

Their identities carefully hidden thanks to Snape's spells, and Harry dressed in one of Remus' casual robes that had been resized to fit him — with a promise to order him some causal wizard-wear at the earliest opportunity because *really*, what young man didn't have a single robe outside his school uniform? — Harry and Remus apparated into Diagon Alley at eight forty-five the next morning. They strolled to Gringotts with the air of a father and son just grabbing a bit of spending money before a fun day out; entirely ordinary in the usual summer crowd of the alley. Harry scanned the goblins at the desks when they entered, and tugged Remus over towards Farlig. He placed his wand on the counter. "Good morning, and good fortune. I believe I have a meeting."

He currently looked nothing like Harry Potter, but that didn't slow Farlig for a second, and the goblin gave him a toothy smile. "This way, please, sirs." He hopped down from his chair and led Harry and Remus into the back rooms, to a door with Gorrak's name on it. He rapped sharply on the door, and it opened.

As the two of them stepped through the doorway, their disguise spells melted off them. That was no worry; Remus had anticipated as much, and they'd reapply spells when they left. Inside the office were Gorrak and Bill, the eldest Weasley son jumping to his feet to grab Harry in a hug. "Good, I'm glad you could make it."

Harry exchanged greetings with Gorrak, then turned back to Bill. "What is it you needed to talk to me about?"

Bill's freckled face turned serious. "You might want to sit down for this. Both of you." Remus took a chair beside Harry, within reach if Harry needed him. Harry appreciated it. Bill leaned against Gorrak's desk, fiddling with the fang in his ear. "You remember when I scanned you, Harry? Before the third task? And I told you the magic in your scar looked familiar." Harry nodded. "I went back to Egypt and did a little digging, and eventually I remembered where I'd seen it before. One of the first tombs I ever cracked, way back when I was still an apprentice. There was this doll, see? It had this *really* weird vibe to it. Darker than anything else in the tomb, and there was some pretty nasty stuff in there — the locals all thought it was haunted, said they heard moaning coming from it sometimes. The owner had been a very rich, very evil wizard. There were a load of scrolls about immortality, and then the doll, which I couldn't figure out."

Bill bit his lip, his hands white-knuckled on the edge of the desk. "I called my supervisor in, and he took one look at the doll and the scrolls and declared an immediate evacuation of the tomb. Lit the whole thing up with Fiendfyre as soon as everyone was out. I asked him why, and he told me the doll had been used for some of the blackest magic this world would ever see, and not a single hint of it could be allowed to make it to the public. I was wet behind the ears, so I didn't question him, but it stuck in my memory. I went to talk to him last week, told him I'd come across that magic again but I couldn't tell him where, and I needed to know what it was so I could deal with it."

"What is it?" Harry asked, wondering what his scar could have in common with a cursed doll in a haunted tomb.

"He told me the doll was something called a horcrux," Bill started slowly. "A very rare, very old, *incredibly* dark piece of magic. Most of the knowledge has been lost these days, but like