

# Merope's Last Breath

by AngelEyes3954

What happened on the night that Tom Riddle was born? What were the events leading up to Merope's last breath? *Written in response to EmeraldCity's "The Birth of a HP Character" Challenge on HPFF.*

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Chapter 1 of 1

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**Disclaimer: All the characters and the plot that you recognize belong to J.K. Rowling. Anything you do not recognize is my own...**

*A/N: Thank you so much to my beta, AntigoneBlack! She is amazing!*~~~~~

The young girl hurried down the dark alley, stumbling and tripping as she walked. She was dressed in tattered robes that clung tightly to her swollen, pregnant stomach. Her hair hung limply down her back, and she had large, purple rings around her eyes, which seemed to be looking in two different directions. She shivered as she stepped around a small crowd of people, who just stared at her hideous appearance.

Merope Gaunt once again found herself alone in the dark alley. She stumbled and came very close to landing on her stomach, although luckily she caught herself. She pulled out an old, battered wand that had belonged to her mother and whispered, "Lumos." She was not surprised when nothing happened; she hadn't been able to perform magic since he had left her. She felt the tears welling up in her eyes and hurried forward once more. When she finally reached her destination, a shop full of many dark objects, she stopped to catch her breath before entering the store.

A tinkle of a bells sounded as she opened the door, and a man came out of the back room, his eyes narrowed with a scowl upon his face. "Yes?" he said, taking in her ugly appearance. He knew she couldn't possibly be buying and that most likely whatever she was selling would be worthless.

"I need to sell this," Merope answered, pulling a heavy gold locket out from her robes. As she took a step forward towards the counter, she stumbled once again, the weight of her stomach pulling her forward, and she nearly broke the glass counter when she collided with it. When she composed herself, she looked up once again at the man, who was scowling once again. She reached out and let the gold locket fall into the man's outstretched hand. "It once belonged to Slytherin himself," she said, hoping that the shopkeeper would know its true value.

The man looked the locket over, noticing the ornate "S" sculpted into the gold. Nodding, he said, "Yes, well, unless it can be absolutely proven that it was Slytherin's, I can only give you ten Galleons for it." He glanced up at the disheveled girl; he figured she would be so desperate for money, she would take it.

Merope looked at the man, trying to figure out how to prove it. She was at a loss, but she was desperate for money, so she hung her head and said, "Fine, ten Galleons is fine." The man smiled in satisfaction, reaching into a drawer behind the counter to withdraw the money.

She held out her hand greedily, and as soon as the money was deposited there, she whipped around and stumbled out of the store, determined to find some food and a warm shelter.

Margaret was shaken out of her reverie by the arrival of Doctor Roberts. She hurried him into the small infirmary and he quickly got to work. Unfortunately the young mother had already lost too much blood, and after slipping into unconsciousness, her breathing slowed and finally stopped at 11:12 PM. Just as Merope took her last breath and her heart stopped beating, young Tom gave a loud wail; it had been forty-three minutes since his first and only cry, and then he fell silent once again.