

JAMES POTTER AND THE
CURSE OF THE GATEKEEPER



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Based upon the characters and worlds of J. K. Rowling



17. THE BLOODLINE

The next week seemed to shuttle past with the inertia of a freight train. As the end of the term loomed, the library grew busier and busier. The older students moved about in a sort of harried fog, studying and drilling each other on topics James could barely understand. Even the Gremlins seemed tense. Noah, Sabrina, Damien, and Petra sat on the couch before the fireplace, surrounded by loose parchments, books, and candy wrappers. James waved at them as he passed, heading down to the library.

“Hey, Damien,” he said, “thanks for helping out in the Headmaster’s office the other day.”

“Just doing my job,” Damien muttered, his nose buried in a huge book of star charts.

On the way down to the library, James considered the events of the previous days. It was all moving so fast that it was becoming hard to keep track of. On Monday, James had informed Scorpius that he, Ralph, and Rose had been ordered to shut down the Defence Club as punishment for sneaking into Hogsmeade. Scorpius had been strangely unperturbed.

“A pity that you won’t be able to keep attending,” he’d said blithely, looking up over his glasses from the book he’d been studying.

“I don’t think you understand,” James said, sitting down. “The club’s been disbanded. Merlin ordered it.”

Scorpius looked down at his book again, turning a page. “I understand it as well as I wish. As far as I’m concerned, you three have been banned from leading the club. As co-teacher, I’ve no intention of shutting it down. We’ll rename it if necessary. We’ll call it, oh, ‘Scorpius’ Army’.”

“That’s not funny,” James said, shaking his head.

“No?” Scorpius replied. “Well, I sat up all night thinking of it. So, drat.”

James thought about it for a moment, and then asked quietly, “You’ll really keep teaching the club? Even though Merlin thinks it’s been shut down?”

“I’m sure I don’t know what you mean,” Scorpius answered. “If the Headmaster has determined that the Defence Club should be dissolved, then dissolved it will be. It’s pure and simple coincidence that I, along with the Specter of Silence and the Grey Lady, will be teaching an entirely *new* club that happens to meet in the same place at the same time to study the same topics. Surely, the Headmaster would recognize the difference.”

James shook his head, smiling crookedly. “You really are a chip off the old Slytherin block, aren’t you? You’re as twisted as a corkscrew!”

“Being twisted simply means being able to think around corners,” Scorpius said, returning to his book. “My father taught me that.”

James started to get up, then stopped and looked back at the pale boy. “Cedric actually has you calling him the ‘Specter of Silence’?”

Scorpius adjusted his glasses. “Who am I to argue with a ghost’s choice of name?”

Apparently, Scorpius had been as good as his word. On Thursday evening, James, Rose, and Ralph had hovered in the halls near the gymnasium. Sure enough, as they passed the pebbled glass doors, they could hear the sounds of the club, practicing and drilling under Cedric’s and the Grey Lady’s patient tutelage.

Preparations for *The Triumvirate* were also coming along swiftly. Jason Smith’s props crew was working double-time, having produced most of the sets and prop elements, including a huge wind machine that worked on treadle power. Gennifer Tellus was feverishly commanding her costume shop, managing all the adjustments, alterations and last-minute costuming details. Josephina Bartlett had recovered from her hex-induced vertigo enough to climb onto the stage, although she couldn’t approach the edge without getting dizzy. Nevertheless, a contingent of Ravenclaw girls had begun a rather snarky campaign to reinstate Josephina in the role of Astra. To that end, they had painted a slew of signs and pinned petitions onto several notice boards. The petitions hadn’t accumulated many signatures, however, and apart from Josephina’s entourage, even the rest of the Ravenclaws seemed to quietly support Petra in the role. For his own part, James was impressed to realize that he had now learned almost all of his lines. There had been a time when he hardly believed it was possible, but the persistent rehearsals and late-night script readings had apparently paid off. Noah and Petra seemed by turns affectionate and cold during rehearsals, obviously reflecting the ongoing tumult of their relationship. James had still not practiced his kissing scene with Petra, although they’d read through the lines a dozen times. Professor Curry assured them that it need not be a real kiss, but simply that they lean toward one another and touch cheeks. They’d be in silhouette to the audience, and the lights would go out the moment the kiss occurred, thus ending act three. To James’ great dismay, however,

he was forced to obey Tabitha Corsica's direction whenever Professor Curry wasn't around. Tabitha seemed to take perverse pleasure in forcing James to recite his monologues over and over, constantly critiquing him and belittling him in front of the other actors and crew. As James sweated in the bright stage lights, re-reading his rallying speech for the ninth time, his dislike of Tabitha's pretty, smug face slowly intensified into a bright little furnace of hatred.

The Quidditch season had finally ended with a smashing victory by Hufflepuff over Gryffindor, resulting in days of merciless taunting by the Hufflepuffs and surly retorts from the Gryffindors. To commemorate Albus' first season as Slytherin Seeker, Tabitha had apparently given him the broom he'd been flying all season, the same mysteriously hexed broom which had caused James, Ralph, and Zane so much trouble during the previous year. James could hardly believe that Tabitha would relinquish the broom, but he also knew it would only serve to endear Albus all the more to his Slytherin mates. Besides, if Tabitha was turning over something as powerful as that broom, it would only be because she had something even more powerful in her possession.

And then, this very morning, James had finally received a letter back from his father. He'd read it over breakfast with both Ralph and Rose peering closely over his shoulder.

Dear James,

Sorry about the late response, but I've been terribly busy with this new Auror sub-department. We've called in Kingsley to give us a hand with it, and he's been a great help both in organizing and preparing the field team for what they'll be up against. Believe it or not, even K. Debellows has offered his assistance. Turns out the Harriers faced a Dementor hive like this once in Hungary. Viktor has his squad on standby, just in case, so that's a relief.

Spot on about this Gatekeeper business. Our researchers at the Ministry had already begun to piece together some details about it. We have old Dung Fletcher in protective custody, and he had an inkling that the people who orchestrated last year's conspiracy were working toward something big like this. We're quite confident that this whole 'Curse of the Gatekeeper' story is just a massive scare tactic. The P.E. is still at work trying to secretly destabilize the magical world, and what better way to do it than to invent a grave new threat that the Ministry isn't able to contain, eh? Don't worry. We've got the best people on it, including me. Still, be sure that we won't be taking any chances, all right? If there really is something behind this besides a load of rogue Dementors, we'll be on the lookout for it.

Regarding the R. Stone, you can always ask me whatever you want, James. Tell your friend Cameron I remember his uncle well and that he's right about the stone. After I used it in the Forest that night, I dropped it. I didn't need it anymore, and it was best lost to the wizarding world forever. I'd guess it's still out there somewhere, but even I could probably never find it again. I strongly recommend that you not go looking for it. It'll only mean trouble. Let it stay lost, all right?

*Love,
Your father*

P.S. No, still no sign of what's gone missing, but honestly, I haven't had much time to look for them. Mum and Grandma say hello. Grandma is staying in Albus' room, so you don't have anything to worry about. See you in a few weeks!

James arrived in the dim library and wandered through the aisles and shelves until he found Ralph and Rose, who were deep in conversation. He plunked his satchel onto the table and sat down next to Rose.

"We spoke to Zane a little while ago," Ralph announced. "He popped up right here in the library. Made Professor Heretofore ten shades of mad. She refused to let us zap him with any spells to maintain his projection, but he did give us a quick message."

James leaned in. "What was it?"

"Apparently he went to see Madame Delacroix in person," Rose said in a low voice. "She's pretty dotty, but he got some useful information out of her about what the wrong people might be able to do with your voodoo doll."

"What?" James asked fervently. "Tell me!"

"Exactly bupkis," Ralph replied, curling his hand into the shape of a zero.

"More or less," Rose added, glancing at Ralph. "Your dad was right, James, when he said that voodoo wasn't like what the Muggle films show. It's apparently mostly psychological. Pinning a voodoo doll in the heart doesn't kill the subject, but it might make them sad or lonely."

"Or give them heartburn," Ralph quipped.

Rose rolled her eyes. "The point is no one can physically hurt you with a voodoo doll. They may be able to make you *believe* you feel pain, or certain emotions, but that's all."

James breathed a huge sigh. "Well, that's a big relief, I guess."

"Still," Ralph asked, "who do you think might have it?"

"Probably nobody," James answered. "It wasn't with the Cloak or the map. It was just on my mum's bedside table. It's probably just lost at home like my dad said."

"Maybe Tabitha has it!" Rose whispered conspiratorially. "Maybe she doesn't know she can't hurt you with it! She's probably going mad wondering why it isn't working!"

James shook his head. "That's daft, Rose. Tabitha wouldn't have any way of getting it even if she knew about it. I never told anyone other than you, Ralph, and Zane about it. Besides, Tabitha doesn't need a voodoo doll to get at me. She could've fought me that night in the hall. Obviously she's not meaning to attack us with magic or anything."

"At least not *yet*," Ralph muttered. Suddenly, a low whistle pierced the air. It wasn't particularly loud, but it was noisy enough to disturb those studying nearby. At the next table, Ashley Doone glanced up curiously, looking for the source of the whistle.

"What's that?" Rose rasped. "Ralph, I think it's coming from your bag!"

Ralph scrambled around in his seat, retrieving his bag. As soon as he unzipped it, the noise grew louder.

“It’s Trenton’s Sneakoscope!” Ralph said, pulling the instrument out of his bag. The noise was increasing both in pitch and volume.

“Mr. Deedle!” a voice called stridently. James turned in his seat and saw Professor Heretofore approaching along the aisle, her sharp features pinched into a scowl. “How many times must you insist on disrupting this library?”

“Sorry,” Ralph said, still fiddling with the Sneakoscope. “It must be malfunctioning. I can’t see how to turn it off!”

Professor Heretofore shook her head in disdain. She produced her wand and flicked it deftly. The Sneakoscope emitted a sudden squawk and fell silent.

“There,” she said venomously. “It’s off. Now please vacate yourselves from the library, the three of you. If I see you in here again for the rest of the day, there will be deducted House points, even if you *are* a member of my house, Mr. Deedle. Now off with you.”

“Stupid hunk of junk,” Ralph muttered as they threaded toward the door. He stuffed the Sneakoscope in his bag and shouldered it.

“It wasn’t malfunctioning,” a voice drawled. James glanced up as Scorpius fell in line with them, walking out of the library. “It was doing exactly what it was meant to do.”

“Getting us kicked out of the library?” Ralph asked derisively.

Scorpius lowered his voice. “No, Deedle. Alerting you to the presence of untrustworthy people.”

James frowned at Scorpius. “What do you mean?”

“Not here,” Scorpius said. “Follow me. I’ll tell you what I can along the way.”

For several minutes, Scorpius led James, Ralph, and Rose through the halls silently. Eventually, they came to an old part of the castle which was rarely used. It smelled vaguely moldy. They passed no one else in the halls.

“I understand you had a rather illuminating conversation with ‘Tabby,’” Scorpius finally said, glancing at James as he walked.

“How do you know about that?”

“I hear things,” Scorpius replied vaguely. “Tabitha has somehow come to believe that I am a Slytherin in disguise. She thinks that I detest the lot of you and am therefore on their side.”

“You had *me* fooled for awhile too, you know,” James admitted. “My bed still has the words ‘Whiny Potter Git’ on it.”

“Where are we going, Scorpius?” Rose asked suspiciously. “It looks like we’re headed to the same place where we found the Mirror of Erised.”

Scorpius nodded. “That’s the spot, Weasley. Nothing gets past you.”

“Scorpius,” James said, narrowing his eyes, “if I didn’t know any better, I’d say you were nervous.”

Scorpius stopped suddenly in the hall. He turned to face the other three. “What I’m about to do, I do against my better judgment,” he said in a low, serious voice. “If my grandfather knew what I was about to show you, he’d probably kill me, and that’s *not* an exaggeration.”

“What, Scorpius?” James asked, lowering his own voice to match the pale boy’s. “Do you know something?”

Scorpius looked away. “Remember when I told you that I hadn’t seen my grandfather for years? That he was in hiding, even from the rest of the family?”

James and Rose nodded. James said, “It’s not true? He’s not in hiding?”

“Yes, he’s in hiding. But it isn’t true that I haven’t seen him. I’ve seen him plenty.” Scorpius sighed and looked at James, Ralph, and Rose. “It started two years ago. I hated the way my father had turned his back on his upbringing. The reason he’d begun studying the founders was to find out the truth about Salazar Slytherin. He’d been raised to believe that Slytherin was a revolutionary thinker and a hero, but the more my father studied, the more he began to believe that Slytherin had simply been a vicious, power-hungry madman. When I was quite young, Father and Grandfather had a serious row about it. They ended up wand to wand, although neither actually cast a spell. It disgusted me that my father would deny his family heritage. Once Grandfather disowned my father and moved into hiding, I determined to join him and prove my loyalty. My mother helped me locate Grandfather Lucius. He was quite happy to have me visit him in secret. He told me of his plans. Yes, I know about the Gatekeeper and how it came to descend into the world. I know that my grandfather believes he is carrying out the final solution of Salazar Slytherin, finally bringing about a world of pureblood perfection. But the more I listened to my grandfather, the more I realized he’d gone completely mad. Both he and his partner, Gregor Tyrranicus. Gregor was once wizarding royalty in Romania, but he lost power and was kicked out by his own family. Both he and my Grandfather Lucius will do anything to get that power back, and more. They truly mean to be rulers of a new pureblood kingdom with the Gatekeeper as their strong-arm.”

“So they really do think they can control it,” Rose breathed. “They *are* mad!”

“They’re mad, yes,” Scorpius answered. “But who’s to say they can’t control it? If they can possess both halves of the Beacon Stone, they may indeed be able to protect themselves and their kingdom from the Gatekeeper, although it will hate them all the more for it, and will destroy them all the quicker if they get careless.”

“So what is it you want to show us?” James asked, firming his jaw. “What does your grandfather not want us to know?”

Scorpius seemed to be struggling with himself. His eyes were locked on James’, his lips pressed together. Finally, the boy nodded slightly. “Come on,” he said, and quickly turned.

They walked a little way further until they came to a large, heavy door. Scorpius produced a tarnished brass key and turned it in the lock.

“My father gave me this key so I could help you come back through the Mirror, Potter,” Scorpius explained, pushing the heavy door open. “I don’t know how he came to possess it, but I suspect it had something to do with one of the lesser known shops in the dark corners of Knockturn Alley. Still, I doubt even my father knew what this key would also give me access to.”

“What’s the big deal?” Ralph asked as they entered the cramped storage room again. The Mirror of Erised showed their reflections in its dusty surface. All around it were crates, trunks, and locked cabinets.

“Don’t look too closely into the Mirror,” Scorpius said, walking past it and approaching one of the cabinets. “Without its Focusing Book, it’ll just show you distractions. The real surprise is over here.”

“Whose stuff *is* all this?” Rose asked, looking around slowly. “I thought it was just a bunch of stored junk when we were here last, but that was before I knew how powerful the Mirror was and where it came from. Nobody would just throw *that* in with a bunch of random crates.”

Scorpius wrenched a lock loose from one of the cabinets and swung the door open. “All of this,” he said, glancing back at Rose, “is the contents of Albus Dumbledore’s office while he was Headmaster. He’d willed most of it to his brother, Aberforth, but when Aberforth died, he willed it right back to the school. It’s all been stored here ever since, hidden even from the new headmasters according to Aberforth’s instructions. Not the most trusting fellow, was old Aberforth. We’d never have found it at all if we hadn’t used Ravenclaw’s signal to locate the Mirror.”

“Wow,” James breathed in awe. “I bet my dad would love to know about this place. He and Dumbledore were pretty close. Look! Is that Fawkes the phoenix’s perch? I bet it is!”

“This stuff is probably really valuable,” Rose said, picking up a heavy book from a table. “Most of these books are one-of-a-kind. They’re hand-printed and illustrated...”

“That’s all well and good,” Scorpius said, stepping aside and gesturing at the open cabinet. “But *this* is why I brought you here.”

Ralph and James peered into the cabinet, confused at the display of dusty tools and ancient gadgets. A large bowl-shaped object on the top shelf emitted a pale glow. Rose gasped, her eyes going wide.

“Is that the Pensieve?” she whispered. “Dumbledore’s Pensieve?”

Scorpius nodded. “I came here once on my own, the night before James’ return. I sneaked out of the dorm and used Ravenclaw’s signal to find this room. I wanted to be sure it really existed. When I found it, I explored a little and found the Pensieve. It contains many of Headmaster Dumbledore’s memories, and Severus Snape’s as well, since Snape apparently kept it in the Headmaster’s office and used it after Dumbledore died. I knew the memories would be rather faded now that Dumbledore and Snape are both dead, but there was one set of memories in particular I was curious about. Grandfather Lucius had already told me *his* side of the story, but I wanted to see if Dumbledore’s and Snape’s version was any different. It was—a little.”

James asked in a low voice, “What’s the memory about, Scorpius?”

Scorpius looked James in the eye again. He didn’t blink as he answered. “Something my grandfather and Gregor call ‘the Bloodline’. It’s about who the Bloodline of Voldemort is, and how they came to be.”

There was a long moment of perfect silence, and then, firmly, James said, “I want to see.”

Scorpius nodded. “I thought you might.” He gestured at the gently glowing bowl.

“How does it work?” Ralph asked, following reluctantly as James and Rose stepped forward. “Does it, like, make a film or something? How does it know what memory we want to see? Will it hurt?”

“Shut up, Ralph,” James said, not unkindly. “Just hold my hand. You too, Rose. I think we just have to look. That’s all.”

Slowly, carefully, James, Rose, and Ralph leaned over the stone bowl. The surface of the liquid inside the Pensieve looked uncomfortably like the swirling mercury smoke in Merlin’s Magic Mirror except that it glowed rather more. It lit the three student’s faces. And then something began to swim up out of the depths of the Pensieve. It seemed to come from far deeper than the mere depth of the bowl. James held his breath as the light intensified. The swirling increased, becoming larger as the liquid in the bowl rose. It filled James’

vision and then, swiftly and painlessly, it seemed to grab him. At once, James, Rose, and Ralph fell into the Pensieve as if it had grown to the size of a pool. It swallowed them completely, and for better or worse, there was no turning back. They were a part of the faded memories of Albus Dumbledore and Severus Snape.



Each of the three experienced it uniquely and separately. When James landed in the middle of the first memory, neither Ralph nor Rose was anywhere in sight. As Scorpius had said, the memories were slightly faded; James felt more as if he was dreaming them than living them. As the world of the memory resolved around him, he found himself standing in the Headmaster's office, but not as he'd ever known it. It rippled and swam, like a scene witnessed underwater, but then it began to solidify. Fawkes the phoenix preened on his perch, proving to James that he was seeing the room as it had looked during Dumbledore's term as Headmaster.

"We must be prepared for the eventuality, Severus," Dumbledore was saying, not looking at Snape, who stood by the window, looking out at a black sky. "It cannot be assumed that Voldemort will be too proud to resort to such a tactic. If he comes to fear that his plans—and therefore his life—are in jeopardy, we must assume he will prepare a successor of some kind."

"The Dark Lord is not given to preparations for failure, Headmaster," Snape said. "His vanity will not admit the possibility of defeat. The sheer number of Horcruxes he has prepared are evidence of his assurance."

"I disagree," Dumbledore said, steepling his fingers as he sat at his desk. James saw that one of the old headmaster's hands was rather horribly blackened and sickly. "*One* Horcrux would be enough for a confident villain. Voldemort's substantial collection of them proves quite the reverse. He lives in terror of death, believing nothing but the most extreme measures will ward it off. This is not the behavior of a man confident in his immortality. If, in time, he fears that even this collection will fail him, he will turn to even more desperate measures. You will know this when the time comes, and if it does, your duty will be clear."

Snape turned away from the window and approached the desk. "It pains me to admit it, but this task is very nearly beyond me, Headmaster. You are far better equipped to manage it than am I."

Dumbledore nodded slowly and smiled. "I will not argue that, Severus, but we both know it is unlikely that I should still be alive when the time comes. The task falls to you by default. Nevertheless, I am quite confident in your ability to do what is necessary. Despite what you believe of yourself, you *are* rather uniquely qualified for this type of work..."

As Dumbledore said this, the memory slowly dissolved. The room faded into obscurity and both Snape and Dumbledore vanished. An indeterminate amount of time seemed to pass, and then James found

another memory solidifying around him. He was in a drawing room in a grand house, although it was apparent that the house was quite old and its best days were behind it. A large crystal chandelier lay shattered on the floor like a corpse. Bits of broken crystal lay everywhere, sparkling in the firelight.

“Potter,” a high, silky voice said. James turned to see a horrible cloaked figure standing in front of the hearth. It was like a man, but only just. Beneath the cowl, the face was so pale as to be nearly translucent. There was no nose, save for a pair of grotesquely flaring slits, and the red eyes glowed with thin vertical pupils. James’ knees went weak with fear as the figure seemed to stare coldly at him, but then it turned its gaze away, looking askance at a woman huddled at the end of a nearby sofa.

“I thought I was quite clear,” the high, cold voice went on, and James now recognized the figure for who it was. This was Voldemort himself, in the flesh. “I was not to be disturbed for anything other than Harry Potter. Bellatrix here assures me I was, indeed, rather specific about that requirement. And yet she herself is the one responsible for interrupting my work *without* any Harry Potter to present me upon my return.”

Bellatrix sobbed and rolled off the sofa, throwing herself onto the floor at Voldemort’s feet. “He was here, my Lord! I tell you: he was my prisoner when I summoned you; otherwise, I would never have dared! Lucius and Narcissa can attest to the fact! But we were betrayed at the last minute—” Bellatrix flung an arm toward a man James hadn’t noticed yet. The man stood in the shadows, his face deathly pale and blank. His hair was long and white. “Tell him, Lucius!” Bellatrix implored. “Tell the Dark Lord that we had Potter in our grasp!” When the man didn’t respond, Bellatrix’s face contorted into desperate rage. “Then perhaps you should tell him how you were *bested* by the boy Potter! Tell him, Lucius, how *you* were Stunned unconscious mere *moments* after they burst upon us! *Tell him!*”

“Severus,” Voldemort said, ignoring the woman’s raving, sobbing protests, “this unfortunate occasion has pressed me to consider an option that I had hoped would be unnecessary.”

James turned and saw Snape standing in front of the closed door of the drawing room. He knew neither Snape nor Voldemort could see him; nevertheless, he felt very uncomfortable standing between them as they spoke. He moved into a nearby corner opposite the staring figure of Lucius Malfoy. Snape merely stood and waited, looking unflinchingly at the awful, snakelike face.

“I have summoned you from your post for the same reason I have dismissed Narcissa, Greyback, and Lucius’ son. No one else need know of the duty I am placing upon you. Lucius himself will have his own role if he chooses to accept it; I have every expectation that he will be eager to prove his worth after recent events. But you, Severus, will perform a very important duty in this arrangement.”

“Whatever you wish, my Lord,” Snape said evenly.

Voldemort went on, stepping away from the hearth. “As you know, Severus, I have prepared Horcruxes, creating an unbroken chain of immortality for my ascendance...”

As Voldemort slowly crossed the room, the broken chandelier rose silently from the floor, allowing him to pass beneath it. The shattered bits of crystal rose with it, turning and glinting in the air like water droplets.

“I am quite confident that these Horcruxes will serve me well; however, in the extremely *unlikely* event that any of them should be destroyed—”

“Never, my Lord!” Bellatrix cried, still groveling on the floor. “It is impossible!”

“—I have prepared one *final* Horcrux,” Voldemort went on, completely ignoring Bellatrix’s outburst. “It is rather unique. In fact, I am quite confident that such a thing has never before been created.”

Voldemort reached the center of the room and stopped. As the broken chandelier hovered over him, he reached slowly into his cloak and produced a long, narrow dagger. It was singularly ugly, made of silver with a jewel-encrusted handle. The blade was tarnished to a dark glint, as if it had been rubbed with soot.

“This dagger,” Voldemort went on, turning it slowly in the firelight, “is rather special to me. It has travelled with me long and served me on many occasions. You may be interested to know that it once belonged to my father. I took it as an inheritance from his dead hand. Thus, it is quite fitting that this dagger, Severus, is the final and perhaps most important of my Horcruxes. I am entrusting you to safeguard it within the protection of Hogwarts until the time comes for its use.”

“I will guard it with my life, my Lord,” Snape said, inclining his head. “I am honored to be entrusted with a task that will only add to your long life.”

“Alas, Severus,” Voldemort said, pulling the dagger away, as if reluctant to give it up. “This is not *that* sort of Horcrux. With this relic, I am thinking only of *future* generations. Never let it be said that your Lord is not gracious, for this Horcrux is not to be used for myself. As I have already told you, this Horcrux is *special*. The part of my soul that it contains is shut off from me forever. I cannot reclaim it. Thus, if, in the remarkable and *unimaginable* event that every Horcrux but this were destroyed, this dagger would not assure my survival.”

Bellatrix gasped, but her eyes were huge and avid as she watched Voldemort. Her gaze never left the dagger as it flitted and glinted in his pale hand.

“The part of my soul locked within this dagger is a *gift*, my friends. It is meant to be *passed on*. Lucius, my loyal servant, I have asked you to remain because I know your desperate—and justifiable—desire to prove yourself to me. It shall be your duty and honor to bestow the gift of the dagger should that day ever come.”

For the first time, Lucius Malfoy’s face flickered with life. He blinked at Voldemort, and then stumbled forward, not quite daring to touch his master.

“Thank you, my Lord! It *is* my honor! I will not fail you!”

“I am certain of that, Lucius,” Voldemort said smoothly, almost kindly. “For if, for some reason, you fail the dagger, it will find you. I have bound it to you, and your family. In the event that something unfortunate befalls Headmaster Snape, you must retrieve the dagger from him. It will be waiting for you. And in the event that the time passes for its use and you have not fulfilled your role, it will *seek* you with its *own* intent. It will come for you, and your family. I do trust that you understand.”

“I do, my Lord,” Lucius rasped, nodding. “I will perform whatever duty you entrust to me. I vow my oath, Master!”

Voldemort nodded slowly. “Then your work begins this day, Lucius. Find for me a worthy vessel. Find a family whose blood is pure but whose loyalties will never be suspect. When the time comes, go to the woman in that family who is with child. She must take the dagger unto herself, and by her own hand, use the dagger to trace my symbol—the first initial of my name—upon the swell of her unborn son, drawing it in her own blood. Let her willingness infuse the life of the dagger into that mother’s blood, taking it to the child.

Thus, this relic of my soul will be passed on. The boy will carry my essence, made anew, ready to serve yet another generation. This is your duty and your oath to me, Lucius. Swear it.”

“I swear, my Lord!” Lucius rasped, falling to one knee.

“My Lord!” Bellatrix cried breathlessly, crawling to her knees and imploring with one hand. “Choose me! Let *me* be the vessel of your gift to future generations! I will raise the boy to be your perfect image! I am willing! I am *eager!*”

“Yes, loyal Bellatrix,” Voldemort said softly, not turning to her. Bits of the floating crystal chandelier revolved in the air between them. “But your loyalties are your most damning quality for this task. No one must guess in whose womb my soul is to be reborn. Despite your greatest wish, this duty cannot fall to you.”

Bellatrix sobbed. “Then *why* have you kept me here, my Lord?” she wailed desperately. “Why have you retained me only to see my greatest desire plucked from my grasp?”

Voldemort sighed indulgently. “Your very question contains the answer, dear Bellatrix. But do try to look on the bright side: I had considered simply killing you for allowing Harry Potter to slip through your grasp this night. Instead, I have merely killed your greatest dream.”

“*Nooooo!*” Bellatrix shrieked, crumpling, and James’ hair stood up. He’d never heard a more despairing, hopeless cry.

Voldemort strode forward, smiling as if Bellatrix’s wail of agony was the sweetest music. He held the dagger out to Snape. As Snape took the dagger, the suspended chandelier fell again. It crashed noisily to the floor behind Voldemort, shattering like a bomb and drowning out the pitiful wail of Bellatrix Lestrange.

The memory shattered as well.

There was a flash of swirling smoke, and then one more scene materialized, swimming out of the mists like a fever dream. In this memory, James saw Severus Snape again. He was pacing in the Headmaster’s office, which was his own office by this time.

“You seem to misunderstand, Albus,” Snape said, speaking apparently to the portrait of Dumbledore on the office wall. “It will *not* be a request. Slughorn is the man responsible for the Dark Lord’s ability to create Horcruxes in the first place. He understands them better than I do. He *owes* his service to the world to render this one *useless.*”

“If only that were possible, Severus,” the portrait of Dumbledore replied. “But it is not. You may destroy the Horcrux, yes, but *no* one can simply render it ineffective. Besides, I seem to recall that my instruction was to simply poison the instrument, assuring it would kill both the mother and the son it was meant to infiltrate.”

“I cannot destroy the dagger while the Dark Lord still lives,” Snape replied. “He has bound it to Lucius Malfoy; he will know if it is compromised, and my loyalties will be revealed.”

“Then do as I instructed,” Dumbledore insisted ardently. “Poison the blade. It is within your abilities. There are any number of undetectable poisons in this very room. Let the same instrument that carries that dark soul also carry its doom.”

“*You* might have been able to oversee the murder of the woman and her child ‘for the greater good’, Albus, but I’m afraid that that ability has fled me.”

The portrait replied sadly. “Then you are a fool, Severus. The fruit of this Horcrux will be on *your* head, *not* Horace Slughorn’s.”

Snape exhaled slowly, thinking. Finally, he glanced up. “Perhaps not,” he said, as if to himself. “Perhaps there is another way.”

“You are mistaken, Severus,” Dumbledore replied. “My way is the only responsible method. Otherwise, the boy will be born with the thread of Voldemort himself beating in his veins.”

Snape smiled slowly, coldly. “Perhaps not...,” he said again.

“Surely you do not doubt that the dagger Horcrux will transmit the remnant of Voldemort’s soul?”

“I do not,” Snape said, narrowing his eyes. “But perhaps it will not be transmitted into a *boy*...”

Dumbledore sighed patiently. “This is not the time for conspiracies, Severus.”

“Indulge me,” Snape replied slowly. “I am merely speculating. The Dark Lord believes his soul will pass into a boy child. He is, in his heart, that most arrogant of men, the sort that believes unquestioningly in the superiority of his own gender. But what if Lucius’ judgment were to become impaired? What if his divinations were clouded? And as a result, what if the final Horcrux were transmitted to a *girl* child?”

“That is not evidence that his soul would not dominate the child’s personality. She would still be influenced by his living essence.”

“His quintessentially *male* essence,” Snape muttered, hardly listening to the portrait. “But how would that balance against the unexpected polarity of her own female heart? How indeed...”

The portrait interrupted gently. “This is speculative foolishness, my friend. I tell you: poison the dagger, or if you cannot, *destroy* it when the proper time comes.”

Snape looked up at the portrait, his eyes narrowed. He took the dagger out of his robes and held it in his hands. It glinted darkly, just as ugly as James had last seen it. Snape nodded.

“Yes,” he agreed. “You’re right, of course, Albus. When the time is right. I cannot destroy the Horcrux yet; there is too much at stake for my loyalties to be challenged. In the meantime, however, perhaps I will experiment. Lucius Malfoy is bonded to the dagger. I may be able to *use* that bond, pervert it, cause it to cloud his mind in the event that it does survive. If Lucius succeeds in using the dagger, he will ‘accidentally’ use it on an unborn girl child, thus foiling his master’s wishes. Perhaps, just perhaps, that would be enough to tip the balance. Otherwise, I will destroy the Horcrux myself when the time is right.”

“Forgive me, Severus,” Dumbledore said, looking him evenly in the eye, “but what if you do not live that long?”

“I have more than one reason to stay alive, Albus,” Snape answered, slipping the dagger back into his robes. “And as you well know, destroying this mysterious object is not even the most important. Trust me, I *shall* be careful.”

On Snape’s last word—*careful*—the memory rippled and faded. Swirling, silvery smoke filled James’ vision and he realized he was leaning on something hard. It was uncomfortable, so he pushed back from it. As he did, he drew his face away from the bowl of Dumbledore’s Pensieve, disoriented and dizzy. Ralph and Rose pulled away at the same moment. They clutched at each other, struggling to stay upright.

“Did you see it?” Scorpius asked. James blinked, recovering his balance. Scorpius was seated on a trunk in the corner of the storage room, leaning languidly against the wall. “Did you see the dagger?”

“I did,” James said. “Did you, Rose? And Ralph? I never saw either of you in there.”

Rose shook her head in dismay. “I saw it all. I saw Headmaster Dumbledore and Professor Snape talking about the possibility of some sort of successor. And then... I saw *him*. He Who Must Not Be Named. He was awful.”

“I didn’t understand a lot of what he said, but I think I got the gist of it,” Ralph said, his face pale. “Those Horcrux things were supposed to keep little bits of Voldemort’s soul safe, so even if he got killed, he wouldn’t really die, right?”

“But the last Horcrux, the one embedded in his father’s dagger, was different,” Rose nodded. “He *couldn’t* reclaim that part again, no matter what. It was meant to be passed on to a baby boy, carrying that bit of his soul to a new life.”

James furrowed his brow. “But why would someone so obsessed with immortality waste a Horcrux on someone *else’s* life?”

Ralph shrugged as if the answer was obvious. “It’s *still* his life, but hidden away. Who’d suspect it? As long as Voldemort was inside Voldemort, all the good wizards in the world were gunning for him. He knew that at least a few people, like your dad, James, would never stop until every last Horcrux was destroyed and every shred of Voldemort was killed. Hiding one last little bit of his soul in some anonymous new baby was sort of genius. I mean, you saw the way Voldemort looked. It wasn’t like he could pass himself off unnoticed in a crowd, was it? But if he was part of some little kid, who would ever think to look there? It’s the perfect disguise.”

“But even so, he wouldn’t *be* that little kid,” Rose said, screwing her face up in disgust. “That little bit of his soul would have to compete against the *whole* soul of the person it was inside of.”

“Or *work with* it,” Scorpius said. “If it could find some weak place in the host soul, it could exploit it, somehow bend it to Voldemort’s will. Even a tree can be bent if it’s manipulated from the time it’s a seedling. Voldemort was very patient and wily. His essence would *take* the time to prune and bend that new soul to his will.”

“So what happened to the dagger?” Rose asked, seating herself on a crate. “We have to assume that Professor Snape was killed before he got a chance to destroy the Horcrux. But did he succeed in hexing the dagger to fool your grandfather?”

“Not according to him,” Scorpius said, smiling grimly. “My grandfather knows nothing of the Pensieve or the memories it contains. He tells the entire story rather differently, of course...”

Scorpius launched into the rest of the tale as he knew it.



It began, he explained, with the death of Severus Snape at the hand of Voldemort, killed not because the Dark Lord suspected his divided allegiance—Scorpius himself hadn't even known of that until he'd discovered it in the Pensieve's stored memories—but because of the mistaken notion that Snape must die for the Elder Wand, the unbeatable instrument of magic, to belong fully to Voldemort. Snape had not expected this, and thus had not destroyed the dagger Horcrux. Snape had, however, been wily enough to hide the dagger extremely well, and to tell no one of its location. Shortly thereafter, after Voldemort himself had been killed and his Death Eaters scattered, Lucius Malfoy had gone after the dagger Horcrux, fanatically intent on fulfilling his duties to his dead master. He crept into the school shortly after the battle was over, while its defences were still very weak. He used every art at his disposal to search for the dagger, but even though he could sense its presence, he was utterly unable to find its hiding place. It drove him mad with fear and rage, for he believed that if he failed, the Dark Lord would exact his revenge even from beyond the grave.

While he was still searching Snape's Headmaster office, Lucius' presence in the castle was detected. He fled, masked and cursing everyone and everything in his way. As he escaped through the Forbidden Forest, however, his heightened sensitivities detected a powerful magical object lost there. He had no time to search for the object, but he determined to return as soon as he could, for he believed he had quite by accident stumbled upon the hiding place of the dagger Horcrux.

Time passed, however, and Lucius was unable to return to the Forest. Most of his fellow Death Eaters were in hiding or had already been captured and imprisoned. Lucius covered his tracks exceptionally well, but lived in abject fear that he was being watched, that at any moment, he would be found out and apprehended. His wife, Narcissa, had left him shortly after the battle, and even his son, Draco, seemed to want little to do with him, so Lucius went into hiding. He used the last of his money to buy a rundown manor house on Cannery Row, protecting it with the best secrecy methods he knew. There, alone, he began to plan his return to Hogwarts castle to capture back the dagger.

Unfortunately, in the time that had passed, Hogwarts had been rebuilt and fortified. There was no way for someone like Lucius to get inside the grounds undetected. He needed partners and he needed money. Soon enough, he encountered both in the form of Gregor Tyranicus, a soft but hate-filled refugee from his own royal wizarding family in Romania. Gregor came with a small fortune in gold, granted to him by his father in an effort to assure he left quietly and never returned. Gregor was instantly enthralled by Lucius' tales of his dealings with the famous Dark Lord, and vowed every bit of his treasure in support of the search for the mysterious dagger Horcrux. In exchange, he merely asked for his own position of power once the predicted pureblood kingdom was instated. Lucius graciously accepted Gregor's support, even catering to the man's rather obsessive infatuation with collecting relics from the Dark Lord's life.

Together, they assembled a small team of thieves and murderers, training them for the death-defying siege of Hogwarts castle. In reality, Lucius had no intention of accompanying the siege. He planned to use the distraction created by the siege to sneak alone into the Forbidden Forest and seek out the hidden dagger. Despite his and Gregor's training, in fact, Lucius fully expected the siege team to be captured and sent to Azkaban. Frankly, so long as they provided the short distraction Lucius needed, he didn't care. They would be one small sacrifice in the ongoing work of the fallen Dark Lord.

The siege never happened though. Less than a week before the planned trip to Hogwarts castle, Lucius was alone in the manor house on Cannery Row when one of the thieves he'd hired for the siege team,

a young man named Malcolm Baddock, stepped out of the shadows, a knife glittering in his hand. The man grinned, ordering Lucius to turn over the gold hidden somewhere in the house.

“Give it to me and maybe I’ll only cut out your tongue, old man,” Baddock had said.

Lucius had merely sighed. He closed the book he’d been reading and, almost lazily, produced his wand. He fingered it idly, not really pointing it at Baddock. “And what makes you believe, young man, that you won’t be killed where you stand by this very wand?”

Baddock’s grin widened eagerly. “Because this here’s my lucky knife, it is,” he said, displaying the darkly glinting blade. “It’s not failed me yet. It’ll kill you three times before you hit the floor, you daft old coot. No wand’s ever been any good against it before, and yours won’t be any different. Now take me to the gold!”

Lucius narrowed his eyes. “Tell me, my friend,” he said silkily, “does your lucky knife know when a wizard is going to do *this*?”

In one deft movement, Lucius drew a short flick in the air. A thin red line slashed across Baddock’s throat and he flinched. Blood began to bead from the cut. It dribbled down his throat and Baddock tried to look down at it, frowning rather comically. His face contorted with rage and he reared, hoisting the knife by its tip. As he opened his mouth to speak, however, his head quietly toppled backwards off his shoulders, separating neatly along the line of blood. It fell to the floor with a thunk.

Lucius was already pocketing his wand and wondering if he’d tell the rest of the team what had happened to Baddock when something poked him in the stomach. He looked down curiously and noticed the hilt of Baddock’s knife protruding from his robe. A moment later, he heard the thump of the man’s headless body striking the floor, dead. Truly, it *had* been a lucky knife if Baddock had succeeded in finishing the throw he’d begun while his head was still marginally attached.

Lucius reached for the knife to extract it from his stomach. It would hurt, but it wouldn’t be fatal, not to a wizard like Lucius. He stopped, however, before his fingers touched the hilt. His eyes widened slowly as he stared at it. The bit of hilt he could see protruding from the slowly darkening folds of his robes was quite ugly and jewel-encrusted. Lucius recognized it. Slowly, he wrapped his fingers around the silver hilt and pulled the blade out of his gut. He barely felt it. He slid to his knees, holding the dagger up, turning it, and watching the firelight play on its dark, bloody blade. He began to laugh.

“Thank you, my Lord,” he cried through his laughter. “Even dead, your word rings true! Your final Horcrux has found me! Thank you! I will not fail you! Your final task will be completed!”

Lucius laughed until he was hoarse, only remembering to heal the wound in his stomach when he noticed the blood soaking the front of his robes and pattering to the floor.

It had been over two years since the Battle of Hogwarts, since the inconceivable death of the Dark Lord, but Lucius was finally able to complete his duty. He told Gregor of the surprising appearance of the dagger, and they dismissed the rest of the siege team with a small pay-off in gold, warning them that if they told anyone what they knew, they would experience the same fate as had befallen their mate, Baddock.

Lucius had long since determined the family that would play host to the Dark Lord’s ‘gift’. They were pureblood, but lowly and poor. Lucius spied on them and discovered that a young woman in the family had just become pregnant. Her name was Lianna Agnellis and her husband had recently been apprehended by the Ministry, suspected of low-level involvement with Death Eaters in the last days of Voldemort’s reign of

terror. Lucius had vaguely known the man, whose name was Wilfred. He had indeed been a tool of the Death Eaters, although he himself barely knew it. The young man had been extremely simple and gullible, and Lucius himself had even used him as a messenger. It was Lucius who had anonymously informed the Ministry of Wilfred's Death Eater connections, knowing full well that the pathetic man would never be able to implicate anyone by name; Lucius and his cohorts had been far too careful for that. Wilfred was interrogated by the Wizengamot and eventually imprisoned in Azkaban until such time as he might choose to divulge the names of his purported accomplices.

After Wilfred's imprisonment, Lucius paid a visit to the young, quite pregnant Lianna in her tiny flat. He ingratiated himself to her, claiming to be a concerned friend and former associate of her incarcerated husband. Lianna made tea for the two of them and they sat at her rickety kitchen table. Lucius explained that he had both the money and the influence to see to her husband's release *if* she was willing to perform a small service on behalf of her husband's benefactors. Lianna was desperate: she fell upon Lucius, sobbing and promising she'd do anything to get her Wilfred back home. She asked what Lucius required of her, and he balked, suggesting that she might think twice once he told her. He asked her to take a moment to consider it while she refilled his tea.

As she returned to the stove, sniffing and wiping her eyes, Lucius peered into Lianna's empty teacup, examining the shreds of tea leaves scattered in the bottom. He had to be sure that the child in the woman's womb was a boy child; surely, Lucius was wizard enough to ascertain something as simple as that. He looked closely, squinting, but for some reason, the tea leaves blurred before his eyes. He blinked, trying to focus, to concentrate. In his robes, the Horcrux dagger seemed to vibrate. He felt it reaching into his mind, calling him. It was distracting him. Lately, Lucius never went anywhere without the dagger, but now he suddenly wished he'd left it at the manor house. And then, just as Lianna was returning, settling Lucius' own cup onto the table, the stew of sodden leaves became clear. Lucius stared at them, even reaching for the woman's cup and tilting it to the light. Yes, there it was. There was no question: the child in the woman's belly was a boy child. The leaves proved it. Lucius sighed and smiled with relief. The dagger in his robes went still again.

"What?" Lianna had said nervously, sitting back down. "What do you see in the leaves? Am I going to get my Wilfred back?"

Lucius looked at her with gently shining eyes. He placed his hand on hers comfortingly. "You will both be together very soon," he promised, "*if* you do as we require. You may do it today, this very afternoon if you wish. I will assist you. But you must do it with no hesitation and no questions. It may shock you and even pain you, but only a little, and it will be over in mere minutes. Can you do that, my dear Mrs. Agnellis?"

She nodded, nervously but with great resolution. "I knew that Wilfred's bosses weren't the nicest of people, and that the things they made him do were sometimes awful. I told him then what I'm telling you now, sir: I don't want to know anything about it. I'll do what you want me to do, but don't make me know any more about it than I have to. I just want my Wilfred back, and after that, we'll take our leave of the lot of you, if you don't mind."

Lucius nodded understandingly, patting her hand, but Lianna seemed to have nothing more to say. The firm line of her mouth proved to Lucius that the simple-minded woman had determined to do nearly anything to get her husband back. She seemed to sense it would be rather horrid, but she had a look on her

face that Lucius knew well. It was the look that said *I will do whatever it takes, and then I will never speak of it or think of it again. No one will know, and I will forget it myself. I am already forgetting it. My mind is a blank. Please just get it over with.*

When Lucius was quite confident that the look of resolve was fully solidified on Lianna's face, he reached slowly into his robe, maintaining his expression of kind concern. He produced a folded black cloth and laid it on the table.

"Unwrap it, Mrs. Agnellis," he said quietly. "It is for you."

She reached and pulled the folded cloth to herself. She unwrapped it and stared blankly down at the ugly silver dagger.

Lucius continued to smile at her. "It'll only hurt for a moment," he said reassuringly. He began to explain to her what she must do.



"That's absolutely horrible," Rose said, her voice shaking. "Your grandfather is a monster!"

Scorpius didn't respond. He looked away, glancing at the dusty Mirror of Erised.

Ralph frowned. "So how did that Baddock bloke get the dagger Horcrux?"

"He was a seventh-year student at Hogwarts right before the battle," Scorpius said. "My grandfather thinks the dagger somehow *allowed* Baddock to find it, knowing it could use him to get to where it wanted to be."

"Poor stupid git," Rose said, sighing.

"But if the dagger was with Baddock," James asked, "then what was the magical object your grandfather sensed in the Forbidden Forest—" He stopped suddenly as the answer came to him. Rose's eyes widened as she also made the connection.

"The *Resurrection Stone!*" she breathed. "That's how they found it! He got lucky enough to get near it when his senses were on high alert! He felt the lost Resurrection Stone and mistook it for the hidden dagger!"

"He must have realized that as well," James nodded gravely. "He probably didn't know what it was, but after Baddock tried to attack him, he knew the thing in the Forest couldn't have been the dagger. Eventually, he snuck out into the Forest to look for it. Bloody hell! He must have wet himself when he found out it was Slytherin's half of the Beacon Stone!"

Scorpius shook his head. "I don't know anything about that part, but yes, it would make sense."

“So,” James asked, “that’s the end of the story, then? This poor Lianna woman scratched Voldemort’s initial on her belly and gave birth to a baby with part of Voldemort’s soul in it?”

Scorpius nodded, still averting his eyes, “She was sick with what she’d done, and of course, my grandfather did nothing to see that her husband was released from Azkaban. Not that he really could even if he’d wanted to. All of that had been lies. Eventually, as Wilfred wasn’t released, Lianna became convinced that she’d done something awful, and for no reason. She became very sick and was taken to St. Mungo’s hospital. That night, she died giving birth to her baby.”

Ralph’s lips were pressed into a thin line. He shook his head and said, “This is awful. I didn’t need to know any of this.”

Rose looked up, her eyes shining. “Whatever happened to the baby’s father?”

“Wilfred stayed in Azkaban for years. He knew his wife had died giving birth to his child, but he never saw the baby. He demanded to be let out so he could raise his child. He became irrational and was put into solitary confinement. A short while later, he was found dead in his cell. My grandfather believes he was thrown into the Dementor pit by some of the guards.”

“The ‘Dementor pit?’” Ralph said, shuddering.

Rose sighed shallowly. “The Dementors used to be the guards at Azkaban. When they were deemed untrustworthy, most of them were rounded up and imprisoned there themselves, in a virtually lightless room in the cellar. Just like with the Borleys, the Dementors are creatures of shadow: without light to show up against, they’re helpless. Azkaban’s dark pit keeps them imprisoned and weak but mad with hunger. If a human was thrown into the pit with them, it’d be an extremely horrible death.”

Ralph asked, “But why would the guards throw that poor sap into the pit?”

“Revenge,” Scorpius said simply. “They believed he was holding out, protecting the worst Death Eaters, the ones who hadn’t yet been captured. Most of the new guards at Azkaban had been former Aurors and Harriers. They’d seen loads of people killed by the Death Eaters and had no mercy on someone they believed was protecting those responsible. Nothing was ever proved though.”

“So the baby was an orphan,” James said quietly. “Just like my dad.”

Scorpius nodded. “To my grandfather’s great anger, the baby was a girl child. To this day, he has no idea that it was the hex of Severus Snape that clouded his judgment, working through the dagger itself. He refuses to refer to the child as a ‘she’, calling it either ‘the Bloodline’ or even ‘it’. He simultaneously despises her and obsesses over her, knowing she bears the last shred of his dead master. The baby girl was raised by Lianna’s parents, who were not particularly loving. My grandfather has spied on them regularly through the years. The grandparents were never overtly cruel, but Grandfather believes they secretly blame the girl for the death of their daughter.”

Rose shook her head. “Stop. I don’t want to hear any more. It’s just too beastly.”

James face had grown hard and resolved. He looked at Scorpius. “No,” he said. “You’ve told us everything else. Now tell us the most important part. Tell us who the Bloodline is.”

“I’d thought you would have figured that bit out by now,” Scorpius answered. “She is the only known orphan girl currently at Hogwarts, although she never speaks of it. She has her mother’s dark hair and her father’s height, but everything else, she gets from the persistent dark influence of the dagger Horcrux, from the last fragmented wisp of the soul of Voldemort. She was standing right next to you this afternoon,

hidden behind a bookshelf in the library, listening to you three. It was her presence that set off the Sneakoscope in Ralph's satchel. You know who I mean. Tell me her name because I can't bring myself to say it out loud. My grandfather would kill me, and he'd probably use that stupid dagger to do it."

James looked at Rose and Ralph, measuring their faces, and then he looked at Scorpius.

"The Bloodline of Voldemort is Tabitha Violetus Corsica," he said firmly. "Somehow, I've known it all along."

"Then you know something else as well," Scorpius said, sighing and standing up.

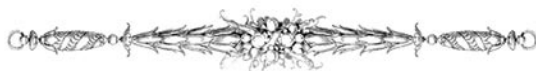
"What?" Ralph said, looking one by one at everyone in the room.

Rose answered calmly, "We know who Bloodline is, so we also know who the host of the Gatekeeper is going to be. Both are Tabitha."

James shook his head slowly. "The only thing we *don't* know," he said, "is how and when it's going to happen and what we can do to stop her."

ONLY THREE MORE CHAPTERS TO GO!

The last chapter of *James Potter and the Curse of the Gatekeeper* will be released Saturday, September 20th at noon, CST. If you have not yet visited the [Grotto Keep Forum](#), do stop in then for the official JPCG Wrap Party! We're aiming for record users on that day to commemorate the completion of the story. The author will be on hand to answer questions and offer his own thoughts on the tale and the future of the James Potter world. Stop in as a visitor and view the discussion, or register and join in the conversation! Either way, we hope to meet you in the [Grotto](#) this Saturday from noon until whenever. See you there!



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