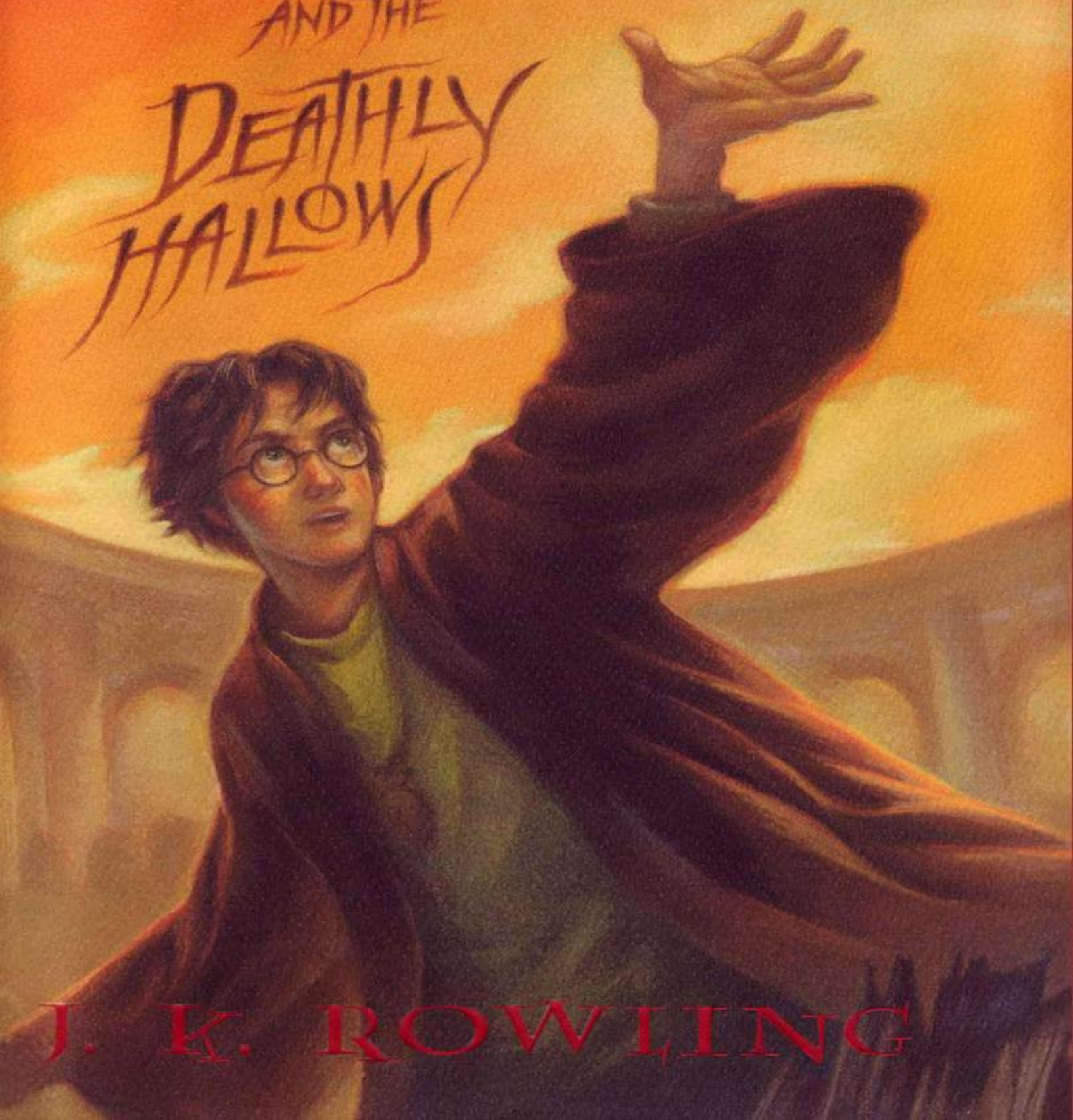


Harry Potter

AND THE
DEATHLY
HALLOWS



J. K. ROWLING

Harry Potter
and the Deathly Hallows

by

J. K. Rowling

Illustrations By Mary Grandpré

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The dedication of this book is split seven ways:

To Neil,

To Jessica,

To David,

To Kenzie,

To Di,

To Anne,

And to you, if you have stuck with Harry until the very end.

Oh, the torment bred in the race,
the grinding scream of death
and the stroke that hits the vein,
the haemorrhage none can staunch, the grief,
the curse no man can bear.

But there is a cure in the house
and not outside it, no,
not from others but from *them*,
their bloody strife. We sing to you,
dark gods beneath the earth.

Now hear, you blissful powers underground —
answer the call, send help.
Bless the children, give them triumph now.

Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*

Death is but crossing the world, as friends do the seas; they live in one another still. For they must needs be present, that love and live in that which is omnipresent. In this divine glass they see face to face; and their converse is free, as well as pure. This is the comfort of friends, that though they may be said to die, yet their friendship and society are, in the best sense, ever present, because immortal

William Penn, *More Fruits of Solitude*

Chapter 1

The Dark Lord Ascending

The two men appeared out of nowhere, a few yards apart in the narrow, moonlit lane. For a second they stood quite still, wands directed at each other's chests; then, recognizing each other, they stowed their wands beneath their cloaks and started walking briskly in the same direction.

"News?" asked the taller of the two.

"The best," replied Severus Snape.

The lane was bordered on the left by wild, low-growing brambles, on the right by a high, neatly manicured hedge. The men's long cloaks flapped around their ankles as they marched.

"Thought I might be late," said Yaxley, his blunt features sliding in and out of sight as the branches of overhanging trees broke the moonlight. "It was a little trickier than I expected. But I hope he will be satisfied. You sound confident that your reception will be good?"

Snape nodded, but did not elaborate. They turned right, into a wide driveway that led off the lane. The high hedge curved with them, running off into the distance beyond the pair of impressive wrought-iron gates barring the men's way. Neither of them broke step: In silence both raised their left arms in a kind of salute and passed straight through, as though the dark metal were smoke.

The yew hedges muffled the sound of the men's footsteps. There was a rustle somewhere to their right: Yaxley drew his wand again, pointing it over his companion's head, but the source of the noise proved to be nothing more than a pure-white peacock, strutting majestically along the top of the hedge.

"He always did himself well, Lucius. *Peacocks* ..." Yaxley thrust his wand back under his cloak with a snort.

A handsome manor house grew out of the darkness at the end of the straight drive, lights glinting in the diamond-paned downstairs windows. Somewhere in the dark garden beyond the hedge a fountain was playing.

Gravel crackled beneath their feet as Snape and Yaxley sped toward the front door, which swung inward at their approach, though nobody had visibly opened it.

The hallway was large, dimly lit, and sumptuously decorated, with a magnificent carpet covering most of the stone floor. The eyes of the pale-faced portraits on the walls followed Snape and Yaxley as they strode past. The two men halted at a heavy wooden door leading into the next room, hesitated for the space of a heartbeat, then Snape turned the bronze handle.

The drawing room was full of silent people, sitting at a long and ornate table. The room's usual furniture had been pushed carelessly up against the walls. Illumination came from a roaring fire beneath a handsome marble mantelpiece surmounted by a gilded mirror. Snape and Yaxley lingered for a moment on the threshold. As their eyes grew accustomed to the lack of light, they were drawn upward to the strangest feature of the scene: an apparently unconscious human figure hanging upside down over the table, revolving slowly as if suspended by an invisible rope, and reflected in the mirror and in the bare, polished surface of the table below. None of the people seated underneath this singular sight was looking at it except for a pale young man sitting almost directly below it. He seemed unable to prevent himself from glancing upward every minute or so.

"Yaxley. Snape," said a high, clear voice from the head of the table. "You are very nearly late."

The speaker was seated directly in front of the fireplace, so that it was difficult, at first, for the new arrivals to make out more than his silhouette. As they drew nearer, however, his face shone through the gloom, hairless, snakelike, with slits for nostrils and gleaming red eyes whose pupils were vertical. He was so pale that he seemed to emit a pearly glow.

"Severus, here," said Voldemort, indicating the seat on his immediate right. "Yaxley — beside Dolohov."

The two men took their allotted places. Most of the eyes around the table followed Snape, and it was to him that Voldemort spoke first.

"So?"

"My Lord, the Order of the Phoenix intends to move Harry Potter from his current place of safety on Saturday next, at nightfall."

The interest around the table sharpened palpably: Some stiffened, others fidgeted, all gazing at Snape and Voldemort.

“Saturday ... at nightfall,” repeated Voldemort. His red eyes fastened upon Snape’s black ones with such intensity that some of the watchers looked away, apparently fearful that they themselves would be scorched by the ferocity of the gaze. Snape, however, looked calmly back into Voldemort’s face and, after a moment or two, Voldemort’s lipless mouth curved into something like a smile.

“Good. Very good. And this information comes —”

“— from the source we discussed,” said Snape.

“My Lord.”

Yaxley had leaned forward to look down the long table at Voldemort and Snape. All faces turned to him.

“My Lord, I have heard differently.”

Yaxley waited, but Voldemort did not speak, so he went on, “Dawlish, the Auror, let slip that Potter will not be moved until the thirtieth, the night before the boy turns seventeen.”

Snape was smiling.

“My source told me that there are plans to lay a false trail; this must be it. No doubt a Confundus Charm has been placed upon Dawlish. It would not be the first time; he is known to be susceptible.”

“I assure you, my Lord, Dawlish seemed quite certain,” said Yaxley.

“If he has been Confunded, naturally he is certain,” said Snape. “I assure *you*, Yaxley, the Auror Office will play no further part in the protection of Harry Potter. The Order believes that we have infiltrated the Ministry.”

“The Order’s got one thing right, then, eh?” said a squat man sitting a short distance from Yaxley; he gave a wheezy giggle that was echoed here and there along the table.

Voldemort did not laugh. His gaze had wandered upward to the body revolving slowly overhead, and he seemed to be lost in thought.

“My Lord,” Yaxley went on, “Dawlish believes an entire party of Aurors will be used to transfer the boy —”

Voldemort held up a large white hand, and Yaxley subsided at once, watching resentfully as Voldemort turned back to Snape.

“Where are they going to hide the boy next?”

“At the home of one of the Order,” said Snape. “The place, according to the source, has been given every protection that the Order and Ministry together could provide. I think that there is little chance of taking him once he is there, my Lord, unless, of course, the Ministry has fallen before next

Saturday, which might give us the opportunity to discover and undo enough of the enchantments to break through the rest.”

“Well, Yaxley?” Voldemort called down the table, the firelight glinting strangely in his red eyes. “*Will* the Ministry have fallen by next Saturday?”

Once again, all heads turned. Yaxley squared his shoulders.

“My Lord, I have good news on that score. I have — with difficulty, and after great effort — succeeded in placing an Imperius Curse upon Pius Thicknesse.”

Many of those sitting around Yaxley looked impressed; his neighbor, Dolohov, a man with a long, twisted face, clapped him on the back.

“It is a start,” said Voldemort. “But Thicknesse is only one man. Scrimgeour must be surrounded by our people before I act. One failed attempt on the Minister’s life will set me back a long way.”

“Yes — my Lord, that is true — but you know, as Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, Thicknesse has regular contact not only with the Minister himself, but also with the Heads of all the other Ministry departments. It will, I think, be easy now that we have such a high-ranking official under our control, to subjugate the others, and then they can all work together to bring Scrimgeour down.”

“As long as our friend Thicknesse is not discovered before he has converted the rest,” said Voldemort. “At any rate, it remains unlikely that the Ministry will be mine before next Saturday. If we cannot touch the boy at his destination, then it must be done while he travels.”

“We are at an advantage there, my Lord,” said Yaxley, who seemed determined to receive some portion of approval. “We now have several people planted within the Department of Magical Transport. If Potter Apparates or uses the Floo Network, we shall know immediately.”

“He will not do either,” said Snape. “The Order is eschewing any form of transport that is controlled or regulated by the Ministry; they mistrust everything to do with the place.”

“All the better,” said Voldemort. “He will have to move in the open. Easier to take, by far.”

Again, Voldemort looked up at the slowly revolving body as he went on, “I shall attend to the boy in person. There have been too many mistakes where Harry Potter is concerned. Some of them have been my own. That Potter lives is due more to my errors than to his triumphs.”

The company around the table watched Voldemort apprehensively, each of them, by his or her expression, afraid that they might be blamed for Harry Potter's continued existence. Voldemort, however, seemed to be speaking more to himself than to any of them, still addressing the unconscious body above him.

"I have been careless, and so have been thwarted by luck and chance, those wreckers of all but the best-laid plans. But I know better now. I understand those things that I did not understand before. I must be the one to kill Harry Potter, and I shall be."

At these words, seemingly in response to them, a sudden wail sounded, a terrible, drawn-out cry of misery and pain. Many of those at the table looked downward, startled, for the sound had seemed to issue from below their feet.

"Wormtail," said Voldemort, with no change in his quiet, thoughtful tone, and without removing his eyes from the revolving body above, "have I not spoken to you about keeping our prisoner quiet?"

"Yes, m-my Lord," gasped a small man halfway down the table, who had been sitting so low in his chair that it had appeared, at first glance, to be unoccupied. Now he scrambled from his seat and scurried from the room, leaving nothing behind him but a curious gleam of silver.

"As I was saying," continued Voldemort, looking again at the tense faces of his followers, "I understand better now. I shall need, for instance, to borrow a wand from one of you before I go to kill Potter."

The faces around him displayed nothing but shock; he might have announced that he wanted to borrow one of their arms.

"No volunteers?" said Voldemort. "Let's see ... Lucius, I see no reason for you to have a wand anymore."

Lucius Malfoy looked up. His skin appeared yellowish and waxy in the firelight, and his eyes were sunken and shadowed. When he spoke, his voice was hoarse.

"My Lord?"

"Your wand, Lucius. I require your wand."

"I ..."

Malfoy glanced sideways at his wife. She was staring straight ahead, quite as pale as he was, her long blonde hair hanging down her back, but beneath the table her slim fingers closed briefly on his wrist. At her touch,