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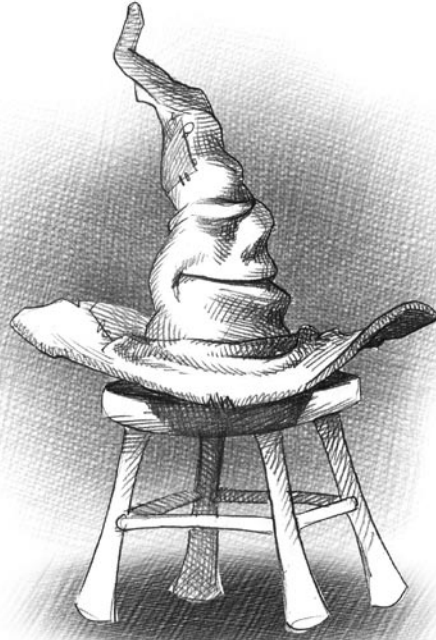
# JAMES POTTER AND THE CURSE OF THE GATEKEEPER

Featuring the Song of the Sorting Hat



By G. Norman Lippert

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



**E**xactly as last year, a wooden stool had been placed on the dais. Atop it, the worn and ancient Sorting Hat sat, looking like nothing more than a dusty cast-off from a forgotten wardrobe. James knew that in his parents' day, and for centuries before, the Hat had sung a song prior to each year's Sorting. Last year, however, the Hat had not produced a song. James hadn't thought about it much; he'd merely assumed that after all those centuries the Hat deserved the occasional break. Now, the ancient Hat stirred on its stool, apparently preparing to sing. The fold that formed the mouth seemed to open, to take a deep breath, and then the Hat's high, lilting voice filled the waiting silence.

“A thousand years and more have I resided at my post  
And watched the tide of years forever ebb upon my host  
Fair Hogwarts alters not despite the weight of ages raging  
For Hogwarts knows that time revolves, while she is only aging  
The rise of villains coincides, to keep the balance rightly  
With dawning heroes, in whose eyes good justice blazes brightly  
In recent past, dread Voldemort rose up with might so scary  
That fate did send a hero boy, the orphan Potter, Harry  
And thus unveiled the drama of time's everlasting scheme  
The players change, the venues shift, but constant is the theme  
The root of evil always finds a new and fertile garden  
But valor's heart is ever strong to bring us fate's good pardon  
And this, you see, brings us to me, the Hat that does the Sorting,  
For 'tis my task to keep the balance right for evil thwarting

For witnessed I the dawn of that long battle that endures  
And long as that old struggle lasts, my duty hope ensures  
I see the seed that guarantees the role of every student  
And place them best into the House that grows the seed most prudent  
In Hufflepuff, the seed of loyalty and diligence  
For Ravenclaw, the vine of knowledge grows with common sense  
Brave Gryffindor breeds valor and courageousness of heart  
And Slytherin gives those who love ambition their good start  
They go there hence into their House as sign of their vocation  
But many sense it gives a hint of deeper motivation  
Make no mistake, judge not the one upon their house of Sorting  
But always look instead to gauge the way of their comporting  
For good can come of any House, regardless of its banner  
And evil, too, can spread its leaves within the finest manor  
Beneath my brim now come and sit to hear my declaration  
But be assured, you bring along your heart's own inclination  
It matters not what happens while you sit upon this chair  
The true judge of your future is what sits beneath your hair.”

As the Sorting Hat finished its song, the Hall erupted into applause. James grinned, craning to look across the room toward Ralph, who smiled back a little sheepishly. If anyone needed to hear the Hat's most recent song, it was Ralph, whose assignment to Slytherin had been a source of rather constant consternation during the previous year. As the applause died away, Professor McGonagall approached the Hat, producing a long parchment from her robes. She unrolled it and studied it through her tiny spectacles. She nodded to herself, lowered the parchment, and picked up the Sorting Hat by its tip...

