

2. Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

Harry's summer at Privet Drive is even more miserable than usual. His relatives have put bars on his window, determined to prevent his return to Hogwarts. His salvation comes in the form of Ron Weasley and his older twin brothers, Fred and George, who rescue him in their father's enchanted flying Ford Anglia. After a pleasant stay at the Weasleys' chaotic but loving home, The Burrow, Harry and Ron are blocked from entering Platform 9¾ by a magical barrier. In a desperate move, they fly the car all the way to Hogwarts, crashing into a violent, sentient tree on the grounds called the Whomping Willow and nearly getting expelled.

Shortly after the term begins, a sinister message appears on a castle wall, written in what looks like blood: "THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED. ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE." The caretaker's cat is found petrified nearby. It is revealed that the Chamber of Secrets is a legendary hidden room built by Salazar Slytherin, one of the founders of Hogwarts, who believed only pure-blood wizards should be allowed to study magic. The legend says the Chamber houses a monster that only the "Heir of Slytherin" can control, which would be used to purge the school of Muggle-borns.

Suspicion and fear spread through the school as more students are found petrified, including the Gryffindor ghost, Nearly Headless Nick, and a first-year student. The prime suspect becomes Harry after it's revealed during a dueling club demonstration that he is a Parselmouth—one who can speak to snakes. This is an incredibly rare and dark magical ability, and it was Salazar Slytherin's most famous trait.

Meanwhile, Hermione brews a complex Polyjuice Potion, which allows the drinker to assume the appearance of another person. Harry and Ron use it to disguise themselves as Draco Malfoy's cronies, Crabbe and Goyle, to interrogate him. They learn that Malfoy is not the heir, but he gives them a clue that the Chamber was opened fifty years ago, resulting in the death of a Muggle-born girl. This event led to the expulsion of a student: Rubeus Hagrid.

Harry finds an enchanted diary in a girls' bathroom. It is empty, but when he writes in it, it responds. The diary belongs to Tom Riddle, a student from fifty years prior. The diary shows Harry a memory of Riddle catching Hagrid with a giant spider, Aragog, which Riddle claims was the monster from the Chamber. This leads to Hagrid being arrested and sent to the wizarding prison Azkaban, while Dumbledore is suspended as Headmaster by the school governors, led by Lucius Malfoy, Draco's father.

Before being taken away, Hagrid cryptically tells Harry and Ron to "follow the spiders." This leads them into the Forbidden Forest, where they encounter Aragog, who is now ancient and enormous. Aragog tells them that he was not the monster and that the girl who died fifty years ago was killed in a bathroom. Just before Hermione becomes the latest victim of petrification, she leaves a clue in her hand—a ripped page from a book describing a Basilisk, a giant serpent that kills with its gaze. They realize the Basilisk has been traveling through the castle's plumbing, and the girl who died is the ghost who haunts the bathroom where Harry found the diary: Moaning Myrtle.

A final message appears, stating that "her skeleton will lie in the Chamber forever." The "her" is revealed to be Ginny Weasley, Ron's younger sister. Harry and Ron, with a fraudulent and memory-wiped Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, Gilderoy Lockhart, in tow, find the entrance to the Chamber in Myrtle's bathroom. Inside, Harry finds an unconscious Ginny and a teenage Tom Riddle, who is a living memory preserved by his diary. Riddle reveals that he is the Heir of Slytherin and that "Tom Marvolo Riddle" is an anagram for "I am Lord Voldemort." He explains that he used Ginny, who had been writing in his diary, to reopen the Chamber and release the Basilisk.

Riddle summons the Basilisk to kill Harry. The battle is grim until Dumbledore's phoenix, Fawkes, arrives, bringing the Sorting Hat. Fawkes blinds the Basilisk, neutralizing its deadly gaze. The Sorting Hat produces the ruby-encrusted Sword of Gryffindor, which Harry uses to impale the Basilisk through the roof of its mouth. However, a Basilisk fang pierces Harry's arm, poisoning him. As he is dying, Fawkes's tears, which have healing powers, save him. Harry takes the broken fang and stabs Riddle's diary with it. The memory of Riddle screams and vanishes, and Ginny awakens.

Back in Dumbledore's office, Harry learns the diary was a Horcrux—an object containing a piece of Voldemort's soul. He also discovers that Lucius Malfoy was the one who planted the diary on Ginny. Harry cleverly tricks Lucius into freeing his abused house-elf, Dobby, who reveals he was the one trying to stop Harry from coming to Hogwarts to protect him. All the petrified victims are cured, Hagrid is released, and exams are canceled.