmm?” She was curled up in one of the sagging

armchairs with The Tales of Beedle the Bard. He could

not imagine how much more she could get out of the

book, which was not, after all, very long; but evidently

she was still deciphering something in it, because

Spellman’s Syllabary lay open on the arm of the chair.

Harry cleared his throat. He felt exactly as he had

done on the occasion, several years previously, when

he had asked Professor McGonagall whether he could

go into Hogsmeade, despite the fact that he had not

persuaded the Dursleys to sign his permission slip.

“Hermione, I’ve been thinking, and — ”

“Harry, could you help me with something?”

Apparently she had not been listening to him. She

leaned forward and held out The Tales of Beedle the

Bard.

“Look at that symbol,” she said, pointing to the top of

a page. Above what Harry assumed was the title of

the story (being unable to read runes, he could not be

sure) , there was a picture of what looked like a

triangular eye, its pupil crossed with a vertical line.

“I never took Ancient Runes, Hermione.”

“I know that, but it isn’t a rune and it’s not in the

syllabary, either. All along I thought it was a picture

of an eye, but I don’t think it is! It’s been inked in,

look, somebody’s drawn it there, it isn’t really part of

the book. Think, have you ever seen it before?”

Page | 356 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No ... No, wait a moment.” Harry looked closer. “Isn’t

it the same symbol Luna’s dad was wearing round his

neck?”

“Well, that’s what I thought too!”

“Then it’s Grindelwald’s mark.”

She stared at him, openmouthed.

“What?”

“Krum told me ...”

He recounted the story that Viktor Krum had told him

at the wedding. Hermione looked astonished.

“ Grindelwald’s mark?”

She looked from Harry to the weird symbol and back

again. “I’ve never heard that Grindelwald had a mark.

There’s no mention of it in anything I’ve ever read

about him.”

“Well, like I say, Krum reckoned that symbol was

carved on a wall at Durmstrang, and Grindelwald put

it there.”

She fell back into the old armchair, frowning.

“That’s very odd. If it’s a symbol of Dark Magic, what’s

it doing in a book of children’s stories?”

“Yeah, it is weird,” said Harry. “And you’d think

Scrimgeour would have recognized it. He was

Minister, he ought to have been expert on Dark stuff.”

Page | 357 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I know. ... Perhaps he thought it was an eye, just like

I did. All the other stories have little pictures over the

titles.”

She did not speak, but continued to pore over the

strange mark. Harry tried again.

“Hermione?”

“Hmm?”

“I’ve been thinking. I — I want to go to Godric’s

Hollow.”

She looked up at him, but her eyes were unfocused,

and he was sure she was still thinking about the

mysterious mark on the book.

“Yes,” she said. “Yes, I’ve been wondering that too. I

really think we’ll have to.”

“Did you hear me right?” he asked.

“Of course I did. You want to go to Godric’s Hollow. I

agree, I think we should. I mean, I can’t think of

anywhere else it could be either. It’ll be dangerous,

but the more I think about it, the more likely it seems

it’s there.”

“Er — what’s there?” asked Harry.

At that, she looked just as bewildered as he felt.

“Well, the sword, Harry! Dumbledore must have

known you’d want to go back there, and I mean,

Godric’s Hollow is Godric Gryffindor’s birthplace — ”

“Really? Gryffindor came from Godric’s Hollow?”

Page | 358 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry, did you ever even open A History of Magic?”

“Erm,” he said, smiling for what felt like the first time

in months: The muscles in his face felt oddly stiff. “I

might’ve opened it, you know, when I bought it ... just

the once. ...”

“Well, as the village is named after him I’d have

thought you might have made the connection,” said

Hermione. She sounded much more like her old self

than she had done of late; Harry half expected her to

announce that she was off to the library. “There’s a

bit about the village in A History of Magic, wait ...”

She opened the beaded bag and rummaged for a

while, finally extracting her copy of their old school

textbook, A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot,

which she thumbed through until finding the page

she wanted.

“ ‘Upon the signature of the International Statute of

Secrecy in 1689, wizards went into hiding for good. It

was natural, perhaps, that they formed their own

small communities within a community. Many small

villages and hamlets attracted several magical

families, who banded together for mutual support and

protection. The villages of Tinworth in Cornwall, Upper

Flagley in Yorkshire, and Ottery St. Catchpole on the

south coast of England were notable homes to knots of

Wizarding families who lived alongside tolerant and

sometimes Confunded Muggles. Most celebrated of

these half-magical dwelling places is, perhaps,

Godric’s Hollow, the West Country village where the

great wizard Godric Gryffindor was born, and where

Bowman Wright, Wizarding smith, forged the first

Golden Snitch. The graveyard is full of the names of

ancient magical families, and this accounts, no doubt,

for the stories of hauntings that have dogged the little

church beside it for many centuries.’

Page | 359 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You and your parents aren’t mentioned,” Hermione

said, closing the book, “because Professor Bagshot

doesn’t cover anything later than the end of the

nineteenth century. But you see? Godric’s Hollow,

Godric Gryffindor, Gryffindor’s sword; don’t you think

Dumbledore would have expected you to make the

connection?”

“Oh yeah ...”

Harry did not want to admit that he had not been

thinking about the sword at all when he suggested

they go to Godric’s Hollow. For him, the lure of the

village lay in his parents’ graves, the house where he

had narrowly escaped death, and in the person of

Bathilda Bagshot.

“Remember what Muriel said?” he asked eventually.

“Who?”

“You know,” he hesitated: He did not want to say

Ron’s name. “Ginny’s great-aunt. At the wedding. The

one who said you had skinny ankles.”

“Oh,” said Hermione. It was a sticky moment: Harry

knew that she had sensed Ron’s name in the offing.

He rushed on:

“She said Bathilda Bagshot still lives in Godric’s

Hollow.”

“Bathilda Bagshot,” murmured Hermione, running

her index finger over Bathilda’s embossed name on

the front cover of A History of Magic. “Well, I suppose

She gasped so dramatically that Harry’s insides

turned over; he drew his wand, looking around at the

Page | 360 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

entrance, half expecting to see a hand forcing its way

through the entrance flap, but there was nothing

there.

“What?” he said, half angry, half relieved. “What did

you do that for? I thought you’d seen a Death Eater

unzipping the tent, at least — ”

“Harry, what if Bathilda’ s got the sword? What if

Dumbledore entrusted it to her?”

Harry considered this possibility. Bathilda would be

an extremely old woman by now, and according to

Muriel, she was “gaga.” Was it likely that Dumbledore

would have hidden the sword of Gryffindor with her?

If so, Harry felt that Dumbledore had left a great deal

to chance: Dumbledore had never revealed that he

had replaced the sword with a fake, nor had he so

much as mentioned a friendship with Bathilda. Now,

however, was not the moment to cast doubt on

Hermione’s theory, not when she was so surprisingly

willing to fall in with Harry’s dearest wish.

“Yeah, he might have done! So, are we going to go to

Godric’s Hollow?”

“Yes, but we’ll have to think it through carefully,

Harry.” She was sitting up now, and Harry could tell

that the prospect of having a plan again had lifted her

mood as much as his. “We’ll need to practice

Disapparating together under the Invisibility Cloak for

a start, and perhaps Disillusionment Charms would

be sensible too, unless you think we should go the

whole hog and use Polyjuice Potion? In that case we’ll

need to collect hair from somebody. I actually think

we’d better do that, Harry, the thicker our disguises

the better. ...”

Page | 361 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry let her talk, nodding and agreeing whenever

there was a pause, but his mind had left the

conversation. For the first time since he had

discovered that the sword in Gringotts was a fake, he

felt excited.

He was about to go home, about to return to the place

where he had had a family. It was in Godric’s Hollow

that, but for Voldemort, he would have grown up and

spent every school holiday. He could have invited

friends to his house. ... He might even have had

brothers and sisters. ... It would have been his

mother who had made his seventeenth birthday cake.

The life he had lost had hardly ever seemed so real to

him as at this moment, when he knew he was about

to see the place where it had been taken from him.

After Hermione had gone to bed that night, Harry

quietly extracted his rucksack from Hermione ’s

beaded bag, and from inside it, the photograph album

Hagrid had given him so long ago. For the first time in

months, he perused the old pictures of his parents,

smiling and waving up at him from the images, which

were all he had left of them now.

Harry would gladly have set out for Godric’s Hollow

the following day, but Hermione had other ideas.

Convinced as she was that Voldemort would expect

Harry to return to the scene of his parents’ deaths,

she was determined that they would set off only after

they had ensured that they had the best disguises

possible. It was therefore a full week later — once

they had surreptitiously obtained hairs from innocent

Muggles who were Christmas shopping, and had

practiced Apparating and Disapparating while

underneath the Invisibility Cloak together — that

Hermione agreed to make the journey.

They were to Apparate to the village under cover of

darkness, so it was late afternoon when they finally

Page | 362 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

swallowed Polyjuice Potion, Harry transforming into a

balding, middle-aged Muggle man, Hermione into his

small and rather mousy wife. The beaded bag

containing all of their possessions (apart from the

Horcrux, which Harry was wearing around his neck)

was tucked into an inside pocket of Hermione ’s

buttoned-up coat. Harry lowered the Invisibility Cloak

over them, then they turned into the suffocating

darkness once again.

Heart beating in his throat, Harry opened his eyes.

They were standing hand in hand in a snowy lane

under a dark blue sky, in which the night’s first stars

were already glimmering feebly. Cottages stood on

either side of the narrow road, Christmas decorations

twinkling in their windows. A short way ahead of

them, a glow of golden streetlights indicated the

center of the village.

“All this snow!” Hermione whispered beneath the

cloak. “Why didn’t we think of snow? After all our

precautions, we’ll leave prints! We’ll just have to get

rid of them — you go in front, I’ll do it — ”

Harry did not want to enter the village like a

pantomime horse, trying to keep themselves

concealed while magically covering their traces.

“Let’s take off the Cloak,” said Harry, and when she

looked frightened, “Oh, come on, we don’t look like us

and there’s no one around.”

He stowed the Cloak under his jacket and they made

their way forward unhampered, the icy air stinging

their faces as they passed more cottages: Any one of

them might have been the one in which James and

Lily had once lived or where Bathilda lived now. Harry

gazed at the front doors, their snow-burdened roofs,

and their front porches, wondering whether he

Page | 363 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

remembered any of them, knowing deep inside that it

was impossible, that he had been little more than a

year old when he had left this place forever. He was

not even sure whether he would be able to see the

cottage at all; he did not know what happened when

the subjects of a Fidelius Charm died. Then the little

lane along which they were walking curved to the left

and the heart of the village, a small square, was

revealed to them.

Strung all around with colored lights, there was what

looked like a war memorial in the middle, partly

obscured by a windblown Christmas tree. There were

several shops, a post office, a pub, and a little church

whose stained-glass windows were glowing jewel-

bright across the square.

The snow here had become impacted: It was hard and

slippery where people had trodden on it all day.

Villagers were crisscrossing in front of them, their

figures briefly illuminated by streetlamps. They heard

a snatch of laughter and pop music as the pub door

opened and closed; then they heard a carol start up

inside the little church.

“Harry, I think it’s Christmas Eve!” said Hermione.

“Is it?”

He had lost track of the date; they had not seen a

newspaper for weeks.

“I’m sure it is,” said Hermione, her eyes upon the

church. “They ... they’ll be in there, won’t they? Your

mum and dad? I can see the graveyard behind it.”

Harry felt a thrill of something that was beyond

excitement, more like fear. Now that he was so near,

he wondered whether he wanted to see after all.

Page | 364 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Perhaps Hermione knew how he was feeling, because

she reached for his hand and took the lead for the

first time, pulling him forward. Halfway across the

square, however, she stopped dead.

“Harry, look!”

She was pointing at the war memorial. As they had

passed it, it had transformed. Instead of an obelisk

covered in names, there was a statue of three people:

a man with untidy hair and glasses, a woman with

long hair and a kind, pretty face, and a baby boy

sitting in his mother’s arms. Snow lay upon all their

heads, like fluffy white caps.

Harry drew closer, gazing up into his parents’ faces.

He had never imagined that there would be a statue.

. . . How strange it was to see himself represented in

stone, a happy baby without a scar on his forehead.

“C’mon,” said Harry, when he had looked his fill, and

they turned again toward the church. As they crossed

the road, he glanced over his shoulder; the statue had

turned back into the war memorial.

The singing grew louder as they approached the

church. It made Harry’s throat constrict, it reminded

him so forcefully of Hogwarts, of Peeves bellowing

rude versions of carols from inside suits of armor, of

the Great Hall’s twelve Christmas trees, of

Dumbledore wearing a bonnet he had won in a

cracker, of Ron in a hand-knitted sweater. . . .

There was a kissing gate at the entrance to the

graveyard. Hermione pushed it open as quietly as

possible and they edged through it. On either side of

the slippery path to the church doors, the snow lay

deep and untouched. They moved off through the

Page | 365 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

snow, carving deep trenches behind them as they

walked around the building, keeping to the shadows

beneath the brilliant windows.

Behind the church, row upon row of snowy

tombstones protruded from a blanket of pale blue

that was flecked with dazzling red, gold, and green

wherever the reflections from the stained glass hit the

snow. Keeping his hand closed tightly on the wand in

his jacket pocket, Harry moved toward the nearest

grave.

“Look at this, it’s an Abbott, could be some long-lost

relation of Hannah’s!”

“Keep your voice down,” Hermione begged him.

They waded deeper and deeper into the graveyard,

gouging dark tracks into the snow behind them,

stooping to peer at the words on old headstones,

every now and then squinting into the surrounding

darkness to make absolutely sure that they were

unaccompanied .

“Harry, here!”

Hermione was two rows of tombstones away; he had

to wade back to her, his heart positively banging in

his chest.

“Is it — ?”

“No, but look!”

She pointed to the dark stone. Harry stooped down

and saw, upon the frozen, lichen-spotted granite, the

words KENDRA DUMBLEDORE and, a short way

below her dates of birth and death, AND HER

DAUGHTER ARIANA. There was also a quotation:

Page | 366 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

So Rita Skeeter and Muriel had got some of their facts

right. The Dumbledore family had indeed lived here,

and part of it had died here.

Seeing the grave was worse than hearing about it.

Harry could not help thinking that he and

Dumbledore both had deep roots in this graveyard,

and that Dumbledore ought to have told him so, yet

he had never thought to share the connection. They

could have visited the place together; for a moment

Harry imagined coming here with Dumbledore, of

what a bond that would have been, of how much it

would have meant to him. But it seemed that to

Dumbledore, the fact that their families lay side by

side in the same graveyard had been an unimportant

coincidence, irrelevant, perhaps, to the job he wanted

Harry to do.

Hermione was looking at Harry, and he was glad that

his face was hidden in shadow. He read the words on

the tombstone again. Where your treasure is, there

will your heart be also. He did not understand what

these words meant. Surely Dumbledore had chosen

them, as the eldest member of the family once his

mother had died.

“Are you sure he never mentioned — ?” Hermione

began.

“No,” said Harry curtly, then, “let’s keep looking,” and

he turned away, wishing he had not seen the stone:

He did not want his excited trepidation tainted with

resentment.

“Here!” cried Hermione again a few moments later

from out of the darkness. “Oh no, sorry! I thought it

said Potter.”

Page | 367 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

She was rubbing at a crumbling, mossy stone, gazing

down at it, a little frown on her face.

“Harry, come back a moment.”

He did not want to be sidetracked again, and only

grudgingly made his way back through the snow

toward her.

“What?”

“Look at this!”

The grave was extremely old, weathered so that Harry

could hardly make out the name. Hermione showed

him the symbol beneath it.

“Harry, that’s the mark in the book!”

He peered at the place she indicated: The stone was

so worn that it was hard to make out what was

engraved there, though there did seem to be a

triangular mark beneath the nearly illegible name.

“Yeah ... it could be. ...”

Hermione lit her wand and pointed it at the name on

the headstone.

“It says Ig — Ignotus, I think. ...”

“I’m going to keep looking for my parents, all right?”

Harry told her, a slight edge to his voice, and he set

off again, leaving her crouched beside the old grave.

Every now and then he recognized a surname that,

like Abbott, he had met at Hogwarts. Sometimes there

were several generations of the same Wizarding family

represented in the graveyard: Harry could tell from

Page | 368 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the dates that it had either died out, or the current

members had moved away from Godric’s Hollow.

Deeper and deeper amongst the graves he went, and

every time he reached a new headstone he felt a little

lurch of apprehension and anticipation.

The darkness and the silence seemed to become, all of

a sudden, much deeper. Harry looked around,

worried, thinking of dementors, then realized that the

carols had finished, that the chatter and flurry of

churchgoers were fading away as they made their way

back into the square. Somebody inside the church

had just turned off the lights.

Then Hermione’s voice came out of the blackness for

the third time, sharp and clear from a few yards

away.

“Harry, they’re here ... right here.”

And he knew by her tone that it was his mother and

father this time: He moved toward her, feeling as if

something heavy were pressing on his chest, the

same sensation he had had right after Dumbledore

had died, a grief that had actually weighed on his

heart and lungs.

The headstone was only two rows behind Kendra and

Ariana’s. It was made of white marble, just like

Dumbledore’s tomb, and this made it easy to read, as

it seemed to shine in the dark. Harry did not need to

kneel or even approach very close to it to make out

the words engraved upon it.

JAMES POTTER

BORN 27 MARCH 1960

LILY POTTER

BORN 30 JANUARY 1960

Page | 369 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

DIED 31 OCTOBER 1981

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Harry read the words slowly, as though he would

have only one chance to take in their meaning, and

he read the last of them aloud.

“ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death’...”

A horrible thought came to him, and with it a kind of

panic. “Isn’t that a Death Eater idea? Why is that

there?”

“It doesn’t mean defeating death in the way the Death

Eaters mean it, Harry,” said Hermione, her voice

gentle. “It means ... you know ... living beyond death.

Living after death.”

But they were not living, thought Harry: They were

gone. The empty words could not disguise the fact

that his parents’ moldering remains lay beneath snow

and stone, indifferent, unknowing. And tears came

before he could stop them, boiling hot then instantly

freezing on his face, and what was the point in wiping

them off or pretending? He let them fall, his lips

pressed hard together, looking down at the thick

snow hiding from his eyes the place where the last of

Lily and James lay, bones now, surely, or dust, not

knowing or caring that their living son stood so near,

his heart still beating, alive because of their sacrifice

and close to wishing, at this moment, that he was

sleeping under the snow with them.

Hermione had taken his hand again and was gripping

it tightly. He could not look at her, but returned the

pressure, now taking deep, sharp gulps of the night

air, trying to steady himself, trying to regain control.

He should have brought something to give them, and

he had not thought of it, and every plant in the

Page | 370 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

graveyard was leafless and frozen. But Hermione

raised her wand, moved it in a circle through the air,

and a wreath of Christmas roses blossomed before

them. Harry caught it and laid it on his parents’

grave.

As soon as he stood up he wanted to leave: He did not

think he could stand another moment there. He put

his arm around Hermione’s shoulders, and she put

hers around his waist, and they turned in silence and

walked away through the snow, past Dumbledore’s

mother and sister, back toward the dark church and

the out-of-sight kissing gate.

Page | 371 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

BATHILDA’S SECRET

“Harry, stop.”

“What’s wrong?”

They had only just reached the grave of the unknown

Abbott.

“There’s someone there. Someone watching us. I can

tell. There, over by the bushes.”

They stood quite still, holding on to each other, gazing

at the dense black boundary of the graveyard. Harry

could not see anything.

“Are you sure?”

“I saw something move, I could have sworn I did. ...”

She broke from him to free her wand arm.

“We look like Muggles,” Harry pointed out.

Page | 372 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Muggles who ’ve just been laying flowers on your

parents’ grave! Harry, I’m sure there’s someone over

there!”

Harry thought of A History of Magic ; the graveyard

was supposed to be haunted: what if — ? But then he

heard a rustle and saw a little eddy of dislodged snow

in the bush to which Hermione had pointed. Ghosts

could not move snow.

“It’s a cat,” said Harry, after a second or two, “or a

bird. If it was a Death Eater we’d be dead by now. But

let’s get out of here, and we can put the Cloak back

on.”

They glanced back repeatedly as they made their way

out of the graveyard. Harry, who did not feel as

sanguine as he had pretended when reassuring

Hermione, was glad to reach the gate and the slippery

pavement. They pulled the Invisibility Cloak back over

themselves. The pub was fuller than before: Many

voices inside it were now singing the carol that they

had heard as they approached the church. For a

moment Harry considered suggesting they take refuge

inside it, but before he could say anything Hermione

murmured, “Let’s go this way,” and pulled him down

the dark street leading out of the village in the

opposite direction from which they had entered. Harry

could make out the point where the cottages ended

and the lane turned into open country again. They

walked as quickly as they dared, past more windows

sparkling with multicolored lights, the outlines of

Christmas trees dark through the curtains.

“How are we going to find Bathilda’s house?” asked

Hermione, who was shivering a little and kept

glancing back over her shoulder. “Harry? What do you

think? Harry?”

Page | 373 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

She tugged at his arm, but Harry was not paying

attention. He was looking toward the dark mass that

stood at the very end of this row of houses. Next

moment he had sped up, dragging Hermione along

with him; she slipped a little on the ice.

“Harry — ”

“Look. ... Look at it, Hermione. ...”

“I don’t ... oh!”

He could see it; the Fidelius Charm must have died

with James and Lily. The hedge had grown wild in the

sixteen years since Hagrid had taken Harry from the

rubble that lay scattered amongst the waist-high

grass. Most of the cottage was still standing, though

entirely covered in dark ivy and snow, but the right

side of the top floor had been blown apart; that, Harry

was sure, was where the curse had backfired. He and

Hermione stood at the gate, gazing up at the wreck of

what must once have been a cottage just like those

that flanked it.

“I wonder why nobody’s ever rebuilt it?” whispered

Hermione.

“Maybe you can’t rebuild it?” Harry replied. “Maybe

it’s like the injuries from Dark Magic and you can’t

repair the damage?”

He slipped a hand from beneath the Cloak and

grasped the snowy and thickly rusted gate, not

wishing to open it, but simply to hold some part of the

house.

“You’re not going to go inside? It looks unsafe, it

might — oh, Harry, look!”

Page | 374 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

His touch on the gate seemed to have done it. A sign

had risen out of the ground in front of them, up

through the tangles of nettles and weeds, like some

bizarre, fast-growing flower, and in golden letters

upon the wood it said:

On this spot, on the night of 31 October 1 981, Lily and

James Potter lost their lives. Their son, Harry, remains

the only wizard ever to have survived the Killing Curse.

This house, invisible to Muggles, has been left in its

ruined state as a monument to the Potters and as a

reminder of the violence that tore apart their family.

And all around these neatly lettered words, scribbles

had been added by other witches and wizards who

had come to see the place where the Boy Who Lived

had escaped. Some had merely signed their names in

Everlasting Ink; others had carved their initials into

the wood, still others had left messages. The most

recent of these, shining brightly over sixteen years’

worth of magical graffiti, all said similar things.

Good luck, Harry, wherever you are.

If you read this, Harry, we’re all behind you!

Long live Harry Potter.

“They shouldn’t have written on the sign!” said

Hermione, indignant.

But Harry beamed at her.

“It’s brilliant. I’m glad they did. I ...”

He broke off. A heavily muffled figure was hobbling up

the lane toward them, silhouetted by the bright lights

Page | 375 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

in the distant square. Harry thought, though it was

hard to judge, that the figure was a woman. She was

moving slowly, possibly frightened of slipping on the

snowy ground. Her stoop, her stoutness, her shuffling

gait all gave an impression of extreme age. They

watched in silence as she drew nearer. Harry was

waiting to see whether she would turn into any of the

cottages she was passing, but he knew instinctively

that she would not. At last she came to a halt a few

yards from them and simply stood there in the middle

of the frozen road, facing them.

He did not need Hermione’s pinch to his arm. There

was next to no chance that this woman was a Muggle:

She was standing there gazing at a house that ought

to have been completely invisible to her, if she was

not a witch. Even assuming that she was a witch,

however, it was odd behavior to come out on a night

this cold, simply to look at an old ruin. By all the

rules of normal magic, meanwhile, she ought not to

be able to see Hermione and him at all. Nevertheless,

Harry had the strangest feeling that she knew that

they were there, and also who they were. Just as he

had reached this uneasy conclusion, she raised a

gloved hand and beckoned.

Hermione moved closer to him under the Cloak, her

arm pressed against his.

“How does she know?”

He shook his head. The woman beckoned again, more

vigorously. Harry could think of many reasons not to

obey the summons, and yet his suspicions about her

identity were growing stronger every moment that

they stood facing each other in the deserted street.

Was it possible that she had been waiting for them all

these long months? That Dumbledore had told her to

Page | 376 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

wait, and that Harry would come in the end? Was it

not likely that it was she who had moved in the

shadows in the graveyard and had followed them to

this spot? Even her ability to sense them suggested

some Dumbledore-ish power that he had never

encountered before.

Finally Harry spoke, causing Hermione to gasp and

jump.

“Are you Bathilda?”

The muffled figure nodded and beckoned again.

Beneath the Cloak Harry and Hermione looked at

each other. Harry raised his eyebrows; Hermione gave

a tiny, nervous nod.

They stepped toward the woman and, at once, she

turned and hobbled off back the way they had come.

Leading them past several houses, she turned in at a

gate. They followed her up the front path through a

garden nearly as overgrown as the one they had just

left. She fumbled for a moment with a key at the front

door, then opened it and stepped back to let them

pass.

She smelled bad, or perhaps it was her house: Harry

wrinkled his nose as they sidled past her and pulled

off the Cloak. Now that he was beside her, he realized

how tiny she was; bowed down with age, she came

barely level with his chest. She closed the door behind

them, her knuckles blue and mottled against the

peeling paint, then turned and peered into Harry’s

face. Her eyes were thick with cataracts and sunken

into folds of transparent skin, and her whole face was

dotted with broken veins and liver spots. He

wondered whether she could make him out at all;

Page | 377 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

even if she could, it was the balding Muggle whose

identity he had stolen that she would see.

The odor of old age, of dust, of unwashed clothes and

stale food intensified as she unwound a moth-eaten

black shawl, revealing a head of scant white hair

through which the scalp showed clearly.

“Bathilda?” Harry repeated.

She nodded again. Harry became aware of the locket

against his skin; the thing inside it that sometimes

ticked or beat had woken; he could feel it pulsing

through the cold gold. Did it know, could it sense,

that the thing that would destroy it was near?

Bathilda shuffled past them, pushing Hermione aside

as though she had not seen her, and vanished into

what seemed to be a sitting room.

“Harry, I’m not sure about this,” breathed Hermione.

“Look at the size of her; I think we could overpower

her if we had to,” said Harry. “Listen, I should have

told you, I knew she wasn’t all there. Muriel called her

‘gaga.’ ”

“Come!” called Bathilda from the next room.

Hermione jumped and clutched Harry’s arm.

“It’s okay,” said Harry reassuringly, and he led the

way into the sitting room.

Bathilda was tottering around the place lighting

candles, but it was still very dark, not to mention

extremely dirty. Thick dust crunched beneath their

feet, and Harry’s nose detected, underneath the dank

and mildewed smell, something worse, like meat gone

Page | 378 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

bad. He wondered when was the last time anyone had

been inside Bathilda’s house to check whether she

was coping. She seemed to have forgotten that she

could do magic, too, for she lit the candles clumsily

by hand, her trailing lace cuff in constant danger of

catching fire.

“Let me do that,” offered Harry, and he took the

matches from her. She stood watching him as he

finished lighting the candle stubs that stood on

saucers around the room, perched precariously on

stacks of books and on side tables crammed with

cracked and moldy cups.

The last surface on which Harry spotted a candle was

a bow-fronted chest of drawers on which there stood

a large number of photographs. When the flame

danced into life, its reflection wavered on their dusty

glass and silver. He saw a few tiny movements from

the pictures. As Bathilda fumbled with logs for the

fire, he muttered “ Tergeo ”: The dust vanished from

the photographs, and he saw at once that half a

dozen were missing from the largest and most ornate

frames. He wondered whether Bathilda or somebody

else had removed them. Then the sight of a

photograph near the back of the collection caught his

eye, and he snatched it up.

It was the golden-haired, merry-faced thief, the young

man who had perched on Gregorovitch’s windowsill,

smiling lazily up at Harry out of the silver frame. And

it came to Harry instantly where he had seen the boy

before: in The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore, arm

in arm with the teenage Dumbledore, and that must

be where all the missing photographs were: in Rita’s

book.

“Mrs. — Miss — Bagshot?” he said, and his voice

shook slightly. “Who is this?”

Page | 379 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Bathilda was standing in the middle of the room

watching Hermione light the fire for her.

“Miss Bagshot?” Harry repeated, and he advanced

with the picture in his hands as the flames burst into

life in the fireplace. Bathilda looked up at his voice,

and the Horcrux beat faster upon his chest.

“Who is this person?” Harry asked her, pushing the

picture forward.

She peered at it solemnly, then up at Harry.

“Do you know who this is?” he repeated in a much

slower and louder voice than usual. “This man? Do

you know him? What’s he called?”

Bathilda merely looked vague. Harry felt an awful

frustration. How had Rita Skeeter unlocked Bathilda’s

memories?

“Who is this man?” he repeated loudly.

“Harry, what are you doing?” asked Hermione.

“This picture, Hermione, it’s the thief, the thief who

stole from Gregorovitch! Please!” he said to Bathilda.

“Who is this?”

But she only stared at him.

“Why did you ask us to come with you, Mrs. — Miss

— Bagshot?” asked Hermione, raising her own voice.

“Was there something you wanted to tell us?”

Giving no sign that she had heard Hermione, Bathilda

now shuffled a few steps closer to Harry. With a little

jerk of her head she looked back into the hall.

Page | 380 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You want us to leave?” he asked.

She repeated the gesture, this time pointing firstly at

him, then at herself, then at the ceiling.

“Oh, right ... Hermione, I think she wants me to go

upstairs with her.”

“All right,” said Hermione, “let’s go.”

But when Hermione moved, Bathilda shook her head

with surprising vigor, once more pointing first at

Harry, then to herself.

“She wants me to go with her, alone.”

“Why?” asked Hermione, and her voice rang out sharp

and clear in the candlelit room; the old lady shook her

head a little at the loud noise.

“Maybe Dumbledore told her to give the sword to me,

and only to me?”

“Do you really think she knows who you are?”

“Yes,” said Harry, looking down into the milky eyes

fixed upon his own, “I think she does.”

“Well, okay then, but be quick, Harry.”

“Lead the way,” Harry told Bathilda.

She seemed to understand, because she shuffled

around him toward the door. Harry glanced back at

Hermione with a reassuring smile, but he was not

sure she had seen it; she stood hugging herself in the

midst of the candlelit squalor, looking toward the

bookcase. As Harry walked out of the room, unseen

by both Hermione and Bathilda, he slipped the silver-

Page | 381 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

framed photograph of the unknown thief inside his

jacket.

The stairs were steep and narrow: Harry was half

tempted to place his hands on stout Bathilda’s

backside to ensure that she did not topple over

backward on top of him, which seemed only too likely.

Slowly, wheezing a little, she climbed to the upper

landing, turned immediately right, and led him into a

low-ceilinged bedroom.

It was pitch-black and smelled horrible: Harry had

just made out a chamber pot protruding from under

the bed before Bathilda closed the door and even that

was swallowed by the darkness.

“Lumos,” said Harry, and his wand ignited. He gave a

start: Bathilda had moved close to him in those few

seconds of darkness, and he had not heard her

approach.

“You are Potter?” she whispered.

“Yes, I am.”

She nodded slowly, solemnly. Harry felt the Horcrux

beating fast, faster than his own heart: It was an

unpleasant, agitating sensation.

“Have you got anything for me?” Harry asked, but she

seemed distracted by his lit wand-tip.

“Have you got anything for me?” he repeated.

Then she closed her eyes and several things

happened at once: Harry’s scar prickled painfully; the

Horcrux twitched so that the front of his sweater

actually moved; the dark, fetid room dissolved

Page | 382 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

momentarily. He felt a leap of joy and spoke in a high,

cold voice: Hold him).

Harry swayed where he stood: The dark, foul-smelling

room seemed to close around him again; he did not

know what had just happened.

“Have you got anything for me?” he asked for a third

time, much louder.

“Over here,” she whispered, pointing to the corner.

Harry raised his wand and saw the outline of a

cluttered dressing table beneath the curtained

window.

This time she did not lead him. Harry edged between

her and the unmade bed, his wand raised. He did not

want to look away from her.

“What is it?” he asked as he reached the dressing

table, which was heaped high with what looked and

smelled like dirty laundry.

“There,” she said, pointing at the shapeless mass.

And in the instant that he looked away, his eyes

raking the tangled mess for a sword hilt, a ruby, she

moved weirdly: He saw it out of the corner of his eye;

panic made him turn and horror paralyzed him as he

saw the old body collapsing and the great snake

pouring from the place where her neck had been.

The snake struck as he raised his wand: The force of

the bite to his forearm sent the wand spinning up

toward the ceiling; its light swung dizzyingly around

the room and was extinguished: Then a powerful blow

from the tail to his midriff knocked the breath out of

him: He fell backward onto the dressing table, into

the mound of filthy clothing —

Page | 383 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He rolled sideways, narrowly avoiding the snake’s tail,

which thrashed down upon the table where he had

been a second earlier: Fragments of the glass surface

rained upon him as he hit the floor. From below he

heard Hermione call, “Harry?”

He could not get enough breath into his lungs to call

back: Then a heavy smooth mass smashed him to the

floor and he felt it slide over him, powerful, muscular

“No!” he gasped, pinned to the floor.

“Yes,” whispered the voice. “Yesss ... hold you ... hold

you ...”

“Accio ... Accio Wand ...”

But nothing happened and he needed his hands to try

to force the snake from him as it coiled itself around

his torso, squeezing the air from him, pressing the

Horcrux hard into his chest, a circle of ice that

throbbed with life, inches from his own frantic heart,

and his brain was flooding with cold, white light, all

thought obliterated, his own breath drowned, distant

footsteps, everything going. ...

A metal heart was banging outside his chest, and now

he was flying, flying with triumph in his heart,

without need of broomstick or thestral. ...

He was abruptly awake in the sour-smelling

darkness; Nagini had released him. He scrambled up

and saw the snake outlined against the landing light:

It struck, and Hermione dived aside with a shriek; her

deflected curse hit the curtained window, which

shattered. Frozen air filled the room as Harry ducked

to avoid another shower of broken glass and his foot

slipped on a pencil-like something — his wand —

Page | 384 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He bent and snatched it up, but now the room was

full of the snake, its tail thrashing; Hermione was

nowhere to be seen and for a moment Harry thought

the worst, but then there was a loud bang and a flash

of red light, and the snake flew into the air, smacking

Harry hard in the face as it went, coil after heavy coil

rising up to the ceiling. Harry raised his wand, but as

he did so, his scar seared more painfully, more

powerfully than it had done in years.

“He’s coming! Hermione, he’s comingl”

As he yelled the snake fell, hissing wildly. Everything

was chaos: It smashed shelves from the wall, and

splintered china flew everywhere as Harry jumped

over the bed and seized the dark shape he knew to be

Hermione —

She shrieked with pain as he pulled her back across

the bed: The snake reared again, but Harry knew that

worse than the snake was coming, was perhaps

already at the gate, his head was going to split open

with the pain from his scar —

The snake lunged as he took a running leap, dragging

Hermione with him; as it struck, Hermione screamed,

“ ConfringoV’ and her spell flew around the room,

exploding the wardrobe mirror and ricocheting back

at them, bouncing from floor to ceiling; Harry felt the

heat of it sear the back of his hand. Glass cut his

cheek as, pulling Hermione with him, he leapt from

bed to broken dressing table and then straight out of

the smashed window into nothingness, her scream

reverberating through the night as they twisted in

midair. ...

And then his scar burst open and he was Voldemort

and he was running across the fetid bedroom, his

long white hands clutching at the windowsill as he

Page | 385 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

glimpsed the bald man and the little woman twist and

vanish, and he screamed with rage, a scream that

mingled with the girl’s, that echoed across the dark

gardens over the church bells ringing in Christmas

Day. ...

And his scream was Harry’s scream, his pain was

Harry’s pain ... that it could happen here, where it

had happened before ... here, within sight of that

house where he had come so close to knowing what it

was to die ... to die. ... The pain was so terrible ...

ripped from his body. ... But if he had no body, why

did his head hurt so badly; if he was dead, how could

he feel so unbearably, didn’t pain cease with death,

didn’t it go ...

The night wet and windy, two children dressed as

pumpkins waddling across the square, and the shop

windows covered in paper spiders, all the tawdry

Muggle trappings of a world in which they did not

believe. ... And he was gliding along, that sense of

purpose and power and rightness in him that he

always knew on these occasions. . . . Not anger . . . that

was for weaker souls than he ... but triumph, yes. ...

He had waited for this, he had hoped for it. ...

“Nice costume, mister!”

He saw the small boy’s smile falter as he ran near

enough to see beneath the hood of the cloak, saw the

fear cloud his painted face: Then the child turned and

ran away. ... Beneath the robe he fingered the handle

of his wand. ... One simple movement and the child

would never reach his mother . . . but unnecessary,

quite unnecessary. . . .

And along a new and darker street he moved, and

now his destination was in sight at last, the Fidelius

Charm broken, though they did not know it yet. ...

Page | 386 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

And he made less noise than the dead leaves

slithering along the pavement as he drew level with

the dark hedge, and stared over it. ...

They had not drawn the curtains; he saw them quite

clearly in their little sitting room, the tall black-haired

man in his glasses, making puffs of colored smoke

erupt from his wand for the amusement of the small

black-haired boy in his blue pajamas. The child was

laughing and trying to catch the smoke, to grab it in

his small fist. ...

A door opened and the mother entered, saying words

he could not hear, her long dark-red hair falling over

her face. Now the father scooped up the son and

handed him to the mother. He threw his wand down

upon the sofa and stretched, yawning. . . .

The gate creaked a little as he pushed it open, but

James Potter did not hear. His white hand pulled out

the wand beneath his cloak and pointed it at the

door, which burst open.

He was over the threshold as James came sprinting

into the hall. It was easy, too easy, he had not even

picked up his wand. ...

“Lily, take Harry and go! It’s him! Go! Run! Ill hold

him off!”

Hold him off, without a wand in his hand! . . . He

laughed before casting the curse. . . .

“Avada Kedavra!”

The green light filled the cramped hallway, it lit the

pram pushed against the wall, it made the banisters

glare like lightning rods, and James Potter fell like a

marionette whose strings were cut. ...

Page | 387 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He could hear her screaming from the upper floor,

trapped, but as long as she was sensible, she, at

least, had nothing to fear. ... He climbed the steps,

listening with faint amusement to her attempts to

barricade herself in. ... She had no wand upon her

either. ... How stupid they were, and how trusting,

thinking that their safety lay in friends, that weapons

could be discarded even for moments. ...

He forced the door open, cast aside the chair and

boxes hastily piled against it with one lazy wave of his

wand ... and there she stood, the child in her arms. At

the sight of him, she dropped her son into the crib

behind her and threw her arms wide, as if this would

help, as if in shielding him from sight she hoped to be

chosen instead. . . .

“Not Harry, not Harry, please not Harry!”

“Stand aside, you silly girl . . . stand aside, now. ”

“Not Harry, please no, take me, kill me instead — ”

“This is my last warning — ”

“Not Harry! Please . . . have mercy . . . have mercy. . . .

Not Harry! Not Harry! Please — I’ll do anything — ”

“Stand aside. Stand aside, girl!”

He could have forced her away from the crib, but it

seemed more prudent to finish them all. ...

The green light flashed around the room and she

dropped like her husband. The child had not cried all

this time: He could stand, clutching the bars of his crib,

and he looked up into the intruder’s face with a kind of

bright interest, perhaps thinking that it was his father

Page | 388 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

who hid beneath the cloak, making more pretty lights,

and his mother would pop up any moment, laughing —

He pointed the wand very carefully into the boy’s face:

He wanted to see it happen, the destruction of this one,

inexplicable danger. The child began to cry: It had seen

that he was not James. He did not like it crying, he

had never been able to stomach the small ones

whining in the orphanage —

“Avada Kedavra!”

And then he broke: He was nothing, nothing but pain

and terror, and he must hide himself, not here in the

rubble of the ruined house, where the child was

trapped and screaming, but far away . . . far away. . . .

“No,” he moaned.

The snake rustled on the filthy, cluttered floor, and he

had killed the boy, and yet he was the boy. . . .

“No ...”

And now he stood at the broken window of Bathilda’s

house, immersed in memories of his greatest loss, and

at his feet the great snake slithered over broken china

and glass. ... He looked down and saw something ...

something incredible. . . .

“No ...”

“Harry, it’s all right, you’re all right!”

He stooped down and picked up the smashed

photograph. There he was, the unknown thief, the

thief he was seeking. . . .

“No ... I dropped it. ... I dropped it. ...”

Page | 389 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry, it’s okay, wake up, wake up!”

He was Harry. ... Harry, not Voldemort ... and the

thing that was rustling was not a snake. ... He opened

his eyes.

“Harry,” Hermione whispered. “Do you feel all — all

right?”

“Yes,” he lied.

He was in the tent, lying on one of the lower bunks

beneath a heap of blankets. He could tell that it was

almost dawn by the stillness and the quality of the

cold, flat light beyond the canvas ceiling. He was

drenched in sweat; he could feel it on the sheets and

blankets.

“We got away.”

“Yes,” said Hermione. “I had to use a Hover Charm to

get you into your bunk, I couldn’t lift you. You’ve

been ... Well, you haven’t been quite ...”

There were purple shadows under her brown eyes and

he noticed a small sponge in her hand: She had been

wiping his face.

“You’ve been ill,” she finished. “Quite ill.”

“How long ago did we leave?”

“Hours ago. It’s nearly morning.”

“And I’ve been ... what, unconscious?”

“Not exactly,” said Hermione uncomfortably. “You’ve

been shouting and moaning and ... things,” she

added in a tone that made Harry feel uneasy. What

Page | 390 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

had he done? Screamed curses like Voldemort, cried

like the baby in the crib?

“I couldn’t get the Horcrux off you,” Hermione said,

and he knew she wanted to change the subject. “It

was stuck, stuck to your chest. You’ve got a mark; I’m

sorry, I had to use a Severing Charm to get it away.

The snake bit you too, but I’ve cleaned the wound and

put some dittany on it. ...”

He pulled the sweaty T-shirt he was wearing away

from himself and looked down. There was a scarlet

oval over his heart where the locket had burned him.

He could also see the half-healed puncture marks to

his forearm.

“Where Ve you put the Horcrux?”

“In my bag. I think we should keep it off for a while.”

He lay back on his pillows and looked into her

pinched gray face.

“We shouldn’t have gone to Godric’s Hollow. It’s my

fault, it’s all my fault, Hermione, I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault. I wanted to go too; I really thought

Dumbledore might have left the sword there for you.”

“Yeah, well ... we got that wrong, didn’t we?”

“What happened, Harry? What happened when she

took you upstairs? Was the snake hiding somewhere?

Did it just come out and kill her and attack you?”

“No,” he said. “She was the snake ... or the snake was

her ... all along.”

“W-what?”

Page | 391 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He closed his eyes. He could still smell Bathilda’s

house on him: It made the whole thing horribly vivid.

“Bathilda must’ve been dead a while. The snake was

... was inside her. You-Know-Who put it there in

Godric’s Hollow, to wait. You were right. He knew I’d

go back.”

“The snake was inside her?”

He opened his eyes again: Hermione looked revolted,

nauseated.

“Lupin said there would be magic we’d never

imagined,” Harry said. “She didn’t want to talk in

front of you, because it was Parseltongue, all

Parseltongue, and I didn’t realize, but of course I

could understand her. Once we were up in the room,

the snake sent a message to You-Know-Who, I heard

it happen inside my head, I felt him get excited, he

said to keep me there ... and then ...”

He remembered the snake coming our of Bathilda’s

neck: Hermione did not need to know the details.

"... she changed, changed into the snake, and

attacked.”

He looked down at the puncture marks.

“It wasn’t supposed to kill me, just keep me there till

You-Know-Who came.”

If he had only managed to kill the snake, it would

have been worth it, all of it. ... Sick at heart, he sat up

and threw back the covers.

“Harry, no, I’m sure you ought to rest!”

Page | 392 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You’re the one who needs sleep. No offense, but you

look terrible. I’m fine. I’ll keep watch for a while.

Where’s my wand?”

She did not answer, she merely looked at him.

“Where’s my wand, Hermione?”

She was biting her lip, and tears swam in her eyes.

“Harry ...”

“ Where’s my wand?”

She reached down beside the bed and held it out to

him.

The holly and phoenix wand was nearly severed in

two. One fragile strand of phoenix feather kept both

pieces hanging together. The wood had splintered

apart completely. Harry took it into his hands as

though it was a living thing that had suffered a

terrible injury. He could not think properly:

Everything was a blur of panic and fear. Then he held

out the wand to Hermione.

“Mend it. Please.”

“Harry, I don’t think, when it’s broken like this — ”

“Please, Hermione, try!”

“R-Reparo.”

The dangling half of the wand resealed itself. Harry

held it up.

“Lumosl”

Page | 393 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The wand sparked feebly, then went out. Harry

pointed it at Hermione.

“ Expelliarmusl”

Hermione ’s wand gave a little jerk, but did not leave

her hand. The feeble attempt at magic was too much

for Harry’s wand, which split into two again. He

stared at it, aghast, unable to take in what he was

seeing . . . the wand that had survived so much . . .

“Harry,” Hermione whispered so quietly he could

hardly hear her. “I’m so, so sorry. I think it was me.

As we were leaving, you know, the snake was coming

for us, and so I cast a Blasting Curse, and it

rebounded everywhere, and it must have — must

have hit — ”

“It was an accident,” said Harry mechanically. He felt

empty, stunned. “We’ll — we’ll find a way to repair it.”

“Harry, I don’t think we’re going to be able to,” said

Hermione, the tears trickling down her face.

“Remember . . . remember Ron? When he broke his

wand, crashing the car? It was never the same again,

he had to get a new one.”

Harry thought of Ollivander, kidnapped and held

hostage by Voldemort; of Gregorovitch, who was dead.

How was he supposed to find himself a new wand?

“Well,” he said, in a falsely matter-of-fact voice, “well,

I’ll just borrow yours for now, then. While I keep

watch.”

Her face glazed with tears, Hermione handed over her

wand, and he left her sitting beside his bed, desiring

nothing more than to get away from her.

Page | 394 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE LIFE AND LIES OF ALBUS

DUMBLEDORE

The sun was coming up: The pure, colorless vastness

of the sky stretched over him, indifferent to him and

his suffering. Harry sat down in the tent entrance and

took a deep breath of clean air. Simply to be alive to

watch the sun rise over the sparkling snowy hillside

ought to have been the greatest treasure on earth, yet

he could not appreciate it: His senses had been

spiked by the calamity of losing his wand. He looked

out over a valley blanketed in snow, distant church

bells chiming through the glittering silence.

Without realizing it, he was digging his fingers into

his arms as if he were trying to resist physical pain.

He had spilled his own blood more times than he

could count; he had lost all the bones in his right arm

once; this journey had already given him scars to his

chest and forearm to join those on his hand and

forehead, but never, until this moment, had he felt

himself to be fatally weakened, vulnerable, and

naked, as though the best part of his magical power

had been torn from him. He knew exactly what

Page | 395 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Hermione would say if he expressed any of this: The

wand is only as good as the wizard. But she was

wrong, his case was different. She had not felt the

wand spin like the needle of a compass and shoot

golden flames at his enemy. He had lost the

protection of the twin cores, and only now that it was

gone did he realize how much he had been counting

upon it.

He pulled the pieces of the broken wand out of his

pocket and, without looking at them, tucked them

away in Hagrid’s pouch around his neck. The pouch

was now too full of broken and useless objects to take

any more. Harry’s hand brushed the old Snitch

through the mokeskin and for a moment he had to

fight the temptation to pull it out and throw it away.

Impenetrable, unhelpful, useless, like everything else

Dumbledore had left behind —

And his fury at Dumbledore broke over him now like

lava, scorching him inside, wiping out every other

feeling. Out of sheer desperation they had talked

themselves into believing that Godric’s Hollow held

answers, convinced themselves that they were

supposed to go back, that it was all part of some

secret path laid out for them by Dumbledore; but

there was no map, no plan. Dumbledore had left them

to grope in the darkness, to wrestle with unknown

and undreamed-of terrors, alone and unaided:

Nothing was explained, nothing was given freely, they

had no sword, and now, Harry had no wand. And he

had dropped the photograph of the thief, and it would

surely be easy now for Voldemort to find out who he

was. ... Voldemort had all the information now. ...

“Harry?”

Hermione looked frightened that he might curse her

with her own wand. Her face streaked with tears, she

Page | 396 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

crouched down beside him, two cups of tea trembling

in her hands and something bulky under her arm.

“Thanks,” he said, taking one of the cups.

“Do you mind if I talk to you?”

“No,” he said because he did not want to hurt her

feelings.

“Harry, you wanted to know who that man in the

picture was. Well ... I’ve got the book.”

Timidly she pushed it onto his lap, a pristine copy of

The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore.

“Where — how — ?”

“It was in Bathilda’s sitting room, just lying there. ...

This note was sticking out of the top of it.”

Hermione read the few lines of spiky, acid-green

writing aloud.

“ ‘Dear Batty, Thanks for your help. Here’s a copy of

the book, hope you like it. You said everything, even if

you don’t remember it. Rita.’ I think it must have

arrived while the real Bathilda was alive, but perhaps

she wasn’t in any fit state to read it?”

“No, she probably wasn’t.”

Harry looked down upon Dumbledore ’s face and

experienced a surge of savage pleasure: Now he would

know all the things that Dumbledore had never

thought it worth telling him, whether Dumbledore

wanted him to or not.

Page | 397 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You’re still really angry at me, aren’t you?” said

Hermione; he looked up to see fresh tears leaking out

of her eyes, and knew that his anger must have

shown in his face.

“No,” he said quietly. “No, Hermione, I know it was an

accident. You were trying to get us out of there alive,

and you were incredible. I’d be dead if you hadn’t

been there to help me.”

He tried to return her watery smile, then turned his

attention to the book. Its spine was stiff; it had clearly

never been opened before. He riffled through the

pages, looking for photographs. He came across the

one he sought almost at once, the young Dumbledore

and his handsome companion, roaring with laughter

at some long-forgotten joke. Harry dropped his eyes to

the caption.

Albus Dumbledore, shortly after his mother’s death,

with his friend Gellert Grindelwald.

Harry gaped at the last word for several long

moments. Grindelwald. His friend Grindelwald. He

looked sideways at Hermione, who was still

contemplating the name as though she could not

believe her eyes. Slowly she looked up at Harry.

“ Grindelwald?”

Ignoring the remainder of the photographs, Harry

searched the pages around them for a recurrence of

that fatal name. He soon discovered it and read

greedily, but became lost: It was necessary to go

further back to make sense of it all, and eventually he

found himself at the start of a chapter entitled “The

Greater Good.” Together, he and Hermione started to

read:

Page | 398 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Now approaching his eighteenth birthday,

Dumbledore left Hogwarts in a blaze of glory — Head

Boy, Prefect, Winner of the Barnabus Finkley Prize for

Exceptional Spell-Casting, British Youth

Representative to the Wizengamot, Gold Medal-

Winner for Ground-Breaking Contribution to the

International Alchemical Conference in Cairo.

Dumbledore intended, next, to take a Grand Tour

with Elphias “Dogbreath” Doge, the dim-witted but

devoted sidekick he had picked up at school.

The two young men were staying at the Leaky

Cauldron in London, preparing to depart for Greece the

following morning, when an owl arrived bearing news

of Dumbledore’ s mother’s death. “Dogbreath” Doge,

who refused to be interviewed for this book, has given

the public his own sentimental version of what

happened next. He represents Kendra’s death as a

tragic blow, and Dumbledore’s decision to give up his

expedition as an act of noble self-sacrifice.

Certainly Dumbledore returned to Godric’s Hollow at

once, supposedly to “care” for his younger brother

and sister. But how much care did he actually give

them?

“He were a head case, that Aberforth,” says Enid

Smeek, whose family lived on the outskirts of Godric’s

Hollow at that time. “Ran wild. ’Course, with his mum

and dad gone you’d have felt sorry for him, only he

kept chucking goat dung at my head. I don’t think

Albus was fussed about him, I never saw them

together, anyway.”

So what was Albus doing, if not comforting his wild

young brother? The answer, it seems, is ensuring the

continued imprisonment of his sister. For, though her

first jailer had died, there was no change in the pitiful

condition of Ariana Dumbledore. Her very existence

Page | 399 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

continued to be known only to those few outsiders

who, like “Dogbreath” Doge, could be counted upon to

believe in the story of her “ill health.”

Another such easily satisfied friend of the family was

Bathilda Bagshot, the celebrated magical historian

who has lived in Godric’s Hollow for many years.

Kendra, of course, had rebuffed Bathilda when she

first attempted to welcome the family to the village.

Several years later, however, the author sent an owl to

Albus at Hog warts, having been favorably impressed

by his paper on trans-species transformation in

Transfiguration Today. This initial contact led to

acquaintance with the entire Dumbledore family . At

the time of Kendra’s death, Bathilda was the only

person in Godric’s Hollow who was on speaking terms

with Dumbledore’s mother.

Unfortunately, the brilliance that Bathilda exhibited

earlier in her life has now dimmed. “The fire’s lit, but

the cauldron’s empty,” as Ivor Dillonsby put it to me,

or, in Enid Smeek’s slightly earthier phrase, “She’s

nutty as squirrel poo.” Nevertheless, a combination of

tried-and-tested reporting techniques enabled me to

extract enough nuggets of hard fact to string together

the whole scandalous story.

Like the rest of the Wizarding world, Bathilda puts

Kendra’s premature death down to a backfiring

charm, a story repeated by Albus and Aberforth in

later years. Bathilda also parrots the family line on

Ariana, calling her “frail” and “delicate.” On one

subject, however, Bathilda is well worth the effort I

put into procuring Veritaserum, for she, and she

alone, knows the full story of the best-kept secret of

Albus Dumbledore’s life. Now revealed for the first

time, it calls into question everything that his

admirers believed of Dumbledore: his supposed

hatred of the Dark Arts, his opposition to the

Page | 400 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

oppression of Muggles, even his devotion to his own

family.

The very same summer that Dumbledore went home

to Godric’s Hollow, now an orphan and head of the

family, Bathilda Bagshot agreed to accept into her

home her great-nephew, Gellert Grindelwald.

The name of Grindelwald is justly famous: In a list of

Most Dangerous Dark Wizards of All Time, he would

miss out on the top spot only because You-Know-Who

arrived, a generation later, to steal his crown. As

Grindelwald never extended his campaign of terror to

Britain, however, the details of his rise to power are

not widely known here.

Educated at Durmstrang, a school famous even then

for its unfortunate tolerance of the Dark Arts,

Grindelwald showed himself quite as precociously

brilliant as Dumbledore. Rather than channel his

abilities into the attainment of awards and prizes,

however, Gellert Grindelwald devoted himself to other

pursuits. At sixteen years old, even Durmstrang felt it

could no longer turn a blind eye to the twisted

experiments of Gellert Grindelwald, and he was

expelled.

Hitherto, all that has been known of Grindelwald ’s

next movements is that he “traveled abroad for some

months.” It can now be revealed that Grindelwald

chose to visit his great-aunt in Godric’s Hollow, and

that there, intensely shocking though it will be for

many to hear it, he struck up a close friendship with

none other than Albus Dumbledore.

“He seemed a charming boy to me,” babbles Bathilda,

“whatever he became later. Naturally I introduced him

to poor Albus, who was missing the company of lads

his own age. The boys took to each other at once.”

Page | 401 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

They certainly did. Bathilda shows me a letter, kept

by her, that Albus Dumbledore sent Gellert

Grindelwald in the dead of night.

“Yes, even after they’d spent all day in discussion —

both such brilliant young boys, they got on like a

cauldron on fire — I’d sometimes hear an owl tapping

at Gellert’s bedroom window, delivering a letter from

Albus! An idea would have struck him, and he had to

let Gellert know immediately!”

And what ideas they were. Profoundly shocking

though Albus Dumbledore’ s fans will find it, here are

the thoughts of their seventeen-year-old hero, as

relayed to his new best friend. (A copy of the original

letter may be seen on page 463.)

Gellert —

Your point about Wizard dominance being FOR THE

MUGGLES’ OWN GOOD — this, I think , is the crucial

point. Yes, we have been given power and yes, that

power gives us the right to rule, but it also gives us

responsibilities over the ruled. We must stress this

point, it will be the foundation stone upon which we

build. Where we are opposed, as we surely will be, this

must be the basis of all our counterarguments. We

seize control FOR THE GREATER GOOD. And from this

it follows that where we meet resistance, we must use

only the force that is necessary and no more. (This was

your mistake at Durmstrang! But I do not complain,

because if you had not been expelled, we would never

have met.)

Albus

Astonished and appalled though his many admirers

will be, this letter constitutes proof that Albus

Dumbledore once dreamed of overthrowing the Statute

Page | 402 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

of Secrecy and establishing Wizard rule over Muggles.

What a blow for those who have always portrayed

Dumbledore as the Muggle-boms’ greatest champion!

How hollow those speeches promoting Muggle rights

seem in the light of this damning new evidence! How

despicable does Albus Dumbledore appear, busy

plotting his rise to power when he should have been

mourning his mother and caring for his sister!

No doubt those determined to keep Dumbledore on

his crumbling pedestal will bleat that he did not, after

all, put his plans into action, that he must have

suffered a change of heart, that he came to his

senses. However, the truth seems altogether more

shocking.

Barely two months into their great new friendship,

Dumbledore and Grindelwald parted, never to see each

other again until they met for their legendary duel (for

more, see chapter 22). What caused this abrupt

rupture? Had Dumbledore come to his senses? Had he

told Grindelwald he wanted no more part in his plans?

Alas, no.

“It was poor little Ariana dying, I think, that did it,”

says Bathilda. “It came as an awful shock. Gellert was

there in the house when it happened, and he came

back to my house all of a dither, told me he wanted to

go home the next day. Terribly distressed, you know.

So I arranged a Portkey and that was the last I saw of

him.

“Albus was beside himself at Ariana’s death. It was so

dreadful for those two brothers. They had lost

everybody except each other. No wonder tempers ran

a little high. Aberforth blamed Albus, you know, as

people will under these dreadful circumstances. But

Aberforth always talked a little madly, poor boy. All

the same, breaking Albus’s nose at the funeral was

Page | 403 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

not decent. It would have destroyed Kendra to see her

sons fighting like that, across her daughter’s body. A

shame Gellert could not have stayed for the funeral.

... He would have been a comfort to Albus, at least.

This dreadful coffin- side brawl, known only to those

few who attended Ariana Dumbledore’s funeral, raises

several questions. Why exactly did Aberforth

Dumbledore blame Albus for his sister’s death? Was

it, as “Batty” pretends, a mere effusion of grief? Or

could there have been some more concrete reason for

his fury? Grindelwald, expelled from Durmstrang for

near-fatal attacks upon fellow students, fled the

country hours after the girl’s death, and Albus (out of

shame or fear?) never saw him again, not until forced

to do so by the pleas of the Wizarding world.

Neither Dumbledore nor Grindelwald ever seems to

have referred to this brief boyhood friendship in later

life. However, there can be no doubt that Dumbledore

delayed, for some five years of turmoil, fatalities, and

disappearances, his attack upon Gellert Grindelwald.

Was it lingering affection for the man or fear of

exposure as his once best friend that caused

Dumbledore to hesitate? Was it only reluctantly that

Dumbledore set out to capture the man he was once

so delighted he had met?

And how did the mysterious Ariana die? Was she the

inadvertent victim of some Dark rite? Did she stumble

across something she ought not to have done, as the

two young men sat practicing for their attempt at

glory and domination? Is it possible that Ariana

Dumbledore was the first person to die “for the

greater good”?

Page | 404 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The chapter ended here and Harry looked up.

Hermione had reached the bottom of the page before

him. She tugged the book out of Harry’s hands,

looking a little alarmed by his expression, and closed

it without looking at it, as though hiding something

indecent.

“Harry — ”

But he shook his head. Some inner certainty had

crashed down inside him; it was exactly as he had felt

after Ron left. He had trusted Dumbledore, believed

him the embodiment of goodness and wisdom. All was

ashes: How much more could he lose? Ron,

Dumbledore, the phoenix wand ...

“Harry.” She seemed to have heard his thoughts.

“Listen to me. It — it doesn’t make very nice reading

“Yeah, you could say that — ”

“ — but don’t forget, Harry, this is Rita Skeeter

writing.”

“You did read that letter to Grindelwald, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I — I did.” She hesitated, looking upset, cradling

her tea in her cold hands. “I think that’s the worst bit.

I know Bathilda thought it was all just talk, but ‘For

the Greater Good’ became Grindelwald ’s slogan, his

justification for all the atrocities he committed later.

And . . . from that ... it looks like Dumbledore gave him

the idea. They say ‘For the Greater Good’ was even

carved over the entrance to Nurmengard.”

“What’s Nurmengard?”

Page | 405 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“The prison Grindelwald had built to hold his

opponents. He ended up in there himself, once

Dumbledore had caught him. Anyway, it’s — it’s an

awful thought that Dumbledore ’s ideas helped

Grindelwald rise to power. But on the other hand,

even Rita can’t pretend that they knew each other for

more than a few months one summer when they were

both really young, and — ”

“I thought you’d say that,” said Harry. He did not

want to let his anger spill out at her, but it was hard

to keep his voice steady. “I thought you’d say They

were young. ’ They were the same age as we are now.

And here we are, risking our lives to fight the Dark

Arts, and there he was, in a huddle with his new best

friend, plotting their rise to power over the Muggles.”

His temper would not remain in check much longer:

He stood up and walked around, trying to work some

of it off.

“I’m not trying to defend what Dumbledore wrote,”

said Hermione. “All that ‘right to rule’ rubbish, it’s

‘Magic Is Might’ all over again. But Harry, his mother

had just died, he was stuck alone in the house — ”

“Alone? He wasn’t alone! He had his brother and

sister for company, his Squib sister he was keeping

locked up — ”

“I don’t believe it,” said Hermione. She stood up too.

“Whatever was wrong with that girl, I don’t think she

was a Squib. The Dumbledore we knew would never,

ever have allowed — ”

“The Dumbledore we thought we knew didn’t want to

conquer Muggles by force!” Harry shouted, his voice

echoing across the empty hilltop, and several

Page | 406 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

blackbirds rose into the air, squawking and spiraling

against the pearly sky.

“He changed, Harry, he changed! It’s as simple as

that! Maybe he did believe these things when he was

seventeen, but the whole of the rest of his life was

devoted to fighting the Dark Arts! Dumbledore was

the one who stopped Grindelwald, the one who always

voted for Muggle protection and Muggle-born rights,

who fought You-Know-Who from the start, and who

died trying to bring him down!”

Rita’s book lay on the ground between them, so that

the face of Albus Dumbledore smiled dolefully at

both.

“Harry, I’m sorry, but I think the real reason you’re so

angry is that Dumbledore never told you any of this

himself.”

“Maybe I am!” Harry bellowed, and he flung his arms

over his head, hardly knowing whether he was trying

to hold in his anger or protect himself from the weight

of his own disillusionment. “Look what he asked from

me, Hermione! Risk your life, Harry! And again! And

again! And don’t expect me to explain everything, just

trust me blindly, trust that I know what I’m doing,

trust me even though I don’t trust you! Never the

whole truth! Never!”

His voice cracked with the strain, and they stood

looking at each other in the whiteness and the

emptiness, and Harry felt they were as insignificant

as insects beneath that wide sky.

“He loved you,” Hermione whispered. “I know he loved

you.”

Harry dropped his arms.

Page | 407 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I don’t know who he loved, Hermione, but it was

never me. This isn’t love, the mess he’s left me in. He

shared a damn sight more of what he was really

thinking with Gellert Grindelwald than he ever shared

with me.”

Harry picked up Hermione ’s wand, which he had

dropped in the snow, and sat back down in the

entrance of the tent.

“Thanks for the tea. I’ll finish the watch. You get back

in the warm.”

She hesitated, but recognized the dismissal. She

picked up the book and then walked back past him

into the tent, but as she did so, she brushed the top

of his head lightly with her hand. He closed his eyes

at her touch, and hated himself for wishing that what

she said was true: that Dumbledore had really cared.

Page | 408 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE SILVER DOE

It was snowing by the time Hermione took over the

watch at midnight. Harry’s dreams were confused and

disturbing: Nagini wove in and out of them, first

through a gigantic, cracked ring, then through a

wreath of Christmas roses. He woke repeatedly,

panicky, convinced that somebody had called out to

him in the distance, imagining that the wind

whipping around the tent was footsteps or voices.

Finally he got up in the darkness and joined

Hermione, who was huddled in the entrance to the

tent reading A History of Magic by the light of her

wand. The snow was still falling thickly, and she

greeted with relief his suggestion of packing up early

and moving on.

“Well go somewhere more sheltered,” she agreed,

shivering as she pulled on a sweatshirt over her

pajamas. “I kept thinking I could hear people moving

outside. I even thought I saw somebody once or

twice.”

Page | 409 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry paused in the act of pulling on a jumper and

glanced at the silent, motionless Sneakoscope on the

table.

“I’m sure I imagined it,” said Hermione, looking

nervous. “The snow in the dark, it plays tricks on

your eyes. ... But perhaps we ought to Disapparate

under the Invisibility Cloak, just in case?”

Half an hour later, with the tent packed, Harry

wearing the Horcrux, and Hermione clutching the

beaded bag, they Disapparated. The usual tightness

engulfed them; Harry’s feet parted company with the

snowy ground, then slammed hard onto what felt like

frozen earth covered with leaves.

“Where are we?” he asked, peering around at a fresh

mass of trees as Hermione opened the beaded bag

and began tugging out tent poles.

“The Forest of Dean,” she said. “I came camping here

once with my mum and dad.”

Here too snow lay on the trees all around and it was

bitterly cold, but they were at least protected from the

wind. They spent most of the day inside the tent,

huddled for warmth around the useful bright blue

flames that Hermione was so adept at producing, and

which could be scooped up and carried around in a

jar. Harry felt as though he was recuperating from

some brief but severe illness, an impression

reinforced by Hermione ’s solicitousness. That

afternoon fresh flakes drifted down upon them, so

that even their sheltered clearing had a fresh dusting

of powdery snow.

After two nights of little sleep, Harry’s senses seemed

more alert than usual. Their escape from Godric’s

Hollow had been so narrow that Voldemort seemed

Page | 410 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

somehow closer than before, more threatening. As

darkness drew in again Harry refused Hermione’s

offer to keep watch and told her to go to bed.

Harry moved an old cushion into the tent mouth and

sat down, wearing all the sweaters he owned but even

so, still shivery. The darkness deepened with the

passing hours until it was virtually impenetrable. He

was on the point of taking out the Marauder’s Map, so

as to watch Ginny’s dot for a while, before he

remembered that it was the Christmas holidays and

that she would be back at the Burrow.

Every tiny movement seemed magnified in the

vastness of the forest. Harry knew that it must be full

of living creatures, but he wished they would all

remain still and silent so that he could separate their

innocent scurryings and prowlings from noises that

might proclaim other, sinister movements. He

remembered the sound of a cloak slithering over dead

leaves many years ago, and at once thought he heard

it again before mentally shaking himself. Their

protective enchantments had worked for weeks; why

should they break now? And yet he could not throw

off the feeling that something was different tonight.

Several times he jerked upright, his neck aching

because he had fallen asleep, slumped at an awkward

angle against the side of the tent. The night reached

such a depth of velvety blackness that he might have

been suspended in limbo between Disapparition and

Apparition. He had just held up a hand in front of his

face to see whether he could make out his fingers

when it happened.

A bright silver light appeared right ahead of him,

moving through the trees. Whatever the source, it was

moving soundlessly. The light seemed simply to drift

toward him.

Page | 411 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He jumped to his feet, his voice frozen in his throat,

and raised Hermione’s wand. He screwed up his eyes

as the light became blinding, the trees in front of it

pitch-black in silhouette, and still the thing came

closer. ...

And then the source of the light stepped out from

behind an oak. It was a silver- white doe, moon-bright

and dazzling, picking her way over the ground, still

silent, and leaving no hoofprints in the fine powdering

of snow. She stepped toward him, her beautiful head

with its wide, long-lashed eyes held high.

Harry stared at the creature, filled with wonder, not

at her strangeness, but at her inexplicable familiarity.

He felt that he had been waiting for her to come, but

that he had forgotten, until this moment, that they

had arranged to meet. His impulse to shout for

Hermione, which had been so strong a moment ago,

had gone. He knew, he would have staked his life on

it, that she had come for him, and him alone.

They gazed at each other for several long moments

and then she turned and walked away.

“No,” he said, and his voice was cracked with lack of

use. “Come back!”

She continued to step deliberately through the trees,

and soon her brightness was striped by their thick

black trunks. For one trembling second he hesitated.

Caution murmured it could be a trick, a lure, a trap.

But instinct, overwhelming instinct, told him that this

was not Dark Magic. He set off in pursuit.

Snow crunched beneath his feet, but the doe made no

noise as she passed through the trees, for she was

nothing but light. Deeper and deeper into the forest

she led him, and Harry walked quickly, sure that

Page | 412 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

when she stopped, she would allow him to approach

her properly. And then she would speak and the voice

would tell him what he needed to know.

At last, she came to a halt. She turned her beautiful

head toward him once more, and he broke into a run,

a question burning in him, but as he opened his lips

to ask it, she vanished.

Though the darkness had swallowed her whole, her

burnished image was still imprinted on his retinas; it

obscured his vision, brightening when he lowered his

eyelids, disorienting him. Now fear came: Her

presence had meant safety.

“Lumos\” he whispered, and the wand-tip ignited.

The imprint of the doe faded away with every blink of

his eyes as he stood there, listening to the sounds of

the forest, to distant crackles of twigs, soft swishes of

snow. Was he about to be attacked? Had she enticed

him into an ambush? Was he imagining that

somebody stood beyond the reach of the wandlight,

watching him?

He held the wand higher. Nobody ran out at him, no

flash of green light burst from behind a tree. Why,

then, had she led him to this spot?

Something gleamed in the light of the wand, and

Harry spun about, but all that was there was a small,

frozen pool, its cracked black surface glittering as he

raised the wand higher to examine it.

He moved forward rather cautiously and looked down.

The ice reflected his distorted shadow and the beam

of wandlight, but deep below the thick, misty gray

carapace, something else glinted. A great silver cross

Page | 413 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

His heart skipped into his mouth: He dropped to his

knees at the pool’s edge and angled the wand so as to

flood the bottom of the pool with as much light as

possible. A glint of deep red ... It was a sword with

glittering rubies in its hilt. ... The sword of Gryffindor

was lying at the bottom of the forest pool.

Barely breathing, he stared down at it. How was this

possible? How could it have come to be lying in a

forest pool, this close to the place where they were

camping? Had some unknown magic drawn Hermione

to this spot, or was the doe, which he had taken to be

a Patronus, some kind of guardian of the pool? Or

had the sword been put into the pool after they had

arrived, precisely because they were here? In which

case, where was the person who had wanted to pass

it to Harry? Again he directed the wand at the

surrounding trees and bushes, searching for a

human outline, for the glint of an eye, but he could

not see anyone there. All the same, a little more fear

leavened his exhilaration as he returned his attention

to the sword reposing upon the bottom of the frozen

pool.

He pointed the wand at the silvery shape and

murmured, “Accio Sword.”

It did not stir. He had not expected it to. If it had been

that easy, the sword would have lain on the ground

for him to pick up, not in the depths of a frozen pool.

He set off around the circle of ice, thinking hard

about the last time the sword had delivered itself to

him. He had been in terrible danger then, and had

asked for help.

“Help,” he murmured, but the sword remained upon

the pool bottom, indifferent, motionless.

Page | 414 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

What was it, Harry asked himself (walking again),

that Dumbledore had told him the last time he had

retrieved the sword? Only a true Gryffindor could have

pulled that out of the hat. And what were the qualities

that defined a Gryffindor? A small voice inside Harry’s

head answered him: Their daring, nerve, and chivalry

set Gryffindors apart.

Harry stopped walking and let out a long sigh, his

smoky breath dispersing rapidly upon the frozen air.

He knew what he had to do. If he was honest with

himself, he had thought it might come to this from

the moment he had spotted the sword through the

ice.

He glanced around at the surrounding trees again,

but was convinced now that nobody was going to

attack him. They had had their chance as he walked

alone through the forest, had had plenty of

opportunity as he examined the pool. The only reason

to delay at this point was because the immediate

prospect was so deeply uninviting.

With fumbling fingers Harry started to remove his

many layers of clothing. Where “chivalry” entered into

this, he thought ruefully, he was not entirely sure,

unless it counted as chivalrous that he was not

calling for Hermione to do it in his stead.

An owl hooted somewhere as he stripped off, and he

thought with a pang of Hedwig. He was shivering

now, his teeth chattering horribly, and yet he

continued to strip off until at last he stood there in

his underwear, barefooted in the snow. He placed the

pouch containing his wand, his mother’s letter, the

shard of Sirius’s mirror, and the old Snitch on top of

his clothes, then he pointed Hermione’s wand at the

ice.

Page | 415 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Diffindo.”

It cracked with a sound like a bullet in the silence:

The surface of the pool broke and chunks of dark ice

rocked on the ruffled water. As far as Harry could

judge, it was not deep, but to retrieve the sword he

would have to submerge himself completely.

Contemplating the task ahead would not make it

easier or the water warmer. He stepped to the pool’s

edge and placed Hermione’s wand on the ground, still

lit. Then, trying not to imagine how much colder he

was about to become or how violently he would soon

be shivering, he jumped.

Every pore of his body screamed in protest: The very

air in his lungs seemed to freeze solid as he was

submerged to his shoulders in the frozen water. He

could hardly breathe; trembling so violently the water

lapped over the edges of the pool, he felt for the blade

with his numb feet. He only wanted to dive once.

Harry put off the moment of total submersion from

second to second, gasping and shaking, until he told

himself that it must be done, gathered all his courage,

and dived.

The cold was agony: It attacked him like fire. His

brain itself seemed to have frozen as he pushed

through the dark water to the bottom and reached

out, groping for the sword. His fingers closed around

the hilt; he pulled it upward.

Then something closed tight around his neck. He

thought of water weeds, though nothing had brushed

him as he dived, and raised his empty hand to free

himself. It was not weed: The chain of the Horcrux

had tightened and was slowly constricting his

windpipe.

Page | 416 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

Harry kicked out wildly, trying to push himself back

to the surface, but merely propelled himself into the

rocky side of the pool. Thrashing, suffocating, he

scrabbled at the strangling chain, his frozen fingers

unable to loosen it, and now little lights were popping

inside his head, and he was going to drown, there was

nothing left, nothing he could do, and the arms that

closed around his chest were surely Death’s. ...

Choking and retching, soaking and colder than he

had ever been in his life, he came to facedown in the

snow. Somewhere close by, another person was

panting and coughing and staggering around.

Hermione had come again, as she had come when the

snake attacked. ... Yet it did not sound like her, not

with those deep coughs, not judging by the weight of

the footsteps. ...

Harry had no strength to lift his head and see his

savior’s identity. All he could do was raise a shaking

hand to his throat and feel the place where the locket

had cut tightly into his flesh. It was gone: Someone

had cut him free. Then a panting voice spoke from

over his head.

“Are — you — mental?”

Nothing but the shock of hearing that voice could

have given Harry the strength to get up. Shivering

violently, he staggered to his feet. There before him

stood Ron, fully dressed but drenched to the skin, his

hair plastered to his face, the sword of Gryffindor in

one hand and the Horcrux dangling from its broken

chain in the other.

“Why the hell,” panted Ron, holding up the Horcrux,

which swung backward and forward on its shortened

chain in some parody of hypnosis, “didn’t you take

this thing off before you dived?”

Page | 417 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry could not answer. The silver doe was nothing,

nothing compared with Ron’s reappearance; he could

not believe it. Shuddering with cold, he caught up the

pile of clothes still lying at the water’s edge and began

to pull them on. As he dragged sweater after sweater

over his head, Harry stared at Ron, half expecting him

to have disappeared every time he lost sight of him,

and yet he had to be real: He had just dived into the

pool, he had saved Harry’s life.

“It was y-you?” Harry said at last, his teeth

chattering, his voice weaker than usual due to his

near-strangulation.

“Well, yeah,” said Ron, looking slightly confused.

“Y-you cast that doe?”

“What? No, of course not! I thought it was you doing

it!”

“My Patronus is a stag.”

“Oh yeah. I thought it looked different. No antlers.”

Harry put Hagrid’s pouch back around his neck,

pulled on a final sweater, stooped to pick up

Hermione’s wand, and faced Ron again.

“How come you’re here?”

Apparently Ron had hoped that this point would come

up later, if at all.

“Well, I’ve — you know — I’ve come back. If — ” He

cleared his throat. “You know. You still want me.”

There was a pause, in which the subject of Ron’s

departure seemed to rise like a wall between them.

Page | 418 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Yet he was here. He had returned. He had just saved

Harry’s life.

Ron looked down at his hands. He seemed

momentarily surprised to see the things he was

holding.

“Oh yeah, I got it out,” he said, rather unnecessarily,

holding up the sword for Harry’s inspection. “That’s

why you jumped in, right?”

“Yeah,” said Harry. “But I don’t understand. How did

you get here? How did you find us?”

“Long story,” said Ron. “I’ve been looking for you for

hours, it’s a big forest, isn’t it? And I was just

thinking I’d have to kip under a tree and wait for

morning when I saw that deer coming and you

following.”

“You didn’t see anyone else?”

“No,” said Ron. “I — ”

But he hesitated, glancing at two trees growing close

together some yards away.

“I did think I saw something move over there, but I

was running to the pool at the time, because you’d

gone in and you hadn’t come up, so I wasn’t going to

make a detour to — hey!”

Harry was already hurrying to the place Ron had

indicated. The two oaks grew close together; there

was a gap of only a few inches between the trunks at

eye level, an ideal place to see but not be seen. The

ground around the roots, however, was free of snow,

and Harry could see no sign of footprints. He walked

Page | 419 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

back to where Ron stood waiting, still holding the

sword and the Horcrux.

“Anything there?” Ron asked.

“No,” said Harry.

“So how did the sword get in that pool?”

“Whoever cast the Patronus must have put it there.”

They both looked at the ornate silver sword, its rubied

hilt glinting a little in the light from Hermione’s wand.

“You reckon this is the real one?” asked Ron.

“One way to find out, isn’t there?” said Harry.

The Horcrux was still swinging from Ron’s hand. The

locket was twitching slightly. Harry knew that the

thing inside it was agitated again. It had sensed the

presence of the sword and had tried to kill Harry

rather than let him possess it. Now was not the time

for long discussions; now was the moment to destroy

the locket once and for all. Harry looked around,

holding Hermione’s wand high, and saw the place: a

flattish rock lying in the shadow of a sycamore tree.

“Come here,” he said, and he led the way, brushed

snow from the rock’s surface, and held out his hand

for the Horcrux. When Ron offered the sword,

however, Harry shook his head.

“No, you should do it.”

“Me?” said Ron, looking shocked. “Why?”

“Because you got the sword out of the pool. I think it’s

supposed to be you.”

Page | 420 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He was not being kind or generous. As certainly as he

had known that the doe was benign, he knew that

Ron had to be the one to wield the sword.

Dumbledore had at least taught Harry something

about certain kinds of magic, of the incalculable

power of certain acts.

“I’m going to open it,” said Harry, “and you stab it.

Straightaway, okay? Because whatever’s in there will

put up a fight. The bit of Riddle in the diary tried to

kill me.”

“How are you going to open it?” asked Ron. He looked

terrified.

“I’m going to ask it to open, using Parseltongue,” said

Harry. The answer came so readily to his lips that he

thought that he had always known it deep down:

Perhaps it had taken his recent encounter with Nagini

to make him realize it. He looked at the serpentine S,

inlaid with glittering green stones: It was easy to

visualize it as a minuscule snake, curled upon the

cold rock.

“No!” said Ron. “No, don’t open it! I’m serious!”

“Why not?” asked Harry. “Let’s get rid of the damn

thing, it’s been months — ”

“I can’t, Harry, I’m serious — you do it — ”

“But why?”

“Because that thing’s bad for me!” said Ron, backing

away from the locket on the rock. “I can’t handle it!

I’m not making excuses, Harry, for what I was like,

but it affects me worse than it affected you and

Hermione, it made me think stuff — stuff I was

thinking anyway, but it made everything worse, I

Page | 421 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

can’t explain it, and then I’d take it off and I’d get my

head on straight again, and then I’d have to put the

effing thing back on — I can’t do it, Harry!”

He had backed away, the sword dragging at his side,

shaking his head.

“You can do it,” said Harry, “you can! You’ve just got

the sword, I know it’s supposed to be you who uses it.

Please, just get rid of it, Ron.”

The sound of his name seemed to act like a stimulant.

Ron swallowed, then, still breathing hard through his

long nose, moved back toward the rock.

“Tell me when,” he croaked.

“On three,” said Harry, looking back down at the

locket and narrowing his eyes, concentrating on the

letter S, imagining a serpent, while the contents of the

locket rattled like a trapped cockroach. It would have

been easy to pity it, except that the cut around

Harry’s neck still burned.

“One ... two ... three ... open.”

The last word came as a hiss and a snarl and the

golden doors of the locket swung wide with a little

click.

Behind both of the glass windows within blinked a

living eye, dark and handsome as Tom Riddle’s eyes

had been before he turned them scarlet and slit-

pupiled.

“Stab,” said Harry, holding the locket steady on the

rock.

Page | 422 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ron raised the sword in his shaking hands: The point

dangled over the frantically swiveling eyes, and Harry

gripped the locket tightly, bracing himself, already

imagining blood pouring from the empty windows.

Then a voice hissed from out of the Horcrux.

“I have seen your heart, and it is mine.”

“Don’t listen to it!” Harry said harshly. “Stab it!”

“I have seen your dreams, Ronald Weasley, and I have

seen your fears. All you desire is possible, but all that

you dread is also possible. ...”

“Stab!” shouted Harry; his voice echoed off the

surrounding trees, the sword point trembled, and Ron

gazed down into Riddle’s eyes.

“ Least loved, always, by the mother who craved a

daughter . . . Least loved, now, by the girl who prefers

your friend . . . Second best, always, eternally

overshadowed ...”

“Ron, stab it now!” Harry bellowed: He could feel the

locket quivering in his grip and was scared of what

was coming. Ron raised the sword still higher, and as

he did so, Riddle’s eyes gleamed scarlet.

Out of the locket’s two windows, out of the eyes, there

bloomed, like two grotesque bubbles, the heads of

Harry and Hermione, weirdly distorted.

Ron yelled in shock and backed away as the figures

blossomed out of the locket, first chests, then waists,

then legs, until they stood in the locket, side by side

like trees with a common root, swaying over Ron and

the real Harry, who had snatched his fingers away

from the locket as it burned, suddenly, white-hot.

Page | 423 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Ron!” he shouted, but the Riddle-Harry was now

speaking with Voldemort’s voice and Ron was gazing,

mesmerized, into its face.

“ Why return? We were better without you, happier

without you, glad of your absence. . . . We laughed at

your stupidity, your cowardice, your presumption — ”

“ Presumption?’ echoed the Riddle-Hermione, who was

more beautiful and yet more terrible than the real

Hermione: She swayed, cackling, before Ron, who

looked horrified yet transfixed, the sword hanging

pointlessly at his side. “ Who could look at you, who

would ever look at you, beside Harry Potter? What

have you ever done, compared with the Chosen One?

What are you, compared with the Boy Who Lived?”

“Ron, stab it, STAB IT!” Harry yelled, but Ron did not

move: His eyes were wide, and the Riddle-Harry and

the Riddle-Hermione were reflected in them, their hair

swirling like flames, their eyes shining red, their

voices lifted in an evil duet.

“ Your mother confessed,” sneered Riddle-Harry, while

Riddle-Hermione jeered, “that she would have

preferred me as a son, would be glad to exchange ...”

“Who wouldn’t prefer him, what woman would take

you, you are nothing, nothing, nothing to him,” crooned

Riddle-Hermione, and she stretched like a snake and

entwined herself around Riddle-Harry, wrapping him

in a close embrace: Their lips met.

On the ground in front of them, Ron’s face filled with

anguish. He raised the sword high, his arms shaking.

“Do it, Ron!” Harry yelled.

Page | 424 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ron looked toward him, and Harry thought he saw a

trace of scarlet in his eyes.

“Ron — ?”

The sword flashed, plunged: Harry threw himself out

of the way, there was a clang of metal and a long,

drawn-out scream. Harry whirled around, slipping in

the snow, wand held ready to defend himself: but

there was nothing to fight.

The monstrous versions of himself and Hermione

were gone: There was only Ron, standing there with

the sword held slackly in his hand, looking down at

the shattered remains of the locket on the flat rock.

Slowly, Harry walked back to him, hardly knowing

what to say or do. Ron was breathing heavily: His

eyes were no longer red at all, but their normal blue;

they were also wet.

Harry stooped, pretending he had not seen, and

picked up the broken Horcrux. Ron had pierced the

glass in both windows: Riddle’s eyes were gone, and

the stained silk lining of the locket was smoking

slightly. The thing that had lived in the Horcrux had

vanished; torturing Ron had been its final act.

The sword clanged as Ron dropped it. He had sunk to

his knees, his head in his arms. He was shaking, but

not, Harry realized, from cold. Harry crammed the

broken locket into his pocket, knelt down beside Ron,

and placed a hand cautiously on his shoulder. He

took it as a good sign that Ron did not throw it off.

“After you left,” he said in a low voice, grateful for the

fact that Ron’s face was hidden, “she cried for a week.

Probably longer, only she didn’t want me to see. There

Page | 425 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

were loads of nights when we never even spoke to

each other. With you gone ...”

He could not finish; it was only now that Ron was

here again that Harry fully realized how much his

absence had cost them.

“She’s like my sister,” he went on. “I love her like a

sister and I reckon she feels the same way about me.

It’s always been like that. I thought you knew.”

Ron did not respond, but turned his face away from

Harry and wiped his nose noisily on his sleeve. Harry

got to his feet again and walked to where Ron’s

enormous rucksack lay yards away, discarded as Ron

had run toward the pool to save Harry from drowning.

He hoisted it onto his own back and walked back to

Ron, who clambered to his feet as Harry approached,

eyes bloodshot but otherwise composed.

“I’m sorry,” he said in a thick voice. “I’m sorry I left. I

know I was a — a — ”

He looked around at the darkness, as if hoping a bad

enough word would swoop down upon him and claim

him.

“You’ve sort of made up for it tonight,” said Harry.

“Getting the sword. Finishing off the Horcrux. Saving

my life.”

“That makes me sound a lot cooler than I was,” Ron

mumbled.

“Stuff like that always sounds cooler than it really

was,” said Harry. “I’ve been trying to tell you that for

years.”

Page | 426 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Simultaneously they walked forward and hugged,

Harry gripping the still-sopping back of Ron’s jacket.

“And now,” said Harry as they broke apart, “all we’ve

got to do is find the tent again.”

But it was not difficult. Though the walk through the

dark forest with the doe had seemed lengthy, with

Ron by his side the journey back seemed to take a

surprisingly short time. Harry could not wait to wake

Hermione, and it was with quickening excitement that

he entered the tent, Ron lagging a little behind him.

It was gloriously warm after the pool and the forest,

the only illumination the bluebell flames still

shimmering in a bowl on the floor. Hermione was fast

asleep, curled up under her blankets, and did not

move until Harry had said her name several times.

“Hermionel”

She stirred, then sat up quickly, pushing her hair out

of her face.

“What’s wrong? Harry? Are you all right?”

“It’s okay, everything’s fine. More than fine. I’m great.

There’s someone here.”

“What do you mean? Who — ?”

She saw Ron, who stood there holding the sword and

dripping onto the threadbare carpet. Harry backed

into a shadowy corner, slipped off Ron’s rucksack,

and attempted to blend in with the canvas.

Hermione slid out of her bunk and moved like a

sleepwalker toward Ron, her eyes upon his pale face.

She stopped right in front of him, her lips slightly

Page | 427 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

parted, her eyes wide. Ron gave a weak, hopeful smile

and half raised his arms.

Hermione launched herself forward and started

punching every inch of him that she could reach.

“Ouch — ow — gerroff! What the — ? Hermione —

OW!”

“You — complete — arse — Ronald — Weasley!”

She punctuated every word with a blow: Ron backed

away, shielding his head as Hermione advanced.

“You — crawl — back — here — after — weeks — and

— weeks — oh, where’s my wand?”

She looked as though ready to wrestle it out of

Harry’s hands and he reacted instinctively.

“Protegol”

The invisible shield erupted between Ron and

Hermione: The force of it knocked her backward onto

the floor. Spitting hair out of her mouth, she leapt up

again.

“Hermione!” said Harry. “Calm — ”

“I will not calm down!” she screamed. Never before

had he seen her lose control like this; she looked

quite demented. “Give me back my wand! Give it back

to me\”

“Hermione, will you please — ”

“Don’t you tell me what to do, Harry Potter!” she

screeched. “Don’t you dare! Give it back now! And

YOU!”

Page | 428 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

She was pointing at Ron in dire accusation: It was

like a malediction, and Harry could not blame Ron for

retreating several steps.

“I came running after you! I called you! I begged you

to come back!”

“I know,” Ron said, “Hermione, I’m sorry, I’m really —

“Oh, you’re sorry!”

She laughed, a high-pitched, out-of-control sound;

Ron looked at Harry for help, but Harry merely

grimaced his helplessness.

“You come back after weeks — weeks — and you

think it’s all going to be all right if you just say

sorry?”

“Well, what else can I say?” Ron shouted, and Harry

was glad that Ron was fighting back.

“Oh, I don’t know!” yelled Hermione with awful

sarcasm. “Rack your brains, Ron, that should only

take a couple of seconds — ”

“Hermione,” interjected Harry, who considered this a

low blow, “he just saved my — ”

“I don’t care!” she screamed. “I don’t care what he’s

done! Weeks and weeks, we could have been dead for

all he knew — ”

“I knew you weren’t dead!” bellowed Ron, drowning

her voice for the first time, and approaching as close

as he could with the Shield Charm between them.

“Harry’s all over the Prophet, all over the radio, they’re

looking for you everywhere, all these rumors and

Page | 429 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

mental stories, I knew I’d hear straight off if you were

dead, you don’t know what it’s been like — ”

“What it’s been like for you?”

Her voice was now so shrill only bats would be able to

hear it soon, but she had reached a level of

indignation that rendered her temporarily speechless,

and Ron seized his opportunity.

“I wanted to come back the minute I’d Disapparated,

but I walked straight into a gang of Snatchers,

Hermione, and I couldn’t go anywhere!”

“A gang of what?” asked Harry, as Hermione threw

herself down into a chair with her arms and legs

crossed so tightly it seemed unlikely that she would

unravel them for several years.

“Snatchers,” said Ron. “They’re everywhere — gangs

trying to earn gold by rounding up Muggle-borns and

blood traitors, there’s a reward from the Ministry for

everyone captured. I was on my own and I look like I

might be school age; they got really excited, thought I

was a Muggle-born in hiding. I had to talk fast to get

out of being dragged to the Ministry.”

“What did you say to them?”

“Told them I was Stan Shunpike. First person I could

think of.”

“And they believed that?”

“They weren’t the brightest. One of them was

definitely part troll, the smell off him. ...”

Ron glanced at Hermione, clearly hopeful she might

soften at this small instance of humor, but her

Page | 430 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

expression remained stony above her tightly knotted

limbs.

“Anyway, they had a row about whether I was Stan or

not. It was a bit pathetic to be honest, but there were

still five of them and only one of me and they’d taken

my wand. Then two of them got into a fight and while

the others were distracted I managed to hit the one

holding me in the stomach, grabbed his wand,

Disarmed the bloke holding mine, and Disapparated.

I didn’t do it so well, Splinched myself again” — Ron

held up his right hand to show two missing

fingernails; Hermione raised her eyebrows coldly —

“and I came out miles from where you were. By the

time I got back to that bit of riverbank where we’d

been ... you’d gone.”

“Gosh, what a gripping story,” Hermione said in the

lofty voice she adopted when wishing to wound. “You

must have been simply terrified. Meanwhile we went

to Godric’s Hollow and, let’s think, what happened

there, Harry? Oh yes, You-Know- Who’s snake turned

up, it nearly killed both of us, and then You-Know-

Who himself arrived and missed us by about a

second.”

“What?” Ron said, gaping from her to Harry, but

Hermione ignored him.

“Imagine losing fingernails, Harry! That really puts

our sufferings into perspective, doesn’t it?”

“Hermione,” said Harry quietly, “Ron just saved my

life.”

She appeared not to have heard him.

“One thing I would like to know, though,” she said,

fixing her eyes on a spot a foot over Ron’s head. “How

Page | 431 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

exactly did you find us tonight? That’s important.

Once we know, we’ll be able to make sure we’re not

visited by anyone else we don’t want to see.”

Ron glared at her, then pulled a small silver object

from his jeans pocket.

“This.”

She had to look at Ron to see what he was showing

them.

“The Deluminator?” she asked, so surprised she

forgot to look cold and fierce.

“It doesn’t just turn the lights on and off,” said Ron. “I

don’t know how it works or why it happened then and

not any other time, because I’ve been wanting to come

back ever since I left. But I was listening to the radio

really early on Christmas morning and I heard ... I

heard you.”

He was looking at Hermione.

“You heard me on the radio?” she asked

incredulously.

“No, I heard you coming out of my pocket. Your

voice,” he held up the Deluminator again, “came out

of this.”

“And what exactly did I say?” asked Hermione, her

tone somewhere between skepticism and curiosity.

“My name. ‘Ron.’ And you said ... something about a

wand. ...”

Hermione turned a fiery shade of scarlet. Harry

remembered: It had been the first time Ron’s name

Page | 432 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

had been said aloud by either of them since the day

he had left; Hermione had mentioned it when talking

about repairing Harry’s wand.

“So I took it out,” Ron went on, looking at the

Deluminator, “and it didn’t seem different or

anything, but I was sure I’d heard you. So I clicked it.

And the light went out in my room, but another light

appeared right outside the window.”

Ron raised his empty hand and pointed in front of

him, his eyes focused on something neither Harry nor

Hermione could see.

“It was a ball of light, kind of pulsing, and bluish, like

that light you get around a Portkey, you know?”

“Yeah,” said Harry and Hermione together

automatically.

“I knew this was it,” said Ron. “I grabbed my stuff and

packed it, then I put on my rucksack and went out

into the garden.

“The little ball of light was hovering there, waiting for

me, and when I came out it bobbed along a bit and I

followed it behind the shed and then it ... well, it went

inside me.”

“Sorry?” said Harry, sure he had not heard correctly.

“It sort of floated toward me,” said Ron, illustrating

the movement with his free index finger, “right to my

chest, and then — it just went straight through. It

was here,” he touched a point close to his heart, “I

could feel it, it was hot. And once it was inside me I

knew what I was supposed to do, I knew it would take

me where I needed to go. So I Disapparated and came

Page | 433 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

out on the side of a hill. There was snow everywhere.

“We were there,” said Harry. “We spent two nights

there, and the second night I kept thinking I could

hear someone moving around in the dark and calling

out!”

“Yeah, well, that would’ve been me,” said Ron. “Your

protective spells work, anyway, because I couldn’t see

you and I couldn’t hear you. I was sure you were

around, though, so in the end I got in my sleeping bag

and waited for one of you to appear. I thought you’d

have to show yourselves when you packed up the

tent.”

“No, actually,” said Hermione. “We’ve been

Disapparating under the Invisibility Cloak as an extra

precaution. And we left really early, because, as Harry

says, we’d heard somebody blundering around.”

“Well, I stayed on that hill all day,” said Ron. “I kept

hoping you’d appear. But when it started to get dark I

knew I must have missed you, so I clicked the

Deluminator again, the blue light came out and went

inside me, and I Disapparated and arrived here in

these woods. I still couldn’t see you, so I just had to

hope one of you would show yourselves in the end —

and Harry did. Well, I saw the doe first, obviously.”

“You saw the what?” said Hermione sharply.

They explained what had happened, and as the story

of the silver doe and the sword in the pool unfolded,

Hermione frowned from one to the other of them,

concentrating so hard she forgot to keep her limbs

locked together.

Page | 434 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But it must have been a Patronus!” she said.

“Couldn’t you see who was casting it? Didn’t you see

anyone? And it led you to the sword! I can’t believe

this! Then what happened?”

Ron explained how he had watched Harry jump into

the pool and had waited for him to resurface; how he

had realized that something was wrong, dived in, and

saved Harry, then returned for the sword. He got as

far as the opening of the locket, then hesitated, and

Harry cut in.

“ — and Ron stabbed it with the sword.”

“And ... and it went? Just like that?” she whispered.

“Well, it — it screamed,” said Harry with half a glance

at Ron. “Here.”

He threw the locket into her lap; gingerly she picked it

up and examined its punctured windows.

Deciding that it was at last safe to do so, Harry

removed the Shield Charm with a wave of Hermione’s

wand and turned to Ron.

“Did you just say you got away from the Snatchers

with a spare wand?”

“What?” said Ron, who had been watching Hermione

examining the locket. “Oh — oh yeah.”

He tugged open a buckle on his rucksack and pulled

a short, dark wand out of its pocket. “Here. I figured

it’s always handy to have a backup.”

“You were right,” said Harry, holding out his hand.

“Mine’s broken.”

Page | 435 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You’re kidding?” Ron said, but at that moment

Hermione got to her feet, and he looked apprehensive

again.

Hermione put the vanquished Horcrux into the

beaded bag, then climbed back into her bed and

settled down without another word.

Ron passed Harry the new wand.

“About the best you could hope for, I think,”

murmured Harry.

“Yeah,” said Ron. “Could’ve been worse. Remember

those birds she set on me?”

“I still haven’t ruled it out,” came Hermione’s muffled

voice from beneath her blankets, but Harry saw Ron

smiling slightly as he pulled his maroon pajamas out

of his rucksack.

Page | 436 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

XEN OPHILIUS LOVEGOOD

Harry had not expected Hermione’s anger to abate

overnight, and was therefore unsurprised that she

communicated mainly by dirty looks and pointed

silences the next morning. Ron responded by

maintaining an unnaturally somber demeanor in her

presence as an outward sign of continuing remorse.

In fact, when all three of them were together Harry

felt like the only non-mourner at a poorly attended

funeral. During those few moments he spent alone

with Harry, however (collecting water and searching

the undergrowth for mushrooms), Ron became

shamelessly cheery.

“Someone helped us,” he kept saying. “Someone sent

that doe. Someone’s on our side. One Horcrux down,

mate!”

Bolstered by the destruction of the locket, they set to

debating the possible locations of the other

Horcruxes, and even though they had discussed the

matter so often before, Harry felt optimistic, certain

that more breakthroughs would succeed the first.

Page | 437 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Hermione’s sulkiness could not mar his buoyant

spirits: The sudden upswing in their fortunes, the

appearance of the mysterious doe, the recovery of

Gryffindor’s sword, and above all, Ron’s return, made

Harry so happy that it was quite difficult to maintain

a straight face.

Late in the afternoon he and Ron escaped Hermione’s

baleful presence again, and under the pretense of

scouring the bare hedges for nonexistent

blackberries, they continued their ongoing exchange

of news. Harry had finally managed to tell Ron the

whole story of his and Hermione’s various

wanderings, right up to the full story of what had

happened at Godric’s Hollow; Ron was now filling

Harry in on everything he had discovered about the

wider Wizarding world during his weeks away.

"... and how did you find out about the Taboo?” he

asked Harry after explaining the many desperate

attempts of Muggle-borns to evade the Ministry.

“The what?”

“You and Hermione have stopped saying You-Know-

Who’s name!”

“Oh, yeah. Well, it’s just a bad habit we’ve slipped

into,” said Harry. “But I haven’t got a problem calling

him V — ”

“NO!” roared Ron, causing Harry to jump into the

hedge and Hermione (nose buried in a book at the

tent entrance) to scowl over at them. “Sorry,” said

Ron, wrenching Harry back out of the brambles, “but

the name’s been jinxed, Harry, that’s how they track

people! Using his name breaks protective

enchantments, it causes some kind of magical

Page | 438 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

disturbance — it’s how they found us in Tottenham

Court Road!”

“Because we used his name?”

“Exactly! You’ve got to give them credit, it makes

sense. It was only people who were serious about

standing up to him, like Dumbledore, who ever dared

use it. Now they’ve put a Taboo on it, anyone who

says it is trackable — quick-and-easy way to find

Order members! They nearly got Kingsley — ”

“You’re kidding?”

“Yeah, a bunch of Death Eaters cornered him, Bill

said, but he fought his way out. He’s on the run now,

just like us.” Ron scratched his chin thoughtfully with

the end of his wand. “You don’t reckon Kingsley could

have sent that doe?”

“His Patronus is a lynx, we saw it at the wedding,

remember?”

“Oh yeah ...”

They moved farther along the hedge, away from the

tent and Hermione.

“Harry ... you don’t reckon it could’ve been

Dumbledore?”

“Dumbledore what?”

Ron looked a little embarrassed, but said in a low

voice, “Dumbledore ... the doe? I mean,” Ron was

watching Harry out of the corners of his eyes, “he had

the real sword last, didn’t he?”

Page | 439 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry did not laugh at Ron, because he understood

too well the longing behind the question. The idea

that Dumbledore had managed to come back to them,

that he was watching over them, would have been

inexpressibly comforting. He shook his head.

“Dumbledore’s dead,” he said. “I saw it happen, I saw

the body. He’s definitely gone. Anyway, his Patronus

was a phoenix, not a doe.”

“Patronuses can change, though, can’t they?” said

Ron. “Tonks’s changed, didn’t it?”

“Yeah, but if Dumbledore was alive, why wouldn’t he

show himself? Why wouldn’t he just hand us the

sword?”

“Search me,” said Ron. “Same reason he didn’t give it

to you while he was alive? Same reason he left you an

old Snitch and Hermione a book of kids’ stories?”

“Which is what?” asked Harry, turning to look Ron

full in the face, desperate for the answer.

“I dunno,” said Ron. “Sometimes I’ve thought, when

I’ve been a bit hacked off, he was having a laugh or —

or he just wanted to make it more difficult. But I don’t

think so, not anymore. He knew what he was doing

when he gave me the Deluminator, didn’t he? He —

well,” Ron’s ears turned bright red and he became

engrossed in a tuft of grass at his feet, which he

prodded with his toe, “he must’ve known I’d run out

on you.”

“No,” Harry corrected him. “He must’ve known you’d

always want to come back.”

Ron looked grateful, but still awkward. Partly to

change the subject, Harry said, “Speaking of

Page | 440 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Dumbledore, have you heard what Skeeter wrote

about him?”

“Oh yeah,” said Ron at once, “people are talking about

it quite a lot. ’Course, if things were different, it’d be

huge news, Dumbledore being pals with Grindelwald,

but now it’s just something to laugh about for people

who didn’t like Dumbledore, and a bit of a slap in the

face for everyone who thought he was such a good

bloke. I don’t know that it’s such a big deal, though.

He was really young when they — ”

“Our age,” said Harry, just as he had retorted to

Hermione, and something in his face seemed to

decide Ron against pursuing the subject.

A large spider sat in the middle of a frosted web in the

brambles. Harry took aim at it with the wand Ron had

given him the previous night, which Hermione had

since condescended to examine, and had decided was

made of blackthorn.

“Engorgio.”

The spider gave a little shiver, bouncing slightly in the

web. Harry tried again. This time the spider grew

slightly larger.

“Stop that,” said Ron sharply. “I’m sorry I said

Dumbledore was young, okay?”

Harry had forgotten Ron’s hatred of spiders.

“Sorry — Reducio.”

The spider did not shrink. Harry looked down at the

blackthorn wand. Every minor spell he had cast with

it so far that day had seemed less powerful than those

he had produced with his phoenix wand. The new one

Page | 441 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

felt intrusively unfamiliar, like having somebody else’s

hand sewn to the end of his arm.

“You just need to practice,” said Hermione, who had

approached them noiselessly from behind and had

stood watching anxiously as Harry tried to enlarge

and reduce the spider. “It’s all a matter of confidence,

Harry.”

He knew why she wanted it to be all right: She still

felt guilty about breaking his wand. He bit back the

retort that sprang to his lips, that she could take the

blackthorn wand if she thought it made no difference,

and he would have hers instead. Keen for them all to

be friends again, however, he agreed; but when Ron

gave Hermione a tentative smile, she stalked off and

vanished behind her book once more.

All three of them returned to the tent when darkness

fell, and Harry took first watch. Sitting in the

entrance, he tried to make the blackthorn wand

levitate small stones at his feet; but his magic still

seemed clumsier and less powerful than it had done

before. Hermione was lying on her bunk reading,

while Ron, after many nervous glances up at her, had

taken a small wooden wireless out of his rucksack

and started to try and tune it.

“There’s this one program,” he told Harry in a low

voice, “that tells the news like it really is. All the

others are on You- Know- Who’s side and are following

the Ministry line, but this one ... you wait till you

hear it, it’s great. Only they can’t do it every night,

they have to keep changing locations in case they’re

raided, and you need a password to tune in. ...

Trouble is, I missed the last one. ...”

He drummed lightly on the top of the radio with his

wand, muttering random words under his breath. He

Page | 442 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

threw Hermione many covert glances, plainly fearing

an angry outburst, but for all the notice she took of

him he might not have been there. For ten minutes or

so Ron tapped and muttered, Hermione turned the

pages of her book, and Harry continued to practice

with the blackthorn wand.

Finally Hermione climbed down from her bunk. Ron

ceased his tapping at once.

“If it’s annoying you, 111 stop!” he told Hermione

nervously.

Hermione did not deign to respond, but approached

Harry.

“We need to talk,” she said.

He looked at the book still clutched in her hand. It

was The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore.

“What?” he said apprehensively. It flew through his

mind that there was a chapter on him in there; he

was not sure he felt up to hearing Rita’s version of his

relationship with Dumbledore. Hermione ’s answer,

however, was completely unexpected.

“I want to go and see Xenophilius Lovegood.”

He stared at her.

“Sorry?”

“Xenophilius Lovegood. Luna’s father. I want to go

and talk to him!”

“Er — why?”

Page | 443 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

She took a deep breath, as though bracing herself,

and said, “It’s that mark, the mark in Beedle the

Bard. Look at this!”

She thrust The Life and Lies ofAlbus Dumbledore

under Harry’s unwilling eyes and he saw a

photograph of the original letter that Dumbledore had

written Grindelwald, with Dumbledore ’s familiar thin,

slanting handwriting. He hated seeing absolute proof

that Dumbledore really had written those words, that

they had not been Rita’s invention.

“The signature,” said Hermione. “Look at the

signature, Harry!”

He obeyed. For a moment he had no idea what she

was talking about, but, looking more closely with the

aid of his lit wand, he saw that Dumbledore had

replaced the A of Albus with a tiny version of the

same triangular mark inscribed upon The Tales of

Beedle the Bard.

“Er — what are you — ?” said Ron tentatively, but

Hermione quelled him with a look and turned back to

Harry.

“It keeps cropping up, doesn’t it?” she said. “I know

Viktor said it was Grindelwald ’s mark, but it was

definitely on that old grave in Godric’s Hollow, and

the dates on the headstone were long before

Grindelwald came along! And now this! Well, we can’t

ask Dumbledore or Grindelwald what it means — I

don’t even know whether Grindelwald’s still alive —

but we can ask Mr. Lovegood. He was wearing the

symbol at the wedding. I’m sure this is important,

Harry!”

Harry did not answer immediately. He looked into her

intense, eager face and then out into the surrounding

Page | 444 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

darkness, thinking. After a long pause he said,

“Hermione, we don’t need another Godric’s Hollow.

We talked ourselves into going there, and — ”

“But it keeps appearing, Harry! Dumbledore left me

The Tales of Beedle the Bard, how do you know we’re

not supposed to find out about the sign?”

“Here we go again!” Harry felt slightly exasperated.

“We keep trying to convince ourselves Dumbledore left

us secret signs and clues — ”

“The Deluminator turned out to be pretty useful,”

piped up Ron. “I think Hermione’s right, I think we

ought to go and see Lovegood.”

Harry threw him a dark look. He was quite sure that

Ron’s support of Hermione had little to do with a

desire to know the meaning of the triangular rune.

“It won’t be like Godric’s Hollow,” Ron added,

“Lovegood’s on your side, Harry, The Quibbler’s been

for you all along, it keeps telling everyone they’ve got

to help you!”

“I’m sure this is important!” said Hermione earnestly.

“But don’t you think if it was, Dumbledore would

have told me about it before he died?”

“Maybe ... maybe it’s something you need to find out

for yourself,” said Hermione with a faint air of

clutching at straws.

“Yeah,” said Ron sycophantically, “that makes sense.”

“No, it doesn’t,” snapped Hermione, “but I still think

we ought to talk to Mr. Lovegood. A symbol that links

Page | 445 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Dumbledore, Grindelwald, and Godric’s Hollow?

Harry, I’m sure we ought to know about this!”

“I think we should vote on it,” said Ron. “Those in

favor of going to see Lovegood — ”

His hand flew into the air before Hermione’s. Her lips

quivered suspiciously as she raised her own.

“Outvoted, Harry, sorry,” said Ron, clapping him on

the back.

“Fine,” said Harry, half amused, half irritated. “Only,

once we’ve seen Lovegood, let’s try and look for some

more Horcruxes, shall we? Where do the Lovegoods

live, anyway? Do either of you know?”

“Yeah, they’re not far from my place,” said Ron. “I

dunno exactly where, but Mum and Dad always point

toward the hills whenever they mention them.

Shouldn’t be hard to find.”

When Hermione had returned to her bunk, Harry

lowered his voice.

“You only agreed to try and get back in her good

books.”

“All’s fair in love and war,” said Ron brightly, “and

this is a bit of both. Cheer up, it’s the Christmas

holidays, Luna ’ll be home!”

They had an excellent view of the village of Ottery St.

Catchpole from the breezy hillside to which they

Disapparated next morning. From their high vantage

point the village looked like a collection of toy houses

in the great slanting shafts of sunlight stretching to

earth in the breaks between clouds. They stood for a

minute or two looking toward the Burrow, their hands

Page | 446 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

shadowing their eyes, but all they could make out

were the high hedges and trees of the orchard, which

afforded the crooked little house protection from

Muggle eyes.

“It’s weird, being this near, but not going to visit,”

said Ron.

“Well, it’s not like you haven’t just seen them. You

were there for Christmas,” said Hermione coldly.

“I wasn’t at the Burrow!” said Ron with an

incredulous laugh. “Do you think I was going to go

back there and tell them all I’d walked out on you?

Yeah, Fred and George would’ve been great about it.

And Ginny, she’d have been really understanding.”

“But where have you been, then?” asked Hermione,

surprised.

“Bill and Fleur’s new place. Shell Cottage. Bill’s

always been decent to me. He — he wasn’t impressed

when he heard what I’d done, but he didn’t go on

about it. He knew I was really sorry. None of the rest

of the family know I was there. Bill told Mum he and

Fleur weren’t going home for Christmas because they

wanted to spend it alone. You know, first holiday after

they were married. I don’t think Fleur minded. You

know how much she hates Celestina Warbeck.”

Ron turned his back on the Burrow.

“Let’s try up here,” he said, leading the way over the

top of the hill.

They walked for a few hours, Harry, at Hermione ’s

insistence, hidden beneath the Invisibility Cloak. The

cluster of low hills appeared to be uninhabited apart

from one small cottage, which seemed deserted.

Page | 447 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Do you think it’s theirs, and they’ve gone away for

Christmas?” said Hermione, peering through the

window at a neat little kitchen with geraniums on the

windowsill. Ron snorted.

“Listen, I’ve got a feeling you’d be able to tell who lived

there if you looked through the Lovegoods’ window.

Let’s try the next lot of hills.”

So they Disapparated a few miles farther north.

“Aha!” shouted Ron, as the wind whipped their hair

and clothes. Ron was pointing upward, toward the top

of the hill on which they had appeared, where a most

strange-looking house rose vertically against the sky,

a great black cylinder with a ghostly moon hanging

behind it in the afternoon sky. “That’s got to be

Luna’s house, who else would live in a place like that?

It looks like a giant rook!”

“It’s nothing like a bird,” said Hermione, frowning at

the tower.

“I was talking about a chess rook,” said Ron. “A castle

to you.”

Ron’s legs were the longest and he reached the top of

the hill first. When Harry and Hermione caught up

with him, panting and clutching stitches in their

sides, they found him grinning broadly.

“It’s theirs,” said Ron. “Look.”

Three hand-painted signs had been tacked to a

broken-down gate. The first read,

THE QUIBBLER. EDITOR: X. LOVEGOOD

the second,

Page | 448 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

PICK YOUR OWN MISTLETOE

the third,

KEEP OFF THE DIRIGIBLE PLUMS

The gate creaked as they opened it. The zigzagging

path leading to the front door was overgrown with a

variety of odd plants, including a bush covered in the

orange radishlike fruit Luna sometimes wore as

earrings. Harry thought he recognized a Snargaluff

and gave the wizened stump a wide berth. Two aged

crab apple trees, bent with the wind, stripped of

leaves but still heavy with berry-sized red fruits and

bushy crowns of white-beaded mistletoe, stood

sentinel on either side of the front door. A little owl

with a slightly flattened, hawklike head peered down

at them from one of the branches.

“You’d better take off the Invisibility Cloak, Harry,”

said Hermione. “It’s you Mr. Lovegood wants to help,

not us.”

He did as she suggested, handing her the Cloak to

stow in the beaded bag. She then rapped three times

on the thick black door, which was studded with iron

nails and bore a knocker shaped like an eagle.

Barely ten seconds passed, then the door was flung

open and there stood Xenophilius Lovegood, barefoot

and wearing what appeared to be a stained nightshirt

His long white candyfloss hair was dirty and

unkempt. Xenophilius had been positively dapper at

Bill and Fleur’s wedding by comparison.

“What? What is it? Who are you? What do you want?”

he cried in a high-pitched, querulous voice, looking

first at Hermione, then at Ron, and finally at Harry,

Page | 449 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

upon which his mouth fell open in a perfect, comical

O.

“Hello, Mr. Lovegood,” said Harry, holding out his

hand. “I’m Harry, Harry Potter.”

Xenophilius did not take Harry’s hand, although the

eye that was not pointing inward at his nose slid

straight to the scar on Harry’s forehead.

“Would it be okay if we came in?” asked Harry.

“There’s something we’d like to ask you.”

“I ... I’m not sure that’s advisable,” whispered

Xenophilius. He swallowed and cast a quick look

around the garden. “Rather a shock ... My word ... I

... I’m afraid I don’t really think I ought to — ”

“It won’t take long,” said Harry, slightly disappointed

by this less-than-warm welcome.

“I — oh, all right then. Come in, quickly. QuicklyV’

They were barely over the threshold when Xenophilius

slammed the door shut behind them. They were

standing in the most peculiar kitchen Harry had ever

seen. The room was perfectly circular, so that it felt

like being inside a giant pepper pot. Everything was

curved to fit the walls — the stove, the sink, and the

cupboards — and all of it had been painted with

flowers, insects, and birds in bright primary colors.

Harry thought he recognized Luna’s style: The effect,

in such an enclosed space, was slightly

overwhelming.

In the middle of the floor, a wrought-iron spiral

staircase led to the upper levels. There was a great

deal of clattering and banging coming from overhead:

Harry wondered what Luna could be doing.

Page | 450 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You’d better come up,” said Xenophilius, still looking

extremely uncomfortable, and he led the way.

The room above seemed to be a combination of living

room and workplace, and as such, was even more

cluttered than the kitchen. Though much smaller and

entirely round, the room somewhat resembled the

Room of Requirement on the unforgettable occasion

that it had transformed itself into a gigantic labyrinth

comprised of centuries of hidden objects. There were

piles upon piles of books and papers on every surface.

Delicately made models of creatures Harry did not

recognize, all flapping wings or snapping jaws, hung

from the ceiling.

Luna was not there: The thing that was making such

a racket was a wooden object covered in magically

turning cogs and wheels. It looked like the bizarre

offspring of a workbench and a set of old shelves, but

after a moment Harry deduced that it was an old-

fashioned printing press, due to the fact that it was

churning out Quibblers.

“Excuse me,” said Xenophilius, and he strode over to

the machine, seized a grubby tablecloth from beneath

an immense number of books and papers, which all

tumbled onto the floor, and threw it over the press,

somewhat muffling the loud bangs and clatters. He

then faced Harry.

“Why have you come here?”

Before Harry could speak, however, Hermione let out

a small cry of shock.

“Mr. Lovegood — what’s that?”

She was pointing at an enormous, gray spiral horn,

not unlike that of a unicorn, which had been

Page | 451 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

mounted on the wall, protruding several feet into the

room.

“It is the horn of a Crumple-Horned Snorkack,” said

Xenophilius.

“No it isn’t!” said Hermione.

“Hermione,” muttered Harry, embarrassed, “now’s not

the moment — ”

“But Harry, it’s an Erumpent horn! It’s a Class B

Tradeable Material and it’s an extraordinarily

dangerous thing to have in a house!”

“How d’you know it’s an Erumpent horn?” asked Ron,

edging away from the horn as fast as he could, given

the extreme clutter of the room.

“There’s a description in Fantastic Beasts and Where

to Find Them .! Mr. Lovegood, you need to get rid of it

straightaway, don’t you know it can explode at the

slightest touch?”

“The Crumple-Horned Snorkack,” said Xenophilius

very clearly, a mulish look upon his face, “is a shy

and highly magical creature, and its horn — ”

“Mr. Lovegood, I recognize the grooved markings

around the base, that’s an Erumpent horn and it’s

incredibly dangerous — I don’t know where you got it

“I bought it,” said Xenophilius dogmatically, “two

weeks ago, from a delightful young wizard who knew

of my interest in the exquisite Snorkack. A Christmas

surprise for my Luna. Now,” he said, turning to

Harry, “why exactly have you come here, Mr. Potter?”

Page | 452 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We need some help,” said Harry, before Hermione

could start again.

“Ah,” said Xenophilius. “Help. Hmm.”

His good eye moved again to Harry’s scar. He seemed

simultaneously terrified and mesmerized.

“Yes. The thing is ... helping Harry Potter ... rather

dangerous ...”

“Aren’t you the one who keeps telling everyone it’s

their first duty to help Harry?” said Ron. “In that

magazine of yours?”

Xenophilius glanced behind him at the concealed

printing press, still banging and clattering beneath

the tablecloth.

“Er — yes, I have expressed that view. However — ”

“That’s for everyone else to do, not you personally?”

said Ron.

Xenophilius did not answer. He kept swallowing, his

eyes darting between the three of them. Harry had the

impression that he was undergoing some painful

internal struggle.

“Where’s Luna?” asked Hermione. “Let’s see what she

thinks.”

Xenophilius gulped. He seemed to be steeling himself.

Finally he said in a shaky voice difficult to hear over

the noise of the printing press, “Luna is down at the

stream, fishing for Freshwater Plimpies. She ... she

will like to see you. I’ll go and call her and then —

yes, very well. I shall try to help you.”

Page | 453 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He disappeared down the spiral staircase and they

heard the front door open and close. They looked at

each other.

“Cowardly old wart,” said Ron. “Luna’s got ten times

his guts.”

“He’s probably worried about what’ll happen to them

if the Death Eaters find out I was here,” said Harry.

“Well, I agree with Ron,” said Hermione. “Awful old

hypocrite, telling everyone else to help you and trying

to worm out of it himself. And for heaven’s sake keep

away from that horn.”

Harry crossed to the window on the far side of the

room. He could see a stream, a thin, glittering ribbon

lying far below them at the base of the hill. They were

very high up; a bird fluttered past the window as he

stared in the direction of the Burrow, now invisible

beyond another line of hills. Ginny was over there

somewhere. They were closer to each other today than

they had been since Bill and Fleur’s wedding, but she

could have no idea he was gazing toward her now,

thinking of her. He supposed he ought to be glad of it;

anyone he came into contact with was in danger,

Xenophilius’s attitude proved that.

He turned away from the window and his gaze fell

upon another peculiar object standing upon the

cluttered, curved sideboard: a stone bust of a

beautiful but austere-looking witch wearing a most

bizarre-looking headdress. Two objects that

resembled golden ear trumpets curved out from the

sides. A tiny pair of glittering blue wings was stuck to

a leather strap that ran over the top of her head,

while one of the orange radishes had been stuck to a

second strap around her forehead.

Page | 454 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Look at this,” said Harry.

“Fetching,” said Ron. “Surprised he didn’t wear that

to the wedding.”

They heard the front door close, and a moment later

Xenophilius had climbed back up the spiral staircase

into the room, his thin legs now encased in

Wellington boots, bearing a tray of ill-assorted

teacups and a steaming teapot.

“Ah, you have spotted my pet invention,” he said,

shoving the tray into Hermione’s arms and joining

Harry at the statue’s side. “Modeled, fittingly enough,

upon the head of the beautiful Rowena Ravenclaw.

‘Wit beyond measure is man’s greatest treasureV ”

He indicated the objects like ear trumpets.

“These are the Wrackspurt siphons — to remove all

sources of distraction from the thinker’s immediate

area. Here,” he pointed out the tiny wings, “a billywig

propeller, to induce an elevated frame of mind.

Finally,” he pointed to the orange radish, “the

Dirigible Plum, so as to enhance the ability to accept

the extraordinary.”

Xenophilius strode back to the tea tray, which

Hermione had managed to balance precariously on

one of the cluttered side tables.

“May I offer you all an infusion of Gurdyroots?” said

Xenophilius. “We make it ourselves.” As he started to

pour out the drink, which was as deeply purple as

beetroot juice, he added, “Luna is down beyond

Bottom Bridge, she is most excited that you are here.

She ought not to be too long, she has caught nearly

enough Plimpies to make soup for all of us. Do sit

down and help yourselves to sugar.

Page | 455 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Now,” he removed a tottering pile of papers from an

armchair and sat down, his Wellingtoned legs

crossed, “how may I help you, Mr. Potter?”

“Well,” said Harry, glancing at Hermione, who nodded

encouragingly, “it’s about that symbol you were

wearing around your neck at Bill and Fleur’s

wedding, Mr. Lovegood. We wondered what it meant.”

Xenophilius raised his eyebrows.

“Are you referring to the sign of the Deathly Hallows?”

Page | 456 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE TALE OF THE THREE

BROTHERS

Harry turned to look at Ron and Hermione. Neither of

them seemed to have understood what Xenophilius

had said either.

“The Deathly Hallows?”

“That’s right,” said Xenophilius. “You haven’t heard of

them? I’m not surprised. Very, very few wizards

believe. Witness that knuckle-headed young man at

your brother’s wedding,” he nodded at Ron, “who

attacked me for sporting the symbol of a well-known

Dark wizard! Such ignorance. There is nothing Dark

about the Hallows — at least, not in that crude sense.

One simply uses the symbol to reveal oneself to other

believers, in the hope that they might help one with

the Quest.”

He stirred several lumps of sugar into his Gurdyroot

infusion and drank some.

Page | 457 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I’m sorry,” said Harry. “I still don’t really

understand.”

To be polite, he took a sip from his cup too, and

almost gagged: The stuff was quite disgusting, as

though someone had liquidized bogey-flavored Every

Flavor Beans.

“Well, you see, believers seek the Deathly Hallows,”

said Xenophilius, smacking his lips in apparent

appreciation of the Gurdyroot infusion.

“But what are the Deathly Hallows?” asked Hermione.

Xenophilius set aside his empty teacup.

“I assume that you are all familiar with “The Tale of

the Three Brothers’?”

Harry said, “No,” but Ron and Hermione both said,

“Yes.” Xenophilius nodded gravely.

“Well, well, Mr. Potter, the whole thing starts with

The Tale of the Three Brothers’ ... I have a copy

somewhere. ...”

He glanced vaguely around the room, at the piles of

parchment and books, but Hermione said, “I’ve got a

copy, Mr. Lovegood, I’ve got it right here.”

And she pulled out The Tales of Beedle the Bard from

the small, beaded bag.

“The original?” inquired Xenophilius sharply, and

when she nodded, he said, “Well then, why don’t you

read it aloud? Much the best way to make sure we all

understand.”

Page | 458 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Er ... all right,” said Hermione nervously. She opened

the book, and Harry saw that the symbol they were

investigating headed the top of the page as she gave a

little cough, and began to read.

“ ‘There were once three brothers who were traveling

along a lonely, winding road at twilight — ’ ”

“Midnight, our mum always told us,” said Ron, who

had stretched out, arms behind his head, to listen.

Hermione shot him a look of annoyance.

“Sorry, I just think it’s a bit spookier if it’s midnight!”

said Ron.

“Yeah, because we really need a bit more fear in our

lives,” said Harry before he could stop himself.

Xenophilius did not seem to be paying much

attention, but was staring out of the window at the

sky. “Go on, Hermione.”

“ ‘In time, the brothers reached a river too deep to

wade through and too dangerous to swim across.

However, these brothers were learned in the magical

arts, and so they simply waved their wands and made

a bridge appear across the treacherous water. They

were halfway across it when they found their path

blocked by a hooded figure.

“ ‘And Death spoke to them — ’ ”

“Sorry,” interjected Harry, “but Death spoke to them?”

“It’s a fairy tale, Harry!”

“Right, sorry. Go on.”

“ ‘And Death spoke to them. He was angry that he had

been cheated out of three new victims, for travelers

Page | 459 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

usually drowned in the river. But Death was cunning.

He pretended to congratulate the three brothers upon

their magic, and said that each had earned a prize for

having been clever enough to evade him.

“ ‘So the oldest brother, who was a combative man,

asked for a wand more powerful than any in existence:

a wand that must always win duels for its owner, a

wand worthy of a wizard who had conquered Death!

So Death crossed to an elder tree on the banks of the

river, fashioned a wand from a branch that hung there,

and gave it to the oldest brother.

“ ‘Then the second brother, who was an arrogant man,

decided that he wanted to humiliate Death still further,

and asked for the power to recall others from Death. So

Death picked up a stone from the riverbank and gave it

to the second brother, and told him that the stone

would have the power to bring back the dead.

“ ‘And then Death asked the third and youngest

brother what he would like. The youngest brother was

the humblest and also the wisest of the brothers, and

he did not trust Death. So he asked for something that

would enable him to go forth from that place without

being followed by Death. And Death, most unwillingly,

handed over his own Cloak of Invisibility.’ ”

“Death’s got an Invisibility Cloak?” Harry interrupted

again.

“So he can sneak up on people,” said Ron.

“Sometimes he gets bored of running at them,

flapping his arms and shrieking ... sorry, Hermione.”

“ ‘Then Death stood aside and allowed the three

brothers to continue on their way, and they did so,

talking with wonder of the adventure they had had,

and admiring Death’s gifts.

Page | 460 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ ‘In due course the brothers separated, each for his

own destination.

“ ‘The first brother traveled on for a week or more, and

reaching a distant village, sought out a fellow wizard

with whom he had a quarrel. Naturally, with the Elder

Wand as his weapon, he could not fail to win the duel

that followed. Leaving his enemy dead upon the floor,

the oldest brother proceeded to an inn, where he

boasted loudly of the powerful wand he had snatched

from Death himself, and of how it made him invincible.

“ ‘That very night, another wizard crept upon the oldest

brother as he lay, wine-sodden, upon his bed. The thief

took the wand and, for good measure, slit the oldest

brother’s throat.

“ ‘And so Death took the first brother for his own.

“ ‘Meanwhile, the second brother journeyed to his own

home, where he lived alone. Here he took out the stone

that had the power to recall the dead, and turned it

thrice in his hand. To his amazement and his delight,

the figure of the girl he had once hoped to marry,

before her untimely death, appeared at once before

him.

“ ‘Yet she was sad and cold, separated from him as by

a veil. Though she had returned to the mortal world,

she did not truly belong there and suffered. Finally the

second brother, driven mad with hopeless longing,

killed himself so as truly to join her.

“ ‘And so Death took the second brother for his own.

“ ‘But though Death searched for the third brother for

many years, he was never able to find him. It was only

when he had attained a great age that the youngest

brother finally took off the Cloak of Invisibility and

Page | 461 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

gave it to his son. And then he greeted Death as an old

friend, and went with him gladly, and, equals, they

departed this life. ’ ”

Hermione closed the book. It was a moment or two

before Xenophilius seemed to realize that she had

stopped reading, then he withdrew his gaze from the

window and said, “Well, there you are.”

“Sorry?” said Hermione, sounding confused.

“Those are the Deathly Hallows,” said Xenophilius.

He picked up a quill from a packed table at his elbow,

and pulled a torn piece of parchment from between

more books.

“The Elder Wand,” he said, and he drew a straight

vertical line upon the parchment. “The Resurrection

Stone,” he said, and he added a circle on top of the

line. “The Cloak of Invisibility,” he finished, enclosing

both line and circle in a triangle, to make the symbol

that so intrigued Hermione. “Together,” he said, “the

Deathly Hallows.”

“But there’s no mention of the words ‘Deathly

Hallows’ in the story,” said Hermione.

“Well, of course not,” said Xenophilius, maddeningly

smug. “That is a children’s tale, told to amuse rather

than to instruct. Those of us who understand these

matters, however, recognize that the ancient story

refers to three objects, or Hallows, which, if united,

will make the possessor master of Death.”

There was a short silence in which Xenophilius

glanced out of the window. Already the sun was low

in the sky.

Page | 462 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Luna ought to have enough Plimpies soon,” he said

quietly.

“When you say ‘master of Death’ — ” said Ron.

“Master,” said Xenophilius, waving an airy hand.

“Conqueror. Vanquisher. Whichever term you prefer.”

“But then ... do you mean ...” said Hermione slowly,

and Harry could tell that she was trying to keep any

trace of skepticism out of her voice, “that you believe

these objects — these Hallows — actually exist?”

Xenophilius raised his eyebrows again.

“Well, of course.”

“But,” said Hermione, and Harry could hear her

restraint starting to crack, “Mr. Lovegood, how can

you possibly believe — ?”

“Luna has told me all about you, young lady,” said

Xenophilius. “You are, I gather, not unintelligent, but

painfully limited. Narrow. Close-minded.”

“Perhaps you ought to try on the hat, Hermione,” said

Ron, nodding toward the ludicrous headdress. His

voice shook with the strain of not laughing.

“Mr. Lovegood,” Hermione began again. “We all know

that there are such things as Invisibility Cloaks. They

are rare, but they exist. But — ”

“Ah, but the Third Hallow is a true Cloak of

Invisibility, Miss Granger! I mean to say, it is not a

traveling cloak imbued with a Disillusionment Charm,

or carrying a Bedazzling Hex, or else woven from

Demiguise hair, which will hide one initially but fade

with the years until it turns opaque. We are talking

Page | 463 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

about a cloak that really and truly renders the wearer

completely invisible, and endures eternally, giving

constant and impenetrable concealment, no matter

what spells are cast at it. How many cloaks have you

ever seen like that, Miss Granger?”

Hermione opened her mouth to answer, then closed it

again, looking more confused than ever. She, Harry,

and Ron glanced at one another, and Harry knew that

they were all thinking the same thing. It so happened

that a cloak exactly like the one Xenophilius had just

described was in the room with them at that very

moment.

“Exactly,” said Xenophilius, as if he had defeated

them all in reasoned argument. “None of you have

ever seen such a thing. The possessor would be

immeasurably rich, would he not?”

He glanced out of the window again. The sky was now

tinged with the faintest trace of pink.

“All right,” said Hermione, disconcerted. “Say the

Cloak existed ... what about the stone, Mr. Lovegood?

The thing you call the Resurrection Stone?”

“What of it?”

“Well, how can that be real?”

“Prove that it is not,” said Xenophilius.

Hermione looked outraged.

“But that’s — I’m sorry, but that’s completely

ridiculous! How can I possibly prove it doesn’t exist?

Do you expect me to get hold of — of all the pebbles

in the world and test them? I mean, you could claim

Page | 464 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

that anything’s real if the only basis for believing in it

is that nobody’s proved it doesn’t exist!”

“Yes, you could,” said Xenophilius. “I am glad to see

that you are opening your mind a little.”

“So the Elder Wand,” said Harry quickly, before

Hermione could retort, “you think that exists too?”

“Oh, well, in that case there is endless evidence,” said

Xenophilius. “The Elder Wand is the Hallow that is

most easily traced, because of the way in which it

passes from hand to hand.”

“Which is what?” asked Harry.

“Which is that the possessor of the wand must

capture it from its previous owner, if he is to be truly

master of it,” said Xenophilius. “Surely you have

heard of the way the wand came to Egbert the

Egregious, after his slaughter of Emeric the Evil? Of

how Godelot died in his own cellar after his son,

Hereward, took the wand from him? Of the dreadful

Loxias, who took the wand from Barnabas Deverill,

whom he had killed? The bloody trail of the Elder

Wand is splattered across the pages of Wizarding

history.”

Harry glanced at Hermione. She was frowning at

Xenophilius, but she did not contradict him.

“So where do you think the Elder Wand is now?”

asked Ron.

“Alas, who knows?” said Xenophilius, as he gazed out

of the window. “Who knows where the Elder Wand

lies hidden? The trail goes cold with Arcus and Livius.

Who can say which of them really defeated Loxias,

Page | 465 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

and which took the wand? And who can say who may

have defeated them? History, alas, does not tell us.”

There was a pause. Finally Hermione asked stiffly,

“Mr. Lovegood, does the Peverell family have anything

to do with the Deathly Hallows?”

Xenophilius looked taken aback as something shifted

in Harry’s memory, but he could not locate it. Peverell

...he had heard that name before. ...

“But you have been misleading me, young woman!”

said Xenophilius, now sitting up much straighter in

his chair and goggling at Hermione. “I thought you

were new to the Hallows Quest! Many of us Questers

believe that the Peverells have everything —

everything ! — to do with the Hallows!”

“Who are the Peverells?” asked Ron.

“That was the name on the grave with the mark on it,

in Godric’s Hollow,” said Hermione, still watching

Xenophilius. “Ignotus Peverell.”

“Exactly!” said Xenophilius, his forefinger raised

pedantically. “The sign of the Deathly Hallows on

Ignotus ’s grave is conclusive proof!”

“Of what?” asked Ron.

“Why, that the three brothers in the story were

actually the three Peverell brothers, Antioch, Cadmus,

and Ignotus! That they were the original owners of the

Hallows!”

With another glance at the window he got to his feet,

picked up the tray, and headed for the spiral

staircase.

Page | 466 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You will stay for dinner?” he called, as he vanished

downstairs again. “Everybody always requests our

recipe for Freshwater Plimpy soup.”

“Probably to show the Poisoning Department at St.

Mungo’s,” said Ron under his breath.

Harry waited until they could hear Xenophilius

moving about in the kitchen downstairs before

speaking.

“What do you think?” he asked Hermione.

“Oh, Harry,” she said wearily, “it’s a pile of utter

rubbish. This can’t be what the sign really means.

This must just be his weird take on it. What a waste

of time.”

“I s’pose this is the man who brought us Crumple-

Horned Snorkacks,” said Ron.

“You don’t believe it either?” Harry asked him.

“Nah, that story’s just one of those things you tell

kids to teach them lessons, isn’t it? ‘Don’t go looking

for trouble, don’t pick fights, don’t go messing around

with stuff that’s best left alone! Just keep your head

down, mind your own business, and you’ll be okay’

Come to think of it,” Ron added, “maybe that story’s

why elder wands are supposed to be unlucky.”

“What are you talking about?”

“One of those superstitions, isn’t it? ‘May-born

witches will marry Muggles.’ ‘Jinx by twilight, undone

by midnight.’ ‘Wand of elder, never prosper.’ You

must’ve heard them. My mum’s full of them.”

Page | 467 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry and I were raised by Muggles,” Hermione

reminded him. “We were taught different

superstitions.” She sighed deeply as a rather pungent

smell drifted up from the kitchen. The one good thing

about her exasperation with Xenophilius was that it

seemed to have made her forget that she was annoyed

at Ron. “I think you’re right,” she told him. “It’s just a

morality tale, it’s obvious which gift is best, which one

you’d choose — ”

The three of them spoke at the same time; Hermione

said, “the Cloak,” Ron said, “the wand,” and Harry

said, “the stone.”

They looked at each other, half surprised, half

amused.

“You’re supposed to say the Cloak,” Ron told

Hermione, “but you wouldn’t need to be invisible if

you had the wand. An unbeatable wand, Hermione,

come on!”

“We’ve already got an Invisibility Cloak,” said Harry.

“And it’s helped us rather a lot, in case you hadn’t

noticed!” said Hermione. “Whereas the wand would be

bound to attract trouble — ”

“Only if you shouted about it,” argued Ron. “Only if

you were prat enough to go dancing around, waving it

over your head, and singing, ‘I’ve got an unbeatable

wand, come and have a go if you think you’re hard

enough.’ As long as you kept your trap shut — ”

“Yes, but could you keep your trap shut?” said

Hermione, looking skeptical. “You know, the only true

thing he said to us was that there have been stories

about extra- powerful wands for hundreds of years.”

Page | 468 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“There have?” asked Harry.

Hermione looked exasperated: The expression was so

endearingly familiar that Harry and Ron grinned at

each other.

“The Deathstick, the Wand of Destiny, they crop up

under different names through the centuries, usually

in the possession of some Dark wizard who’s boasting

about them. Professor Binns mentioned some of

them, but — oh, it’s all nonsense. Wands are only as

powerful as the wizards who use them. Some wizards

just like to boast that theirs are bigger and better

than other people’s.”

“But how do you know,” said Harry, “that those

wands — the Deathstick and the Wand of Destiny —

aren’t the same wand, surfacing over the centuries

under different names?”

“What, and they’re all really the Elder Wand, made by

Death?” said Ron.

Harry laughed: The strange idea that had occurred to

him was, after all, ridiculous. His wand, he reminded

himself, had been of holly, not elder, and it had been

made by Ollivander, whatever it had done that night

Voldemort had pursued him across the skies. And if it

had been unbeatable, how could it have been broken?

“So why would you take the stone?” Ron asked him.

“Well, if you could bring people back, we could have

Sirius ... Mad-Eye ... Dumbledore ... my parents. ...”

Neither Ron nor Hermione smiled.

“But according to Beedle the Bard, they wouldn’t

want to come back, would they?” said Harry, thinking

Page | 469 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

about the tale they had just heard. “I don’t suppose

there have been loads of other stories about a stone

that can raise the dead, have there?” he asked

Hermione.

“No,” she replied sadly. “I don’t think anyone except

Mr. Lovegood could kid themselves that’s possible.

Beedle probably took the idea from the Sorcerer’s

Stone; you know, instead of a stone to make you

immortal, a stone to reverse death.”

The smell from the kitchen was getting stronger: It

was something like burning underpants. Harry

wondered whether it would be possible to eat enough

of whatever Xenophilius was cooking to spare his

feelings.

“What about the Cloak, though?” said Ron slowly.

“Don’t you realize, he’s right? I’ve got so used to

Harry’s Cloak and how good it is, I never stopped to

think. I’ve never heard of one like Harry’s. It’s

infallible. We’ve never been spotted under it — ”

“Of course not — we’re invisible when we’re under it,

Ron!”

“But all the stuff he said about other cloaks, and

they’re not exactly ten a Knut, you know, is true! It’s

never occurred to me before, but I’ve heard stuff

about charms wearing off cloaks when they get old, or

them being ripped apart by spells so they’ve got holes

in. Harry’s was owned by his dad, so it’s not exactly

new, is it, but it’s just ... perfect!”

“Yes, all right, but Ron, the stone ...”

As they argued in whispers, Harry moved around the

room, only half listening. Reaching the spiral stair, he

raised his eyes absently to the next level and was

Page | 470 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

distracted at once. His own face was looking back at

him from the ceiling of the room above.

After a moment’s bewilderment, he realized that it

was not a mirror, but a painting. Curious, he began

to climb the stairs.

“Harry, what are you doing? I don’t think you should

look around when he’s not here!”

But Harry had already reached the next level.

Luna had decorated her bedroom ceiling with five

beautifully painted faces: Harry, Ron, Hermione,

Ginny, and Neville. They were not moving as the

portraits at Hogwarts moved, but there was a certain

magic about them all the same: Harry thought they

breathed. What appeared to be fine golden chains

wove around the pictures, linking them together, but

after examining them for a minute or so, Harry

realized that the chains were actually one word,

repeated a thousand times in golden ink: friends . . .

friends . . . friends . . .

Harry felt a great rush of affection for Luna. He looked

around the room. There was a large photograph

beside the bed, of a young Luna and a woman who

looked very like her. They were hugging. Luna looked

rather better-groomed in this picture than Harry had

ever seen her in life. The picture was dusty. This

struck Harry as slightly odd. He stared around.

Something was wrong. The pale blue carpet was also

thick with dust. There were no clothes in the

wardrobe, whose doors stood ajar. The bed had a

cold, unfriendly look, as though it had not been slept

in for weeks. A single cobweb stretched over the

nearest window, across a bloodred sky.

Page | 471 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“What’s wrong?” Hermione asked as Harry descended

the staircase, but before he could respond,

Xenophilius reached the top of the stairs from the

kitchen, now holding a tray laden with bowls.

“Mr. Lovegood,” said Harry. “Where’s Luna?”

“Excuse me?”

“Where’s Luna?”

Xenophilius halted on the top step.

“I — I’ve already told you. She is down at Bottom

Bridge, fishing for Plimpies.”

“So why have you only laid that tray for four?”

Xenophilius tried to speak, but no sound came out.

The only noise was the continued chugging of the

printing press, and a slight rattle from the tray as

Xenophilius ’s hands shook.

“I don’t think Luna’s been here for weeks,” said Harry.

“Her clothes are gone, her bed hasn’t been slept in.

Where is she? And why do you keep looking out of the

window?”

Xenophilius dropped the tray: The bowls bounced and

smashed. Harry, Ron, and Hermione drew their

wands: Xenophilius froze, his hand about to enter his

pocket. At that moment the printing press gave a

huge bang and numerous Quibblers came streaming

across the floor from underneath the tablecloth; the

press fell silent at last.

Hermione stooped down and picked up one of the

magazines, her wand still pointing at Mr. Lovegood.

Page | 472 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry, look at this.”

He strode over to her as quickly as he could through

all the clutter. The front of The Quibbler carried his

own picture, emblazoned with the words

UNDESIRABLE NUMBER ONE and captioned with

the reward money.

“The Quibbler’s going for a new angle, then?” Harry

asked coldly, his mind working very fast. “Is that

what you were doing when you went into the garden,

Mr. Lovegood? Sending an owl to the Ministry?”

Xenophilius licked his lips.

“They took my Luna,” he whispered. “Because of what

I’ve been writing. They took my Luna and I don’t know

where she is, what they’ve done to her. But they

might give her back to me if I — if I — ”

“Hand over Harry?” Hermione finished for him.

“No deal,” said Ron flatly. “Get out of the way, we’re

leaving.”

Xenophilius looked ghastly, a century old, his lips

drawn back into a dreadful leer.

“They will be here at any moment. I must save Luna. I

cannot lose Luna. You must not leave.”

He spread his arms in front of the staircase, and

Harry had a sudden vision of his mother doing the

same thing in front of his crib.

“Don’t make us hurt you,” Harry said. “Get out of the

way, Mr. Lovegood.”

“HARRY!” Hermione screamed.

Page | 473 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Figures on broomsticks were flying past the windows.

As the three of them looked away from him,

Xenophilius drew his wand. Harry realized their

mistake just in time: He launched himself sideways,

shoving Ron and Hermione out of harm’s way as

Xenophilius’s Stunning Spell soared across the room

and hit the Erumpent horn.

There was a colossal explosion. The sound of it

seemed to blow the room apart: Fragments of wood

and paper and rubble flew in all directions, along with

an impenetrable cloud of thick white dust. Harry flew

through the air, then crashed to the floor, unable to

see as debris rained upon him, his arms over his

head. He heard Hermione’s scream, Ron’s yell, and a

series of sickening metallic thuds, which told him

that Xenophilius had been blasted off his feet and

fallen backward down the spiral stairs.

Half buried in rubble, Harry tried to raise himself: He

could barely breathe or see for dust. Half of the

ceiling had fallen in, and the end of Luna’s bed was

hanging through the hole. The bust of Rowena

Ravenclaw lay beside him with half its face missing,

fragments of torn parchment were floating through

the air, and most of the printing press lay on its side,

blocking the top of the staircase to the kitchen. Then

another white shape moved close by, and Hermione,

coated in dust like a second statue, pressed her finger

to her lips.

The door downstairs crashed open.

“Didn’t I tell you there was no need to hurry,

Travers?” said a rough voice. “Didn’t 1 tell you this

nutter was just raving as usual?”

There was a bang and a scream of pain from

Xenophilius.

Page | 474 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No ... no ... upstairs ... Potter!”

“I told you last week, Lovegood, we weren’t coming

back for anything less than some solid information!

Remember last week? When you wanted to swap your

daughter for that stupid bleeding headdress? And the

week before” — another bang, another squeal —

“when you thought we’d give her back if you offered

us proof there are Crumple” — bang — “Headed” —

bang — “Snorkacks?”

“No — no — I beg you!” sobbed Xenophilius. “It really

is Potter! Really!”

“And now it turns out you only called us here to try

and blow us up!” roared the Death Eater, and there

was a volley of bangs interspersed with squeals of

agony from Xenophilius.

“The place looks like it’s about to fall in, Selwyn,” said

a cool second voice, echoing up the mangled

staircase. “The stairs are completely blocked. Could

try clearing it? Might bring the place down.”

“You lying piece of filth,” shouted the wizard named

Selwyn. “You’ve never seen Potter in your life, have

you? Thought you’d lure us here to kill us, did you?

And you think you’ll get your girl back like this?”

“I swear ... I swear ... Potter’s upstairs!”

“Homenum revelio,” said the voice at the foot of the

stairs.

Harry heard Hermione gasp, and he had the odd

sensation that something was swooping low over him,

immersing his body in its shadow.

Page | 475 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“There’s someone up there all right, Selwyn,” said the

second man sharply.

“It’s Potter, I tell you, it’s Potter!” sobbed Xenophilius.

“Please ... please ... give me Luna, just let me have

Luna. ...”

“You can have your little girl, Lovegood,” said Selwyn,

“if you get up those stairs and bring me down Harry

Potter. But if this is a plot, if it’s a trick, if you’ve got

an accomplice waiting up there to ambush us, we’ll

see if we can spare a bit of your daughter for you to

bury.”

Xenophilius gave a wail of fear and despair. There

were scurryings and scrapings: Xenophilius was

trying to get through the debris on the stairs.

“Come on,” Harry whispered, “we’ve got to get out of

here.”

He started to dig himself out under cover of all the

noise Xenophilius was making on the staircase. Ron

was buried deepest: Harry and Hermione climbed, as

quietly as they could, over all the wreckage to where

he lay, trying to prise a heavy chest of drawers off his

legs. While Xenophilius ’s banging and scraping drew

nearer and nearer, Hermione managed to free Ron

with the use of a Hover Charm.

“All right,” breathed Hermione, as the broken printing

press blocking the top of the stairs began to tremble;

Xenophilius was feet away from them. She was still

white with dust. “Do you trust me, Harry?”

Harry nodded.

“Okay then,” Hermione whispered, “give me the

Invisibility Cloak. Ron, you’re going to put it on.”

Page | 476 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Me? But Harry — ”

“Please, Ron\ Harry, hold on tight to my hand, Ron,

grab my shoulder.”

Harry held out his left hand. Ron vanished beneath

the Cloak. The printing press blocking the stairs was

vibrating: Xenophilius was trying to shift it using a

Hover Charm. Harry did not know what Hermione

was waiting for.

“Hold tight,” she whispered. “Hold tight ... any second

Xenophilius’s paper- white face appeared over the top

of the sideboard.

“Obliviate\” cried Hermione, pointing her wand first

into his face, then at the floor beneath them.

“Deprimo\”

She had blasted a hole in the sitting room floor. They

fell like boulders, Harry still holding onto her hand for

dear life; there was a scream from below, and he

glimpsed two men trying to get out of the way as vast

quantities of rubble and broken furniture rained all

around them from the shattered ceiling. Hermione

twisted in midair and the thundering of the collapsing

house rang in Harry’s ears as she dragged him once

more into darkness.

Page | 477 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE DEATHLY HALLOWS

Harry fell, panting, onto grass and scrambled up at

once. They seemed to have landed in the corner of a

field at dusk; Hermione was already running in a

circle around them, waving her wand.

“Protego Totalum ... Salvio Hexia ...”

“That treacherous old bleeder!” Ron panted, emerging

from beneath the Invisibility Cloak and throwing it to

Harry. “Hermione, you’re a genius, a total genius, I

can’t believe we got out of that!”

“ Cave Inimicum ... Didn’t I say it was an Erumpent

horn, didn’t I tell him? And now his house has been

blown apart!”

“Serves him right,” said Ron, examining his torn jeans

and the cuts to his legs. “What d’you reckon they’ll do

to him?”

“Oh, I hope they don’t kill him!” groaned Hermione.

“That’s why I wanted the Death Eaters to get a

Page | 478 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

glimpse of Harry before we left, so they knew

Xenophilius hadn’t been lying!”

“Why hide me, though?” asked Ron.

“You’re supposed to be in bed with spattergroit, Ron!

They’ve kidnapped Luna because her father

supported Harry! What would happen to your family if

they knew you’re with him?”

“But what about your mum and dad?”

“They’re in Australia,” said Hermione. “They should

be all right. They don’t know anything.”

“You’re a genius,” Ron repeated, looking awed.

“Yeah, you are, Hermione,” agreed Harry fervently. “I

don’t know what we’d do without you.”

She beamed, but became solemn at once.

“What about Luna?”

“Well, if they’re telling the truth and she’s still alive —

” began Ron.

“Don’t say that, don’t say it!” squealed Hermione.

“She must be alive, she must!”

“Then she’ll be in Azkaban, I expect,” said Ron.

“Whether she survives the place, though ... Loads

don’t. ...”

“She will,” said Harry. He could not bear to

contemplate the alternative. “She’s tough, Luna,

much tougher than you’d think. She’s probably

teaching all the inmates about Wrackspurts and

Nargles.”

Page | 479 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I hope you’re right,” said Hermione. She passed a

hand over her eyes. “I’d feel so sorry for Xenophilius if

“ — if he hadn’t just tried to sell us to the Death

Eaters, yeah,” said Ron.

They put up the tent and retreated inside it, where

Ron made them tea. After their narrow escape, the

chilly, musty old place felt like home: safe, familiar,

and friendly.

“Oh, why did we go there?” groaned Hermione after a

few minutes’ silence. “Harry, you were right, it was

Godric’s Hollow all over again, a complete waste of

time! The Deathly Hallows ... such rubbish ...

although actually,” a sudden thought seemed to have

struck her, “he might have made it all up, mightn’t

he? He probably doesn’t believe in the Deathly

Hallows at all, he just wanted to keep us talking until

the Death Eaters arrived!”

“I don’t think so,” said Ron. “It’s a damn sight harder

making stuff up when you’re under stress than you’d

think. I found that out when the Snatchers caught

me. It was much easier pretending to be Stan,

because I knew a bit about him, than inventing a

whole new person. Old Lovegood was under loads of

pressure, trying to make sure we stayed put. I reckon

he told us the truth, or what he thinks is the truth,

just to keep us talking.”

“Well, I don’t suppose it matters,” sighed Hermione.

“Even if he was being honest, I never heard such a lot

of nonsense in all my life.”

“Hang on, though,” said Ron. “The Chamber of

Secrets was supposed to be a myth, wasn’t it?”

Page | 480 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But the Deathly Hallows can’t exist, Ron!”

“You keep saying that, but one of them can,” said

Ron. “Harry’s Invisibility Cloak — ”

“ The Tale of the Three Brothers’ is a story,” said

Hermione firmly. “A story about how humans are

frightened of death. If surviving was as simple as

hiding under the Invisibility Cloak, we’d have

everything we need already!”

“I don’t know. We could do with an unbeatable wand,”

said Harry, turning the blackthorn wand he so

disliked over in his fingers.

“There’s no such thing, Harry!”

“You said there have been loads of wands — the

Deathstick and whatever they were called — ”

“All right, even if you want to kid yourself the Elder

Wand’s real, what about the Resurrection Stone?” Her

fingers sketched quotation marks around the name,

and her tone dripped sarcasm. “No magic can raise

the dead, and that’s that!”

“When my wand connected with You-Know-Who’s, it

made my mum and dad appear ... and Cedric ...”

“But they weren’t really back from the dead, were

they?” said Hermione. “Those kinds of — of pale

imitations aren’t the same as truly bringing someone

back to life.”

“But she, the girl in the tale, didn’t really come back,

did she? The story says that once people are dead,

they belong with the dead. But the second brother

still got to see her and talk to her, didn’t he? He even

lived with her for a while. ...”

Page | 481 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He saw concern and something less easily definable

in Hermione’s expression. Then, as she glanced at

Ron, Harry realized that it was fear: He had scared

her with his talk of living with dead people.

“So that Peverell bloke who’s buried in Godric’s

Hollow,” he said hastily, trying to sound robustly

sane, “you don’t know anything about him, then?”

“No,” she replied, looking relieved at the change of

subject. “I looked him up after I saw the mark on his

grave; if he’d been anyone famous or done anything

important, I’m sure he’d be in one of our books. The

only place I’ve managed to find the name ‘Peverell’ is

Nature’s Nobility: A Wizarding Genealogy. I borrowed

it from Kreacher,” she explained as Ron raised his

eyebrows. “It lists the pure-blood families that are

now extinct in the male line. Apparently the Peverells

were one of the earliest families to vanish.”

“ ‘Extinct in the male line’?” repeated Ron.

“It means the name’s died out,” said Hermione,

“centuries ago, in the case of the Peverells. They could

still have descendants, though, they’d just be called

something different.”

And then it came to Harry in one shining piece, the

memory that had stirred at the sound of the name

“Peverell”: a filthy old man brandishing an ugly ring

in the face of a Ministry official, and he cried aloud,

“Marvolo Gaunt!”

“Sorry?” said Ron and Hermione together.

“Marvolo Gaunti You -Know- Who’s grandfather! In the

Pensieve! With Dumbledore! Marvolo Gaunt said he

was descended from the Peverells!”

Page | 482 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ron and Hermione looked bewildered.

“The ring, the ring that became the Horcrux, Marvolo

Gaunt said it had the Peverell coat of arms on it! I

saw him waving it in the bloke from the Ministry’s

face, he nearly shoved it up his nose!”

“The Peverell coat of arms?” said Hermione sharply.

“Could you see what it looked like?”

“Not really,” said Harry, trying to remember. “There

was nothing fancy on there, as far as I could see;

maybe a few scratches. I only ever saw it really close

up after it had been cracked open.”

Harry saw Hermione ’s comprehension in the sudden

widening of her eyes. Ron was looking from one to the

other, astonished.

“Blimey ... You reckon it was this sign again? The

sign of the Hallows?”

“Why not?” said Harry excitedly. “Marvolo Gaunt was

an ignorant old git who lived like a pig, all he cared

about was his ancestry. If that ring had been passed

down through the centuries, he might not have

known what it really was. There were no books in that

house, and trust me, he wasn’t the type to read fairy

tales to his kids. He’d have loved to think the

scratches on the stone were a coat of arms, because

as far as he was concerned, having pure blood made

you practically royal.”

“Yes ... and that’s all very interesting,” said Hermione

cautiously, “but Harry, if you’re thinking what I think

you’re think — ”

Page | 483 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Well, why not? Why not?” said Harry, abandoning

caution. “It was a stone, wasn’t it?” He looked at Ron

for support. “What if it was the Resurrection Stone?”

Ron’s mouth fell open.

“Blimey — but would it still work if Dumbledore broke

— ?”

“Work? Work? Ron, it never worked! There’s no such

thing as a Resurrection Stone\”

Hermione had leapt to her feet, looking exasperated

and angry. “Harry, you’re trying to fit everything into

the Hallows story — ”

“Fit everything in?” he repeated. “Hermione, it fits of

its own accord! I know the sign of the Deathly Hallows

was on that stone! Gaunt said he was descended from

the Peverells!”

“A minute ago you told us you never saw the mark on

the stone properly!”

“Where d’you reckon the ring is now?” Ron asked

Harry. “What did Dumbledore do with it after he

broke it open?”

But Harry’s imagination was racing ahead, far beyond

Ron and Hermione ’s. ...

Three objects, or Hallows, which, if united, will make

the possessor master of Death . . . Master . . . Conqueror

... Vanquisher ... The last enemy that shall be

destroyed is death. . . .

And he saw himself, possessor of the Hallows, facing

Voldemort, whose Horcruxes were no match ...

Neither can live while the other survives. ... Was this

Page | 484 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the answer? Hallows versus Horcruxes? Was there a

way, after all, to ensure that he was the one who

triumphed? If he were the master of the Deathly

Hallows, would he be safe?

“Harry?”

But he scarcely heard Hermione: He had pulled out

his Invisibility Cloak and was running it through his

fingers, the cloth supple as water, light as air. He had

never seen anything to equal it in his nearly seven

years in the Wizarding world. The Cloak was exactly

what Xenophilius had described: A cloak that really

and truly renders the wearer completely invisible, and

endures eternally, giving constant and impenetrable

concealment, no matter what spells are cast at it ...

And then, with a gasp, he remembered —

“Dumbledore had my Cloak the night my parents

died!”

His voice shook and he could feel the color in his face,

but he did not care.

“My mum told Sirius that Dumbledore borrowed the

Cloak! This is why! He wanted to examine it, because

he thought it was the third Hallow! Ignotus Peverell is

buried in Godric’s Hollow. ...” Harry was walking

blindly around the tent, feeling as though great new

vistas of truth were opening all around him. “He’s my

ancestor! I’m descended from the third brother! It all

makes sense!”

He felt armed in certainty, in his belief in the Hallows,

as if the mere idea of possessing them was giving him

protection, and he felt joyous as he turned back to

the other two.

Page | 485 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry,” said Hermione again, but he was busy

undoing the pouch around his neck, his fingers

shaking hard.

“Read it,” he told her, pushing his mother’s letter into

her hand. “Read it! Dumbledore had the Cloak,

Hermione! Why else would he want it? He didn’t need

a Cloak, he could perform a Disillusionment Charm

so powerful that he made himself completely invisible

without one!”

Something fell to the floor and rolled, glittering, under

a chair: He had dislodged the Snitch when he pulled

out the letter. He stooped to pick it up, and then the

newly tapped spring of fabulous discoveries threw

him another gift, and shock and wonder erupted

inside him so that he shouted out.

“IT’S IN HERE! He left me the ring — it’s in the

Snitch!”

“You — you reckon?”

He could not understand why Ron looked taken

aback. It was so obvious, so clear to Harry:

Everything fit, everything. . . . His Cloak was the third

Hallow, and when he discovered how to open the

Snitch he would have the second, and then all he

needed to do was find the first Hallow, the Elder

Wand, and then —

But it was as though a curtain fell on a lit stage: All

his excitement, all his hope and happiness were

extinguished at a stroke, and he stood alone in the

darkness, and the glorious spell was broken.

“That’s what he’s after.”

Page | 486 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The change in his voice made Ron and Hermione look

even more scared.

“You-Know-Who’s after the Elder Wand.”

He turned his back on their strained, incredulous

faces. He knew it was the truth. It all made sense.

Voldemort was not seeking a new wand; he was

seeking an old wand, a very old wand indeed. Harry

walked to the entrance of the tent, forgetting about

Ron and Hermione as he looked out into the night,

thinking. ...

Voldemort had been raised in a Muggle orphanage.

Nobody could have told him The Tales of Beedle the

Bard when he was a child, any more than Harry had

heard them. Hardly any wizards believed in the

Deathly Hallows. Was it likely that Voldemort knew

about them?

Harry gazed into the darkness. ... If Voldemort had

known about the Deathly Hallows, surely he would

have sought them, done anything to possess them:

three objects that made the possessor master of

Death? If he had known about the Deathly Hallows,

he might not have needed Horcruxes in the first

place. Didn’t the simple fact that he had taken a

Hallow, and turned it into a Horcrux, demonstrate

that he did not know this last great Wizarding secret?

Which meant that Voldemort sought the Elder Wand

without realizing its full power, without

understanding that it was one of three . . . for the

wand was the Hallow that could not be hidden, whose

existence was best known. ... The bloody trail of the

Elder Wand is splattered across the pages of

Wizarding history . . .

Page | 487 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry watched the cloudy sky, curves of smoke-gray

and silver sliding over the face of the white moon. He

felt lightheaded with amazement at his discoveries.

He turned back into the tent. It was a shock to see

Ron and Hermione standing exactly where he had left

them, Hermione still holding Lily’s letter, Ron at her

side looking slightly anxious. Didn’t they realize how

far they had traveled in the last few minutes?

“This is it,” Harry said, trying to bring them inside the

glow of his own astonished certainty. “This explains

everything. The Deathly Hallows are real, and I’ve got

one — maybe two — ”

He held up the Snitch.

“ — and You-Know-Who’s chasing the third, but he

doesn’t realize ... he just thinks it’s a powerful wand

“Harry,” said Hermione, moving across to him and

handing him back Lily’s letter, “I’m sorry, but I think

you’ve got this wrong, all wrong.”

“But don’t you see? It all fits — ”

“No, it doesn’t,” she said. “It doesn’t , Harry, you’re

just getting carried away. Please,” she said as he

started to speak, “please just answer me this: If the

Deathly Hallows really existed, and Dumbledore knew

about them, knew that the person who possessed all

three of them would be master of Death — Harry, why

wouldn’t he have told you? Why?”

He had his answer ready.

“But you said it, Hermione! You’ve got to find out

about them for yourself! It’s a Quest!”

Page | 488 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

“But I only said that to try and persuade you to come

to the Lovegoods’!” cried Hermione in exasperation. “I

didn’t really believe it!”

Harry took no notice.

“Dumbledore usually let me find out stuff for myself.

He let me try my strength, take risks. This feels like

the kind of thing he’d do.”

“Harry, this isn’t a game, this isn’t practice! This is

the real thing, and Dumbledore left you very clear

instructions: Find and destroy the Horcruxes! That

symbol doesn’t mean anything, forget the Deathly

Hallows, we can’t afford to get sidetracked — ”

Harry was barely listening to her. He was turning the

Snitch over and over in his hands, half expecting it to

break open, to reveal the Resurrection Stone, to prove

to Hermione that he was right, that the Deathly

Hallows were real.

She appealed to Ron.

“You don’t believe in this, do you?”

Harry looked up. Ron hesitated.

“I dunno ... I mean ... bits of it sort of fit together,”

said Ron awkwardly. “But when you look at the whole

thing ...” He took a deep breath. “I think we’re

supposed to get rid of Horcruxes, Harry. That’s what

Dumbledore told us to do. Maybe ... maybe we should

forget about this Hallows business.”

“Thank you, Ron,” said Hermione. “I’ll take first

watch.”

Page | 489 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

And she strode past Harry and sat down in the tent

entrance, bringing the action to a fierce full stop.

But Harry hardly slept that night. The idea of the

Deathly Hallows had taken possession of him, and he

could not rest while agitating thoughts whirled

through his mind: the wand, the stone, and the

Cloak, if he could just possess them all. ...

I open at the close. ... But what was ‘the close’? Why

couldn’t he have the stone now? If only he had the

stone, he could ask Dumbledore these questions in

person . . . and Harry murmured words to the Snitch

in the darkness, trying everything, even Parseltongue,

but the golden ball would not open. ...

And the wand, the Elder Wand, where was that

hidden? Where was Voldemort searching now? Harry

wished his scar would burn and show him

Voldemort’s thoughts, because for the first time ever,

he and Voldemort were united in wanting the very

same thing. . . . Hermione would not like that idea, of

course. ... But then, she did not believe ...

Xenophilius had been right, in a way . . . Limited.

Narrow. Close-minded. The truth was that she was

scared of the idea of the Deathly Hallows, especially of

the Resurrection Stone ... and Harry pressed his

mouth again to the Snitch, kissing it, nearly

swallowing it, but the cold metal did not yield. ...

It was nearly dawn when he remembered Luna, alone

in a cell in Azkaban, surrounded by dementors, and

he suddenly felt ashamed of himself. He had forgotten

all about her in his feverish contemplation of the

Hallows. If only they could rescue her; but dementors

in those numbers would be virtually unassailable.

Now he came to think about it, he had not yet tried

casting a Patronus with the blackthorn wand. ... He

must try that in the morning. . . .

Page | 490 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

If only there was a way of getting a better wand . . .

And desire for the Elder Wand, the Deathstick,

unbeatable, invincible, swallowed him once more. ...

They packed up the tent next morning and moved on

through a dreary shower of rain. The downpour

pursued them to the coast, where they pitched the

tent that night, and persisted through the whole

week, through sodden landscapes that Harry found

bleak and depressing. He could think only of the

Deathly Hallows. It was as though a flame had been

lit inside him that nothing, not Hermione ’s flat

disbelief nor Ron’s persistent doubts, could

extinguish. And yet the fiercer the longing for the

Hallows burned inside him, the less joyful it made

him. He blamed Ron and Hermione: Their determined

indifference was as bad as the relentless rain for

dampening his spirits, but neither could erode his

certainty, which remained absolute. Harry’s belief in

and longing for the Hallows consumed him so much

that he felt quite isolated from the other two and their

obsession with the Horcruxes.

“Obsession?” said Hermione in a low fierce voice,

when Harry was careless enough to use the word one

evening, after Hermione had told him off for his lack

of interest in locating more Horcruxes. “We’re not the

ones with an obsession, Harry! We’re the ones trying

to do what Dumbledore wanted us to do!”

But he was impervious to the veiled criticism.

Dumbledore had left the sign of the Hallows for

Hermione to decipher, and he had also, Harry

remained convinced of it, left the Resurrection Stone

hidden in the golden Snitch. Neither can live while the

other survives. ... master of Death ... Why didn’t Ron

and Hermione understand?

Page | 491 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ ‘The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death,’ ”

Harry quoted calmly.

“I thought it was You-Know-Who we were supposed to

be fighting?” Hermione retorted, and Harry gave up

on her.

Even the mystery of the silver doe, which the other

two insisted on discussing, seemed less important to

Harry now, a vaguely interesting sideshow. The only

other thing that mattered to him was that his scar

had begun to prickle again, although he did all he

could to hide this fact from the other two. He sought

solitude whenever it happened, but was disappointed

by what he saw. The visions he and Voldemort were

sharing had changed in quality; they had become

blurred, shifting as though they were moving in and

out of focus. Harry was just able to make out the

indistinct features of an object that looked like a

skull, and something like a mountain that was more

shadow than substance. Used to images sharp as

reality, Harry was disconcerted by the change. He was

worried that the connection between himself and

Voldemort had been damaged, a connection that he

both feared and, whatever he had told Hermione,

prized. Somehow Harry connected these unsatisfying,

vague images with the destruction of his wand, as if it

was the blackthorn wand’s fault that he could no

longer see into Voldemort’s mind as well as before.

As the weeks crept on, Harry could not help but

notice, even through his new self-absorption, that

Ron seemed to be taking charge. Perhaps because he

was determined to make up for having walked out on

them, perhaps because Harry’s descent into

listlessness galvanized his dormant leadership

qualities, Ron was the one now encouraging and

exhorting the other two into action.

Page | 492 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Three Horcruxes left,” he kept saying. “We need a

plan of action, come on! Where haven’t we looked?

Let’s go through it again. The orphanage ...”

Diagon Alley, Hogwarts, the Riddle House, Borgin and

Burkes, Albania, every place that they knew Tom

Riddle had ever lived or worked, visited or murdered,

Ron and Hermione raked over them again, Harry

joining in only to stop Hermione pestering him. He

would have been happy to sit alone in silence, trying

to read Voldemort’s thoughts, to find out more about

the Elder Wand, but Ron insisted on journeying to

ever more unlikely places simply, Harry was aware, to

keep them moving.

“You never know,” was Ron’s constant refrain. “Upper

Flagley is a Wizarding village, he might’ve wanted to

live there. Let’s go and have a poke around.”

These frequent forays into Wizarding territory brought

them within occasional sight of Snatchers.

“Some of them are supposed to be as bad as Death

Eaters,” said Ron. “The lot that got me were a bit

pathetic, but Bill reckons some of them are really

dangerous. They said on Potterwatch — ”

“On what?” said Harry.

“ Potterwatch , didn’t I tell you that’s what it was

called? The program I keep trying to get on the radio,

the only one that tells the truth about what’s going

on! Nearly all the programs are following You-Know-

Who’s line, all except Potterwatch. I really want you to

hear it, but it’s tricky tuning in. ...”

Ron spent evening after evening using his wand to

beat out various rhythms on top of the wireless while

the dials whirled. Occasionally they would catch

Page | 493 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows -J.K. Rowling

snatches of advice on how to treat dragon pox, and

once a few bars of “A Cauldron Full of Hot Strong

Love.” While he tapped, Ron continued to try to hit on

the correct password, muttering strings of random

words under his breath.

“They’re normally something to do with the Order,” he

told them. “Bill had a real knack for guessing them.

I’m bound to get one in the end. ...”

But not until March did luck favor Ron at last. Harry

was sitting in the tent entrance, on guard duty,

staring idly at a clump of grape hyacinths that had

forced their way through the chilly ground, when Ron

shouted excitedly from inside the tent.

“I’ve got it, I’ve got it! Password was Altars’! Get in

here, Harry!”

Roused for the first time in days from his

contemplation of the Deathly Hallows, Harry hurried

back inside the tent to find Ron and Hermione

kneeling on the floor beside the little radio. Hermione,

who had been polishing the sword of Gryffindor just

for something to do, was sitting open-mouthed,

staring at the tiny speaker, from which a most

familiar voice was issuing.

"... apologize for our temporary absence from the

airwaves, which was due to a number of house calls

in our area by those charming Death Eaters.”

“But that’s Lee Jordan!” said Hermione.

“I know!” beamed Ron. “Cool, eh?”

"... now found ourselves another secure location,” Lee

was saying, “and I’m pleased to tell you that two of

Page | 494 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

our regular contributors have joined me here this

evening. Evening, boys!”

“Hi.”

“Evening, River.”

“ ‘River,’ that’s Lee,” Ron explained. “They’ve all got

code names, but you can usually tell — ”

“Shh!” said Hermione.

“But before we hear from Royal and Romulus,” Lee

went on, “let’s take a moment to report those deaths

that the Wizarding Wireless Network News and Daily

Prophet don’t think important enough to mention. It is

with great regret that we inform our listeners of the

murders of Ted Tonks and Dirk Cresswell.”

Harry felt a sick, swooping in his belly. He, Ron, and

Hermione gazed at one another in horror.

“A goblin by the name of Gornuk was also killed. It is

believed that Muggle-born Dean Thomas and a

second goblin, both believed to have been traveling

with Tonks, Cresswell, and Gornuk, may have

escaped. If Dean is listening, or if anyone has any

knowledge of his whereabouts, his parents and sisters

are desperate for news.

“Meanwhile, in Gaddley, a Muggle family of five has

been found dead in their home. Muggle authorities

are attributing the deaths to a gas leak, but members

of the Order of the Phoenix inform me that it was the

Killing Curse — more evidence, as if it were needed, of

the fact that Muggle slaughter is becoming little more

than a recreational sport under the new regime.

Page | 495 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Finally, we regret to inform our listeners that the

remains of Bathilda Bagshot have been discovered in

Godric’s Hollow. The evidence is that she died several

months ago. The Order of the Phoenix informs us that

her body showed unmistakable signs of injuries

inflicted by Dark Magic.

“Listeners, I’d like to invite you now to join us in a

minute’s silence in memory of Ted Tonks, Dirk

Cresswell, Bathilda Bagshot, Gornuk, and the

unnamed, but no less regretted, Muggles murdered

by the Death Eaters.”

Silence fell, and Harry, Ron, and Hermione did not

speak. Half of Harry yearned to hear more, half of him

was afraid of what might come next. It was the first

time he had felt fully connected to the outside world

for a long time.

“Thank you,” said Lee’s voice. “And now we turn to

regular contributor Royal, for an update on how the

new Wizarding order is affecting the Muggle world.”

“Thanks, River,” said an unmistakable voice, deep,

measured, reassuring.

“Kingsley!” burst out Ron.

“We know!” said Hermione, hushing him.

“Muggles remain ignorant of the source of their

suffering as they continue to sustain heavy

casualties,” said Kingsley. “However, we continue to

hear truly inspirational stories of wizards and witches

risking their own safety to protect Muggle friends and

neighbors, often without the Muggles’ knowledge. I’d

like to appeal to all our listeners to emulate their

example, perhaps by casting a protective charm over

Page | 496 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

any Muggle dwellings in your street. Many lives could

be saved if such simple measures are taken.”

“And what would you say, Royal, to those listeners

who reply that in these dangerous times, it should be

Wizards first’?” asked Lee.

“I’d say that it’s one short step from Wizards first’ to

‘Purebloods first,’ and then to ‘Death Eaters,’ ” replied

Kingsley. “We’re all human, aren’t we? Every human

life is worth the same, and worth saving.”

“Excellently put, Royal, and you’ve got my vote for

Minister of Magic if ever we get out of this mess,” said

Lee. “And now, over to Romulus for our popular

feature ‘Pals of Potter. ’ ”

“Thanks, River,” said another very familiar voice; Ron

started to speak, but Hermione forestalled him in a

whisper.

“We know it’s Lupin\”

“Romulus, do you maintain, as you have every time

you’ve appeared on our program, that Harry Potter is

still alive?”

“I do,” said Lupin firmly. “There is no doubt at all in

my mind that his death would be proclaimed as

widely as possible by the Death Eaters if it had

happened, because it would strike a deadly blow at

the morale of those resisting the new regime. The Boy

Who Lived’ remains a symbol of everything for which

we are fighting: the triumph of good, the power of

innocence, the need to keep resisting.”

A mixture of gratitude and shame welled up in Harry.

Had Lupin forgiven him, then, for the terrible things

he had said when they had last met?

Page | 497 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“And what would you say to Harry if you knew he was

listening, Romulus?”

“I’d tell him we’re all with him in spirit,” said Lupin,

then hesitated slightly. “And I’d tell him to follow his

instincts, which are good and nearly always right.”

Harry looked at Hermione, whose eyes were full of

tears.

“Nearly always right,” she repeated.

“Oh, didn’t I tell you?” said Ron in surprise. “Bill told

me Lupin’s living with Tonks again! And apparently

she’s getting pretty big too. ...”

“... and our usual update on those friends of Harry

Potter’s who are suffering for their allegiance?” Lee

was saying.

“Well, as regular listeners will know, several of the

more outspoken supporters of Harry Potter have now

been imprisoned, including Xenophilius Lovegood,

erstwhile editor of The Quibbler,” said Lupin.

“At least he’s still alive!” muttered Ron.

“We have also heard within the last few hours that

Rubeus Hagrid” — all three of them gasped, and so

nearly missed the rest of the sentence — “well-known

gamekeeper at Hogwarts School, has narrowly

escaped arrest within the grounds of Hogwarts, where

he is rumored to have hosted a ‘Support Harry Potter’

party in his house. However, Hagrid was not taken

into custody, and is, we believe, on the run.”

“I suppose it helps, when escaping from Death Eaters,

if you’ve got a sixteen-foot-high half brother?” asked

Lee.

Page | 498 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“It would tend to give you an edge,” agreed Lupin

gravely. “May I just add that while we here at

Potterwatch applaud Hagrid’s spirit, we would urge

even the most devoted of Harry’s supporters against

following Hagrid’s lead. ‘Support Harry Potter’ parties

are unwise in the present climate.”

“Indeed they are, Romulus,” said Lee, “so we suggest

that you continue to show your devotion to the man

with the lightning scar by listening to PotterwatcM

And now let’s move to news concerning the wizard

who is proving just as elusive as Harry Potter. We like

to refer to him as the Chief Death Eater, and here to

give his views on some of the more insane rumors

circulating about him, I’d like to introduce a new

correspondent: Rodent.”

“ ‘Rodent’?” said yet another familiar voice, and Harry,

Ron, and Hermione cried out together:

“Fred!”

“No — is it George?”

“It’s Fred, I think,” said Ron, leaning in closer, as

whichever twin it was said,

“I’m not being ‘Rodent,’ no way, I told you I wanted to

be ‘Rapier’!”

“Oh, all right then. ‘Rapier,’ could you please give us

your take on the various stories we’ve been hearing

about the Chief Death Eater?”

“Yes, River, I can,” said Fred. “As our listeners will

know, unless they’ve taken refuge at the bottom of a

garden pond or somewhere similar, You-Know-Who’s

strategy of remaining in the shadows is creating a

nice little climate of panic. Mind you, if all the alleged

Page | 499 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

sightings of him are genuine, we must have a good

nineteen You-Know-Whos running around the place.”

“Which suits him, of course,” said Kingsley. “The air

of mystery is creating more terror than actually

showing himself.”

“Agreed,” said Fred. “So, people, let’s try and calm

down a bit. Things are bad enough without inventing

stuff as well. For instance, this new idea that You-

Know-Who can kill with a single glance from his eyes.

That’s a basilisk, listeners. One simple test: Check

whether the thing that’s glaring at you has got legs. If

it has, it’s safe to look into its eyes, although if it

really is You-Know-Who, that’s still likely to be the

last thing you ever do.”

For the first time in weeks and weeks, Harry was

laughing: He could feel the weight of tension leaving

him.

“And the rumors that he keeps being sighted abroad?”

asked Lee.

“Well, who wouldn’t want a nice little holiday after all

the hard work he’s been putting in?” asked Fred.

“Point is, people, don’t get lulled into a false sense of

security, thinking he’s out of the country. Maybe he

is, maybe he isn’t, but the fact remains he can move

faster than Severus Snape confronted with shampoo

when he wants to, so don’t count on him being a long

way away if you’re planning on taking any risks. I

never thought I’d hear myself say it, but safety first!”

“Thank you very much for those wise words, Rapier,”

said Lee. “Listeners, that brings us to the end of

another Potterwatch. We don’t know when it will be

possible to broadcast again, but you can be sure we

shall be back. Keep twiddling those dials: The next

Page | 500 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

password will be ‘Mad-Eye.’ Keep each other safe:

Keep faith. Good night.”

The radio’s dial twirled and the lights behind the

tuning panel went out. Harry, Ron, and Hermione

were still beaming. Hearing familiar, friendly voices

was an extraordinary tonic; Harry had become so

used to their isolation he had nearly forgotten that

other people were resisting Voldemort. It was like

waking from a long sleep.

“Good, eh?” said Ron happily.

“Brilliant,” said Harry.

“It’s so brave of them,” sighed Hermione admiringly.

“If they were found ...”

“Well, they keep on the move, don’t they?” said Ron.

“Like us.”

“But did you hear what Fred said?” asked Harry

excitedly; now the broadcast was over, his thoughts

turned again toward his all-consuming obsession.

“He’s abroad! He’s still looking for the Wand, I knew

it!”

“Harry — ”

“Come on, Hermione, why are you so determined not

to admit it? Vol — ”

“HARRY, NO!”

“ — demort’s after the Elder Wand!”

“The name’s Taboo!” Ron bellowed, leaping to his feet

as a loud crack sounded outside the tent. “I told you,

Harry, I told you, we can’t say it anymore — we’ve got

Page | 501 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

to put the protection back around us — quickly — it’s

how they find — ”

But Ron stopped talking, and Harry knew why. The

Sneakoscope on the table had lit up and begun to

spin; they could hear voices coming nearer and

nearer: rough, excited voices. Ron pulled the

Deluminator out of his pocket and clicked it: Their

lamps went out.

“Come out of there with your hands up!” came a

rasping voice through the darkness. “We know you’re

in there! You’ve got half a dozen wands pointing at

you and we don’t care who we curse!”

Page | 502 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

MALFOY MANOR

Harry looked around at the other two, now mere

outlines in the darkness. He saw Hermione point her

wand, not toward the outside, but into his face; there

was a bang, a burst of white light, and he buckled in

agony, unable to see. He could feel his face swelling

rapidly under his hands as heavy footfalls

surrounded him.

“Get up, vermin.”

Unknown hands dragged Harry roughly off the

ground. Before he could stop them, someone had

rummaged through his pockets and removed the

blackthorn wand. Harry clutched at his excruciatingly

painful face, which felt unrecognizable beneath his

fingers, tight, swollen, and puffy as though he had

suffered some violent allergic reaction. His eyes had

been reduced to slits through which he could barely

see; his glasses fell off as he was bundled out of the

tent; all he could make out were the blurred shapes of

four or five people wrestling Ron and Hermione

outside too.

Page | 503 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Get — off — her!” Ron shouted. There was the

unmistakable sound of knuckles hitting flesh: Ron

grunted in pain and Hermione screamed, “No! Leave

him alone, leave him alone!”

“Your boyfriend’s going to have worse than that done

to him if he’s on my list,” said the horribly familiar,

rasping voice. “Delicious girl ... What a treat ... I do

enjoy the softness of the skin. ...”

Harry’s stomach turned over. He knew who this was:

Fenrir Grey back, the werewolf who was permitted to

wear Death Eater robes in return for his hired

savagery.

“Search the tent!” said another voice.

Harry was thrown facedown onto the ground. A thud

told him that Ron had been cast down beside him.

They could hear footsteps and crashes; the men were

pushing over chairs inside the tent as they searched.

“Now, let’s see who we’ve got,” said Greyback’s

gloating voice from overhead, and Harry was rolled

over onto his back. A beam of wandlight fell into his

face and Grey back laughed.

“I’ll be needing butterbeer to wash this one down.

What happened to you, ugly?”

Harry did not answer immediately.

“I said,” repeated Greyback, and Harry received a

blow to the diaphragm that made him double over in

pain, “what happened to you?”

“Stung,” Harry muttered. “Been stung.”

“Yeah, looks like it,” said a second voice.

Page | 504 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“What’s your name?” snarled Greyback.

“Dudley,” said Harry.

“And your first name?”

“I — Vernon. Vernon Dudley.”

“Check the list, Scabior,” said Greyback, and Harry

heard him move sideways to look down at Ron,

instead. “And what about you, ginger?”

“Stan Shunpike,” said Ron.

“Like ’ell you are,” said the man called Scabior. “We

know Stan Shunpike, ’e’s put a bit of work our way.”

There was another thud.

“I’b Bardy,” said Ron, and Harry could tell that his

mouth was full of blood. “Bardy Weadley.”

“A Weasley?” rasped Greyback. “So you’re related to

blood traitors even if you’re not a Mudblood. And

lastly, your pretty little friend ...” The relish in his

voice made Harry’s flesh crawl.

“Easy, Greyback,” said Scabior over the jeering of the

others.

“Oh, I’m not going to bite just yet. We’ll see if she’s a

bit quicker at remembering her name than Barny.

Who are you, girly?”

“Penelope Clearwater,” said Hermione. She sounded

terrified, but convincing.

“What’s your blood status?”

Page | 505 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Half-blood,” said Hermione.

“Easy enough to check,” said Scabior. “But the ’ole lot

of ’em look like they could still be ’ogwarts age — ”

“Weh lebt,” said Ron.

“Left, ’ave you, ginger?” said Scabior. “And you

decided to go camping? And you thought, just for a

laugh, you’d use the Dark Lord’s name?”

“Nod a laugh,” said Ron. “Aggiden.”

“Accident?” There was more jeering laughter.

“You know who used to like using the Dark Lord’s

name, Weasley?” growled Greyback. “The Order of the

Phoenix. Mean anything to you?”

“Doh.”

“Well, they don’t show the Dark Lord proper respect,

so the name’s been Tabooed. A few Order members

have been tracked that way. We’ll see. Bind them up

with the other two prisoners!”

Someone yanked Harry up by the hair, dragged him a

short way, pushed him down into a sitting position,

then started binding him back-to-back with other

people. Harry was still half blind, barely able to see

anything through his puffed-up eyes. When at last

the man tying them had walked away, Harry

whispered to the other prisoners.

“Anyone still got a wand?”

“No,” said Ron and Hermione from either side of him.

“This is all my fault. I said the name, I’m sorry — ”

Page | 506 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry?”

It was a new, but familiar, voice, and it came from

directly behind Harry, from the person tied to

Hermione’s left.

“Dean?”

“It is you! If they find out who they’ve got — ! They’re

Snatchers, they’re only looking for truants to sell for

gold — ”

“Not a bad little haul for one night,” Greyback was

saying, as a pair of hobnailed boots marched close by

Harry and they heard more crashes from inside the

tent. “A Mudblood, a runaway goblin, and three

truants. You checked their names on the list yet,

Scabior?” he roared.

“Yeah. There’s no Vernon Dudley on ’ere, Greyback.”

“Interesting,” said Greyback. “That’s interesting.”

He crouched down beside Harry, who saw, through

the infinitesimal gap left between his swollen eyelids,

a face covered in matted gray hair and whiskers, with

pointed brown teeth and sores at the corners of his

mouth. Greyback smelled as he had done at the top of

the tower where Dumbledore had died: of dirt, sweat,

and blood.

“So you aren’t wanted, then, Vernon? Or are you on

that list under a different name? What House were

you in at Hogwarts?”

“Slytherin,” said Harry automatically.

Page | 507 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Funny ’ow they all thinks we wants to ’ear that,”

jeered Scabior out of the shadows. “But none of ’em

can tell us where the common room is.”

“It’s in the dungeons,” said Harry clearly. “You enter

through the wall. It’s full of skulls and stuff and it’s

under the lake, so the light’s all green.”

There was a short pause.

“Well, well, looks like we really ’ave caught a little

Slytherin,” said Scabior. “Good for you, Vernon,

’cause there ain’t a lot of Mudblood Slytherins. Who’s

your father?”

“He works at the Ministry,” Harry lied. He knew that

his whole story would collapse with the smallest

investigation, but on the other hand, he only had

until his face regained its usual appearance before

the game was up in any case. “Department of Magical

Accidents and Catastrophes.”

“You know what, Greyback,” said Scabior. “I think

there is a Dudley in there.”

Harry could barely breathe: Could luck, sheer luck,

get them safely out of this?

“Well, well,” said Greyback, and Harry could hear the

tiniest note of trepidation in that callous voice, and

knew that Greyback was wondering whether he had

indeed just attacked and bound the son of a Ministry

official. Harry’s heart was pounding against the ropes

around his ribs; he would not have been surprised to

know that Greyback could see it. “If you’re telling the

truth, ugly, you’ve got nothing to fear from a trip to

the Ministry. I expect your father’ll reward us just for

picking you up.”

Page | 508 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But,” said Harry, his mouth bone dry, “if you just let

us — ”

“Hey!” came a shout from inside the tent. “Look at

this, Greyback!”

A dark figure came bustling toward them, and Harry

saw a glint of silver in the light of their wands. They

had found Gryffindor’s sword.

“Ve-e-ry nice,” said Greyback appreciatively, taking it

from his companion. “Oh, very nice indeed. Looks

goblin-made, that. Where did you get something like

this?”

“It’s my father’s,” Harry lied, hoping against hope that

it was too dark for Greyback to see the name etched

just below the hilt. “We borrowed it to cut firewood — ”

“ ’ang on a minute, Greyback! Look at this, in the

Propheti”

As Scabior said it, Harry’s scar, which was stretched

tight across his distended forehead, burned savagely.

More clearly than he could make out anything around

him, he saw a towering building, a grim fortress, jet-

black and forbidding; Voldemort’s thoughts had

suddenly become razor-sharp again; he was gliding

toward the gigantic building with a sense of calmly

euphoric purpose. ...

So close ...So close . . .

With a huge effort of will Harry closed his mind to

Voldemort’s thoughts, pulling himself back to where

he sat, tied to Ron, Hermione, Dean, and Griphook in

the darkness, listening to Greyback and Scabior.

Page | 509 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ ‘’ermione Granger,’ ” Scabior was saying, “ ‘the

Mudblood who is known to be traveling with ’arry

Potter.’ ”

Harry’s scar burned in the silence, but he made a

supreme effort to keep himself present, not to slip

into Voldemort’s mind. He heard the creak of

Greyback’s boots as he crouched down in front of

Hermione.

“You know what, little girly? This picture looks a hell

of a lot like you.”

“It isn’t! It isn’t me!”

Hermione ’s terrified squeak was as good as a

confession.

“ ‘... known to be traveling with Harry Potter,’ ”

repeated Grey back quietly.

A stillness had settled over the scene. Harry’s scar

was exquisitely painful, but he struggled with all his

strength against the pull of Voldemort’s thoughts: It

had never been so important to remain in his own

right mind.

“Well, this changes things, doesn’t it?” whispered

Greyback. Nobody spoke: Harry sensed the gang of

Snatchers watching, frozen, and felt Hermione ’s arm

trembling against his. Greyback got up and took a

couple of steps to where Harry sat, crouching down

again to stare closely at his misshapen features.

“What’s that on your forehead, Vernon?” he asked

softly, his breath foul in Harry’s nostrils as he

pressed a filthy finger to the taut scar.

Page | 510 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Don’t touch it!” Harry yelled; he could not stop

himself; he thought he might be sick from the pain of

it.

“I thought you wore glasses, Potter?” breathed

Greyback.

“I found glasses!” yelped one of the Snatchers

skulking in the background. “There was glasses in the

tent, Greyback, wait — ”

And seconds later Harry’s glasses had been rammed

back onto his face. The Snatchers were closing in

now, peering at him.

“It is!” rasped Greyback. “We’ve caught Potter!”

They all took several steps backward, stunned by

what they had done. Harry, still fighting to remain

present inside his own splitting head, could think of

nothing to say: Fragmented visions were breaking

across the surface of his mind —

— He was gliding around the high walls of the black

fortress —

No, he was Harry, tied up and wandless, in grave

danger —

— looking up, up to the topmost window, the highest

tower —

He was Harry, and they were discussing his fate in

low voices —

— Time to fly ...

“...to the Ministry?”

Page | 511 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“To hell with the Ministry,” growled Greyback. “They’ll

take the credit, and we won’t get a look in. I say we

take him straight to You-Know-Who.”

“Will you summon ’im? ’ere?” said Scabior, sounding

awed, terrified.

“No,” snarled Greyback, “I haven’t got — they say he’s

using the Malfoys’ place as a base. We’ll take the boy

there.”

Harry thought he knew why Greyback was not calling

Voldemort. The werewolf might be allowed to wear

Death Eater robes when they wanted to use him, but

only Voldemort’s inner circle were branded with the

Dark Mark: Greyback had not been granted this

highest honor.

Harry’s scar seared again —

— and he rose into the night, flying straight up to the

window at the very top of the tower —

"... completely sure it’s him? ’Cause if it ain’t,

Greyback, we’re dead.”

“Who’s in charge here?” roared Greyback, covering his

moment of inadequacy. “I say that’s Potter, and him

plus his wand, that’s two hundred thousand Galleons

right there! But if you’re too gutless to come along,

any of you, it’s all for me, and with any luck, I’ll get

the girl thrown in!”

— The window was the merest slit in the black rock,

not big enough for a man to enter. ...A skeletal figure

was just visible through it, curled beneath a blanket. . . .

Dead, or sleeping ... ?

Page | 512 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“All right!” said Scabior. “All right, we’re in! And what

about the rest of ’em, Greyback, what’ll we do with

’em?

“Might as well take the lot. We’ve got two Mudbloods,

that’s another ten Galleons. Give me the sword as

well. If they’re rubies, that’s another small fortune

right there.”

The prisoners were dragged to their feet. Harry could

hear Hermione’s breathing, fast and terrified.

“Grab hold and make it tight. I’ll do Potter!” said

Greyback, seizing a fistful of Harry’s hair; Harry could

feel his long yellow nails scratching his scalp. “On

three! One — two — three — ”

They Disapparated, pulling the prisoners with them.

Harry struggled, trying to throw off Greyback’s hand,

but it was hopeless: Ron and Hermione were

squeezed tightly against him on either side, he could

not separate from the group, and as the breath was

squeezed out of him his scar seared more painfully

still —

— as he forced himself through the slit of a window

like a snake and landed, lightly as vapor, inside the

cell-like room —

The prisoners lurched into one another as they

landed in a country lane. Harry’s eyes, still puffy, took

a moment to acclimatize, then he saw a pair of

wrought-iron gates at the foot of what looked like a

long drive. He experienced the tiniest trickle of relief.

The worst had not happened yet: Voldemort was not

here. He was, Harry knew, for he was fighting to

resist the vision, in some strange, fortresslike place,

at the top of a tower. How long it would take

Page | 513 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Voldemort to get to this place, once he knew that

Harry was here, was another matter. ...

One of the Snatchers strode to the gates and shook

them.

“How do we get in? They’re locked, Greyback, I can’t

— blimey!”

He whipped his hands away in fright. The iron was

contorting, twisting itself out of the abstract furls and

coils into a frightening face, which spoke in a

clanging, echoing voice: “State your purpose!”

“We’ve got Potter!” Greyback roared triumphantly.

“We’ve captured Harry Potter!”

The gates swung open.

“Come on!” said Greyback to his men, and the

prisoners were shunted through the gates and up the

drive, between high hedges that muffled their

footsteps. Harry saw a ghostly white shape above

him, and realized it was an albino peacock. He

stumbled and was dragged onto his feet by Greyback;

now he was staggering along sideways, tied back-to-

back to the four other prisoners. Closing his puffy

eyes, he allowed the pain in his scar to overcome him

for a moment, wanting to know what Voldemort was

doing, whether he knew yet that Harry was caught. ...

The emaciated figure stirred beneath its thin blanket

and rolled over toward him, eyes opening in a skull of

a face. ... The frail man sat up, great sunken eyes

fixed upon him, upon Voldemort, and then he smiled.

Most of his teeth were gone. ...

“So, you have come. I thought you would ... one day.

But your journey was pointless. I never had it.”

Page | 514 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ You lie]”

As Voldemort’s anger throbbed inside him, Harry’s

scar threatened to burst with pain, and he wrenched

his mind back to his own body, fighting to remain

present as the prisoners were pushed over gravel.

Light spilled out over all of them.

“What is this?” said a woman’s cold voice.

“We’re here to see He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named!”

rasped Greyback.

“Who are you?”

“You know me!” There was resentment in the

werewolf’s voice. “Fenrir Greyback! We’ve caught

Harry Potter!”

Greyback seized Harry and dragged him around to

face the light, forcing the other prisoners to shuffle

around too.

“I know ’e’s swollen, ma’am, but it’s ’im!” piped up

Scabior. “If you look a bit closer, you’ll see ’is scar.

And this ’ere, see the girl? The Mudblood who’s been

traveling around with ’im, ma’am. There’s no doubt

it’s ’im, and we’ve got ’is wand as well! ’Ere, ma’am — ”

Through his puffy eyelids Harry saw Narcissa Malfoy

scrutinizing his swollen face. Scabior thrust the

blackthorn wand at her. She raised her eyebrows.

“Bring them in,” she said.

Harry and the others were shoved and kicked up

broad stone steps into a hallway lined with portraits.

Page | 515 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Follow me,” said Narcissa, leading the way across the

hall. “My son, Draco, is home for his Easter holidays.

If that is Harry Potter, he will know.”

The drawing room dazzled after the darkness outside;

even with his eyes almost closed Harry could make

out the wide proportions of the room. A crystal

chandelier hung from the ceiling, more portraits

against the dark purple walls. Two figures rose from

chairs in front of an ornate marble fireplace as the

prisoners were forced into the room by the Snatchers.

“What is this?”

The dreadfully familiar, drawling voice of Lucius

Malfoy fell on Harry’s ears. He was panicking now: He

could see no way out, and it was easier, as his fear

mounted, to block out Voldemort’s thoughts, though

his scar was still burning.

“They say they’ve got Potter,” said Narcissa’s cold

voice. “Draco, come here.”

Harry did not dare look directly at Draco, but saw

him obliquely: a figure slightly taller than he was,

rising from an armchair, his face a pale and pointed

blur beneath white-blond hair.

Greyback forced the prisoners to turn again so as to

place Harry directly beneath the chandelier.

“Well, boy?” rasped the werewolf.

Harry was facing a mirror over the fireplace, a great

gilded thing in an intricately scrolled frame. Through

the slits of his eyes he saw his own reflection for the

first time since leaving Grimmauld Place.

Page | 516 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

His face was huge, shiny, and pink, every feature

distorted by Hermione’s jinx. His black hair reached

his shoulders and there was a dark shadow around

his jaw. Had he not known that it was he who stood

there, he would have wondered who was wearing his

glasses. He resolved not to speak, for his voice was

sure to give him away; yet he still avoided eye contact

with Draco as the latter approached.

“Well, Draco?” said Lucius Malfoy. He sounded avid.

“Is it? Is it Harry Potter?”

“I can’t — I can’t be sure,” said Draco. He was keeping

his distance from Greyback, and seemed as scared of

looking at Harry as Harry was of looking at him.

“But look at him carefully, look! Come closer!”

Harry had never heard Lucius Malfoy so excited.

“Draco, if we are the ones who hand Potter over to the

Dark Lord, everything will be forgiv — ”

“Now, we won’t be forgetting who actually caught him,

I hope, Mr. Malfoy?” said Greyback menacingly.

“Of course not, of course not!” said Lucius

impatiently. He approached Harry himself, came so

close that Harry could see the usually languid, pale

face in sharp detail even through his swollen eyes.

With his face a puffy mask, Harry felt as though he

was peering out from between the bars of a cage.

“What did you do to him?” Lucius asked Greyback.

“How did he get into this state?”

“That wasn’t us.”

“Looks more like a Stinging Jinx to me,” said Lucius.

Page | 517 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

His gray eyes raked Harry’s forehead.

“There’s something there,” he whispered, “it could be

the scar, stretched tight. ... Draco, come here, look

properly! What do you think?”

Harry saw Draco’s face up close now, right beside his

father’s. They were extraordinarily alike, except that

while his father looked beside himself with

excitement, Draco’s expression was full of reluctance,

even fear.

“I don’t know,” he said, and he walked away toward

the fireplace where his mother stood watching.

“We had better be certain, Lucius,” Narcissa called to

her husband in her cold, clear voice. “Completely sure

that it is Potter, before we summon the Dark Lord . . .

They say this is his” — she was looking closely at the

blackthorn wand — “but it does not resemble

Ollivander’s description. ... If we are mistaken, if we

call the Dark Lord here for nothing . . . Remember

what he did to Rowle and Dolohov?”

“What about the Mudblood, then?” growled Greyback.

Harry was nearly thrown off his feet as the Snatchers

forced the prisoners to swivel around again, so that

the light fell on Hermione instead.

“Wait,” said Narcissa sharply. “Yes — yes, she was in

Madam Malkin’s with Potter! I saw her picture in the

Prophett Look, Draco, isn’t it the Granger girl?”

“I ... maybe ... yeah.”

“But then, that’s the Weasley boy!” shouted Lucius,

striding around the bound prisoners to face Ron. “It’s

them, Potter’s friends — Draco, look at him, isn’t it

Arthur Weasley’s son, what’s his name — ?”

Page | 518 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Yeah,” said Draco again, his back to the prisoners.

“It could be.”

The drawing room door opened behind Harry. A

woman spoke, and the sound of the voice wound

Harry’s fear to an even higher pitch.

“What is this? What’s happened, Cissy?”

Bellatrix Lestrange walked slowly around the

prisoners, and stopped on Harry’s right, staring at

Hermione through her heavily lidded eyes.

“But surely,” she said quietly, “this is the Mudblood

girl? This is Granger?”

“Yes, yes, it’s Granger!” cried Lucius. “And beside her,

we think, Potter! Potter and his friends, caught at

last!”

“Potter?” shrieked Bellatrix, and she backed away, the

better to take in Harry. “Are you sure? Well then, the

Dark Lord must be informed at once!”

She dragged back her left sleeve: Harry saw the Dark

Mark burned into the flesh of her arm, and knew that

she was about to touch it, to summon her beloved

master —

“I was about to call him!” said Lucius, and his hand

actually closed upon Bellatrix’s wrist, preventing her

from touching the Mark. “I shall summon him, Bella,

Potter has been brought to my house, and it is

therefore upon my authority — ”

“Your authority!” she sneered, attempting to wrench

her hand from his grasp. “You lost your authority

when you lost your wand, Lucius! How dare you! Take

your hands off me!”

Page | 519 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“This is nothing to do with you, you did not capture

the boy — ”

“Begging your pardon, Mr. Malfoy,” interjected

Greyback, “but it’s us that caught Potter, and it’s us

that 11 be claiming the gold — ”

“Gold!” laughed Bellatrix, still attempting to throw off

her brother-in-law, her free hand groping in her

pocket for her wand. “Take your gold, filthy

scavenger, what do I want with gold? I seek only the

honor of his — of — ”

She stopped struggling, her dark eyes fixed upon

something Harry could not see. Jubilant at her

capitulation, Lucius threw her hand from him and

ripped up his own sleeve —

“STOP!” shrieked Bellatrix. “Do not touch it, we shall

all perish if the Dark Lord comes now!”

Lucius froze, his index finger hovering over his own

Mark. Bellatrix strode out of Harry’s limited line of

vision.

“What is that?” he heard her say.

“Sword,” grunted an out-of-sight Snatcher.

“Give it to me.”

“It’s not yorn, missus, it’s mine, I reckon I found it.”

There was a bang and a flash of red light: Harry knew

that the Snatcher had been Stunned. There was a

roar of anger from his fellows: Scabior drew his wand.

“What d’you think you’re playing at, woman?”

Page | 520 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Stupefyl” she screamed. “Stupefyl”

They were no match for her, even though there were

four of them against one of her: She was a witch, as

Harry knew, with prodigious skill and no conscience.

They fell where they stood, all except Greyback, who

had been forced into a kneeling position, his arms

outstretched. Out of the corners of his eyes Harry saw

Bellatrix bearing down upon the werewolf, the sword

of Gryffindor gripped tightly in her hand, her face

waxen.

“Where did you get this sword?” she whispered to

Greyback as she pulled his wand out of his

unresisting grip.

“How dare you?” he snarled, his mouth the only thing

that could move as he was forced to gaze up at her.

He bared his pointed teeth. “Release me, woman!”

“Where did you find this sword?” she repeated,

brandishing it in his face. “Snape sent it to my vault

in Gringotts!”

“It was in their tent,” rasped Greyback. “Release me, I

say!”

She waved her wand, and the werewolf sprang to his

feet, but appeared too wary to approach her. He

prowled behind an armchair, his filthy curved nails

clutching its back.

“Draco, move this scum outside,” said Bellatrix,

indicating the unconscious men. “If you haven’t got

the guts to finish them, then leave them in the

courtyard for me.”

“Don’t you dare speak to Draco like — ” said Narcissa

furiously, but Bellatrix screamed,

Page | 521 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Be quiet! The situation is graver than you can

possibly imagine, Cissy! We have a very serious

problem!”

She stood, panting slightly, looking down at the

sword, examining its hilt. Then she turned to look at

the silent prisoners.

“If it is indeed Potter, he must not be harmed,” she

muttered, more to herself than to the others. “The

Dark Lord wishes to dispose of Potter himself. . . . But

if he finds out ... I must ... I must know. ...”

She turned back to her sister again.

“The prisoners must be placed in the cellar, while I

think what to do!”

“This is my house, Bella, you don’t give orders in my

“Do it! You have no idea of the danger we are in!”

shrieked Bellatrix. She looked frightening, mad; a

thin stream of fire issued from her wand and burned

a hole in the carpet.

Narcissa hesitated for a moment, then addressed the

werewolf.

“Take these prisoners down to the cellar, Greyback.”

“Wait,” said Bellatrix sharply. “All except ... except for

the Mudblood.”

Greyback gave a grunt of pleasure.

“No!” shouted Ron. “You can have me, keep me!”

Page | 522 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Bellatrix hit him across the face; the blow echoed

around the room.

“If she dies under questioning, I’ll take you next,” she

said. “Blood traitor is next to Mudblood in my book.

Take them downstairs, Greyback, and make sure they

are secure, but do nothing more to them — yet.”

She threw Greyback’s wand back to him, then took a

short silver knife from under her robes. She cut

Hermione free from the other prisoners, then dragged

her by the hair into the middle of the room, while

Greyback forced the rest of them to shuffle across to

another door, into a dark passageway, his wand held

out in front of him, projecting an invisible and

irresistible force.

“Reckon she’ll let me have a bit of the girl when she’s

finished with her?” Greyback crooned as he forced

them along the corridor. “I’d say I’ll get a bite or two,

wouldn’t you, ginger?”

Harry could feel Ron shaking. They were forced down

a steep flight of stairs, still tied back-to-back and in

danger of slipping and breaking their necks at any

moment. At the bottom was a heavy door. Greyback

unlocked it with a tap of his wand, then forced them

into a dank and musty room and left them in total

darkness. The echoing bang of the slammed cellar

door had not died away before there was a terrible,

drawn-out scream from directly above them.

“HERMIONE!” Ron bellowed, and he started to writhe

and struggle against the ropes tying them together, so

that Harry staggered. “HERMIONE!”

“Be quiet!” Harry said. “Shut up, Ron, we need to

work out a way — ”

Page | 523 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“HERMIONE! HERMIONE!”

“We need a plan, stop yelling — we need to get these

ropes off — ”

“Harry?” came a whisper through the darkness. “Ron?

Is that you?”

Ron stopped shouting. There was a sound of

movement close by them, then Harry saw a shadow

moving closer.

“Harry? Ron?”

“Luna?”

“Yes, it’s me! Oh no, I didn’t want you to be caught!”

“Luna, can you help us get these ropes off?” said

Harry.

“Oh yes, I expect so. ... There’s an old nail we use if

we need to break anything. ... Just a moment ...”

Hermione screamed again from overhead, and they

could hear Bellatrix screaming too, but her words

were inaudible, for Ron shouted again, “HERMIONE!

HERMIONE!”

“Mr. Ollivander?” Harry could hear Luna saying. “Mr.

Ollivander, have you got the nail? If you just move

over a little bit... I think it was beside the water jug.

She was back within seconds.

“You’ll need to stay still,” she said.

Page | 524 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry could feel her digging at the rope’s tough fibers

to work the knots free. From upstairs they heard

Bellatrix’s voice.

“I’m going to ask you again! Where did you get this

sword? Where?”

“We found it — we found it — PLEASE!” Hermione

screamed again; Ron struggled harder than ever, and

the rusty nail slipped onto Harry’s wrist.

“Ron, please stay still!” Luna whispered. “I can’t see

what I’m doing — ”

“My pocket!” said Ron. “In my pocket, there’s a

Deluminator, and it’s full of light!”

A few seconds later, there was a click, and the

luminescent spheres the Deluminator had sucked

from the lamps in the tent flew into the cellar: Unable

to rejoin their sources, they simply hung there, like

tiny suns, flooding the underground room with light.

Harry saw Luna, all eyes in her white face, and the

motionless figure of Ollivander the wandmaker,

curled up on the floor in the corner. Craning around,

he caught sight of their fellow prisoners: Dean and

Griphook the goblin, who seemed barely conscious,

kept standing by the ropes that bound him to the

humans.

“Oh, that’s much easier, thanks, Ron,” said Luna,

and she began hacking at their bindings again.

“Hello, Dean!”

From above came Bellatrix’s voice.

“You are lying, filthy Mudblood, and I know it! You

have been inside my vault at Gringotts! Tell the truth,

tell the truth\”

Page | 525 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Another terrible scream

“HERMIONE!”

“What else did you take? What else have you got? Tell

me the truth or, I swear, I shall run you through with

this knife!”

“There!”

Harry felt the ropes fall away and turned, rubbing his

wrists, to see Ron running around the cellar, looking

up at the low ceiling, searching for a trapdoor. Dean,

his face bruised and bloody, said “Thanks” to Luna

and stood there, shivering, but Griphook sank onto

the cellar floor, looking groggy and disoriented, many

welts across his swarthy face.

Ron was now trying to Disapparate without a wand.

“There’s no way out, Ron,” said Luna, watching his

fruitless efforts. “The cellar is completely escape-

proof. I tried, at first. Mr. Ollivander has been here for

a long time, he’s tried everything.”

Hermione was screaming again: The sound went

through Harry like physical pain. Barely conscious of

the fierce prickling of his scar, he too started to run

around the cellar, feeling the walls for he hardly knew

what, knowing in his heart that it was useless.

“What else did you take, what else? ANSWER ME!

CRUCIO\”

Hermione ’s screams echoed off the walls upstairs,

Ron was half sobbing as he pounded the walls with

his fists, and Harry in utter desperation seized

Hagrid’s pouch from around his neck and groped

inside it: He pulled out Dumbledore’s Snitch and

Page | 526 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

shook it, hoping for he did not know what — nothing

happened — he waved the broken halves of the

phoenix wand, but they were lifeless — the mirror

fragment fell sparkling to the floor, and he saw a

gleam of brightest blue —

Dumbledore’s eye was gazing at him out of the mirror.

“Help us!” he yelled at it in mad desperation. “We’re in

the cellar of Malfoy Manor, help us!”

The eye blinked and was gone.

Harry was not even sure that it had really been there.

He tilted the shard of mirror this way and that, and

saw nothing reflected there but the walls and ceiling

of their prison, and upstairs Hermione was screaming

worse than ever, and next to him Ron was bellowing,

“HERMIONE! HERMIONE!”

“How did you get into my vault?” they heard Bellatrix

scream. “Did that dirty little goblin in the cellar help

you?”

“We only met him tonight!” Hermione sobbed. “We’ve

never been inside your vault. ... It isn’t the real sword!

It’s a copy, just a copy!

“A copy?” screeched Bellatrix. “Oh, a likely story!”

“But we can find out easily!” came Lucius’s voice.

“Draco, fetch the goblin, he can tell us whether the

sword is real or not!”

Harry dashed across the cellar to where Griphook was

huddled on the floor.

Page | 527 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Griphook,” he whispered into the goblin’s pointed

ear, “you must tell them that sword’s a fake, they

mustn’t know it’s the real one, Griphook, please — ”

He could hear someone scuttling down the cellar

steps; next moment, Draco’s shaking voice spoke

from behind the door.

“Stand back. Line up against the back wall. Don’t try

anything, or I’ll kill you!”

They did as they were bidden; as the lock turned, Ron

clicked the Deluminator and the lights whisked back

into his pocket, restoring the cellar’s darkness. The

door flew open; Malfoy marched inside, wand held out

in front of him, pale and determined. He seized the

little goblin by the arm and backed out again,

dragging Griphook with him. The door slammed shut

and at the same moment a loud crack echoed inside

the cellar.

Ron clicked the Deluminator. Three balls of light flew

back into the air from his pocket, revealing Dobby the

house-elf, who had just Apparated into their midst.

“DOB — !”

Harry hit Ron on the arm to stop him shouting, and

Ron looked terrified at his mistake. Footsteps crossed

the ceiling overhead: Draco marching Griphook to

Bellatrix.

Dobby’s enormous, tennis-ball-shaped eyes were

wide; he was trembling from his feet to the tips of his

ears. He was back in the home of his old masters, and

it was clear that he was petrified.

“Harry Potter,” he squeaked in the tiniest quiver of a

voice, “Dobby has come to rescue you.”

Page | 528 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But how did you — ?”

An awful scream drowned Harry’s words: Hermione

was being tortured again. He cut to the essentials.

“You can Disapparate out of this cellar?” he asked

Dobby, who nodded, his ears flapping.

“And you can take humans with you?”

Dobby nodded again.

“Right. Dobby, I want you to grab Luna, Dean, and

Mr. Ollivander, and take them — take them to — ”

“Bill and Fleur’s,” said Ron. “Shell Cottage on the

outskirts of Tinworth!”

The elf nodded for a third time.

“And then come back,” said Harry. “Can you do that,

Dobby?”

“Of course, Harry Potter,” whispered the little elf. He

hurried over to Mr. Ollivander, who appeared to be

barely conscious. He took one of the wandmaker’s

hands in his own, then held out the other to Luna

and Dean, neither of whom moved.

“Harry, we want to help you!” Luna whispered.

“We can’t leave you here,” said Dean.

“Go, both of you! We’ll see you at Bill and Fleur’s.”

As Harry spoke, his scar burned worse than ever, and

for a few seconds he looked down, not upon the

wandmaker, but on another man who was just as old,

just as thin, but laughing scornfully.

Page | 529 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ Kill me, then, Voldemort, I welcome death! But my

death will not bring you what you seek. . . . There is so

much you do not understand. ...”

He felt Voldemort’s fury, but as Hermione screamed

again he shut it out, returning to the cellar and the

horror of his own present.

“Go!” Harry beseeched Luna and Dean. “Go! Well

follow, just go!”

They caught hold of the elf’s outstretched fingers.

There was another loud crack, and Dobby, Luna,

Dean, and Ollivander vanished.

“What was that?” shouted Lucius Malfoy from over

their heads. “Did you hear that? What was that noise

in the cellar?”

Harry and Ron stared at each other.

“Draco — no, call Wormtail! Make him go and check!”

Footsteps crossed the room overhead, then there was

silence. Harry knew that the people in the drawing

room were listening for more noises from the cellar.

“We’re going to have to try and tackle him,” he

whispered to Ron. They had no choice: The moment

anyone entered the room and saw the absence of

three prisoners, they were lost. “Leave the lights on,”

Harry added, and as they heard someone descending

the steps outside the door, they backed against the

wall on either side of it.

“Stand back,” came Wormtail’s voice. “Stand away

from the door. I am coming in.”

Page | 530 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The door flew open. For a split second Wormtail gazed

into the apparently empty cellar, ablaze with light

from the three miniature suns floating in midair.

Then Harry and Ron launched themselves upon him.

Ron seized Wormtail’s wand arm and forced it

upward; Harry slapped a hand to his mouth, muffling

his voice. Silently they struggled: Wormtail’s wand

emitted sparks; his silver hand closed around Harry’s

throat.

“What is it, Wormtail?” called Lucius Malfoy from

above.

“Nothing!” Ron called back, in a passable imitation of

Wormtail’s wheezy voice. “All fine!”

Harry could barely breathe.

“You’re going to kill me?” Harry choked, attempting to

prise off the metal fingers. “After I saved your life?

You owe me, Wormtail!”

The silver fingers slackened. Harry had not expected

it: He wrenched himself free, astonished, keeping his

hand over Wormtail’s mouth. He saw the ratlike

man’s small watery eyes widen with fear and surprise:

He seemed just as shocked as Harry at what his hand

had done, at the tiny, merciful impulse it had

betrayed, and he continued to struggle more

powerfully, as though to undo that moment of

weakness.

“And well have that,” whispered Ron, tugging

Wormtail’s wand from his other hand.

Wandless, helpless, Pettigrew’s pupils dilated in

terror. His eyes had slid from Harry’s face to

something else. His own silver fingers were moving

inexorably toward his own throat.

Page | 531 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No — ”

Without pausing to think, Harry tried to drag back

the hand, but there was no stopping it. The silver tool

that Voldemort had given his most cowardly servant

had turned upon its disarmed and useless owner;

Pettigrew was reaping his reward for his hesitation,

his moment of pity; he was being strangled before

their eyes.

“No!”

Ron had released Wormtail too, and together he and

Harry tried to pull the crushing metal fingers from

around Wormtail’s throat, but it was no use.

Pettigrew was turning blue.

“Relashiol” said Ron, pointing the wand at the silver

hand, but nothing happened; Pettigrew dropped to his

knees, and at the same moment, Hermione gave a

dreadful scream from overhead. Wormtail’s eyes rolled

upward in his purple face; he gave a last twitch, and

was still.

Harry and Ron looked at each other, then leaving

Wormtail’s body on the floor behind them, ran up the

stairs and back into the shadowy passageway leading

to the drawing room. Cautiously they crept along it

until they reached the drawing room door, which was

ajar. Now they had a clear view of Bellatrix looking

down at Griphook, who was holding Gryffindor’s

sword in his long-fingered hands. Hermione was lying

at Bellatrix’s feet. She was barely stirring.

“Well?” Bellatrix said to Griphook. “Is it the true

sword?”

Harry waited, holding his breath, fighting against the

prickling of his scar.

Page | 532 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No,” said Griphook. “It is a fake.”

“Are you sure?” panted Bellatrix. “Quite sure?”

“Yes,” said the goblin.

Relief broke across her face, all tension drained from

it.

“Good,” she said, and with a casual flick of her wand

she slashed another deep cut into the goblin’s face,

and he dropped with a yell at her feet. She kicked him

aside. “And now,” she said in a voice that burst with

triumph, “we call the Dark Lord!”

And she pushed back her sleeve and touched her

forefinger to the Dark Mark.

At once, Harry’s scar felt as though it had split open

again. His true surroundings vanished: He was

Voldemort, and the skeletal wizard before him was

laughing toothlessly at him; he was enraged at the

summons he felt — he had warned them, he had told

them to summon him for nothing less than Potter. If

they were mistaken . . .

“Kill me, then!” demanded the old man. “You will not

win, you cannot win! That wand will never, ever be

yours — ”

And Voldemort’s fury broke: A burst of green light

filled the prison room and the frail old body was lifted

from its hard bed and then fell back, lifeless, and

Voldemort returned to the window, his wrath barely

controllable. ... They would suffer his retribution if

they had no good reason for calling him back. . . .

“And I think,” said Bellatrix’s voice, “we can dispose of

the Mudblood. Greyback, take her if you want her.”

Page | 533 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“NOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

Ron had burst into the drawing room; Bellatrix looked

around, shocked; she turned her wand to face Ron

instead —

“ ExpelliarmusV’ he roared, pointing Wormtail’s wand

at Bellatrix, and hers flew into the air and was caught

by Harry, who had sprinted after Ron. Lucius,

Narcissa, Draco, and Greyback wheeled about; Harry

yelled, “Stupefy\” and Lucius Malfoy collapsed onto

the hearth. Jets of light flew from Draco’s, Narcissa’s,

and Greyback’s wands; Harry threw himself to the

floor, rolling behind a sofa to avoid them.

“STOP OR SHE DIES!”

Panting, Harry peered around the edge of the sofa.

Bellatrix was supporting Hermione, who seemed to be

unconscious, and was holding her short silver knife

to Hermione ’s throat.

“Drop your wands,” she whispered. “Drop them, or

we’ll see exactly how filthy her blood is!”

Ron stood rigid, clutching Wormtail’s wand. Harry

straightened up, still holding Bellatrix’s.

“I said, drop them!” she screeched, pressing the blade

into Hermione’s throat: Harry saw beads of blood

appear there.

“All right!” he shouted, and he dropped Bellatrix’s

wand onto the floor at his feet. Ron did the same with

Wormtail’s. Both raised their hands to shoulder

height.

“Good!” she leered. “Draco, pick them up! The Dark

Lord is coming, Harry Potter! Your death approaches!”

Page | 534 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry knew it; his scar was bursting with the pain of

it, and he could feel Voldemort flying through the sky

from far away, over a dark and stormy sea, and soon

he would be close enough to Apparate to them, and

Harry could see no way out.

“Now,” said Bellatrix softly, as Draco hurried back to

her with the wands, “Cissy, I think we ought to tie

these little heroes up again, while Greyback takes

care of Miss Mudblood. I am sure the Dark Lord will

not begrudge you the girl, Greyback, after what you

have done tonight.”

At the last word there was a peculiar grinding noise

from above. All of them looked upward in time to see

the crystal chandelier tremble; then, with a creak and

an ominous jingling, it began to fall. Bellatrix was

directly beneath it; dropping Hermione, she threw

herself aside with a scream. The chandelier crashed

to the floor in an explosion of crystal and chains,

falling on top of Hermione and the goblin, who still

clutched the sword of Gryffindor. Glittering shards of

crystal flew in all directions: Draco doubled over, his

hands covering his bloody face.

As Ron ran to pull Hermione out of the wreckage,

Harry took his chance: He leapt over an armchair and

wrested the three wands from Draco’s grip, pointed all

of them at Greyback, and yelled, “Stupefyl” The

werewolf was lifted off his feet by the triple spell, flew

up to the ceiling, and then smashed to the ground.

As Narcissa dragged Draco out of the way of further

harm, Bellatrix sprang to her feet, her hair flying as

she brandished the silver knife; but Narcissa had

directed her wand at the doorway.

“Dobby!” she screamed, and even Bellatrix froze.

“You! You dropped the chandelier — ?”

Page | 535 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The tiny elf trotted into the room, his shaking finger

pointing at his old mistress.

“You must not hurt Harry Potter,” he squeaked.

“Kill him, Cissy!” shrieked Bellatrix, but there was

another loud crack, and Narcissa’s wand too flew into

the air and landed on the other side of the room.

“You dirty little monkey!” bawled Bellatrix. “How dare

you take a witch’s wand, how dare you defy your

masters?”

“Dobby has no master!” squealed the elf. “Dobby is a

free elf, and Dobby has come to save Harry Potter and

his friends!”

Harry’s scar was blinding him with pain. Dimly he

knew that they had moments, seconds before

Voldemort was with them.

“Ron, catch — and GO!” he yelled, throwing one of the

wands to him; then he bent down to tug Griphook out

from under the chandelier. Hoisting the groaning

goblin, who still clung to the sword, over one

shoulder, Harry seized Dobby’s hand and spun on the

spot to Disapparate.

As he turned into darkness he caught one last view of

the drawing room: of the pale, frozen figures of

Narcissa and Draco, of the streak of red that was

Ron’s hair, and a blur of flying silver, as Bellatrix’s

knife flew across the room at the place where he was

vanishing —

Bill and Fleur’s . . . Shell Cottage . . . Bill and Fleur’s . . .

He had disappeared into the unknown; all he could

do was repeat the name of the destination and hope

Page | 536 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

that it would suffice to take him there. The pain in his

forehead pierced him, and the weight of the goblin

bore down upon him; he could feel the blade of

Gryffindor’s sword bumping against his back; Dobby’s

hand jerked in his; he wondered whether the elf was

trying to take charge, to pull them in the right

direction, and tried, by squeezing the fingers, to

indicate that that was fine with him. ...

And then they hit solid earth and smelled salty air.

Harry fell to his knees, relinquished Dobby’s hand,

and attempted to lower Griphook gently to the

ground.

“Are you all right?” he said as the goblin stirred, but

Griphook merely whimpered.

Harry squinted around through the darkness. There

seemed to be a cottage a short way away under the

wide starry sky, and he thought he saw movement

outside it.

“Dobby, is this Shell Cottage?” he whispered,

clutching the two wands he had brought from the

Malfoys’, ready to fight if he needed to. “Have we come

to the right place? Dobby?”

He looked around. The little elf stood feet from him.

“DOBBY!”

The elf swayed slightly, stars reflected in his wide,

shining eyes. Together, he and Harry looked down at

the silver hilt of the knife protruding from the elf’s

heaving chest.

“Dobby — no — HELP!” Harry bellowed toward the

cottage, toward the people moving there. “HELP!”

Page | 537 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He did not know or care whether they were wizards or

Muggles, friends or foes; all he cared about was that a

dark stain was spreading across Dobby’s front, and

that he had stretched out his thin arms to Harry with

a look of supplication. Harry caught him and laid him

sideways on the cool grass.

“Dobby, no, don’t die, don’t die — ”

The elf’s eyes found him, and his lips trembled with

the effort to form words.

“Harry ... Potter ...”

And then with a little shudder the elf became quite

still, and his eyes were nothing more than great

glassy orbs, sprinkled with light from the stars they

could not see.

Page | 538 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE WANDMAKER

It was like sinking into an old nightmare; for an

instant Harry knelt again beside Dumbledore’s body

at the foot of the tallest tower at Hogwarts, but in

reality he was staring at a tiny body curled upon the

grass, pierced by Bellatrix’s silver knife. Harry’s voice

was still saying, “Dobby ... Dobby ...” even though he

knew that the elf had gone where he could not call

him back.

After a minute or so he realized that they had, after

all, come to the right place, for here were Bill and

Fleur, Dean and Luna, gathering around him as he

knelt over the elf.

“Hermione?” he said suddenly. “Where is she?”

“Ron’s taken her inside,” said Bill. “She’ll be all right.”

Harry looked back down at Dobby. He stretched out a

hand and pulled the sharp blade from the elf’s body,

then dragged off his own jacket and covered Dobby in

it like a blanket.

Page | 539 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The sea was rushing against rock somewhere nearby;

Harry listened to it while the others talked, discussing

matters in which he could take no interest, making

decisions. Dean carried the injured Griphook into the

house, Fleur hurrying with them; now Bill was

making suggestions about burying the elf. Harry

agreed without really knowing what he was saying. As

he did so, he gazed down at the tiny body, and his

scar prickled and burned, and in one part of his

mind, viewed as if from the wrong end of a long

telescope, he saw Voldemort punishing those they

had left behind at Malfoy Manor. His rage was

dreadful and yet Harry’s grief for Dobby seemed to

diminish it, so that it became a distant storm that

reached Harry from across a vast, silent ocean.

“I want to do it properly,” were the first words of

which Harry was fully conscious of speaking. “Not by

magic. Have you got a spade?”

And shortly afterward he had set to work, alone,

digging the grave in the place that Bill had shown him

at the end of the garden, between bushes. He dug

with a kind of fury, relishing the manual work,

glorying in the non-magic of it, for every drop of his

sweat and every blister felt like a gift to the elf who

had saved their lives.

His scar burned, but he was master of the pain; he

felt it, yet was apart from it. He had learned control at

last, learned to shut his mind to Voldemort, the very

thing Dumbledore had wanted him to learn from

Snape. Just as Voldemort had not been able to

possess Harry while Harry was consumed with grief

for Sirius, so his thoughts could not penetrate Harry

now, while he mourned Dobby. Grief, it seemed, drove

Voldemort out ... though Dumbledore, of course,

would have said that it was love. ...

Page | 540 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

On Harry dug, deeper and deeper into the hard, cold

earth, subsuming his grief in sweat, denying the pain

in his scar. In the darkness, with nothing but the

sound of his own breath and the rushing sea to keep

him company, the things that had happened at the

Malfoys’ returned to him, the things he had heard

came back to him, and understanding blossomed in

the darkness. ...

The steady rhythm of his arms beat time with his

thoughts. Hallows ... Horcruxes ... Hallows ...

Horcruxes ... Yet he no longer burned with that weird,

obsessive longing. Loss and fear had snuffed it out:

He felt as though he had been slapped awake again.

Deeper and deeper Harry sank into the grave, and he

knew where Voldemort had been tonight, and whom

he had killed in the topmost cell of Nurmengard, and

why. ...

And he thought of Wormtail, dead because of one

small unconscious impulse of mercy. . . . Dumbledore

had foreseen that. ... How much more had he known?

Harry lost track of time. He knew only that the

darkness had lightened a few degrees when he was

rejoined by Ron and Dean.

“How’s Hermione?”

“Better,” said Ron. “Fleur’s looking after her.”

Harry had his retort ready for when they asked him

why he had not simply created a perfect grave with

his wand, but he did not need it. They jumped down

into the hole he had made with spades of their own,

and together they worked in silence until the hole

seemed deep enough.

Page | 541 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry wrapped the elf more snugly in his jacket. Ron

sat on the edge of the grave and stripped off his shoes

and socks, which he placed upon the elf’s bare feet.

Dean produced a woolen hat, which Harry placed

carefully upon Dobby’s head, muffling his batlike

ears.

“We should close his eyes.”

Harry had not heard the others coming through the

darkness. Bill was wearing a traveling cloak, Fleur a

large white apron, from the pocket of which protruded

a bottle of what Harry recognized to be Skele-Gro.

Hermione was wrapped in a borrowed dressing gown,

pale and unsteady on her feet; Ron put an arm

around her when she reached him. Luna, who was

huddled in one of Fleur’s coats, crouched down and

placed her fingers tenderly upon each of the elf’s

eyelids, sliding them over his glassy stare.

“There,” she said softly. “Now he could be sleeping.”

Harry placed the elf into the grave, arranged his tiny

limbs so that he might have been resting, then

climbed out and gazed for the last time upon the little

body. He forced himself not to break down as he

remembered Dumbledore’s funeral, and the rows and

rows of golden chairs, and the Minister of Magic in

the front row, the recitation of Dumbledore’s

achievements, the stateliness of the white marble

tomb. He felt that Dobby deserved just as grand a

funeral, and yet here the elf lay between bushes in a

roughly dug hole.

“I think we ought to say something,” piped up Luna.

“I’ll go first, shall I?”

And as everybody looked at her, she addressed the

dead elf at the bottom of the grave.

Page | 542 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Thank you so much, Dobby, for rescuing me from

that cellar. It’s so unfair that you had to die, when

you were so good and brave. I’ll always remember

what you did for us. I hope you’re happy now.”

She turned and looked expectantly at Ron, who

cleared his throat and said in a thick voice, “Yeah ...

thanks, Dobby.”

“Thanks,” muttered Dean.

Harry swallowed.

“Good-bye, Dobby,” he said. It was all he could

manage, but Luna had said it all for him. Bill raised

his wand, and the pile of earth beside the grave rose

up into the air and fell neatly upon it, a small,

reddish mound.

“D’you mind if I stay here a moment?” he asked the

others.

They murmured words he did not catch; he felt gentle

pats upon his back, and then they all traipsed back

toward the cottage, leaving Harry alone beside the elf.

He looked around: There were a number of large

white stones, smoothed by the sea, marking the edge

of the flower beds. He picked up one of the largest

and laid it, pillowlike, over the place where Dobby ’s

head now rested. He then felt in his pocket for a

wand.

There were two in there. He had forgotten, lost track;

he could not now remember whose wands these were;

he seemed to remember wrenching them out of

someone’s hand. He selected the shorter of the two,

which felt friendlier in his hand, and pointed it at the

rock.

Page | 543 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Slowly, under his murmured instruction, deep cuts

appeared upon the rock’s surface. He knew that

Hermione could have done it more neatly, and

probably more quickly, but he wanted to mark the

spot as he had wanted to dig the grave. When Harry

stood up again, the stone read:

HERE LIES DOBBY, A FREE ELF.

He looked down at his handiwork for a few more

seconds, then walked away, his scar still prickling a

little, and his mind full of those things that had come

to him in the grave, ideas that had taken shape in the

darkness, ideas both fascinating and terrible.

They were all sitting in the living room when he

entered the little hall, their attention focused upon

Bill, who was talking. The room was light-colored,

pretty, with a small fire of driftwood burning brightly

in the fireplace. Harry did not want to drop mud upon

the carpet, so he stood in the doorway, listening.

"... lucky that Ginny’s on holiday. If she’d been at

Hogwarts, they could have taken her before we

reached her. Now we know she’s safe too.”

He looked around and saw Harry standing there.

“I’ve been getting them all out of the Burrow,” he

explained. “Moved them to Muriel’s. The Death Eaters

know Ron’s with you now, they’re bound to target the

family — don’t apologize,” he added at the sight of

Harry’s expression. “It was always a matter of time,

Dad’s been saying so for months. We’re the biggest

blood-traitor family there is.”

“How are they protected?” asked Harry.

Page | 544 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Fidelius Charm. Dad’s Secret-Keeper. And we’ve

done it on this cottage too; I’m Secret-Keeper here.

None of us can go to work, but that’s hardly the most

important thing now. Once Ollivander and Griphook

are well enough, we’ll move them to Muriel’s too.

There isn’t much room here, but she’s got plenty.

Griphook’s legs are on the mend, Fleur’s given him

Skele-Gro; we could probably move them in an hour

or —

“No,” Harry said, and Bill looked startled. “I need both

of them here. I need to talk to them. It’s important.”

He heard the authority in his own voice, the

conviction, the sense of purpose that had come to him

as he dug Dobby’s grave. All of their faces were

turned toward him, looking puzzled.

“I’m going to wash,” Harry told Bill, looking down at

his hands, still covered in mud and Dobby’s blood.

“Then 111 need to see them, straightaway.”

He walked into the little kitchen, to the basin beneath

a window overlooking the sea. Dawn was breaking

over the horizon, shell pink and faintly gold, as he

washed, again following the train of thought that had

come to him in the dark garden. ...

Dobby would never be able to tell them who had sent

him to the cellar, but Harry knew what he had seen.

A piercing blue eye had looked out of the mirror

fragment, and then help had come. Help will always

be given at Hog warts to those who ask for it

Harry dried his hands, impervious to the beauty of

the scene outside the window and to the murmuring

of the others in the sitting room. He looked out over

the ocean and felt closer, this dawn, than ever before,

closer to the heart of it all.

Page | 545 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

And still his scar prickled, and he knew that

Voldemort was getting there too. Harry understood

and yet did not understand. His instinct was telling

him one thing, his brain quite another. The

Dumbledore in Harry’s head smiled, surveying Harry

over the tips of his fingers, pressed together as if in

prayer.

You gave Ron the Deluminator. You understood him. . . .

You gave him a way back. . . .

And you understood Wormtail too. ... You knew there

was a bit of regret there, somewhere. ...

And if you knew them ... What did you know about

me, Dumbledore?

Am I meant to know, but not to seek? Did you know

how hard I’d find that? Is that why you made it this

difficult? So I’d have time to work that out?

Harry stood quite still, eyes glazed, watching the place

where a bright gold rim of dazzling sun was rising

over the horizon. Then he looked down at his clean

hands and was momentarily surprised to see the

cloth he was holding in them. He set it down and

returned to the hall, and as he did so, he felt his scar

pulse angrily, and there flashed across his mind, swift

as the reflection of a dragonfly over water, the outline

of a building he knew extremely well.

Bill and Fleur were standing at the foot of the stairs.

“I need to speak to Griphook and Ollivander,” Harry

said.

“No,” said Fleur. “You will ’ave to wait, ’Arry. Zey are

both ill, tired — ”

Page | 546 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I’m sorry,” he said without heat, “but it can’t wait. I

need to talk to them now. Privately — and separately.

It’s urgent.”

“Harry, what the hell’s going on?” asked Bill. “You

turn up here with a dead house-elf and a half-

conscious goblin, Hermione looks as though she’s

been tortured, and Ron’s just refused to tell me

anything — ”

“We can’t tell you what we’re doing,” said Harry flatly.

“You’re in the Order, Bill, you know Dumbledore left

us a mission. We’re not supposed to talk about it to

anyone else.”

Fleur made an impatient noise, but Bill did not look

at her; he was staring at Harry. His deeply scarred

face was hard to read. Finally Bill said, “All right. Who

do you want to talk to first?”

Harry hesitated. He knew what hung on his decision.

There was hardly any time left; now was the moment

to decide: Horcruxes or Hallows?

“Griphook,” Harry said. “I’ll speak to Griphook first.”

His heart was racing as if he had been sprinting and

had just cleared an enormous obstacle.

“Up here, then,” said Bill, leading the way.

Harry had walked up several steps before stopping

and looking back.

“I need you two as well!” he called to Ron and

Hermione, who had been skulking, half concealed, in

the doorway of the sitting room.

They both moved into the light, looking oddly relieved.

Page | 547 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“How are you?” Harry asked Hermione. “You were

amazing — coming up with that story when she was

hurting you like that — ”

Hermione gave a weak smile as Ron gave her a one-

armed squeeze.

“What are we doing now, Harry?” he asked.

“You’ll see. Come on.”

Harry, Ron, and Hermione followed Bill up the steep

stairs onto a small landing. Three doors led off it.

“In here,” said Bill, opening the door into his and

Fleur’s room. It too had a view of the sea, now flecked

with gold in the sunrise. Harry moved to the window,

turned his back on the spectacular view, and waited,

his arms folded, his scar prickling. Hermione took the

chair beside the dressing table; Ron sat on the arm.

Bill reappeared, carrying the little goblin, whom he

set down carefully upon the bed. Griphook grunted

thanks, and Bill left, closing the door upon them all.

“I’m sorry to take you out of bed,” said Harry. “How

are your legs?”

“Painful,” replied the goblin. “But mending.”

He was still clutching the sword of Gryffindor, and

wore a strange look: half truculent, half intrigued.

Harry noted the goblin’s sallow skin, his long thin

fingers, his black eyes. Fleur had removed his shoes:

His long feet were dirty. He was larger than a house-

elf, but not by much. His domed head was much

bigger than a human’s.

“You probably don’t remember — ” Harry began.

Page | 548 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ — that I was the goblin who showed you to your

vault, the first time you ever visited Gringotts?” said

Griphook. “I remember, Harry Potter. Even amongst

goblins, you are very famous.”

Harry and the goblin looked at each other, sizing each

other up. Harry’s scar was still prickling. He wanted

to get through this interview with Griphook quickly,

and at the same time was afraid of making a false

move. While he tried to decide on the best way to

approach his request, the goblin broke the silence.

“You buried the elf,” he said, sounding unexpectedly

rancorous. “I watched you from the window of the

bedroom next door.”

“Yes,” said Harry.

Griphook looked at him out of the corners of his

slanting black eyes.

“You are an unusual wizard, Harry Potter.”

“In what way?” asked Harry, rubbing his scar

absently.

“You dug the grave.”

“So?”

Griphook did not answer. Harry rather thought he

was being sneered at for acting like a Muggle, but it

did not much matter to him whether Griphook

approved of Dobby’s grave or not. He gathered himself

for the attack.

“Griphook, I need to ask — ”

“You also rescued a goblin.”

Page | 549 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“What?”

“You brought me here. Saved me.”

“Well, I take it you’re not sorry?” said Harry a little

impatiently.

“No, Harry Potter,” said Griphook, and with one finger

he twisted the thin black beard upon his chin, “but

you are a very odd wizard.”

“Right,” said Harry. “Well, I need some help,

Griphook, and you can give it to me.”

The goblin made no sign of encouragement, but

continued to frown at Harry as though he had never

seen anything like him.

“I need to break into a Gringotts vault.”

Harry had not meant to say it so baldly; the words

were forced from him as pain shot through his

lightning scar and he saw, again, the outline of

Hogwarts. He closed his mind firmly. He needed to

deal with Griphook first. Ron and Hermione were

staring at Harry as though he had gone mad.

“Harry — ” said Hermione, but she was cut off by

Griphook.

“Break into a Gringotts vault?” repeated the goblin,

wincing a little as he shifted his position upon the

bed. “It is impossible.”

“No, it isn’t,” Ron contradicted him. “It’s been done.”

“Yeah,” said Harry. “The same day I first met you,

Griphook. My birthday, seven years ago.”

Page | 550 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“The vault in question was empty at the time,”

snapped the goblin, and Harry understood that even

though Griphook had left Gringotts, he was offended

at the idea of its defenses being breached. “Its

protection was minimal.”

“Well, the vault we need to get into isn’t empty, and

I’m guessing its protection will be pretty powerful,”

said Harry. “It belongs to the Lestranges.”

He saw Hermione and Ron look at each other,

astonished, but there would be time enough to

explain after Griphook had given his answer.

“You have no chance,” said Griphook flatly. “No

chance at all. If you seek beneath our floors, a

treasure that was never yours — ”

“Thief you have been warned, beware — yeah, I

know, I remember,” said Harry. “But I’m not trying to

get myself any treasure, I’m not trying to take

anything for personal gain. Can you believe that?”

The goblin looked slantwise at Harry, and the

lightning scar on Harry’s forehead prickled, but he

ignored it, refusing to acknowledge its pain or its

invitation.

“If there was a wizard of whom I would believe that

they did not seek personal gain,” said Griphook

finally, “it would be you, Harry Potter. Goblins and

elves are not used to the protection or the respect

that you have shown this night. Not from wand-

carriers.”

“Wand-carriers,” repeated Harry: The phrase fell oddly

upon his ears as his scar prickled, as Voldemort

turned his thoughts northward, and as Harry burned

to question Ollivander next door.

Page | 551 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“The right to carry a wand,” said the goblin quietly,

“has long been contested between wizards and

goblins.”

“Well, goblins can do magic without wands,” said

Ron.

“That is immaterial! Wizards refuse to share the

secrets of wand-lore with other magical beings, they

deny us the possibility of extending our powers!”

“Well, goblins won’t share any of their magic either,”

said Ron. “You won’t tell us how to make swords and

armor the way you do. Goblins know how to work

metal in a way wizards have never — ”

“It doesn’t matter,” said Harry, noting Griphook’s

rising color. “This isn’t about wizards versus goblins

or any other sort of magical creature — ”

Griphook gave a nasty laugh.

“But it is, it is about precisely that! As the Dark Lord

becomes ever more powerful, your race is set still

more firmly above mine! Gringotts falls under

Wizarding rule, house-elves are slaughtered, and who

amongst the wand-carriers protests?”

“We do!” said Hermione. She had sat up straight, her

eyes bright. “We protest! And I’m hunted quite as

much as any goblin or elf, Griphook! I’m a Mudblood!”

“Don’t call yourself — ” Ron muttered.

“Why shouldn’t I?” said Hermione. “Mudblood, and

proud of it! I’ve got no higher position under this new

order than you have, Griphook! It was me they chose

to torture, back at the Malfoys’!”

Page | 552 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

As she spoke, she pulled aside the neck of the

dressing gown to reveal the thin cut Bellatrix had

made, scarlet against her throat.

“Did you know that it was Harry who set Dobby free?”

she asked. “Did you know that we’ve wanted elves to

be freed for years?” (Ron fidgeted uncomfortably on

the arm of Hermione’s chair.) “You can’t want You-

Know-Who defeated more than we do, Griphook!”

The goblin gazed at Hermione with the same curiosity

he had shown Harry.

“What do you seek within the Lestranges’ vault?” he

asked abruptly. “The sword that lies inside it is a

fake. This is the real one.” He looked from one to the

other of them. “I think that you already know this.

You asked me to lie for you back there.”

“But the fake sword isn’t the only thing in that vault,

is it?” asked Harry. “Perhaps you’ve seen the other

things in there?”

His heart was pounding harder than ever. He

redoubled his efforts to ignore the pulsing of his scar.

The goblin twisted his beard around his finger again.

“It is against our code to speak of the secrets of

Gringotts. We are the guardians of fabulous

treasures. We have a duty to the objects placed in our

care, which were, so often, wrought by our fingers.”

The goblin stroked the sword, and his black eyes

roved from Harry to Hermione to Ron and then back

again.

“So young,” he said finally, “to be fighting so many.”

Page | 553 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Will you help us?” said Harry. “We haven’t got a hope

of breaking in without a goblin’s help. You’re our one

chance.”

“I shall ... think about it,” said Griphook

maddeningly.

“But — ” Ron started angrily; Hermione nudged him in

the ribs.

“Thank you,” said Harry.

The goblin bowed his great domed head in

acknowledgement, then flexed his short legs.

“I think,” he said, settling himself ostentatiously upon

Bill and Fleur’s bed, “that the Skele-Gro has finished

its work. I may be able to sleep at last. Forgive me. ...”

“Yeah, of course,” said Harry, but before leaving the

room he leaned forward and took the sword of

Gryffindor from beside the goblin. Griphook did not

protest, but Harry thought he saw resentment in the

goblin’s eyes as he closed the door upon him.

“Little git,” whispered Ron. “He’s enjoying keeping us

hanging.”

“Harry,” whispered Hermione, pulling them both away

from the door, into the middle of the still-dark

landing, “are you saying what I think you’re saying?

Are you saying there’s a Horcrux in the Lestranges’

vault?”

“Yes,” said Harry. “Bellatrix was terrified when she

thought we’d been in there, she was beside herself.

Why? What did she think we’d seen, what else did she

think we might have taken? Something she was

petrified You-Know-Who would find out about.”

Page | 554 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But I thought we were looking for places You-Know-

Who’s been, places he’s done something important?”

said Ron, looking baffled. “Was he ever inside the

Lestranges’ vault?”

“I don’t know whether he was ever inside Gringotts,”

said Harry. “He never had gold there when he was

younger, because nobody left him anything. He would

have seen the bank from the outside, though, the first

time he ever went to Diagon Alley.”

Harry’s scar throbbed, but he ignored it; he wanted

Ron and Hermione to understand about Gringotts

before they spoke to Ollivander.

“I think he would have envied anyone who had a key

to a Gringotts vault. I think he’d have seen it as a real

symbol of belonging to the Wizarding world. And don’t

forget, he trusted Bellatrix and her husband. They

were his most devoted servants before he fell, and

they went looking for him after he vanished. He said it

the night he came back, I heard him.”

Harry rubbed his scar.

“I don’t think he’d have told Bellatrix it was a

Horcrux, though. He never told Lucius Malfoy the

truth about the diary. He probably told her it was a

treasured possession and asked her to place it in her

vault. The safest place in the world for anything you

want to hide, Hagrid told me ... except for Hogwarts.”

When Harry had finished speaking, Ron shook his

head.

“You really understand him.”

Page | 555 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Bits of him,” said Harry. “Bits ... I just wish I’d

understood Dumbledore as much. But well see.

Come on — Ollivander now.”

Ron and Hermione looked bewildered but impressed

as they followed him across the little landing and

knocked upon the door opposite Bill and Fleur’s. A

weak “Come in!” answered them.

The wandmaker was lying on the twin bed farthest

from the window. He had been held in the cellar for

more than a year, and tortured, Harry knew, on at

least one occasion. He was emaciated, the bones of

his face sticking out sharply against the yellowish

skin. His great silver eyes seemed vast in their

sunken sockets. The hands that lay upon the blanket

could have belonged to a skeleton. Harry sat down on

the empty bed, beside Ron and Hermione. The rising

sun was not visible here. The room faced the cliff- top

garden and the freshly dug grave.

“Mr. Ollivander, I’m sorry to disturb you,” Harry said.

“My dear boy.” Ollivander’s voice was feeble. “You

rescued us. I thought we would die in that place. I

can never thank you ... never thank you ... enough.”

“We were glad to do it.”

Harry’s scar throbbed. He knew, he was certain, that

there was hardly any time left in which to beat

Voldemort to his goal, or else to attempt to thwart

him. He felt a flutter of panic ... yet he had made his

decision when he chose to speak to Griphook first.

Feigning a calm he did not feel, he groped in the

pouch around his neck and took out the two halves of

his broken wand.

“Mr. Ollivander, I need some help.”

Page | 556 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Anything. Anything,” said the wandmaker weakly.

“Can you mend this? Is it possible?”

Ollivander held out a trembling hand, and Harry

placed the two barely connected halves into his palm.

“Holly and phoenix feather,” said Ollivander in a

tremulous voice. “Eleven inches. Nice and supple.”

“Yes,” said Harry. “Can you — ?”

“No,” whispered Ollivander. “I am sorry, very sorry,

but a wand that has suffered this degree of damage

cannot be repaired by any means that I know of.”

Harry had been braced to hear it, but it was a blow

nevertheless. He took the wand halves back and

replaced them in the pouch around his neck.

Ollivander stared at the place where the shattered

wand had vanished, and did not look away until

Harry had taken from his pocket the two wands he

had brought from the Malfoys’.

“Can you identify these?” Harry asked.

The wandmaker took the first of the wands and held

it close to his faded eyes, rolling it between his

knobble-knuckled fingers, flexing it slightly.

“Walnut and dragon heartstring,” he said. “Twelve-

and-three-quarter inches. Unyielding. This wand

belonged to Bellatrix Lestrange.”

“And this one?”

Ollivander performed the same examination.

Page | 557 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Hawthorn and unicorn hair. Ten inches precisely.

Reasonably springy. This was the wand of Draco

Malfoy.”

“Was?” repeated Harry. “Isn’t it still his?”

“Perhaps not. If you took it — ”

“— I did — ”

“ — then it may be yours. Of course, the manner of

taking matters. Much also depends upon the wand

itself. In general, however, where a wand has been

won, its allegiance will change.”

There was silence in the room, except for the distant

rushing of the sea.

“You talk about wands like they’ve got feelings,” said

Harry, “like they can think for themselves.”

“The wand chooses the wizard,” said Ollivander. “That

much has always been clear to those of us who have

studied wandlore.”

“A person can still use a wand that hasn’t chosen

them, though?” asked Harry.

“Oh yes, if you are any wizard at all you will be able to

channel your magic through almost any instrument.

The best results, however, must always come where

there is the strongest affinity between wizard and

wand. These connections are complex. An initial

attraction, and then a mutual quest for experience,

the wand learning from the wizard, the wizard from

the wand.”

The sea gushed forward and backward; it was a

mournful sound.

Page | 558 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I took this wand from Draco Malfoy by force,” said

Harry. “Can I use it safely?”

“I think so. Subtle laws govern wand ownership, but

the conquered wand will usually bend its will to its

new master.”

“So I should use this one?” said Ron, pulling

Wormtail’s wand out of his pocket and handing it to

Ollivander.

“Chestnut and dragon heartstring. Nine-and-a-

quarter inches. Brittle. I was forced to make this

shortly after my kidnapping, for Peter Pettigrew. Yes,

if you won it, it is more likely to do your bidding, and

do it well, than another wand.”

“And this holds true for all wands, does it?” asked

Harry.

“I think so,” replied Ollivander, his protuberant eyes

upon Harry’s face. “You ask deep questions, Mr.

Potter. Wandlore is a complex and mysterious branch

of magic.”

“So, it isn’t necessary to kill the previous owner to

take true possession of a wand?” asked Harry.

Ollivander swallowed.

“Necessary? No, I should not say that it is necessary

to kill.”

“There are legends, though,” said Harry, and as his

heart rate quickened, the pain in his scar became

more intense; he was sure that Voldemort had

decided to put his idea into action. “Legends about a

wand — or wands — that have passed from hand to

hand by murder.”

Page | 559 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ollivander turned pale. Against the snowy pillow he

was light gray, and his eyes were enormous,

bloodshot, and bulging with what looked like fear.

“Only one wand, I think,” he whispered.

“And You-Know-Who is interested in it, isn’t he?”

asked Harry.

“I — how?” croaked Ollivander, and he looked

appealingly at Ron and Hermione for help. “How do

you know this?”

“He wanted you to tell him how to overcome the

connection between our wands,” said Harry.

Ollivander looked terrified.

“He tortured me, you must understand that! The

Cruciatus Curse, I — I had no choice but to tell him

what I knew, what I guessed!”

“I understand,” said Harry. “You told him about the

twin cores? You said he just had to borrow another

wizard’s wand?”

Ollivander looked horrified, transfixed, by the amount

that Harry knew. He nodded slowly.

“But it didn’t work,” Harry went on. “Mine still beat

the borrowed wand. Do you know why that is?”

Ollivander shook his head as slowly as he had just

nodded.

“I had ... never heard of such a thing. Your wand

performed something unique that night. The

connection of the twin cores is incredibly rare, yet

Page | 560 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

why your wand should have snapped the borrowed

wand, I do not know. ...”

“We were talking about the other wand, the wand that

changes hands by murder. When You-Know-Who

realized my wand had done something strange, he

came back and asked about that other wand, didn’t

he?”

“How do you know this?”

Harry did not answer.

“Yes, he asked,” whispered Ollivander. “He wanted to

know everything I could tell him about the wand

variously known as the Deathstick, the Wand of

Destiny, or the Elder Wand.”

Harry glanced sideways at Hermione. She looked

flabbergasted.

“The Dark Lord,” said Ollivander in hushed and

frightened tones, “had always been happy with the

wand I made him — yew and phoenix feather,

thirteen-and-a-half inches — until he discovered the

connection of the twin cores. Now he seeks another,

more powerful wand, as the only way to conquer

yours.”

“But he’ll know soon, if he doesn’t already, that

mine’s broken beyond repair,” said Harry quietly.

“No!” said Hermione, sounding frightened. “He can’t

know that, Harry, how could he — ?”

“Priori Incantatem,” said Harry. “We left your wand

and the blackthorn wand at the Malfoys’, Hermione. If

they examine them properly, make them re-create the

spells they’ve cast lately, they’ll see that yours broke

Page | 561 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

mine, they’ll see that you tried and failed to mend it,

and they’ll realize that I’ve been using the blackthorn

one ever since.”

The little color she had regained since their arrival

had drained from her face. Ron gave Harry a

reproachful look, and said, “Let’s not worry about

that now — ”

But Mr. Ollivander intervened.

“The Dark Lord no longer seeks the Elder Wand only

for your destruction, Mr. Potter. He is determined to

possess it because he believes it will make him truly

invulnerable.”

“And will it?”

“The owner of the Elder Wand must always fear

attack,” said Ollivander, “but the idea of the Dark

Lord in possession of the Deathstick is, I must admit

... formidable.”

Harry was suddenly reminded of how he had been

unsure, when they first met, of how much he liked

Ollivander. Even now, having been tortured and

imprisoned by Voldemort, the idea of the Dark wizard

in possession of this wand seemed to enthrall him as

much as it repulsed him.

“You — you really think this wand exists, then, Mr.

Ollivander?” asked Hermione.

“Oh yes,” said Ollivander. “Yes, it is perfectly possible

to trace the wand’s course through history. There are

gaps, of course, and long ones, where it vanishes from

view, temporarily lost or hidden; but always it

resurfaces. It has certain identifying characteristics

that those who are learned in wandlore recognize.

Page | 562 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There are written accounts, some of them obscure,

that I and other wandmakers have made it our

business to study. They have the ring of authenticity.”

“So you — you don’t think it can be a fairy tale or a

myth?” Hermione asked hopefully.

“No,” said Ollivander. “Whether it needs to pass by

murder, I do not know. Its history is bloody, but that

may be simply due to the fact that it is such a

desirable object, and arouses such passions in

wizards. Immensely powerful, dangerous in the wrong

hands, and an object of incredible fascination to all of

us who study the power of wands.”

“Mr. Ollivander,” said Harry, “you told You-Know-Who

that Gregorovitch had the Elder Wand, didn’t you?”

Ollivander turned, if possible, even paler. He looked

ghostly as he gulped.

“But how — how do you — ?”

“Never mind how I know it,” said Harry, closing his

eyes momentarily as his scar burned and he saw, for

mere seconds, a vision of the main street in

Hogsmeade, still dark, because it was so much

farther north. “You told You-Know-Who that

Gregorovitch had the wand?”

“It was a rumor,” whispered Ollivander. “A rumor,

years and years ago, long before you were born! I

believe Gregorovitch himself started it. You can see

how good it would be for business: that he was

studying and duplicating the qualities of the Elder

Wand!”

“Yes, I can see that,” said Harry. He stood up. “Mr.

Ollivander, one last thing, and then we’ll let you get

Page | 563 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

some rest. What do you know about the Deathly

Hallows?”

“The — the what?” asked the wandmaker, looking

utterly bewildered.

“The Deathly Hallows.”

“I’m afraid I don’t know what you’re talking about. Is

this still something to do with wands?”

Harry looked into the sunken face and believed that

Ollivander was not acting. He did not know about the

Hallows.

“Thank you,” said Harry. “Thank you very much. We’ll

leave you to get some rest now.”

Ollivander looked stricken.

“He was torturing me!” he gasped. “The Cruciatus

Curse ... you have no idea. ...”

“I do,” said Harry. “I really do. Please get some rest.

Thank you for telling me all of this.”

He led Ron and Hermione down the staircase. Harry

caught a glimpse of Bill, Fleur, Luna, and Dean

sitting at the table in the kitchen, cups of tea in front

of them. They all looked up at Harry as he appeared

in the doorway, but he merely nodded to them and

continued into the garden, Ron and Hermione behind

him. The reddish mound of earth that covered Dobby

lay ahead, and Harry walked back to it, as the pain in

his head built more and more powerfully. It was a

huge effort now to close down the visions that were

forcing themselves upon him, but he knew that he

would have to resist only a little longer. He would

yield very soon, because he needed to know that his

Page | 564 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

theory was right. He must make only one more short

effort, so that he could explain to Ron and Hermione.

“Gregorovitch had the Elder Wand a long time ago,”

he said. “I saw You-Know-Who trying to find him.

When he tracked him down, he found that

Gregorovitch didn’t have it anymore: It was stolen

from him by Grindelwald. How Grindelwald found out

that Gregorovitch had it, I don’t know — but if

Gregorovitch was stupid enough to spread the rumor,

it can’t have been that difficult.”

Voldemort was at the gates of Hogwarts; Harry could

see him standing there, and see too the lamp bobbing

in the pre-dawn, coming closer and closer.

“And Grindelwald used the Elder Wand to become

powerful. And at the height of his power, when

Dumbledore knew he was the only one who could

stop him, he dueled Grindelwald and beat him, and

he took the Elder Wand.”

“Dumbledore had the Elder Wand?” said Ron. “But

then — where is it now?”

“At Hogwarts,” said Harry, fighting to remain with

them in the cliff-top garden.

“But then, let’s go!” said Ron urgently. “Harry, let’s go

and get it before he does!”

“It’s too late for that,” said Harry. He could not help

himself, but clutched his head, trying to help it resist.

“He knows where it is. He’s there now.”

“Harry!” Ron said furiously. “How long have you

known this — why have we been wasting time? Why

did you talk to Griphook first? We could have gone —

we could still go — ”

Page | 565 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No,” said Harry, and he sank to his knees in the

grass. “Hermione’s right. Dumbledore didn’t want me

to have it. He didn’t want me to take it. He wanted me

to get the Horcruxes.”

“The unbeatable wand, Harry!” moaned Ron.

“I’m not supposed to ... I’m supposed to get the

Horcruxes. ...”

And now everything was cool and dark: The sun was

barely visible over the horizon as he glided alongside

Snape, up through the grounds toward the lake.

“I shall join you in the castle shortly,” he said in his

high, cold voice. “Leave me now.”

Snape bowed and set off back up the path, his black

cloak billowing behind him. Harry walked slowly,

waiting for Snape ’s figure to disappear. It would not

do for Snape, or indeed anyone else, to see where he

was going. But there were no lights in the castle

windows, and he could conceal himself ... and in a

second he had cast upon himself a Disillusionment

Charm that hid him even from his own eyes.

And he walked on, around the edge of the lake, taking

in the outlines of the beloved castle, his first kingdom,

his birthright. ...

And here it was, beside the lake, reflected in the dark

waters. The white marble tomb, an unnecessary blot

on the familiar landscape. He felt again that rush of

controlled euphoria, that heady sense of purpose in

destruction. He raised the old yew wand: How fitting

that this would be its last great act.

Page | 566 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The tomb split open from head to foot. The shrouded

figure was as long and thin as it had been in life. He

raised the wand again.

The wrappings fell open. The face was translucent,

pale, sunken, yet almost perfectly preserved. They

had left his spectacles on the crooked nose: He felt

amused derision. Dumbledore’s hands were folded

upon his chest, and there it lay, clutched beneath

them, buried with him.

Had the old fool imagined that marble or death would

protect the wand? Had he thought that the Dark Lord

would be scared to violate his tomb? The spiderlike

hand swooped and pulled the wand from

Dumbledore’s grasp, and as he took it, a shower of

sparks flew from its tip, sparkling over the corpse of

its last owner, ready to serve a new master at last.

Page | 567 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

SHELL COTTAGE

Bill and Fleur’s cottage stood alone on a cliff

overlooking the sea, its walls embedded with shells

and whitewashed. It was a lonely and beautiful place.

Wherever Harry went inside the tiny cottage or its

garden, he could hear the constant ebb and flow of

the sea, like the breathing of some great, slumbering

creature. He spent much of the next few days making

excuses to escape the crowded cottage, craving the

cliff-top view of open sky and wide, empty sea, and

the feel of cold, salty wind on his face.

The enormity of his decision not to race Voldemort to

the wand still scared Harry. He could not remember,

ever before, choosing not to act. He was full of doubts,

doubts that Ron could not help voicing whenever they

were together.

“What if Dumbledore wanted us to work out the

symbol in time to get the wand?” “What if working out

what the symbol meant made you ‘worthy’ to get the

Hallows?” “Harry, if that really is the Elder Wand,

how the hell are we supposed to finish off You-Know-

Page | 568 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Who?” Harry had no answers: There were moments

when he wondered whether it had been outright

madness not to try to prevent Voldemort breaking

open the tomb. He could not even explain

satisfactorily why he had decided against it: Every

time he tried to reconstruct the internal arguments

that had led to his decision, they sounded feebler to

him.

The odd thing was that Hermione’s support made him

feel just as confused as Ron’s doubts. Now forced to

accept that the Elder Wand was real, she maintained

that it was an evil object, and that the way Voldemort

had taken possession of it was repellent, not to be

considered.

“You could never have done that, Harry,” she said

again and again. “You couldn’t have broken into

Dumbledore’s grave.”

But the idea of Dumbledore’s corpse frightened Harry

much less than the possibility that he might have

misunderstood the living Dumbledore’s intentions. He

felt that he was still groping in the dark; he had

chosen his path but kept looking back, wondering

whether he had misread the signs, whether he should

not have taken the other way. From time to time,

anger at Dumbledore crashed over him again,

powerful as the waves slamming themselves against

the cliff beneath the cottage, anger that Dumbledore

had not explained before he died.

“But is he dead?” said Ron, three days after they had

arrived at the cottage. Harry had been staring out

over the wall that separated the cottage garden from

the cliff when Ron and Hermione had found him; he

wished they had not, having no wish to join in with

their argument.

Page | 569 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Yes, he is, Ron, please don’t start that again!”

“Look at the facts, Hermione,” said Ron, speaking

across Harry, who continued to gaze at the horizon.

“The silver doe. The sword. The eye Harry saw in the

mirror — ”

“Harry admits he could have imagined the eye! Don’t

you, Harry?”

“I could have,” said Harry without looking at her.

“But you don’t think you did, do you?” asked Ron.

“No, I don’t,” said Harry.

“There you go!” said Ron quickly, before Hermione

could carry on. “If it wasn’t Dumbledore, explain how

Dobby knew we were in the cellar, Hermione?”

“I can’t — but can you explain how Dumbledore sent

him to us if he’s lying in a tomb at Hogwarts?”

“I dunno, it could’ve been his ghost!”

“Dumbledore wouldn’t come back as a ghost,” said

Harry. There was little about Dumbledore he was sure

of now, but he knew that much. “He would have gone

on.”

“What d’you mean, ‘gone on’?” asked Ron, but before

Harry could say any more, a voice behind them said, “

’Arry?”

Fleur had come out of the cottage, her long silver hair

flying in the breeze.

Page | 570 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ ’Arry, Grip’ook would like to speak to you. ’E eez in

ze smallest bedroom, ’e says ’e does not want to be

over’eard.”

Her dislike of the goblin sending her to deliver

messages was clear; she looked irritable as she

walked back around the house.

Griphook was waiting for them, as Fleur had said, in

the tiniest of the cottage’s three bedrooms, in which

Hermione and Luna slept by night. He had drawn the

red cotton curtains against the bright, cloudy sky,

which gave the room a fiery glow at odds with the rest

of the airy, light cottage.

“I have reached my decision, Harry Potter,” said the

goblin, who was sitting cross-legged in a low chair,

drumming its arms with his spindly fingers. “Though

the goblins of Gringotts will consider it base

treachery, I have decided to help you — ”

“That’s great!” said Harry, relief surging through him.

“Griphook, thank you, we’re really — ”

“ — in return,” said the goblin firmly, “for payment.”

Slightly taken aback, Harry hesitated.

“How much do you want? I’ve got gold.”

“Not gold,” said Griphook. “I have gold.”

His black eyes glittered; there were no whites to his

eyes.

“I want the sword. The sword of Godric Gryffindor.”

Harry’s spirits plummeted.

Page | 571 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You can’t have that,” he said. “I’m sorry.”

“Then,” said the goblin softly, “we have a problem.”

“We can give you something else,” said Ron eagerly.

“I’ll bet the Lestranges have got loads of stuff, you can

take your pick once we get into the vault.”

He had said the wrong thing. Griphook flushed

angrily.

“I am not a thief, boy! I am not trying to procure

treasures to which I have no right!”

“The sword’s ours — ”

“It is not,” said the goblin.

“We’re Gryffindors, and it was Godric Gryffindor’s — ”

“And before it was Gryffindor’s, whose was it?”

demanded the goblin, sitting up straight.

“No one’s,” said Ron. “It was made for him, wasn’t it?”

“No!” cried the goblin, bristling with anger as he

pointed a long finger at Ron. “Wizarding arrogance

again! That sword was Ragnuk the First’s, taken from

him by Godric Gryffindor! It is a lost treasure, a

masterpiece of goblinwork! It belongs with the

goblins! The sword is the price of my hire, take it or

leave it!”

Griphook glared at them. Harry glanced at the other

two, then said, “We need to discuss this, Griphook, if

that’s all right. Could you give us a few minutes?”

The goblin nodded, looking sour.

Page | 572 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Downstairs in the empty sitting room, Harry walked

to the fireplace, brow furrowed, trying to think what

to do. Behind him, Ron said, “He’s having a laugh. We

can’t let him have that sword.”

“It is true?” Harry asked Hermione. “Was the sword

stolen by Gryffindor?”

“I don’t know,” she said hopelessly. “Wizarding history

often skates over what the wizards have done to other

magical races, but there’s no account that I know of

that says Gryffindor stole the sword.”

“It’ll be one of those goblin stories,” said Ron, “about

how the wizards are always trying to get one over on

them. I suppose we should think ourselves lucky he

hasn’t asked for one of our wands.”

“Goblins have got good reason to dislike wizards,

Ron,” said Hermione. “They’ve been treated brutally in

the past.”

“Goblins aren’t exactly fluffy little bunnies, though,

are they?” said Ron. “They’ve killed plenty of us.

They’ve fought dirty too.”

“But arguing with Griphook about whose race is most

underhanded and violent isn’t going to make him

more likely to help us, is it?”

There was a pause while they tried to think of a way

around the problem. Harry looked out of the window

at Dobby’s grave. Luna was arranging sea lavender in

a jam jar beside the headstone.

“Okay,” said Ron, and Harry turned back to face him,

“how’s this? We tell Griphook we need the sword until

we get inside the vault, and then he can have it.

Page | 573 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There’s a fake in there, isn’t there? We switch them,

and give him the fake.”

“Ron, he’d know the difference better than we would!”

said Hermione. “He’s the only one who realized there

had been a swap!”

“Yeah, but we could scarper before he realizes — ”

He quailed beneath the look Hermione was giving

him.

“That,” she said quietly, “is despicable. Ask for his

help, then double-cross him? And you wonder why

goblins don’t like wizards, Ron?”

Ron’s ears had turned red.

“All right, all right! It was the only thing I could think

of! What’s your solution, then?”

“We need to offer him something else, something just

as valuable.”

“Brilliant. I’ll go and get one of our other ancient

goblin-made swords and you can gift wrap it.”

Silence fell between them again. Harry was sure that

the goblin would accept nothing but the sword, even

if they had something as valuable to offer him. Yet the

sword was their one, indispensable weapon against

the Horcruxes.

He closed his eyes for a moment or two and listened

to the rush of the sea. The idea that Gryffindor might

have stolen the sword was unpleasant to him: He had

always been proud to be a Gryffindor; Gryffindor had

been the champion of Muggle-borns, the wizard who

had clashed with the pureblood-loving Slytherin. ...

Page | 574 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Maybe he’s lying,” Harry said, opening his eyes

again. “Griphook. Maybe Gryffindor didn’t take the

sword. How do we know the goblin version of history’s

right?”

“Does it make a difference?” asked Hermione.

“Changes how I feel about it,” said Harry.

He took a deep breath.

“Well tell him he can have the sword after he’s helped

us get into that vault — but we’ll be careful to avoid

telling him exactly when he can have it.”

A grin spread slowly across Ron’s face. Hermione,

however, looked alarmed.

“Harry, we can’t — ”

“He can have it,” Harry went on, “after we’ve used it

on all of the Horcruxes. I’ll make sure he gets it then.

I’ll keep my word.”

“But that could be years!” said Hermione.

“I know that, but he needn’t. I won’t be lying ...

really.”

Harry met her eyes with a mixture of defiance and

shame. He remembered the words that had been

engraved over the gateway to Nurmengard: FOR THE

GREATER GOOD. He pushed the idea away. What

choice did they have?

“I don’t like it,” said Hermione.

“Nor do I, much,” Harry admitted.

Page | 575 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Well, I think it’s genius,” said Ron, standing up

again. “Let’s go and tell him.”

Back in the smallest bedroom, Harry made the offer,

careful to phrase it so as not to give any definite time

for the handover of the sword. Hermione frowned at

the floor while he was speaking; he felt irritated at

her, afraid that she might give the game away.

However, Griphook had eyes for nobody but Harry.

“I have your word, Harry Potter, that you will give me

the sword of Gryffindor if I help you?”

“Yes,” said Harry.

“Then shake,” said the goblin, holding out his hand.

Harry took it and shook. He wondered whether those

black eyes saw any misgivings in his own. Then

Griphook relinquished him, clapped his hands

together, and said, “So. We begin!”

It was like planning to break into the Ministry all over

again. They settled to work in the smallest bedroom,

which was kept, according to Griphook’s preference,

in semidarkness.

“I have visited the Lestranges’ vault only once,”

Griphook told them, “on the occasion I was told to

place inside it the false sword. It is one of the most

ancient chambers. The oldest Wizarding families store

their treasures at the deepest level, where the vaults

are largest and best protected. ...”

They remained shut in the cupboardlike room for

hours at a time. Slowly the days stretched into weeks.

There was problem after problem to overcome, not

least of which was that their store of Polyjuice Potion

was greatly depleted.

Page | 576 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“There’s really only enough left for one of us,” said

Hermione, tilting the thick mudlike potion against the

lamplight.

“That’ll be enough,” said Harry, who was examining

Griphook’s hand-drawn map of the deepest

passageways.

The other inhabitants of Shell Cottage could hardly

fail to notice that something was going on now that

Harry, Ron, and Hermione only emerged for

mealtimes. Nobody asked questions, although Harry

often felt Bill’s eyes on the three of them at the table,

thoughtful, concerned.

The longer they spent together, the more Harry

realized that he did not much like the goblin.

Griphook was unexpectedly bloodthirsty, laughed at

the idea of pain in lesser creatures, and seemed to

relish the possibility that they might have to hurt

other wizards to reach the Lestranges’ vault. Harry

could tell that his distaste was shared by the other

two, but they did not discuss it: They needed

Griphook.

The goblin ate only grudgingly with the rest of them.

Even after his legs had mended, he continued to

request trays of food in his room, like the still-frail

Ollivander, until Bill (following an angry outburst

from Fleur) went upstairs to tell him that the

arrangement could not continue. Thereafter Griphook

joined them at the overcrowded table, although he

refused to eat the same food, insisting, instead, on

lumps of raw meat, roots, and various fungi.

Harry felt responsible: It was, after all, he who had

insisted that the goblin remain at Shell Cottage so

that he could question him; his fault that the whole

Page | 577 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Weasley family had been driven into hiding, that Bill,

Fred, George, and Mr. Weasley could no longer work.

“I’m sorry,” he told Fleur, one blustery April evening

as he helped her prepare dinner. “I never meant you

to have to deal with all of this.”

She had just set some knives to work, chopping up

steaks for Griphook and Bill, who had preferred his

meat bloody ever since he had been attacked by

Greyback. While the knives sliced away behind her,

her somewhat irritable expression softened.

“ ’Arry, you saved my sister’s life, I do not forget.”

This was not, strictly speaking, true, but Harry

decided against reminding her that Gabrielle had

never been in real danger.

“Anyway,” Fleur went on, pointing her wand at a pot

of sauce on the stove, which began to bubble at once,

“Mr. Ollivander leaves for Muriel’s zis evening. Zat will

make zings easier. Ze goblin,” she scowled a little at

the mention of him, “can move downstairs, and you,

Ron, and Dean can take zat room.”

“We don’t mind sleeping in the living room,” said

Harry, who knew that Griphook would think poorly of

having to sleep on the sofa; keeping Griphook happy

was essential to their plans. “Don’t worry about us.”

And when she tried to protest he went on, “We’ll be off

your hands soon too, Ron, Hermione, and I. We won’t

need to be here much longer.”

“But what do you mean?” she said, frowning at him,

her wand pointing at the casserole dish now

suspended in midair. “Of course you must not leave,

you are safe ’ere!”

Page | 578 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

She looked rather like Mrs. Weasley as she said it,

and he was glad that the back door opened at that

moment. Luna and Dean entered, their hair damp

from the rain outside and their arms full of driftwood.

"... and tiny little ears,” Luna was saying, “a bit like a

hippo’s, Daddy says, only purple and hairy. And if

you want to call them, you have to hum; they prefer a

waltz, nothing too fast. ...”

Looking uncomfortable, Dean shrugged at Harry as

he passed, following Luna into the combined dining

and sitting room where Ron and Hermione were

laying the dinner table. Seizing the chance to escape

Fleur’s questions, Harry grabbed two jugs of pumpkin

juice and followed them.

"... and if you ever come to our house I’ll be able to

show you the horn, Daddy wrote to me about it but I

haven’t seen it yet, because the Death Eaters took me

from the Hogwarts Express and I never got home for

Christmas,” Luna was saying, as she and Dean relaid

the fire.

“Luna, we told you,” Hermione called over to her.

“That horn exploded. It came from an Erumpent, not

a Crumple-Horned Snorkack — ”

“No, it was definitely a Snorkack horn,” said Luna

serenely. “Daddy told me. It will probably have re-

formed by now, they mend themselves, you know.”

Hermione shook her head and continued laying down

forks as Bill appeared, leading Mr. Ollivander down

the stairs. The wandmaker still looked exceptionally

frail, and he clung to Bill’s arm as the latter

supported him, carrying a large suitcase.

Page | 579 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

‘Tm going to miss you, Mr. Ollivander,” said Luna,

approaching the old man.

“And I you, my dear,” said Ollivander, patting her on

the shoulder. “You were an inexpressible comfort to

me in that terrible place.”

“So, au revoir, Mr. Ollivander,” said Fleur, kissing him

on both cheeks. “And I wonder whezzer you could

oblige me by delivering a package to Bill’s Auntie

Muriel? I never returned ’er tiara.”

“It will be an honor,” said Ollivander with a little bow,

“the very least I can do in return for your generous

hospitality.”

Fleur drew out a worn velvet case, which she opened

to show the wandmaker. The tiara sat glittering and

twinkling in the light from the low-hanging lamp.

“Moonstones and diamonds,” said Griphook, who had

sidled into the room without Harry noticing. “Made by

goblins, I think?”

“And paid for by wizards,” said Bill quietly, and the

goblin shot him a look that was both furtive and

challenging.

A strong wind gusted against the cottage windows as

Bill and Ollivander set off into the night. The rest of

them squeezed in around the table; elbow to elbow

and with barely enough room to move, they started to

eat. The fire crackled and popped in the grate beside

them. Fleur, Harry noticed, was merely playing with

her food; she glanced at the window every few

minutes; however, Bill returned before they had

finished their first course, his long hair tangled by the

wind.

Page | 580 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Everything’s fine,” he told Fleur. “Ollivander settled

in, Mum and Dad say hello. Ginny sends you all her

love. Fred and George are driving Muriel up the wall,

they’re still operating an Owl-Order business out of

her back room. It cheered her up to have her tiara

back, though. She said she thought we’d stolen it.”

“Ah, she eez charmante, your aunt,” said Fleur

crossly, waving her wand and causing the dirty plates

to rise and form a stack in midair. She caught them

and marched out of the room.

“Daddy’s made a tiara,” piped up Luna. “Well, more of

a crown, really.”

Ron caught Harry’s eye and grinned; Harry knew that

he was remembering the ludicrous headdress they

had seen on their visit to Xenophilius.

“Yes, he’s trying to re-create the lost diadem of

Ravenclaw. He thinks he’s identified most of the main

elements now. Adding the billywig wings really made

a difference — ”

There was a bang on the front door. Everyone’s head

turned toward it. Fleur came running out of the

kitchen, looking frightened; Bill jumped to his feet,

his wand pointing at the door; Harry, Ron, and

Hermione did the same. Silently Griphook slipped

beneath the table, out of sight.

“Who is it?” Bill called.

“It is I, Remus John Lupin!” called a voice over the

howling wind. Harry experienced a thrill of fear; what

had happened? “I am a werewolf, married to

Nymphadora Tonks, and you, the Secret-Keeper of

Shell Cottage, told me the address and bade me come

in an emergency!”

Page | 581 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Lupin,” muttered Bill, and he ran to the door and

wrenched it open.

Lupin fell over the threshold. He was white-faced,

wrapped in a traveling cloak, his graying hair

windswept. He straightened up, looked around the

room, making sure of who was there, then cried

aloud, “It’s a boy! We’ve named him Ted, after Dora’s

father!”

Hermione shrieked.

“Wha — ? Tonks — Tonks has had the baby?”

“Yes, yes, she’s had the baby!” shouted Lupin. All

around the table came cries of delight, sighs of relief:

Hermione and Fleur both squealed,

“Congratulations!” and Ron said, “Blimey, a baby!” as

if he had never heard of such a thing before.

“Yes — yes — a boy,” said Lupin again, who seemed

dazed by his own happiness. He strode around the

table and hugged Harry; the scene in the basement of

Grimmauld Place might never have happened.

“You’ll be godfather?” he said as he released Harry.

“M-me?” stammered Harry

“You, yes, of course — Dora quite agrees, no one

better — ”

“I — yeah — blimey — ”

Harry felt overwhelmed, astonished, delighted; now

Bill was hurrying to fetch wine, and Fleur was

persuading Lupin to join them for a drink.

Page | 582 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I can’t stay long, I must get back,” said Lupin,

beaming around at them all: He looked years younger

than Harry had ever seen him. “Thank you, thank

you, Bill.”

Bill had soon filled all of their goblets, they stood and

raised them high in a toast.

“To Teddy Remus Lupin,” said Lupin, “a great wizard

in the making!”

“ ’Oo does ’e look like?” Fleur inquired.

“I think he looks like Dora, but she thinks he is like

me. Not much hair. It looked black when he was

born, but I swear it’s turned ginger in the hour since.

Probably be blond by the time I get back. Andromeda

says Tonks’s hair started changing color the day that

she was born.” He drained his goblet. “Oh, go on

then, just one more,” he added, beaming, as Bill made

to fill it again.

The wind buffeted the little cottage and the fire leapt

and crackled, and Bill was soon opening another

bottle of wine. Lupin’s news seemed to have taken

them out of themselves, removed them for a while

from their state of siege: Tidings of new life were

exhilarating. Only the goblin seemed untouched by

the suddenly festive atmosphere, and after a while he

slunk back to the bedroom he now occupied alone.

Harry thought he was the only one who had noticed

this, until he saw Bill’s eyes following the goblin up

the stairs.

“No ... no ... I really must get back,” said Lupin at

last, declining yet another goblet of wine. He got to his

feet and pulled his traveling cloak back around

himself.

Page | 583 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Good-bye, good-bye — I’ll try and bring some

pictures in a few days’ time — they’ll all be so glad to

know that I’ve seen you — ”

He fastened his cloak and made his farewells,

hugging the women and grasping hands with the

men, then, still beaming, returned into the wild night.

“Godfather, Harry!” said Bill as they walked into the

kitchen together, helping clear the table. “A real

honor! Congratulations!”

As Harry set down the empty goblets he was carrying,

Bill pulled the door behind him closed, shutting out

the still-voluble voices of the others, who were

continuing to celebrate even in Lupin’s absence.

“I wanted a private word, actually, Harry. It hasn’t

been easy to get an opportunity with the cottage this

full of people.”

Bill hesitated.

“Harry, you’re planning something with Griphook.”

It was a statement, not a question, and Harry did not

bother to deny it. He merely looked at Bill, waiting.

“I know goblins,” said Bill. “I’ve worked for Gringotts

ever since I left Hogwarts. As far as there can be

friendship between wizards and goblins, I have goblin

friends — or, at least, goblins I know well, and like.”

Again, Bill hesitated.

“Harry, what do you want from Griphook, and what

have you promised him in return?”

“I can’t tell you that,” said Harry. “Sorry, Bill.”

Page | 584 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The kitchen door opened behind them; Fleur was

trying to bring through more empty goblets.

“Wait,” Bill told her. “Just a moment.”

She backed out and he closed the door again.

“Then I have to say this,” Bill went on. “If you have

struck any kind of bargain with Griphook, and most

particularly if that bargain involves treasure, you

must be exceptionally careful. Goblin notions of

ownership, payment, and repayment are not the same

as human ones.”

Harry felt a slight squirm of discomfort, as though a

small snake had stirred inside him.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“We are talking about a different breed of being,” said

Bill. “Dealings between wizards and goblins have been

fraught for centuries — but you’ll know all that from

History of Magic. There has been fault on both sides, I

would never claim that wizards have been innocent.

However, there is a belief among some goblins, and

those at Gringotts are perhaps most prone to it, that

wizards cannot be trusted in matters of gold and

treasure, that they have no respect for goblin

ownership.”

“I respect — ” Harry began, but Bill shook his head.

“You don’t understand, Harry, nobody could

understand unless they have lived with goblins. To a

goblin, the rightful and true master of any object is

the maker, not the purchaser. All goblin-made objects

are, in goblin eyes, rightfully theirs.”

“But if it was bought — ”

Page | 585 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ — then they would consider it rented by the one who

had paid the money. They have, however, great

difficulty with the idea of goblin-made objects passing

from wizard to wizard. You saw Griphook’s face when

the tiara passed under his eyes. He disapproves. I

believe he thinks, as do the fiercest of his kind, that it

ought to have been returned to the goblins once the

original purchaser died. They consider our habit of

keeping goblin-made objects, passing them from

wizard to wizard without further payment, little more

than theft.”

Harry had an ominous feeling now; he wondered

whether Bill guessed more than he was letting on.

“All I am saying,” said Bill, setting his hand on the

door back into the sitting room, “is to be very careful

what you promise goblins, Harry. It would be less

dangerous to break into Gringotts than to renege on a

promise to a goblin.”

“Right,” said Harry as Bill opened the door, “yeah.

Thanks. I’ll bear that in mind.”

As he followed Bill back to the others a wry thought

came to him, born no doubt of the wine he had

drunk. He seemed set on course to become just as

reckless a godfather to Teddy Lupin as Sirius Black

had been to him.

Page | 586 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

GRINGOTTS

Their plans were made, their preparations complete;

in the smallest bedroom a single long, coarse black

hair (plucked from the sweater Hermione had been

wearing at Malfoy Manor) lay curled in a small glass

phial on the mantelpiece.

“And you’ll be using her actual wand,” said Harry,

nodding toward the walnut wand, “so I reckon you’ll

be pretty convincing.”

Hermione looked frightened that the wand might sting

or bite her as she picked it up.

“I hate this thing,” she said in a low voice. “I really

hate it. It feels all wrong, it doesn’t work properly for

me. ... It’s like a bit of her.”

Harry could not help but remember how Hermione

had dismissed his loathing of the blackthorn wand,

insisting that he was imagining things when it did not

work as well as his own, telling him to simply

practice. He chose not to repeat her own advice back

Page | 587 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

to her, however; the eve of their attempted assault on

Gringotts felt like the wrong moment to antagonize

her.

“It’ll probably help you get in character, though,” said

Ron. “Think what that wand’s done!”

“But that’s my point!” said Hermione. “This is the

wand that tortured Neville’s mum and dad, and who

knows how many other people? This is the wand that

killed Sirius!”

Harry had not thought of that: He looked down at the

wand and was visited by a brutal urge to snap it, to

slice it in half with Gryffindor’s sword, which was

propped against the wall beside him.

“I miss my wand,” Hermione said miserably. “I wish

Mr. Ollivander could have made me another one too.”

Mr. Ollivander had sent Luna a new wand that

morning. She was out on the back lawn at that

moment, testing its capabilities in the late afternoon

sun. Dean, who had lost his wand to the Snatchers,

was watching rather gloomily.

Harry looked down at the hawthorn wand that had

once belonged to Draco Malfoy. He had been

surprised, but pleased, to discover that it worked for

him at least as well as Hermione ’s had done.

Remembering what Ollivander had told them of the

secret workings of wands, Harry thought he knew

what Hermione ’s problem was: She had not won the

walnut wand’s allegiance by taking it personally from

Bellatrix.

The door of the bedroom opened and Griphook

entered. Harry reached instinctively for the hilt of the

sword and drew it close to him, but regretted his

Page | 588 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

action at once: He could tell that the goblin had

noticed. Seeking to gloss over the sticky moment, he

said, “We’ve just been checking the last-minute stuff,

Griphook. We’ve told Bill and Fleur we’re leaving

tomorrow, and we’ve told them not to get up to see us

off.”

They had been firm on this point, because Hermione

would need to transform into Bellatrix before they left,

and the less that Bill and Fleur knew or suspected

about what they were about to do, the better. They

had also explained that they would not be returning.

As they had lost Perkins’s old tent on the night that

the Snatchers caught them, Bill had lent them

another one. It was now packed inside the beaded

bag, which, Harry was impressed to learn, Hermione

had protected from the Snatchers by the simple

expedient of stuffing it down her sock.

Though he would miss Bill, Fleur, Luna, and Dean,

not to mention the home comforts they had enjoyed

over the last few weeks, Harry was looking forward to

escaping the confinement of Shell Cottage. He was

tired of trying to make sure that they were not

overheard, tired of being shut in the tiny, dark

bedroom. Most of all, he longed to be rid of Griphook.

However, precisely how and when they were to part

from the goblin without handing over Gryffindor’s

sword remained a question to which Harry had no

answer. It had been impossible to decide how they

were going to do it, because the goblin rarely left

Harry, Ron, and Hermione alone together for more

than five minutes at a time: “He could give my mother

lessons,” growled Ron, as the goblin’s long fingers

kept appearing around the edges of doors. With Bill’s

warning in mind, Harry could not help suspecting

that Griphook was on the watch for possible

skulduggery. Hermione disapproved so heartily of the

planned double-cross that Harry had given up

Page | 589 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

attempting to pick her brains on how best to do it;

Ron, on the rare occasions that they had been able to

snatch a few Griphook-free moments, had come up

with nothing better than “Well just have to wing it,

mate.”

Harry slept badly that night. Lying awake in the early

hours, he thought back to the way he had felt the

night before they had infiltrated the Ministry of Magic

and remembered a determination, almost an

excitement. Now he was experiencing jolts of anxiety,

nagging doubts: He could not shake off the fear that it

was all going to go wrong. He kept telling himself that

their plan was good, that Griphook knew what they

were facing, that they were well-prepared for all the

difficulties they were likely to encounter, yet still he

felt uneasy. Once or twice he heard Ron stir and was

sure that he too was awake, but they were sharing

the sitting room with Dean, so Harry did not speak.

It was a relief when six o’clock arrived and they could

slip out of their sleeping bags, dress in the

semidarkness, then creep out into the garden, where

they were to meet Hermione and Griphook. The dawn

was chilly, but there was little wind now that it was

May. Harry looked up at the stars still glimmering

palely in the dark sky and listened to the sea washing

backward and forward against the cliff: He was going

to miss the sound.

Small green shoots were forcing their way up through

the red earth of Dobby’s grave now; in a year’s time

the mound would be covered in flowers. The white

stone that bore the elf’s name had already acquired a

weathered look. He realized now that they could

hardly have laid Dobby to rest in a more beautiful

place, but Harry ached with sadness to think of

leaving him behind. Looking down on the grave, he

wondered yet again how the elf had known where to

Page | 590 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

come to rescue them. His fingers moved

absentmindedly to the little pouch still strung around

his neck, through which he could feel the jagged

mirror fragment in which he had been sure he had

seen Dumbledore’s eye. Then the sound of a door

opening made him look around.

Bellatrix Lestrange was striding across the lawn

toward them, accompanied by Griphook. As she

walked, she was tucking the small, beaded bag into

the inside pocket of another set of the old robes they

had taken from Grimmauld Place. Though Harry

knew perfectly well that it was really Hermione, he

could not suppress a shiver of loathing. She was taller

than he was, her long black hair rippling down her

back, her heavily lidded eyes disdainful as they rested

upon him; but then she spoke, and he heard

Hermione through Bellatrix’s low voice.

“She tasted disgusting, worse than Gurdyroots! Okay,

Ron, come here so I can do you. ...”

“Right, but remember, I don’t like the beard too long

“Oh, for heaven’s sake, this isn’t about looking

handsome — ” “It’s not that, it gets in the way! But I

liked my nose a bit shorter, try and do it the way you

did last time.”

Hermione sighed and set to work, muttering under

her breath as she transformed various aspects of

Ron’s appearance. He was to be given a completely

fake identity, and they were trusting to the malevolent

aura cast by Bellatrix to protect him. Meanwhile

Harry and Griphook were to be concealed under the

Invisibility Cloak.

“There,” said Hermione, “how does he look, Harry?”

Page | 591 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

It was just possible to discern Ron under his disguise,

but only, Harry thought, because he knew him so

well. Ron’s hair was now long and wavy; he had a

thick brown beard and mustache, no freckles, a

short, broad nose, and heavy eyebrows.

“Well, he’s not my type, but he’ll do,” said Harry.

“Shall we go, then?”

All three of them glanced back at Shell Cottage, lying

dark and silent under the fading stars, then turned

and began to walk toward the point, just beyond the

boundary wall, where the Fidelius Charm stopped

working and they would be able to Disapparate. Once

past the gate, Griphook spoke.

“I should climb up now, Harry Potter, I think?”

Harry bent down and the goblin clambered onto his

back, his hands linked in front of Harry’s throat. He

was not heavy, but Harry disliked the feeling of the

goblin and the surprising strength with which he

clung on. Hermione pulled the Invisibility Cloak out of

the beaded bag and threw it over them both.

“Perfect,” she said, bending down to check Harry’s

feet. “I can’t see a thing. Let’s go.”

Harry turned on the spot, with Griphook on his

shoulders, concentrating with all his might on the

Leaky Cauldron, the inn that was the entrance to

Diagon Alley. The goblin clung even tighter as they

moved into the compressing darkness, and seconds

later Harry’s feet found pavement and he opened his

eyes on Charing Cross Road. Muggles bustled past

wearing the hangdog expressions of early morning,

quite unconscious of the little inn’s existence.

Page | 592 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The bar of the Leaky Cauldron was nearly deserted.

Tom, the stooped and toothless landlord, was

polishing glasses behind the bar counter; a couple of

warlocks having a muttered conversation in the far

corner glanced at Hermione and drew back into the

shadows.

“Madam Lestrange,” murmured Tom, and as

Hermione passed he inclined his head subserviently.

“Good morning,” said Hermione, and as Harry crept

past, still carrying Griphook piggyback under the

Cloak, he saw Tom look surprised.

“Too polite,” Harry whispered in Hermione’s ear as

they passed out of the inn into the tiny backyard.

“You need to treat people like they’re scum!”

“Okay, okay!”

Hermione drew out Bellatrix’s wand and tapped a

brick in the nondescript wall in front of them. At once

the bricks began to whirl and spin: A hole appeared

in the middle of them, which grew wider and wider,

finally forming an archway onto the narrow cobbled

street that was Diagon Alley.

It was quiet, barely time for the shops to open, and

there were hardly any shoppers abroad. The crooked,

cobbled street was much altered now from the

bustling place Harry had visited before his first term

at Hogwarts so many years before. More shops than

ever were boarded up, though several new

establishments dedicated to the Dark Arts had been

created since his last visit. Harry’s own face glared

down at him from posters plastered over many

windows, always captioned with the words

UNDESIRABLE NUMBER ONE.

Page | 593 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

A number of ragged people sat huddled in doorways.

He heard them moaning to the few passersby,

pleading for gold, insisting that they were really

wizards. One man had a bloody bandage over his eye.

As they set off along the street, the beggars glimpsed

Hermione. They seemed to melt away before her,

drawing hoods over their faces and fleeing as fast as

they could. Hermione looked after them curiously,

until the man with the bloodied bandage came

staggering right across her path.

“My children!” he bellowed, pointing at her. His voice

was cracked, high-pitched; he sounded distraught.

“Where are my children? What has he done with

them? You know, you know\”

“I — I really — ” stammered Hermione.

The man lunged at her, reaching for her throat: Then,

with a bang and a burst of red light he was thrown

backward onto the ground, unconscious. Ron stood

there, his wand still outstretched and a look of shock

visible behind his beard. Faces appeared at the

windows on either side of the street, while a little knot

of prosperous-looking passersby gathered their robes

about them and broke into gentle trots, keen to

vacate the scene.

Their entrance into Diagon Alley could hardly have

been more conspicuous; for a moment Harry

wondered whether it might not be better to leave now

and try to think of a different plan. Before they could

move or consult one another, however, they heard a

cry from behind them.

“Why, Madam Lestrange!”

Page | 594 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry whirled around and Griphook tightened his

hold around Harry’s neck: A tall, thin wizard with a

crown of bushy gray hair and a long, sharp nose was

striding toward them.

“It’s Travers,” hissed the goblin into Harry’s ear, but

at that moment Harry could not think who Travers

was. Hermione had drawn herself up to her fullest

height and said with as much contempt as she could

muster:

“And what do you want?”

Travers stopped in his tracks, clearly affronted.

“ He’s another Death Eater\” breathed Griphook, and

Harry sidled sideways to repeat the information into

Hermione ’s ear.

“I merely sought to greet you,” said Travers coolly,

“but if my presence is not welcome ...”

Harry recognized his voice now; Travers was one of

the Death Eaters who had been summoned to

Xenophilius’s house.

“No, no, not at all, Travers,” said Hermione quickly,

trying to cover up her mistake. “How are you?”

“Well, I confess I am surprised to see you out and

about, Bellatrix.”

“Really? Why?” asked Hermione.

“Well,” Travers coughed, “I heard that the inhabitants

of Malfoy Manor were confined to the house, after the

... ah ... escape.”

Page | 595 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry willed Hermione to keep her head. If this was

true, and Bellatrix was not supposed to be out in

public —

“The Dark Lord forgives those who have served him

most faithfully in the past,” said Hermione in a

magnificent imitation of Bellatrix’s most

contemptuous manner. “Perhaps your credit is not as

good with him as mine is, Travers.”

Though the Death Eater looked offended, he also

seemed less suspicious. He glanced down at the man

Ron had just Stunned.

“How did it offend you?”

“It does not matter, it will not do so again,” said

Hermione coolly.

“Some of these wandless can be troublesome,” said

Travers. “While they do nothing but beg I have no

objection, but one of them actually asked me to plead

her case at the Ministry last week. ‘I’m a witch, sir, I’m

a witch, let me prove it to youV ” he said in a squeaky

impersonation. “As if I was going to give her my wand

— but whose wand,” said Travers curiously, “are you

using at the moment, Bellatrix? I heard that your own

was — ”

“I have my wand here,” said Hermione coldly, holding

up Bellatrix’s wand. “I don’t know what rumors you

have been listening to, Travers, but you seem sadly

misinformed.”

Travers seemed a little taken aback at that, and he

turned instead to Ron.

“Who is your friend? I do not recognize him.”

Page | 596 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“This is Dragomir Despard,” said Hermione; they had

decided that a fictional foreigner was the safest cover

for Ron to assume. “He speaks very little English, but

he is in sympathy with the Dark Lord’s aims. He has

traveled here from Transylvania to see our new

regime.”

“Indeed? How do you do, Dragomir?”

“ ’Ow you?” said Ron, holding out his hand.

Travers extended two fingers and shook Ron’s hand

as though frightened of dirtying himself.

“So what brings you and your — ah — sympathetic

friend to Diagon Alley this early?” asked Travers.

“I need to visit Gringotts,” said Hermione.

“Alas, I also,” said Travers. “Gold, filthy gold! We

cannot live without it, yet I confess I deplore the

necessity of consorting with our long-fingered

friends.”

Harry felt Griphook’s clasped hands tighten

momentarily around his neck.

“Shall we?” said Travers, gesturing Hermione forward.

Hermione had no choice but to fall into step beside

him and head along the crooked, cobbled street

toward the place where the snowy-white Gringotts

stood towering over the other little shops. Ron sloped

along beside them, and Harry and Griphook followed.

A watchful Death Eater was the very last thing they

needed, and the worst of it was, with Travers

marching at what he believed to be Bellatrix’s side,

there was no means for Harry to communicate with

Page | 597 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Hermione or Ron. All too soon they arrived at the foot

of the marble steps leading up to the great bronze

doors. As Griphook had already warned them, the

liveried goblins who usually flanked the entrance had

been replaced by two wizards, both of whom were

clutching long thin golden rods.

“Ah, Probity Probes,” sighed Travers theatrically, “so

crude — but effective!”

And he set off up the steps, nodding left and right to

the wizards, who raised the golden rods and passed

them up and down his body. The Probes, Harry knew,

detected spells of concealment and hidden magical

objects. Knowing that he had only seconds; Harry

pointed Draco’s wand at each of the guards in turn

and murmured, “Confundo” twice. Unnoticed by

Travers, who was looking through the bronze doors at

the inner hall, each of the guards gave a little start as

the spells hit them.

Hermione ’s long black hair rippled behind her as she

climbed the steps.

“One moment, madam,” said the guard, raising his

Probe.

“But you’ve just done that!” said Hermione in

Bellatrix’s commanding, arrogant voice. Travers

looked around, eyebrows raised. The guard was

confused. He stared down at the thin golden Probe

and then at his companion, who said in a slightly

dazed voice,

“Yeah, you’ve just checked them, Marius.”

Hermione swept forward, Ron by her side, Harry and

Griphook trotting invisibly behind them. Harry

Page | 598 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

glanced back as they crossed the threshold: The

wizards were both scratching their heads.

Two goblins stood before the inner doors, which were

made of silver and which carried the poem warning of

dire retribution to potential thieves. Harry looked up

at it, and all of a sudden a knife-sharp memory came

to him: standing on this very spot on the day that he

had turned eleven, the most wonderful birthday of his

life, and Hagrid standing beside him saying, “ Like I

said, yeh’d be mad ter try an’ rob it.” Gringotts had

seemed a place of wonder that day, the enchanted

repository of a trove of gold he had never known he

possessed, and never for an instant could he have

dreamed that he would return to steal. ... But within

seconds they were standing in the vast marble hall of

the bank.

The long counter was manned by goblins sitting on

high stools, serving the first customers of the day.

Hermione, Ron, and Travers headed toward an old

goblin who was examining a thick gold coin through

an eyeglass. Hermione allowed Travers to step ahead

of her on the pretext of explaining features of the hall

to Ron.

The goblin tossed the coin he was holding aside, said

to nobody in particular, “Leprechaun,” and then

greeted Travers, who passed over a tiny golden key,

which was examined and given back to him.

Hermione stepped forward.

“Madam Lestrange!” said the goblin, evidently

startled. “Dear me! How — how may I help you

today?”

“I wish to enter my vault,” said Hermione.

Page | 599 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The old goblin seemed to recoil a little. Harry glanced

around. Not only was Travers hanging back,

watching, but several other goblins had looked up

from their work to stare at Hermione.

“You have ... identification?” asked the goblin.

“Identification? I — I have never been asked for

identification before!” said Hermione.

“ They know\” whispered Griphook in Harry’s ear.

“They must have been warned there might be an

impostor !”

“Your wand will do, madam,” said the goblin. He held

out a slightly trembling hand, and in a dreadful blast

of realization Harry knew that the goblins of Gringotts

were aware that Bellatrix’s wand had been stolen.

“Act now, act now,” whispered Griphook in Harry’s

ear, “the Imperius Cursel”

Harry raised the hawthorn wand beneath the cloak,

pointed it at the old goblin, and whispered, for the

first time in his life, “Imperiol”

A curious sensation shot down Harry’s arm, a feeling

of tingling warmth that seemed to flow from his mind,

down the sinews and veins connecting him to the

wand and the curse it had just cast. The goblin took

Bellatrix’s wand, examined it closely, and then said,

“Ah, you have had a new wand made, Madam

Lestrange!”

“What?” said Hermione. “No, no, that’s mine — ”

“A new wand?” said Travers, approaching the counter

again; still the goblins all around were watching. “But

Page | 600 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

how could you have done, which wandmaker did you

use?”

Harry acted without thinking: Pointing his wand at

Travers, he muttered, “Imperiol” once more.

“Oh yes, I see,” said Travers, looking down at

Bellatrix’s wand, “yes, very handsome. And is it

working well? I always think wands require a little

breaking in, don’t you?”

Hermione looked utterly bewildered, but to Harry’s

enormous relief she accepted the bizarre turn of

events without comment.

The old goblin behind the counter clapped his hands

and a younger goblin approached.

“I shall need the Clankers,” he told the goblin, who

dashed away and returned a moment later with a

leather bag that seemed to be full of jangling metal,

which he handed to his senior. “Good, good! So, if you

will follow me, Madam Lestrange,” said the old goblin,

hopping down off his stool and vanishing from sight,

“I shall take you to your vault.”

He appeared around the end of the counter, jogging

happily toward them, the contents of the leather bag

still jingling. Travers was now standing quite still with

his mouth hanging wide open. Ron was drawing

attention to this odd phenomenon by regarding

Travers with confusion.

“Wait — Bogrod!”

Another goblin came scurrying around the counter.

Page | 601 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We have instructions,” he said with a bow to

Hermione. “Forgive me, Madam, but there have been

special orders regarding the vault of Lestrange.”

He whispered urgently in Bogrod’s ear, but the

Imperiused goblin shook him off.

“I am aware of the instructions. Madam Lestrange

wishes to visit her vault. ... Very old family ... old

clients ... This way, please ...”

And, still clanking, he hurried toward one of the many

doors leading off the hall. Harry looked back at

Travers, who was still rooted to the spot looking

abnormally vacant, and made his decision: With a

flick of his wand he made Travers come with them,

walking meekly in their wake as they reached the

door and passed into the rough stone passageway

beyond, which was lit with flaming torches.

“We’re in trouble; they suspect,” said Harry as the

door slammed behind them and he pulled off the

Invisibility Cloak. Griphook jumped down from his

shoulders; neither Travers nor Bogrod showed the

slightest surprise at the sudden appearance of Harry

Potter in their midst. “They’re Imperiused,” he added,

in response to Hermione and Ron’s confused queries

about Travers and Bogrod, who were both now

standing there looking blank. “I don’t think I did it

strongly enough, I don’t know. ...”

And another memory darted through his mind, of the

real Bellatrix Lestrange shrieking at him when he had

first tried to use an Unforgivable Curse: “You need to

mean them, Potter!”

“What do we do?” asked Ron. “Shall we get out now,

while we can?”

Page | 602 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“If we can,” said Hermione, looking back toward the

door into the main hall, beyond which who knew

what was happening.

“We’ve got this far, I say we go on,” said Harry.

“Good!” said Griphook. “So, we need Bogrod to control

the cart; I no longer have the authority. But there will

not be room for the wizard.”

Harry pointed his wand at Travers.

“Imperio\”

The wizard turned and set off along the dark track at

a smart pace.

“What are you making him do?”

“Hide,” said Harry as he pointed his wand at Bogrod,

who whistled to summon a little cart that came

trundling along the tracks toward them out of the

darkness. Harry was sure he could hear shouting

behind them in the main hall as they all clambered

into it, Bogrod in front with Griphook, Harry, Ron,

and Hermione crammed together in the back.

With a jerk the cart moved off, gathering speed: They

hurtled past Travers, who was wriggling into a crack

in the wall, then the cart began twisting and turning

through the labyrinthine passages, sloping downward

all the time. Harry could not hear anything over the

rattling of the cart on the tracks: His hair flew behind

him as they swerved between stalactites, flying ever

deeper into the earth, but he kept glancing back.

They might as well have left enormous footprints

behind them; the more he thought about it, the more

foolish it seemed to have disguised Hermione as

Page | 603 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Bellatrix, to have brought along Bellatrix’s wand,

when the Death Eaters knew who had stolen it —

They were deeper than Harry had ever penetrated

within Gringotts; they took a hairpin bend at speed

and saw ahead of them, with seconds to spare, a

waterfall pounding over the track. Harry heard

Griphook shout, “No!” but there was no braking: They

zoomed through it. Water filled Harry’s eyes and

mouth: He could not see or breathe: Then, with an

awful lurch, the cart flipped over and they were all

thrown out of it. Harry heard the cart smash into

pieces against the passage wall, heard Hermione

shriek something, and felt himself glide back toward

the ground as though weightless, landing painlessly

on the rocky passage floor.

“C-Cushioning Charm,” Hermione spluttered, as Ron

pulled her to her feet, but to Harry’s horror he saw

that she was no longer Bellatrix; instead she stood

there in overlarge robes, sopping wet and completely

herself; Ron was red-haired and beardless again.

They were realizing it as they looked at each other,

feeling their own faces.

“The Thief’s Downfall!” said Griphook, clambering to

his feet and looking back at the deluge onto the

tracks, which, Harry knew now, had been more than

water. “It washes away all enchantment, all magical

concealment! They know there are impostors in

Gringotts, they have set off defenses against us!”

Harry saw Hermione checking that she still had the

beaded bag, and hurriedly thrust his own hand under

his jacket to make sure he had not lost the Invisibility

Cloak. Then he turned to see Bogrod shaking his

head in bewilderment: The Thief’s Downfall seemed to

have lifted the Imperius Curse.

Page | 604 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We need him,” said Griphook, “we cannot enter the

vault without a Gringotts goblin. And we need the

Clankers!”

“Imperiol” Harry said again; his voice echoed through

the stone passage as he felt again the sense of heady

control that flowed from brain to wand. Bogrod

submitted once more to his will, his befuddled

expression changing to one of polite indifference, as

Ron hurried to pick up the leather bag of metal tools.

“Harry, I think I can hear people coming!” said

Hermione, and she pointed Bellatrix’s wand at the

waterfall and cried, “Protego\” They saw the Shield

Charm break the flow of enchanted water as it flew up

the passageway.

“Good thinking,” said Harry. “Lead the way,

Griphook!”

“How are we going to get out again?” Ron asked as

they hurried on foot into the darkness after the

goblin, Bogrod panting in their wake like an old dog.

“Let’s worry about that when we have to,” said Harry.

He was trying to listen: He thought he could hear

something clanking and moving around nearby.

“Griphook, how much farther?”

“Not far, Harry Potter, not far ...”

And they turned a corner and saw the thing for which

Harry had been prepared, but which still brought all

of them to a halt.

A gigantic dragon was tethered to the ground in front

of them, barring access to four or five of the deepest

vaults in the place. The beast’s scales had turned pale

and flaky during its long incarceration under the

Page | 605 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

ground; its eyes were milkily pink; both rear legs bore

heavy cuffs from which chains led to enormous pegs

driven deep into the rocky floor. Its great spiked

wings, folded close to its body, would have filled the

chamber if it spread them, and when it turned its

ugly head toward them, it roared with a noise that

made the rock tremble, opened its mouth, and spat a

jet of fire that sent them running back up the

passageway.

“It is partially blind,” panted Griphook, “but even

more savage for that. However, we have the means to

control it. It has learned what to expect when the

Clankers come. Give them to me.”

Ron passed the bag to Griphook, and the goblin

pulled out a number of small metal instruments that

when shaken made a loud, ringing noise like

miniature hammers on anvils. Griphook handed them

out: Bogrod accepted his meekly.

“You know what to do,” Griphook told Harry, Ron,

and Hermione. “It will expect pain when it hears the

noise: It will retreat, and Bogrod must place his palm

upon the door of the vault.”

They advanced around the corner again, shaking the

Clankers, and the noise echoed off the rocky walls,

grossly magnified, so that the inside of Harry’s skull

seemed to vibrate with the din. The dragon let out

another hoarse roar, then retreated. Harry could see

it trembling, and as they drew nearer he saw the

scars made by vicious slashes across its face, and

guessed that it had been taught to fear hot swords

when it heard the sound of the Clankers.

“Make him press his hand to the door!” Griphook

urged Harry, who turned his wand again upon

Bogrod. The old goblin obeyed, pressing his palm to

Page | 606 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the wood, and the door of the vault melted away to

reveal a cavelike opening crammed from floor to

ceiling with golden coins and goblets, silver armor,

the skins of strange creatures — some with long

spines, others with drooping wings — potions in

jeweled flasks, and a skull still wearing a crown.

“Search, fast!” said Harry as they all hurried inside

the vault.

He had described Hufflepuff’s cup to Ron and

Hermione, but if it was the other, unknown Horcrux

that resided in this vault, he did not know what it

looked like. He barely had time to glance around,

however, before there was a muffled clunk from

behind them: The door had reappeared, sealing them

inside the vault, and they were plunged into total

darkness.

“No matter, Bogrod will be able to release us!” said

Griphook as Ron gave a shout of surprise. “Light your

wands, can’t you? And hurry, we have very little

time!”

“Lumosl”

Harry shone his lit wand around the vault: Its beam

fell upon glittering jewels; he saw the fake sword of

Gryffindor lying on a high shelf amongst a jumble of

chains. Ron and Hermione had lit their wands too,

and were now examining the piles of objects

surrounding them.

“Harry, could this be — ? Aargh!”

Hermione screamed in pain, and Harry turned his

wand on her in time to see a jeweled goblet tumbling

from her grip. But as it fell, it split, became a shower

of goblets, so that a second later, with a great clatter,

Page | 607 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the floor was covered in identical cups rolling in every

direction, the original impossible to discern amongst

them.

“It burned me!” moaned Hermione, sucking her

blistered fingers.

“They have added Gemino and Flagrante Curses!”

said Griphook. “Everything you touch will burn and

multiply, but the copies are worthless — and if you

continue to handle the treasure, you will eventually

be crushed to death by the weight of expanding gold!”

“Okay, don’t touch anything!” said Harry desperately,

but even as he said it, Ron accidentally nudged one of

the fallen goblets with his foot, and twenty more

exploded into being while Ron hopped on the spot,

part of his shoe burned away by contact with the hot

metal.

“Stand still, don’t move!” said Hermione, clutching at

Ron.

“Just look around!” said Harry. “Remember, the cup’s

small and gold, it’s got a badger engraved on it, two

handles — otherwise see if you can spot Ravenclaw’s

symbol anywhere, the eagle — ”

They directed their wands into every nook and

crevice, turning cautiously on the spot. It was

impossible not to brush up against anything; Harry

sent a great cascade of fake Galleons onto the ground

where they joined the goblets, and now there was

scarcely room to place their feet, and the glowing gold

blazed with heat, so that the vault felt like a furnace.

Harry’s wandlight passed over shields and goblin-

made helmets set on shelves rising to the ceiling;

higher and higher he raised the beam, until suddenly

Page | 608 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

it found an object that made his heart skip and his

hand tremble.

“It’s there, it’s up there\”

Ron and Hermione pointed their wands at it too, so

that the little golden cup sparkled in a three-way

spotlight: the cup that had belonged to Helga

Hufflepuff, which had passed into the possession of

Hepzibah Smith, from whom it had been stolen by

Tom Riddle.

“And how the hell are we going to get up there

without touching anything?” asked Ron.

“Accio Cup\” cried Hermione, who had evidently

forgotten in her desperation what Griphook had told

them during their planning sessions.

“No use, no use!” snarled the goblin.

“Then what do we do?” said Harry, glaring at the

goblin. “If you want the sword, Griphook, then you’ll

have to help us more than — wait! Can I touch stuff

with the sword? Hermione, give it here!”

Hermione fumbled inside her robes, drew out the

beaded bag, rummaged for a few seconds, then

removed the shining sword. Harry seized it by its

rubied hilt and touched the tip of the blade to a silver

flagon nearby, which did not multiply.

“If I can just poke the sword through a handle — but

how am I going to get up there?”

The shelf on which the cup reposed was out of reach

for any of them, even Ron, who was tallest. The heat

from the enchanted treasure rose in waves, and sweat

ran down Harry’s face and back as he struggled to

Page | 609 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

think of a way up to the cup; and then he heard the

dragon roar on the other side of the vault door, and

the sound of clanking growing louder and louder.

They were truly trapped now: There was no way out

except through the door, and a horde of goblins

seemed to be approaching on the other side. Harry

looked at Ron and Hermione and saw terror in their

faces.

“Hermione,” said Harry as the clanking grew louder,

“I’ve got to get up there, we’ve got to get rid of it — ”

She raised her wand, pointed it at Harry, and

whispered, “Levicorpus.”

Hoisted into the air by his ankle, Harry hit a suit of

armor and replicas burst out of it like white-hot

bodies, filling the cramped space. With screams of

pain Ron, Hermione, and the two goblins were

knocked aside into other objects, which also began to

replicate. Half buried in a rising tide of red-hot

treasure, they struggled and yelled as Harry thrust

the sword through the handle of Hufflepuff’s cup,

hooking it onto the blade.

“Impervius\” screeched Hermione in an attempt to

protect herself, Ron, and the goblins from the burning

metal.

Then the worst scream yet made Harry look down:

Ron and Hermione were waist-deep in treasure,

struggling to keep Bogrod from slipping beneath the

rising tide, but Griphook had sunk out of sight and

nothing but the tips of a few long fingers were left in

view.

Harry seized Griphook’s fingers and pulled. The

blistered goblin emerged by degrees, howling.

Page | 610 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Liberacorpus\” yelled Harry, and with a crash he and

Griphook landed on the surface of the swelling

treasure, and the sword flew out of Harry’s hand.

“Get it!” Harry yelled, fighting the pain of the hot

metal on his skin, as Griphook clambered onto his

shoulders again, determined to avoid the swelling

mass of red-hot objects. “Where’s the sword? It had

the cup on it!”

The clanking on the other side of the door was

growing deafening — it was too late —

“There!”

It was Griphook who had seen it and Griphook who

lunged, and in that instant Harry knew that the

goblin had never expected them to keep their word.

One hand holding tightly to a fistful of Harry’s hair, to

make sure he did not fall into the heaving sea of

burning gold, Griphook seized the hilt of the sword

and swung it high out of Harry’s reach.

The tiny golden cup, skewered by the handle on the

sword’s blade, was flung into the air. The goblin still

astride him, Harry dived and caught it, and although

he could feel it scalding his flesh he did not relinquish

it, even while countless Hufflepuff cups burst from

his fist, raining down upon him as the entrance of the

vault opened up again and he found himself sliding

uncontrollably on an expanding avalanche of fiery

gold and silver that bore him, Ron, and Hermione into

the outer chamber.

Hardly aware of the pain from the burns covering his

body, and still borne along on the swell of replicating

treasure, Harry shoved the cup into his pocket and

reached up to retrieve the sword, but Griphook was

gone. Sliding from Harry’s shoulders the moment he

Page | 611 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

could, he had sprinted for cover amongst the

surrounding goblins, brandishing the sword and

crying, “Thieves! Thieves! Help! Thieves!” He vanished

into the midst of the advancing crowd, all of whom

were holding daggers and who accepted him without

question.

Slipping on the hot metal, Harry struggled to his feet

and knew that the only way out was through.

“Stupefyl” he bellowed, and Ron and Hermione joined

in: Jets of red light flew into the crowd of goblins, and

some toppled over, but others advanced, and Harry

saw several wizard guards running around the

corner.

The tethered dragon let out a roar, and a gush of

flame flew over the goblins: The wizards fled, doubled-

up, back the way they had come, and inspiration, or

madness, came to Harry. Pointing his wand at the

thick cuffs chaining the beast to the floor, he yelled,

“Relashiol”

The cuffs broke open with loud bangs.

“This way!” Harry yelled, and still shooting Stunning

Spells at the advancing goblins, he sprinted toward

the blind dragon.

“Harry — Harry — what are you doing?” cried

Hermione.

“Get up, climb up, come on — ”

The dragon had not realized that it was free: Harry’s

foot found the crook of its hind leg and he pulled

himself up onto its back. The scales were hard as

steel; it did not even seem to feel him. He stretched

out an arm; Hermione hoisted herself up; Ron

Page | 612 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

climbed on behind them, and a second later the

dragon became aware that it was untethered.

With a roar it reared: Harry dug in his knees,

clutching as tightly as he could to the jagged scales

as the wings opened, knocking the shrieking goblins

aside like skittles, and it soared into the air. Harry,

Ron, and Hermione, flat on its back, scraped against

the ceiling as it dived toward the passage opening,

while the pursuing goblins hurled daggers that

glanced off its flanks.

“Well never get out, it’s too big!” Hermione screamed,

but the dragon opened its mouth and belched flame

again, blasting the tunnel, whose floors and ceiling

cracked and crumbled. By sheer force the dragon

clawed and fought its way through. Harry’s eyes were

shut tight against the heat and dust: Deafened by the

crashing of rock and the dragon’s roars, he could only

cling to its back, expecting to be shaken off at any

moment; then he heard Hermione yelling, “Defodiol”

She was helping the dragon enlarge the passageway,

carving out the ceiling as it struggled upward toward

the fresher air, away from the shrieking and clanking

goblins: Harry and Ron copied her, blasting the

ceiling apart with more gouging spells. They passed

the underground lake, and the great crawling,

snarling beast seemed to sense freedom and space

ahead of it, and behind them the passage was full of

the dragon’s thrashing, spiked tail, of great lumps of

rock, gigantic fractured stalactites, and the clanking

of the goblins seemed to be growing more muffled,

while ahead, the dragon’s fire kept their progress

clear —

And then at last, by the combined force of their spells

and the dragon’s brute strength, they had blasted

their way out of the passage into the marble hallway.

Page | 613 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Goblins and wizards shrieked and ran for cover, and

finally the dragon had room to stretch its wings:

Turning its horned head toward the cool outside air it

could smell beyond the entrance, it took off, and with

Harry, Ron, and Hermione still clinging to its back, it

forced its way through the metal doors, leaving them

buckled and hanging from their hinges, as it

staggered into Diagon Alley and launched itself into

the sky.

Page | 614 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE FINAL HIDING PLACE

There was no means of steering; the dragon could not

see where it was going, and Harry knew that if it

turned sharply or rolled in midair they would find it

impossible to cling onto its broad back. Nevertheless,

as they climbed higher and higher, London unfurling

below them like a gray-and-green map, Harry’s

overwhelming feeling was of gratitude for an escape

that had seemed impossible. Crouching low over the

beast’s neck, he clung tight to the metallic scales, and

the cool breeze was soothing on his burned and

blistered skin, the dragon’s wings beating the air like

the sails of a windmill. Behind him, whether from

delight or fear he could not tell, Ron kept swearing at

the top of his voice, and Hermione seemed to be

sobbing.

After five minutes or so, Harry lost some of his

immediate dread that the dragon was going to throw

them off, for it seemed intent on nothing but getting

as far away from its underground prison as possible;

but the question of how and when they were to

dismount remained rather frightening. He had no idea

Page | 615 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

how long dragons could fly without landing, nor how

this particular dragon, which could barely see, would

locate a good place to put down. He glanced around

constantly, imagining that he could feel his scar

prickling. ...

How long would it be before Voldemort knew that they

had broken into the Lestranges’ vault? How soon

would the goblins of Gringotts notify Bellatrix? How

quickly would they realize what had been taken? And

then, when they discovered that the golden cup was

missing? Voldemort would know, at last, that they

were hunting Horcruxes. ...

The dragon seemed to crave cooler and fresher air: It

climbed steadily until they were flying through wisps

of chilly cloud, and Harry could no longer make out

the little colored dots which were cars pouring in and

out of the capital. On and on they flew, over

countryside parceled out in patches of green and

brown, over roads and rivers winding through the

landscape like strips of matte and glossy ribbon.

“What do you reckon it’s looking for?” Ron yelled as

they flew farther and farther north.

“No idea,” Harry bellowed back. His hands were numb

with cold but he did not dare attempt to shift his grip.

He had been wondering for some time what they

would do if they saw the coast sail beneath them, if

the dragon headed for open sea; he was cold and

numb, not to mention desperately hungry and thirsty.

When, he wondered, had the beast itself last eaten?

Surely it would need sustenance before long? And

what if, at that point, it realized it had three highly

edible humans sitting on its back?

The sun slipped lower in the sky, which was turning

indigo; and still the dragon flew, cities and towns

Page | 616 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

gliding out of sight beneath them, its enormous

shadow sliding over the earth like a great dark cloud.

Every part of Harry ached with the effort of holding on

to the dragon’s back.

“Is it my imagination,” shouted Ron after a

considerable stretch of silence, “or are we losing

height?”

Harry looked down and saw deep green mountains

and lakes, coppery in the sunset. The landscape

seemed to grow larger and more detailed as he

squinted over the side of the dragon, and he

wondered whether it had divined the presence of fresh

water by the flashes of reflected sunlight.

Lower and lower the dragon flew, in great spiraling

circles, honing in, it seemed, upon one of the smaller

lakes.

“I say we jump when it gets low enough!” Harry called

back to the others. “Straight into the water before it

realizes we’re here!”

They agreed, Hermione a little faintly, and now Harry

could see the dragon’s wide yellow underbelly rippling

in the surface of the water.

“NOW!”

He slithered over the side of the dragon and

plummeted feetfirst toward the surface of the lake;

the drop was greater than he had estimated and he

hit the water hard, plunging like a stone into a

freezing, green, reed-filled world. He kicked toward

the surface and emerged, panting, to see enormous

ripples emanating in circles from the places where

Ron and Hermione had fallen. The dragon did not

seem to have noticed anything: It was already fifty

Page | 617 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

feet away, swooping low over the lake to scoop up

water in its scarred snout. As Ron and Hermione

emerged, spluttering and gasping, from the depths of

the lake, the dragon flew on, its wings beating hard,

and landed at last on a distant bank.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione struck out for the opposite

shore. The lake did not seem to be deep: Soon it was

more a question of fighting their way through reeds

and mud than swimming, and at last they flopped,

sodden, panting, and exhausted, onto slippery grass.

Hermione collapsed, coughing and shuddering.

Though Harry could have happily lain down and

slept, he staggered to his feet, drew out his wand, and

started casting the usual protective spells around

them.

When he had finished, he joined the others. It was the

first time that he had seen them properly since

escaping from the vault. Both had angry red burns all

over their faces and arms, and their clothing was

singed away in places. They were wincing as they

dabbed essence of dittany onto their many injuries.

Hermione handed Harry the bottle, then pulled out

three bottles of pumpkin juice she had brought from

Shell Cottage and clean, dry robes for all of them.

They changed and then gulped down the juice.

“Well, on the upside,” said Ron finally, who was

sitting watching the skin on his hands regrow, “we got

the Horcrux. On the downside — ”

“ — no sword,” said Harry through gritted teeth, as he

dripped dittany through the singed hole in his jeans

onto the angry burn beneath.

“No sword,” repeated Ron. “That double-crossing little

scab ...”

Page | 618 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry pulled the Horcrux from the pocket of the wet

jacket he had just taken off and set it down on the

grass in front of them. Glinting in the sun, it drew

their eyes as they swigged their bottles of juice.

“At least we can’t wear it this time, that’d look a bit

weird hanging round our necks,” said Ron, wiping his

mouth on the back of his hand.

Hermione looked across the lake to the far bank,

where the dragon was still drinking.

“What’ll happen to it, do you think?” she asked. “Will

it be all right?”

“You sound like Hagrid,” said Ron. “It’s a dragon,

Hermione, it can look after itself. It’s us we need to

worry about.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I don’t know how to break this to you,” said

Ron, “but I think they might have noticed we broke

into Gringotts.”

All three of them started to laugh, and once started, it

was difficult to stop. Harry’s ribs ached, he felt

lightheaded with hunger, but he lay back on the grass

beneath the reddening sky and laughed until his

throat was raw.

“What are we going to do, though?” said Hermione

finally, hiccuping herself back to seriousness. “He’ll

know, won’t he? You- Know- Who will know we know

about his Horcruxes!”

“Maybe they’ll be too scared to tell him?” said Ron

hopefully. “Maybe they’ll cover up — ”

Page | 619 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The sky, the smell of lake water, the sound of Ron’s

voice were extinguished: Pain cleaved Harry’s head

like a sword stroke. He was standing in a dimly lit

room, and a semicircle of wizards faced him, and on

the floor at his feet knelt a small, quaking figure.

“What did you say to me?” His voice was high and

cold, but fury and fear burned inside him. The one

thing he had dreaded — but it could not be true, he

could not see how ...

The goblin was trembling, unable to meet the red eyes

high above his.

“Say it again!” murmured Voldemort. “ Say it again).”

“M-my Lord,” stammered the goblin, its black eyes

wide with terror, “m-my Lord ... we t-tried t-to st-stop

them. ... Im-impostors, my Lord ... broke — broke

into the — into the Lestranges’ v-vault. ...”

“Impostors? What impostors? I thought Gringotts had

ways of revealing impostors? Who were they?”

“It was ... it was . . . the P-Potter b-boy and t-two

accomplices. ...”

“And they took?” he said, his voice rising, a terrible

fear gripping him. “Tell me! What did they take?”

“A ... a s-small golden c-cup, m-my Lord ...”

The scream of rage, of denial left him as if it were a

stranger’s: He was crazed, frenzied, it could not be

true, it was impossible, nobody had ever known: How

was it possible that the boy could have discovered his

secret?

Page | 620 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The Elder Wand slashed through the air and green

light erupted through the room; the kneeling goblin

rolled over, dead; the watching wizards scattered

before him, terrified: Bellatrix and Lucius Malfoy

threw others behind them in their race for the door,

and again and again his wand fell, and those who

were left were slain, all of them, for bringing him this

news, for hearing about the golden cup —

Alone amongst the dead he stormed up and down,

and they passed before him in vision: his treasures,

his safeguards, his anchors to immortality — the

diary was destroyed and the cup was stolen: What if,

what if, the boy knew about the others? Could he

know, had he already acted, had he traced more of

them? Was Dumbledore at the root of this?

Dumbledore, who had always suspected him;

Dumbledore, dead on his orders; Dumbledore, whose

wand was his now, yet who reached out from the

ignominy of death through the boy, the boy —

But surely if the boy had destroyed any of his

Horcruxes, he, Lord Voldemort, would have known,

would have felt it? He, the greatest wizard of them all;

he, the most powerful; he, the killer of Dumbledore

and of how many other worthless, nameless men:

How could Lord Voldemort not have known, if he,

himself, most important and precious, had been

attacked, mutilated?

True, he had not felt it when the diary had been

destroyed, but he had thought that was because he

had no body to feel, being less than ghost. ... No,

surely, the rest were safe. ... The other Horcruxes

must be intact. ...

But he must know, he must be sure. ... He paced the

room, kicking aside the goblin’s corpse as he passed,

Page | 621 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

and the pictures blurred and burned in his boiling

brain: the lake, the shack, and Hogwarts —

A modicum of calm cooled his rage now: How could

the boy know that he had hidden the ring in the

Gaunt shack? No one had ever known him to be

related to the Gaunts, he had hidden the connection,

the killings had never been traced to him: The ring,

surely, was safe.

And how could the boy, or anybody else, know about

the cave or penetrate its protection? The idea of the

locket being stolen was absurd. ...

As for the school: He alone knew where in Hogwarts

he had stowed the Horcrux, because he alone had

plumbed the deepest secrets of that place. ...

And there was still Nagini, who must remain close

now, no longer sent to do his bidding, under his

protection. ...

But to be sure, to be utterly sure, he must return to

each of his hiding places, he must redouble protection

around each of his Horcruxes. ... A job, like the quest

for the Elder Wand, that he must undertake alone ...

Which should he visit first, which was in most

danger? An old unease flickered inside him.

Dumbledore had known his middle name. ...

Dumbledore might have made the connection with

the Gaunts. ... Their abandoned home was, perhaps,

the least secure of his hiding places, it was there that

he would go first. ...

The lake, surely impossible ... though was there a

slight possibility that Dumbledore might have known

some of his past misdeeds, through the orphanage.

Page | 622 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

And Hogwarts . . . but he knew that his Horcrux there

was safe; it would be impossible for Potter to enter

Hogsmeade without detection, let alone the school.

Nevertheless, it would be prudent to alert Snape to

the fact that the boy might try to reenter the castle. ...

To tell Snape why the boy might return would be

foolish, of course; it had been a grave mistake to trust

Bellatrix and Malfoy: Didn’t their stupidity and

carelessness prove how unwise it was ever to trust?

He would visit the Gaunt shack first, then, and take

Nagini with him: He would not be parted from the

snake anymore . . . and he strode from the room,

through the hall, and out into the dark garden where

the fountain played; he called the snake in

Parseltongue and it slithered out to join him like a

long shadow. ...

Harry’s eyes flew open as he wrenched himself back

to the present: He was lying on the bank of the lake in

the setting sun, and Ron and Hermione were looking

down at him. Judging by their worried looks, and by

the continued pounding of his scar, his sudden

excursion into Voldemort’s mind had not passed

unnoticed. He struggled up, shivering, vaguely

surprised that he was still wet to his skin, and saw

the cup lying innocently in the grass before him, and

the lake, deep blue shot with gold in the failing sun.

“He knows.” His own voice sounded strange and low

after Voldemort’s high screams. “He knows, and he’s

going to check where the others are, and the last

one,” he was already on his feet, “is at Hogwarts. I

knew it. I knew it.”

“What?”

Ron was gaping at him; Hermione sat up, looking

worried.

Page | 623 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But what did you see? How do you know?”

“I saw him find out about the cup, I — I was in his

head, he’s” — Harry remembered the killings — “he’s

seriously angry, and scared too, he can’t understand

how we knew, and now he’s going to check the others

are safe, the ring first. He thinks the Hogwarts one is

safest, because Snape’s there, because it’ll be so hard

not to be seen getting in, I think he’ll check that one

last, but he could still be there within hours — ”

“Did you see where in Hogwarts it is?” asked Ron,

now scrambling to his feet too.

“No, he was concentrating on warning Snape, he

didn’t think about exactly where it is — ”

“Wait, wait\” cried Hermione as Ron caught up the

Horcrux and Harry pulled out the Invisibility Cloak

again. “We can’t just go, we haven’t got a plan, we

need to — ”

“We need to get going,” said Harry firmly. He had

been hoping to sleep, looking forward to getting into

the new tent, but that was impossible now. “Can you

imagine what he’s going to do once he realizes the

ring and the locket are gone? What if he moves the

Hogwarts Horcrux, decides it isn’t safe enough?”

“But how are we going to get in?”

“Well go to Hogsmeade,” said Harry, “and try to work

something out once we see what the protection

around the school’s like. Get under the Cloak,

Hermione, I want to stick together this time.”

“But we don’t really fit — ”

“It’ll be dark, no one’s going to notice our feet.”

Page | 624 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The flapping of enormous wings echoed across the

black water: The dragon had drunk its fill and risen

into the air. They paused in their preparations to

watch it climb higher and higher, now black against

the rapidly darkening sky, until it vanished over a

nearby mountain. Then Hermione walked forward

and took her place between the other two. Harry

pulled the Cloak down as far as it would go, and

together they turned on the spot into the crushing

darkness.

Page | 625 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE MISSING MIRROR

Harry’s feet touched road. He saw the achingly

familiar Hogsmeade High Street: dark shop fronts,

and the outline of black mountains beyond the

village, and the curve in the road ahead that led off

toward Hogwarts, and light spilling from the windows

of the Three Broomsticks, and with a lurch of the

heart he remembered, with piercing accuracy, how he

had landed here nearly a year before, supporting a

desperately weak Dumbledore; all this in a second,

upon landing — and then, even as he relaxed his grip

upon Ron’s and Hermione’s arms, it happened.

The air was rent by a scream that sounded like

Voldemort’s when he had realized the cup had been

stolen: It tore at every nerve in Harry’s body, and he

knew immediately that their appearance had caused

it. Even as he looked at the other two beneath the

Cloak, the door of the Three Broomsticks burst open

and a dozen cloaked and hooded Death Eaters

dashed into the street, their wands aloft.

Page | 626 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry seized Ron’s wrist as he raised his wand; there

were too many of them to Stun: Even attempting it

would give away their position. One of the Death

Eaters waved his wand and the scream stopped, still

echoing around the distant mountains.

“Accio Cloak).” roared one of the Death Eaters.

Harry seized its folds, but it made no attempt to

escape: The Summoning Charm had not worked on it.

“Not under your wrapper, then, Potter?” yelled the

Death Eater who had tried the charm, and then to his

fellows, “Spread out. He’s here.”

Six of the Death Eaters ran toward them: Harry, Ron,

and Hermione backed as quickly as possible down the

nearest side street, and the Death Eaters missed

them by inches. They waited in the darkness,

listening to the footsteps running up and down,

beams of light flying along the street from the Death

Eaters’ searching wands.

“Let’s just leave!” Hermione whispered. “Disapparate

now!”

“Great idea,” said Ron, but before Harry could reply a

Death Eater shouted,

“We know you’re here, Potter, and there’s no getting

away! We’ll find you!”

“They were ready for us,” whispered Harry. “They set

up that spell to tell them we’d come. I reckon they’ve

done something to keep us here, trap us — ”

“What about dementors?” called another Death Eater.

“Let ’em have free rein, they’d find him quick enough!”

Page | 627 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“The Dark Lord wants Potter dead by no hand but his

“ — an’ dementors won’t kill him! The Dark Lord

wants Potter’s life, not his soul. He’ll be easier to kill if

he’s been Kissed first!”

There were noises of agreement. Dread filled Harry:

To repel dementors they would have to produce

Patronuses, which would give them away

immediately.

“We’re going to have to try to Disapparate, Harry!”

Hermione whispered.

Even as she said it, he felt the unnatural cold begin to

steal over the street. Light was sucked from the

environment right up to the stars, which vanished. In

the pitch-blackness, he felt Hermione take hold of his

arm and together, they turned on the spot.

The air through which they needed to move seemed to

have become solid: They could not Disapparate; the

Death Eaters had cast their charms well. The cold

was biting deeper and deeper into Harry’s flesh. He,

Ron, and Hermione retreated down the side street,

groping their way along the wall, trying not to make a

sound. Then, around the corner, gliding noiselessly,

came dementors, ten or more of them, visible because

they were of a denser darkness than their

surroundings, with their black cloaks and their

scabbed and rotting hands. Could they sense fear in

the vicinity? Harry was sure of it: They seemed to be

coming more quickly now, taking those dragging,

rattling breaths he detested, tasting despair on the

air, closing in —

He raised his wand: He could not, would not, suffer

the Dementor’s Kiss, whatever happened afterward. It

Page | 628 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

was of Ron and Hermione that he thought as he

whispered, “Expecto Patronum).”

The silver stag burst from his wand and charged: The

dementors scattered and there was a triumphant yell

from somewhere out of sight.

“It’s him, down there, down there, I saw his Patronus,

it was a stag!

The dementors had retreated, the stars were popping

out again, and the footsteps of the Death Eaters were

becoming louder; but before Harry in his panic could

decide what to do, there was a grinding of bolts

nearby, a door opened on the left-hand side of the

narrow street, and a rough voice said, “Potter, in here,

quick!”

He obeyed without hesitation: The three of them

hurtled through the open doorway.

“Upstairs, keep the Cloak on, keep quiet!” muttered a

tall figure, passing them on his way into the street

and slamming the door behind him.

Harry had had no idea where they were, but now he

saw, by the stuttering light of a single candle, the

grubby, sawdust- strewn bar of the Hog’s Head Inn.

They ran behind the counter and through a second

doorway, which led to a rickety wooden staircase that

they climbed as fast as they could. The stairs opened

onto a sitting room with a threadbare carpet and a

small fireplace, above which hung a single large oil

painting of a blonde girl who gazed out at the room

with a kind of vacant sweetness.

Shouts reached them from the street below. Still

wearing the Invisibility Cloak, they crept toward the

grimy window and looked down. Their savior, whom

Page | 629 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry now recognized as the Hog’s Head’s barman,

was the only person not wearing a hood.

“So what?” he was bellowing into one of the hooded

faces. “So what? You send dementors down my street,

I’ll send a Patronus back at ’em! I’m not having ’em

near me, I’ve told you that, I’m not having it!”

“That wasn’t your Patronus!” said a Death Eater.

“That was a stag, it was Potter’s!”

“Stag!” roared the barman, and he pulled out a wand.

“Stag! You idiot — Expecto Patronum .!”

Something huge and horned erupted from the wand:

Head down, it charged toward the High Street and out

of sight.

“That’s not what I saw — ” said the Death Eater,

though with less certainty.

“Curfew’s been broken, you heard the noise,” one of

his companions told the barman. “Someone was out

in the street against regulations — ”

“If I want to put my cat out, I will, and be damned to

your curfew!”

“ You set off the Caterwauling Charm?”

“What if I did? Going to cart me off to Azkaban? Kill

me for sticking my nose out my own front door? Do it,

then, if you want to! But I hope for your sakes you

haven’t pressed your little Dark Marks and

summoned him. He’s not going to like being called

here for me and my old cat, is he, now?”

“Don’t you worry about us,” said one of the Death

Eaters, “worry about yourself, breaking curfew!”

Page | 630 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“And where will you lot traffick potions and poisons

when my pub’s closed down? What’ll happen to your

little sidelines then?”

“Are you threatening — ?”

“I keep my mouth shut, it’s why you come here, isn’t

it?”

“I still say I saw a stag Patronus!” shouted the first

Death Eater.

“Stag?” roared the barman. “It’s a goat, idiot!”

“All right, we made a mistake,” said the second Death

Eater. “Break curfew again and we won’t be so

lenient!”

The Death Eaters strode back toward the High Street.

Hermione moaned with relief, wove out from under

the Cloak, and sat down on a wobble-legged chair.

Harry drew the curtains tight shut, then pulled the

Cloak off himself and Ron. They could hear the

barman down below, rebolting the door of the bar,

then climbing the stairs.

Harry’s attention was caught by something on the

mantelpiece: a small, rectangular mirror propped on

top of it, right beneath the portrait of the girl.

The barman entered the room.

“You bloody fools,” he said gruffly, looking from one to

the other of them. “What were you thinking, coming

here?”

“Thank you,” said Harry. “We can’t thank you

enough. You saved our lives.”

Page | 631 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The barman grunted. Harry approached him, looking

up into the face, trying to see past the long, stringy,

wire-gray hair and beard. He wore spectacles. Behind

the dirty lenses, the eyes were a piercing, brilliant

blue.

“It’s your eye I’ve been seeing in the mirror.”

There was silence in the room. Harry and the barman

looked at each other.

“You sent Dobby.”

The barman nodded and looked around for the elf.

“Thought he’d be with you. Where Ve you left him?”

“He’s dead,” said Harry. “Bellatrix Lestrange killed

him.”

The barman’s face was impassive. After a few

moments he said, “I’m sorry to hear it. I liked that

elf.”

He turned away, lighting lamps with prods of his

wand, not looking at any of them.

“You’re Aberforth,” said Harry to the man’s back.

He neither confirmed nor denied it, but bent to light

the fire.

“How did you get this?” Harry asked, walking across

to Sirius’s mirror, the twin of the one he had broken

nearly two years before. “Bought it from Dung ’bout a

year ago,” said Aberforth. “Albus told me what it was.

Been trying to keep an eye out for you.”

Ron gasped.

Page | 632 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“The silver doe!” he said excitedly. “Was that you too?”

“What are you talking about?” said Aberforth.

“Someone sent a doe Patronus to us!”

“Brains like that, you could be a Death Eater, son.

Haven’t I just proved my Patronus is a goat?”

“Oh,” said Ron. “Yeah ... well, I’m hungry!” he added

defensively as his stomach gave an enormous rumble.

“I got food,” said Aberforth, and he sloped out of the

room, reappearing moments later with a large loaf of

bread, some cheese, and a pewter jug of mead, which

he set upon a small table in front of the fire.

Ravenous, they ate and drank, and for a while there

was silence but for the crackle of the fire, the clink of

goblets, and the sound of chewing.

“Right then,” said Aberforth when they had eaten

their fill, and Harry and Ron sat slumped dozily in

their chairs. “We need to think of the best way to get

you out of here. Can’t be done by night, you heard

what happens if anyone moves outdoors during

darkness: Caterwauling Charm’s set off, they’ll be

onto you like bow-truckles on doxy eggs. I don’t

reckon I’ll be able to pass off a stag as a goat a second

time. Wait for daybreak when curfew lifts, then you

can put your Cloak back on and set out on foot. Get

right out of Hogsmeade, up into the mountains, and

you’ll be able to Disapparate there. Might see Hagrid.

He’s been hiding in a cave up there with Grawp ever

since they tried to arrest him.”

“We’re not leaving,” said Harry. “We need to get into

Hogwarts.”

“Don’t be stupid, boy,” said Aberforth.

Page | 633 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We’ve got to,” said Harry.

“What you’ve got to do,” said Aberforth, leaning

forward, “is to get as far from here as you can.”

“You don’t understand. There isn’t much time. We’ve

got to get into the castle. Dumbledore — I mean, your

brother — wanted us — ”

The firelight made the grimy lenses of Aberforth ’s

glasses momentarily opaque, a bright flat white, and

Harry remembered the blind eyes of the giant spider,

Aragog.

“My brother Albus wanted a lot of things,” said

Aberforth, “and people had a habit of getting hurt

while he was carrying out his grand plans. You get

away from this school, Potter, and out of the country

if you can. Forget my brother and his clever schemes.

He’s gone where none of this can hurt him, and you

don’t owe him anything.”

“You don’t understand,” said Harry again.

“Oh, don’t I?” said Aberforth quietly. “You don’t think

I understood my own brother? Think you knew Albus

better than I did?”

“I didn’t mean that,” said Harry, whose brain felt

sluggish with exhaustion and from the surfeit of food

and wine. “It’s ... he left me a job.”

“Did he now?” said Aberforth. “Nice job, I hope?

Pleasant? Easy? Sort of thing you’d expect an

unqualified wizard kid to be able to do without

overstretching themselves?”

Ron gave a rather grim laugh. Hermione was looking

strained.

Page | 634 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I-it’s not easy, no,” said Harry. “But I’ve got to — ”

“ ‘Got to’? Why ‘got to\*? He’s dead, isn’t he?” said

Aberforth roughly. “Let it go, boy, before you follow

him! Save yourself!”

“I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“I — ” Harry felt overwhelmed; he could not explain, so

he took the offensive instead. “But you’re fighting too,

you’re in the Order of the Phoenix — ”

“I was,” said Aberforth. “The Order of the Phoenix is

finished. You-Know-Who’s won, it’s over, and anyone

who’s pretending different’s kidding themselves. It’ll

never be safe for you here, Potter, he wants you too

badly. So go abroad, go into hiding, save yourself.

Best take these two with you.” He jerked a thumb at

Ron and Hermione. “They’ll be in danger long as they

live now everyone knows they’ve been working with

you.”

“I can’t leave,” said Harry. “I’ve got a job — ”

“Give it to someone else!”

“I can’t. It’s got to be me, Dumbledore explained it all

“Oh, did he now? And did he tell you everything, was

he honest with you?”

Harry wanted with all his heart to say “Yes,” but

somehow the simple word would not rise to his lips.

Aberforth seemed to know what he was thinking.

Page | 635 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I knew my brother, Potter. He learned secrecy at our

mother’s knee. Secrets and lies, that’s how we grew

up, and Albus ... he was a natural.”

The old man’s eyes traveled to the painting of the girl

over the mantelpiece. It was, now Harry looked

around properly, the only picture in the room. There

was no photograph of Albus Dumbledore, nor of

anyone else.

“Mr. Dumbledore?” said Hermione rather timidly. “Is

that your sister? Ariana?”

“Yes,” said Aberforth tersely. “Been reading Rita

Skeeter, have you, missy?”

Even by the rosy light of the fire it was clear that

Hermione had turned red.

“Elphias Doge mentioned her to us,” said Harry,

trying to spare Hermione.

“That old berk,” muttered Aberforth, taking another

swig of mead. “Thought the sun shone out of my

brother’s every orifice, he did. Well, so did plenty of

people, you three included, by the looks of it.”

Harry kept quiet. He did not want to express the

doubts and uncertainties about Dumbledore that had

riddled him for months now. He had made his choice

while he dug Dobby’s grave, he had decided to

continue along the winding, dangerous path indicated

for him by Albus Dumbledore, to accept that he had

not been told everything that he wanted to know, but

simply to trust. He had no desire to doubt again; he

did not want to hear anything that would deflect him

from his purpose. He met Aberforth ’s gaze, which was

so strikingly like his brother’s: The bright blue eyes

gave the same impression that they were X-raying the

Page | 636 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

object of their scrutiny, and Harry thought that

Aberforth knew what he was thinking and despised

him for it.

“Professor Dumbledore cared about Harry, very

much,” said Hermione in a low voice.

“Did he now?” said Aberforth. “Funny thing, how

many of the people my brother cared about very

much ended up in a worse state than if he’d left ’em

well alone.”

“What do you mean?” asked Hermione breathlessly.

“Never you mind,” said Aberforth.

“But that’s a really serious thing to say!” said

Hermione. “Are you — are you talking about your

sister?”

Aberforth glared at her: His lips moved as if he were

chewing the words he was holding back. Then he

burst into speech.

“When my sister was six years old, she was attacked,

set upon, by three Muggle boys. They’d seen her

doing magic, spying through the back garden hedge:

She was a kid, she couldn’t control it, no witch or

wizard can at that age. What they saw scared them, I

expect. They forced their way through the hedge, and

when she couldn’t show them the trick, they got a bit

carried away trying to stop the little freak doing it.”

Hermione ’s eyes were huge in the firelight; Ron looked

slightly sick. Aberforth stood up, tall as Albus, and

suddenly terrible in his anger and the intensity of his

pain.

Page | 637 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“It destroyed her, what they did: She was never right

again. She wouldn’t use magic, but she couldn’t get

rid of it; it turned inward and drove her mad, it

exploded out of her when she couldn’t control it, and

at times she was strange and dangerous. But mostly

she was sweet and scared and harmless.

“And my father went after the bastards that did it,”

said Aberforth, “and attacked them. And they locked

him up in Azkaban for it. He never said why he’d

done it, because if the Ministry had known what

Ariana had become, she’d have been locked up in St.

Mungo’s for good. They’d have seen her as a serious

threat to the International Statute of Secrecy,

unbalanced like she was, with magic exploding out of

her at moments when she couldn’t keep it in any

longer.

“We had to keep her safe and quiet. We moved house,

put it about she was ill, and my mother looked after

her, and tried to keep her calm and happy.

“I was her favorite,” he said, and as he said it, a

grubby schoolboy seemed to look out through

Aberforth’s wrinkles and tangled beard. “Not Albus,

he was always up in his bedroom when he was home,

reading his books and counting his prizes, keeping up

with his correspondence with ‘the most notable

magical names of the day,’ ” Aberforth sneered. “He

didn’t want to be bothered with her. She liked me

best. I could get her to eat when she wouldn’t do it for

my mother, I could get her to calm down when she

was in one of her rages, and when she was quiet, she

used to help me feed the goats.

“Then, when she was fourteen ... See, I wasn’t there,”

said Aberforth. “If I’d been there, I could have calmed

her down. She had one of her rages, and my mother

wasn’t as young as she was, and ... it was an

Page | 638 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

accident. Ariana couldn’t control it. But my mother

was killed.”

Harry felt a horrible mixture of pity and repulsion; he

did not want to hear any more, but Aberforth kept

talking, and Harry wondered how long it had been

since he had spoken about this; whether, in fact, he

had ever spoken about it.

“So that put paid to Albus’s trip round the world with

little Doge. The pair of ’em came home for my

mother’s funeral and then Doge went off on his own,

and Albus settled down as head of the family. Ha!”

Aberforth spat into the fire.

“I’d have looked after her, I told him so, I didn’t care

about school, I’d have stayed home and done it. He

told me I had to finish my education and he’d take

over from my mother. Bit of a comedown for Mr.

Brilliant, there’s no prizes for looking after your half-

mad sister, stopping her blowing up the house every

other day. But he did all right for a few weeks . . . till

he came.”

And now a positively dangerous look crept over

Aberforth’s face.

“Grindelwald. And at last, my brother had an equal to

talk to, someone just as bright and talented as he

was. And looking after Ariana took a backseat then,

while they were hatching all their plans for a new

Wizarding order, and looking for Hallows, and

whatever else it was they were so interested in. Grand

plans for the benefit of all Wizardkind, and if one

young girl got neglected, what did that matter, when

Albus was working for the greater good?

Page | 639 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But after a few weeks of it, I’d had enough, I had. It

was nearly time for me to go back to Hogwarts, so I

told ’em, both of ’em, face-to-face, like I am to you,

now,” and Aberforth looked down at Harry, and it

took little imagination to see him as a teenager, wiry

and angry, confronting his elder brother. “I told him,

you’d better give it up now. You can’t move her, she’s

in no fit state, you can’t take her with you, wherever it

is you’re planning to go, when you’re making your

clever speeches, trying to whip yourselves up a

following. He didn’t like that,” said Aberforth, and his

eyes were briefly occluded by the firelight on the

lenses of his glasses: They shone white and blind

again. “Grindelwald didn’t like that at all. He got

angry. He told me what a stupid little boy I was,

trying to stand in the way of him and my brilliant

brother. ... Didn’t I understand, my poor sister

wouldn’t have to be hidden once they’d changed the

world, and led the wizards out of hiding, and taught

the Muggles their place?

“And there was an argument . . . and I pulled out my

wand, and he pulled out his, and I had the Cruciatus

Curse used on me by my brother’s best friend — and

Albus was trying to stop him, and then all three of us

were dueling, and the flashing lights and the bangs

set her off, she couldn’t stand it — ”

The color was draining from Aberforth ’s face as

though he had suffered a mortal wound.

“ — and I think she wanted to help, but she didn’t

really know what she was doing, and I don’t know

which of us did it, it could have been any of us — and

she was dead.”

His voice broke on the last word and he dropped

down into the nearest chair. Hermione’s face was wet

with tears, and Ron was almost as pale as Aberforth.

Page | 640 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry felt nothing but revulsion: He wished he had

not heard it, wished he could wash his mind clean of

it.

“I’m so ... I’m so sorry,” Hermione whispered.

“Gone,” croaked Aberforth. “Gone forever.”

He wiped his nose on his cuff and cleared his throat.

“ ’Course, Grindelwald scarpered. He had a bit of a

track record already, back in his own country, and he

didn’t want Ariana set to his account too. And Albus

was free, wasn’t he? Free of the burden of his sister,

free to become the greatest wizard of the — ”

“He was never free,” said Harry.

“I beg your pardon?” said Aberforth.

“Never,” said Harry. “The night that your brother died,

he drank a potion that drove him out of his mind. He

started screaming, pleading with someone who wasn’t

there. ‘Don’t hurt them, please ... hurt me instead.’ ”

Ron and Hermione were staring at Harry. He had

never gone into details about what had happened on

the island on the lake: The events that had taken

place after he and Dumbledore had returned to

Hogwarts had eclipsed it so thoroughly.

“He thought he was back there with you and

Grindelwald, I know he did,” said Harry, remembering

Dumbledore whimpering, pleading. “He thought he

was watching Grindelwald hurting you and Ariana. . . .

It was torture to him, if you’d seen him then, you

wouldn’t say he was free.”

Page | 641 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Aberforth seemed lost in contemplation of his own

knotted and veined hands. After a long pause he said,

“How can you be sure, Potter, that my brother wasn’t

more interested in the greater good than in you? How

can you be sure you aren’t dispensable, just like my

little sister?”

A shard of ice seemed to pierce Harry’s heart.

“I don’t believe it. Dumbledore loved Harry,” said

Hermione.

“Why didn’t he tell him to hide, then?” shot back

Aberforth. “Why didn’t he say to him, Take care of

yourself, here’s how to survive’?”

“Because,” said Harry before Hermione could answer,

“sometimes you’ve got to think about more than your

own safety! Sometimes you’ve got to think about the

greater good! This is war!”

“You’re seventeen, boy!”

“I’m of age, and I’m going to keep fighting even if

you’ve given up!”

“Who says I’ve given up?”

“ The Order of the Phoenix is finished,’ ” Harry

repeated. “ Tou- Know- Who’s won, it’s over, and

anyone who’s pretending different’s kidding

themselves.’ ”

“I don’t say I like it, but it’s the truth!”

“No, it isn’t,” said Harry. “Your brother knew how to

finish You-Know-Who and he passed the knowledge

on to me. I’m going to keep going until I succeed — or

Page | 642 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

I die. Don’t think I don’t know how this might end.

I’ve known it for years.”

He waited for Aberforth to jeer or to argue, but he did

not. He merely scowled.

“We need to get into Hogwarts,” said Harry again. “If

you can’t help us, we’ll wait till daybreak, leave you in

peace, and try to find a way in ourselves. If you can

help us — well, now would be a great time to mention

it.”

Aberforth remained fixed in his chair, gazing at Harry

with the eyes that were so extraordinarily like his

brother’s. At last he cleared his throat, got to his feet,

walked around the little table, and approached the

portrait of Ariana.

“You know what to do,” he said.

She smiled, turned, and walked away, not as people

in portraits usually did, out of the sides of their

frames, but along what seemed to be a long tunnel

painted behind her. They watched her slight figure

retreating until finally she was swallowed by the

darkness.

“Er — what — ?” began Ron.

“There’s only one way in now,” said Aberforth. “You

must know they’ve got all the old secret passageways

covered at both ends, dementors all around the

boundary walls, regular patrols inside the school from

what my sources tell me. The place has never been so

heavily guarded. How you expect to do anything once

you get inside it, with Snape in charge and the

Carrows as his deputies ... well, that’s your lookout,

isn’t it? You say you’re prepared to die.”

Page | 643 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But what ... ?” said Hermione, frowning at Ariana’s

picture.

A tiny white dot had reappeared at the end of the

painted tunnel, and now Ariana was walking back

toward them, growing bigger and bigger as she came.

But there was somebody else with her now, someone

taller than she was, who was limping along, looking

excited. His hair was longer than Harry had ever seen

it: He appeared to have suffered several gashes to his

face and his clothes were ripped and torn. Larger and

larger the two figures grew, until only their heads and

shoulders filled the portrait. Then the whole thing

swung forward on the wall like a little door, and the

entrance to a real tunnel was revealed. And out of it,

his hair overgrown, his face cut, his robes ripped,

clambered the real Neville Longbottom, who gave a

roar of delight, leapt down from the mantelpiece, and

yelled, “I knew you’d come! I knew it, HarryY’

Page | 644 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE LOST DIADEM

“Neville — what the — how — ?”

But Neville had spotted Ron and Hermione, and with

yells of delight was hugging them too. The longer

Harry looked at Neville, the worse he appeared: One

of his eyes was swollen yellow and purple, there were

gouge marks on his face, and his general air of

unkemptness suggested that he had been living

rough. Nevertheless, his battered visage shone with

happiness as he let go of Hermione and said again, “I

knew you’d come! Kept telling Seamus it was a matter

of time!”

“Neville, what’s happened to you?”

“What? This?” Neville dismissed his injuries with a

shake of the head. “This is nothing. Seamus is worse.

You’ll see. Shall we get going then? Oh,” he turned to

Aberforth, “Ab, there might be a couple more people

on the way.”

Page | 645 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Couple more?” repeated Aberforth ominously. “What

d’you mean, a couple more, Longbottom? There’s a

curfew and a Caterwauling Charm on the whole

village!”

“I know, that’s why they’ll be Apparating directly into

the bar,” said Neville. “Just send them down the

passage when they get here, will you? Thanks a lot.”

Neville held out his hand to Hermione and helped her

to climb up onto the mantelpiece and into the tunnel;

Ron followed, then Neville. Harry addressed

Aberforth.

“I don’t know how to thank you. You’ve saved our

lives twice.”

“Look after ’em, then,” said Aberforth gruffly. “I might

not be able to save ’em a third time.”

Harry clambered up onto the mantelpiece and

through the hole behind Ariana’s portrait. There were

smooth stone steps on the other side: It looked as

though the passageway had been there for years.

Brass lamps hung from the walls and the earthy floor

was worn and smooth; as they walked, their shadows

rippled, fanlike, across the wall.

“How long’s this been here?” Ron asked as they set

off. “It isn’t on the Marauder’s Map, is it, Harry? I

thought there were only seven passages in and out of

school?”

“They sealed off all of those before the start of the

year,” said Neville. “There’s no chance of getting

through any of them now, not with curses over the

entrances and Death Eaters and dementors waiting at

the exits.” He started walking backward, beaming,

drinking them in. “Never mind that stuff. ... Is it true?

Page | 646 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Did you break into Gringotts? Did you escape on a

dragon? It’s everywhere, everyone’s talking about it,

Terry Boot got beaten up by Carrow for yelling about

it in the Great Hall at dinner!”

“Yeah, it’s true,” said Harry.

Neville laughed gleefully.

“What did you do with the dragon?”

“Released it into the wild,” said Ron. “Hermione was

all for keeping it as a pet — ”

“Don’t exaggerate, Ron — ”

“But what have you been doing? People have been

saying you’ve just been on the run, Harry, but I don’t

think so. I think you’ve been up to something.”

“You’re right,” said Harry, “but tell us about

Hogwarts, Neville, we haven’t heard anything.”

“It’s been ... well, it’s not really like Hogwarts

anymore,” said Neville, the smile fading from his face

as he spoke. “Do you know about the Carrows?”

“Those two Death Eaters who teach here?”

“They do more than teach,” said Neville. “They’re in

charge of all discipline. They like punishment, the

Carrows.”

“Like Umbridge?”

“Nah, they make her look tame. The other teachers

are all supposed to refer us to the Carrows if we do

anything wrong. They don’t, though, if they can avoid

it. You can tell they all hate them as much as we do.

Page | 647 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Amycus, the bloke, he teaches what used to be

Defense Against the Dark Arts, except now it’s just

the Dark Arts. We’re supposed to practice the

Cruciatus Curse on people who’ve earned detentions

“What?”

Harry, Ron, and Hermione’s united voices echoed up

and down the passage.

“Yeah,” said Neville. “That’s how I got this one,” he

pointed at a particularly deep gash in his cheek, “I

refused to do it. Some people are into it, though;

Crabbe and Goyle love it. First time they’ve ever been

top in anything, I expect.

“Alecto, Amycus’s sister, teaches Muggle Studies,

which is compulsory for everyone. We’ve all got to

listen to her explain how Muggles are like animals,

stupid and dirty, and how they drove wizards into

hiding by being vicious toward them, and how the

natural order is being reestablished. I got this one,”

he indicated another slash to his face, “for asking her

how much Muggle blood she and her brother have

got.”

“Blimey, Neville,” said Ron, “there’s a time and a place

for getting a smart mouth.”

“You didn’t hear her,” said Neville. “You wouldn’t have

stood it either. The thing is, it helps when people

stand up to them, it gives everyone hope. I used to

notice that when you did it, Harry.”

“But they’ve used you as a knife sharpener,” said

Ron, wincing slightly as they passed a lamp and

Neville’s injuries were thrown into even greater relief.

Page | 648 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Neville shrugged.

“Doesn’t matter. They don’t want to spill too much

pure blood, so they’ll torture us a bit if we’re mouthy

but they won’t actually kill us.”

Harry did not know what was worse, the things that

Neville was saying or the matter-of-fact tone in which

he said them.

“The only people in real danger are the ones whose

friends and relatives on the outside are giving trouble.

They get taken hostage. Old Xeno Lovegood was

getting a bit too outspoken in The Quihhler, so they

dragged Luna off the train on the way back for

Christmas.”

“Neville, she’s all right, we’ve seen her — ”

“Yeah, I know, she managed to get a message to me.”

From his pocket he pulled a golden coin, and Harry

recognized it as one of the fake Galleons that

Dumbledore’s Army had used to send one another

messages.

“These have been great,” said Neville, beaming at

Hermione. “The Carrows never rumbled how we were

communicating, it drove them mad. We used to sneak

out at night and put graffiti on the walls:

Dumbledore’s Army, Still Recruiting, stuff like that.

Snape hated it.”

“You used to?” said Harry, who had noticed the past

tense.

“Well, it got more difficult as time went on,” said

Neville. “We lost Luna at Christmas, and Ginny never

came back after Easter, and the three of us were sort

Page | 649 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

of the leaders. The Carrows seemed to know I was

behind a lot of it, so they started coming down on me

hard, and then Michael Corner went and got caught

releasing a first-year they’d chained up, and they

tortured him pretty badly. That scared people off.”

“No kidding,” muttered Ron, as the passage began to

slope upward.

“Yeah, well, I couldn’t ask people to go through what

Michael did, so we dropped those kinds of stunts. But

we were still fighting, doing underground stuff, right

up until a couple of weeks ago. That’s when they

decided there was only one way to stop me, I suppose,

and they went for Gran.”

“They what?” said Harry, Ron, and Hermione

together.

“Yeah,” said Neville, panting a little now, because the

passage was climbing so steeply, “well, you can see

their thinking. It had worked really well, kidnapping

kids to force their relatives to behave, I s’pose it was

only a matter of time before they did it the other way

around. Thing was,” he faced them, and Harry was

astonished to see that he was grinning, “they bit off a

bit more than they could chew with Gran. Little old

witch living alone, they probably thought they didn’t

need to send anyone particularly powerful. Anyway,”

Neville laughed, “Dawlish is still in St. Mungo’s and

Gran’s on the run. She sent me a letter,” he clapped a

hand to the breast pocket of his robes, “telling me she

was proud of me, that I’m my parents’ son, and to

keep it up.”

“Cool,” said Ron.

“Yeah,” said Neville happily. “Only thing was, once

they realized they had no hold over me, they decided

Page | 650 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Hogwarts could do without me after all. I don’t know

whether they were planning to kill me or send me to

Azkaban; either way, I knew it was time to disappear.”

“But,” said Ron, looking thoroughly confused, “aren’t

— aren’t we heading straight back into Hogwarts?”

“ ’Course,” said Neville. “You’ll see. We’re here.”

They turned a corner and there ahead of them was

the end of the passage. Another short flight of steps

led to a door just like the one hidden behind Ariana’s

portrait. Neville pushed it open and climbed through.

As Harry followed, he heard Neville call out to unseen

people:

“Look who it is! Didn’t I tell you?”

As Harry emerged into the room beyond the passage,

there were several screams and yells: “HARRY!” “It’s

Potter, it’s POTTER!” “Ron!” “Hermionel”

He had a confused impression of colored hangings, of

lamps and many faces. The next moment, he, Ron,

and Hermione were engulfed, hugged, pounded on the

back, their hair ruffled, their hands shaken, by what

seemed to be more than twenty people: They might

just have won a Quidditch final.

“Okay, okay, calm down!” Neville called, and as the

crowd backed away, Harry was able to take in their

surroundings.

He did not recognize the room at all. It was enormous,

and looked rather like the interior of a particularly

sumptuous tree house, or perhaps a gigantic ship’s

cabin. Multicolored hammocks were strung from the

ceiling and from a balcony that ran around the dark

wood-paneled and windowless walls, which were

Page | 651 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

covered in bright tapestry hangings: Harry saw the

gold Gryffindor lion, emblazoned on scarlet; the black

badger of Hufflepuff, set against yellow; and the

bronze eagle of Ravenclaw, on blue. The silver and

green of Slytherin alone were absent. There were

bulging bookcases, a few broomsticks propped

against the walls, and in the corner, a large wooden-

cased wireless.

“Where are we?”

“Room of Requirement, of course!” said Neville.

“Surpassed itself, hasn’t it? The Carrows were

chasing me, and I knew I had just one chance for a

hideout: I managed to get through the door and this

is what I found! Well, it wasn’t exactly like this when I

arrived, it was a load smaller, there was only one

hammock and just Gryffindor hangings. But it’s

expanded as more and more of the D.A. have arrived.”

“And the Carrows can’t get in?” asked Harry, looking

around for the door.

“No,” said Seamus Finnigan, whom Harry had not

recognized until he spoke: Seamus’s face was bruised

and puffy. “It’s a proper hideout, as long as one of us

stays in here, they can’t get at us, the door won’t

open. It’s all down to Neville. He really gets this room.

You’ve got to ask it for exactly what you need — like,

‘I don’t want any Carrow supporters to be able to get

in’ — and it’ll do it for you! You’ve just got to make

sure you close the loopholes! Neville’s the man!”

“It’s quite straightforward, really,” said Neville

modestly. “I’d been in here about a day and a half,

and getting really hungry, and wishing I could get

something to eat, and that’s when the passage to the

Hog’s Head opened up. I went through it and met

Aberforth. He’s been providing us with food, because

Page | 652 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

for some reason, that’s the one thing the room doesn’t

really do.”

“Yeah, well, food’s one of the five exceptions to

Gamp’s Law of Elemental Transfiguration,” said Ron

to general astonishment.

“So we’ve been hiding out here for nearly two weeks,”

said Seamus, “and it just makes more hammocks

every time we need them, and it even sprouted a

pretty good bathroom once girls started turning up —

“ — and thought they’d quite like to wash, yes,”

supplied Lavender Brown, whom Harry had not

noticed until that point. Now that he looked around

properly, he recognized many familiar faces. Both

Patil twins were there, as were Terry Boot, Ernie

Macmillan, Anthony Goldstein, and Michael Corner.

“Tell us what you’ve been up to, though,” said Ernie.

“There’ve been so many rumors, we’ve been trying to

keep up with you on Potterwatch.” He pointed at the

wireless. “You didn’t break into Gringotts?”

“They did!” said Neville. “And the dragon’s true too!”

There was a smattering of applause and a few

whoops; Ron took a bow.

“What were you after?” asked Seamus eagerly.

Before any of them could parry the question with one

of their own, Harry felt a terrible, scorching pain in

the lightning scar. As he turned his back hastily on

the curious and delighted faces, the Room of

Requirement vanished, and he was standing inside a

ruined stone shack, and the rotting floorboards were

ripped apart at his feet, a disinterred golden box lay

Page | 653 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

open and empty beside the hole, and Voldemort’s

scream of fury vibrated inside his head.

With an enormous effort he pulled out of Voldemort’s

mind again, back to where he stood, swaying, in the

Room of Requirement, sweat pouring from his face

and Ron holding him up.

“Are you all right, Harry?” Neville was saying. “Want

to sit down? I expect you’re tired, aren’t — ?”

“No,” said Harry. He looked at Ron and Hermione,

trying to tell them without words that Voldemort had

just discovered the loss of one of the other Horcruxes.

Time was running out fast: If Voldemort chose to visit

Hogwarts next, they would miss their chance.

“We need to get going,” he said, and their expressions

told him that they understood.

“What are we going to do, then, Harry?” asked

Seamus. “What’s the plan?”

“Plan?” repeated Harry. He was exercising all his

willpower to prevent himself succumbing again to

Voldemort’s rage: His scar was still burning. “Well,

there’s something we — Ron, Hermione, and I — need

to do, and then we’ll get out of here.”

Nobody was laughing or whooping anymore. Neville

looked confused.

“What d’you mean, ‘get out of here’?”

“We haven’t come back to stay,” said Harry, rubbing

his scar, trying to soothe the pain. “There’s something

important we need to do — ”

“What is it?”

Page | 654 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I — I can’t tell you.”

There was a ripple of muttering at this: Neville’s

brows contracted.

“Why can’t you tell us? It’s something to do with

fighting You-Know-Who, right?”

“Well, yeah — ”

“Then we’ll help you.”

The other members of Dumbledore’s Army were

nodding, some enthusiastically, others solemnly. A

couple of them rose from their chairs to demonstrate

their willingness for immediate action.

“You don’t understand.” Harry seemed to have said

that a lot in the last few hours. “We — we can’t tell

you. We’ve got to do it — alone.”

“Why?” asked Neville.

“Because ...” In his desperation to start looking for

the missing Horcrux, or at least to have a private

discussion with Ron and Hermione about where they

might commence their search, Harry found it difficult

to gather his thoughts. His scar was still searing.

“Dumbledore left the three of us a job,” he said

carefully, “and we weren’t supposed to tell — I mean,

he wanted us to do it, just the three of us.”

“We’re his army,” said Neville. “Dumbledore’s Army.

We were all in it together, we’ve been keeping it going

while you three have been off on your own — ”

“It hasn’t exactly been a picnic, mate,” said Ron.

Page | 655 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I never said it had, but I don’t see why you can’t

trust us. Everyone in this room’s been fighting and

they’ve been driven in here because the Carrows were

hunting them down. Everyone in here’s proven they’re

loyal to Dumbledore — loyal to you.”

“Look,” Harry began, without knowing what he was

going to say, but it did not matter: The tunnel door

had just opened behind him.

“We got your message, Neville! Hello you three, I

thought you must be here!”

It was Luna and Dean. Seamus gave a great roar of

delight and ran to hug his best friend.

“Hi, everyone!” said Luna happily. “Oh, it’s great to be

back!”

“Luna,” said Harry distractedly, “what are you doing

here? How did you — ?”

“I sent for her,” said Neville, holding up the fake

Galleon. “I promised her and Ginny that if you turned

up I’d let them know. We all thought that if you came

back, it would mean revolution. That we were going to

overthrow Snape and the Carrows.”

“Of course that’s what it means,” said Luna brightly.

“Isn’t it, Harry? We’re going to fight them out of

Hogwarts?”

“Listen,” said Harry with a rising sense of panic, “I’m

sorry, but that’s not what we came back for. There’s

something we’ve got to do, and then — ”

“You’re going to leave us in this mess?” demanded

Michael Corner.

Page | 656 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No!” said Ron. “What we’re doing will benefit

everyone in the end, it’s all about trying to get rid of

You-Know-Who — ”

“Then let us help!” said Neville angrily. “We want to be

a part of it!”

There was another noise behind them, and Harry

turned. His heart seemed to fail: Ginny was now

climbing through the hole in the wall, closely followed

by Fred, George, and Lee Jordan. Ginny gave Harry a

radiant smile: He had forgotten, or had never fully

appreciated, how beautiful she was, but he had never

been less pleased to see her.

“Aberforth’s getting a bit annoyed,” said Fred, raising

his hand in answer to several cries of greeting. “He

wants a kip, and his bar’s turned into a railway

station.”

Harry’s mouth fell open. Right behind Lee Jordan

came Harry’s old girlfriend, Cho Chang. She smiled at

him.

“I got the message,” she said, holding up her own fake

Galleon, and she walked over to sit beside Michael

Corner.

“So what’s the plan, Harry?” said George.

“There isn’t one,” said Harry, still disoriented by the

sudden appearance of all these people, unable to take

everything in while his scar was still burning so

fiercely.

“Just going to make it up as we go along, are we? My

favorite kind,” said Fred.

Page | 657 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You’ve got to stop this!” Harry told Neville. “What did

you call them all back for? This is insane — ”

“We’re fighting, aren’t we?” said Dean, taking out his

fake Galleon. “The message said Harry was back, and

we were going to fight! I’ll have to get a wand, though

“You haven’t got a wand — ?” began Seamus.

Ron turned suddenly to Harry.

“Why can’t they help?”

“What?”

“They can help.” He dropped his voice and said, so

that none of them could hear but Hermione, who

stood between them, “We don’t know where it is.

We’ve got to find it fast. We don’t have to tell them it’s

a Horcrux.”

Harry looked from Ron to Hermione, who murmured,

“I think Ron’s right. We don’t even know what we’re

looking for, we need them.” And when Harry looked

unconvinced, “You don’t have to do everything alone,

Harry.”

Harry thought fast, his scar still prickling, his head

threatening to split again. Dumbledore had warned

him against telling anyone but Ron and Hermione

about the Horcruxes. Secrets and lies, that’s how we

grew up, and Albus ...he was a natural. ... Was he

turning into Dumbledore, keeping his secrets

clutched to his chest, afraid to trust? But

Dumbledore had trusted Snape, and where had that

led? To murder at the top of the highest tower ...

Page | 658 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“All right,” he said quietly to the other two. “Okay,” he

called to the room at large, and all noise ceased: Fred

and George, who had been cracking jokes for the

benefit of those nearest, fell silent, and all of them

looked alert, excited.

“There’s something we need to find,” Harry said.

“Something — something that’ll help us overthrow

You-Know-Who. It’s here at Hogwarts, but we don’t

know where. It might have belonged to Ravenclaw.

Has anyone heard of an object like that? Has anyone

ever come across something with her eagle on it, for

instance?”

He looked hopefully toward the little group of

Ravenclaws, to Padma, Michael, Terry, and Cho, but

it was Luna who answered, perched on the arm of

Ginny’s chair.

“Well, there’s her lost diadem. I told you about it,

remember, Harry? The lost diadem of Ravenclaw?

Daddy’s trying to duplicate it.”

“Yeah, but the lost diadem,” said Michael Corner,

rolling his eyes, “is lost, Luna. That’s sort of the

point.”

“When was it lost?” asked Harry.

“Centuries ago, they say,” said Cho, and Harry’s heart

sank. “Professor Flitwick says the diadem vanished

with Ravenclaw herself. People have looked, but,” she

appealed to her fellow Ravenclaws, “nobody’s ever

found a trace of it, have they?”

They all shook their heads.

“Sorry, but what is a diadem?” asked Ron.

Page | 659 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“It’s a kind of crown,” said Terry Boot. “Ravenclaw’s

was supposed to have magical properties, enhance

the wisdom of the wearer.”

“Yes, Daddy’s Wrackspurt siphons — ”

But Harry cut across Luna.

“And none of you have ever seen anything that looks

like it?”

They all shook their heads again. Harry looked at Ron

and Hermione and his own disappointment was

mirrored back at him. An object that had been lost

this long, and apparently without trace, did not seem

like a good candidate for the Horcrux hidden in the

castle. ... Before he could formulate a new question,

however, Cho spoke again.

“If you’d like to see what the diadem’s supposed to

look like, I could take you up to our common room

and show you, Harry? Ravenclaw’s wearing it in her

statue.”

Harry’s scar scorched again: For a moment the Room

of Requirement swam before him, and he saw instead

the dark earth soaring beneath him and felt the great

snake wrapped around his shoulders. Voldemort was

flying again, whether to the underground lake or here,

to the castle, he did not know: Either way, there was

hardly any time left.

“He’s on the move,” he said quietly to Ron and

Hermione. He glanced at Cho and then back at them.

“Listen, I know it’s not much of a lead, but I’m going

to go and look at this statue, at least find out what

the diadem looks like. Wait for me here and keep, you

know — the other one — safe.”

Page | 660 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Cho had got to her feet, but Ginny said rather

fiercely, “No, Luna will take Harry, won’t you, Luna?”

“Oooh, yes, I’d like to,” said Luna happily, and Cho

sat down again, looking disappointed.

“How do we get out?” Harry asked Neville.

“Over here.”

He led Harry and Luna to a corner, where a small

cupboard opened onto a steep staircase.

“It comes out somewhere different every day, so

they’ve never been able to find it,” he said. “Only

trouble is, we never know exactly where we’re going to

end up when we go out. Be careful, Harry, they’re

always patrolling the corridors at night.”

“No problem,” said Harry. “See you in a bit.”

He and Luna hurried up the staircase, which was

long, lit by torches, and turned corners in unexpected

places. At last they reached what appeared to be solid

wall.

“Get under here,” Harry told Luna, pulling out the

Invisibility Cloak and throwing it over both of them.

He gave the wall a little push.

It melted away at his touch and they slipped outside:

Harry glanced back and saw that it had resealed itself

at once. They were standing in a dark corridor: Harry

pulled Luna back into the shadows, fumbled in the

pouch around his neck, and took out the Marauder’s

Map. Holding it close to his nose he searched, and

located his and Luna’s dots at last.

Page | 661 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We’re up on the fifth floor,” he whispered, watching

Filch moving away from them, a corridor ahead.

“Come on, this way.”

They crept off.

Harry had prowled the castle at night many times

before, but never had his heart hammered this fast,

never had so much depended on his safe passage

through the place. Through squares of moonlight

upon the floor, past suits of armor whose helmets

creaked at the sound of their soft footsteps, around

corners beyond which who knew what lurked, Harry

and Luna walked, checking the Marauder’s Map

whenever light permitted, twice pausing to allow a

ghost to pass without drawing attention to

themselves. He expected to encounter an obstacle at

any moment; his worst fear was Peeves, and he

strained his ears with every step to hear the first,

telltale signs of the poltergeist’s approach.

“This way, Harry,” breathed Luna, plucking his sleeve

and pulling him toward a spiral staircase.

They climbed in tight, dizzying circles; Harry had

never been up here before. At last they reached a

door. There was no handle and no keyhole: nothing

but a plain expanse of aged wood, and a bronze

knocker in the shape of an eagle.

Luna reached out a pale hand, which looked eerie

floating in midair, unconnected to arm or body. She

knocked once, and in the silence it sounded to Harry

like a cannon blast. At once the beak of the eagle

opened, but instead of a bird’s call, a soft, musical

voice said, “Which came first, the phoenix or the

flame?”

Page | 662 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Hmm . . . What do you think, Harry?” said Luna,

looking thoughtful.

“What? Isn’t there just a password?”

“Oh no, you’ve got to answer a question,” said Luna.

“What if you get it wrong?”

“Well, you have to wait for somebody who gets it

right,” said Luna. “That way you learn, you see?”

“Yeah ... Trouble is, we can’t really afford to wait for

anyone else, Luna.”

“No, I see what you mean,” said Luna seriously. “Well

then, I think the answer is that a circle has no

beginning.”

“Well reasoned,” said the voice, and the door swung

open.

The deserted Ravenclaw common room was a wide,

circular room, airier than any Harry had ever seen at

Hogwarts. Graceful arched windows punctuated the

walls, which were hung with blue-and-bronze silks:

By day, the Ravenclaws would have a spectacular

view of the surrounding mountains. The ceiling was

domed and painted with stars, which were echoed in

the midnight-blue carpet. There were tables, chairs,

and bookcases, and in a niche opposite the door

stood a tall statue of white marble.

Harry recognized Rowena Ravenclaw from the bust he

had seen at Luna’s house. The statue stood beside a

door that led, he guessed, to dormitories above. He

strode right up to the marble woman, and she seemed

to look back at him with a quizzical half smile on her

face, beautiful yet slightly intimidating. A delicate-

Page | 663 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

looking circlet had been reproduced in marble on top

of her head. It was not unlike the tiara Fleur had

worn at her wedding. There were tiny words etched

into it. Harry stepped out from under the Cloak and

climbed up onto Ravenclaw’s plinth to read them.

“ ‘Wit beyond measure is man’s greatest treasure.’ ”

“Which makes you pretty skint, witless,” said a

cackling voice.

Harry whirled around, slipped off the plinth, and

landed on the floor. The sloping-shouldered figure of

Alecto Carrow was standing before him, and even as

Harry raised his wand, she pressed a stubby

forefinger to the skull and snake branded on her

forearm.

Page | 664 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE SACKING OF SEVERUS SNAPE

The moment her finger touched the Mark, Harry’s

scar burned savagely, the starry room vanished from

sight, and he was standing upon an outcrop of rock

beneath a cliff, and the sea was washing around him

and there was triumph in his heart — They have the

boy.

A loud bang brought Harry back to where he stood:

Disoriented, he raised his wand, but the witch before

him was already falling forward; she hit the ground so

hard that the glass in the bookcases tinkled.

“I’ve never Stunned anyone except in our D.A.

lessons,” said Luna, sounding mildly interested. “That

was noisier than I thought it would be.”

And sure enough, the ceiling had begun to tremble.

Scurrying, echoing footsteps were growing louder

from behind the door leading to the dormitories:

Luna’s spell had woken Ravenclaws sleeping above.

“Luna, where are you? I need to get under the Cloak!”

Page | 665 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Luna’s feet appeared out of nowhere; he hurried to

her side and she let the Cloak fall back over them as

the door opened and a stream of Ravenclaws, all in

their nightclothes, flooded into the common room.

There were gasps and cries of surprise as they saw

Alecto lying there unconscious. Slowly they shuffled

in around her, a savage beast that might wake at any

moment and attack them. Then one brave little first-

year darted up to her and prodded her backside with

his big toe.

“I think she might be dead!” he shouted with delight.

“Oh, look,” whispered Luna happily, as the

Ravenclaws crowded in around Alecto. “They’re

pleased!”

“Yeah ... great ...”

Harry closed his eyes, and as his scar throbbed he

chose to sink again into Voldemort’s mind. ... He was

moving along the tunnel into the first cave. ... He had

chosen to make sure of the locket before coming . . .

but that would not take him long. . . .

There was a rap on the common room door and every

Ravenclaw froze. From the other side, Harry heard the

soft, musical voice that issued from the eagle door

knocker: “Where do Vanished objects go?”

“I dunno, do I? Shut it!” snarled an uncouth voice

that Harry knew was that of the Carrow brother,

Amycus. “Alecto? Alecto? Are you there? Have you got

him? Open the door!”

The Ravenclaws were whispering amongst

themselves, terrified. Then, without warning, there

came a series of loud bangs, as though somebody was

firing a gun into the door.

Page | 666 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ALECTO\ If he comes, and we haven’t got Potter —

d’you want to go the same way as the Malfoys?

ANSWER ME!” Amyous bellowed, shaking the door for

all he was worth, but still it did not open. The

Ravenclaws were all backing away, and some of the

most frightened began scampering back up the

staircase to their beds. Then, just as Harry was

wondering whether he ought not to blast open the

door and Stun Amycus before the Death Eater could

do anything else, a second, most familiar voice rang

out beyond the door.

“May I ask what you are doing, Professor Carrow?”

“Trying — to get — through this damned — door!”

shouted Amycus. “Go and get Flitwick! Get him to

open it, now!”

“But isn’t your sister in there?” asked Professor

McGonagall. “Didn’t Professor Flitwick let her in

earlier this evening, at your urgent request? Perhaps

she could open the door for you? Then you needn’t

wake up half the castle.”

“She ain’t answering, you old besom! You open it!

Garn! Do it, now!

“Certainly, if you wish it,” said Professor McGonagall,

with awful coldness. There was a genteel tap of the

knocker and the musical voice asked again,

“Where do Vanished objects go?”

“Into nonbeing, which is to say, everything,” replied

Professor McGonagall.

“Nicely phrased,” replied the eagle door knocker, and

the door swung open.

Page | 667 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The few Ravenclaws who had remained behind

sprinted for the stairs as Amycus burst over the

threshold, brandishing his wand. Hunched like his

sister, he had a pallid, doughy face and tiny eyes,

which fell at once on Alecto, sprawled motionless on

the floor. He let out a yell of fury and fear.

“What’ve they done, the little whelps?” he screamed.

“I’ll Cruciate the lot of ’em till they tell me who did it

— and what’s the Dark Lord going to say?” he

shrieked, standing over his sister and smacking

himself on the forehead with his fist. “We haven’t got

him, and they’ve gorn and killed her!”

“She’s only Stunned,” said Professor McGonagall

impatiently, who had stooped down to examine

Alecto. “She’ll be perfectly all right.”

“No she bludgering well won’t!” bellowed Amycus. “Not

after the Dark Lord gets hold of her! She’s gorn and

sent for him, I felt me Mark burn, and he thinks we’ve

got Potter!”

“ ‘Got Potter’?” said Professor McGonagall sharply.

“What do you mean, ‘got Potter’?”

“He told us Potter might try and get inside Ravenclaw

Tower, and to send for him if we caught him!”

“Why would Harry Potter try to get inside Ravenclaw

Tower? Potter belongs in my House!”

Beneath the disbelief and anger, Harry heard a little

strain of pride in her voice, and affection for Minerva

McGonagall gushed up inside him.

“We was told he might come in here!” said Carrow. “I

dunno why, do I?”

Page | 668 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Professor McGonagall stood up and her beady eyes

swept the room. Twice they passed right over the

place where Harry and Luna stood.

“We can push it off on the kids,” said Amycus, his

piglike face suddenly crafty. “Yeah, that’s what we’ll

do. Well say Alecto was ambushed by the kids, them

kids up there” — he looked up at the starry ceiling

toward the dormitories — “and we’ll say they forced

her to press her Mark, and that’s why he got a false

alarm. ... He can punish them. Couple of kids more or

less, what’s the difference?”

“Only the difference between truth and lies, courage

and cowardice,” said Professor McGonagall, who had

turned pale, “a difference, in short, which you and

your sister seem unable to appreciate. But let me

make one thing very clear. You are not going to pass

off your many ineptitudes on the students of

Hogwarts. I shall not permit it.”

“Excuse me?”

Amycus moved forward until he was offensively close

to Professor McGonagall, his face within inches of

hers. She refused to back away, but looked down at

him as if he were something disgusting she had found

stuck to a lavatory seat.

“It’s not a case of what you’ll permit, Minerva

McGonagall. Your time’s over. It’s us what’s in charge

here now, and you’ll back me up or you’ll pay the

price.”

And he spat in her face.

Harry pulled the Cloak off himself, raised his wand,

and said, “You shouldn’t have done that.”

Page | 669 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

As Amycus spun around, Harry shouted, “Crucio\”

The Death Eater was lifted off his feet. He writhed

through the air like a drowning man, thrashing and

howling in pain, and then, with a crunch and a

shattering of glass, he smashed into the front of a

bookcase and crumpled, insensible, to the floor.

“I see what Bellatrix meant,” said Harry, the blood

thundering through his brain, “you need to really

mean it.”

“Potter!” whispered Professor McGonagall, clutching

her heart. “Potter — you’re here! What — ? How — ?”

She struggled to pull herself together. “Potter, that

was foolish!”

“He spat at you,” said Harry.

“Potter, I — that was very — very gallant of you — but

don’t you realize — ?”

“Yeah, I do,” Harry assured her. Somehow her panic

steadied him. “Professor McGonagall, Voldemort’s on

the way.”

“Oh, are we allowed to say the name now?” asked

Luna with an air of interest, pulling off the Invisibility

Cloak. This appearance of a second outlaw seemed to

overwhelm Professor McGonagall, who staggered

backward and fell into a nearby chair, clutching at

the neck of her old tartan dressing gown.

“I don’t think it makes any difference what we call

him,” Harry told Luna. “He already knows where I

am.”

In a distant part of Harry’s brain, that part connected

to the angry, burning scar, he could see Voldemort

Page | 670 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

sailing fast over the dark lake in the ghostly green

boat. ... He had nearly reached the island where the

stone basin stood. ...

“You must flee,” whispered Professor McGonagall.

“Now, Potter, as quickly as you can!”

“I can’t,” said Harry. “There’s something I need to do.

Professor, do you know where the diadem of

Ravenclaw is?”

“The d-diadem of Ravenclaw? Of course not — hasn’t

it been lost for centuries?” She sat up a little

straighter. “Potter, it was madness, utter madness,

for you to enter this castle — ”

“I had to,” said Harry. “Professor, there’s something

hidden here that I’m supposed to find, and it could be

the diadem — if I could just speak to Professor

Flitwick — ”

There was a sound of movement, of clinking glass:

Amycus was coming round. Before Harry or Luna

could act, Professor McGonagall rose to her feet,

pointed her wand at the groggy Death Eater, and

said, “Imperio.”

Amycus got up, walked over to his sister, picked up

her wand, then shuffled obediently to Professor

McGonagall and handed it over along with his own.

Then he lay down on the floor beside Alecto. Professor

McGonagall waved her wand again, and a length of

shimmering silver rope appeared out of thin air and

snaked around the Carrows, binding them tightly

together.

“Potter,” said Professor McGonagall, turning to face

him again with superb indifference to the Carrows’

Page | 671 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

predicament, “if He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named does

indeed know that you are here — ”

As she said it, a wrath that was like physical pain

blazed through Harry, setting his scar on fire, and for

a second he looked down upon a basin whose potion

had turned clear, and saw that no golden locket lay

safe beneath the surface —

“Potter, are you all right?” said a voice, and Harry

came back: He was clutching Luna’s shoulder to

steady himself.

“Time’s running out, Voldemort’s getting nearer.

Professor, I’m acting on Dumbledore’s orders, I must

find what he wanted me to find! But we’ve got to get

the students out while I’m searching the castle — it’s

me Voldemort wants, but he won’t care about killing a

few more or less, not now — ” not now he knows I’m

attacking Horcruxes, Harry finished the sentence in

his head.

“You’re acting on Dumbledore’s orders?” she repeated

with a look of dawning wonder. Then she drew herself

up to her fullest height.

“We shall secure the school against He-Who-Must-

Not-Be-Named while you search for this — this

object.”

“Is that possible?”

“I think so,” said Professor McGonagall dryly, “we

teachers are rather good at magic, you know. I am

sure we will be able to hold him off for a while if we all

put our best efforts into it. Of course, something will

have to be done about Professor Snape — ”

“Let me — ”

Page | 672 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ — and if Hogwarts is about to enter a state of siege,

with the Dark Lord at the gates, it would indeed be

advisable to take as many innocent people out of the

way as possible. With the Floo Network under

observation, and Apparition impossible within the

grounds — ”

“There’s a way,” said Harry quickly, and he explained

about the passageway leading into the Hog’s Head.

“Potter, we’re talking about hundreds of students — ”

“I know, Professor, but if Voldemort and the Death

Eaters are concentrating on the school boundaries

they won’t be interested in anyone who’s

Disapparating out of the Hog’s Head.”

“There’s something in that,” she agreed. She pointed

her wand at the Carrows, and a silver net fell upon

their bound bodies, tied itself around them, and

hoisted them into the air, where they dangled beneath

the blue-and-gold ceiling like two large, ugly sea

creatures. “Come. We must alert the other Heads of

House. You’d better put that Cloak back on.”

She marched toward the door, and as she did so she

raised her wand. From the tip burst three silver cats

with spectacle markings around their eyes. The

Patronuses ran sleekly ahead, filling the spiral

staircase with silvery light, as Professor McGonagall,

Harry, and Luna hurried back down.

Along the corridors they raced, and one by one the

Patronuses left them; Professor McGonagall’s tartan

dressing gown rustled over the floor, and Harry and

Luna jogged behind her under the Cloak.

They had descended two more floors when another

set of quiet footsteps joined theirs. Harry, whose scar

Page | 673 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

was still prickling, heard them first: He felt in the

pouch around his neck for the Marauder’s Map, but

before he could take it out, McGonagall too seemed to

become aware of their company. She halted, raised

her wand ready to duel, and said, “Who’s there?”

“It is I,” said a low voice.

From behind a suit of armor stepped Severus Snape.

Hatred boiled up in Harry at the sight of him: He had

forgotten the details of Snape ’s appearance in the

magnitude of his crimes, forgotten how his greasy

black hair hung in curtains around his thin face, how

his black eyes had a dead, cold look. He was not

wearing nightclothes, but was dressed in his usual

black cloak, and he too was holding his wand ready

for a fight.

“Where are the Carrows?” he asked quietly.

“Wherever you told them to be, I expect, Severus,”

said Professor McGonagall.

Snape stepped nearer, and his eyes flitted over

Professor McGonagall into the air around her, as if he

knew that Harry was there. Harry held his wand up

too, ready to attack.

“I was under the impression,” said Snape, “that Alecto

had apprehended an intruder.”

“Really?” said Professor McGonagall. “And what gave

you that impression?”

Snape made a slight flexing movement of his left arm,

where the Dark Mark was branded into his skin.

Page | 674 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Oh, but naturally,” said Professor McGonagall. “You

Death Eaters have your own private means of

communication, I forgot.”

Snape pretended not to have heard her. His eyes were

still probing the air all about her, and he was moving

gradually closer, with an air of hardly noticing what

he was doing.

“I did not know that it was your night to patrol the

corridors, Minerva.”

“You have some objection?”

“I wonder what could have brought you out of your

bed at this late hour?”

“I thought I heard a disturbance,” said Professor

McGonagall.

“Really? But all seems calm.”

Snape looked into her eyes.

“Have you seen Harry Potter, Minerva? Because if you

have, I must insist — ”

Professor McGonagall moved faster than Harry could

have believed: Her wand slashed through the air and

for a split second Harry thought that Snape must

crumple, unconscious, but the swiftness of his Shield

Charm was such that McGonagall was thrown off

balance. She brandished her wand at a torch on the

wall and it flew out of its bracket: Harry, about to

curse Snape, was forced to pull Luna out of the way

of the descending flames, which became a ring of fire

that filled the corridor and flew like a lasso at Snape

Page | 675 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Then it was no longer fire, but a great black serpent

that McGonagall blasted to smoke, which re-formed

and solidified in seconds to become a swarm of

pursuing daggers: Snape avoided them only by

forcing the suit of armor in front of him, and with

echoing clangs the daggers sank, one after another,

into its breast —

“Minerva!” said a squeaky voice, and looking behind

him, still shielding Luna from flying spells, Harry saw

Professors Flitwick and Sprout sprinting up the

corridor toward them in their nightclothes, with the

enormous Professor Slughorn panting along at the

rear.

“No!” squealed Flitwick, raising his wand. “You’ll do

no more murder at Hogwarts!”

Flitwick’s spell hit the suit of armor behind which

Snape had taken shelter: With a clatter it came to life.

Snape struggled free of the crushing arms and sent it

flying back toward his attackers: Harry and Luna had

to dive sideways to avoid it as it smashed into the wall

and shattered. When Harry looked up again, Snape

was in full flight, McGonagall, Flitwick, and Sprout all

thundering after him: He hurtled through a classroom

door and, moments later, he heard McGonagall cry,

“Coward! COWARD !”

“What’s happened, what’s happened?” asked Luna.

Harry dragged her to her feet and they raced along

the corridor, trailing the Invisibility Cloak behind

them, into the deserted classroom where Professors

McGonagall, Flitwick, and Sprout were standing at a

smashed window.

“He jumped,” said Professor McGonagall as Harry and

Luna ran into the room.

Page | 676 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You mean he’s dead?” Harry sprinted to the window,

ignoring Flitwick’s and Sprout’s yells of shock at his

sudden appearance.

“No, he’s not dead,” said McGonagall bitterly. “Unlike

Dumbledore, he was still carrying a wand ... and he

seems to have learned a few tricks from his master.”

With a tingle of horror, Harry saw in the distance a

huge, batlike shape flying through the darkness

toward the perimeter wall.

There were heavy footfalls behind them, and a great

deal of puffing: Slughorn had just caught up.

“Harry!” he panted, massaging his immense chest

beneath his emerald-green silk pajamas. “My dear

boy ... what a surprise ... Minerva, do please explain.

... Severus ... what ... ?”

“Our headmaster is taking a short break,” said

Professor McGonagall, pointing at the Snape-shaped

hole in the window.

“Professor!” Harry shouted, his hands at his forehead.

He could see the Inferi-filled lake sliding beneath him,

and he felt the ghostly green boat bump into the

underground shore, and Voldemort leapt from it with

murder in his heart —

“Professor, we’ve got to barricade the school, he’s

coming now!”

“Very well. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is coming,”

she told the other teachers. Sprout and Flitwick

gasped; Slughorn let out a low groan. “Potter has

work to do in the castle on Dumbledore’s orders. We

need to put in place every protection of which we are

capable while Potter does what he needs to do.”

Page | 677 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You realize, of course, that nothing we do will be able

to keep out You-Know-Who indefinitely?” squeaked

Flitwick.

“But we can hold him up,” said Professor Sprout.

“Thank you, Pomona,” said Professor McGonagall,

and between the two witches there passed a look of

grim understanding. “I suggest we establish basic

protection around the place, then gather our students

and meet in the Great Hall. Most must be evacuated,

though if any of those who are over age wish to stay

and fight, I think they ought to be given the chance.”

“Agreed,” said Professor Sprout, already hurrying

toward the door. “I shall meet you in the Great Hall in

twenty minutes with my House.”

And as she jogged out of sight, they could hear her

muttering, “Tentacula. Devil’s Snare. And Snargaluff

pods ... yes, I’d like to see the Death Eaters fighting

those.”

“I can act from here,” said Flitwick, and although he

could barely see out of it, he pointed his wand

through the smashed window and started muttering

incantations of great complexity. Harry heard a weird

rushing noise, as though Flitwick had unleashed the

power of the wind into the grounds.

“Professor,” Harry said, approaching the little Charms

master, “Professor, I’m sorry to interrupt, but this is

important. Have you got any idea where the diadem of

Ravenclaw is?”

“ — Protego Horribilis — the diadem of Ravenclaw?”

squeaked Flitwick. “A little extra wisdom never goes

amiss, Potter, but I hardly think it would be much

use in this situation!”

Page | 678 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I only meant — do you know where it is? Have you

ever seen it?”

“Seen it? Nobody has seen it in living memory! Long

since lost, boy!”

Harry felt a mixture of desperate disappointment and

panic. What, then, was the Horcrux?

“We shall meet you and your Ravenclaws in the Great

Hall, Filius!” said Professor McGonagall, beckoning to

Harry and Luna to follow her.

They had just reached the door when Slughorn

rumbled into speech.

“My word,” he puffed, pale and sweaty, his walrus

mustache aquiver. “What a to-do! I’m not at all sure

whether this is wise, Minerva. He is bound to find a

way in, you know, and anyone who has tried to delay

him will be in most grievous peril — ”

“I shall expect you and the Slytherins in the Great

Hall in twenty minutes, also,” said Professor

McGonagall. “If you wish to leave with your students,

we shall not stop you. But if any of you attempt to

sabotage our resistance or take up arms against us

within this castle, then, Horace, we duel to kill.”

“Minerva!” he said, aghast.

“The time has come for Slytherin House to decide

upon its loyalties,” interrupted Professor McGonagall.

“Go and wake your students, Horace.”

Harry did not stay to watch Slughorn splutter: He and

Luna ran after Professor McGonagall, who had taken

up a position in the middle of the corridor and raised

her wand.

Page | 679 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Piertotum — oh, for heaven’s sake, Filch, not now — ”

The aged caretaker had just come hobbling into view,

shouting, “Students out of bed! Students in the

corridors!”

“They’re supposed to be, you blithering idiot!” shouted

McGonagall. “Now go and do something constructive!

Find Peeves!”

“P-Peeves?” stammered Filch as though he had never

heard the name before.

“Yes, Peeves, you fool, Peevesl Haven’t you been

complaining about him for a quarter of a century? Go

and fetch him, at once!”

Filch evidently thought Professor McGonagall had

taken leave of her senses, but hobbled away, hunch-

shouldered, muttering under his breath.

“And now — Piertotum Locomotori” cried Professor

McGonagall.

And all along the corridor the statues and suits of

armor jumped down from their plinths, and from the

echoing crashes from the floors above and below,

Harry knew that their fellows throughout the castle

had done the same.

“Hogwarts is threatened!” shouted Professor

McGonagall. “Man the boundaries, protect us, do

your duty to our school!”

Clattering and yelling, the horde of moving statues

stampeded past Harry: some of them smaller, others

larger, than life. There were animals too, and the

clanking suits of armor brandished swords and

spiked balls on chains.

Page | 680 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Now, Potter,” said McGonagall, “you and Miss

Lovegood had better return to your friends and bring

them to the Great Hall — I shall rouse the other

Gryffindors.”

They parted at the top of the next staircase, Harry

and Luna running back toward the concealed

entrance to the Room of Requirement. As they ran,

they met crowds of students, most wearing traveling

cloaks over their pajamas, being shepherded down to

the Great Hall by teachers and prefects.

“That was Potter!”

“ Harry Potted”

“It was him, I swear, I just saw him!”

But Harry did not look back, and at last they reached

the entrance to the Room of Requirement. Harry

leaned against the enchanted wall, which opened to

admit them, and he and Luna sped back down the

steep staircase.

“Wh — ?”

As the room came into view, Harry slipped down a few

stairs in shock. It was packed, far more crowded than

when he had last been in there. Kingsley and Lupin

were looking up at him, as were Oliver Wood, Katie

Bell, Angelina Johnson and Alicia Spinnet, Bill and

Fleur, and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley.

“Harry, what’s happening?” said Lupin, meeting him

at the foot of the stairs.

“Voldemort’s on his way, they’re barricading the

school — Snape’s run for it — What are you doing

here? How did you know?”

Page | 681 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We sent messages to the rest of Dumbledore’s Army,”

Fred explained. “You couldn’t expect everyone to miss

the fun, Harry, and the D.A. let the Order of the

Phoenix know, and it all kind of snowballed.”

“What first, Harry?” called George. “What’s going on?”

“They’re evacuating the younger kids and everyone’s

meeting in the Great Hall to get organized,” Harry

said. “We’re fighting.”

There was a great roar and a surge toward the foot of

the stairs; he was pressed back against the wall as

they ran past him, the mingled members of the Order

of the Phoenix, Dumbledore’s Army, and Harry’s old

Quidditch team, all with their wands drawn, heading

up into the main castle.

“Come on, Luna,” Dean called as he passed, holding

out his free hand; she took it and followed him back

up the stairs.

The crowd was thinning: Only a little knot of people

remained below in the Room of Requirement, and

Harry joined them. Mrs. Weasley was struggling with

Ginny. Around them stood Lupin, Fred, George, Bill,

and Fleur.

“You’re underage!” Mrs. Weasley shouted at her

daughter as Harry approached. “I won’t permit it! The

boys, yes, but you, you’ve got to go home!”

“I won’t!”

Ginny’s hair flew as she pulled her arm out of her

mother’s grip.

“I’m in Dumbledore’s Army — ”

Page | 682 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“A teenagers’ gang!”

“A teenagers’ gang that’s about to take him on, which

no one else has dared to do!” said Fred.

“She’s sixteen!” shouted Mrs. Weasley. “She’s not old

enough! What you two were thinking, bringing her

with you — ”

Fred and George looked slightly ashamed of

themselves.

“Mum’s right, Ginny,” said Bill gently. “You can’t do

this. Everyone underage will have to leave, it’s only

right.”

“I can’t go home!” Ginny shouted, angry tears

sparkling in her eyes. “My whole family’s here, I can’t

stand waiting there alone and not knowing and — ”

Her eyes met Harry’s for the first time. She looked at

him beseechingly, but he shook his head and she

turned away bitterly.

“Fine,” she said, staring at the entrance to the tunnel

back to the Hog’s Head. “I’ll say good-bye now, then,

and—”

There was a scuffling and a great thump: Someone

else had clambered out of the tunnel, overbalanced

slightly, and fallen. He pulled himself up on the

nearest chair, looked around through lopsided horn-

rimmed glasses, and said, “Am I too late? Has it

started? I only just found out, so I — I — ”

Percy spluttered into silence. Evidently he had not

expected to run into most of his family. There was a

long moment of astonishment, broken by Fleur

turning to Lupin and saying, in a wildly transparent

Page | 683 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

attempt to break the tension, “So — ’ow eez leetle

Teddy?”

Lupin blinked at her, startled. The silence between

the Weasleys seemed to be solidifying, like ice.

“I — oh yes — he’s fine!” Lupin said loudly. “Yes,

Tonks is with him — at her mother’s — ”

Percy and the other Weasleys were still staring at one

another, frozen.

“Here, I’ve got a picture!” Lupin shouted, pulling a

photograph from inside his jacket and showing it to

Fleur and Harry, who saw a tiny baby with a tuft of

bright turquoise hair, waving fat fists at the camera.

“I was a fool!” Percy roared, so loudly that Lupin

nearly dropped his photograph. “I was an idiot, I was

a pompous prat, I was a — a — ”

“Ministry-loving, family-disowning, power-hungry

moron,” said Fred.

Percy swallowed.

“Yes, I was!”

“Well, you can’t say fairer than that,” said Fred,

holding out his hand to Percy.

Mrs. Weasley burst into tears. She ran forward,

pushed Fred aside, and pulled Percy into a strangling

hug, while he patted her on the back, his eyes on his

father.

“I’m sorry, Dad,” Percy said.

Page | 684 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Mr. Weasley blinked rather rapidly, then he too

hurried to hug his son.

“What made you see sense, Perce?” inquired George.

“It’s been coming on for a while,” said Percy, mopping

his eyes under his glasses with a corner of his

traveling cloak. “But I had to find a way out and it’s

not so easy at the Ministry, they’re imprisoning

traitors all the time. I managed to make contact with

Aberforth and he tipped me off ten minutes ago that

Hogwarts was going to make a fight of it, so here I

am.”

“Well, we do look to our prefects to take a lead at

times such as these,” said George in a good imitation

of Percy’s most pompous manner. “Now let’s get

upstairs and fight, or all the good Death Eaters’ll be

taken.”

“So, you’re my sister-in-law now?” said Percy, shaking

hands with Fleur as they hurried off toward the

staircase with Bill, Fred, and George.

“Ginny!” barked Mrs. Weasley.

Ginny had been attempting, under cover of the

reconciliation, to sneak upstairs too.

“Molly, how about this,” said Lupin. “Why doesn’t

Ginny stay here, then at least she’ll be on the scene

and know what’s going on, but she won’t be in the

middle of the fighting?”

“That’s a good idea,” said Mr. Weasley firmly. “Ginny,

you stay in this room, you hear me?”

Page | 685 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ginny did not seem to like the idea much, but under

her father’s unusually stern gaze, she nodded. Mr.

and Mrs. Weasley and Lupin headed off for the stairs

as well.

“Where’s Ron?” asked Harry. “Where’s Hermione?”

“They must have gone up to the Great Hall already,”

Mr. Weasley called over his shoulder.

“I didn’t see them pass me,” said Harry.

“They said something about a bathroom,” said Ginny,

“not long after you left.”

“A bathroom?”

Harry strode across the room to an open door leading

off the Room of Requirement and checked the

bathroom beyond. It was empty.

“You’re sure they said bath — ?”

But then his scar seared and the Room of

Requirement vanished: He was looking through the

high wrought-iron gates with winged boars on pillars

at either side, looking through the dark grounds

toward the castle, which was ablaze with lights.

Nagini lay draped over his shoulders. He was

possessed of that cold, cruel sense of purpose that

preceded murder.

Page | 686 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE BATTLE OF HOGWARTS

The enchanted ceiling of the Great Hall was dark and

scattered with stars, and below it the four long House

tables were lined with disheveled students, some in

traveling cloaks, others in dressing gowns. Here and

there shone the pearly white figures of the school

ghosts. Every eye, living and dead, was fixed upon

Professor McGonagall, who was speaking from the

raised platform at the top of the Hall. Behind her

stood the remaining teachers, including the palomino

centaur, Firenze, and the members of the Order of the

Phoenix who had arrived to fight.

"... evacuation will be overseen by Mr. Filch and

Madam Pomfrey. Prefects, when I give the word, you

will organize your House and take your charges, in an

orderly fashion, to the evacuation point.”

Many of the students looked petrified. However, as

Harry skirted the walls, scanning the Gryffindor table

for Ron and Hermione, Ernie Macmillan stood up at

the Hufflepuff table and shouted, “And what if we

want to stay and fight?”

Page | 687 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There was a smattering of applause.

“If you are of age, you may stay,” said Professor

McGonagall.

“What about our things?” called a girl at the

Ravenclaw table. “Our trunks, our owls?”

“We have no time to collect possessions,” said

Professor McGonagall. “The important thing is to get

you out of here safely.”

“Where’s Professor Snape?” shouted a girl from the

Slytherin table.

“He has, to use the common phrase, done a bunk,”

replied Professor McGonagall, and a great cheer

erupted from the Gryffindors, Hufflepuffs, and

Ravenclaws.

Harry moved up the Hall alongside the Gryffindor

table, still looking for Ron and Hermione. As he

passed, faces turned in his direction, and a great deal

of whispering broke out in his wake.

“We have already placed protection around the

castle,” Professor McGonagall was saying, “but it is

unlikely to hold for very long unless we reinforce it. I

must ask you, therefore, to move quickly and calmly,

and do as your prefects — ”

But her final words were drowned as a different voice

echoed throughout the Hall. It was high, cold, and

clear: There was no telling from where it came; it

seemed to issue from the walls themselves. Like the

monster it had once commanded, it might have lain

dormant there for centuries.

Page | 688 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I know that you are preparing to fight.” There were

screams amongst the students, some of whom

clutched each other, looking around in terror for the

source of the sound. “Your efforts are futile. You

cannot fight me. I do not want to kill you. I have great

respect for the teachers of Hogwarts. I do not want to

spill magical blood.”

There was silence in the Hall now, the kind of silence

that presses against the eardrums, that seems too

huge to be contained by walls.

“Give me Harry Potter,” said Voldemort’s voice, “and

none shall be harmed. Give me Harry Potter, and I

shall leave the school untouched. Give me Harry

Potter, and you will be rewarded.

“You have until midnight.”

The silence swallowed them all again. Every head

turned, every eye in the place seemed to have found

Harry, to hold him frozen in the glare of thousands of

invisible beams. Then a figure rose from the Slytherin

table and he recognized Pansy Parkinson as she

raised a shaking arm and screamed, “But he’s there!

Potter’s there\ Someone grab him!”

Before Harry could speak, there was a massive

movement. The Gryffindors in front of him had risen

and stood facing, not Harry, but the Slytherins. Then

the Hufflepuffs stood, and almost at the same

moment, the Ravenclaws, all of them with their backs

to Harry, all of them looking toward Pansy instead,

and Harry, awestruck and overwhelmed, saw wands

emerging everywhere, pulled from beneath cloaks and

from under sleeves.

“Thank you, Miss Parkinson,” said Professor

McGonagall in a clipped voice. “You will leave the Hall

Page | 689 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

first with Mr. Filch. If the rest of your House could

follow.”

Harry heard the grinding of benches and then the

sound of the Slytherins trooping out on the other side

of the Hall.

“Ravenclaws, follow on!” cried Professor McGonagall.

Slowly the four tables emptied. The Slytherin table

was completely deserted, but a number of older

Ravenclaws remained seated while their fellows filed

out; even more Hufflepuffs stayed behind, and half of

Gryffindor remained in their seats, necessitating

Professor McGonagall’s descent from the teachers’

platform to chivvy the underage on their way.

“Absolutely not, Creevey, go! And you, Peakes!”

Harry hurried over to the Weasleys, all sitting

together at the Gryffindor table.

“Where are Ron and Hermione?”

“Haven’t you found — ?” began Mr. Weasley, looking

worried.

But he broke off as Kingsley had stepped forward on

the raised platform to address those who had

remained behind.

“We’ve only got half an hour until midnight, so we

need to act fast! A battle plan has been agreed

between the teachers of Hogwarts and the Order of

the Phoenix. Professors Flitwick, Sprout, and

McGonagall are going to take groups of fighters up to

the three highest towers — Ravenclaw, Astronomy,

and Gryffindor — where they’ll have a good overview,

excellent positions from which to work spells.

Page | 690 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Meanwhile Remus” — he indicated Lupin — “Arthur”

— he pointed toward Mr. Weasley, sitting at the

Gryffindor table — “and I will take groups into the

grounds. We’ll need somebody to organize defense of

the entrances of the passageways into the school — ”

“Sounds like a job for us,” called Fred, indicating

himself and George, and Kingsley nodded his

approval.

“All right, leaders up here and we’ll divide up the

troops!”

“Potter,” said Professor McGonagall, hurrying up to

him, as students flooded the platform, jostling for

position, receiving instructions, “ Aren’t you supposed

to be looking for something?”

“What? Oh,” said Harry, “oh yeah!”

He had almost forgotten about the Horcrux, almost

forgotten that the battle was being fought so that he

could search for it: The inexplicable absence of Ron

and Hermione had momentarily driven every other

thought from his mind.

“Then go, Potter, go!”

“Right — yeah — ”

He sensed eyes following him as he ran out of the

Great Hall again, into the entrance hall still crowded

with evacuating students. He allowed himself to be

swept up the marble staircase with them, but at the

top he hurried off along a deserted corridor. Fear and

panic were clouding his thought processes. He tried

to calm himself, to concentrate on finding the

Horcrux, but his thoughts buzzed as frantically and

fruitlessly as wasps trapped beneath a glass. Without

Page | 691 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ron and Hermione to help him he could not seem to

marshal his ideas. He slowed down, coming to a halt

halfway along an empty passage, where he sat down

upon the plinth of a departed statue and pulled the

Marauder’s Map out of the pouch around his neck.

He could not see Ron’s or Hermione’s names

anywhere on it, though the density of the crowd of

dots now making its way to the Room of Requirement

might, he thought, be concealing them. He put the

map away, pressed his hands over his face, and

closed his eyes, trying to concentrate. ...

Voldemort thought I’d go to Ravenclaw Tower.

There it was: a solid fact, the place to start. Voldemort

had stationed Alecto Carrow in the Ravenclaw

common room, and there could only be one

explanation: Voldemort feared that Harry already

knew his Horcrux was connected to that House.

But the only object anyone seemed to associate with

Ravenclaw was the lost diadem . . . and how could the

Horcrux be the diadem? How was it possible that

Voldemort, the Slytherin, had found the diadem that

had eluded generations of Ravenclaws? Who could

have told him where to look, when nobody had seen

the diadem in living memory?

In living memory ...

Beneath his fingers, Harry’s eyes flew open again. He

leapt up from the plinth and tore back the way he had

come, now in pursuit of his one last hope. The sound

of hundreds of people marching toward the Room of

Requirement grew louder and louder as he returned

to the marble stairs. Prefects were shouting

instructions, trying to keep track of the students in

their own Houses; there was much pushing and

shoving; Harry saw Zacharias Smith bowling over

Page | 692 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

first-years to get to the front of the queue; here and

there younger students were in tears, while older ones

called desperately for friends or siblings. ...

Harry caught sight of a pearly white figure drifting

across the entrance hall below and yelled as loudly as

he could over the clamor.

“Nick! NICK! I need to talk to you!”

He forced his way back through the tide of students,

finally reaching the bottom of the stairs, where Nearly

Headless Nick, ghost of Gryffindor Tower, stood

waiting for him.

“Harry! My dear boy!”

Nick made to grasp Harry’s hands with both of his

own: Harry’s felt as though they had been thrust into

icy water.

“Nick, you’ve got to help me. Who’s the ghost of

Ravenclaw Tower?”

Nearly Headless Nick looked surprised and a little

offended.

“The Gray Lady, of course; but if it is ghostly services

you require — ?”

“It’s got to be her — d’you know where she is?”

“Let’s see. ...”

Nick’s head wobbled a little on his ruff as he turned

hither and thither, peering over the heads of the

swarming students.

Page | 693 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“That’s her over there, Harry, the young woman with

the long hair.”

Harry looked in the direction of Nick’s transparent,

pointing finger and saw a tall ghost who caught sight

of Harry looking at her, raised her eyebrows, and

drifted away through a solid wall.

Harry ran after her. Once through the door of the

corridor into which she had disappeared, he saw her

at the very end of the passage, still gliding smoothly

away from him.

“Hey — wait — come back!”

She consented to pause, floating a few inches from

the ground. Harry supposed that she was beautiful,

with her waist-length hair and floor-length cloak, but

she also looked haughty and proud. Close to, he

recognized her as a ghost he had passed several times

in the corridor, but to whom he had never spoken.

“You’re the Gray Lady?”

She nodded but did not speak.

“The ghost of Ravenclaw Tower?”

“That is correct.”

Her tone was not encouraging.

“Please: I need some help. I need to know anything

you can tell me about the lost diadem.”

A cold smile curved her lips.

“I am afraid,” she said, turning to leave, “that I cannot

help you.”

Page | 694 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“WAIT!”

He had not meant to shout, but anger and panic were

threatening to overwhelm him. He glanced at his

watch as she hovered in front of him: It was a quarter

to midnight.

“This is urgent,” he said fiercely. “If that diadem’s at

Hogwarts, I’ve got to find it, fast.”

“You are hardly the first student to covet the diadem,”

she said disdainfully. “Generations of students have

badgered me — ”

“This isn’t about trying to get better marks!” Harry

shouted at her. “It’s about Voldemort — defeating

Voldemort — or aren’t you interested in that?”

She could not blush, but her transparent cheeks

became more opaque, and her voice was heated as

she replied, “Of course I — how dare you suggest — ?”

“Well, help me, then!”

Her composure was slipping.

“It — it is not a question of — ” she stammered. “My

mother’s diadem — ”

“Your mother’s?”

She looked angry with herself.

“When I lived,” she said stiffly, “I was Helena

Ravenclaw.”

“You’re her daughter? But then, you must know what

happened to it!”

Page | 695 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“While the diadem bestows wisdom,” she said with an

obvious effort to pull herself together, “I doubt that it

would greatly increase your chances of defeating the

wizard who calls himself Lord — ”

“Haven’t I just told you, I’m not interested in wearing

it!” Harry said fiercely. “There’s no time to explain —

but if you care about Hogwarts, if you want to see

Voldemort finished, you’ve got to tell me anything you

know about the diadem!”

She remained quite still, floating in midair, staring

down at him, and a sense of hopelessness engulfed

Harry. Of course, if she had known anything, she

would have told Flitwick or Dumbledore, who had

surely asked her the same question. He had shaken

his head and made to turn away when she spoke in a

low voice.

“I stole the diadem from my mother.”

“You — you did what?”

“ I stole the diadem,” repeated Helena Ravenclaw in a

whisper. “I sought to make myself cleverer, more

important than my mother. I ran away with it.”

He did not know how he had managed to gain her

confidence, and did not ask; he simply listened, hard,

as she went on:

“My mother, they say, never admitted that the diadem

was gone, but pretended that she had it still. She

concealed her loss, my dreadful betrayal, even from

the other founders of Hogwarts.

“Then my mother fell ill — fatally ill. In spite of my

perfidy, she was desperate to see me one more time.

She sent a man who had long loved me, though I

Page | 696 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

spurned his advances, to find me. She knew that he

would not rest until he had done so.”

Harry waited. She drew a deep breath and threw back

her head.

“He tracked me to the forest where I was hiding.

When I refused to return with him, he became violent.

The Baron was always a hot-tempered man. Furious

at my refusal, jealous of my freedom, he stabbed me.”

“The Baron? You mean — ?”

“The Bloody Baron, yes,” said the Gray Lady, and she

lifted aside the cloak she wore to reveal a single dark

wound in her white chest. “When he saw what he had

done, he was overcome with remorse. He took the

weapon that had claimed my life, and used it to kill

himself. All these centuries later, he wears his chains

as an act of penitence ... as he should,” she added

bitterly.

“And . . . and the diadem?”

“It remained where I had hidden it when I heard the

Baron blundering through the forest toward me.

Concealed inside a hollow tree.

“A hollow tree?” repeated Harry. “What tree? Where

was this?”

“A forest in Albania. A lonely place I thought was far

beyond my mother’s reach.”

“Albania,” repeated Harry. Sense was emerging

miraculously from confusion, and now he understood

why she was telling him what she had denied

Dumbledore and Flitwick. “You’ve already told

someone this story, haven’t you? Another student?”

Page | 697 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

She closed her eyes and nodded.

“I had ... no idea. . . . He was . . . flattering. He seemed

to ... to understand ... to sympathize. ...”

Yes, Harry thought, Tom Riddle would certainly have

understood Helena Ravenclaw’s desire to possess

fabulous objects to which she had little right.

“Well, you weren’t the first person Riddle wormed

things out of,” Harry muttered. “He could be

charming when he wanted. ...”

So Voldemort had managed to wheedle the location of

the lost diadem out of the Gray Lady. He had traveled

to that far-flung forest and retrieved the diadem from

its hiding place, perhaps as soon as he left Hogwarts,

before he even started work at Borgin and Burkes.

And wouldn’t those secluded Albanian woods have

seemed an excellent refuge when, so much later,

Voldemort had needed a place to lie low, undisturbed,

for ten long years?

But the diadem, once it became his precious Horcrux,

had not been left in that lowly tree. ... No, the diadem

had been returned secretly to its true home, and

Voldemort must have put it there —

“ — the night he asked for a job!” said Harry, finishing

his thought.

“I beg your pardon?”

“He hid the diadem in the castle, the night he asked

Dumbledore to let him teach!” said Harry. Saying it

out loud enabled him to make sense of it all. “He

must’ve hidden the diadem on his way up to, or down

from, Dumbledore ’s office! But it was still worth trying

Page | 698 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

to get the job — then he might’ve got the chance to

nick Gryffindor’s sword as well — thank you, thanks!”

Harry left her floating there, looking utterly

bewildered. As he rounded the corner back into the

entrance hall, he checked his watch. It was five

minutes until midnight, and though he now knew

what the last Horcrux was, he was no closer to

discovering where it was. ...

Generations of students had failed to find the diadem;

that suggested that it was not in Ravenclaw Tower —

but if not there, where? What hiding place had Tom

Riddle discovered inside Hogwarts Castle, that he

believed would remain secret forever?

Lost in desperate speculation, Harry turned a corner,

but he had taken only a few steps down the new

corridor when the window to his left broke open with

a deafening, shattering crash. As he leapt aside, a

gigantic body flew in through the window and hit the

opposite wall. Something large and furry detached

itself, whimpering, from the new arrival and flung

itself at Harry.

“Hagrid!” Harry bellowed, fighting off Fang the

boarhound’s attentions as the enormous bearded

figure clambered to his feet. “What the — ?”

“Harry, yer here! Yer here\”

Hagrid stooped down, bestowed upon Harry a cursory

and rib-cracking hug, then ran back to the shattered

window.

“Good boy, Grawpy!” he bellowed through the hole in

the window. “I’ll see yer in a moment, there’s a good

lad!”

Page | 699 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Beyond Hagrid, out in the dark night, Harry saw

bursts of light in the distance and heard a weird,

keening scream. He looked down at his watch: It was

midnight. The battle had begun.

“Blimey, Harry,” panted Hagrid, “this is it, eh? Time

ter fight?”

“Hagrid, where have you come from?”

“Heard You-Know-Who from up in our cave,” said

Hagrid grimly. “Voice carried, didn’ it? Yeh got till

midnight ter gimme Potter.’ Knew yeh mus’ be here,

knew what mus’ be happenin’. Get down, Fang. So we

come ter join in, me an’ Grawpy an’ Fang. Smashed

our way through the boundary by the forest, Grawpy

was carryin’ us, Fang an’ me. Told him ter let me

down at the castle, so he shoved me through the

window, bless him. Not exac’ly what I meant, bu’ —

where’s Ron an’ Hermione?”

“That,” said Harry, “is a really good question. Come

on.”

They hurried together along the corridor, Fang

lolloping beside them. Harry could hear movement

through the corridors all around: running footsteps,

shouts; through the windows, he could see more

flashes of light in the dark grounds.

“Where’re we goin’?” puffed Hagrid, pounding along at

Harry’s heels, making the floorboards quake.

“I dunno exactly,” said Harry, making another

random turn, “but Ron and Hermione must be

around here somewhere. ...”

The first casualties of the battle were already strewn

across the passage ahead: The two stone gargoyles

Page | 700 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

that usually guarded the entrance to the staffroom

had been smashed apart by a jinx that had sailed

through another broken window. Their remains

stirred feebly on the floor, and as Harry leapt over one

of their disembodied heads, it moaned faintly, “Oh,

don’t mind me ... I’ll just lie here and crumble. ...”

Its ugly stone face made Harry think suddenly of the

marble bust of Rowena Ravenclaw at Xenophilius’s

house, wearing that mad headdress — and then of

the statue in Ravenclaw Tower, with the stone diadem

upon her white curls. ...

And as he reached the end of the passage, the

memory of a third stone effigy came back to him: that

of an ugly old warlock, onto whose head Harry

himself had placed a wig and a battered old tiara. The

shock shot through Harry with the heat of firewhisky,

and he nearly stumbled.

He knew, at last, where the Horcrux sat waiting for

him. ...

Tom Riddle, who confided in no one and operated

alone, might have been arrogant enough to assume

that he, and only he, had penetrated the deepest

mysteries of Hogwarts Castle. Of course, Dumbledore

and Flitwick, those model pupils, had never set foot in

that particular place, but he, Harry, had strayed off

the beaten track in his time at school — here at last

was a secret he and Voldemort knew, that

Dumbledore had never discovered —

He was roused by Professor Sprout, who was

thundering past followed by Neville and half a dozen

others, all of them wearing earmuffs and carrying

what appeared to be large potted plants.

Page | 701 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Mandrakes!” Neville bellowed at Harry over his

shoulder as he ran. “Going to lob them over the walls

— they won’t like this!”

Harry knew now where to go: He sped off, with Hagrid

and Fang galloping behind him. They passed portrait

after portrait, and the painted figures raced alongside

them, wizards and witches in ruffs and breeches, in

armor and cloaks, cramming themselves into each

others’ canvases, screaming news from other parts of

the castle. As they reached the end of this corridor,

the whole castle shook, and Harry knew, as a gigantic

vase blew off its plinth with explosive force, that it

was in the grip of enchantments more sinister than

those of the teachers and the Order.

“It’s all righ’, Fang — it’s all righ’!” yelled Hagrid, but

the great boarhound had taken flight as slivers of

china flew like shrapnel through the air, and Hagrid

pounded off after the terrified dog, leaving Harry

alone.

He forged on through the trembling passages, his

wand at the ready, and for the length of one corridor

the little painted knight, Sir Cadogan, rushed from

painting to painting beside him, clanking along in his

armor, screaming encouragement, his fat little pony

cantering behind him.

“Braggarts and rogues, dogs and scoundrels, drive

them out, Harry Potter, see them off!”

Harry hurtled around a corner and found Fred and a

small knot of students, including Lee Jordan and

Hannah Abbott, standing beside another empty

plinth, whose statue had concealed a secret

passageway. Their wands were drawn and they were

listening at the concealed hole.

Page | 702 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Nice night for it!” Fred shouted as the castle quaked

again, and Harry sprinted by, elated and terrified in

equal measure. Along yet another corridor he dashed,

and then there were owls everywhere, and Mrs. Norris

was hissing and trying to bat them with her paws, no

doubt to return them to their proper place. ...

“Potter!”

Aberforth Dumbledore stood blocking the corridor

ahead, his wand held ready.

“I’ve had hundreds of kids thundering through my

pub, Potter!”

“I know, we’re evacuating,” Harry said, “Voldemort’s

“ — attacking because they haven’t handed you over,

yeah,” said Aberforth, “I’m not deaf, the whole of

Hogsmeade heard him. And it never occurred to any

of you to keep a few Slytherins hostage? There are

kids of Death Eaters you’ve just sent to safety.

Wouldn’t it have been a bit smarter to keep ’em here?”

“It wouldn’t stop Voldemort,” said Harry, “and your

brother would never have done it.”

Aberforth grunted and tore away in the opposite

direction.

Your brother would never have done it. ... Well, it was

the truth, Harry thought as he ran on again;

Dumbledore, who had defended Snape for so long,

would never have held students ransom. ...

And then he skidded around a final corner and with a

yell of mingled relief and fury he saw them: Ron and

Hermione, both with their arms full of large, curved,

Page | 703 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

dirty yellow objects, Ron with a broomstick under his

arm.

“Where the hell have you been?” Harry shouted.

“Chamber of Secrets,” said Ron.

“Chamber — what?” said Harry, coming to an

unsteady halt before them.

“It was Ron, all Ron’s idea!” said Hermione

breathlessly. “Wasn’t it absolutely brilliant? There we

were, after you left, and I said to Ron, even if we find

the other one, how are we going to get rid of it? We

still hadn’t got rid of the cup! And then he thought of

it! The basilisk!”

“What the — ?”

“Something to get rid of Horcruxes,” said Ron simply.

Harry’s eyes dropped to the objects clutched in Ron

and Hermione’s arms: great curved fangs, torn, he

now realized, from the skull of a dead basilisk.

“But how did you get in there?” he asked, staring

from the fangs to Ron. “You need to speak

Parseltongue!”

“He did!” whispered Hermione. “Show him, Ron!”

Ron made a horrible strangled hissing noise.

“It’s what you did to open the locket,” he told Harry

apologetically. “I had to have a few goes to get it right,

but,” he shrugged modestly, “we got there in the end.”

“He was amazing.” said Hermione. “Amazing!”

Page | 704 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“So ...” Harry was struggling to keep up. “So ...”

“So we’re another Horcrux down,” said Ron, and from

under his jacket he pulled the mangled remains of

Hufflepuff’s cup. “Hermione stabbed it. Thought she

should. She hasn’t had the pleasure yet.”

“Genius!” yelled Harry.

“It was nothing,” said Ron, though he looked

delighted with himself. “So what’s new with you?”

As he said it, there was an explosion from overhead:

All three of them looked up as dust fell from the

ceiling and they heard a distant scream.

“I know what the diadem looks like, and I know where

it is,” said Harry, talking fast. “He hid it exactly where

I hid my old Potions book, where everyone’s been

hiding stuff for centuries. He thought he was the only

one to find it. Come on.”

As the walls trembled again, he led the other two back

through the concealed entrance and down the

staircase into the Room of Requirement. It was empty

except for three women: Ginny, Tonks, and an elderly

witch wearing a moth-eaten hat, whom Harry

recognized immediately as Neville’s grandmother.

“Ah, Potter,” she said crisply as if she had been

waiting for him. “You can tell us what’s going on.”

“Is everyone okay?” said Ginny and Tonks together.

“ ’S far as we know,” said Harry. “Are there still people

in the passage to the Hog’s Head?”

He knew that the room would not be able to

transform while there were still users inside it.

Page | 705 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I was the last to come through,” said Mrs.

Longbottom. “I sealed it, I think it unwise to leave it

open now Aberforth has left his pub. Have you seen

my grandson?”

“He’s fighting,” said Harry.

“Naturally,” said the old lady proudly. “Excuse me, I

must go and assist him.”

With surprising speed she trotted off toward the stone

steps.

Harry looked at Tonks.

“I thought you were supposed to be with Teddy at

your mother’s?”

“I couldn’t stand not knowing — ” Tonks looked

anguished. “She’ll look after him — have you seen

Remus?”

“He was planning to lead a group of fighters into the

grounds — ”

Without another word, Tonks sped off.

“Ginny,” said Harry, “I’m sorry, but we need you to

leave too. Just for a bit. Then you can come back in.”

Ginny looked simply delighted to leave her sanctuary.

“And then you can come back in!” he shouted after

her as she ran up the steps after Tonks. “ You’ve got to

come back ini”

“Hang on a moment!” said Ron sharply. “We’ve

forgotten someone!”

Page | 706 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Who?” asked Hermione.

“The house-elves, they’ll all be down in the kitchen,

won’t they?”

“You mean we ought to get them fighting?” asked

Harry.

“No,” said Ron seriously, “I mean we should tell them

to get out. We don’t want any more Dobbies, do we?

We can’t order them to die for us — ”

There was a clatter as the basilisk fangs cascaded out

of Hermione ’s arms. Running at Ron, she flung them

around his neck and kissed him full on the mouth.

Ron threw away the fangs and broomstick he was

holding and responded with such enthusiasm that he

lifted Hermione off her feet.

“Is this the moment?” Harry asked weakly, and when

nothing happened except that Ron and Hermione

gripped each other still more firmly and swayed on

the spot, he raised his voice. “01! There’s a war going

on here!”

Ron and Hermione broke apart, their arms still

around each other.

“I know, mate,” said Ron, who looked as though he

had recently been hit on the back of the head with a

Bludger, “so it’s now or never, isn’t it?”

“Never mind that, what about the Horcrux?” Harry

shouted. “D’you think you could just — just hold it in

until we’ve got the diadem?”

“Yeah — right — sorry — ” said Ron, and he and

Hermione set about gathering up fangs, both pink in

the face.

Page | 707 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

It was clear, as the three of them stepped back into

the corridor upstairs, that in the minutes that they

had spent in the Room of Requirement the situation

within the castle had deteriorated severely: The walls

and ceiling were shaking worse than ever; dust filled

the air, and through the nearest window, Harry saw

bursts of green and red light so close to the foot of the

castle that he knew the Death Eaters must be very

near to entering the place. Looking down, Harry saw

Grawp the giant meandering past, swinging what

looked like a stone gargoyle torn from the roof and

roaring his displeasure.

“Let’s hope he steps on some of them!” said Ron as

more screams echoed from close by.

“As long as it’s not any of our lot!” said a voice: Harry

turned and saw Ginny and Tonks, both with their

wands drawn at the next window, which was missing

several panes. Even as he watched, Ginny sent a well-

aimed jinx into a crowd of fighters below.

“Good girl!” roared a figure running through the dust

toward them, and Harry saw Aberforth again, his gray

hair flying as he led a small group of students past.

“They look like they might be breaching the north

battlements, they’ve brought giants of their own!”

“Have you seen Remus?” Tonks called after him.

“He was dueling Dolohov,” shouted Aberforth,

“haven’t seen him since!

“Tonks,” said Ginny, “Tonks, I’m sure he’s okay — ”

But Tonks had run off into the dust after Aberforth.

Ginny turned, helpless, to Harry, Ron, and Hermione.

Page | 708 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“They’ll be all right,” said Harry, though he knew they

were empty words. “Ginny, we’ll be back in a moment,

just keep out of the way, keep safe — come on!” he

said to Ron and Hermione, and they ran back to the

stretch of wall beyond which the Room of

Requirement was waiting to do the bidding of the next

entrant.

I need the place where everything is hidden, Harry

begged of it inside his head, and the door materialized

on their third run past.

The furor of the battle died the moment they crossed

the threshold and closed the door behind them: All

was silent. They were in a place the size of a cathedral

with the appearance of a city, its towering walls built

of objects hidden by thousands of long-gone students.

“And he never realized anyone could get in?” said

Ron, his voice echoing in the silence.

“He thought he was the only one,” said Harry. “Too

bad for him I’ve had to hide stuff in my time ... this

way,” he added, “I think it’s down here. ...”

He passed the stuffed troll and the Vanishing Cabinet

Draco Malfoy had mended last year with such

disastrous consequences, then hesitated, looking up

and down aisles of junk; he could not remember

where to go next. ...

“ Accio Diadem).” cried Hermione in desperation, but

nothing flew through the air toward them. It seemed

that, like the vault at Gringotts, the room would not

yield its hidden objects that easily.

“Let’s split up,” Harry told the other two. “Look for a

stone bust of an old man wearing a wig and a tiara!

Page | 709 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

It’s standing on a cupboard and it’s definitely

somewhere near here. ...”

They sped off up adjacent aisles; Harry could hear the

others’ footsteps echoing through the towering piles of

junk, of bottles, hats, crates, chairs, books, weapons,

broomsticks, bats. ...

“Somewhere near here,” Harry muttered to himself.

“Somewhere ... somewhere ...”

Deeper and deeper into the labyrinth he went, looking

for objects he recognized from his one previous trip

into the room. His breath was loud in his ears, and

then his very soul seemed to shiver: There it was,

right ahead, the blistered old cupboard in which he

had hidden his old Potions book, and on top of it, the

pockmarked stone warlock wearing a dusty old wig

and what looked like an ancient, discolored tiara.

He had already stretched out his hand, though he

remained ten feet away, when a voice behind him

said, “Hold it, Potter.”

He skidded to a halt and turned around. Crabbe and

Goyle were standing behind him, shoulder to

shoulder, wands pointing right at Harry. Through the

small space between their leering faces he saw Draco

Malfoy.

“That’s my wand you’re holding, Potter,” said Malfoy,

pointing his own through the gap between Crabbe

and Goyle.

“Not anymore,” panted Harry, tightening his grip on

the hawthorn wand. “Winners, keepers, Malfoy. Who’s

lent you theirs?”

“My mother,” said Draco.

Page | 710 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry laughed, though there was nothing very

humorous about the situation. He could not hear Ron

or Hermione anymore. They seemed to have run out

of earshot, searching for the diadem.

“So how come you three aren’t with Voldemort?”

asked Harry.

“We’re gonna be rewarded,” said Crabbe: His voice

was surprisingly soft for such an enormous person;

Harry had hardly ever heard him speak before.

Crabbe was smiling like a small child promised a

large bag of sweets. “We ’ung back, Potter. We decided

not to go. Decided to bring you to ’im.”

“Good plan,” said Harry in mock admiration. He could

not believe that he was this close, and was going to be

thwarted by Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle. He began

edging slowly backward toward the place where the

Horcrux sat lopsided upon the bust. If he could just

get his hands on it before the fight broke out . . .

“So how did you get in here?” he asked, trying to

distract them.

“I virtually lived in the Room of Hidden Things all last

year,” said Malfoy, his voice brittle. “I know how to get

in.”

“We was hiding in the corridor outside,” grunted

Goyle. “We can do Diss-lusion Charms now! And

then,” his face split into a gormless grin, “you turned

up right in front of us and said you was looking for a

die-dum! What’s a die-dum?”

“Harry?” Ron’s voice echoed suddenly from the other

side of the wall to Harry’s right. “Are you talking to

someone?”

Page | 711 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

With a whiplike movement, Crabbe pointed his wand

at the fifty-foot mountain of old furniture, of broken

trunks, of old books and robes and unidentifiable

junk, and shouted, “DescendoV’

The wall began to totter, then the top third crumbled

into the aisle next door where Ron stood.

“Ron!” Harry bellowed, as somewhere out of sight

Hermione screamed, and Harry heard innumerable

objects crashing to the floor on the other side of the

destabilized wall: He pointed his wand at the rampart,

cried, “Finite!” and it steadied.

“No!” shouted Malfoy, staying Crabbe’s arm as the

latter made to repeat his spell. “If you wreck the room

you might bury this diadem thing!”

“What’s that matter?” said Crabbe, tugging himself

free. “It’s Potter the Dark Lord wants, who cares

about a die-dum?”

“Potter came in here to get it,” said Malfoy with ill-

disguised impatience at the slow-wittedness of his

colleagues, “so that must mean — ”

“ ‘Must mean?” Crabbe turned on Malfoy with

undisguised ferocity. “Who cares what you think? I

don’t take your orders no more, Draco. You an’ your

dad are finished.”

“Harry?” shouted Ron again, from the other side of

the junk wall. “What’s going on?”

“Harry?” mimicked Crabbe. “What’s going — no,

Potter! Cruciol”

Harry had lunged for the tiara; Crabbe’s curse missed

him but hit the stone bust, which flew into the air;

Page | 712 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the diadem soared upward and then dropped out of

sight in the mass of objects on which the bust had

rested.

“STOP!” Malfoy shouted at Crabbe, his voice echoing

through the enormous room. “The Dark Lord wants

him alive — ”

“So? I’m not killing him, am I?” yelled Crabbe,

throwing off Malfoy’s restraining arm. “But if I can, I

will, the Dark Lord wants him dead anyway, what’s

thediff— ?”

A jet of scarlet light shot past Harry by inches:

Hermione had run around the corner behind him and

sent a Stunning Spell straight at Crabbe ’s head. It

only missed because Malfoy pulled him out of the

way.

“It’s that Mudblood! Avada Kedavral”

Harry saw Hermione dive aside, and his fury that

Crabbe had aimed to kill wiped all else from his mind.

He shot a Stunning Spell at Crabbe, who lurched out

of the way, knocking Malfoy’s wand out of his hand; it

rolled out of sight beneath a mountain of broken

furniture and boxes.

“Don’t kill him! DONT KILL HIM!” Malfoy yelled at

Crabbe and Goyle, who were both aiming at Harry:

Their split second’s hesitation was all Harry needed.

“ Expelliarmusl”

Goyle ’s wand flew out of his hand and disappeared

into the bulwark of objects beside him; Goyle leapt

foolishly on the spot, trying to retrieve it; Malfoy

jumped out of range of Hermione ’s second Stunning

Spell, and Ron, appearing suddenly at the end of the

Page | 713 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

aisle, shot a full Body-Bind Curse at Crabbe, which

narrowly missed.

Crabbe wheeled around and screamed, “Avada

KedavraY’ again. Ron leapt out of sight to avoid the jet

of green light. The wandless Malfoy cowered behind a

three-legged wardrobe as Hermione charged toward

them, hitting Goyle with a Stunning Spell as she

came.

“It’s somewhere here!” Harry yelled at her, pointing at

the pile of junk into which the old tiara had fallen.

“Look for it while I go and help R — ”

“HARRY!” she screamed.

A roaring, billowing noise behind him gave him a

moment’s warning. He turned and saw both Ron and

Crabbe running as hard as they could up the aisle

toward them.

“Like it hot, scum?” roared Crabbe as he ran.

But he seemed to have no control over what he had

done. Flames of abnormal size were pursuing them,

licking up the sides of the junk bulwarks, which were

crumbling to soot at their touch.

“Aguamenti\” Harry bawled, but the jet of water that

soared from the tip of his wand evaporated in the air.

“RUN!”

Malfoy grabbed the Stunned Goyle and dragged him

along; Crabbe outstripped all of them, now looking

terrified; Harry, Ron, and Hermione pelted along in

his wake, and the fire pursued them. It was not

normal fire; Crabbe had used a curse of which Harry

had no knowledge: As they turned a corner the flames

Page | 714 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

chased them as though they were alive, sentient,

intent upon killing them. Now the fire was mutating,

forming a gigantic pack of fiery beasts: Flaming

serpents, chimaeras, and dragons rose and fell and

rose again, and the detritus of centuries on which

they were feeding was thrown up in the air into their

fanged mouths, tossed high on clawed feet, before

being consumed by the inferno.

Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle had vanished from view:

Harry, Ron, and Hermione stopped dead; the fiery

monsters were circling them, drawing closer and

closer, claws and horns and tails lashed, and the heat

was solid as a wall around them.

“What can we do?” Hermione screamed over the

deafening roars of the fire. “What can we do?”

“Here!”

Harry seized a pair of heavy-looking broomsticks from

the nearest pile of junk and threw one to Ron, who

pulled Hermione onto it behind him. Harry swung his

leg over the second broom and, with hard kicks to the

ground, they soared up into the air, missing by feet

the horned beak of a flaming raptor that snapped its

jaws at them. The smoke and heat were becoming

overwhelming: Below them the cursed fire was

consuming the contraband of generations of hunted

students, the guilty outcomes of a thousand banned

experiments, the secrets of the countless souls who

had sought refuge in the room. Harry could not see a

trace of Malfoy, Crabbe, or Goyle anywhere: He

swooped as low as he dared over the marauding

monsters of flame to try to find them, but there was

nothing but fire: What a terrible way to die. ... He had

never wanted this. ...

Page | 715 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry, let’s get out, let’s get out!” bellowed Ron,

though it was impossible to see where the door was

through the black smoke.

And then Harry heard a thin, piteous human scream

from amidst the terrible commotion, the thunder of

devouring flame.

“It’s — too — dangerous — !” Ron yelled, but Harry

wheeled in the air. His glasses giving his eyes some

small protection from the smoke, he raked the

firestorm below, seeking a sign of life, a limb or a face

that was not yet charred like wood. ...

And he saw them: Malfoy with his arms around the

unconscious Goyle, the pair of them perched on a

fragile tower of charred desks, and Harry dived.

Malfoy saw him coming and raised one arm, but even

as Harry grasped it he knew at once that it was no

good: Goyle was too heavy and Malfoy ’s hand, covered

in sweat, slid instantly out of Harry’s —

“IF WE DIE FOR THEM, I’LL KILL YOU, HARRY!”

roared Ron’s voice, and, as a great flaming chimaera

bore down upon them, he and Hermione dragged

Goyle onto their broom and rose, rolling and pitching,

into the air once more as Malfoy clambered up behind

Harry.

“The door, get to the door, the door!” screamed Malfoy

in Harry’s ear, and Harry sped up, following Ron,

Hermione, and Goyle through the billowing black

smoke, hardly able to breathe: and all around them

the last few objects unburned by the devouring flames

were flung into the air, as the creatures of the cursed

fire cast them high in celebration: cups and shields, a

sparkling necklace, and an old, discolored tiara —

Page | 716 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ What are you doing, what are you doing, the door’s

that way\” screamed Malfoy, but Harry made a

hairpin swerve and dived. The diadem seemed to fall

in slow motion, turning and glittering as it dropped

toward the maw of a yawning serpent, and then he

had it, caught it around his wrist —

Harry swerved again as the serpent lunged at him; he

soared upward and straight toward the place where,

he prayed, the door stood open: Ron, Hermione, and

Goyle had vanished; Malfoy was screaming and

holding Harry so tightly it hurt. Then, through the

smoke, Harry saw a rectangular patch on the wall

and steered the broom at it, and moments later clean

air filled his lungs and they collided with the wall in

the corridor beyond.

Malfoy fell off the broom and lay facedown, gasping,

coughing, and retching. Harry rolled over and sat up:

The door to the Room of Requirement had vanished,

and Ron and Hermione sat panting on the floor beside

Goyle, who was still unconscious.

“C-Crabbe,” choked Malfoy as soon as he could

speak. “C-Crabbe ...”

“He’s dead,” said Ron harshly.

There was silence, apart from panting and coughing.

Then a number of huge bangs shook the castle, and a

great cavalcade of transparent figures galloped past

on horses, their heads screaming with bloodlust

under their arms. Harry staggered to his feet when

the Headless Hunt had passed and looked around:

The battle was still going on all around him. He could

hear more screams than those of the retreating

ghosts. Panic flared within him.

Page | 717 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Where’s Ginny?” he said sharply. “She was here. She

was supposed to be going back into the Room of

Requirement.”

“Blimey, d’you reckon it’ll still work after that fire?”

asked Ron, but he too got to his feet, rubbing his

chest and looking left and right. “Shall we split up

and look — ?”

“No,” said Hermione, getting to her feet too. Malfoy

and Goyle remained slumped hopelessly on the

corridor floor; neither of them had wands. “Let’s stick

together. I say we go — Harry, what’s that on your

arm?”

“What? Oh yeah — ”

He pulled the diadem from his wrist and held it up. It

was still hot, blackened with soot, but as he looked at

it closely he was just able to make out the tiny words

etched upon it: WIT BEYOND MEASURE IS MAN’S

GREATEST TREASURE.

A bloodlike substance, dark and tarry, seemed to be

leaking from the diadem. Suddenly Harry felt the

thing vibrate violently, then break apart in his hands,

and as it did so, he thought he heard the faintest,

most distant scream of pain, echoing not from the

grounds or the castle, but from the thing that had

just fragmented in his fingers.

“It must have been Fiendfyre!” whimpered Hermione,

her eyes on the broken pieces.

“Sorry?”

“Fiendfyre — cursed fire — it’s one of the substances

that destroy Horcruxes, but I would never, ever have

Page | 718 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

dared use it, it’s so dangerous — how did Crabbe

know how to — ?”

“Must’ve learned from the Carrows,” said Harry

grimly.

“Shame he wasn’t concentrating when they

mentioned how to stop it, really,” said Ron, whose

hair, like Hermione’s, was singed, and whose face was

blackened. “If he hadn’t tried to kill us all, I’d be quite

sorry he was dead.”

“But don’t you realize?” whispered Hermione. “This

means, if we can just get the snake — ”

But she broke off as yells and shouts and the

unmistakable noises of dueling filled the corridor.

Harry looked around and his heart seemed to fail:

Death Eaters had penetrated Hogwarts. Fred and

Percy had just backed into view, both of them dueling

masked and hooded men.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione ran forward to help: Jets of

light flew in every direction and the man dueling

Percy backed off, fast: Then his hood slipped and they

saw a high forehead and streaked hair —

“Hello, Minister!” bellowed Percy, sending a neat jinx

straight at Thicknesse, who dropped his wand and

clawed at the front of his robes, apparently in awful

discomfort. “Did I mention I’m resigning?”

“You’re joking, Perce!” shouted Fred as the Death

Eater he was battling collapsed under the weight of

three separate Stunning Spells. Thicknesse had fallen

to the ground with tiny spikes erupting all over him;

he seemed to be turning into some form of sea urchin.

Fred looked at Percy with glee.

Page | 719 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You actually are joking, Perce. ... I don’t think I’ve

heard you joke since you were — ”

The air exploded. They had been grouped together,

Harry, Ron, Hermione, Fred, and Percy, the two

Death Eaters at their feet, one Stunned, the other

Transfigured; and in that fragment of a moment,

when danger seemed temporarily at bay, the world

was rent apart. Harry felt himself flying through the

air, and all he could do was hold as tightly as possible

to that thin stick of wood that was his one and only

weapon, and shield his head in his arms: He heard

the screams and yells of his companions without a

hope of knowing what had happened to them —

And then the world resolved itself into pain and

semidarkness: He was half buried in the wreckage of

a corridor that had been subjected to a terrible

attack. Cold air told him that the side of the castle

had been blown away, and hot stickiness on his

cheek told him that he was bleeding copiously. Then

he heard a terrible cry that pulled at his insides, that

expressed agony of a kind neither flame nor curse

could cause, and he stood up, swaying, more

frightened than he had been that day, more

frightened, perhaps, than he had been in his life. ...

And Hermione was struggling to her feet in the

wreckage, and three redheaded men were grouped on

the ground where the wall had blasted apart. Harry

grabbed Hermione ’s hand as they staggered and

stumbled over stone and wood.

“No — no — no!” someone was shouting. “No! Fred!

No!”

And Percy was shaking his brother, and Ron was

kneeling beside them, and Fred’s eyes stared without

Page | 720 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

seeing, the ghost of his last laugh still etched upon

his face.

Page | 721 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE ELDER WAND

The world had ended, so why had the battle not

ceased, the castle fallen silent in horror, and every

combatant laid down their arms? Harry’s mind was in

free fall, spinning out of control, unable to grasp the

impossibility, because Fred Weasley could not be

dead, the evidence of all his senses must be lying —

And then a body fell past the hole blown into the side

of the school, and curses flew in at them from the

darkness, hitting the wall behind their heads.

“Get down!” Harry shouted, as more curses flew

through the night: He and Ron had both grabbed

Hermione and pulled her to the floor, but Percy lay

across Fred’s body, shielding it from further harm,

and when Harry shouted, “Percy, come on, we’ve got

to move!” he shook his head.

“Percy!” Harry saw tear tracks streaking the grime

coating Ron’s face as he seized his elder brother’s

shoulders and pulled, but Percy would not budge.

Page | 722 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Percy, you can’t do anything for him! We’re going to

Hermione screamed, and Harry, turning, did not need

to ask why. A monstrous spider the size of a small car

was trying to climb through the huge hole in the wall:

One of Aragog’s descendants had joined the fight.

Ron and Harry shouted together; their spells collided

and the monster was blown backward, its legs jerking

horribly, and vanished into the darkness.

“It brought friends!” Harry called to the others,

glancing over the edge of the castle through the hole

in the wall the curses had blasted: More giant spiders

were climbing the side of the building, liberated from

the Forbidden Forest, into which the Death Eaters

must have penetrated. Harry fired Stunning Spells

down upon them, knocking the lead monster into its

fellows, so that they rolled back down the building

and out of sight. Then more curses came soaring over

Harry’s head, so close he felt the force of them blow

his hair.

“Let’s move, NOW!”

Pushing Hermione ahead of him with Ron, Harry

stooped to seize Fred’s body under the armpits. Percy,

realizing what Harry was trying to do, stopped

clinging to the body and helped; together, crouching

low to avoid the curses flying at them from the

grounds, they hauled Fred out of the way.

“Here,” said Harry, and they placed him in a niche

where a suit of armor had stood earlier. He could not

bear to look at Fred a second longer than he had to,

and after making sure that the body was well hidden,

he took off after Ron and Hermione. Malfoy and Goyle

had vanished, but at the end of the corridor, which

Page | 723 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

was now full of dust and falling masonry, glass long

gone from the windows, he saw many people running

backward and forward, whether friends or foes he

could not tell. Rounding the corner, Percy let out a

bull-like roar: “ROOKWOOD!” and sprinted off in the

direction of a tall man, who was pursuing a couple of

students.

“Harry, in here!” Hermione screamed.

She had pulled Ron behind a tapestry: They seemed

to be wrestling together, and for one mad second

Harry thought that they were embracing again; then

he saw that Hermione was trying to restrain Ron, to

stop him running after Percy.

“Listen to me — LISTEN, ROM”

“I wanna help — I wanna kill Death Eaters — ”

His face was contorted, smeared with dust and

smoke, and he was shaking with rage and grief.

“Ron, we’re the only ones who can end it! Please —

Ron — we need the snake, we’ve got to kill the snake!”

said Hermione.

But Harry knew how Ron felt: Pursuing another

Horcrux could not bring the satisfaction of revenge;

he too wanted to fight, to punish them, the people

who had killed Fred, and he wanted to find the other

Weasleys, and above all make sure, make quite sure,

that Ginny was not — but he could not permit that

idea to form in his mind —

“We will fight!” Hermione said. “We’ll have to, to reach

the snake! But let’s not lose sight now of what we’re

supposed to be d-doing! We’re the only ones who can

end it!”

Page | 724 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

She was crying too, and she wiped her face on her

torn and singed sleeve as she spoke, but she took

great heaving breaths to calm herself as, still keeping

a tight hold on Ron, she turned to Harry.

“You need to find out where Voldemort is, because

hell have the snake with him, won’t he? Do it, Harry

— look inside him!”

Why was it so easy? Because his scar had been

burning for hours, yearning to show him Voldemort’s

thoughts? He closed his eyes on her command, and at

once, the screams and the bangs and all the

discordant sounds of the battle were drowned until

they became distant, as though he stood far, far away

from them. ...

He was standing in the middle of a desolate but

strangely familiar room, with peeling paper on the

walls and all the windows boarded except for one. The

sounds of the assault on the castle were muffled and

distant. The single unblocked window revealed

distant bursts of light where the castle stood, but

inside the room it was dark except for a solitary oil

lamp.

He was rolling his wand between his fingers, watching

it, his thoughts on the room in the castle, the secret

room only he had ever found, the room, like the

Chamber, that you had to be clever and cunning and

inquisitive to discover. . . . He was confident that the

boy would not find the diadem . . . although

Dumbledore’s puppet had come much farther than he

had ever expected . . . too far. . . .

“My Lord,” said a voice, desperate and cracked. He

turned: There was Lucius Malfoy sitting in the

darkest corner, ragged and still bearing the marks of

the punishment he had received after the boy’s last

Page | 725 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

escape. One of his eyes remained closed and puffy.

“My Lord ... please ... my son ...”

“If your son is dead, Lucius, it is not my fault. He did

not come and join me, like the rest of the Slytherins.

Perhaps he has decided to befriend Harry Potter?”

“No — never,” whispered Malfoy.

“You must hope not.”

“Aren’t — aren’t you afraid, my Lord, that Potter

might die at another hand but yours?” asked Malfoy,

his voice shaking. “Wouldn’t it be ... forgive me ...

more prudent to call off this battle, enter the castle,

and seek him y-yourself?”

“Do not pretend, Lucius. You wish the battle to cease

so that you can discover what has happened to your

son. And I do not need to seek Potter. Before the night

is out, Potter will have come to find me.”

Voldemort dropped his gaze once more to the wand in

his fingers. It troubled him ... and those things that

troubled Lord Voldemort needed to be rearranged. ...

“Go and fetch Snape.”

“Snape, m-my Lord?”

“Snape. Now. I need him. There is a — service — I

require from him. Go.”

Frightened, stumbling a little through the gloom,

Lucius left the room. Voldemort continued to stand

there, twirling the wand between his fingers, staring

at it.

Page | 726 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“It is the only way, Nagini,” he whispered, and he

looked around, and there was the great thick snake,

now suspended in midair, twisting gracefully within

the enchanted, protected space he had made for her,

a starry, transparent sphere somewhere between

glittering cage and tank.

With a gasp, Harry pulled back and opened his eyes;

at the same moment his ears were assaulted with the

screeches and cries, the smashes and bangs of battle.

“He’s in the Shrieking Shack. The snake’s with him,

it’s got some sort of magical protection around it. He’s

just sent Lucius Malfoy to find Snape.”

“Voldemort’s sitting in the Shrieking Shack?” said

Hermione, outraged. “He’s not — he’s not even

fighting?”

“He doesn’t think he needs to fight,” said Harry. “He

thinks I’m going to go to him.”

“But why?”

“He knows I’m after Horcruxes — he’s keeping Nagini

close beside him — obviously I’m going to have to go

to him to get near the thing — ”

“Right,” said Ron, squaring his shoulders. “So you

can’t go, that’s what he wants, what he’s expecting.

You stay here and look after Hermione, and I’ll go and

get it — ”

Harry cut across Ron.

“You two stay here, I’ll go under the Cloak and I’ll be

back as soon as I — ”

Page | 727 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No,” said Hermione, “it makes much more sense if I

take the Cloak and — ”

“Don’t even think about it,” Ron snarled at her.

Before Hermione could get farther than “Ron, I’m just

as capable — ” the tapestry at the top of the staircase

on which they stood was ripped open.

“POTTER!”

Two masked Death Eaters stood there, but even

before their wands were fully raised, Hermione

shouted, “Glisseo\”

The stairs beneath their feet flattened into a chute

and she, Harry, and Ron hurtled down it, unable to

control their speed but so fast that the Death Eaters’

Stunning Spells flew far over their heads. They shot

through the concealing tapestry at the bottom and

spun onto the floor, hitting the opposite wall.

“Duro\” cried Hermione, pointing her wand at the

tapestry, and there were two loud, sickening crunches

as the tapestry turned to stone and the Death Eaters

pursuing them crumpled against it.

“Get back!” shouted Ron, and he, Harry, and

Hermione flattened themselves against a door as a

herd of galloping desks thundered past, shepherded

by a sprinting Professor McGonagall. She appeared

not to notice them: Her hair had come down and

there was a gash on her cheek. As she turned the

corner, they heard her scream, “CHARGE!”

“Harry, you get the Cloak on,” said Hermione. “Never

mind us — ”

Page | 728 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

But he threw it over all three of them; large though

they were, he doubted anyone would see their

disembodied feet through the dust that clogged the

air, the falling stone, the shimmer of spells.

They ran down the next staircase and found

themselves in a corridor full of duelers. The portraits

on either side of the fighters were crammed with

figures screaming advice and encouragement, while

Death Eaters, both masked and unmasked, dueled

students and teachers. Dean had won himself a

wand, for he was face-to-face with Dolohov, Parvati

with Travers. Harry, Ron, and Hermione raised their

wands at once, ready to strike, but the duelers were

weaving and darting around so much that there was a

strong likelihood of hurting one of their own side if

they cast curses. Even as they stood braced, looking

for the opportunity to act, there came a great

“Wheeeeeeeeeeee\” and, looking up, Harry saw Peeves

zooming over them, dropping Snargaluff pods down

onto the Death Eaters, whose heads were suddenly

engulfed in wriggling green tubers like fat worms.

“Argh!”

A fistful of tubers had hit the Cloak over Ron’s head;

the slimy green roots were suspended improbably in

midair as Ron tried to shake them loose.

“Someone’s invisible there!” shouted a masked Death

Eater, pointing.

Dean made the most of the Death Eater’s momentary

distraction, knocking him out with a Stunning Spell;

Dolohov attempted to retaliate and Parvati shot a

Body-Bind Curse at him.

“LET’S GO!” Harry yelled, and he, Ron, and Hermione

gathered the Cloak tightly around themselves and

Page | 729 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

pelted, heads down, through the midst of the fighters,

slipping a little in pools of Snargaluff juice, toward the

top of the marble staircase into the entrance hall.

“I’m Draco Malfoy, I’m Draco, I’m on your side!”

Draco was on the upper landing, pleading with

another masked Death Eater. Harry Stunned the

Death Eater as they passed: Malfoy looked around,

beaming, for his savior, and Ron punched him from

under the Cloak. Malfoy fell backward on top of the

Death Eater, his mouth bleeding, utterly bemused.

“And that’s the second time we’ve saved your life

tonight, you two-faced bastard!” Ron yelled.

There were more duelers all over the stairs and in the

hall, Death Eaters everywhere Harry looked: Yaxley,

close to the front doors, in combat with Flitwick, a

masked Death Eater dueling Kingsley right beside

them. Students ran in every direction, some carrying

or dragging injured friends. Harry directed a Stunning

Spell toward the masked Death Eater; it missed but

nearly hit Neville, who had emerged from nowhere

brandishing armfuls of Venomous Tentacula, which

looped itself happily around the nearest Death Eater

and began reeling him in.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione sped down the marble

staircase: Glass shattered to their left, and the

Slytherin hourglass that had recorded House points

spilled its emeralds everywhere, so that people slipped

and staggered as they ran. Two bodies fell from the

balcony overhead as they reached the ground, and a

gray blur that Harry took for an animal sped four-

legged across the hall to sink its teeth into one of the

fallen.

Page | 730 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“NO!” shrieked Hermione, and with a deafening blast

from her wand, Fenrir Greyback was thrown

backward from the feebly stirring body of Lavender

Brown. He hit the marble banisters and struggled to

return to his feet. Then, with a bright white flash and

a crack, a crystal ball fell on top of his head, and he

crumpled to the ground and did not move.

“I have more!” shrieked Professor Trelawney from over

the banisters. “More for any who want them! Here — ”

And with a movement like a tennis serve, she heaved

another enormous crystal sphere from her bag, waved

her wand through the air, and caused the ball to

speed across the hall and smash through a window.

At the same moment, the heavy wooden front doors

burst open, and more of the gigantic spiders forced

their way into the entrance hall.

Screams of terror rent the air: The fighters scattered,

Death Eaters and Hogwartians alike, and red and

green jets of light flew into the midst of the oncoming

monsters, which shuddered and reared, more

terrifying than ever.

“How do we get out?” yelled Ron over all the

screaming, but before either Harry or Hermione could

answer they were bowled aside: Hagrid had come

thundering down the stairs, brandishing his flowery

pink umbrella.

“Don’t hurt ’em, don’t hurt ’em!” he yelled.

“HAGRID, NO!”

Harry forgot everything else: He sprinted out from

under the Cloak, running bent double to avoid the

curses illuminating the whole hall.

Page | 731 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“HAGRID, COME BACK!”

But he was not even halfway to Hagrid when he saw it

happen: Hagrid vanished amongst the spiders, and

with a great scurrying, a foul swarming movement,

they retreated under the onslaught of spells, Hagrid

buried in their midst.

“HAGRID!”

Harry heard someone calling his own name, whether

friend or foe he did not care: He was sprinting down

the front steps into the dark grounds, and the spiders

were swarming away with their prey, and he could see

nothing of Hagrid at all.

“HAGRID!”

He thought he could make out an enormous arm

waving from the midst of the spider swarm, but as he

made to chase after them, his way was impeded by a

monumental foot, which swung down out of the

darkness and made the ground on which he stood

shudder. He looked up: A giant stood before him,

twenty feet high, its head hidden in shadow, nothing

but its treelike, hairy shins illuminated by light from

the castle doors. With one brutal, fluid movement, it

smashed a massive fist through an upper window,

and glass rained down upon Harry, forcing him back

under the shelter of the doorway.

“Oh my — !” shrieked Hermione, as she and Ron

caught up with Harry and gazed upward at the giant

now trying to seize people through the window above.

“DONT!” Ron yelled, grabbing Hermione’s hand as

she raised her wand. “Stun him and hell crush half

the castle — ”

Page | 732 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“HAGGER?”

Grawp came lurching around the corner of the castle;

only now did Harry realize that Grawp was, indeed,

an undersized giant. The gargantuan monster trying

to crush people on the upper floors looked around

and let out a roar. The stone steps trembled as he

stomped toward his smaller kin, and Grawp ’s

lopsided mouth fell open, showing yellow, half-brick-

sized teeth; and then they launched themselves at

each other with the savagery of lions.

“RUN!” Harry roared; the night was full of hideous

yells and blows as the giants wrestled, and he seized

Hermione’s hand and tore down the steps into the

grounds, Ron bringing up the rear. Harry had not lost

hope of finding and saving Hagrid; he ran so fast that

they were halfway toward the forest before they were

brought up short again.

The air around them had frozen: Harry’s breath

caught and solidified in his chest. Shapes moved out

in the darkness, swirling figures of concentrated

blackness, moving in a great wave toward the castle,

their faces hooded and their breath rattling. . . .

Ron and Hermione closed in beside him as the

sounds of fighting behind them grew suddenly muted,

deadened, because a silence only dementors could

bring was falling thickly through the night, and Fred

was gone, and Hagrid was surely dying or already

dead. ...

“Come on, Harry!” said Hermione’s voice from a very

long way away. “Patronuses, Harry, come on!”

He raised his wand, but a dull hopelessness was

spreading through him: How many more lay dead

Page | 733 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

that he did not yet know about; he felt as though his

soul had already half left his body. . . .

“HARRY, COME ON!” screamed Hermione.

A hundred dementors were advancing, gliding toward

them, sucking their way closer to Harry’s despair,

which was like a promise of a feast. ...

He saw Ron’s silver terrier burst into the air, flicker

feebly, and expire; he saw Hermione’s otter twist in

midair and fade; and his own wand trembled in his

hand, and he almost welcomed the oncoming

oblivion, the promise of nothing, of no feeling. . . .

And then a silver hare, a boar, and a fox soared past

Harry, Ron, and Hermione’s heads: The dementors

fell back before the creatures’ approach. Three more

people had arrived out of the darkness to stand

beside them, their wands outstretched, continuing to

cast their Patronuses: Luna, Ernie, and Seamus.

“That’s right,” said Luna encouragingly, as if they

were back in the Room of Requirement and this was

simply spell practice for the D.A. “That’s right, Harry

... come on, think of something happy. ...”

“Something happy?” he said, his voice cracked.

“We’re all still here,” she whispered, “we’re still

fighting. Come on, now. ...”

There was a silver spark, then a wavering light, and

then, with the greatest effort it had ever cost him, the

stag burst from the end of Harry’s wand. It cantered

forward, and now the dementors scattered in earnest,

and immediately the night was mild again, but the

sounds of the surrounding battle were loud in his

ears.

Page | 734 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Can’t thank you enough,” said Ron shakily, turning

to Luna, Ernie, and Seamus, “you just saved — ”

With a roar and an earth-quaking tremor, another

giant came lurching out of the darkness from the

direction of the forest, brandishing a club taller than

any of them.

“RUN!” Harry shouted again, but the others needed

no telling: They all scattered, and not a second too

soon, for next moment the creature’s vast foot had

fallen exactly where they had been standing. Harry

looked round: Ron and Hermione were following him,

but the other three had vanished back into the battle.

“Let’s get out of range!” yelled Ron as the giant swung

its club again and its bellows echoed through the

night, across the grounds where bursts of red and

green light continued to illuminate the darkness.

“The Whomping Willow,” said Harry, “go!”

Somehow he walled it all up in his mind, crammed it

into a small space into which he could not look now:

Thoughts of Fred and Hagrid, and his terror for all the

people he loved, scattered in and outside the castle,

must all wait, because they had to run, had to reach

the snake and Voldemort, because that was, as

Hermione said, the only way to end it —

He sprinted, half believing he could outdistance death

itself, ignoring the jets of light flying in the darkness

all around him, and the sound of the lake crashing

like the sea, and the creaking of the Forbidden Forest

though the night was windless; through grounds that

seemed themselves to have risen in rebellion, he ran

faster than he had ever moved in his life, and it was

he who saw the great tree first, the Willow that

Page | 735 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

protected the secret at its roots with whiplike,

slashing branches.

Panting and gasping, Harry slowed down, skirting the

Willow’s swiping branches, peering through the

darkness toward its thick trunk, trying to see the

single knot in the bark of the old tree that would

paralyze it. Ron and Hermione caught up, Hermione

so out of breath she could not speak.

“How — how’re we going to get in?” panted Ron. “I can

— see the place — if we just had — Crookshanks

again — ”

“Crookshanks?” wheezed Hermione, bent double,

clutching her chest. “Are you a wizard, or what?”

“Oh — right — yeah — ”

Ron looked around, then directed his wand at a twig

on the ground and said, “Wingardium Leviosal” The

twig flew up from the ground, spun through the air as

if caught by a gust of wind, then zoomed directly at

the trunk through the Willow’s ominously swaying

branches. It jabbed at a place near the roots, and at

once, the writhing tree became still.

“Perfect!” panted Hermione.

“Wait.”

For one teetering second, while the crashes and

booms of the battle filled the air, Harry hesitated.

Voldemort wanted him to do this, wanted him to

come. ... Was he leading Ron and Hermione into a

trap?

But then the reality seemed to close upon him, cruel

and plain: The only way forward was to kill the snake,

Page | 736 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

and the snake was where Voldemort was, and

Voldemort was at the end of this tunnel. ...

“Harry, we’re coming, just get in there!” said Ron,

pushing him forward.

Harry wriggled into the earthy passage hidden in the

tree’s roots. It was a much tighter squeeze than it had

been the last time they had entered it. The tunnel was

low-ceilinged: They had had to double up to move

through it nearly four years previously; now there was

nothing for it but to crawl. Harry went first, his wand

illuminated, expecting at any moment to meet

barriers, but none came. They moved in silence,

Harry’s gaze fixed upon the swinging beam of the

wand held in his fist.

At last the tunnel began to slope upward and Harry

saw a sliver of light ahead. Hermione tugged at his

ankle.

“The Cloak!” she whispered. “Put the Cloak on!”

He groped behind him and she forced the bundle of

slippery cloth into his free hand. With difficulty he

dragged it over himself, murmured, “Nox,”

extinguishing his wandlight, and continued on his

hands and knees, as silently as possible, all his

senses straining, expecting every second to be

discovered, to hear a cold clear voice, see a flash of

green light.

And then he heard voices coming from the room

directly ahead of them, only slightly muffled by the

fact that the opening at the end of the tunnel had

been blocked up by what looked like an old crate.

Hardly daring to breathe, Harry edged right up to the

opening and peered through a tiny gap left between

crate and wall.

Page | 737 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

The room beyond was dimly lit, but he could see

Nagini, swirling and coiling like a serpent underwater,

safe in her enchanted, starry sphere, which floated

unsupported in midair. He could see the edge of a

table, and a long-fingered white hand toying with a

wand. Then Snape spoke, and Harry’s heart lurched:

Snape was inches away from where he crouched,

hidden.

"... my Lord, their resistance is crumbling — ”

“ — and it is doing so without your help,” said

Voldemort in his high, clear voice. “Skilled wizard

though you are, Severus, I do not think you will make

much difference now. We are almost there ... almost.”

“Let me find the boy. Let me bring you Potter. I know I

can find him, my Lord. Please.”

Snape strode past the gap, and Harry drew back a

little, keeping his eyes fixed upon Nagini, wondering

whether there was any spell that might penetrate the

protection surrounding her, but he could not think of

anything. One failed attempt, and he would give away

his position. ...

Voldemort stood up. Harry could see him now, see the

red eyes, the flattened, serpentine face, the pallor of

him gleaming slightly in the semidarkness.

“I have a problem, Severus,” said Voldemort softly.

“My Lord?” said Snape.

Voldemort raised the Elder Wand, holding it as

delicately and precisely as a conductor’s baton.

“Why doesn’t it work for me, Severus?”

Page | 738 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

In the silence Harry imagined he could hear the snake

hissing slightly as it coiled and uncoiled — or was it

Voldemort’s sibilant sigh lingering on the air?

“My — my Lord?” said Snape blankly. “I do not

understand. You — you have performed extraordinary

magic with that wand.”

“No,” said Voldemort. “I have performed my usual

magic. I am extraordinary, but this wand ... no. It has

not revealed the wonders it has promised. I feel no

difference between this wand and the one I procured

from Ollivander all those years ago.”

Voldemort’s tone was musing, calm, but Harry’s scar

had begun to throb and pulse: Pain was building in

his forehead, and he could feel that controlled sense

of fury building inside Voldemort.

“No difference,” said Voldemort again.

Snape did not speak. Harry could not see his face: He

wondered whether Snape sensed danger, was trying

to find the right words to reassure his master.

Voldemort started to move around the room: Harry

lost sight of him for seconds as he prowled, speaking

in that same measured voice, while the pain and fury

mounted in Harry.

“I have thought long and hard, Severus. ... Do you

know why I have called you back from the battle?”

And for a moment Harry saw Snape ’s profile: His eyes

were fixed upon the coiling snake in its enchanted

cage.

“No, my Lord, but I beg you will let me return. Let me

find Potter.”

Page | 739 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You sound like Lucius. Neither of you understands

Potter as I do. He does not need finding. Potter will

come to me. I know his weakness, you see, his one

great flaw. He will hate watching the others struck

down around him, knowing that it is for him that it

happens. He will want to stop it at any cost. He will

come.”

“But my Lord, he might be killed accidentally by one

other than yourself — ”

“My instructions to my Death Eaters have been

perfectly clear. Capture Potter. Kill his friends — the

more, the better — but do not kill him.

“But it is of you that I wished to speak, Severus, not

Harry Potter. You have been very valuable to me. Very

valuable.”

“My Lord knows I seek only to serve him. But — let

me go and find the boy, my Lord. Let me bring him to

you. I know I can — ”

“I have told you, no!” said Voldemort, and Harry

caught the glint of red in his eyes as he turned again,

and the swishing of his cloak was like the slithering of

a snake, and he felt Voldemort’s impatience in his

burning scar. “My concern at the moment, Severus, is

what will happen when I finally meet the boy!”

“My Lord, there can be no question, surely — ?”

“ — but there is a question, Severus. There is.”

Voldemort halted, and Harry could see him plainly

again as he slid the Elder Wand through his white

fingers, staring at Snape.

Page | 740 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Why did both the wands I have used fail when

directed at Harry Potter?”

“I — I cannot answer that, my Lord.”

“Can’t you?”

The stab of rage felt like a spike driven through

Harry’s head: He forced his own fist into his mouth to

stop himself from crying out in pain. He closed his

eyes, and suddenly he was Voldemort, looking into

Snape’s pale face.

“My wand of yew did everything of which I asked it,

Severus, except to kill Harry Potter. Twice it failed.

Ollivander told me under torture of the twin cores,

told me to take another’s wand. I did so, but Lucius’s

wand shattered upon meeting Potter’s.”

“I — I have no explanation, my Lord.”

Snape was not looking at Voldemort now. His dark

eyes were still fixed upon the coiling serpent in its

protective sphere.

“I sought a third wand, Severus. The Elder Wand, the

Wand of Destiny, the Deathstick. I took it from its

previous master. I took it from the grave of Albus

Dumbledore.”

And now Snape looked at Voldemort, and Snape’s

face was like a death mask. It was marble white and

so still that when he spoke, it was a shock to see that

anyone lived behind the blank eyes.

“My Lord — let me go to the boy — ”

“All this long night, when I am on the brink of victory,

I have sat here,” said Voldemort, his voice barely

Page | 741 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

louder than a whisper, “wondering, wondering, why

the Elder Wand refuses to be what it ought to be,

refuses to perform as legend says it must perform for

its rightful owner ... and I think I have the answer.”

Snape did not speak.

“Perhaps you already know it? You are a clever man,

after all, Severus. You have been a good and faithful

servant, and I regret what must happen.”

“My Lord — ”

“The Elder Wand cannot serve me properly, Severus,

because I am not its true master. The Elder Wand

belongs to the wizard who killed its last owner. You

killed Albus Dumbledore. While you live, Severus, the

Elder Wand cannot be truly mine.”

“My Lord!” Snape protested, raising his wand.

“It cannot be any other way,” said Voldemort. “I must

master the wand, Severus. Master the wand, and I

master Potter at last.”

And Voldemort swiped the air with the Elder Wand. It

did nothing to Snape, who for a split second seemed

to think he had been reprieved: But then Voldemort’s

intention became clear. The snake’s cage was rolling

through the air, and before Snape could do anything

more than yell, it had encased him, head and

shoulders, and Voldemort spoke in Parseltongue.

“Kill.”

There was a terrible scream. Harry saw Snape ’s face

losing the little color it had left; it whitened as his

black eyes widened, as the snake’s fangs pierced his

Page | 742 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

neck, as he failed to push the enchanted cage off

himself, as his knees gave way and he fell to the floor.

“I regret it,” said Voldemort coldly.

He turned away; there was no sadness in him, no

remorse. It was time to leave this shack and take

charge, with a wand that would now do his full

bidding. He pointed it at the starry cage holding the

snake, which drifted upward, off Snape, who fell

sideways onto the floor, blood gushing from the

wounds in his neck. Voldemort swept from the room

without a backward glance, and the great serpent

floated after him in its huge protective sphere.

Back in the tunnel and his own mind, Harry opened

his eyes: He had drawn blood biting down on his

knuckles in the effort not to shout out. Now he was

looking through the tiny crack between crate and

wall, watching a foot in a black boot trembling on the

floor.

“Harry!” breathed Hermione behind him, but he had

already pointed his wand at the crate blocking his

view. It lifted an inch into the air and drifted sideways

silently. As quietly as he could, he pulled himself up

into the room.

He did not know why he was doing it, why he was

approaching the dying man: He did not know what he

felt as he saw Snape’s white face, and the fingers

trying to staunch the bloody wound at his neck.

Harry took off the Invisibility Cloak and looked down

upon the man he hated, whose widening black eyes

found Harry as he tried to speak. Harry bent over

him, and Snape seized the front of his robes and

pulled him close.

Page | 743 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

A terrible rasping, gurgling noise issued from Snape’s

throat.

“Take ... it. ... Take ... it. ...”

Something more than blood was leaking from Snape.

Silvery blue, neither gas nor liquid, it gushed from his

mouth and his ears and his eyes, and Harry knew

what it was, but did not know what to do —

A flask, conjured from thin air, was thrust into his

shaking hands by Hermione. Harry lifted the silvery

substance into it with his wand. When the flask was

full to the brim, and Snape looked as though there

was no blood left in him, his grip on Harry’s robes

slackened.

“Look ... at ... me. ...” he whispered.

The green eyes found the black, but after a second,

something in the depths of the dark pair seemed to

vanish, leaving them fixed, blank, and empty. The

hand holding Harry thudded to the floor, and Snape

moved no more.

Page | 744 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE PRINCE’S TALE

Harry remained kneeling at Snape’s side, simply

staring down at him, until quite suddenly a high, cold

voice spoke so close to them that Harry jumped to his

feet, the flask gripped tightly in his hands, thinking

that Voldemort had reentered the room.

Voldemort ’s voice reverberated from the walls and

floor, and Harry realized that he was talking to

Hogwarts and to all the surrounding area, that the

residents of Hogsmeade and all those still fighting in

the castle would hear him as clearly as if he stood

beside them, his breath on the back of their necks, a

deathblow away.

“You have fought,” said the high, cold voice,

“valiantly. Lord Voldemort knows how to value

bravery.

“Yet you have sustained heavy losses. If you continue

to resist me, you will all die, one by one. I do not wish

this to happen. Every drop of magical blood spilled is

a loss and a waste.

Page | 745 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Lord Voldemort is merciful. I command my forces to

retreat immediately.

“You have one hour. Dispose of your dead with

dignity. Treat your injured.

“I speak now, Harry Potter, directly to you. You have

permitted your friends to die for you rather than face

me yourself. I shall wait for one hour in the Forbidden

Forest. If, at the end of that hour, you have not come

to me, have not given yourself up, then battle

recommences. This time, I shall enter the fray myself,

Harry Potter, and I shall find you, and I shall punish

every last man, woman, and child who has tried to

conceal you from me. One hour.”

Both Ron and Hermione shook their heads frantically,

looking at Harry.

“Don’t listen to him,” said Ron.

“It’ll be all right,” said Hermione wildly. “Let’s — let’s

get back to the castle, if he’s gone to the forest we’ll

need to think of a new plan — ”

She glanced at Snape’s body, then hurried back to

the tunnel entrance. Ron followed her. Harry gathered

up the Invisibility Cloak, then looked down at Snape.

He did not know what to feel, except shock at the way

Snape had been killed, and the reason for which it

had been done. ...

They crawled back through the tunnel, none of them

talking, and Harry wondered whether Ron and

Hermione could still hear Voldemort ringing in their

heads, as he could.

Page | 746 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

You have permitted your friends to die for you rather

than face me yourself I shall wait for one hour in the

Forbidden Forest. . . . One hour. . . .

Small bundles seemed to litter the lawn at the front of

the castle. It could only be an hour or so from dawn,

yet it was pitch-black. The three of them hurried

toward the stone steps. A lone clog, the size of a small

boat, lay abandoned in front of them. There was no

other sign of Grawp or of his attacker.

The castle was unnaturally silent. There were no

flashes of light now, no bangs or screams or shouts.

The flagstones of the deserted entrance hall were

stained with blood. Emeralds were still scattered all

over the floor, along with pieces of marble and

splintered wood. Part of the banisters had been blown

away.

“Where is everyone?” whispered Hermione.

Ron led the way to the Great Hall. Harry stopped in

the doorway.

The House tables were gone and the room was

crowded. The survivors stood in groups, their arms

around each other’s necks. The injured were being

treated upon the raised platform by Madam Pomfrey

and a group of helpers. Firenze was amongst the

injured; his flank poured blood and he shook where

he lay, unable to stand.

The dead lay in a row in the middle of the Hall. Harry

could not see Fred’s body, because his family

surrounded him. George was kneeling at his head;

Mrs. Weasley was lying across Fred’s chest, her body

shaking, Mr. Weasley stroking her hair while tears

cascaded down his cheeks.

Page | 747 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Without a word to Harry, Ron and Hermione walked

away. Harry saw Hermione approach Ginny, whose

face was swollen and blotchy, and hug her. Ron

joined Bill, Fleur, and Percy, who flung an arm

around Ron’s shoulders. As Ginny and Hermione

moved closer to the rest of the family, Harry had a

clear view of the bodies lying next to Fred: Remus and

Tonks, pale and still and peaceful-looking, apparently

asleep beneath the dark, enchanted ceiling.

The Great Hall seemed to fly away, become smaller,

shrink, as Harry reeled backward from the doorway.

He could not draw breath. He could not bear to look

at any of the other bodies, to see who else had died

for him. He could not bear to join the Weasleys, could

not look into their eyes, when if he had given himself

up in the first place, Fred might never have died. ...

He turned away and ran up the marble staircase.

Lupin, Tonks ... He yearned not to feel. ... He wished

he could rip out his heart, his innards, everything

that was screaming inside him. ...

The castle was completely empty; even the ghosts

seemed to have joined the mass mourning in the

Great Hall. Harry ran without stopping, clutching the

crystal flask of Snape’s last thoughts, and he did not

slow down until he reached the stone gargoyle

guarding the headmaster’s office.

“Password?”

“Dumbledore!” said Harry without thinking, because

it was he whom he yearned to see, and to his surprise

the gargoyle slid aside, revealing the spiral staircase

behind.

But when Harry burst into the circular office he found

a change. The portraits that hung all around the

Page | 748 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

walls were empty. Not a single headmaster or

headmistress remained to see him; all, it seemed, had

flitted away, charging through the paintings that lined

the castle, so that they could have a clear view of

what was going on.

Harry glanced hopelessly at Dumbledore’s deserted

frame, which hung directly behind the headmaster’s

chair, then turned his back on it. The stone Pensieve

lay in the cabinet where it had always been: Harry

heaved it onto the desk and poured Snape’s memories

into the wide basin with its runic markings around

the edge. To escape into someone else’s head would

be a blessed relief. ... Nothing that even Snape had

left him could be worse than his own thoughts. The

memories swirled, silver white and strange, and

without hesitating, with a feeling of reckless

abandonment, as though this would assuage his

torturing grief, Harry dived.

He fell headlong into sunlight, and his feet found

warm ground. When he straightened up, he saw that

he was in a nearly deserted playground. A single huge

chimney dominated the distant skyline. Two girls

were swinging backward and forward, and a skinny

boy was watching them from behind a clump of

bushes. His black hair was overlong and his clothes

were so mismatched that it looked deliberate: too

short jeans, a shabby, overlarge coat that might have

belonged to a grown man, an odd smocklike shirt.

Harry moved closer to the boy. Snape looked no more

than nine or ten years old, sallow, small, stringy.

There was undisguised greed in his thin face as he

watched the younger of the two girls swinging higher

and higher than her sister.

“Lily, don’t do it!” shrieked the elder of the two.

Page | 749 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

But the girl had let go of the swing at the very height

of its arc and flown into the air, quite literally flown,

launched herself skyward with a great shout of

laughter, and instead of crumpling on the playground

asphalt, she soared like a trapeze artist through the

air, staying up far too long, landing far too lightly.

“Mummy told you not to!”

Petunia stopped her swing by dragging the heels of

her sandals on the ground, making a crunching,

grinding sound, then leapt up, hands on hips.

“Mummy said you weren’t allowed, Lily!”

“But I’m fine,” said Lily, still giggling. “Tuney, look at

this. Watch what I can do.”

Petunia glanced around. The playground was

deserted apart from themselves and, though the girls

did not know it, Snape. Lily had picked up a fallen

flower from the bush behind which Snape lurked.

Petunia advanced, evidently torn between curiosity

and disapproval. Lily waited until Petunia was near

enough to have a clear view, then held out her palm.

The flower sat there, opening and closing its petals,

like some bizarre, many-lipped oyster.

“Stop it!” shrieked Petunia.

“It’s not hurting you,” said Lily, but she closed her

hand on the blossom and threw it back to the ground.

“It’s not right,” said Petunia, but her eyes had

followed the flower’s flight to the ground and lingered

upon it. “How do you do it?” she added, and there

was definite longing in her voice.

Page | 750 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“It’s obvious, isn’t it?” Snape could no longer contain

himself, but had jumped out from behind the bushes.

Petunia shrieked and ran backward toward the

swings, but Lily, though clearly startled, remained

where she was. Snape seemed to regret his

appearance. A dull flush of color mounted the sallow

cheeks as he looked at Lily.

“What’s obvious?” asked Lily.

Snape had an air of nervous excitement. With a

glance at the distant Petunia, now hovering beside the

swings, he lowered his voice and said, “I know what

you are.”

“What do you mean?”

“You’re ... you’re a witch,” whispered Snape.

She looked affronted.

“ That’s not a very nice thing to say to somebody!”

She turned, nose in the air, and marched off toward

her sister.

“No!” said Snape. He was highly colored now, and

Harry wondered why he did not take off the

ridiculously large coat, unless it was because he did

not want to reveal the smock beneath it. He flapped

after the girls, looking ludicrously batlike, like his

older self.

The sisters considered him, united in disapproval,

both holding on to one of the swing poles as though it

was the safe place in tag.

Page | 751 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You are,” said Snape to Lily. “You are a witch. I’ve

been watching you for a while. But there’s nothing

wrong with that. My mum’s one, and I’m a wizard.”

Petunia’s laugh was like cold water.

“Wizard!” she shrieked, her courage returned now

that she had recovered from the shock of his

unexpected appearance. “I know who you are. You’re

that Snape boy! They live down Spinner’s End by the

river,” she told Lily, and it was evident from her tone

that she considered the address a poor

recommendation. “Why have you been spying on us?”

“Haven’t been spying,” said Snape, hot and

uncomfortable and dirty-haired in the bright sunlight.

“Wouldn’t spy on you, anyway,” he added spitefully,

“ you’re a Muggle.”

Though Petunia evidently did not understand the

word, she could hardly mistake the tone.

“Lily, come on, we’re leaving!” she said shrilly. Lily

obeyed her sister at once, glaring at Snape as she left.

He stood watching them as they marched through the

playground gate, and Harry, the only one left to

observe him, recognized Snape ’s bitter

disappointment, and understood that Snape had been

planning this moment for a while, and that it had all

gone wrong. . . .

The scene dissolved, and before Harry knew it, re-

formed around him. He was now in a small thicket of

trees. He could see a sunlit river glittering through

their trunks. The shadows cast by the trees made a

basin of cool green shade. Two children sat facing

each other, cross-legged on the ground. Snape had

removed his coat now; his odd smock looked less

peculiar in the half light.

Page | 752 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

"... and the Ministry can punish you if you do magic

outside school, you get letters.”

“But I have done magic outside school!”

“We’re all right. We haven’t got wands yet. They let

you off when you’re a kid and you can’t help it. But

once you’re eleven,” he nodded importantly, “and they

start training you, then you’ve got to go careful.”

There was a little silence. Lily had picked up a fallen

twig and twirled it in the air, and Harry knew that she

was imagining sparks trailing from it. Then she

dropped the twig, leaned in toward the boy, and said,

“It is real, isn’t it? It’s not a joke? Petunia says you’re

lying to me. Petunia says there isn’t a Hogwarts. It is

real, isn’t it?”

“It’s real for us,” said Snape. “Not for her. But we’ll get

the letter, you and me.”

“Really?” whispered Lily.

“Definitely,” said Snape, and even with his poorly cut

hair and his odd clothes, he struck an oddly

impressive figure sprawled in front of her, brimful of

confidence in his destiny.

“And will it really come by owl?” Lily whispered.

“Normally,” said Snape. “But you’re Muggle-born, so

someone from the school will have to come and

explain to your parents.”

“Does it make a difference, being Muggle-born?”

Snape hesitated. His black eyes, eager in the greenish

gloom, moved over the pale face, the dark red hair.

Page | 753 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No,” he said. “It doesn’t make any difference.”

“Good,” said Lily, relaxing: It was clear that she had

been worrying.

“You’ve got loads of magic,” said Snape. “I saw that.

All the time I was watching you ...”

His voice trailed away; she was not listening, but had

stretched out on the leafy ground and was looking up

at the canopy of leaves overhead. He watched her as

greedily as he had watched her in the playground.

“How are things at your house?” Lily asked.

A little crease appeared between his eyes.

“Fine,” he said.

“They’re not arguing anymore?”

“Oh yes, they’re arguing,” said Snape. He picked up a

fistful of leaves and began tearing them apart,

apparently unaware of what he was doing. “But it

won’t be that long and I’ll be gone.”

“Doesn’t your dad like magic?”

“He doesn’t like anything, much,” said Snape.

“Severus?”

A little smile twisted Snape ’s mouth when she said

his name.

“Yeah?”

“Tell me about the dementors again.”

Page | 754 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“What d’you want to know about them for?”

“If I use magic outside school — ”

“They wouldn’t give you to the dementors for that!

Dementors are for people who do really bad stuff.

They guard the wizard prison, Azkaban. You’re not

going to end up in Azkaban, you’re too — ”

He turned red again and shredded more leaves. Then

a small rustling noise behind Harry made him turn:

Petunia, hiding behind a tree, had lost her footing.

“Tuney!” said Lily, surprise and welcome in her voice,

but Snape had jumped to his feet.

“Who’s spying now?” he shouted. “What d’you want?”

Petunia was breathless, alarmed at being caught.

Harry could see her struggling for something hurtful

to say.

“What is that you’re wearing, anyway?” she said,

pointing at Snape’s chest. “Your mum’s blouse?”

There was a crack: A branch over Petunia’s head had

fallen. Lily screamed: The branch caught Petunia on

the shoulder, and she staggered backward and burst

into tears.

“Tuney!”

But Petunia was running away. Lily rounded on

Snape.

“Did you make that happen?”

“No.” He looked both defiant and scared.

Page | 755 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You did!” She was backing away from him. “You did).

You hurt her!”

“No — no I didn’t!”

But the lie did not convince Lily: After one last

burning look, she ran from the little thicket, off after

her sister, and Snape looked miserable and confused.

And the scene re-formed. Harry looked around: He

was on platform nine and three-quarters, and Snape

stood beside him, slightly hunched, next to a thin,

sallow-faced, sour-looking woman who greatly

resembled him. Snape was staring at a family of four

a short distance away. The two girls stood a little

apart from their parents. Lily seemed to be pleading

with her sister; Harry moved closer to listen.

"... I’m sorry, Tuney, I’m sorry! Listen — ” She caught

her sister’s hand and held tight to it, even though

Petunia tried to pull it away. “Maybe once I’m there —

no, listen, Tuney! Maybe once I’m there, I’ll be able to

go to Professor Dumbledore and persuade him to

change his mind!”

“I don’t — want — to — go!” said Petunia, and she

dragged her hand back out of her sister’s grasp. “You

think I want to go to some stupid castle and learn to

be a — a — ”

Her pale eyes roved over the platform, over the cats

mewling in their owners’ arms, over the owls

fluttering and hooting at each other in cages, over the

students, some already in their long black robes,

loading trunks onto the scarlet steam engine or else

greeting one another with glad cries after a summer

apart.

Page | 756 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ — you think I want to be a — a freak?”

Lily’s eyes filled with tears as Petunia succeeded in

tugging her hand away.

“I’m not a freak,” said Lily. “That’s a horrible thing to

say.”

“That’s where you’re going,” said Petunia with relish.

“A special school for freaks. You and that Snape boy

... weirdos, that’s what you two are. It’s good you’re

being separated from normal people. It’s for our

safety.”

Lily glanced toward her parents, who were looking

around the platform with an air of wholehearted

enjoyment, drinking in the scene. Then she looked

back at her sister, and her voice was low and fierce.

“You didn’t think it was such a freak’s school when

you wrote to the headmaster and begged him to take

you.”

Petunia turned scarlet.

“Beg? I didn’t beg!”

“I saw his reply. It was very kind.”

“You shouldn’t have read — ” whispered Petunia, “that

was my private — how could you — ?”

Lily gave herself away by half-glancing toward where

Snape stood nearby. Petunia gasped.

“That boy found it! You and that boy have been

sneaking in my room!”

Page | 757 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No — not sneaking — ” Now Lily was on the

defensive. “Severus saw the envelope, and he couldn’t

believe a Muggle could have contacted Hogwarts,

that’s all! He says there must be wizards working

undercover in the postal service who take care of — ”

“Apparently wizards poke their noses in everywhere!”

said Petunia, now as pale as she had been flushed.

“ Freak).” she spat at her sister, and she flounced off to

where her parents stood. ...

The scene dissolved again. Snape was hurrying along

the corridor of the Hogwarts Express as it clattered

through the countryside. He had already changed into

his school robes, had perhaps taken the first

opportunity to take off his dreadful Muggle clothes. At

last he stopped, outside a compartment in which a

group of rowdy boys were talking. Hunched in a

corner seat beside the window was Lily, her face

pressed against the windowpane.

Snape slid open the compartment door and sat down

opposite Lily. She glanced at him and then looked

back out of the window. She had been crying.

“I don’t want to talk to you,” she said in a constricted

voice.

“Why not?”

“Tuney h-hates me. Because we saw that letter from

Dumbledore.”

“So what?”

She threw him a look of deep dislike.

“So she’s my sister!”

Page | 758 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“She’s only a — ” He caught himself quickly; Lily, too

busy trying to wipe her eyes without being noticed,

did not hear him.

“But we’re going!” he said, unable to suppress the

exhilaration in his voice. “This is it! We’re off to

Hogwarts!”

She nodded, mopping her eyes, but in spite of herself,

she half smiled.

“You’d better be in Slytherin,” said Snape, encouraged

that she had brightened a little.

“Slytherin?”

One of the boys sharing the compartment, who had

shown no interest at all in Lily or Snape until that

point, looked around at the word, and Harry, whose

attention had been focused entirely on the two beside

the window, saw his father: slight, black-haired like

Snape, but with that indefinable air of having been

well-cared-for, even adored, that Snape so

conspicuously lacked.

“Who wants to be in Slytherin? I think I’d leave,

wouldn’t you?” James asked the boy lounging on the

seats opposite him, and with a jolt, Harry realized

that it was Sirius. Sirius did not smile.

“My whole family have been in Slytherin,” he said.

“Blimey,” said James, “and I thought you seemed all

right!”

Sirius grinned.

“Maybe I’ll break the tradition. Where are you

heading, if you’ve got the choice?”

Page | 759 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

James lifted an invisible sword.

“ ‘Gryffindor, where dwell the brave at heart!’ Like my

dad.”

Snape made a small, disparaging noise. James turned

on him.

“Got a problem with that?”

“No,” said Snape, though his slight sneer said

otherwise. “If you’d rather be brawny than brainy — ”

“Where ’re you hoping to go, seeing as you’re neither?”

interjected Sirius.

James roared with laughter. Lily sat up, rather

flushed, and looked from James to Sirius in dislike.

“Come on, Severus, let’s find another compartment.”

“Oooooo ...”

James and Sirius imitated her lofty voice; James tried

to trip Snape as he passed.

“See ya, Snivellus!” a voice called, as the

compartment door slammed. ...

And the scene dissolved once more. ...

Harry was standing right behind Snape as they faced

the candlelit House tables, lined with rapt faces. Then

Professor McGonagall said, “Evans, Lily!”

He watched his mother walk forward on trembling

legs and sit down upon the rickety stool. Professor

McGonagall dropped the Sorting Hat onto her head,

Page | 760 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

and barely a second after it had touched the dark red

hair, the hat cried, “ Gryffindoii”

Harry heard Snape let out a tiny groan. Lily took off

the hat, handed it back to Professor McGonagall, then

hurried toward the cheering Gryffindors, but as she

went she glanced back at Snape, and there was a sad

little smile on her face. Harry saw Sirius move up the

bench to make room for her. She took one look at

him, seemed to recognize him from the train, folded

her arms, and firmly turned her back on him.

The roll call continued. Harry watched Lupin,

Pettigrew, and his father join Lily and Sirius at the

Gryffindor table. At last, when only a dozen students

remained to be sorted, Professor McGonagall called

Snape.

Harry walked with him to the stool, watched him

place the hat upon his head. “Slytherinl” cried the

Sorting Hat.

And Severus Snape moved off to the other side of the

Hall, away from Lily, to where the Slytherins were

cheering him, to where Lucius Malfoy, a prefect badge

gleaming upon his chest, patted Snape on the back as

he sat down beside him. ...

And the scene changed. ...

Lily and Snape were walking across the castle

courtyard, evidently arguing. Harry hurried to catch

up with them, to listen in. As he reached them, he

realized how much taller they both were: A few years

seemed to have passed since their Sorting.

"... thought we were supposed to be friends?” Snape

was saying. “Best friends?”

Page | 761 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“We are, Sev, but I don’t like some of the people you’re

hanging round with! I’m sorry, but I detest Avery and

Mulciber! Mulciber\ What do you see in him, Sev, he’s

creepy! D’you know what he tried to do to Mary

Macdonald the other day?”

Lily had reached a pillar and leaned against it,

looking up into the thin, sallow face.

“That was nothing,” said Snape. “It was a laugh,

that’s all — ”

“It was Dark Magic, and if you think that’s funny — ”

“What about the stuff Potter and his mates get up

to?” demanded Snape. His color rose again as he said

it, unable, it seemed, to hold in his resentment.

“What’s Potter got to do with anything?” said Lily.

“They sneak out at night. There’s something weird

about that Lupin. Where does he keep going?”

“He’s ill,” said Lily. “They say he’s ill — ”

“Every month at the full moon?” said Snape.

“I know your theory,” said Lily, and she sounded cold.

“Why are you so obsessed with them anyway? Why do

you care what they’re doing at night?”

“I’m just trying to show you they’re not as wonderful

as everyone seems to think they are.”

The intensity of his gaze made her blush.

“They don’t use Dark Magic, though.” She dropped

her voice. “And you’re being really ungrateful. I heard

what happened the other night. You went sneaking

Page | 762 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

down that tunnel by the Whomping Willow, and

James Potter saved you from whatever’s down there

Snape’s whole face contorted and he spluttered,

“Saved? Saved? You think he was playing the hero?

He was saving his neck and his friends’ too! You’re

not going to — I won’t let you — ”

“Let me? Let me?”

Lily’s bright green eyes were slits. Snape backtracked

at once.

“I didn’t mean — I just don’t want to see you made a

fool of — He fancies you, James Potter fancies you!”

The words seemed wrenched from him against his

will. “And he’s not ... everyone thinks ... big Quidditch

hero — ” Snape’s bitterness and dislike were rendering

him incoherent, and Lily’s eyebrows were traveling

farther and farther up her forehead.

“I know James Potter’s an arrogant toerag,” she said,

cutting across Snape. “I don’t need you to tell me

that. But Mulciber’s and Avery’s idea of humor is just

evil. Evil, Sev. I don’t understand how you can be

friends with them.”

Harry doubted that Snape had even heard her

strictures on Mulciber and Avery. The moment she

had insulted James Potter, his whole body had

relaxed, and as they walked away there was a new

spring in Snape’s step. ...

And the scene dissolved. ...

Harry watched again as Snape left the Great Hall after

sitting his O.W.L. in Defense Against the Dark Arts,

watched as he wandered away from the castle and

Page | 763 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

strayed inadvertently close to the place beneath the

beech tree where James, Sirius, Lupin, and Pettigrew

sat together. But Harry kept his distance this time,

because he knew what happened after James had

hoisted Severus into the air and taunted him; he

knew what had been done and said, and it gave him

no pleasure to hear it again. ... He watched as Lily

joined the group and went to Snape’s defense.

Distantly he heard Snape shout at her in his

humiliation and his fury, the unforgivable word:

“MudbloocL.”

The scene changed. ...

“I’m sorry.”

“I’m not interested.”

“I’m sorry!”

“Save your breath.”

It was nighttime. Lily, who was wearing a dressing

gown, stood with her arms folded in front of the

portrait of the Fat Lady, at the entrance to Gryffindor

Tower.

“I only came out because Mary told me you were

threatening to sleep here.”

“I was. I would have done. I never meant to call you

Mudblood, it just — ”

“Slipped out?” There was no pity in Lily’s voice. “It’s

too late. I’ve made excuses for you for years. None of

my friends can understand why I even talk to you.

You and your precious little Death Eater friends —

you see, you don’t even deny it! You don’t even deny

Page | 764 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

that’s what you’re all aiming to be! You can’t wait to

join You- Know- Who, can you?”

He opened his mouth, but closed it without speaking.

“I can’t pretend anymore. You’ve chosen your way,

I’ve chosen mine.”

“No — listen, I didn’t mean — ”

“ — to call me Mudblood? But you call everyone of my

birth Mudblood, Severus. Why should I be any

different?”

He struggled on the verge of speech, but with a

contemptuous look she turned and climbed back

through the portrait hole. ...

The corridor dissolved, and the scene took a little

longer to reform: Harry seemed to fly through shifting

shapes and colors until his surroundings solidified

again and he stood on a hilltop, forlorn and cold in

the darkness, the wind whistling through the

branches of a few leafless trees. The adult Snape was

panting, turning on the spot, his wand gripped tightly

in his hand, waiting for something or for someone. ...

His fear infected Harry too, even though he knew that

he could not be harmed, and he looked over his

shoulder, wondering what it was that Snape was

waiting for —

Then a blinding, jagged jet of white light flew through

the air: Harry thought of lightning, but Snape had

dropped to his knees and his wand had flown out of

his hand.

“Don’t kill me!”

“That was not my intention.”

Page | 765 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Any sound of Dumbledore Apparating had been

drowned by the sound of the wind in the branches.

He stood before Snape with his robes whipping

around him, and his face was illuminated from below

in the light cast by his wand.

“Well, Severus? What message does Lord Voldemort

have for me?”

“No — no message — I’m here on my own account!”

Snape was wringing his hands: He looked a little

mad, with his straggling black hair flying around him.

“I — I come with a warning — no, a request — please

Dumbledore flicked his wand. Though leaves and

branches still flew through the night air around them,

silence fell on the spot where he and Snape faced

each other.

“What request could a Death Eater make of me?”

“The — the prophecy . . . the prediction . . . Trelawney

“Ah, yes,” said Dumbledore. “How much did you relay

to Lord Voldemort?”

“Everything — everything I heard!” said Snape. “That

is why — it is for that reason — he thinks it means

Lily Evans!”

“The prophecy did not refer to a woman,” said

Dumbledore. “It spoke of a boy born at the end of

July — ”

Page | 766 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You know what I mean! He thinks it means her son,

he is going to hunt her down — kill them all — ”

“If she means so much to you,” said Dumbledore,

“surely Lord Voldemort will spare her? Could you not

ask for mercy for the mother, in exchange for the

son?”

“I have — I have asked him — ”

“You disgust me,” said Dumbledore, and Harry had

never heard so much contempt in his voice. Snape

seemed to shrink a little. “You do not care, then,

about the deaths of her husband and child? They can

die, as long as you have what you want?”

Snape said nothing, but merely looked up at

Dumbledore.

“Hide them all, then,” he croaked. “Keep her — them

— safe. Please.”

“And what will you give me in return, Severus?”

“In — in return?” Snape gaped at Dumbledore, and

Harry expected him to protest, but after a long

moment he said, “Anything.”

The hilltop faded, and Harry stood in Dumbledore’s

office, and something was making a terrible sound,

like a wounded animal. Snape was slumped forward

in a chair and Dumbledore was standing over him,

looking grim. After a moment or two, Snape raised his

face, and he looked like a man who had lived a

hundred years of misery since leaving the wild hilltop.

“I thought ... you were going ... to keep her ... safe.

Page | 767 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“She and James put their faith in the wrong person,”

said Dumbledore. “Rather like you, Severus. Weren’t

you hoping that Lord Voldemort would spare her?”

Snape’s breathing was shallow.

“Her boy survives,” said Dumbledore.

With a tiny jerk of the head, Snape seemed to flick off

an irksome fly.

“Her son lives. He has her eyes, precisely her eyes.

You remember the shape and color of Lily Evans’s

eyes, I am sure?”

“DON’T!” bellowed Snape. “Gone ... dead ...”

“Is this remorse, Severus?”

“I wish ... I wish / were dead. ...”

“And what use would that be to anyone?” said

Dumbledore coldly. “If you loved Lily Evans, if you

truly loved her, then your way forward is clear.”

Snape seemed to peer through a haze of pain, and

Dumbledore ’s words appeared to take a long time to

reach him.

“What — what do you mean?”

“You know how and why she died. Make sure it was

not in vain. Help me protect Lily’s son.”

“He does not need protection. The Dark Lord has gone

“The Dark Lord will return, and Harry Potter will be in

terrible danger when he does.”

Page | 768 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

There was a long pause, and slowly Snape regained

control of himself, mastered his own breathing. At

last he said, “Very well. Very well. But never — never

tell, Dumbledore! This must be between us! Swear it! I

cannot bear . . . especially Potter’s son ... I want your

word!”

“My word, Severus, that I shall never reveal the best

of you?” Dumbledore sighed, looking down into

Snape’s ferocious, anguished face. “If you insist ...”

The office dissolved but re-formed instantly. Snape

was pacing up and down in front of Dumbledore.

“ — mediocre, arrogant as his father, a determined

rule-breaker, delighted to find himself famous,

attention-seeking and impertinent — ”

“You see what you expect to see, Severus,” said

Dumbledore, without raising his eyes from a copy of

Transfiguration Today. “Other teachers report that the

boy is modest, likable, and reasonably talented.

Personally, I find him an engaging child.”

Dumbledore turned a page, and said, without looking

up, “Keep an eye on Quirrell, won’t you?”

A whirl of color, and now everything darkened, and

Snape and Dumbledore stood a little apart in the

entrance hall, while the last stragglers from the Yule

Ball passed them on their way to bed.

“Well?” murmured Dumbledore.

“Karkaroff’s Mark is becoming darker too. He is

panicking, he fears retribution; you know how much

help he gave the Ministry after the Dark Lord fell.”

Snape looked sideways at Dumbledore ’s crooked-

Page | 769 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

nosed profile. “Karkaroff intends to flee if the Mark

burns.”

“Does he?” said Dumbledore softly, as Fleur Delacour

and Roger Davies came giggling in from the grounds.

“And are you tempted to join him?”

“No,” said Snape, his black eyes on Fleur’s and

Roger’s retreating figures. “I am not such a coward.”

“No,” agreed Dumbledore. “You are a braver man by

far than Igor Karkaroff. You know, I sometimes think

we Sort too soon. ...”

He walked away, leaving Snape looking stricken. ...

And now Harry stood in the headmaster’s office yet

again. It was nighttime, and Dumbledore sagged

sideways in the thronelike chair behind the desk,

apparently semiconscious. His right hand dangled

over the side, blackened and burned. Snape was

muttering incantations, pointing his wand at the

wrist of the hand, while with his left hand he tipped a

goblet full of thick golden potion down Dumbledore ’s

throat. After a moment or two, Dumbledore ’s eyelids

fluttered and opened.

“Why,” said Snape, without preamble, “ why did you

put on that ring? It carries a curse, surely you

realized that. Why even touch it?”

Marvolo Gaunt’s ring lay on the desk before

Dumbledore. It was cracked; the sword of Gryffindor

lay beside it.

Dumbledore grimaced.

“I ... was a fool. Sorely tempted ...”

Page | 770 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Tempted by what?”

Dumbledore did not answer.

“It is a miracle you managed to return here!” Snape

sounded furious. “That ring carried a curse of

extraordinary power, to contain it is all we can hope

for; I have trapped the curse in one hand for the time

being — ”

Dumbledore raised his blackened, useless hand, and

examined it with the expression of one being shown

an interesting curio.

“You have done very well, Severus. How long do you

think I have?”

Dumbledore ’s tone was conversational; he might have

been asking for a weather forecast. Snape hesitated,

and then said, “I cannot tell. Maybe a year. There is

no halting such a spell forever. It will spread

eventually, it is the sort of curse that strengthens over

time.”

Dumbledore smiled. The news that he had less than a

year to live seemed a matter of little or no concern to

him.

“I am fortunate, extremely fortunate, that I have you,

Severus.”

“If you had only summoned me a little earlier, I might

have been able to do more, buy you more time!” said

Snape furiously. He looked down at the broken ring

and the sword. “Did you think that breaking the ring

would break the curse?”

“Something like that ... I was delirious, no doubt. ...”

said Dumbledore. With an effort he straightened

Page | 771 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

himself in his chair. “Well, really, this makes matters

much more straightforward.”

Snape looked utterly perplexed. Dumbledore smiled.

“I refer to the plan Lord Voldemort is revolving around

me. His plan to have the poor Malfoy boy murder me.”

Snape sat down in the chair Harry had so often

occupied, across the desk from Dumbledore. Harry

could tell that he wanted to say more on the subject

of Dumbledore ’s cursed hand, but the other held it up

in polite refusal to discuss the matter further.

Scowling, Snape said, “The Dark Lord does not expect

Draco to succeed. This is merely punishment for

Lucius’s recent failures. Slow torture for Draco’s

parents, while they watch him fail and pay the price.”

“In short, the boy has had a death sentence

pronounced upon him as surely as I have,” said

Dumbledore. “Now, I should have thought the natural

successor to the job, once Draco fails, is yourself?”

There was a short pause.

“That, I think, is the Dark Lord’s plan.”

“Lord Voldemort foresees a moment in the near future

when he will not need a spy at Hogwarts?”

“He believes the school will soon be in his grasp, yes.”

“And if it does fall into his grasp,” said Dumbledore,

almost, it seemed, as an aside, “I have your word that

you will do all in your power to protect the students of

Hogwarts?”

Snape gave a stiff nod.

Page | 772 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Good. Now then. Your first priority will be to discover

what Draco is up to. A frightened teenage boy is a

danger to others as well as to himself. Offer him help

and guidance, he ought to accept, he likes you — ”

“ — much less since his father has lost favor. Draco

blames me, he thinks I have usurped Lucius’s

position.”

“All the same, try. I am concerned less for myself than

for accidental victims of whatever schemes might

occur to the boy. Ultimately, of course, there is only

one thing to be done if we are to save him from Lord

Voldemort’s wrath.”

Snape raised his eyebrows and his tone was sardonic

as he asked, “Are you intending to let him kill you?”

“Certainly not. You must kill me.”

There was a long silence, broken only by an odd

clicking noise. Fawkes the phoenix was gnawing a bit

of cuttlebone.

“Would you like me to do it now?” asked Snape, his

voice heavy with irony. “Or would you like a few

moments to compose an epitaph?”

“Oh, not quite yet,” said Dumbledore, smiling. “I

daresay the moment will present itself in due course.

Given what has happened tonight,” he indicated his

withered hand, “we can be sure that it will happen

within a year.”

“If you don’t mind dying,” said Snape roughly, “why

not let Draco do it?”

Page | 773 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“That boy’s soul is not yet so damaged,” said

Dumbledore. “I would not have it ripped apart on my

account.”

“And my soul, Dumbledore? Mine?”

“You alone know whether it will harm your soul to

help an old man avoid pain and humiliation,” said

Dumbledore. “I ask this one great favor of you,

Severus, because death is coming for me as surely as

the Chudley Cannons will finish bottom of this year’s

league. I confess I should prefer a quick, painless exit

to the protracted and messy affair it will be if, for

instance, Greyback is involved — I hear Voldemort

has recruited him? Or dear Bellatrix, who likes to

play with her food before she eats it.”

His tone was light, but his blue eyes pierced Snape as

they had frequently pierced Harry, as though the soul

they discussed was visible to him. At last Snape gave

another curt nod.

Dumbledore seemed satisfied.

“Thank you, Severus ...”

The office disappeared, and now Snape and

Dumbledore were strolling together in the deserted

castle grounds by twilight.

“What are you doing with Potter, all these evenings

you are closeted together?” Snape asked abruptly.

Dumbledore looked weary.

“Why? You aren’t trying to give him more detentions,

Severus? The boy will soon have spent more time in

detention than out.”

Page | 774 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“He is his father over again — ”

“In looks, perhaps, but his deepest nature is much

more like his mother’s. I spend time with Harry

because I have things to discuss with him,

information I must give him before it is too late.”

“Information,” repeated Snape. “You trust him ... you

do not trust me.”

“It is not a question of trust. I have, as we both know,

limited time. It is essential that I give the boy enough

information for him to do what he needs to do.”

“And why may I not have the same information?”

“I prefer not to put all of my secrets in one basket,

particularly not a basket that spends so much time

dangling on the arm of Lord Voldemort.”

“Which I do on your orders!”

“And you do it extremely well. Do not think that I

underestimate the constant danger in which you

place yourself, Severus. To give Voldemort what

appears to be valuable information while withholding

the essentials is a job I would entrust to nobody but

you.”

“Yet you confide much more in a boy who is incapable

of Occlumency, whose magic is mediocre, and who

has a direct connection into the Dark Lord’s mind!”

“Voldemort fears that connection,” said Dumbledore.

“Not so long ago he had one small taste of what truly

sharing Harry’s mind means to him. It was pain such

as he has never experienced. He will not try to

possess Harry again, I am sure of it. Not in that way.”

Page | 775 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I don’t understand.”

“Lord Voldemort’s soul, maimed as it is, cannot bear

close contact with a soul like Harry’s. Like a tongue

on frozen steel, like flesh in flame — ”

“Souls? We were talking of minds!”

“In the case of Harry and Lord Voldemort, to speak of

one is to speak of the other.”

Dumbledore glanced around to make sure that they

were alone. They were close by the Forbidden Forest

now, but there was no sign of anyone near them.

“After you have killed me, Severus — ”

“You refuse to tell me everything, yet you expect that

small service of me!” snarled Snape, and real anger

flared in the thin face now. “You take a great deal for

granted, Dumbledore! Perhaps I have changed my

mind!”

“You gave me your word, Severus. And while we are

talking about services you owe me, I thought you

agreed to keep a close eye on our young Slytherin

friend?”

Snape looked angry, mutinous. Dumbledore sighed.

“Come to my office tonight, Severus, at eleven, and

you shall not complain that I have no confidence in

you. ...”

They were back in Dumbledore ’s office, the windows

dark, and Fawkes sat silent as Snape sat quite still,

as Dumbledore walked around him, talking.

Page | 776 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry must not know, not until the last moment, not

until it is necessary, otherwise how could he have the

strength to do what must be done?”

“But what must he do?”

“That is between Harry and me. Now listen closely,

Severus. There will come a time — after my death —

do not argue, do not interrupt! There will come a time

when Lord Voldemort will seem to fear for the life of

his snake.”

“For Nagini?” Snape looked astonished.

“Precisely. If there comes a time when Lord Voldemort

stops sending that snake forth to do his bidding, but

keeps it safe beside him under magical protection,

then, I think, it will be safe to tell Harry.”

“Tell him what?”

Dumbledore took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

“Tell him that on the night Lord Voldemort tried to kill

him, when Lily cast her own life between them as a

shield, the Killing Curse rebounded upon Lord

Voldemort, and a fragment of Voldemort’s soul was

blasted apart from the whole, and latched itself onto

the only living soul left in that collapsing building.

Part of Lord Voldemort lives inside Harry, and it is

that which gives him the power of speech with

snakes, and a connection with Lord Voldemort’s mind

that he has never understood. And while that

fragment of soul, unmissed by Voldemort, remains

attached to and protected by Harry, Lord Voldemort

cannot die.”

Page | 777 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry seemed to be watching the two men from one

end of a long tunnel, they were so far away from him,

their voices echoing strangely in his ears.

“So the boy . . . the boy must die?” asked Snape quite

calmly.

“And Voldemort himself must do it, Severus. That is

essential.”

Another long silence. Then Snape said, “I thought ...

all these years . . . that we were protecting him for her.

For Lily.”

“We have protected him because it has been essential

to teach him, to raise him, to let him try his strength,”

said Dumbledore, his eyes still tight shut.

“Meanwhile, the connection between them grows ever

stronger, a parasitic growth: Sometimes I have

thought he suspects it himself. If I know him, he will

have arranged matters so that when he does set out

to meet his death, it will truly mean the end of

Voldemort.”

Dumbledore opened his eyes. Snape looked horrified.

“You have kept him alive so that he can die at the

right moment?”

“Don’t be shocked, Severus. How many men and

women have you watched die?”

“Lately, only those whom I could not save,” said

Snape. He stood up. “You have used me.”

“Meaning?”

“I have spied for you and lied for you, put myself in

mortal danger for you. Everything was supposed to be

Page | 778 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

to keep Lily Potter’s son safe. Now you tell me you

have been raising him like a pig for slaughter — ”

“But this is touching, Severus,” said Dumbledore

seriously. “Have you grown to care for the boy, after

all?”

“For him?” shouted Snape. “Expecto Patronuml”

From the tip of his wand burst the silver doe: She

landed on the office floor, bounded once across the

office, and soared out of the window. Dumbledore

watched her fly away, and as her silvery glow faded

he turned back to Snape, and his eyes were full of

tears.

“After all this time?”

“Always,” said Snape.

And the scene shifted. Now, Harry saw Snape talking

to the portrait of Dumbledore behind his desk.

“You will have to give Voldemort the correct date of

Harry’s departure from his aunt and uncle’s,” said

Dumbledore. “Not to do so will raise suspicion, when

Voldemort believes you so well informed. However,

you must plant the idea of decoys; that, I think, ought

to ensure Harry’s safety. Try Confunding Mundungus

Fletcher. And Severus, if you are forced to take part

in the chase, be sure to act your part convincingly. ...

I am counting upon you to remain in Lord

Voldemort’s good books as long as possible, or

Hogwarts will be left to the mercy of the Carrows. ...”

Now Snape was head to head with Mundungus in an

unfamiliar tavern, Mundungus ’s face looking

curiously blank, Snape frowning in concentration.

Page | 779 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You will suggest to the Order of the Phoenix,” Snape

murmured, “that they use decoys. Polyjuice Potion.

Identical Potters. It is the only thing that might work.

You will forget that I have suggested this. You will

present it as your own idea. You understand?”

“I understand,” murmured Mundungus, his eyes

unfocused. ...

Now Harry was flying alongside Snape on a

broomstick through a clear dark night: He was

accompanied by other hooded Death Eaters, and

ahead were Lupin and a Harry who was really George.

... A Death Eater moved ahead of Snape and raised

his wand, pointing it directly at Lupin’s back —

“ Sectumsemprcd” shouted Snape.

But the spell, intended for the Death Eater’s wand

hand, missed and hit George instead —

And next, Snape was kneeling in Sirius’s old

bedroom. Tears were dripping from the end of his

hooked nose as he read the old letter from Lily. The

second page carried only a few words:

could ever have been friends with Gellert Grindelwald.

I think her mind’s going, personally!

Lots of love,

Lily

Snape took the page bearing Lily’s signature, and her

love, and tucked it inside his robes. Then he ripped in

two the photograph he was also holding, so that he

kept the part from which Lily laughed, throwing the

portion showing James and Harry back onto the floor,

under the chest of drawers. ...

Page | 780 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

And now Snape stood again in the headmaster’s

study as Phineas Nigellus came hurrying into his

portrait.

“Headmaster! They are camping in the Forest of Dean!

The Mudblood — ”

“Do not use that word!”

“ — the Granger girl, then, mentioned the place as she

opened her bag and I heard her!”

“Good. Very good!” cried the portrait of Dumbledore

behind the headmaster’s chair. “Now, Severus, the

sword! Do not forget that it must be taken under

conditions of need and valor — and he must not know

that you give it! If Voldemort should read Harry’s

mind and see you acting for him — ”

“I know,” said Snape curtly. He approached the

portrait of Dumbledore and pulled at its side. It

swung forward, revealing a hidden cavity behind it

from which he took the sword of Gryffindor.

“And you still aren’t going to tell me why it’s so

important to give Potter the sword?” said Snape as he

swung a traveling cloak over his robes.

“No, I don’t think so,” said Dumbledore’s portrait. “He

will know what to do with it. And Severus, be very

careful, they may not take kindly to your appearance

after George Weasley’s mishap — ”

Snape turned at the door.

“Don’t worry, Dumbledore,” he said coolly. “I have a

plan. ...”

Page | 781 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

And Snape left the room. Harry rose up out of the

Pensieve, and moments later he lay on the carpeted

floor in exactly the same room: Snape might just have

closed the door.

Page | 782 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE FOREST AGAIN

Finally, the truth. Lying with his face pressed into the

dusty carpet of the office where he had once thought

he was learning the secrets of victory, Harry

understood at last that he was not supposed to

survive. His job was to walk calmly into Death’s

welcoming arms. Along the way, he was to dispose of

Voldemort’s remaining links to life, so that when at

last he flung himself across Voldemort’s path, and did

not raise a wand to defend himself, the end would be

clean, and the job that ought to have been done in

Godric’s Hollow would be finished: Neither would live,

neither could survive.

He felt his heart pounding fiercely in his chest. How

strange that in his dread of death, it pumped all the

harder, valiantly keeping him alive. But it would have

to stop, and soon. Its beats were numbered. How

many would there be time for, as he rose and walked

through the castle for the last time, out into the

grounds and into the forest?

Page | 783 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Terror washed over him as he lay on the floor, with

that funeral drum pounding inside him. Would it hurt

to die? All those times he had thought that it was

about to happen and escaped, he had never really

thought of the thing itself: His will to live had always

been so much stronger than his fear of death. Yet it

did not occur to him now to try to escape, to outrun

Voldemort. It was over, he knew it, and all that was

left was the thing itself: dying.

If he could only have died on that summer’s night

when he had left number four, Privet Drive, for the

last time, when the noble phoenix-feather wand had

saved him! If he could only have died like Hedwig, so

quickly he would not have known it had happened!

Or if he could have launched himself in front of a

wand to save someone he loved. ... He envied even his

parents’ deaths now. This cold-blooded walk to his

own destruction would require a different kind of

bravery. He felt his fingers trembling slightly and

made an effort to control them, although no one could

see him; the portraits on the walls were all empty.

Slowly, very slowly, he sat up, and as he did so he felt

more alive and more aware of his own living body

than ever before. Why had he never appreciated what

a miracle he was, brain and nerve and bounding

heart? It would all be gone ... or at least, he would be

gone from it. His breath came slow and deep, and his

mouth and throat were completely dry, but so were

his eyes.

Dumbledore’s betrayal was almost nothing. Of course

there had been a bigger plan; Harry had simply been

too foolish to see it, he realized that now. He had

never questioned his own assumption that

Dumbledore wanted him alive. Now he saw that his

life span had always been determined by how long it

took to eliminate all the Horcruxes. Dumbledore had

Page | 784 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

passed the job of destroying them to him, and

obediently he had continued to chip away at the

bonds tying not only Voldemort, but himself, to life!

How neat, how elegant, not to waste any more lives,

but to give the dangerous task to the boy who had

already been marked for slaughter, and whose death

would not be a calamity, but another blow against

Voldemort.

And Dumbledore had known that Harry would not

duck out, that he would keep going to the end, even

though it was his end, because he had taken trouble

to get to know him, hadn’t he? Dumbledore knew, as

Voldemort knew, that Harry would not let anyone else

die for him now that he had discovered it was in his

power to stop it. The images of Fred, Lupin, and

Tonks lying dead in the Great Hall forced their way

back into his mind’s eye, and for a moment he could

hardly breathe: Death was impatient. ...

But Dumbledore had overestimated him. He had

failed: The snake survived. One Horcrux remained to

bind Voldemort to the earth, even after Harry had

been killed. True, that would mean an easier job for

somebody. He wondered who would do it. ... Ron and

Hermione would know what needed to be done, of

course. ... That would have been why Dumbledore

wanted him to confide in two others ... so that if he

fulfilled his true destiny a little early, they could carry

on. ...

Like rain on a cold window, these thoughts pattered

against the hard surface of the incontrovertible truth,

which was that he must die. I must die. It must end.

Ron and Hermione seemed a long way away, in a far-

off country; he felt as though he had parted from

them long ago. There would be no good-byes and no

explanations, he was determined of that. This was a

Page | 785 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

journey they could not take together, and the

attempts they would make to stop him would waste

valuable time. He looked down at the battered gold

watch he had received on his seventeenth birthday.

Nearly half of the hour allotted by Voldemort for his

surrender had elapsed.

He stood up. His heart was leaping against his ribs

like a frantic bird. Perhaps it knew it had little time

left, perhaps it was determined to fulfill a lifetime’s

beats before the end. He did not look back as he

closed the office door.

The castle was empty. He felt ghostly striding through

it alone, as if he had already died. The portrait people

were still missing from their frames; the whole place

was eerily still, as if all its remaining lifeblood were

concentrated in the Great Hall where the dead and

the mourners were crammed.

Harry pulled the Invisibility Cloak over himself and

descended through the floors, at last walking down

the marble staircase into the entrance hall. Perhaps

some tiny part of him hoped to be sensed, to be seen,

to be stopped, but the Cloak was, as ever,

impenetrable, perfect, and he reached the front doors

easily.

Then Neville nearly walked into him. He was one half

of a pair that was carrying a body in from the

grounds. Harry glanced down and felt another dull

blow to his stomach: Colin Creevey, though underage,

must have sneaked back just as Malfoy, Crabbe, and

Goyle had done. He was tiny in death.

“You know what? I can manage him alone, Neville,”

said Oliver Wood, and he heaved Colin over his

shoulder in a fireman’s lift and carried him into the

Great Hall.

Page | 786 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Neville leaned against the door frame for a moment

and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand. He

looked like an old man. Then he set off down the

steps again into the darkness to recover more bodies.

Harry took one glance back at the entrance of the

Great Hall. People were moving around, trying to

comfort each other, drinking, kneeling beside the

dead, but he could not see any of the people he loved,

no hint of Hermione, Ron, Ginny, or any of the other

Weasleys, no Luna. He felt he would have given all the

time remaining to him for just one last look at them;

but then, would he ever have the strength to stop

looking? It was better like this.

He moved down the steps and out into the darkness.

It was nearly four in the morning, and the deathly

stillness of the grounds felt as though they were

holding their breath, waiting to see whether he could

do what he must.

Harry moved toward Neville, who was bending over

another body.

“Neville.”

“Blimey, Harry, you nearly gave me heart failure!”

Harry had pulled off the Cloak: The idea had come to

him out of nowhere, born out of a desire to make

absolutely sure.

“Where are you going, alone?” Neville asked

suspiciously.

“It’s all part of the plan,” said Harry. “There’s

something I’ve got to do. Listen — Neville — ”

Page | 787 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Harry!” Neville looked suddenly scared. “Harry,

you’re not thinking of handing yourself over?”

“No,” Harry lied easily. “ ’Course not ... this is

something else. But I might be out of sight for a while.

You know Voldemort’s snake, Neville? He’s got a huge

snake. ... Calls it Nagini ...”

“I’ve heard, yeah. ... What about it?”

“It’s got to be killed. Ron and Hermione know that,

but just in case they — ”

The awfulness of that possibility smothered him for a

moment, made it impossible to keep talking. But he

pulled himself together again: This was crucial, he

must be like Dumbledore, keep a cool head, make

sure there were backups, others to carry on.

Dumbledore had died knowing that three people still

knew about the Horcruxes; now Neville would take

Harry’s place: There would still be three in the secret.

“Just in case they’re — busy — and you get the

chance — ”

“Kill the snake?”

“Kill the snake,” Harry repeated.

“All right, Harry. You’re okay, are you?”

“I’m fine. Thanks, Neville.”

But Neville seized his wrist as Harry made to move

on.

“We’re all going to keep fighting, Harry. You know

that?”

Page | 788 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Yeah, I — ”

The suffocating feeling extinguished the end of the

sentence; he could not go on. Neville did not seem to

find it strange. He patted Harry on the shoulder,

released him, and walked away to look for more

bodies.

Harry swung the Cloak back over himself and walked

on. Someone else was moving not far away, stooping

over another prone figure on the ground. He was feet

away from her when he realized it was Ginny.

He stopped in his tracks. She was crouching over a

girl who was whispering for her mother.

“It’s all right,” Ginny was saying. “It’s okay. We’re

going to get you inside.”

“But I want to go home,” whispered the girl. “I don’t

want to fight anymore!”

“I know,” said Ginny, and her voice broke. “It’s going

to be all right.”

Ripples of cold undulated over Harry’s skin. He

wanted to shout out to the night, he wanted Ginny to

know that he was there, he wanted her to know where

he was going. He wanted to be stopped, to be dragged

back, to be sent back home. ...

But he was home. Hogwarts was the first and best

home he had known. He and Voldemort and Snape,

the abandoned boys, had all found home here. ...

Ginny was kneeling beside the injured girl now,

holding her hand. With a huge effort Harry forced

himself on. He thought he saw Ginny look around as

he passed, and wondered whether she had sensed

Page | 789 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

someone walking nearby, but he did not speak, and

he did not look back.

Hagrid’s hut loomed out of the darkness. There were

no lights, no sound of Fang scrabbling at the door,

his bark booming in welcome. All those visits to

Hagrid, and the gleam of the copper kettle on the fire,

and rock cakes and giant grubs, and his great

bearded face, and Ron vomiting slugs, and Hermione

helping him save Norbert ...

He moved on, and now he reached the edge of the

forest, and he stopped.

A swarm of dementors was gliding amongst the trees;

he could feel their chill, and he was not sure he would

be able to pass safely through it. He had no strength

left for a Patronus. He could no longer control his own

trembling. It was not, after all, so easy to die. Every

second he breathed, the smell of the grass, the cool

air on his face, was so precious: To think that people

had years and years, time to waste, so much time it

dragged, and he was clinging to each second. At the

same time he thought that he would not be able to go

on, and knew that he must. The long game was

ended, the Snitch had been caught, it was time to

leave the air. ...

The Snitch. His nerveless fingers fumbled for a

moment with the pouch at his neck and he pulled it

out.

I open at the close.

Breathing fast and hard, he stared down at it. Now

that he wanted time to move as slowly as possible, it

seemed to have sped up, and understanding was

coming so fast it seemed to have bypassed thought.

This was the close. This was the moment.

Page | 790 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He pressed the golden metal to his lips and

whispered, “I am about to die.”

The metal shell broke open. He lowered his shaking

hand, raised Draco’s wand beneath the Cloak, and

murmured, “Lumos.”

The black stone with its jagged crack running down

the center sat in the two halves of the Snitch. The

Resurrection Stone had cracked down the vertical line

representing the Elder Wand. The triangle and circle

representing the Cloak and the stone were still

discernible.

And again Harry understood without having to think.

It did not matter about bringing them back, for he

was about to join them. He was not really fetching

them: They were fetching him.

He closed his eyes and turned the stone over in his

hand three times.

He knew it had happened, because he heard slight

movements around him that suggested frail bodies

shifting their footing on the earthy, twig- strewn

ground that marked the outer edge of the forest. He

opened his eyes and looked around.

They were neither ghost nor truly flesh, he could see

that. They resembled most closely the Riddle that had

escaped from the diary so long ago, and he had been

memory made nearly solid. Less substantial than

living bodies, but much more than ghosts, they

moved toward him, and on each face, there was the

same loving smile.

James was exactly the same height as Harry. He was

wearing the clothes in which he had died, and his

Page | 791 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

hair was untidy and ruffled, and his glasses were a

little lopsided, like Mr. Weasley’s.

Sirius was tall and handsome, and younger by far

than Harry had seen him in life. He loped with an

easy grace, his hands in his pockets and a grin on his

face.

Lupin was younger too, and much less shabby, and

his hair was thicker and darker. He looked happy to

be back in this familiar place, scene of so many

adolescent wanderings.

Lily’s smile was widest of all. She pushed her long

hair back as she drew close to him, and her green

eyes, so like his, searched his face hungrily, as

though she would never be able to look at him

enough.

“You’ve been so brave.”

He could not speak. His eyes feasted on her, and he

thought that he would like to stand and look at her

forever, and that would be enough.

“You are nearly there,” said James. “Very close. We

are ... so proud of you.”

“Does it hurt?”

The childish question had fallen from Harry’s lips

before he could stop it.

“Dying? Not at all,” said Sirius. “Quicker and easier

than falling asleep.”

“And he will want it to be quick. He wants it over,”

said Lupin.

Page | 792 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I didn’t want you to die,” Harry said. These words

came without his volition. “Any of you. I’m sorry — ”

He addressed Lupin more than any of them,

beseeching him.

“ — right after you’d had your son ... Remus, I’m sorry

“I am sorry too,” said Lupin. “Sorry I will never know

him . . . but he will know why I died and I hope he will

understand. I was trying to make a world in which he

could live a happier life.”

A chilly breeze that seemed to emanate from the heart

of the forest lifted the hair at Harry’s brow. He knew

that they would not tell him to go, that it would have

to be his decision.

“You’ll stay with me?”

“Until the very end,” said James.

“They won’t be able to see you?” asked Harry.

“We are part of you,” said Sirius. “Invisible to anyone

else.”

Harry looked at his mother.

“Stay close to me,” he said quietly.

And he set off. The dementors’ chill did not overcome

him; he passed through it with his companions, and

they acted like Patronuses to him, and together they

marched through the old trees that grew closely

together, their branches tangled, their roots gnarled

and twisted underfoot. Harry clutched the Cloak

tightly around him in the darkness, traveling deeper

Page | 793 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

and deeper into the forest, with no idea where exactly

Voldemort was, but sure that he would find him.

Beside him, making scarcely a sound, walked James,

Sirius, Lupin, and Lily, and their presence was his

courage, and the reason he was able to keep putting

one foot in front of the other.

His body and mind felt oddly disconnected now, his

limbs working without conscious instruction, as if he

were passenger, not driver, in the body he was about

to leave. The dead who walked beside him through

the forest were much more real to him now than the

living back at the castle: Ron, Hermione, Ginny, and

all the others were the ones who felt like ghosts as he

stumbled and slipped toward the end of his life,

toward Voldemort. ...

A thud and a whisper: Some other living creature had

stirred close by. Harry stopped under the Cloak,

peering around, listening, and his mother and father,

Lupin and Sirius stopped too.

“Someone there,” came a rough whisper close at

hand. “He’s got an Invisibility Cloak. Could it be — ?”

Two figures emerged from behind a nearby tree: Their

wands flared, and Harry saw Yaxley and Dolohov

peering into the darkness, directly at the place Harry,

his mother and father and Sirius and Lupin stood.

Apparently they could not see anything.

“Definitely heard something,” said Yaxley. “Animal,

d’you reckon?”

“That head case Hagrid kept a whole bunch of stuff in

here,” said Dolohov, glancing over his shoulder.

Yaxley looked down at his watch.

Page | 794 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Time’s nearly up. Potter’s had his hour. He’s not

coming.”

“And he was sure he’d come! He won’t be happy.”

“Better go back,” said Yaxley. “Find out what the plan

is now.”

He and Dolohov turned and walked deeper into the

forest. Harry followed them, knowing that they would

lead him exactly where he wanted to go. He glanced

sideways, and his mother smiled at him, and his

father nodded encouragement.

They had traveled on mere minutes when Harry saw

light ahead, and Yaxley and Dolohov stepped out into

a clearing that Harry knew had been the place where

the monstrous Aragog had once lived. The remnants

of his vast web were there still, but the swarm of

descendants he had spawned had been driven out by

the Death Eaters, to fight for their cause.

A fire burned in the middle of the clearing, and its

flickering light fell over a crowd of completely silent,

watchful Death Eaters. Some of them were still

masked and hooded; others showed their faces. Two

giants sat on the outskirts of the group, casting

massive shadows over the scene, their faces cruel,

rough-hewn like rock. Harry saw Fenrir, skulking,

chewing his long nails; the great blond Rowle was

dabbing at his bleeding lip. He saw Lucius Malfoy,

who looked defeated and terrified, and Narcissa,

whose eyes were sunken and full of apprehension.

Every eye was fixed upon Voldemort, who stood with

his head bowed, and his white hands folded over the

Elder Wand in front of him. He might have been

praying, or else counting silently in his mind, and

Harry, standing still on the edge of the scene, thought

Page | 795 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

absurdly of a child counting in a game of hide-and-

seek. Behind his head, still swirling and coiling, the

great snake Nagini floated in her glittering, charmed

cage, like a monstrous halo.

When Dolohov and Yaxley rejoined the circle,

Voldemort looked up.

“No sign of him, my Lord,” said Dolohov.

Voldemort ’s expression did not change. The red eyes

seemed to burn in the firelight. Slowly he drew the

Elder Wand between his long fingers.

“My Lord — ”

Bellatrix had spoken: She sat closest to Voldemort,

disheveled, her face a little bloody but otherwise

unharmed.

Voldemort raised his hand to silence her, and she did

not speak another word, but eyed him in worshipful

fascination.

“I thought he would come,” said Voldemort in his

high, clear voice, his eyes on the leaping flames. “I

expected him to come.”

Nobody spoke. They seemed as scared as Harry,

whose heart was now throwing itself against his ribs

as though determined to escape the body he was

about to cast aside. His hands were sweating as he

pulled off the Invisibility Cloak and stuffed it beneath

his robes, with his wand. He did not want to be

tempted to fight.

“I was, it seems ... mistaken,” said Voldemort.

“You weren’t.”

Page | 796 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry said it as loudly as he could, with all the force

he could muster: He did not want to sound afraid.

The Resurrection Stone slipped from between his

numb fingers, and out of the corner of his eyes he

saw his parents, Sirius, and Lupin vanish as he

stepped forward into the firelight. At that moment he

felt that nobody mattered but Voldemort. It was just

the two of them.

The illusion was gone as soon as it had come. The

giants roared as the Death Eaters rose together, and

there were many cries, gasps, even laughter.

Voldemort had frozen where he stood, but his red

eyes had found Harry, and he stared as Harry moved

toward him, with nothing but the fire between them.

Then a voice yelled: “HARRY! NO!”

He turned: Hagrid was bound and trussed, tied to a

tree nearby. His massive body shook the branches

overhead as he struggled, desperate.

“NO! NO! HARRY, WHAT’RE YEH — ?”

“QUIET!” shouted Rowle, and with a flick of his wand

Hagrid was silenced.

Bellatrix, who had leapt to her feet, was looking

eagerly from Voldemort to Harry, her breast heaving.

The only things that moved were the flames and the

snake, coiling and uncoiling in the glittering cage

behind Voldemort’s head.

Harry could feel his wand against his chest, but he

made no attempt to draw it. He knew that the snake

was too well protected, knew that if he managed to

point the wand at Nagini, fifty curses would hit him

first. And still, Voldemort and Harry looked at each

other, and now Voldemort tilted his head a little to

Page | 797 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the side, considering the boy standing before him,

and a singularly mirthless smile curled the lipless

mouth.

“Harry Potter,” he said very softly. His voice might

have been part of the spitting fire. “The Boy Who

Lived.”

None of the Death Eaters moved. They were waiting:

Everything was waiting. Hagrid was struggling, and

Bellatrix was panting, and Harry thought inexplicably

of Ginny, and her blazing look, and the feel of her lips

on his —

Voldemort had raised his wand. His head was still

tilted to one side, like a curious child, wondering what

would happen if he proceeded. Harry looked back into

the red eyes, and wanted it to happen now, quickly,

while he could still stand, before he lost control,

before he betrayed fear —

He saw the mouth move and a flash of green light,

and everything was gone.

Page | 798 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

KING’S CROSS

He lay facedown, listening to the silence. He was

perfectly alone. Nobody was watching. Nobody else

was there. He was not perfectly sure that he was

there himself.

A long time later, or maybe no time at all, it came to

him that he must exist, must be more than

disembodied thought, because he was lying, definitely

lying, on some surface. Therefore he had a sense of

touch, and the thing against which he lay existed too.

Almost as soon as he had reached this conclusion,

Harry became conscious that he was naked.

Convinced as he was of his total solitude, this did not

concern him, but it did intrigue him slightly. He

wondered whether, as he could feel, he would be able

to see. In opening them, he discovered that he had

eyes.

He lay in a bright mist, though it was not like mist he

had ever experienced before. His surroundings were

not hidden by cloudy vapor; rather the cloudy vapor

Page | 799 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

had not yet formed into surroundings. The floor on

which he lay seemed to be white, neither warm nor

cold, but simply there, a flat, blank something on

which to be.

He sat up. His body appeared unscathed. He touched

his face. He was not wearing glasses anymore.

Then a noise reached him through the unformed

nothingness that surrounded him: the small soft

thumpings of something that flapped, flailed, and

struggled. It was a pitiful noise, yet also slightly

indecent. He had the uncomfortable feeling that he

was eavesdropping on something furtive, shameful.

For the first time, he wished he were clothed.

Barely had the wish formed in his head than robes

appeared a short distance away. He took them and

pulled them on: They were soft, clean, and warm. It

was extraordinary how they had appeared, just like

that, the moment he had wanted them. ...

He stood up, looking around. Was he in some great

Room of Requirement? The longer he looked, the more

there was to see. A great domed glass roof glittered

high above him in sunlight. Perhaps it was a palace.

All was hushed and still, except for those odd

thumping and whimpering noises coming from

somewhere close by in the mist. ...

Harry turned slowly on the spot, and his

surroundings seemed to invent themselves before his

eyes. A wide-open space, bright and clean, a hall

larger by far than the Great Hall, with that clear,

domed glass ceiling. It was quite empty. He was the

only person there, except for —

Page | 800 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He recoiled. He had spotted the thing that was

making the noises. It had the form of a small, naked

child, curled on the ground, its skin raw and rough,

flayed-looking, and it lay shuddering under a seat

where it had been left, unwanted, stuffed out of sight,

struggling for breath.

He was afraid of it. Small and fragile and wounded

though it was, he did not want to approach it.

Nevertheless he drew slowly nearer, ready to jump

back at any moment. Soon he stood near enough to

touch it, yet he could not bring himself to do it. He

felt like a coward. He ought to comfort it, but it

repulsed him.

“You cannot help.”

He spun around. Albus Dumbledore was walking

toward him, sprightly and upright, wearing sweeping

robes of midnight blue.

“Harry.” He spread his arms wide, and his hands were

both whole and white and undamaged. “You

wonderful boy. You brave, brave man. Let us walk.”

Stunned, Harry followed as Dumbledore strode away

from where the flayed child lay whimpering, leading

him to two seats that Harry had not previously

noticed, set some distance away under that high,

sparkling ceiling. Dumbledore sat down in one of

them, and Harry fell into the other, staring at his old

headmaster’s face. Dumbledore ’s long silver hair and

beard, the piercingly blue eyes behind half-moon

spectacles, the crooked nose: Everything was as he

had remembered it. And yet...

“But you’re dead,” said Harry.

“Oh yes,” said Dumbledore matter-of-factly.

Page | 801 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Then ... I’m dead too?”

“Ah,” said Dumbledore, smiling still more broadly.

“That is the question, isn’t it? On the whole, dear boy,

I think not.”

They looked at each other, the old man still beaming.

“Not?” repeated Harry.

“Not,” said Dumbledore.

“But ...” Harry raised his hand instinctively toward

the lightning scar. It did not seem to be there. “But I

should have died — I didn’t defend myself! I meant to

let him kill me!”

“And that,” said Dumbledore, “will, I think, have

made all the difference.”

Happiness seemed to radiate from Dumbledore like

light, like fire: Harry had never seen the man so

utterly, so palpably content.

“Explain,” said Harry.

“But you already know,” said Dumbledore. He

twiddled his thumbs together.

“I let him kill me,” said Harry. “Didn’t I?”

“You did,” said Dumbledore, nodding. “Go on!”

“So the part of his soul that was in me ...”

Dumbledore nodded still more enthusiastically,

urging Harry onward, a broad smile of encouragement

on his face.

Page | 802 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

"... has it gone?”

“Oh yes!” said Dumbledore. “Yes, he destroyed it.

Your soul is whole, and completely your own, Harry.”

“But then ...”

Harry glanced over his shoulder to where the small,

maimed creature trembled under the chair.

“What is that, Professor?”

“Something that is beyond either of our help,” said

Dumbledore.

“But if Voldemort used the Killing Curse,” Harry

started again, “and nobody died for me this time —

how can I be alive?”

“I think you know,” said Dumbledore. “Think back.

Remember what he did, in his ignorance, in his greed

and his cruelty.”

Harry thought. He let his gaze drift over his

surroundings. If it was indeed a palace in which they

sat, it was an odd one, with chairs set in little rows

and bits of railing here and there, and still, he and

Dumbledore and the stunted creature under the chair

were the only beings there. Then the answer rose to

his lips easily, without effort.

“He took my blood,” said Harry.

“Precisely!” said Dumbledore. “He took your blood and

rebuilt his living body with it! Your blood in his veins,

Harry, Lily’s protection inside both of you! He tethered

you to life while he lives!”

Page | 803 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I live . . . while he lives? But I thought ... I thought it

was the other way round! I thought we both had to

die? Or is it the same thing?”

He was distracted by the whimpering and thumping

of the agonized creature behind them and glanced

back at it yet again.

“Are you sure we can’t do anything?”

“There is no help possible.”

“Then explain ... more,” said Harry, and Dumbledore

smiled.

“You were the seventh Horcrux, Harry, the Horcrux

he never meant to make. He had rendered his soul so

unstable that it broke apart when he committed those

acts of unspeakable evil, the murder of your parents,

the attempted killing of a child. But what escaped

from that room was even less than he knew. He left

more than his body behind. He left part of himself

latched to you, the would-be victim who had survived.

“And his knowledge remained woefully incomplete,

Harry! That which Voldemort does not value, he takes

no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and

children’s tales, of love, loyalty, and innocence,

Voldemort knows and understands nothing. Nothing.

That they all have a power beyond his own, a power

beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has

never grasped.

“He took your blood believing it would strengthen

him. He took into his body a tiny part of the

enchantment your mother laid upon you when she

died for you. His body keeps her sacrifice alive, and

while that enchantment survives, so do you and so

does Voldemort’s one last hope for himself.”

Page | 804 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Dumbledore smiled at Harry, and Harry stared at

him.

“And you knew this? You knew — all along?”

“I guessed. But my guesses have usually been good,”

said Dumbledore happily, and they sat in silence for

what seemed like a long time, while the creature

behind them continued to whimper and tremble.

“There’s more,” said Harry. “There’s more to it. Why

did my wand break the wand he borrowed?”

“As to that, I cannot be sure.”

“Have a guess, then,” said Harry, and Dumbledore

laughed.

“What you must understand, Harry, is that you and

Lord Voldemort have journeyed together into realms

of magic hitherto unknown and untested. But here is

what I think happened, and it is unprecedented, and

no wandmaker could, I think, ever have predicted it

or explained it to Voldemort.

“Without meaning to, as you now know, Lord

Voldemort doubled the bond between you when he

returned to a human form. A part of his soul was still

attached to yours, and, thinking to strengthen

himself, he took a part of your mother’s sacrifice into

himself. If he could only have understood the precise

and terrible power of that sacrifice, he would not,

perhaps, have dared to touch your blood. ... But then,

if he had been able to understand, he could not be

Lord Voldemort, and might never have murdered at

all.

“Having ensured this two-fold connection, having

wrapped your destinies together more securely than

Page | 805 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

ever two wizards were joined in history, Voldemort

proceeded to attack you with a wand that shared a

core with yours. And now something very strange

happened, as we know. The cores reacted in a way

that Lord Voldemort, who never knew that your wand

was twin of his, had never expected.

“He was more afraid than you were that night, Harry.

You had accepted, even embraced, the possibility of

death, something Lord Voldemort has never been able

to do. Your courage won, your wand overpowered his.

And in doing so, something happened between those

wands, something that echoed the relationship

between their masters.

“I believe that your wand imbibed some of the power

and qualities of Voldemort’s wand that night, which is

to say that it contained a little of Voldemort himself.

So your wand recognized him when he pursued you,

recognized a man who was both kin and mortal

enemy, and it regurgitated some of his own magic

against him, magic much more powerful than

anything Lucius’s wand had ever performed. Your

wand now contained the power of your enormous

courage and of Voldemort’s own deadly skill: What

chance did that poor stick of Lucius Malfoy’s stand?”

“But if my wand was so powerful, how come

Hermione was able to break it?” asked Harry.

“My dear boy, its remarkable effects were directed

only at Voldemort, who had tampered so ill-advisedly

with the deepest laws of magic. Only toward him was

that wand abnormally powerful. Otherwise it was a

wand like any other ... though a good one, I am sure,”

Dumbledore finished kindly.

Page | 806 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry sat in thought for a long time, or perhaps

seconds. It was very hard to be sure of things like

time, here.

“He killed me with your wand.”

“He failed to kill you with my wand,” Dumbledore

corrected Harry. “I think we can agree that you are

not dead — though, of course,” he added, as if fearing

he had been discourteous, “I do not minimize your

sufferings, which I am sure were severe.”

“I feel great at the moment, though,” said Harry,

looking down at his clean, unblemished hands.

“Where are we, exactly?”

“Well, I was going to ask you that,” said Dumbledore,

looking around. “Where would you say that we are?”

Until Dumbledore had asked, Harry had not known.

Now, however, he found that he had an answer ready

to give.

“It looks,” he said slowly, “like King’s Cross station.

Except a lot cleaner and empty, and there are no

trains as far as I can see.”

“King’s Cross station!” Dumbledore was chuckling

immoderately. “Good gracious, really?”

“Well, where do you think we are?” asked Harry, a

little defensively.

“My dear boy, I have no idea. This is, as they say,

your party.”

Harry had no idea what this meant; Dumbledore was

being infuriating. He glared at him, then remembered

Page | 807 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

a much more pressing question than that of their

current location.

“The Deathly Hallows,” he said, and he was glad to

see that the words wiped the smile from

Dumbledore’s face.

“Ah, yes,” he said. He even looked a little worried.

“Well?”

For the first time since Harry had met Dumbledore,

he looked less than an old man, much less. He looked

fleetingly like a small boy caught in wrongdoing.

“Can you forgive me?” he said. “Can you forgive me

for not trusting you? For not telling you? Harry, I only

feared that you would fail as I had failed. I only

dreaded that you would make my mistakes. I crave

your pardon, Harry. I have known, for some time now,

that you are the better man.”

“What are you talking about?” asked Harry, startled

by Dumbledore’s tone, by the sudden tears in his

eyes.

“The Hallows, the Hallows,” murmured Dumbledore.

“A desperate man’s dream!”

“But they’re real!”

“Real, and dangerous, and a lure for fools,” said

Dumbledore. “And I was such a fool. But you know,

don’t you? I have no secrets from you anymore. You

know.”

“What do I know?”

Page | 808 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Dumbledore turned his whole body to face Harry, and

tears still sparkled in the brilliantly blue eyes.

“Master of death, Harry, master of Death! Was I

better, ultimately, than Voldemort?”

“Of course you were,” said Harry. “Of course — how

can you ask that? You never killed if you could avoid

it!”

“True, true,” said Dumbledore, and he was like a

child seeking reassurance. “Yet I too sought a way to

conquer death, Harry.”

“Not the way he did,” said Harry. After all his anger at

Dumbledore, how odd it was to sit here, beneath the

high, vaulted ceiling, and defend Dumbledore from

himself. “Hallows, not Horcruxes.”

“Hallows,” murmured Dumbledore, “not Horcruxes.

Precisely.”

There was a pause. The creature behind them

whimpered, but Harry no longer looked around.

“Grindelwald was looking for them too?” he asked.

Dumbledore closed his eyes for a moment and

nodded.

“It was the thing, above all, that drew us together,” he

said quietly. “Two clever, arrogant boys with a shared

obsession. He wanted to come to Godric’s Hollow, as I

am sure you have guessed, because of the grave of

Ignotus Peverell. He wanted to explore the place the

third brother had died.”

“So it’s true?” asked Harry. “All of it? The Peverell

brothers — ”

Page | 809 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“ — were the three brothers of the tale,” said

Dumbledore, nodding. “Oh yes, I think so. Whether

they met Death on a lonely road ... I think it more

likely that the Peverell brothers were simply gifted,

dangerous wizards who succeeded in creating those

powerful objects. The story of them being Death’s own

Hallows seems to me the sort of legend that might

have sprung up around such creations.

“The Cloak, as you know now, traveled down through

the ages, father to son, mother to daughter, right

down to Ignotus’s last living descendant, who was

born, as Ignotus was, in the village of Godric’s

Hollow.”

Dumbledore smiled at Harry.

“Me?”

“You. You have guessed, I know, why the Cloak was

in my possession on the night your parents died.

James had showed it to me just a few days

previously. It explained much of his undetected

wrong-doing at school! I could hardly believe what I

was seeing. I asked to borrow it, to examine it. I had

long since given up my dream of uniting the Hallows,

but I could not resist, could not help taking a closer

look. ... It was a Cloak the likes of which I had never

seen, immensely old, perfect in every respect . . . and

then your father died, and I had two Hallows at last,

all to myself!”

His tone was unbearably bitter.

“The Cloak wouldn’t have helped them survive,

though,” Harry said quickly. “Voldemort knew where

my mum and dad were. The Cloak couldn’t have

made them curse-proof.”

Page | 810 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“True,” sighed Dumbledore. “True.”

Harry waited, but Dumbledore did not speak, so he

prompted him.

“So you’d given up looking for the Hallows when you

saw the Cloak?”

“Oh yes,” said Dumbledore faintly. It seemed that he

forced himself to meet Harry’s eyes. “You know what

happened. You know. You cannot despise me more

than I despise myself.”

“But I don’t despise you — ”

“Then you should,” said Dumbledore. He drew a deep

breath. “You know the secret of my sister’s ill health,

what those Muggles did, what she became. You know

how my poor father sought revenge, and paid the

price, died in Azkaban. You know how my mother

gave up her own life to care for Ariana.

“I resented it, Harry.”

Dumbledore stated it baldly, coldly. He was looking

now over the top of Harry’s head, into the distance.

“I was gifted, I was brilliant. I wanted to escape. I

wanted to shine. I wanted glory.

“Do not misunderstand me,” he said, and pain

crossed the face so that he looked ancient again. “I

loved them. I loved my parents, I loved my brother

and my sister, but I was selfish, Harry, more selfish

than you, who are a remarkably selfless person, could

possibly imagine.

“So that, when my mother died, and I was left the

responsibility of a damaged sister and a wayward

Page | 811 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

brother, I returned to my village in anger and

bitterness. Trapped and wasted, I thought! And then,

of course, he came. ...”

Dumbledore looked directly into Harry’s eyes again.

“Grindelwald. You cannot imagine how his ideas

caught me, Harry, inflamed me. Muggles forced into

subservience. We wizards triumphant. Grindelwald

and I, the glorious young leaders of the revolution.

“Oh, I had a few scruples. I assuaged my conscience

with empty words. It would all be for the greater good,

and any harm done would be repaid a hundredfold in

benefits for wizards. Did I know, in my heart of

hearts, what Gellert Grindelwald was? I think I did,

but I closed my eyes. If the plans we were making

came to fruition, all my dreams would come true.

“And at the heart of our schemes, the Deathly

Hallows! How they fascinated him, how they

fascinated both of us! The unbeatable wand, the

weapon that would lead us to power! The

Resurrection Stone — to him, though I pretended not

to know it, it meant an army of Inferi! To me, I

confess, it meant the return of my parents, and the

lifting of all responsibility from my shoulders.

“And the Cloak ... somehow, we never discussed the

Cloak much, Harry. Both of us could conceal

ourselves well enough without the Cloak, the true

magic of which, of course, is that it can be used to

protect and shield others as well as its owner. I

thought that, if we ever found it, it might be useful in

hiding Ariana, but our interest in the Cloak was

mainly that it completed the trio, for the legend said

that the man who united all three objects would then

be truly master of death, which we took to mean

‘invincible.’

Page | 812 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Invincible masters of death, Grindelwald and

Dumbledore! Two months of insanity, of cruel

dreams, and neglect of the only two members of my

family left to me.

“And then ... you know what happened. Reality

returned in the form of my rough, unlettered, and

infinitely more admirable brother. I did not want to

hear the truths he shouted at me. I did not want to

hear that I could not set forth to seek Hallows with a

fragile and unstable sister in tow.

“The argument became a fight. Grindelwald lost

control. That which I had always sensed in him,

though I pretended not to, now sprang into terrible

being. And Ariana . . . after all my mother’s care and

caution ... lay dead upon the floor.”

Dumbledore gave a little gasp and began to cry in

earnest. Harry reached out and was glad to find that

he could touch him: He gripped his arm tightly and

Dumbledore gradually regained control.

“Well, Grindelwald fled, as anyone but I could have

predicted. He vanished, with his plans for seizing

power, and his schemes for Muggle torture, and his

dreams of the Deathly Hallows, dreams in which I

had encouraged him and helped him. He ran, while I

was left to bury my sister, and learn to live with my

guilt and my terrible grief, the price of my shame.

“Years passed. There were rumors about him. They

said he had procured a wand of immense power. I,

meanwhile, was offered the post of Minister of Magic,

not once, but several times. Naturally, I refused. I had

learned that I was not to be trusted with power.”

“But you’d have been better, much better, than Fudge

or Scrimgeour!” burst out Harry.

Page | 813 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Would I?” asked Dumbledore heavily. “I am not so

sure. I had proven, as a very young man, that power

was my weakness and my temptation. It is a curious

thing, Harry, but perhaps those who are best suited

to power are those who have never sought it. Those

who, like you, have leadership thrust upon them, and

take up the mantle because they must, and find to

their own surprise that they wear it well.

“I was safer at Hogwarts. I think I was a good teacher

“You were the best — ”

“ — you are very kind, Harry. But while I busied

myself with the training of young wizards,

Grindelwald was raising an army. They say he feared

me, and perhaps he did, but less, I think, than I

feared him.

“Oh, not death,” said Dumbledore, in answer to

Harry’s questioning look. “Not what he could do to me

magically. I knew that we were evenly matched,

perhaps that I was a shade more skillful. It was the

truth I feared. You see, I never knew which of us, in

that last, horrific fight, had actually cast the curse

that killed my sister. You may call me cowardly: You

would be right. Harry, I dreaded beyond all things the

knowledge that it had been I who brought about her

death, not merely through my arrogance and

stupidity, but that I actually struck the blow that

snuffed out her life.

“I think he knew it, I think he knew what frightened

me. I delayed meeting him until finally, it would have

been too shameful to resist any longer. People were

dying and he seemed unstoppable, and I had to do

what I could.

Page | 814 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Well, you know what happened next. I won the duel.

I won the wand.”

Another silence. Harry did not ask whether

Dumbledore had ever found out who struck Ariana

dead. He did not want to know, and even less did he

want Dumbledore to have to tell him. At last he knew

what Dumbledore would have seen when he looked in

the Mirror of Erised, and why Dumbledore had been

so understanding of the fascination it had exercised

over Harry.

They sat in silence for a long time, and the

whimperings of the creature behind them barely

disturbed Harry anymore.

At last he said, “Grindelwald tried to stop Voldemort

going after the wand. He lied, you know, pretended he

had never had it.”

Dumbledore nodded, looking down at his lap, tears

still glittering on the crooked nose.

“They say he showed remorse in later years, alone in

his cell at Nurmengard. I hope that it is true. I would

like to think he did feel the horror and shame of what

he had done. Perhaps that lie to Voldemort was his

attempt to make amends ... to prevent Voldemort

from taking the Hallow ...”

"... or maybe from breaking into your tomb?”

suggested Harry, and Dumbledore dabbed his eyes.

After another short pause Harry said, “You tried to

use the Resurrection Stone.”

Dumbledore nodded.

Page | 815 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“When I discovered it, after all those years, buried in

the abandoned home of the Gaunts — the Hallow I

had craved most of all, though in my youth I had

wanted it for very different reasons — I lost my head,

Harry. I quite forgot that it was now a Horcrux, that

the ring was sure to carry a curse. I picked it up, and

I put it on, and for a second I imagined that I was

about to see Ariana, and my mother, and my father,

and to tell them how very, very sorry I was. ...

“I was such a fool, Harry. After all those years I had

learned nothing. I was unworthy to unite the Deathly

Hallows, I had proved it time and again, and here was

final proof.”

“Why?” said Harry. “It was natural! You wanted to see

them again. What’s wrong with that?”

“Maybe a man in a million could unite the Hallows,

Harry. I was fit only to possess the meanest of them,

the least extraordinary. I was fit to own the Elder

Wand, and not to boast of it, and not to kill with it. I

was permitted to tame and to use it, because I took it,

not for gain, but to save others from it.

“But the Cloak, I took out of vain curiosity, and so it

could never have worked for me as it works for you,

its true owner. The stone I would have used in an

attempt to drag back those who are at peace, rather

than to enable my self-sacrifice, as you did. You are

the worthy possessor of the Hallows.”

Dumbledore patted Harry’s hand, and Harry looked

up at the old man and smiled; he could not help

himself. How could he remain angry with Dumbledore

now?

“Why did you have to make it so difficult?”

Page | 816 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Dumbledore’s smile was tremulous.

“I am afraid I counted on Miss Granger to slow you

up, Harry. I was afraid that your hot head might

dominate your good heart. I was scared that, if

presented outright with the facts about those

tempting objects, you might seize the Hallows as I

did, at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons. If you

laid hands on them, I wanted you to possess them

safely. You are the true master of death, because the

true master does not seek to run away from Death.

He accepts that he must die, and understands that

there are far, far worse things in the living world than

dying.”

“And Voldemort never knew about the Hallows?”

“I do not think so, because he did not recognize the

Resurrection Stone he turned into a Horcrux. But

even if he had known about them, Harry, I doubt that

he would have been interested in any except the first.

He would not think that he needed the Cloak, and as

for the stone, whom would he want to bring back

from the dead? He fears the dead. He does not love.”

“But you expected him to go after the wand?”

“I have been sure that he would try, ever since your

wand beat Voldemort’s in the graveyard of Little

Hangleton. At first, he was afraid that you had

conquered him by superior skill. Once he had

kidnapped Ollivander, however, he discovered the

existence of the twin cores. He thought that explained

everything. Yet the borrowed wand did no better

against yours! So Voldemort, instead of asking

himself what quality it was in you that had made your

wand so strong, what gift you possessed that he did

not, naturally set out to find the one wand that, they

said, would beat any other. For him, the Elder Wand

Page | 817 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

has become an obsession to rival his obsession with

you. He believes that the Elder Wand removes his last

weakness and makes him truly invincible. Poor

Severus ...”

“If you planned your death with Snape, you meant

him to end up with the Elder Wand, didn’t you?”

“I admit that was my intention,” said Dumbledore,

“but it did not work as I intended, did it?”

“No,” said Harry. “That bit didn’t work out.”

The creature behind them jerked and moaned, and

Harry and Dumbledore sat without talking for the

longest time yet. The realization of what would

happen next settled gradually over Harry in the long

minutes, like softly falling snow.

“I’ve got to go back, haven’t I?”

“That is up to you.”

“I’ve got a choice?”

“Oh yes.” Dumbledore smiled at him. “We are in

King’s Cross, you say? I think that if you decided not

to go back, you would be able to ... let’s say ... board

a train.”

“And where would it take me?”

“On,” said Dumbledore simply.

Silence again.

“Voldemort’s got the Elder Wand.”

“True. Voldemort has the Elder Wand.”

Page | 818 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But you want me to go back?”

“I think,” said Dumbledore, “that if you choose to

return, there is a chance that he may be finished for

good. I cannot promise it. But I know this, Harry, that

you have less to fear from returning here than he

does.”

Harry glanced again at the raw-looking thing that

trembled and choked in the shadow beneath the

distant chair.

“Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and,

above all, those who live without love. By returning,

you may ensure that fewer souls are maimed, fewer

families are torn apart. If that seems to you a worthy

goal, then we say good-bye for the present.”

Harry nodded and sighed. Leaving this place would

not be nearly as hard as walking into the forest had

been, but it was warm and light and peaceful here,

and he knew that he was heading back to pain and

the fear of more loss. He stood up, and Dumbledore

did the same, and they looked for a long moment into

each other’s faces.

“Tell me one last thing,” said Harry. “Is this real? Or

has this been happening inside my head?”

Dumbledore beamed at him, and his voice sounded

loud and strong in Harry’s ears even though the

bright mist was descending again, obscuring his

figure.

“Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry,

but why on earth should that mean that it is not

real?” \*

Page | 819 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

THE FLAW IN THE PLAN

He was lying facedown on the ground again. The

smell of the forest filled his nostrils. He could feel the

cold hard ground beneath his cheek, and the hinge of

his glasses, which had been knocked sideways by the

fall, cutting into his temple. Every inch of him ached,

and the place where the Killing Curse had hit him felt

like the bruise of an iron-clad punch. He did not stir,

but remained exactly where he had fallen, with his

left arm bent out at an awkward angle and his mouth

gaping.

He had expected to hear cheers of triumph and

jubilation at his death, but instead hurried footsteps,

whispers, and solicitous murmurs filled the air.

“My Lord ...my Lord ...”

It was Bellatrix’s voice, and she spoke as if to a lover.

Harry did not dare open his eyes, but allowed his

other senses to explore his predicament. He knew

that his wand was still stowed beneath his robes

because he could feel it pressed between his chest

Page | 820 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

and the ground. A slight cushioning effect in the area

of his stomach told him that the Invisibility Cloak was

also there, stuffed out of sight.

“My Lord ...”

“That will do,” said Voldemort’s voice.

More footsteps: Several people were backing away

from the same spot. Desperate to see what was

happening and why, Harry opened his eyes by a

millimeter.

Voldemort seemed to be getting to his feet. Various

Death Eaters were hurrying away from him, returning

to the crowd lining the clearing. Bellatrix alone

remained behind, kneeling beside Voldemort.

Harry closed his eyes again and considered what he

had seen. The Death Eaters had been huddled

around Voldemort, who seemed to have fallen to the

ground. Something had happened when he had hit

Harry with the Killing Curse. Had Voldemort too

collapsed? It seemed like it. And both of them had

fallen briefly unconscious and both of them had now

returned. ...

“My Lord, let me — ”

“I do not require assistance,” said Voldemort coldly,

and though he could not see it, Harry pictured

Bellatrix withdrawing a helpful hand. “The boy ... Is

he dead?”

There was complete silence in the clearing. Nobody

approached Harry, but he felt their concentrated gaze;

it seemed to press him harder into the ground, and he

was terrified a finger or an eyelid might twitch.

Page | 821 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You,” said Voldemort, and there was a bang and a

small shriek of pain. “Examine him. Tell me whether

he is dead.”

Harry did not know who had been sent to verify. He

could only lie there, with his heart thumping

traitorously, and wait to be examined, but at the

same time noting, small comfort though it was, that

Voldemort was wary of approaching him, that

Voldemort suspected that all had not gone to plan. ...

Hands, softer than he had been expecting, touched

Harry’s face, pulled back an eyelid, crept beneath his

shirt, down to his chest, and felt his heart. He could

hear the woman’s fast breathing, her long hair tickled

his face. He knew that she could feel the steady

pounding of life against his ribs.

“Is Draco alive? Is he in the castle?”

The whisper was barely audible; her lips were an inch

from his ear, her head bent so low that her long hair

shielded his face from the onlookers.

“Yes,” he breathed back.

He felt the hand on his chest contract; her nails

pierced him. Then it was withdrawn. She had sat up.

“He is dead!” Narcissa Malfoy called to the watchers.

And now they shouted, now they yelled in triumph

and stamped their feet, and through his eyelids,

Harry saw bursts of red and silver light shoot into the

air in celebration.

Still feigning death on the ground, he understood.

Narcissa knew that the only way she would be

permitted to enter Hogwarts, and find her son, was as

Page | 822 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

part of the conquering army. She no longer cared

whether Voldemort won.

“You see?” screeched Voldemort over the tumult.

“Harry Potter is dead by my hand, and no man alive

can threaten me now! Watch! CrucioV’

Harry had been expecting it, knew his body would not

be allowed to remain unsullied upon the forest floor;

it must be subjected to humiliation to prove

Voldemort’s victory. He was lifted into the air, and it

took all his determination to remain limp, yet the pain

he expected did not come. He was thrown once, twice,

three times into the air: His glasses flew off and he

felt his wand slide a little beneath his robes, but he

kept himself floppy and lifeless, and when he fell to

the ground for the last time, the clearing echoed with

jeers and shrieks of laughter.

“Now,” said Voldemort, “we go to the castle, and show

them what has become of their hero. Who shall drag

the body? No — Wait — ”

There was a fresh outbreak of laughter, and after a

few moments Harry felt the ground trembling beneath

him.

“You carry him,” Voldemort said. “He will be nice and

visible in your arms, will he not? Pick up your little

friend, Hagrid. And the glasses — put on the glasses

— he must be recognizable — ”

Someone slammed Harry’s glasses back onto his face

with deliberate force, but the enormous hands that

lifted him into the air were exceedingly gentle. Harry

could feel Hagrid ’s arms trembling with the force of

his heaving sobs; great tears splashed down upon

him as Hagrid cradled Harry in his arms, and Harry

Page | 823 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

did not dare, by movement or word, to intimate to

Hagrid that all was not, yet, lost.

“Move,” said Voldemort, and Hagrid stumbled

forward, forcing his way through the close-growing

trees, back through the forest. Branches caught at

Harry’s hair and robes, but he lay quiescent, his

mouth lolling open, his eyes shut, and in the

darkness, while the Death Eaters crowed all around

them, and while Hagrid sobbed blindly, nobody

looked to see whether a pulse beat in the exposed

neck of Harry Potter. . . .

The two giants crashed along behind the Death

Eaters; Harry could hear trees creaking and falling as

they passed; they made so much din that birds rose

shrieking into the sky, and even the jeers of the Death

Eaters were drowned. The victorious procession

marched on toward the open ground, and after a

while Harry could tell, by the lightening of the

darkness through his closed eyelids, that the trees

were beginning to thin.

“BANE!”

Hagrid’s unexpected bellow nearly forced Harry’s eyes

open. “Happy now, are yeh, that yeh didn’ fight, yeh

cowardly bunch o’ nags? Are yeh happy Harry Potter’s

— d-dead...?”

Hagrid could not continue, but broke down in fresh

tears. Harry wondered how many centaurs were

watching their procession pass; he dared not open his

eyes to look. Some of the Death Eaters called insults

at the centaurs as they left them behind. A little later,

Harry sensed, by a freshening of the air, that they

had reached the edge of the forest.

“Stop.”

Page | 824 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Harry thought that Hagrid must have been forced to

obey Voldemort’s command, because he lurched a

little. And now a chill settled over them where they

stood, and Harry heard the rasping breath of the

dementors that patrolled the outer trees. They would

not affect him now. The fact of his own survival

burned inside him, a talisman against them, as

though his father’s stag kept guardian in his heart.

Someone passed close by Harry, and he knew that it

was Voldemort himself because he spoke a moment

later, his voice magically magnified so that it swelled

through the grounds, crashing upon Harry’s

eardrums.

“Harry Potter is dead. He was killed as he ran away,

trying to save himself while you lay down your lives

for him. We bring you his body as proof that your

hero is gone.

“The battle is won. You have lost half of your fighters.

My Death Eaters outnumber you, and the Boy Who

Lived is finished. There must be no more war. Anyone

who continues to resist, man, woman, or child, will be

slaughtered, as will every member of their family.

Come out of the castle now, kneel before me, and you

shall be spared. Your parents and children, your

brothers and sisters will live and be forgiven, and you

will join me in the new world we shall build together.”

There was silence in the grounds and from the castle.

Voldemort was so close to him that Harry did not dare

open his eyes again.

“Come,” said Voldemort, and Harry heard him move

ahead, and Hagrid was forced to follow. Now Harry

opened his eyes a fraction, and saw Voldemort

striding in front of them, wearing the great snake

Nagini around his shoulders, now free of her

Page | 825 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

enchanted cage. But Harry had no possibility of

extracting the wand concealed under his robes

without being noticed by the Death Eaters, who

marched on either side of them through the slowly

lightening darkness. ...

“Harry,” sobbed Hagrid. “Oh, Harry ... Harry ...”

Harry shut his eyes tight again. He knew that they

were approaching the castle and strained his ears to

distinguish, above the gleeful voices of the Death

Eaters and their tramping footsteps, signs of life from

those within.

“Stop.”

The Death Eaters came to a halt: Harry heard them

spreading out in a line facing the open front doors of

the school. He could see, even through his closed lids,

the reddish glow that meant light streamed upon him

from the entrance hall. He waited. Any moment, the

people for whom he had tried to die would see him,

lying apparently dead, in Hagrid ’s arms.

“NO!”

The scream was the more terrible because he had

never expected or dreamed that Professor McGonagall

could make such a sound. He heard another woman

laughing nearby, and knew that Bellatrix gloried in

McGonagall’s despair. He squinted again for a single

second and saw the open doorway filling with people,

as the survivors of the battle came out onto the front

steps to face their vanquishers and see the truth of

Harry’s death for themselves. He saw Voldemort

standing a little in front of him, stroking Nagini’s

head with a single white finger. He closed his eyes

again.

Page | 826 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No!”

“iVo!”

“Harry! HARRY!”

Ron’s, Hermione’s, and Ginny’s voices were worse

than McGonagall’s; Harry wanted nothing more than

to call back, yet he made himself lie silent, and their

cries acted like a trigger; the crowd of survivors took

up the cause, screaming and yelling abuse at the

Death Eaters, until —

“SILENCE!” cried Voldemort, and there was a bang

and a flash of bright light, and silence was forced

upon them all. “It is over! Set him down, Hagrid, at

my feet, where he belongs!”

Harry felt himself lowered onto the grass.

“You see?” said Voldemort, and Harry felt him striding

backward and forward right beside the place where he

lay. “Harry Potter is dead! Do you understand now,

deluded ones? He was nothing, ever, but a boy who

relied on others to sacrifice themselves for him!”

“He beat you!” yelled Ron, and the charm broke, and

the defenders of Hogwarts were shouting and

screaming again until a second, more powerful bang

extinguished their voices once more.

“He was killed while trying to sneak out of the castle

grounds,” said Voldemort, and there was relish in his

voice for the lie, “killed while trying to save himself — ”

But Voldemort broke off: Harry heard a scuffle and a

shout, then another bang, a flash of light, and a grunt

of pain; he opened his eyes an infinitesimal amount.

Someone had broken free of the crowd and charged at

Page | 827 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Voldemort: Harry saw the figure hit the ground,

Disarmed, Voldemort throwing the challenger’s wand

aside and laughing.

“And who is this?” he said in his soft snake’s hiss.

“Who has volunteered to demonstrate what happens

to those who continue to fight when the battle is

lost?”

Bellatrix gave a delighted laugh.

“It is Neville Longbottom, my Lord! The boy who has

been giving the Carrows so much trouble! The son of

the Aurors, remember?”

“Ah, yes, I remember,” said Voldemort, looking down

at Neville, who was struggling back to his feet,

unarmed and unprotected, standing in the no-man ’s-

land between the survivors and the Death Eaters.

“But you are a pureblood, aren’t you, my brave boy?”

Voldemort asked Neville, who stood facing him, his

empty hands curled in fists.

“So what if I am?” said Neville loudly.

“You show spirit and bravery, and you come of noble

stock. You will make a very valuable Death Eater. We

need your kind, Neville Longbottom.”

“I’ll join you when hell freezes over,” said Neville.

“Dumbledore’s Army!” he shouted, and there was an

answering cheer from the crowd, whom Voldemort’s

Silencing Charms seemed unable to hold.

“Very well,” said Voldemort, and Harry heard more

danger in the silkiness of his voice than in the most

powerful curse. “If that is your choice, Longbottom,

we revert to the original plan. On your head,” he said

quietly, “be it.”

Page | 828 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Still watching through his lashes, Harry saw

Voldemort wave his wand. Seconds later, out of one of

the castle’s shattered windows, something that looked

like a misshapen bird flew through the half light and

landed in Voldemort’s hand. He shook the mildewed

object by its pointed end and it dangled, empty and

ragged: the Sorting Hat.

“There will be no more Sorting at Hogwarts School,”

said Voldemort. “There will be no more Houses. The

emblem, shield, and colors of my noble ancestor,

Salazar Slytherin, will suffice for everyone. Won’t

they, Neville Longbottom?”

He pointed his wand at Neville, who grew rigid and

still, then forced the hat onto Neville’s head, so that it

slipped down below his eyes. There were movements

from the watching crowd in front of the castle, and as

one, the Death Eaters raised their wands, holding the

fighters of Hogwarts at bay.

“Neville here is now going to demonstrate what

happens to anyone foolish enough to continue to

oppose me,” said Voldemort, and with a flick of his

wand, he caused the Sorting Hat to burst into flames.

Screams split the dawn, and Neville was aflame,

rooted to the spot, unable to move, and Harry could

not bear it: He must act —

And then many things happened at the same

moment.

They heard uproar from the distant boundary of the

school as what sounded like hundreds of people came

swarming over the out-of-sight walls and pelted

toward the castle, uttering loud war cries. At the

same time, Grawp came lumbering around the side of

the castle and yelled, “HAGGER!” His cry was

Page | 829 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

answered by roars from Voldemort’s giants: They ran

at Grawp like bull elephants, making the earth quake.

Then came hooves and the twangs of bows, and

arrows were suddenly falling amongst the Death

Eaters, who broke ranks, shouting their surprise.

Harry pulled the Invisibility Cloak from inside his

robes, swung it over himself, and sprang to his feet,

as Neville moved too.

In one swift, fluid motion, Neville broke free of the

Body-Bind Curse upon him; the flaming hat fell off

him and he drew from its depths something silver,

with a glittering, rubied handle —

The slash of the silver blade could not be heard over

the roar of the oncoming crowd or the sounds of the

clashing giants or of the stampeding centaurs, and

yet it seemed to draw every eye. With a single stroke

Neville sliced off the great snake’s head, which spun

high into the air, gleaming in the light flooding from

the entrance hall, and Voldemort’s mouth was open

in a scream of fury that nobody could hear, and the

snake’s body thudded to the ground at his feet —

Hidden beneath the Invisibility Cloak, Harry cast a

Shield Charm between Neville and Voldemort before

the latter could raise his wand. Then, over the

screams and the roars and the thunderous stamps of

the battling giants, Hagrid’s yell came loudest of all.

“HARRY!” Hagrid shouted. “HARRY — WHERE’S

HARRY?”

Chaos reigned. The charging centaurs were scattering

the Death Eaters, everyone was fleeing the giants’

stamping feet, and nearer and nearer thundered the

reinforcements that had come from who knew where;

Harry saw great winged creatures soaring around the

heads of Voldemort’s giants, thestrals and Buckbeak

Page | 830 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

the hippogriff scratching at their eyes while Grawp

punched and pummeled them; and now the wizards,

defenders of Hogwarts and Death Eaters alike, were

being forced back into the castle. Harry was shooting

jinxes and curses at any Death Eater he could see,

and they crumpled, not knowing what or who had hit

them, and their bodies were trampled by the

retreating crowd.

Still hidden beneath the Invisibility Cloak, Harry was

buffeted into the entrance hall: He was searching for

Voldemort and saw him across the room, firing spells

from his wand as he backed into the Great Hall, still

screaming instructions to his followers as he sent

curses flying left and right; Harry cast more Shield

Charms, and Voldemort’s would-be victims, Seamus

Finnigan and Hannah Abbott, darted past him into

the Great Hall, where they joined the fight already

flourishing inside it.

And now there were more, even more people storming

up the front steps, and Harry saw Charlie Weasley

overtaking Horace Slughorn, who was still wearing

his emerald pajamas. They seemed to have returned

at the head of what looked like the families and

friends of every Hogwarts student who had remained

to fight, along with the shopkeepers and homeowners

of Hogsmeade. The centaurs Bane, Ronan, and

Magorian burst into the hall with a great clatter of

hooves, as behind Harry the door that led to the

kitchens was blasted off its hinges.

The house-elves of Hogwarts swarmed into the

entrance hall, screaming and waving carving knives

and cleavers, and at their head, the locket of Regulus

Black bouncing on his chest, was Kreacher, his

bullfrog’s voice audible even above this din: “Fight!

Fight! Fight for my Master, defender of house-elves!

Page | 831 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Fight the Dark Lord, in the name of brave Regulus!

Fight!”

They were hacking and stabbing at the ankles and

shins of Death Eaters, their tiny faces alive with

malice, and everywhere Harry looked Death Eaters

were folding under sheer weight of numbers,

overcome by spells, dragging arrows from wounds,

stabbed in the leg by elves, or else simply attempting

to escape, but swallowed by the oncoming horde.

But it was not over yet: Harry sped between duelers,

past struggling prisoners, and into the Great Hall.

Voldemort was in the center of the battle, and he was

striking and smiting all within reach. Harry could not

get a clear shot, but fought his way nearer, still

invisible, and the Great Hall became more and more

crowded as everyone who could walk forced their way

inside.

Harry saw Yaxley slammed to the floor by George and

Lee Jordan, saw Dolohov fall with a scream at

Flitwick’s hands, saw Walden Macnair thrown across

the room by Hagrid, hit the stone wall opposite, and

slide unconscious to the ground. He saw Ron and

Neville bringing down Fenrir Greyback, Aberforth

Stunning Rookwood, Arthur and Percy flooring

Thicknesse, and Lucius and Narcissa Malfoy running

through the crowd, not even attempting to fight,

screaming for their son.

Voldemort was now dueling McGonagall, Slughorn,

and Kingsley all at once, and there was cold hatred in

his face as they wove and ducked around him, unable

to finish him —

Bellatrix was still fighting too, fifty yards away from

Voldemort, and like her master she dueled three at

Page | 832 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

once: Hermione, Ginny, and Luna, all battling their

hardest, but Bellatrix was equal to them, and Harry’s

attention was diverted as a Killing Curse shot so close

to Ginny that she missed death by an inch —

He changed course, running at Bellatrix rather than

Voldemort, but before he had gone a few steps he was

knocked sideways.

“NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH!”

Mrs. Weasley threw off her cloak as she ran, freeing

her arms. Bellatrix spun on the spot, roaring with

laughter at the sight of her new challenger.

“OUT OF MY WAY!” shouted Mrs. Weasley to the three

girls, and with a swipe of her wand she began to duel.

Harry watched with terror and elation as Molly

Weasley’s wand slashed and twirled, and Bellatrix

Lestrange’s smile faltered and became a snarl. Jets of

light flew from both wands, the floor around the

witches’ feet became hot and cracked; both women

were fighting to kill.

“No!” Mrs. Weasley cried as a few students ran

forward, trying to come to her aid. “Get back! Get

back ! She is mine!”

Hundreds of people now lined the walls, watching the

two fights, Voldemort and his three opponents,

Bellatrix and Molly, and Harry stood, invisible, torn

between both, wanting to attack and yet to protect,

unable to be sure that he would not hit the innocent.

“What will happen to your children when I’ve killed

you?” taunted Bellatrix, as mad as her master,

capering as Molly’s curses danced around her. “When

Mummy’s gone the same way as Freddie?”

Page | 833 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You — will — never — touch — our — children —

again!” screamed Mrs. Weasley.

Bellatrix laughed, the same exhilarated laugh her

cousin Sirius had given as he toppled backward

through the veil, and suddenly Harry knew what was

going to happen before it did.

Molly’s curse soared beneath Bellatrix’s outstretched

arm and hit her squarely in the chest, directly over

her heart.

Bellatrix’s gloating smile froze, her eyes seemed to

bulge: For the tiniest space of time she knew what

had happened, and then she toppled, and the

watching crowd roared, and Voldemort screamed.

Harry felt as though he turned in slow motion; he saw

McGonagall, Kingsley, and Slughorn blasted

backward, flailing and writhing through the air, as

Voldemort ’s fury at the fall of his last, best lieutenant

exploded with the force of a bomb. Voldemort raised

his wand and directed it at Molly Weasley.

“Protego\” roared Harry, and the Shield Charm

expanded in the middle of the Hall, and Voldemort

stared around for the source as Harry pulled off the

Invisibility Cloak at last.

The yell of shock, the cheers, the screams on every

side of “Harry!” “HE’S ALIVE!” were stifled at once.

The crowd was afraid, and silence fell abruptly and

completely as Voldemort and Harry looked at each

other, and began, at the same moment, to circle each

other.

“I don’t want anyone else to try to help,” Harry said

loudly, and in the total silence his voice carried like a

trumpet call. “It’s got to be like this. It’s got to be me.”

Page | 834 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Voldemort hissed.

“Potter doesn’t mean that,” he said, his red eyes wide.

“That isn’t how he works, is it? Who are you going to

use as a shield today, Potter?”

“Nobody,” said Harry simply. “There are no more

Horcruxes. It’s just you and me. Neither can live while

the other survives, and one of us is about to leave for

good. ...”

“One of us?” jeered Voldemort, and his whole body

was taut and his red eyes stared, a snake that was

about to strike. “You think it will be you, do you, the

boy who has survived by accident, and because

Dumbledore was pulling the strings?”

“Accident, was it, when my mother died to save me?”

asked Harry. They were still moving sideways, both of

them, in that perfect circle, maintaining the same

distance from each other, and for Harry no face

existed but Voldemort’s. “Accident, when I decided to

fight in that graveyard? Accident, that I didn’t defend

myself tonight, and still survived, and returned to

fight again?”

“Accidents'.” screamed Voldemort, but still he did not

strike, and the watching crowd was frozen as if

Petrified, and of the hundreds in the Hall, nobody

seemed to breathe but they two. “Accident and

chance and the fact that you crouched and sniveled

behind the skirts of greater men and women, and

permitted me to kill them for you!”

“You won’t be killing anyone else tonight,” said Harry

as they circled, and stared into each other’s eyes,

green into red. “You won’t be able to kill any of them

ever again. Don’t you get it? I was ready to die to stop

you from hurting these people — ”

Page | 835 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“But you did not!”

“ — I meant to, and that’s what did it. I’ve done what

my mother did. They’re protected from you. Haven’t

you noticed how none of the spells you put on them

are binding? You can’t torture them. You can’t touch

them. You don’t learn from your mistakes, Riddle, do

you?”

“ You dare — ”

“Yes, I dare,” said Harry. “I know things you don’t

know, Tom Riddle. I know lots of important things

that you don’t. Want to hear some, before you make

another big mistake?”

Voldemort did not speak, but prowled in a circle, and

Harry knew that he kept him temporarily mesmerized

and at bay, held back by the faintest possibility that

Harry might indeed know a final secret. ...

“Is it love again?” said Voldemort, his snake’s face

jeering. “Dumbledore’s favorite solution, love, which

he claimed conquered death, though love did not stop

him falling from the tower and breaking like an old

waxwork? Love, which did not prevent me stamping

out your Mudblood mother like a cockroach, Potter —

and nobody seems to love you enough to run forward

this time and take my curse. So what will stop you

dying now when I strike?”

“Just one thing,” said Harry, and still they circled

each other, wrapped in each other, held apart by

nothing but the last secret.

“If it is not love that will save you this time,” said

Voldemort, “you must believe that you have magic

that I do not, or else a weapon more powerful than

mine?”

Page | 836 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I believe both,” said Harry, and he saw shock flit

across the snakelike face, though it was instantly

dispelled; Voldemort began to laugh, and the sound

was more frightening than his screams; humorless

and insane, it echoed around the silent Hall.

“You think you know more magic than I do?” he said.

“Than I, than Lord Voldemort, who has performed

magic that Dumbledore himself never dreamed of?”

“Oh, he dreamed of it,” said Harry, “but he knew more

than you, knew enough not to do what you’ve done.”

“You mean he was weak!” screamed Voldemort. “Too

weak to dare, too weak to take what might have been

his, what will be mine!”

“No, he was cleverer than you,” said Harry, “a better

wizard, a better man.”

“I brought about the death of Albus Dumbledore!”

“You thought you did,” said Harry, “but you were

wrong.”

For the first time, the watching crowd stirred as the

hundreds of people around the walls drew breath as

one.

“Dumbledore is dead\” Voldemort hurled the words at

Harry as though they would cause him unendurable

pain. “His body decays in the marble tomb in the

grounds of this castle, I have seen it, Potter, and he

will not return!”

“Yes, Dumbledore’s dead,” said Harry calmly, “but

you didn’t have him killed. He chose his own manner

of dying, chose it months before he died, arranged the

Page | 837 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

whole thing with the man you thought was your

servant.”

“What childish dream is this?” said Voldemort, but

still he did not strike, and his red eyes did not waver

from Harry’s.

“Severus Snape wasn’t yours,” said Harry. “Snape

was Dumbledore’s, Dumbledore’s from the moment

you started hunting down my mother. And you never

realized it, because of the thing you can’t understand.

You never saw Snape cast a Patronus, did you,

Riddle?”

Voldemort did not answer. They continued to circle

each other like wolves about to tear each other apart.

“Snape’s Patronus was a doe,” said Harry, “the same

as my mother’s, because he loved her for nearly all of

his life, from the time when they were children. You

should have realized,” he said as he saw Voldemort’s

nostrils flare, “he asked you to spare her life, didn’t

he?”

“He desired her, that was all,” sneered Voldemort,

“but when she had gone, he agreed that there were

other women, and of purer blood, worthier of him — ”

“Of course he told you that,” said Harry, “but he was

Dumbledore’s spy from the moment you threatened

her, and he’s been working against you ever since!

Dumbledore was already dying when Snape finished

him!”

“It matters not!” shrieked Voldemort, who had

followed every word with rapt attention, but now let

out a cackle of mad laughter. “It matters not whether

Snape was mine or Dumbledore’s, or what petty

obstacles they tried to put in my path! I crushed them

Page | 838 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

as I crushed your mother, Snape ’s supposed great

love\ Oh, but it all makes sense, Potter, and in ways

that you do not understand!

“Dumbledore was trying to keep the Elder Wand from

me! He intended that Snape should be the true

master of the wand! But I got there ahead of you, little

boy — I reached the wand before you could get your

hands on it, I understood the truth before you caught

up. I killed Severus Snape three hours ago, and the

Elder Wand, the Deathstick, the Wand of Destiny is

truly mine! Dumbledore ’s last plan went wrong, Harry

Potter!”

“Yeah, it did,” said Harry. “You’re right. But before

you try to kill me, I’d advise you to think about what

you’ve done. ... Think, and try for some remorse,

Riddle. ...”

“What is this?”

Of all the things that Harry had said to him, beyond

any revelation or taunt, nothing had shocked

Voldemort like this. Harry saw his pupils contract to

thin slits, saw the skin around his eyes whiten.

“It’s your one last chance,” said Harry, “it’s all you’ve

got left. ... I’ve seen what you’ll be otherwise. ... Be a

man ... try ... Try for some remorse. ...”

“You dare — ?” said Voldemort again.

“Yes, I dare,” said Harry, “because Dumbledore’s last

plan hasn’t backfired on me at all. It’s backfired on

you, Riddle.”

Voldemort’s hand was trembling on the Elder Wand,

and Harry gripped Draco’s very tightly. The moment,

he knew, was seconds away.

Page | 839 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“That wand still isn’t working properly for you

because you murdered the wrong person. Severus

Snape was never the true master of the Elder Wand.

He never defeated Dumbledore.”

“He killed — ”

“Aren’t you listening? Snape never beat Dumbledorel

Dumbledore’s death was planned between them!

Dumbledore intended to die undefeated, the wand’s

last true master! If all had gone as planned, the

wand’s power would have died with him, because it

had never been won from him!”

“But then, Potter, Dumbledore as good as gave me the

wand!” Voldemort’s voice shook with malicious

pleasure. “I stole the wand from its last master’s

tomb! I removed it against its last master’s wishes! Its

power is mine!”

“You still don’t get it, Riddle, do you? Possessing the

wand isn’t enough! Holding it, using it, doesn’t make

it really yours. Didn’t you listen to Ollivander? The

wand chooses the wizard. ... The Elder Wand

recognized a new master before Dumbledore died,

someone who never even laid a hand on it. The new

master removed the wand from Dumbledore against

his will, never realizing exactly what he had done, or

that the world’s most dangerous wand had given him

its allegiance. ...”

Voldemort’s chest rose and fell rapidly, and Harry

could feel the curse coming, feel it building inside the

wand pointed at his face.

“The true master of the Elder Wand was Draco

Malfoy.”

Page | 840 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Blank shock showed in Voldemort’s face for a

moment, but then it was gone.

“But what does it matter?” he said softly. “Even if you

are right, Potter, it makes no difference to you and

me. You no longer have the phoenix wand: We duel

on skill alone ... and after I have killed you, I can

attend to Draco Malfoy. ...”

“But you’re too late,” said Harry. “You’ve missed your

chance. I got there first. I overpowered Draco weeks

ago. I took this wand from him.”

Harry twitched the hawthorn wand, and he felt the

eyes of everyone in the Hall upon it.

“So it all comes down to this, doesn’t it?” whispered

Harry. “Does the wand in your hand know its last

master was Disarmed? Because if it does ... I am the

true master of the Elder Wand.”

A red-gold glow burst suddenly across the enchanted

sky above them as an edge of dazzling sun appeared

over the sill of the nearest window. The light hit both

of their faces at the same time, so that Voldemort’s

was suddenly a flaming blur. Harry heard the high

voice shriek as he too yelled his best hope to the

heavens, pointing Draco’s wand:

“Avada KedavraV’

“ Expelliarmus\ ”

The bang was like a cannon blast, and the golden

flames that erupted between them, at the dead center

of the circle they had been treading, marked the point

where the spells collided. Harry saw Voldemort’s

green jet meet his own spell, saw the Elder Wand fly

high, dark against the sunrise, spinning across the

Page | 841 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

enchanted ceiling like the head of Nagini, spinning

through the air toward the master it would not kill,

who had come to take full possession of it at last. And

Harry, with the unerring skill of the Seeker, caught

the wand in his free hand as Voldemort fell backward,

arms splayed, the slit pupils of the scarlet eyes rolling

upward. Tom Riddle hit the floor with a mundane

finality, his body feeble and shrunken, the white

hands empty, the snakelike face vacant and

unknowing. Voldemort was dead, killed by his own

rebounding curse, and Harry stood with two wands in

his hand, staring down at his enemy’s shell.

One shivering second of silence, the shock of the

moment suspended: and then the tumult broke

around Harry as the screams and the cheers and the

roars of the watchers rent the air. The fierce new sun

dazzled the windows as they thundered toward him,

and the first to reach him were Ron and Hermione,

and it was their arms that were wrapped around him,

their incomprehensible shouts that deafened him.

Then Ginny, Neville, and Luna were there, and then

all the Weasleys and Hagrid, and Kingsley and

McGonagall and Flitwick and Sprout, and Harry could

not hear a word that anyone was shouting, nor tell

whose hands were seizing him, pulling him, trying to

hug some part of him, hundreds of them pressing in,

all of them determined to touch the Boy Who Lived,

the reason it was over at last —

The sun rose steadily over Hogwarts, and the Great

Hall blazed with life and light. Harry was an

indispensable part of the mingled outpourings of

jubilation and mourning, of grief and celebration.

They wanted him there with them, their leader and

symbol, their savior and their guide, and that he had

not slept, that he craved the company of only a few of

them, seemed to occur to no one. He must speak to

the bereaved, clasp their hands, witness their tears,

Page | 842 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

receive their thanks, hear the news now creeping in

from every quarter as the morning drew on; that the

Imperiused up and down the country had come back

to themselves, that Death Eaters were fleeing or else

being captured, that the innocent of Azkaban were

being released at that very moment, and that Kingsley

Shacklebolt had been named temporary Minister of

Magic. ...

They moved Voldemort’s body and laid it in a

chamber off the Hall, away from the bodies of Fred,

Tonks, Lupin, Colin Creevey, and fifty others who had

died fighting him. McGonagall had replaced the

House tables, but nobody was sitting according to

House anymore: All were jumbled together, teachers

and pupils, ghosts and parents, centaurs and house-

elves, and Firenze lay recovering in a corner, and

Grawp peered in through a smashed window, and

people were throwing food into his laughing mouth.

After a while, exhausted and drained, Harry found

himself sitting on a bench beside Luna.

“I’d want some peace and quiet, if it were me,” she

said.

“I’d love some,” he replied.

“I’ll distract them all,” she said. “Use your Cloak.”

And before he could say a word she had cried, “Oooh,

look, a Blibbering Humdinger!” and pointed out of the

window. Everyone who heard looked around, and

Harry slid the Cloak up over himself, and got to his

feet.

Now he could move through the Hall without

interference. He spotted Ginny two tables away; she

was sitting with her head on her mother’s shoulder:

There would be time to talk later, hours and days and

Page | 843 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

maybe years in which to talk. He saw Neville, the

sword of Gryffindor lying beside his plate as he ate,

surrounded by a knot of fervent admirers. Along the

aisle between the tables he walked, and he spotted

the three Malfoys, huddled together as though unsure

whether or not they were supposed to be there, but

nobody was paying them any attention. Everywhere

he looked he saw families reunited, and finally, he

saw the two whose company he craved most.

“It’s me,” he muttered, crouching down between

them. “Will you come with me?”

They stood up at once, and together he, Ron, and

Hermione left the Great Hall. Great chunks were

missing from the marble staircase, part of the

balustrade gone, and rubble and bloodstains

occurred every few steps as they climbed.

Somewhere in the distance they could hear Peeves

zooming through the corridors singing a victory song

of his own composition:

We did it, we bashed them, wee Potter’s the one,

And Voldy’s gone moldy, so now let’s have fun!

“Really gives a feeling for the scope and tragedy of the

thing, doesn’t it?” said Ron, pushing open a door to

let Harry and Hermione through.

Happiness would come, Harry thought, but at the

moment it was muffled by exhaustion, and the pain of

losing Fred and Lupin and Tonks pierced him like a

physical wound every few steps. Most of all he felt the

most stupendous relief, and a longing to sleep. But

first he owed an explanation to Ron and Hermione,

who had stuck with him for so long, and who

deserved the truth. Painstakingly he recounted what

Page | 844 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

he had seen in the Pensieve and what had happened

in the forest, and they had not even begun to express

all their shock and amazement when at last they

arrived at the place to which they had been walking,

though none of them had mentioned their

destination.

Since he had last seen it, the gargoyle guarding the

entrance to the headmaster’s study had been knocked

aside; it stood lopsided, looking a little punch-drunk,

and Harry wondered whether it would be able to

distinguish passwords anymore.

“Can we go up?” he asked the gargoyle.

“Feel free,” groaned the statue.

They clambered over him and onto the spiral stone

staircase that moved slowly upward like an escalator.

Harry pushed open the door at the top.

He had one, brief glimpse of the stone Pensieve on the

desk where he had left it, and then an earsplitting

noise made him cry out, thinking of curses and

returning Death Eaters and the rebirth of Voldemort

But it was applause. All around the walls, the

headmasters and headmistresses of Hogwarts were

giving him a standing ovation; they waved their hats

and in some cases their wigs, they reached through

their frames to grip each other’s hands; they danced

up and down on the chairs in which they had been

painted; Dilys Derwent sobbed unashamedly; Dexter

Fortescue was waving his ear-trumpet; and Phineas

Nigellus called, in his high, reedy voice, “And let it be

noted that Slytherin House played its part! Let our

contribution not be forgotten!”

Page | 845 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

But Harry had eyes only for the man who stood in the

largest portrait directly behind the headmaster’s

chair. Tears were sliding down from behind the half-

moon spectacles into the long silver beard, and the

pride and the gratitude emanating from him filled

Harry with the same balm as phoenix song.

At last, Harry held up his hands, and the portraits fell

respectfully silent, beaming and mopping their eyes

and waiting eagerly for him to speak. He directed his

words at Dumbledore, however, and chose them with

enormous care. Exhausted and bleary-eyed though he

was, he must make one last effort, seeking one last

piece of advice.

“The thing that was hidden in the Snitch,” he began,

“I dropped it in the forest. I don’t know exactly where,

but I’m not going to go looking for it again. Do you

agree?”

“My dear boy, I do,” said Dumbledore, while his fellow

pictures looked confused and curious. “A wise and

courageous decision, but no less than I would have

expected of you. Does anyone else know where it fell?”

“No one,” said Harry, and Dumbledore nodded his

satisfaction.

“I’m going to keep Ignotus’s present, though,” said

Harry, and Dumbledore beamed.

“But of course, Harry, it is yours forever, until you

pass it on!”

“And then there’s this.”

Harry held up the Elder Wand, and Ron and

Hermione looked at it with a reverence that, even in

Page | 846 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

his befuddled and sleep-deprived state, Harry did not

like to see.

“I don’t want it,” said Harry.

“What?” said Ron loudly. “Are you mental?”

“I know it’s powerful,” said Harry wearily. “But I was

happier with mine. So ...”

He rummaged in the pouch hung around his neck,

and pulled out the two halves of holly still just

connected by the finest thread of phoenix feather.

Hermione had said that they could not be repaired,

that the damage was too severe. All he knew was that

if this did not work, nothing would.

He laid the broken wand upon the headmaster’s desk,

touched it with the very tip of the Elder Wand, and

said, “Reparo.”

As his wand resealed, red sparks flew out of its end.

Harry knew that he had succeeded. He picked up the

holly and phoenix wand and felt a sudden warmth in

his fingers, as though wand and hand were rejoicing

at their reunion.

“I’m putting the Elder Wand,” he told Dumbledore,

who was watching him with enormous affection and

admiration, “back where it came from. It can stay

there. If I die a natural death like Ignotus, its power

will be broken, won’t it? The previous master will

never have been defeated. That’ll be the end of it.”

Dumbledore nodded. They smiled at each other.

“Are you sure?” said Ron. There was the faintest trace

of longing in his voice as he looked at the Elder Wand.

Page | 847 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I think Harry’s right,” said Hermione quietly.

“That wand’s more trouble than it’s worth,” said

Harry. “And quite honestly,” he turned away from the

painted portraits, thinking now only of the four-poster

bed lying waiting for him in Gryffindor Tower, and

wondering whether Kreacher might bring him a

sandwich there, “I’ve had enough trouble for a

lifetime.”

Page | 848 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

ayue

NINETEEN YEARS LATER

Autumn seemed to arrive suddenly that year. The

morning of the first of September was crisp and

golden as an apple, and as the little family bobbed

across the rumbling road toward the great sooty

station, the fumes of car exhausts and the breath of

pedestrians sparkled like cobwebs in the cold air. Two

large cages rattled on top of the laden trolleys the

parents were pushing; the owls inside them hooted

indignantly, and the redheaded girl trailed tearfully

behind her brothers, clutching her father’s arm.

“It won’t be long, and you’ll be going too,” Harry told

her.

“Two years,” sniffed Lily. “I want to go now\”

The commuters stared curiously at the owls as the

family wove its way toward the barrier between

platforms nine and ten. Albus’s voice drifted back to

Harry over the surrounding clamor; his sons had

resumed the argument they had started in the car.

Page | 849 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“I won’ti I won’t be in Slytherin!”

“James, give it a rest!” said Ginny.

“I only said he might be,” said James, grinning at his

younger brother. “There’s nothing wrong with that. He

might be in Slyth — ”

But James caught his mother’s eye and fell silent.

The five Potters approached the barrier. With a

slightly cocky look over his shoulder at his younger

brother, James took the trolley from his mother and

broke into a run. A moment later, he had vanished.

“You’ll write to me, won’t you?” Albus asked his

parents immediately, capitalizing on the momentary

absence of his brother.

“Every day, if you want us to,” said Ginny.

“Not every day,” said Albus quickly. “James says most

people only get letters from home about once a

month.”

“We wrote to James three times a week last year,”

said Ginny.

“And you don’t want to believe everything he tells you

about Hogwarts,” Harry put in. “He likes a laugh,

your brother.”

Side by side, they pushed the second trolley forward,

gathering speed. As they reached the barrier, Albus

winced, but no collision came. Instead, the family

emerged onto platform nine and three-quarters,

which was obscured by thick white steam that was

pouring from the scarlet Hogwarts Express. Indistinct

figures were swarming through the mist, into which

James had already disappeared.

Page | 850 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“Where are they?” asked Albus anxiously, peering at

the hazy forms they passed as they made their way

down the platform.

“Well find them,” said Ginny reassuringly.

But the vapor was dense, and it was difficult to make

out anybody’s faces. Detached from their owners,

voices sounded unnaturally loud. Harry thought he

heard Percy discoursing loudly on broomstick

regulations, and was quite glad of the excuse not to

stop and say hello. ...

“I think that’s them, Al,” said Ginny suddenly.

A group of four people emerged from the mist,

standing alongside the very last carriage. Their faces

only came into focus when Harry, Ginny, Lily, and

Albus had drawn right up to them.

“Hi,” said Albus, sounding immensely relieved.

Rose, who was already wearing her brand-new

Hogwarts robes, beamed at him.

“Parked all right, then?” Ron asked Harry. “I did.

Hermione didn’t believe I could pass a Muggle driving

test, did you? She thought I’d have to Confund the

examiner.”

“No, I didn’t,” said Hermione, “I had complete faith in

you.”

“As a matter of fact, I did Confund him,” Ron

whispered to Harry, as together they lifted Albus ’s

trunk and owl onto the train. “I only forgot to look in

the wing mirror, and let’s face it, I can use a

Supersensory Charm for that.”

Page | 851 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Back on the platform, they found Lily and Hugo,

Rose’s younger brother, having an animated

discussion about which House they would be sorted

into when they finally went to Hogwarts.

“If you’re not in Gryffindor, we’ll disinherit you,” said

Ron, “but no pressure.”

“Ron\”

Lily and Hugo laughed, but Albus and Rose looked

solemn.

“He doesn’t mean it,” said Hermione and Ginny, but

Ron was no longer paying attention. Catching Harry’s

eye, he nodded covertly to a point some fifty yards

away. The steam had thinned for a moment, and

three people stood in sharp relief against the shifting

mist.

“Look who it is.”

Draco Malfoy was standing there with his wife and

son, a dark coat buttoned up to his throat. His hair

was receding somewhat, which emphasized the

pointed chin. The new boy resembled Draco as much

as Albus resembled Harry. Draco caught sight of

Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Ginny staring at him,

nodded curtly, and turned away again.

“So that’s little Scorpius,” said Ron under his breath.

“Make sure you beat him in every test, Rosie. Thank

God you inherited your mother’s brains.”

“Ron, for heaven’s sake,” said Hermione, half stern,

half amused. “Don’t try to turn them against each

other before they’ve even started school!”

Page | 852 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“You’re right, sorry,” said Ron, but unable to help

himself, he added, “Don’t get too friendly with him,

though, Rosie. Granddad Weasley would never forgive

you if you married a pureblood.”

“Hey!”

James had reappeared; he had divested himself of his

trunk, owl, and trolley, and was evidently bursting

with news.

“Teddy’s back there,” he said breathlessly, pointing

back over his shoulder into the billowing clouds of

steam. “Just seen him! And guess what he’s doing?

Snogging Victoire\”

He gazed up at the adults, evidently disappointed by

the lack of reaction.

“Our Teddy! Teddy Lupin\ Snogging our Victoire! Our

cousin! And I asked Teddy what he was doing — ”

“You interrupted them?” said Ginny. “You are so like

Ron — ”

“ — and he said he’d come to see her off! And then he

told me to go away. He’s snogging her!” James added

as though worried he had not made himself clear.

“Oh, it would be lovely if they got married!” whispered

Lily ecstatically. “Teddy would really be part of the

family then!”

“He already comes round for dinner about four times

a week,” said Harry. “Why don’t we just invite him to

live with us and have done with it?”

“Yeah!” said James enthusiastically. “I don’t mind

sharing with A1 — Teddy could have my room!”

Page | 853 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

“No,” said Harry firmly, “you and A1 will share a room

only when I want the house demolished.”

He checked the battered old watch that had once

been Fabian Prewett’s.

“It’s nearly eleven, you’d better get on board.”

“Don’t forget to give Neville our love!” Ginny told

James as she hugged him.

“Mum! I can’t give a professor love\”

“But you know Neville — ”

James rolled his eyes.

“Outside, yeah, but at school he’s Professor

Longbottom, isn’t he? I can’t walk into Herbology and

give him love. ...”

Shaking his head at his mother’s foolishness, he

vented his feelings by aiming a kick at Albus.

“See you later, Al. Watch out for the thestrals.”

“I thought they were invisible? You said they were

invisible !”

But James merely laughed, permitted his mother to

kiss him, gave his father a fleeting hug, then leapt

onto the rapidly filling train. They saw him wave, then

sprint away up the corridor to find his friends.

“Thestrals are nothing to worry about,” Harry told

Albus. “They’re gentle things, there’s nothing scary

about them. Anyway, you won’t be going up to school

in the carriages, you’ll be going in the boats.”

Page | 854 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

Ginny kissed Albus good-bye.

“See you at Christmas.”

“Bye, Al,” said Harry as his son hugged him. “Don’t

forget Hagrid’s invited you to tea next Friday. Don’t

mess with Peeves. Don’t duel anyone till you’ve

learned how. And don’t let James wind you up.”

“What if I’m in Slytherin?”

The whisper was for his father alone, and Harry knew

that only the moment of departure could have forced

Albus to reveal how great and sincere that fear was.

Harry crouched down so that Albus ’s face was slightly

above his own. Alone of Harry’s three children, Albus

had inherited Lily’s eyes.

“Albus Severus,” Harry said quietly, so that nobody

but Ginny could hear, and she was tactful enough to

pretend to be waving to Rose, who was now on the

train, “you were named for two headmasters of

Hogwarts. One of them was a Slytherin and he was

probably the bravest man I ever knew.”

“But just say — ”

“ — then Slytherin House will have gained an excellent

student, won’t it? It doesn’t matter to us, Al. But if it

matters to you, you’ll be able to choose Gryffindor

over Slytherin. The Sorting Hat takes your choice into

account.”

“Really?”

“It did for me,” said Harry.

Page | 855 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling

He had never told any of his children that before, and

he saw the wonder in Albus’s face when he said it.

But now the doors were slamming all along the

scarlet train, and the blurred outlines of parents were

swarming forward for final kisses, last-minute

reminders. Albus jumped into the carriage and Ginny

closed the door behind him. Students were hanging

from the windows nearest them. A great number of

faces, both on the train and off, seemed to be turned

toward Harry.

“Why are they all staring?” demanded Albus as he

and Rose craned around to look at the other

students.

“Don’t let it worry you,” said Ron. “It’s me. I’m

extremely famous.”

Albus, Rose, Hugo, and Lily laughed. The train began

to move, and Harry walked alongside it, watching his

son’s thin face, already ablaze with excitement. Harry

kept smiling and waving, even though it was like a

little bereavement, watching his son glide away from

him. ...

The last trace of steam evaporated in the autumn air.

The train rounded a corner. Harry’s hand was still

raised in farewell.

“He’ll be all right,” murmured Ginny.

As Harry looked at her, he lowered his hand

absentmindedly and touched the lightning scar on his

forehead.

“I know he will.”

The scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All

was well.

Page | 856 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - J.K. Rowling