

His grin faltered when he checked the price tag, and glanced inside his rapidly diminishing coin purse. He muttered a curse under his breath. “Why did I buy that stupid quill?” he hissed quietly, scowling.

Turning away from the wand holsters with slumped shoulders, Harry froze. He was in Diagon Alley — Gringotts was right around the corner. He had heaps of gold that his parents had left him. He just had to go get it!

He left the shop with a spring in his step, making a beeline for the enormous white building at the end of the street. One of the desks was open when he arrived, and the goblin manning it glanced down his long, crooked nose at Harry. “How may I be of assistance?” he asked in a low, slightly croaky voice.

“I’d, uh, like to withdraw some money from my vault, please,” Harry requested, refusing to let his nerves get the better of him. He wondered if it was like a muggle bank account, where you could just get the money without having to go to the vault itself. He didn’t fancy going on one of those mine carts right now. Every time since, someone else had withdrawn money for him. “Oh, uh, Harry Potter. The Potter vaults,” he added belatedly. The goblin’s eyes flicked up to his forehead, as peoples’ often did when he said his name.

“Vault key?” the goblin asked. Harry’s spirits fell. He didn’t have his key! Mrs Weasley was the last person to have it, he thought, but he was pretty sure she gave it back to Dumbledore when she was done.

“Oh. I, um, don’t have my key on me. Is that... a problem?”

“We can confirm your identity in other ways,” the goblin assured him. “But it requires your consent to a scan of your magic.”

Harry hesitated for a second. A scan sounded fairly harmless. People probably did it all the time; surely they didn’t carry their vault keys with them everywhere? “Okay, that sounds fine. I consent.”

The goblin nodded, then snapped his fingers and waved his hand towards Harry. His eyes narrowed behind his glasses, and he hummed, frowning. He snapped and waved a second time, frown growing deeper. Harry’s stomach churned. “Is there something wrong?”

“May I speak to you privately, Mr Potter?” the goblin asked, leaning back in his chair and pursing his lips. “There is a matter I wish to bring to your attention.”

Immediately, Harry’s brain conjured the worst; there was something wrong with his magic, or he wasn’t actually Harry Potter, or the goblins refused to let him in anymore. He nodded, shoving his hands in his pockets to stop them from shaking as he followed the goblin across the bank and into a corridor, where he was led into a small private room. The goblin gestured to a chair, and Harry sat. “One moment, please.”

The goblin left Harry alone in the room, but only for a couple of minutes. Those minutes felt like a lifetime as he waited, scenarios chasing each other around his mind, each more dire than the last.