

And the basilisk corpse. That wasn't great for the atmosphere.

Harry looked around the enormous room, at the huge statue of Salazar himself, still with his jaw wide open for the snake to pass through.

What was it all for?

Surely he hadn't built such a massive chamber just to house his pet snake and his own ego? Especially since the snake seemed to have a space of its own past the statue guardian.

It wasn't like he would be entertaining anyone down here; why make it the size of a grand ballroom?

Harry walked up to the walls, looking for any more markings, or signs. Mostly, he saw snakes. Snake-shaped torch holders on the walls, snakes carved into columns, snakes engraved on the walls. The man really, really liked snakes.

*"Show me your secrets,"* he groaned — or he tried to, at least, but with his eyes on the snake carvings the words naturally came out in Parseltongue.

And the bricks in the wall began to move.

Rolling away from each other like the entrance to Diagon Alley, the wall soon revealed an arched entrance. Harry gaped, stepping inside.

It was an office. Clearly untouched for a very long time, though surprisingly dust-free. One wall was entirely bookshelves, while another held shelves of potions ingredients, jars of odd substances and labelled wooden boxes. An ornate wooden desk sat off to one side, while a small sitting area filled the other half of the office.

*"Well, now,"* a voice hissed, making the hair on the back of Harry's neck stand on end. *"It's been quite some time since I had a visitor. Who might you be, then?"*

Slowly, Harry turned, until he was facing an enormous portrait on one wall.

A portrait of a man who looked an awful lot like Salazar Slytherin himself.