

The Philosopher's Stone

October 18th, 2021, Ottery-St-Mary, Devon

This is the last will and testament of Nicolas Flamel, alias Joseph Siverwood.

I am six hundred and ninety-one years old. I was born in 1330 in the village of Pontoise, outside Paris. I made a good living as a scribe, translator and manuscript seller.

On a trip to Spain in the 1360's I came upon the tome that was to change my life. *The Book of Abraham the Jew* was full of strange codes and symbols which I spent the next twenty years deciphering. It is hard to believe that I discovered The Philosopher's Stone. At first I was able to transmute base metals into silver and gold. I accumulated great wealth which I was careful not to flaunt. After many failed experiments I created The Elixir of Life, the key to immortality. I purified and condensed a plethora of ingredients including blood, hair, mercury, sulphur and arsenic.

I reached the age of eighty-eight in rude health and looking much younger than my years. Rumours started to circulate about the possible unnatural causes of my longevity. I faked my own death. You can see my tombstone in the Église Saint-Jacques-de-la Boucherie. I decamped to Italy.

I have since lived in twenty countries and have mastered thirty languages. In addition to all the major European languages, I am fluent in Mandarin, Hindi, Urdu, Japanese, Samoan and Māori. Since my first wife Perenelle died in 1397, I have been married twenty times and have sired sixty children. In order to evade detection I have had to fake my death many times and move to a new country. My enormous wealth which makes Jeff Bezos seem a pauper has afforded me the capacity to adopt many new nationalities and personas.

Through the centuries I have tried to deploy my riches and unparalleled learned experience for good. My unseen hand has been behind many things of benefit to mankind. I'll mention a few more recent examples. I lived in France in the mid-nineteenth century. It was in Lille that I seeded the ideas to Louis Pasteur which encouraged his development of the pasteurisation process. In America I was a major banker for the Underground Railroad providing secret routes and safe houses for slaves escaping from the southern states. One of my proudest achievements was as a Swiss citizen with the name Henri Dunant organising

emergency relief for casualties at the Battle of Solferino in 1859. This was the initiative which led to the formation of The Red Cross.

I have decided to end my life. My cameo appearance in the Harry Potter series has encouraged those still searching for the secret of eternal life to redouble their efforts to find me. I know my current camouflage as an antiquarian bookseller in Devon is good but is not impenetrable.

Today, I have burnt all my alchemistic formulae in the hope that the search for the Philosopher's Stone will end now. Immortality was more curse than blessing.

Yours finally

Nicolas