

Diving into the Pensieve

Christmas vacation arrived for the students, who welcomed it with evident pleasure. Large snowflakes were falling, covering the courtyard and the grounds in a white blanket.

Most students gathered at the Hogsmeade train station, leaving the castle practically empty.

Only a few regulars, like Hagrid, or Filch and his dreadful Mrs. Norris, never left.

Attilius bid farewell to his friend, who was heading home to spend the holidays with his family. He, however, had orders not to leave the school, as he needed to continue his investigation on behalf of the Dark Lord.

He was permitted to accompany his friend to the station and waved goodbye to him and the other occupants of the train as it rolled away into the valley.

The holidays were shaping up to be very dreary. He was stuck alone in this huge castle now that the majority of its occupants had left.

He waited until the smoke from the locomotive disappeared behind a hillside, then turned back toward the castle. He pushed his dragon-hide gloved hands deep into his robe pockets and trudged through the snow.

He crossed the gates and went straight to his common room without bothering to pass through the Great Hall for breakfast. He glanced around the room and saw only a few students chatting among themselves and a handful of professors conversing lightly.

Attilius descended the stairs toward the dungeons, approaching the bare stone wall and passing through it to find the soft green glow of his common room.

The circular room was completely empty. The black leather armchairs that were usually occupied by students doing their homework now sat vacant. He settled down in front of the fireplace, making himself comfortable as he watched the flames dance and felt their warmth against his skin.



"I'm bored," he muttered. "There's nothing to do."

"You should be less quick to say such nonsense when you're in the presence of treasures like the one you're watching!" an otherworldly voice reprimanded him.

Startled, Attilius leapt to his feet and looked around to locate the source of this statement.

A whitish figure appeared through the thick stone wall. It was tall, wearing a wig of curled hair and a thin mustache above its upper lip.

"Bloody Baron?!" he exclaimed.

"The very same," confirmed the ghost, executing an exaggerated bow that caused his wig to slip to the floor.

Attilius watched as the ghost clumsily picked up his wig and placed it back on his head.

"What are you doing here alone, young man?" the Baron asked, changing the subject.

Attilius sighed.

"I wasn't able to go home for the holidays," he explained. "I'm stuck in this wretched castle.

All alone."

The Bloody Baron laughed.

"You little upstart, you have no idea of even a hundredth of the wonders these walls hide.

When I was a student here, I made it my mission to discover them all."

The ghost launched into a convoluted explanation of his talents as a wizard and the respect he commanded.

As he mimicked battle scenes and described the monsters he'd had to vanquish, Attilius' gaze drifted to the fire and the logs slowly burning.

"I had to lose myself in the Room of Requirement to finally get my hands on Salazar Slytherin's wand, but that wretch Gormlaith stole it from me and locked it in the Chamber of Secrets."

Attilius snapped to attention at this last sentence.

He leapt to his feet.



"Did you just say the Chamber of Secrets?" he exclaimed.

The Bloody Baron nodded.

"Indeed," he confirmed. "At Hogwarts' founding, Salazar Slytherin wasn't convinced by the collective decision of his peers. The increasing number of Muggle-born students didn't sit well with his vision of magic. To reserve magic for Purebloods alone, he decided to create a place where he could freely practice the darkest magic. Thus, the Chamber of Secrets was born."

He paused before concluding, "The last time the Chamber of Secrets was opened, Slytherin's heir released a Basilisk."

The ghost shivered at the mention of the terrible beast.

"Fortunately, that monster was vanquished by the Chosen One a few years ago," he said.

Attilius gave him a blank look.

"Are you talking about the Undesirable No. 1?" he corrected coldly.

The Bloody Baron returned his stare.

"Only Death Eaters and followers of You-Know-Who call him that. To me, he will always be the Chosen One."

Attilius clenched his fist and felt electricity crackle in his fingers. The mention of his master's enemy stirred an uncontrollable anger within him.

A sharp pain gripped his arm, feeling like steel jaws sinking deep into his flesh and vibrating against his bones.

He collapsed into the armchair, clutching his arm, fearing it might detach from his body.

"What's happening to you, dear boy?" the Bloody Baron inquired. "You're pale as a sheet."

Attilius took a deep breath to lessen the pain. Gradually, it subsided and finally vanished.

"Forgive me for prying, but what on earth is happening to you?"

Attilius sighed.

"It's nothing, don't worry. I think it's just a passing pain."

He steered the conversation back to the topic of interest.



"You mentioned having once held Slytherin's wand and the Chamber of Secrets?"

The Bloody Baron shook his head.

"You misunderstand, dear boy. I did indeed hold our illustrious founder's wand in my hands, but I never accessed the Chamber. I only know that that scoundrel Gormlaith snatched it before hiding in the Chamber of Secrets and fleeing the castle to keep her prize for herself."

He paused before continuing.

"I only know that her end was fitting. Legend says her niece took the wand before traveling to America to found Ilvermorny."

Attilius smiled.

"You seem well-informed," he observed.

The Bloody Baron took on a contrite look.

"Are you suggesting I had a passion for that scoundrel?"

"More so for what she stole from you," Attilius corrected.

The ghost smiled, unable to keep a straight face, and burst into laughter, joined by the young man.

"I must admit, in my youth, I was very eager to acquire great power, but she never deigned to give me her attention or her love."

He suddenly looked sad, and the room seemed to drop several degrees.

"Not that she was the only one, anyway," he added.

Attilius interrupted his introspection.

"Baron, can you tell me more about the Chamber of Secrets? Do you know where it's hidden?"

"From what I've heard from Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington, the Chosen One found its entrance thanks to Moaning Myrtle."

Attilius squinted, puzzled.

"Who are you talking about?"

The Bloody Baron explained who the ghost of the student was and how she had tragically died in the girls' bathroom on the second floor.



Attilius thanked the ghost and rushed out of the common room, the ghost's words fading behind him as he slipped through the bare stone wall and into the empty corridor.

He climbed the stairs four steps at a time until he reached the second floor. No one was around, so Attilius quickly slipped into the girls' bathroom.

The room was circular, with several sinks arranged in a circle in the center. Muffled sobbing came from one of the stalls, whose door was closed. Attilius could hear the high-pitched, stifled voice crying inside.

He guessed it was Moaning Myrtle and approached her stall to ask her about the Chamber of Secrets.

He knocked three times, and a loud voice told him to get lost. He tried again, but a ghostly figure passed through the wood of the door, repeating for him to leave her alone.

"Hello, Myrtle, I didn't mean to bother you. My name is Attilius, and I just wanted to ask you a few questions."

The ghostly girl retreated back into her stall and started shouting at him to go away and leave her alone.

"I mean you no harm," he explained. "I just wanted to ask about how you... died."

Myrtle's sobs suddenly stopped. Attilius approached her stall, sure that she'd calmed down.

"You just want to mock me!" she cried, emerging through her stall door.

Startled by her sudden movement, Attilius lost his balance and fell to the floor.

"You're just like everyone else. All you care about is that stupid Chamber of Secrets."

He nodded.

"I can't deny it," he admitted. "I'm looking for information on Salazar Slytherin, and I heard you know where the Chamber of Secrets is hidden. Would you help me?"

Myrtle froze for a moment, hovering a few inches above the ground, giving Attilius his first real look at her.



She still wore her Hogwarts uniform, and her long, greasy hair hung in two pigtails on either side of her round face. Her thick square glasses made her eyes look round and bulging, as if they might fall out.

“Why should I help you?” she asked.

Attilius sighed, getting to his feet and brushing off his robes.

“You don’t have any particular reason to. I’m simply trying to find a way to deal with You-Know-Who, and I thought you might like to help.”

Myrtle looked thoughtful, considering his idea.

“All I can tell you is how I died.”

Attilius smiled in satisfaction.

“It’s better than nothing,” he confirmed.

Slowly, Myrtle approached him, explaining how she’d hidden in the bathroom after Olive Hornby had mocked her glasses. She stayed in the stall for some time until she eventually heard a boy’s voice hissing in an odd language.

Myrtle suddenly went a shade paler than usual.

“I came out to tell him to leave since he had no business in a girls’ bathroom. But I only had time to see two large yellow eyes staring at me.”

She gulped hard.

“I don’t know exactly what happened, but I remember only waking up standing next to my body. I waited a long time before that vile Olive Hornby finally came to check if I was okay.”

Myrtle paused for a moment, giggling.

“I gave her the fright of her life. She never forgot me after that.”

Attilius smiled in turn, realizing there was something quite likable beneath her unusual appearance.

“Do you remember where you saw those yellow eyes that killed you?” he asked, curious.

Myrtle froze once more, going completely white.

She didn’t say another word but merely pointed at the pristine sinks.



Attilius nodded and left her there, moving toward the sinks. He examined them, looking for any buttons, switches, levers, or anything that might allow him to access the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets.

After five minutes with no success, he backed away, thinking he might need another approach.

“I don’t know if this will help you, but when Harry wanted to get in, he started hissing like a snake,” she suggested.

A slight burning sensation flared up in his arm at the mention of the boy’s name.

“What kind of hissing, Myrtle?” he asked.

She attempted to imitate the sound, producing hisses similar to those of a snake.

“Do you mean something like this?” he replied, speaking a sentence in Parseltongue.

Myrtle froze in terror, the hissing sounds chilling her to the core.

“That’s exactly it!” she exclaimed. “That’s what Harry did when he touched that faucet right there!”

She pointed to one of the faucets, and Attilius approached it, noticing a snake engraved in the metal. He turned the knob, but no water came out.

To be sure it wasn’t a mistake, he tried turning the other faucets, and each one produced a steady stream of water.

“They all work fine, except this one.”

He traced his finger along the snake’s design, hissing again and commanding the door to open.

A low rumbling reverberated through the room, passing through the walls and resonating throughout the castle. The sinks parted, revealing the entrance to a chute that descended into the castle’s depths.

“Guess this is the only way in,” Attilius sighed.

Myrtle nodded, her eyes fixed on the gaping hole.

Attilius took a deep breath and slid into the chute, which quickly became a long, dark, slimy slide. Along the way, he spotted other pipes branching off in different directions, but none were wide enough. He was tossed and turned as the chute twisted and turned, hurling him down to unimaginable depths far below the dungeons. Finally, the chute leveled out, and Attilius was spat out onto the damp floor of a stone-walled tunnel, just high enough for him to crouch.



“I wonder where I am,” he mused, looking back up at the chute he’d just emerged from. “I’ll have to find a way back up.”

The pipe disappeared into darkness, suggesting he was miles beneath the castle.

He approached the earthen wall and pressed his hand against it. It was slick, with condensation seeping through.

“Mud,” he noted. “I must be under the Black Lake.”

The tunnel was as silent as a tomb. He reached into his robe, pulling out his wand and casting a small orb of light that illuminated the tunnel with a pale glow.

He moved forward slowly, taking in the contours of the rock. The dampness was palpable, and the temperature was much colder than he’d anticipated.

The tunnel soon opened up into a higher space, and he found himself standing atop a pile of small twigs that made crunching sounds underfoot. He lowered his wand to reveal a pile of small bones scattered across the floor.

Wrinkling his nose in disgust, he pressed onward, determined to find a way out.

Farther along, he encountered the remains of a basilisk shed, its decaying skin still visible in patches.

Struggling to keep his balance, he nearly slipped on a pile of rubble, seemingly fallen from the ceiling. He glanced up, noticing thick cracks lined with moss. Reaching the basilisk shed, he placed his hand on it, closing his eyes and feeling the strength that radiated from the giant serpent. He imagined the creature’s enormous size, picturing it filling much of the tunnels.

An odd noise caught his attention—a rhythmic pulsation, like a heartbeat echoing through the labyrinth. He pressed his hand against one of the walls, closing his eyes again.

For several long seconds, nothing happened. Then, another pulse made the wall tremble.

“There’s something in these tunnels,” he concluded.

He gathered his courage and continued his way through the maze. From time to time, he cast revealing spells to make sure no one was hiding in the mist.

The tunnel kept twisting and turning. Attilius could feel the cold seeping under his robes. He wanted to see the end of the tunnel, yet feared what he might discover there. Finally, after one last curve, he found himself facing a wall



engraved with two intertwined serpents. Large, gleaming emeralds were set in place of their eyes.

He stared at the serpents with curiosity.

“Open,” he hissed.

The two serpents immediately parted: the two sections of the wall on which they were engraved slid silently apart. Moments later, they had entirely disappeared, leaving the path open.

Attilius stepped through the opening.

He was now at the entrance of a long, dimly lit hall. Massive stone pillars, around which sculpted serpents coiled, supported a ceiling lost in shadow, casting dark shadows in a strange, greenish light.

He extended his wand and moved forward among the columns, each of his steps echoed back by the dark walls. More than once, he thought he saw one of the stone serpents shift, its hollow eyes seeming to track his movements.

When he reached the last two pillars, he found himself facing a statue that stretched from floor to ceiling. Attilius had to crane his neck to see the statue’s head: it depicted a wizard with a thin, long beard that almost reached the hem of his robe, where two massive gray feet rested on the smooth floor.

Between the statue’s feet lay the remains of a giant serpent.

Attilius approached slowly, as though he feared the skeleton might animate and try to devour him.

“A testament to your passing, Harry,” Attilius noted.

He stepped around the Basilisk’s remains and began searching for other traces left by Salazar Slytherin.

He circled the room, but very few clues seemed to lead to this place. He raised his wand and cast several revealing spells, but no hidden doors, no secret passages appeared to be hidden in the walls.

After an hour of circling, Attilius collapsed in the center of the room facing the creature’s remains. He took a deep breath and let himself drift into thought.

He had spent the last few months researching his house’s founder. He had visited the library countless times and delved into numerous books on the origins of the school's four founders.



He remembered that Slytherin was the most secretive of them all. He wanted to give more freedom and power to wizards, even at the cost of relations with Muggles.

It had taken him many years to create the Chamber of Secrets and to conduct countless experiments under the noses of the other founders, who were content with their own limited contributions.

Many pureblood wizarding families claimed descent from that illustrious wizard. According to the records Attilius had poured over, only certain families had actually held that honor, like the Gaunts or the Peverells.

His parents had been among those who boasted of belonging to noble families with illustrious ancestors, but Attilius himself didn't care.

In his eyes, only successes achieved by his own hand mattered.

Whether his ancestors were great wizards or the simplest of Muggles, it mattered little to him.

"I'm not going to rot here," he said to himself. "I'll have to find a way out of this foul pit."

He got back to his feet and turned toward the tunnels. During his fall, he had seen different pipes branching in various directions.

He was about to turn back when a voice caught his attention.

"At last you're here, you reckless youth!" thundered a voice that seemed to come from beyond the grave.

Attilius turned to find the bloodied figure of the Bloody Baron hovering toward him.

"You managed to find the famous Chamber of Secrets," he congratulated, looking around with a spark of interest in his eye. "Though it seems to have little left to hide."

His gaze settled on the remains of the giant serpent.

Attilius shrugged.

"I have a feeling something is hiding in these walls, but I can't find it."

The specter rubbed his chin, unable to suggest any hidden cache.

Attilius stiffened.



“You mentioned that Gormlaith fled the castle through here,” he reminded him. “That means there must be a way leading back up to the Forbidden Forest.”

The Bloody Baron pondered this, and his logic seemed plausible.

“How on earth can we find that exit?” he asked.

Attilius struck his fist into his open palm.

“As a ghost, you should be able to pass through walls as thick as these,” he said, pressing his hand against the stone wall.

The specter nodded and slipped through the wall, disappearing for several seconds. Attilius watched every crack in the stone, hoping to see his companion reappear.

After a minute, he was expelled from the wall, sent flying as if some invisible force had thrust him out.

Surprised, Attilius rushed to the ghost, who was attempting to regain his composure, adjusting his wig with difficulty.

“What happened?” he asked.

“I thought I’d found a way for us to escape, but when I approached, the wall repelled me,” he confirmed.

Attilius rubbed his chin, trying to understand.

The Bloody Baron, meanwhile, was straightening his clothing and smoothing the hair of his wig.

“Can you tell me where you were repelled?” Attilius asked again.

The ghost made a face.

“I must confess I am not inclined to be rejected by this wall like a common rogue.”

The young man’s smile shifted to a look of pity.

“I should have guessed it would be too difficult for you,” he said. “I imagine such powerful magic must seem frightening to you.”

The Bloody Baron’s face flushed with outrage.

“Are you implying that I’m a coward?” he protested.

Attilius shrugged indifferently.



“Rest assured, my young friend,” he replied. “If that witch Gormlaith found the path, nothing will be simpler for two wizards as talented as we are.”

The ghost led him to a large, unremarkable section of wall and placed his ghostly palm against it. Taking a deep breath, he tried to move inside but was instantly repelled as if he were made of flesh and blood.

“This is it!” Attilius exclaimed.

He pressed his hand against the cold, damp surface. He closed his eyes and felt a deep, slow vibration.

“There’s something behind here.”

“How on earth can we get through this cursed door?!” the Bloody Baron raged, rubbing his head.

Attilius had a flash of understanding.

His eyes wide with surprise, he turned back to the ghost, who was still grumbling at the founder of Slytherin House, floating near the statue, angrily shaking his fist at its face.

At last, he had the solution. The answer was so obvious.

He took a few steps back and fixed his gaze on the surface that had pushed the Bloody Baron away. He poured all his focus into the few hisses that slipped between his teeth.

“Open,” he hissed.

His words echoed under the high ceiling of the Chamber. For several long seconds, nothing happened.

Suddenly, a rumbling that seemed to emerge from the depths of the Earth caused the stone to crumble, creating an opening three meters wide and high.

The hallway extended a few meters before ending at a stone staircase that disappeared into darkness.

The rumbling had caught the ghost's attention, interrupting his rant against Salazar Slytherin’s statue as he joined Attilius.

“You did it, Malkin,” he remarked. “You managed to find the exit.”

The young man drew his wand from his robe and lit a small beam.

“Are you ready, Baron?” he asked.

The ghost straightened to his full height, smoothing the strands of his wig.



“Let’s go!” he agreed.

They crossed the threshold together, advancing toward the staircase. As soon as Attilius set foot on the first step, the wall reassembled, blocking the exit behind them.

The last glow from the Chamber of Secrets vanished as emerald flames ignited the torches lining both sides of the staircase.

“I have a feeling we’re moving in the right direction,” the Bloody Baron confided.

Attilius nodded, climbing the steps with the ghost close behind.

For several minutes, they ascended, twisting at each junction. Tension tightened his thigh muscles, his feet ached, and his breath grew more and more labored.

“Hang in there, Malkin,” Slytherin's ghost encouraged. “I’m sure we’ll soon be free of this dreadful place.”

The young man nodded. He took one last turn and reached the final step.

At last, he had reached the top. The torches gave way as the emerald glow gradually faded.

He emerged into a new corridor just a few meters long that led to a new chamber nearly ten meters high.

The room was completely empty except for a circular basin several meters wide, topped by a massive transparent stalactite that seemed to pulsate with a vibrant soul.

The sound of dripping water echoed through the space. Attilius approached the basin, seeing his reflection distorted in the rippling water.

Lights drifted in the water like luminous fish swimming in the clear liquid.

“This can’t be...” murmured the Bloody Baron, who had just joined Attilius.

Attilius turned to him, seeking answers.

“What is it?” he asked, pointing to the basin.

The ghost stared at the circle in silence, looking up at the massive stalactite from which whitish water dripped before refocusing on the basin.

“It’s a Pensieve,” he explained.

Attilius stared at him in confusion.



“It’s a way to see a person’s thoughts,” the Baron clarified. “From everything we’ve seen so far, I suspect this stone holds Salazar Slytherin’s memories.”

Attilius was stunned. He had found the memories of Hogwarts' founder, crystallized before he disappeared forever.

The student looked down and noticed a glimmer at the other end of the room. It must be the exit. He started to head towards it but was stopped in his tracks by a voice.

He turned to look at the Bloody Baron, but the ghost’s gaze was still fixed on the massive stalactite.

“Traitor!” a voice cried in the distance. “You’re nothing but a traitor!”

Attilius looked around, searching for the source of the voice, but they were alone. The voice wasn’t the ghost’s; it was much harsher. Rougher.

Older.

Attilius turned his gaze to the shimmering surface of the Pensieve and realized the voices were coming from there.

He leaned closer to the surface, not thinking, and plunged inside.

He found himself on a ledge overlooking the castle under construction below. Two men watched the silhouettes of wizards racing after each other on broomsticks.

“Could you have imagined that our school would attract so many students?” asked the first.

He was tall, with broad, muscular shoulders, long hair, and a thick beard. His scarlet robe bore a golden lion on his chest.

“I think we could bring in even more students, don’t you?” he insisted.

The other remained silent. He was thin and stockier than his friend, bald with a long white beard trailing over his chest. His robe was emerald green, bearing a silver snake.

“I’m not sure if it was wise to bring in so many apprentices,” he hesitated, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

His friend raised his brows in surprise.

“What are you saying, Salazar?” he exclaimed. “Have you forgotten what we promised?”



He paused before continuing.

“Have you forgotten the massacre at Shirley? If they had been better trained, they could have avoided losing their lives.”

Gazing at the castle, Salazar sighed.

“I admit I would have preferred to save more wizards,” he confessed. “We must protect ourselves from these vile Muggles.”

Salazar clenched his fists, green sparks flickering around them. His friend tried to calm him at the sight.

“We managed to save all these people,” he said, pointing at the castle occupants practicing spells with their friends.

Salazar sighed.

“It’s not enough, Godric!” he exclaimed. “We must subdue them to ensure they no longer harm wizards. We are clearly superior to them. They should be our slaves!”

Godric pushed him away.

“What are you talking about? Are you mad?” he asked, worried.

Salazar’s dark green eyes bore into him. His wand had slipped from his sleeve, pointed directly at his friend’s chest.

Attilius tried to step between them, but neither seemed to see him.

He reached for Salazar’s arm, but his hand passed through as if the wizard were a ghost.

“I mean you no harm, Godric,” Salazar assured. “But I cannot let your love for Muggles endanger our kind.”

In a flash, his friend drew his wand, attempting to disarm him, but Salazar deflected the spell, which shattered a rock on the ledge. He tried to cast a painful hex, but Godric dodged, and the spell left a scorch mark on the ground.

The bursts of light drew the attention of the castle’s occupants, who hurried to see what was happening and discovered the two wizards locked in a fierce duel of flashing lights.

Two women approached, closer than the others who feared the pair’s power. One was slender, with long black hair topped by a diadem with an eagle’s head. The other was sturdier, with a leather circlet and a long yellow robe adorned with a black badger.



Both had drawn their wands, ready to intervene.

“What’s going on?” the first asked them. “Why are you fighting? Have you lost your minds?”

Salazar answered first.

“Stay out of this, Rowena. This discussion concerns only Godric and me!”

Rowena's eyes widened in shock at her friend’s tone.

“You will not speak to my mother like that!” interjected a young woman rushing forward.

Salazar burst into sardonic laughter.

“My dear Helena”, he continued. “No matter how much you’ve inherited your mother’s talents, you don’t come close to her.”

He glided toward her silently.

“So I advise you to stay out of this discussion”, he hissed.

With a wave of his hand, he paralyzed almost the entire audience. Only the three other founders were unaffected by his curse.

“Now we can talk more calmly”, he said.

Rowena brandished her wand but was interrupted by Godric.

“I understand your distress”, Salazar. “The Massacre of Shirley was utterly uncalled for. But acting like them won’t prevent a bloodbath.”

Salazar wore a predatory smile.

“I don’t wish to prevent it”, he replied. “On the contrary...”

Without giving the three others a chance to respond, he turned his back and vanished without a trace.

Everything faded around Attilius, and he was thrust out of the Pensieve.

A few seconds later, he returned to the cavern. The Bloody Baron was still with his nose pressed against the stalactite, busy observing what it contained.

“What are you doing?” he asked. “The exit is right in front of us.”

The ghost of Slytherin didn’t listen to him. He couldn’t take his eyes off the rock.

“Baron!” he exclaimed.



Not managing to catch his attention, he grabbed his wand and cast a searing curse that passed right through him. He tried again, aiming at the icicle that began to glow.

“Malkin!” he exclaimed. “What just happened?”

Attilius recounted what he had just seen in Salazar Slytherin's memory and the reason for his departure from Hogwarts.

The ghost listened to his story in disbelief.

“We should keep this story to ourselves”, he insisted. “If our new faculty members learn that Salazar Slytherin's last memories are hidden in the school, they might seek to uncover them.”

Attilius nodded.

The Carrows must not discover this cavern at any cost. They agreed and took the path to the exit. They climbed one last staircase and discovered a trapdoor hidden under a rock that led into the Forbidden Forest.

The day was already well advanced. The sun was descending toward the horizon. The two wizards returned leisurely to the castle, exhausted from their journey in the Chamber of Secrets.

Attilius crossed the castle, passed the Great Hall, and pretended to head for the stairs before stopping for a moment.

He turned back toward the great doors and sat down along the table of his house, rushing for whatever remained of lunch, glad to have finally emerged from the Chamber of Secrets. He never wanted to hear about it again.

At least, not for the moment.

