

Salazar sneered. *“Of course! Did you truly think I would only have one entrance — and that it would be in a **lavatory**?”* He looked entirely disgusted by the concept. *“I built this chamber as the last defence for the students, should we become over-run with Witchfinders. There are entrances all over the castle, in case of emergency. If you look, you will notice the carvings. As my heir, Hogwarts will guide you.”*

The words echoed in Harry’s head, a million questions sparking. The Chamber had been built for *protection*! Not as a secret lair to plot the death of all muggleborns. No wonder it was so large, if it was designed to house the whole population of Hogwarts through a siege. There had to be dozens of passages to explore!

But it was late, and he had to get back to bed. *“Thank you. I’ll be back soon,”* he promised, offering the painting a short bow on his way out. A quick hiss had the stone wall returning; there was no sign of the office entrance, but for the tiny snake scratched on the surface.

“Holy shit,” Harry muttered, wild-eyed. He had just had a conversation with *Salazar Slytherin*.

His body was tired, but his mind and magic were buzzing. He hadn’t done what he had come down to do, thanks to that unexpected detour. He needed to shed some energy, fast.

Harry looked around the room, at the dirt and detritus filling the expansive space.

He might not be able to do anything about the basilisk corpse, but he *could* practice his cleaning charms.

Twenty minutes and an exhaustive amount of magic later, Harry felt much calmer, and the Chamber was on its way to being habitable. It would take many more visits to get it properly clean, but Harry was pleased with his progress. Now it was time for bed, if he could possibly sleep with all the new information circling his brain.

Heading for the section of wall Slytherin had suggested, Harry hissed to the snake, and the passageway revealed itself.

Like with the main entrance in the bathroom, it sealed itself once Harry was through it. He was left in a pitch black stairwell, and quickly conjured a ball of light to float ahead of him.

There was certainly magic in the passageway, as the number of stairs did not equate to the actual distance between the Chamber and Gryffindor Tower. Sure enough, he emerged from a blank section of wall only a few feet to the left of the Fat Lady’s portrait. When he turned back to study it, safely covered by his invisibility cloak, there was the tiniest little snake scratched into the stone.

Well, then.

That was unexpected.

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