

But with the mystery of Slughorn's return from retirement finally solved, there was another mystery lingering in the back of Harry's mind. A far more recent one.

When he was alone that night, safely behind the drapes of his bed and a thick layer of privacy spells, Harry whispered a name.

With a quiet pop, a house elf appeared at the foot of his bed. "Master Harry is needing Ceri?" she asked, keeping to a whisper, glancing around fearfully. "Is Master Harry in trouble?"

"No, I'm fine," he assured. "I— could you bring me a book from my room, please? It's the Peverell family book. Should be on my shelf." He was going to get to the bottom of Dumbledore's weird *Master of Death* comments, one way or another.

Ceri brightened up, nodding exuberantly and disappearing, only to reappear moments later with the book in hand.

"Thanks, Ceri."

The elf's expression turned chiding. "Master Harry is not to be staying up late reading on a school night," she scolded. "Master Harry needs his rest."

He bit back a smile. "I won't stay up much longer, promise." It wasn't a particularly large book, not like the Potter or Black books.

Ceri eyed him shrewdly for a moment more, but was apparently satisfied with that vow, as she vanished once more.

Eagerly, Harry propped the book open on his lap, skimming the contents page. '*Family tree... History and Origins... Three Brothers and Death*'. Well, one of those things was not like the other.

He flipped it open to the page indicated, which was headed with a strange symbol — a circle inside a triangle, with a line neatly bisecting both. Harry had seen that symbol before; it was all over the things in the Peverell vault. It was even in the family crest. But what did it mean?

In the silence of his dorm, Harry read a story — a story of three Peverell brothers, and a river. The story said that while future tales would declare the brothers had conjured a bridge over the river to cheat death, the truth was that the youngest fell in, and died. His two older brothers rescued and revived him, almost expiring their family magics to do so. This burst of energy summoned Death himself, who was curious about these men and their love so strong it could thwart his clutches. Death offered the men a boon each — supposedly, a reward for having escaped him. It would not be for decades more that they would discover Death's true plan.

The eldest brother asked for a wand. More powerful than any other. And his wish was granted; a wand, crafted by Death himself, from a branch of elder off a nearby tree.

The second brother, believing his magic the strongest and the true reason Death had been denied, decided to take that a step further and ask for a way to recall deceased loved ones