

Harry Potter 501

Chapter 501: Chaos at the Ministry of Magic

On the last night, Percy returned to the Burrow unusually early. He looked tired, but extraordinarily sultry.

“It’s been an absolute uproar,” Percy told them. “I’ve been putting out fires for a week. People keep sending Howlers, and of course, if you don’t open a Howler straight away, it explodes. I have scorch marks all over my desk and my best quill is reduced to cinders.”

“Why are they all sending Howlers?” asked Ginny, who was mending her copy of *One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi* with Spellotape on the rug in front of the living room fire.

“Complaining about security at the World Cup, of course.” Percy said, “They want compensation for their ruined properties. Mundungus Fletcher’s filed a 500 Gold-Galleons medical expense claim list, and also said that his tent was destroyed and asked us to compensate him for a twelve-bedroomed tent with en-suite Jacuzzi. But I know all about him. He was not injured at all, and he was actually spending the night under a cloak propped on sticks.”

That night, while the vampires launched an attack in the stadium, the campsite was also attacked.

Many people suffered, especially the tents near Crouch’s, which was area hit the hardest.

The vampires probably thought that Barty Crouch Jr. was hiding in the tent, so they raided the area. Of course, they did not find anything, but they caused a lot of wizards to suffer heavy losses.

Indeed, in order to show up at the World Cup, the wizards put a lot of good things in their tents.

Mrs. Weasley brought everyone several drinks and glanced at his grandfather clock in the corner.

It was a magic clock. It was completely useless if you wanted to know the time, but otherwise very informative.

It had nine golden hands, and each of them was engraved with one of the Weasley family’s names.

There were no numerals around the face, but descriptions of where each family member might be. “Home”, “school” and “work” were there, as well as “traveling”, “lost”, “hospital”, “prison” and so on.

In the position where the number twelve would be on a normal clock, there was “mortal peril”

Although this clock did look too good, it was a very rare magic item of the highest caliber.

It was passed down by the Weasley family. No matter how depressed it was, the Pure Blood Wizard family had some treasures at the bottom of the box.

This magic timepiece was such a thing. It could be used as long as a pointer representing a family member was placed on it.

This was a very unpopular and profound branch of magic, and only powerful and knowledgeable wizards could dabble in it.

This was another extreme use of the magic of name science, and probably only a really powerful Dark wizard would pull it off.

All in all, this aspect was too rare, and there was not much that Evan could get on it from magic books.

Every time he saw this clock, he had an impulse to open it and have a look at its internal structure.

Eight of the hands on the clock were currently pointing to the “home” position, but Mr. Weasley’s, which was the longest, was still pointing to “work.”

Mrs. Weasley sighed and said sadly, “Your father hasn’t had to go into the office on weekends since the days of You-Know-Who. They’re working him far too hard. His dinner is going to be ruined if he doesn’t come home soon.”

“Well, father feels he’s got to make up for his mistake at the match; doesn’t he?” said Percy. “Truth be told, it was a tad unwise to make a public statement without clearing it with his Head of Department first...”

“Don’t you dare blame your father for what that wretched Skeeter woman wrote!” said Mrs. Weasley, flaring up at once.

“Well, it is a bit long, dear,” said Mrs. Weasley gently. “If you’d just let me...”

Rain lashed against the living room window, and Evan sat in front of the fire to study the ancient magic script.

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Charlie was darning a fireproof balaclava, Harry was polishing his Firebolt, and the broomstick servicing kit Hermione had given him for his thirteenth birthday was opened at his feet.

Fred and George were sitting in a far corner, quills out, talking in whispers; their heads bent over a piece of parchment.

“What are you two up to?” said Mrs. Weasley sharply, her eyes on the twins.

“Homework,” said Fred vaguely.

“Don’t be ridiculous, you’re still on holiday,” said Mrs. Weasley.

“Yeah, we just want a head start!” said George.

“You wouldn’t be thinking of restarting Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes, by any chance?” said Mrs. Weasley shrewdly.

“Now, Mum!” said Fred, looking up at her, a pained look on his face. “If the Hogwarts Express crashed tomorrow, and George and I died. How would you feel knowing that the last thing we ever heard from you was an unfounded accusation?!”

Everyone laughed, even Mrs. Weasley.

“Oh, your father’s coming!” She said suddenly, looking up at the clock again.

Mr. Weasley’s hand had suddenly spun from “work” to “traveling”.

A second later, it had shuddered to a halt on “home” with the others, and they heard him calling from the kitchen.

“Coming, Arthur!” called Mrs. Weasley, hurrying out of the room.

A few moments later, Mr. Weasley came into the warm living room carrying his dinner on a tray. He looked completely exhausted.

The letter said that Rita Skeeter wanted to interview him, but Evan did not give her a chance and refused directly.

He didn’t want her to describe him as a young monster with bad habits, or the youngest Dark wizard alive or something of that sort!

This woman had the habit of making rumors to attract the public’s attention. It was better for Evan to stay away from her.

Of course, if Rita Skeeter provoked him, Evan would not be polite. He knew what she was up to...

Chapter 502: The Scary Shadows of the Vampires

As for Bertha Jorkins's disappearance, it was really horrible. No accident, people might never find her.

After Sirius joined the Ministry of Magic, he was responsible for the Fallen Centaurs' Remains.

However, it happened in Albany and beyond the reach of the British Ministry of Magic.

The Special Investigation Team of the International Confederation of Wizards had been working on the matter for more than a week, but little substantial progress had been made.

The specific list of dead wizards and witches had not been determined, and the purpose behind the vampires' action was still unclear.

Everything was a mystery, and the vampire terror shadowed throughout the wizarding world.

Caresius and his people had become wanted all over the world, but they simply didn't care. On the contrary, ordinary people were the ones panicking, fearing another attack by vampires.

They didn't even dare to go to crowded places, and things that were supposed to restrain vampires quickly went out of stock.

Even the toy crosses made by Fred and George were in short supply. God knew what use they had besides changing colors.

On top of that, vampires were not afraid of crosses at all. Those were just muggle myths.

"Send someone to find Bertha Jorkins! Mr. Crouch has been saying it for weeks and weeks," said Percy swiftly.

"Crouch is very lucky Rita hasn't found out about Winky." Said Mr. Weasley irritably, "There would be a week's worth of headlines on his house-elf being caught holding the wand that conjured the Dark Mark."

"I thought we all agreed that that elf, while irresponsible, did not conjure the Mark?" said Percy hotly.

"Now look here, Hermione!" Percy immediately turned around and argued. "A high-ranking Ministry official like Mr. Crouch deserves unswerving obedience from his servants..."

"All right, Hermione!" Evan hurriedly said, "You know Percy didn't mean that."

The topic had Winky had recently become a hotspot for Hermione.

During this time, she did not give up persuading people to be kind to house-elves, and accused Crouch of being cruel.

This led her to quarrel with Percy, who strongly supported Crouch, and they both refused to give in every time they met.

The relationship between the two had dropped from best friend to freezing point.

If Evan's relationship turned that sour with anyone, he would just not speak with them anymore. But Hermione and Percy were not like that. They argued every time they met, trying to convince each other.

They never grew tired of it, but the people around them did.

"I think you'd all better go upstairs and check that you've packed properly!" said Mrs. Weasley, breaking up the argument. "Come on now, all of you..."

Evan stuffed the parchment full of ancient scripts into his arm, and pulled Hermione, who was still glaring at Percy, to go upstairs.

Harry also repacked his broomstick servicing kit, put his Firebolt over his shoulder, and followed Ron and Ginny.

Hermione and Ginny returned to their room, and Evan and the others continued upward.

The rain sounded even louder at the top of the house, accompanied by the loud whistling and moaning wind, not to mention sporadic howls from the ghoul who lived in the attic.

In the room, Pigwidgeon began hooting and zooming around his cage when they entered. The sight of the half-packed trunks seemed to have sent him into a frenzy of excitement.

Hedwig stared at him angrily, her big amber eyes full of reproach.

"Bung him some Owl Treats," said Ron, throwing a packet across to Evan. "It might shut him up."

"I wish Hermione and Percy would stop quarreling and that Hermione would give up on the idea of defending house-elves!" Harry sighed and said, putting his Firebolt on his cot, "What are these things?"

"It's the stuff Mum got for us in Diagon Alley, and will be used in the new term," Ron replied.

He heaved a pile of parcels onto the bed and dropped the money bag and a load of socks next to it.

After giving Pig and Hedwig a little more Owl Treat, Evan started unwrapping what Mrs. Weasley had bought for him.

Apart from a handful of new quills, he had a dozen rolls of parchment, and refills for his potion-making kit. The rest were all books Evan planned to read. They were more than Harry's and Ron's books combined.

He used his wand to make his books shrink to the size of a palm. Then he stuffed them into the cloth bag he carried with him. He didn't need a trunk at all.

“How convenient it is!” Harry stared at Evan’s cloth bag and said, “How much could that hold?”

“I saw it in Diagon Alley last time. It needed too many Gold-Galleons to buy one!” Ron said, while stuffing his books into his trunk, “It’s very convenient, isn’t it?! I wish I could be stronger and learn this Charm as soon as possible.”

“You’ll learn this magic in the seventh year, but you can try to study it earlier than that.” Evan untied the cloth bag and handed it to Harry who was curious. “It involves a lot of advanced curse theories. There are a lot of things you need to learn.”

“I guess there’s no hope!” Ron wrinkled his nose and said, “Can you cast this magic now with the help of the Philosopher’s Stone?”

“There should be no problem!” Evan replied.

In fact, he didn’t need to use the Philosopher’s Stone to do it, but this magic was too troublesome. Evan didn’t have time to waste, not to mention the bag that Flamel gave him was better than any others. Many of the above alchemy techniques were beyond Evan’s imagination at the moment.

“That’s really cool. The Philosopher’s Stone is really amazing! I wish I had one too, so I can become strong.” Ron sighed, staring at Slytherin’s Locket hanging on Evan’s chest. Then as if he had an epiphany, he added: “Oh! You said that the Four Founders have left treasure keys, then three more are still out there...”

In fact, Evan had always been thinking about it, and had to find the Philosopher’s Stones left by the three other Founders as soon as possible.

As for their specific whereabouts, he already had ideas, and when he would return to Hogwarts, he could proceed with his search.

Chapter 503: Ron’s Dress Robes

“Since Gryffindor left the Philosopher’s Stone in the Centaurs’ colony,” When he heard the topic, Harry raised his voice and said with interest, “maybe the other three Founders left them near Hogwarts too. I know there are Merpeople in the lake. Evan, you said that before...”

“It’s really worth investigating!” Evan nodded.

It wouldn’t be surprising if Ravenclaw’s Key was in the hands of the Merpeople in the lake.

Besides the Centaurs in the Forbidden Forest, the only other intelligent population near Hogwarts was the Merpeople clan living in the lake.

The Merpeople is a highly intelligent non-human magic race with a long history even surpassing the Centaurs.

All over the world, there are legends about them, and they often appeared in fairy tales.

Unlike the proud Centaurs, Merpeople and wizards have had frequent contacts.

Although their specific origins are not known, they have long been indispensable allies of Hogwarts Castle.

In any case, they satisfy the hint left by Ravenclaw.

Evan had always thought to investigate in the lake and tried to get in touch with the Merpeople, but he didn't speak their language and couldn't communicate with them.

It seemed that during this school term, he had to include that in his study plan.

"This thing is really good!" said Harry, returning the cloth bag to Evan. "I want one too, but I don't think I need it much. I don't always carry a lot of books and materials around like you. But I bet it would be good for brooms, candy and clothes."

Such bags are good for hiding other things; Evan thought...

Elaine's underwear was in Evan's. He had planned to burn it directly, but it didn't seem to be a good idea. Evan could only keep this "burden" on him and wait for the opportunity to return it to Elaine later.

He had no problem giving Harry the cloth bag for inspection. He could see nothing. Anyway, he wouldn't take out his clothes, and probably couldn't recognize the girl's underwear by touch alone.

Harry lacked experience, but if it were Hermione, he wouldn't have given her the cloth bag again even if she were to kill him.

Evan continued to look down to sort out the books, and Harry began to pack up his own things, laboriously piling his clothes in his bag.

Evan and Harry looked back and saw something in his hand. It looked like a long, maroon velvet dress. It had a moldy-looking lace frill at the collar and matching lace cuffs.

Everyone stared at this ugly velvet dress and was wondering what it was for...

Mrs. Weasley came in, carrying an armful of freshly laundered Hogwarts robes.

"Here you are," she said, sorting the robes into three piles. "Now, mind you pack them properly so they don't crease."

“Mum, you’ve given me Ginny’s new dress.” said Ron, handing it out to her.

“Of course I haven’t,” said Mrs. Weasley. “That’s for you. Dress robes.”

“Dress robes!” repeated Mrs. Weasley. “It says on your school list that you’re supposed to have dress robes this year ... robes for formal occasions.”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” said Ron in disbelief. “I’m not wearing that, no way!”

“Everyone wears them, Ron!” said Mrs. Weasley crossly. “They’re all like that! Your father has got some for smart parties!”

“I’ll go starkers before I put that on,” said Ron stubbornly.

“Don’t be so silly,” said Mrs. Weasley. “You’ve got to have dress robes; they’re on your list! I got some for Harry and Evan too ... show him, Harry, Evan...”

Evan glanced at his clothes and there were also dress robes. But there was no lace on them. They were more or less the same as their school ones, except that they were sky blue instead of black.

Beside him, Harry also carried bottle green robes of the same style in his hand.

“These two clothes suit you very well, dear.” Mrs. Weasley said kindly, “Evan’s color matches his look perfectly and will attract the attention of many girls. Harry, I thought these would bring out the color of your eyes.”

Ron looked at Evan’s and Harry’s robes and said angrily, “Why couldn’t I have some like that?”

“Because... well, Ron, I had to get yours secondhand, and there wasn’t a lot of choice!” said Mrs. Weasley, flushing.

There was an awkward silence in the air, and no one spoke.

With so many children, the Weasleys had been struggling to keep up with their expenses.

Ginny’s school robes were bought by Evan at the time.

He did not offer to pay for Ron’s dress robes, knowing that Mrs. Weasley would certainly never accept it.

Fred and George had made some money recently, but they wouldn’t give it to Ron.

They needed to buy raw materials for new products, expand production, and even rent a shop by themselves. In this way, there was not much money.

Moreover, they couldn’t take it out for Mrs. Weasley to find. They couldn’t let her know that they were still working on prank products.

The last time they were discovered, Mrs. Weasley confiscated all their money and returned it to Evan.

In addition, the twins had a lot of troubles recently.

They had been writing to Ludo Bagman, urging him to pay them their earnings from their bet, in vain.

Bagman did not intend to pay them, and Fred and George couldn't really go to the Ministry of Magic to ask for their money.

"I don't care. I'm never wearing them," Ron was saying stubbornly. "Never!"

"Fine!" snapped Mrs. Weasley, "Go naked. Evan, Harry, make sure you get a picture of him. Goodness knows I could do with a laugh."

She left the room, slamming the door behind her.

Ka ... ka ... ka, there was a funny spluttering noise from behind them. Pigwidgeon was choking on an overly large Owl Treat.

"That's not fair, why is everything I own rubbish?" said Ron furiously, striding across the room to unstick Pigwidgeon's beak.

Evan and Harry looked carefully, and did not know how to comfort Ron.

Chapter 504: The Big Trouble with Mad-Eyes

There was a definite end-of-the-holidays gloom in the air when Evan awoke next morning.

Heavy rain was still splattering against the window as he got dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt; they would change into their school robes on the Hogwarts Express.

Evan, Harry, Ron, Fred, and George had just reached the first-floor landing on their way down to breakfast, when Mrs. Weasley appeared at the foot of the stairs, looking Harassed.

"Arthur!" she called up the staircase. "Arthur! Urgent message from the Ministry!"

Mr. Weasley came clattering past with his robes on back-to-front and hurtled out of sight.

When Evan and the others entered the kitchen, they saw Mrs. Weasley rummaging anxiously in the drawers. "I've got a quill here somewhere!" ... and Mr. Weasley bending over the fire, talking.

In front of him, Amos Diggory's head was sitting in the middle of the flames like a large, bearded egg.

It was talking very fast, completely unperturbed by the sparks flying around it and the flames licking its ears.

"Muggle neighbors heard bangs and shouting, so they went and called those what do you call them ... please-men. Arthur, you've got to get over there..."

"Here!" said Mrs. Weasley breathlessly, pushing a piece of parchment, a bottle of ink, and a crumpled quill into Mr. Weasley's hands.

She stuffed a piece of parchment, a bottle of ink and a crumpled feather pen into Mr. Weasley's hand.

“It’s a real stroke of luck I heard about it!” said Mr. Diggory’s head. “I had to come into the office early to send a couple of owls, and I found the Improper Use of Magic lot all setting off ... if Rita Skeeter gets hold of this one, Arthur ...”

“What does Mad-Eye say happened?” Mr. Weasley asked, unscrewing the ink bottle, loading up his quill, and preparing to take notes.

Hearing them mention Moody, Evan, who was stuffing bread into his mouth, quietly paid attention to their words.

He probably knew what was going on, Voldemort and the vampires acted, and they attacked Moody last night.

He just didn’t know if there was any problem with Crouch, but even if Bartemius Crouch, Jr. was not rescued, Voldemort would probably have done the same after the stadium attack failed, and let Crouch Jr. pretend to be Moody, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, to carry out a new plot to take Harry out of school.

With the help of the powerful vampires, he would take action anyway, which was the key to his resurrection.

In the flames, Mr. Diggory’s head rolled its eyes. “He says he heard an intruder in his yard. He says he was creeping toward the house, but was ambushed by his dustbins.”

“What did the dustbins do?” asked Mr. Weasley, scribbling frantically.

“Made a hell of a noise and fired rubbish everywhere, as far as I can tell,” said Mr. Diggory. “Apparently one of them was still rocketing around when the please-men turned up...”

“And what about the intruder?” Mr. Weasley groaned.

“Arthur, you know Mad-Eye,” said Mr. Diggory’s head. “He’s been trying to help us investigate vampires recently, causing trouble everywhere. Think about it, someone creeping into his yard in the dead of night? More likely there’s a very shell-shocked cat wandering around somewhere, covered in potato peelings. But if the Improper Use of Magic lot get their hands on Mad-Eye, he’s had it... think of his record... we’ve got to get him off a minor charge, something in your department... What are exploding dustbins worth?”

“Might be a caution,” said Mr. Weasley, still writing very fast, his brow furrowed. “Mad-Eye didn’t use his wand? He didn’t actually attack anyone?”

“I’ll bet he leapt out of bed and started jinxing everything he could reach through the window,” said Mr. Diggory with a sigh, “but they’ll have a job proving it, there aren’t any casualties.”

“All right, I’m off,” Mr. Weasley said, and he stuffed the parchment with his notes on it into his pocket and dashed out of the kitchen again.

Mr. Diggory’s head looked around at Mrs. Weasley.

“Sorry about this, Molly!” he said, more calmly. “I have been bothering you so early, but Arthur is the only one who can get Mad-Eye off, and Mad-Eye is supposed to be starting his new job today. Why did he have to choose last night....”

“Never mind, Amos,” said Mrs. Weasley. “Sure you won’t have a bit of toast or anything before you go?”

“Oh go on, then,” said Mr. Diggory.

Mrs. Weasley took a piece of buttered toast from a stack on the kitchen table, put it into the fire tongs, and transferred it into Mr. Diggory’s mouth.

Immediately afterwards, Mr. Weasley returned to the kitchen with a briefcase, his robes still on the wrong way and shouted goodbye to everyone.

“I’d better hurry... you have a good term, boys.” said Mr. Weasley to Evan, Harry, Ron and the twins, fastening a cloak over his shoulders and preparing to Disapparate.

“Arthur, wait a minute. You have to comb your hair, and change your robes before you go,” said Mrs. Weasley.

“Oh!” Mr. Weasley stopped and asked Mrs. Weasley to help him sort it out, “Molly, are you going to be alright taking the kids to King’s Cross?”

“Of course I will,” she said. “You just look after Mad-Eye, we’ll be fine.”

As Mr. Weasley vanished, Hermione, Ginny, Bill, and Charlie entered the kitchen.

“Did someone say Mad-Eye?” Bill asked. “What’s he been up to now?”

“He says someone tried to break into his house last night,” said Mrs. Weasley.

“Mad-Eye Moody?” said George thoughtfully, spreading marmalade on his toast. “Isn’t he that nutter...”

“Your father thinks very highly of Mad-Eye Moody,” said Mrs. Weasley sternly.

“Yeah, well, Dad collects plugs, doesn’t he?” said Fred quietly as Mrs. Weasley left the room. “Birds of a feather...”

“Moody was a great wizard in his time,” said Bill.

“He’s an old friend of Dumbledore,” said Charlie.

“He’s retired. He used to work at the Ministry, said Charlie. “I met him once when Dad took me to work with him. He was an Auror ... one of the best ... a Dark wizard catcher.”

“Yes!” Bill added. “Half of the cells in Azkaban are full because of him. He made himself loads of enemies, though ... the families of people he caught, mainly ... and I heard he’s been getting really paranoid in his old age. He doesn’t trust anyone anymore and he sees Dark wizards everywhere.”

“Yeah, Dad talked to Sirius about it the other day!” Ron agreed. “The same is true of the Head of the Auror office named Rufus Scrimgeour. He’s suspicious and looks like bad news; but Sirius thinks highly of him. He says that this is the Auror’s forte: trust nobody!”

“I don’t know!” said Harry. “But I don’t want Sirius to become like that.”

Chapter 505: Departure and Sirius Intelligence

“Mad Eye Moody’s a very good man, though a little scary, but a good man!” Evan said.

He had also met Moody at the Ministry of Magic once before, when Evan was trying to persuade Mr. Weasley and Sirius to pay attention to Mr. Crouch, but they all thought he was mad, and only Moody felt that Evan’s speculation was reasonable.

He said he would keep a close eye on Crouch, and Evan didn’t know how far it was going.

Of course, these things and plans had been drawn up before Evan knew that the vampires were helping Voldemort.

Evan thought that no one would help Voldemort after he put Pettigrew in Azkaban, and that he might be able to delay Voldemort’s return and sabotage his plot so that he could be fully prepared.

But now it didn’t make much sense. With the help of vampires, Voldemort would surely return successfully.

This was already an unstoppable destiny; something that would happen sooner or later.

In this case, it would be better to follow the plot that Evan was familiar with, so as to grasp all kinds of unexpected situations.

Mad-Eye had been attacked, indicating that Voldemort had begun to act.

The next step was to follow the scheduled plot.

All Evan had to do was to take part in the Triwizard Tournament and take Harry back with him at the last minute from Voldemort, who would have successfully recovered by then.

This was his best bet, and he hoped that everything would go smoothly.

Half an hour later, everyone finished their breakfast and was ready to go.

Bill and Charlie decided to come and see everyone off at King's Cross station, but Percy went directly to the Ministry. He said that he couldn't justify taking more time off, and that Mr. Crouch was really starting to rely on him.

However, Evan doubted whether Crouch could even remember Percy's name or not.

He should be worried about his son's affair now, thinking about how to keep it secret.

Or more perhaps, he could have been already attacked by Voldemort and the vampires, and controlled by the Imperius Curse.

After Percy left, Mrs. Weasley braved the telephone in the village post office to order three Muggle taxis to take them into London in a short time.

"Arthur tried to borrow Ministry cars for us!" She said to everyone, "But there weren't any to spare, they've been too busy recently."

Looking at the pouring rain outside, everyone was worried about using the upcoming Muggle taxis.

The environment and decoration here in the Burrow were obviously not normal to muggle standards; especially that they had so many pets, and Pigwidgeon kept making an earsplitting racket in his cage.

Muggle taxi drivers rarely transported such strange customers and overexcited owls.

Just then, an old-fashioned dark green car drove into the yard.

It was not a Muggle taxi, but a Ministry car.

Evan still remembered that they had been in this car last year.

Under the surprised watchful eyes of everybody, Sirius got out of the car with an umbrella.

He is wearing a black suit that looked very high-class and a watch, just like a successful Muggle businessman.

Sirius greeted everyone with a smile on his face.

Compared with their last meeting, he looks good and his whole body was full of new vitality as if he had rejuvenated. Being an Auror was really suitable for him.

Inside the Burrow, everyone was stunned and they rushed out, Harry in the front.

"Sirius, how come you are here?" Harry asked eagerly. "Didn't you say that you were too busy before?"

"I tried my best to find time to come and see you off. It was not easy, but it was worth it!" Sirius smiled and said, "Well, if you don't want to be late, hurry up and get in the car. We're leaving for London. This car belongs to our department, and I directly requisitioned it."

"Thank goodness Sirius, you've been a great help!" said Mrs. Weasley gratefully.

She asked everyone to quickly move their trunks to the car. And she went to cancel the call the three Muggle taxis.

The interior space of the car was very large and had been expanded by magic. Although they had so many trunks, they were all loaded.

Half an hour later, everyone got in the car and headed for London.

The atmosphere along the way was very good. Everyone was very happy to see Sirius again.

Harry, Ron, Fred and George asked him a lot about his work as an Auror, and he answered them one by one, satisfying everyone's curiosity. By the way, he told them that the Ministry of Magic was making progress in catching vampires.

Because of his position, he knew a lot more than Mr. Weasley and Percy.

And Sirius seemed to have no scruples, and Mrs. Weasley had to worry all the time about reminding him of secrecy.

When they got off at King's Cross station, they felt that time had passed too fast.

The rain outside was coming harder than ever, and they got soaked carrying their trunks across the busy road and into the station.

While the Muggles were not paying attention, they quickly passed through the platform.

The Hogwarts Express, a gleaming scarlet steam engine, was already there, clouds of steam billowing from it, through which the many Hogwarts students and parents on the platform appeared like dark ghosts.

Pigwidgeon became noisier than ever in response to the hooting of many owls through the mist.

Harry, Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Fred, and George set off to find seats, and were soon stowing their luggage in a compartment.

Evan was called aside by Sirius. He had something to say to him.

"Because you have been reminding me that Barty Crouch may have problems, I have paid special attention to him." Sirius said, "We know from a wizard who lives near his house that something has happened to him recently. I think it is necessary to talk to you."

"What was it?" asked Evan.

"One night a week ago, someone heard a loud noise from his house. It was very abnormal. After the house-elf Winky was fired, Crouch should be alone in the house." Sirius said quickly, looking up at the bustling farewell crowd in the distance, "but we have no way to prove anything. Crouch still goes to work in the Ministry every day as usual and returns very late. There's no change in his schedule. Nothing seems to have happened."

Evan thought for a moment, and lowered his voice and asked, "Could it be the Imperius Curse?"

“There is no way to determine that; we can’t test him. You know his position in the Ministry; it would be very troublesome!” Sirius said with a sigh. “But it may be just a simple accident. There is no need to worry. On the other hand, since the vampires came out, there have been many attacks recently. Do you remember the Bulgarian Seeker, Viktor Krum?”

“What happened to him?!” asked Evan, nodding.

“After the World Cup, he did not return to Bulgaria, but stayed at the Leaky Cauldron and was ready to take a vacation in the UK before the start of school.” Sirius said, “But a few days ago, he was also attacked.”

“Attacked?!”

“Yeah, he was alone in the room. Someone heard the sound from downstairs. When people caught up, the attacker had already Disapparated, leaving him alone in the room, injured. We suspect it was an Irish fan that did it, because Krum caught the Golden Snitch.” Sirius sighed and said, “But there is no way to find out who it was. Almost all of Britain supports the Irish team.”

Chapter 506: Hogwarts Express

Evan nodded, and there really was nothing to worry about.

Krum looked so gloomy that everyone wanted to go up and beat him up, and he had the same idea. But Crouch was obviously very unusual, and it seemed that the show was ready to begin!

“There is no sign of vampires, but there are a lot of bad things going on.” Sirius said, “After the World Cup attacks, people seemed to go mad all of a sudden. Attacks and fights happened everywhere and all needed to be dealt with by Aurors. When I came this morning, I also heard that Mad-Eye Moody had another problem. He said that someone attacked him in the middle of the night, but all people saw was the exploded dustbins. It was really terrible.”

“I know. Mr. Weasley had gone to take care of it before you came!” Evan replied.

“I hope he won’t get any serious punishment!” Sirius continued, “Dumbledore invited Moody a few days ago to become the school’s Defense Against the Dark Arts professor. He seems to think that under the current circumstances, it is really necessary to have a professional teacher at Hogwarts. This proved to be indeed necessary, and he was clearly aware of what was going on.”

Dumbledore’s idea was really good, but he didn’t expect Voldemort to hit this trump card of his before even returning.

Hiring Moody to teach at Hogwarts was originally made as an insurance policy. But things go as they went in the books, he would become the fuse for all what’s about to follow.

“Moody’s sometimes a little crazy, but he is absolutely reliable, he has a lot of experience fighting Dark wizards.” Sirius looked at Evan. “If something happens at school, you can go to see him right away.”

“I know!” Evan nodded.

If nothing unexpected happens, the fake Moody who was about to teach at Hogwarts would be willing to help them in the early stages.

Evan felt that he might even be able to get close to him to a certain extent and gather information through that.

“Don’t forget to write to me about everything!” Sirius patted Evan on the shoulder and they both walked back to the platform. “By the way, Evan, you take care of Harry at school. Don’t let him get too impulsive and get into trouble, especially this year. Hogwarts will be holding the Triwizard Tournament competitions, and everything must be handled with great care.”

!” Such words sounded awkward coming out from Sirius’s mouth.

On top of that, most of the time, it was the trouble that came for Harry, not the opposite, and he couldn’t escape no matter how far he ran away.

Sirius probably thought Evan and Harry would be bystanders in the Triwizard Tournament. He never thought either of them was going to compete, becoming the youngest contestants ever.

When they returned, everyone was saying goodbye on the platform.

“I might be seeing you all sooner than you think.” said Charlie, grinning, as he hugged Ginny good-bye.

“Why?” said Fred keenly.

“You’ll see,” said Charlie, “Just don’t tell Percy I mentioned it ... It’s classified information, and can’t be released until the Ministry of Magic deems it appropriate.”

“Yeah, I sort of wish I were back at Hogwarts this year,” said Bill, hands in his pockets, looking almost wistfully at the train.

“Why on earth?” said George impatiently. “You’ve been hiding all summer!”

“You’re going to have an interesting year,” said Bill, “I might even get time off to come and watch a bit of it...”

At this moment, Evan and Sirius just walked past, and Harry quickly asked Sirius what was going on.

“I can’t say, Harry!” Sirius said with a smile. He and Harry hugged each other tightly. “You will know when you get there, and you will definitely be satisfied. It’s a rare big occasion.”

“But...”

Harry wanted to say something more, but the whistle of the train blew, and Mrs. Weasley chivvied them toward the doors.

“Goodbye, Sirius! Goodbye, Mrs. Weasley, thanks for having us to stay,” said Hermione as they climbed on board, closed the door, and leaned out of the window to talk to Mrs. Weasley.

“Oh it was my pleasure, dears!” said Mrs. Weasley. “I’d invite you and Evan and Harry for Christmas, but ... well, I expect you’re all going to want to stay at Hogwarts, with what... one thing and another.”

“Mum!” said Ron irritably. “What do you all know that we don’t?”

“You’ll find out this evening, I expect,” said Mrs. Weasley, smiling. “It’s going to be very exciting... mind you, I’m very glad they’ve changed the rules...”

“What rules?” said Harry, Ron, Fred and George together.

Her words were covered by the loud hiss of the pistons, and the train began to move.

“Tell us what’s happening at Hogwarts!” Fred bellowed out of the window, “What rules are they changing?”

Sirius, Mrs. Weasley, Bill and Charlie waved at them and sped away.

“That’s enough. I want to know what’s going on?!” said Fred unhappily.

Evan, Harry, Ron, and Hermione went back to their compartment.

The thick rain splattering the windows made it very difficult to see out of them.

Ron undid his trunk, pulled out his maroon dress robes, and flung them over Pigwidgeon’s cage to muffle his hooting.

“Dad and Mum won’t say anything. There’s bound to be something big going on in the school this year.” said Ron sullenly.

“Evan, do you know about it?” Harry suddenly turned and asked.

In his impression, Evan knew almost everything, and there was nothing that could be concealed for him.

Since all the rules had been revised, Evan could really just pretend that the matter was no longer a secret.

He was just about to talk, but Hermione pressed her finger to his lips.

“Shh!” she whispered, pointing toward the compartment next to theirs.

At this moment, a familiar drawling voice drifted in through the open door.

“Father actually considered sending me to Durmstrang rather than Hogwarts, you know. He knows the headmaster, you see. Well, you know his opinion of Dumbledore ... the man is such a Mudblood-lover ... and Durmstrang doesn't admit that sort of riffraff. But Mother didn't like the idea of me going to school so far away. Father says Durmstrang takes a far more sensible line than Hogwarts about the Dark Arts. Durmstrang's students actually learn them, not just the defense rubbish we do, and the messy people and teachers we hire...”

Chapter 507: The Triwizard Tournament

After listening for a while, Hermione got up, tiptoed to the compartment door, and slid it shut, blocking out Malfoy's voice.

“So he thinks Durmstrang would have suited him, does he?” she said angrily. “I wish he had gone, then we wouldn't have to put up with him.”

“I remember that Krum is also from Durmstrang!” said Ron. “I have done my research.”

“What, Krum is from there too?!” Harry looked a little surprised. “But Sirius said before that the school had a bad reputation...”

Of course, Durmstrang's tolerance for Dark Arts was within certain limits.

If there were young wizards growing up to be like Grindelwald or Voldemort, they would also take measures to deal with them.

In history, Grindelwald was expelled from Durmstrang because they could no longer tolerate his messy and increasingly evil research on Dark Arts.

“But Krum looks righteous. By the way, where is the school?” Ron asked, “What country?”

“Somewhere in Nordic Europe, I guess it should be near Scandinavia!” said Evan. “I've seen descriptions of the scenery around their school, which fits the Scandinavian environment very well. It's the largest peninsula in Europe and the highest terrain.

There are vast forests covered with snow for long periods, vast snow fields and glaciers, as well as the polar starry sky.”

“Evan, you are so good; you can analyze what information you have to a great extent and deduce a lot!” Hermione exclaimed, “I just speculated that Durmstrang must be somewhere in the far north, somewhere very cold, because they’ve got fur capes as part of their uniforms.”

“That sounds good. Think of the possibilities,” said Ron dreamily. “It would have been so easy to push Malfoy off a glacier and make it look like an accident ... Shame his mother likes him ...”

“”You’d better mind your own business, Weasley!!”

Before Ron had finished, Draco Malfoy appeared in the doorway. Behind him stood Crabbe and Goyle, his enormous, thuggish cronies, both of whom appeared to have grown at least a foot during the summer.

Evidently, they had overheard the conversation through the compartment door.

“Go out, Malfoy, we didn’t invite you in,” said Harry coldly.

Malfoy ignored him. He glanced fearfully at Evan sitting by the window, and then looked at Ron again.

Ron’s words had obviously made Malfoy very angry, and he was not ready to leave.

“Weasley, what is that?” he asked, pointing to Pigwidgeon’s cage. A sleeve of Ron’s dress robes was dangling from it, swaying with the motion of the train, the moldy lace cuff very obvious

Ron made to stuff the robes out of sight, but Malfoy was too quick for him; he seized the sleeve and pulled.

“Look at this!” said Malfoy in ecstasy, holding up Ron’s robes and showing Crabbe and Goyle, “Weasley, you weren’t thinking of wearing these, were you? I mean ... they were very fashionable around 1890...”

“Eat dung, Malfoy!” said Ron, the same color as the dress robes as he snatched them back out of Malfoy’s grip. Malfoy howled with derisive laughter; Crabbe and Goyle guffawed stupidly.

“So ... going to enter, Weasley? Going to try and bring a bit of glory to the family name? There’s money involved as well, you know ... you’d be able to afford some decent robes if you won ...”

“What are you talking about?” snapped Ron.

“Are you going to enter?” Malfoy repeated, looking at Harry, who was also glaring at him. “I suppose you will, Potter? You never miss a chance to show off, do you?”

.

When he heard Hermione’s words, a gleeful smile spread across Malfoy’s pale face.

“Of course we know about the Triwizard Tournament!” Evan interrupted him, “And we also intend to take part in it and become Hogwarts champions. If you have a problem with that, feel free to ask.”

When he heard Evan’s words, the look of joy on Malfoy’s face came to an abrupt end, and he looked comedically shocked. He took a step back and his horrified look seemed to have just discovered that Evan was here too.

Malfoy naturally did not dare to have any comments about Evan’s words. Both his experience of the last term and the horrifying and shocking image of the World Cup were stuck to his mind and could never be forgotten.

He beckoned to Crabbe and Goyle, and the three of them disappeared together.

Ron got to his feet and slammed the sliding compartment door so hard behind them that the glass shattered.

“Don’t let Malfoy get to you, Ron, it’s not worth it!” said Harry.

“Him! Get to me?! As if!” said Ron resentfully. He picked up one of the remaining Cauldron Cakes, made by Mrs. Weasley, and squashed it into a pulp.

“Well, Evan, what exactly is the Triwizard Tournament you just talked about?”

Hermione turned to look at Evan. “Is that what they’ve been talking about? I wish I had heard about it...”

Harry and Ron also focused and looked at Evan curiously.

Chapter 508: The Long Awaited Return to Hogwarts Castle

“As you know, at the end of last semester, Dumbledore took me to Beauxbatons. He took time off to return to England with Beauxbatons’s Headmistress Madame Maxime to discuss the matter.” Evan explained, “It was also at that time that I learned that Hogwarts was about to host the Triwizard Tournament, a traditional event organized by the biggest three magic schools in Europe...”

“Held every five years?!” Ron said in amazement. “But I never knew that Bill, Charlie, and Percy had ever seen such a game, nor had they ever been to the other two wizarding schools.”

“Because the Triwizard Tournament had been interrupted for centuries, I can’t believe they will reinstate it...” said Hermione.

Next, the four began to discuss various details about the Triwizard Tournament.

The sudden excitement and joy diluted the unhappiness that Malfoy brought, and even Ron’s mood became better.

Needless to say, both Harry and Ron wanted to be Hogwarts’s champions; Hermione was the only one who thought it might be dangerous.

The rain became heavier and heavier as the train moved farther north. The sky was so dark and the windows so steamy that the lanterns were lit by midday.

The lunch trolley came rattling along the corridor, and Evan and Harry bought a lot of cakes and snacks.

In the afternoon, people began to flood into this compartment.

Most of them came to see Evan, and everyone knew what he had done at the Quidditch World Cup.

For a while, the small compartment was crowded with people. Evan knew some of them and he didn’t know others. Almost all the young witches and wizards gathered around him.

, and started trying to learn a Summoning Charm.

By the time Evan finally managed to send Colin away, the train was on the verge of Hogwarts.

As soon as they changed into their school robes, the train doors opened, and there was a rumble of thunder overhead.

The young witches and wizards left the train one after another, heads bent and eyes narrowed against the downpour. The rain was now coming down so thick and fast that it was as though buckets of ice-cold water were being emptied repeatedly over their heads.

“Hagrid!” Harry yelled, seeing a gigantic silhouette at the far end of the platform.

Behind Harry, Evan, Ron, and Hermione also hurried to say hello.

“Hello!” Hagrid bellowed back, waving. “See you at the feast if we don’t drown!”

First years traditionally reached Hogwarts Castle by sailing across the lake with Hagrid.

Evan watched Hagrid gather some very young children to his side and lead them to the dark lake.

Because in his first year, he, Harry, and Ron flew in by car, he had not experienced this tradition.

“Oooh, I wouldn’t fancy crossing the lake in this weather,” said Hermione fervently, shivering as they inched slowly along the dark platform with the rest of the crowd.

A hundred horseless carriages stood waiting for them outside the station.

Evan, Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Neville climbed gratefully into one of them, and felt relieved.

The door shut with a snap, and a few moments later, with a great lurch, the long procession of carriages was rumbling and splashing its way up the track toward Hogwarts Castle.

Through the gates, flanked with statues of winged boars, and up the sweeping drive the carriages trundled, swaying dangerously in what was fast becoming a gale.

Ten minutes later, the huge outline of Hogwarts Castle appeared in the dark, its many lighted windows blurred and shimmering behind the thick curtain of rain.

Lightning flashed across the sky as their carriage came to a halt before the great oak front doors, which stood at the top of a flight of stone steps.

People who had occupied the carriages in front were already hurrying up the stone steps into the castle.

Evan, Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Neville jumped down from their carriage and dashed up the steps too, looking up only when they were safely inside the cavernous, torch-lit entrance hall, with its magnificent marble staircase. Everything was so familiar and warm.

“Blimey,” said Ron, shaking his head and sending water everywhere, “if that keeps up the lake’s going to overflow. I’m soaked ... ARRGH!!!”

A large, red, water-filled balloon had dropped from out of the ceiling onto Ron's head and exploded.

Drenched and sputtering, Ron staggered sideways into Harry.

"Be careful!" Evan hurriedly said, pulling Hermione.

Hermione slipped and her whole body was on Evan, just as a second water bomb dropped, narrowly missing Hermione, it burst at their feet.

People all around them shrieked and started pushing one another in their efforts to get out of the line of fire.

Evan looked up and saw, floating twenty feet above them, Peeves the Poltergeist, a little man in a bell-covered hat and orange bow tie.

He made a rude face to Evan, aiming at him as a target, his wide, malicious face contorted with focus.

Before he could drop the balloon in his hand, Evan pulled out his wand as fast as he could.

The water-filled balloon did not fall, but floated beside Peeves.

With a bang, the balloon exploded, and the icy water was all spattered on the ghost and not a drop of it fell.

Then all the other balloons next to Peeves exploded one after another.

Water drenched Peeves. He was the only ghost in Hogwarts whose entity could be affected.

"Damned Evan brat!" Peeves screamed and disappeared into the depths of the corridor.

Behind them, the young wizards whispered and applauded Evan.

Evan was very famous at Hogwarts before, but since the Quidditch World Cup, this reputation had clearly risen to a new level.

Everyone seemed to be particularly expecting and admiring for all his performances, in recognition that Evan had become the most powerful young wizard of Hogwarts.

Chapter 509: The First Years

"Well done, Evan!" Professor McGonagall, who got the news, had come dashing out of the Great Hall. She skidded on the wet floor and grabbed a student around the neck to stop herself from falling. She straightened her pointed hat, and said sternly to the crowd drenched in water. "I'll take care of the rest. Move along, into the Great Hall, come on!"

Along with the crowd, Evan, Harry, Ron, and Hermione slipped and slid across the entrance hall and through the double doors on the right, Ron muttering furiously under his breath as he pushed his sopping hair off his face.

The Great Hall looked its usual splendid self, decorated for the start-of-term feast.

Golden plates and goblets gleamed by the light of hundreds of candles, floating over the tables in midair.

The four long House tables were packed with chattering students.

At the top of the Hall, the staff sat along one side of a fifth table, facing their pupils.

Evan, Harry, Ron, and Hermione walked past the Slytherins, the Ravenclaws, and the Hufflepuffs, and sat down with the rest of the Gryffindors at the far side of the hall, next to Nearly Headless Nick, the Gryffindor ghost.

Pearly white and semitransparent, Nick was dressed tonight in his usual doublet, but with a particularly large ruff, which served the dual purpose of looking extra-festive, and ensuring that his head didn't wobble too much on his partially severed neck.

"Good evening," he said, beaming at them, "How was your summer vacation?!"

"Not bad!" Evan replied, tapping lightly on his school robes with his wand. The water on them evaporated in an instant, and his clothes became dry again.

There were also many opportunities for contact between Evan and Nick. Among all the young wizards at school, the relationship between the two was also the best.

They had just said a few words, and Colin dragged his robe between them.

"Evan, you're already in, it's raining really hard outside!" said Colin, taking off his shoes and emptying them of water. "I stood in the hall for a while, trying to see my brother crossing the lake. But I could see nothing in the dark."

His younger brother, Dennis Creevey, was on the train just now, and Evan had met him.

The little guy had mousy brown hair and looked smaller than Colin, but more energetic.

Obviously, Colin had already told him a lot about Hogwarts, and had greatly praised Evan in front of him. As soon as the little guy saw Evan, he was so excited that he almost lost his breath counting his great deeds!

That looked like a replica of what had happened when Colin met Harry before.

"I really hope they hurry up the sorting, I can't wait!" said Colin, practically bouncing up and down in his seat. "I just hope he'll be sorted to Gryffindor! Evan, can you pray for him with me?! Keep your fingers crossed, eh, Harry?"

"No problem!" Evan nodded.

Harry also agreed, and everyone's topic turned to whether brothers and sisters usually went in the same Houses.

Judging by the Weasleys, that was indeed the case, and their seven children had been put into Gryffindor.

But this wasn't always true. Hermione cited the example of Parvati Patil. She was in Gryffindor, and her twin, Padma, was in Ravenclaw; though they were identical. Even from a personality perspective, there was no difference.

There was also the case of Sirius. All Black family members were usually assigned to Slytherin, but he was the only one to be assigned to Gryffindor.

This made Colin nervous, and he kept his hands folded, praying for Dennis to be assigned to Gryffindor.

Evan's eyes turned to the center of the Great Hall. Since he entered the school, he had not watched the Sorting ceremony on the spot due to many accidents. It seemed like this year at least, he wasn't going to miss it.

At the staff table, there seemed to be rather more empty seats than usual.

Hagrid, of course, was still fighting his way across the lake with the first years. Professor McGonagall was in the entrance hall to supervise the drying of its floor, and prevent Peeves from causing more trouble. Professor Snape was not there.

Only Dumbledore was sitting there as usual, his sweeping silver hair and beard shining in the candlelight, his magnificent deep green robes embroidered with many stars and moons. The tips of Dumbledore's long, thin fingers were together and he was resting his chin upon them, staring up at the ceiling through his half-moon spectacles as though lost in thought.

For a long time, he seemed to sense Evan's gaze. He lowered his head, smiling at him, winking his blue eyes.

Next to Dumbledore, tiny little Professor Flitwick was sitting on a large pile of cushions, drinking a red drink.

He was beside Professor Sprout, the Herbology teacher, whose hat was askew over her flyaway gray hair. She was talking to Professor Sinistra of the Astronomy Department.

After a while, just before the ceremony started, Snape appeared, sallow-faced, hook-nosed and greasy-haired.

He walked into the Great Hall in his dark robes, his footsteps not making a sound at all.

Snape seemed to have an invisible aura, one that made all the young witches and wizards unconsciously shut their mouths as he passed.

His loathing cold eyes paused briefly on Evan and Harry, and then quickly moved away.

"Look at the professors' table, there's still an empty chair!" said Harry, following Snape's footsteps to the staff table. "It's the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher. Why hasn't he come yet? I don't know who it will be."

They had never yet had a Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher who had lasted more than a year, and that position was cursed.

Evan knew that this year's Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher was to be Mad-Eye Moody.

To be precise, it was a fake Moody, impersonated by Batty Crouch Jr. He didn't know what he was doing, and he hadn't shown up yet.

"I don't know who it is, but I wish they would just hurry up, I'm starving!" said Ron.

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than the doors of the Great Hall opened and silence fell.

Professor McGonagall was leading a long line of first years up to the top of the Hall, where everyone looked.

If Evan, Harry, Ron, and Hermione were wet before, it was nothing to how these first years looked. They appeared to have swum across the lake rather than sailed.

They filed along the staff table and came to a halt in a line facing the rest of the school.

All of them were shivering with a combination of cold and nerves, except the smallest of the lot.

He was Colin's younger brother, Dennis, and the little guy was wrapped in Hagrid's moleskin overcoat. The coat was so big for him that it looked as though he were draped in a furry black circus tent. His small face protruded from over the collar, looking almost painfully excited.

Chapter 510: Slave Labor

A few seconds later, Professor McGonagall placed a three-legged stool on the ground in front of the first years and, on top of it, an extremely old, dirty, patched wizard's hat.

Everyone looked at it, and for a moment, there was silence in the Great Hall. Then a long tear near the brim opened wide like a mouth, and the hat broke into song.

This time, the Sorting Hat described the story of the Four Founders co-founding Hogwarts, the qualities of the four of them, and the different virtues they valued, and that a young witch or wizard should have.

Gryffindor was looking for unparalleled bravery. Ravenclaw was seeking cleverness. Hufflepuff valued hard work more than anything.

Slytherin, on the other hand, looked for young wizards who were ambitious and hungry for power and strength.

The lyrics were very cleverly designed, and no one knew how the Sorting Hat came up with them.

The Great Hall rang with applause as the Sorting Hat finished.

Professor McGonagall immediately unrolled a large scroll of parchment and looked seriously at the young wizards in front of her.

"When I call out your name, you will put on the hat and sit on the stool." She told the first years. "When the hat announces your House, you will go and sit at the appropriate table."

Under the chairmanship of Professor McGonagall, the nervous first years were successively divided into four Houses.

As soon as they put on the hat, it immediately shouted out the name of the House the young witch or wizard should go to.

This year's Sorting ceremony was going very well, and Evan remembered that it took him a long time.

As a legendary magic item, the Sorting Hat had a part of the thoughts of the Four Founders.

It could use a spiritual spell to instantly see the hidden thoughts of a young wizard and judge accordingly.

Evan suspected that if a young wizard mastered a mental protection Charm such as Occlumency, and was stronger than the Sorting Hat, then its magic would not work. Of course, so far no such young wizard had appeared.

"Creevey, Dennis!" shouted Professor McGonagall.

Tiny Dennis Creevey staggered forward, tripping over Hagrid's moleskin, just as Hagrid himself sidled into the Hall through a door behind the teachers' table.

About twice as tall as a normal man, and at least three times as broad, Hagrid, with his long, wild, tangled black hair and beard, looked slightly alarming, giving a misleading impression to the new children.

But everyone familiar with him knew that Hagrid actually had a very loving heart.

He winked at Evan as he sat down at the end of the staff table, and watched Dennis Creevey putting on the Sorting Hat.

The rip at the brim opened wide and shouted, "GRYFFINDOR!"

Colin heaved a sigh of relief and began to lead the hard clapping.

Under the applause of everyone, Dennis, beaming widely, took off the hat, placed it back on the stool, and hurried to join the other.

"Colin, I fell into the lake!" He said shrilly, throwing himself into an empty seat. "It was brilliant! And something in the water grabbed me and pushed me back in the boat!"

"Cool!" said Colin, just as excitedly. "It was probably the giant squid, Dennis!"

"Wow!" said Dennis, as though nobody in their wildest dreams could hope for more than being thrown into a storm-tossed, fathoms-deep lake, and pushed out of it again by a giant sea monster.

If he knew that Evan was about to go to the lake to communicate with the Merpeople, how excited would he be?

The Sorting continued; boys and girls with varying degrees of fright on their faces moving one by one to the three-legged stool, the line dwindling slowly as Professor McGonagall passed the L's.

"Oh, hurry up," Ron moaned, massaging his stomach.

“Ron, the Sorting is much more important than food,” said Nearly Headless Nick discontentedly.

“Of course it is, if you’re dead,” snapped Ron!

Nick looked a little unhappy, not answering his words, but instead whispering to Evan.

Finally, the Sorting ended as Kevin Whitby was assigned to Hufflepuff.

Professor McGonagall picked up the hat and the stool and carried them away.

Professor Dumbledore had gotten to his feet. He was smiling around at the students, his arms opened wide in welcome.

“I only have two words to say to you,” he told them, his deep voice echoing around the Hall, “Tuck in!”

In the next second, the empty dishes in front of everyone suddenly filled magically.

Every young wizard began to eat a lot, and Nick watched mournfully as they loaded their plates.

Ron’s words seemed to be very touching to him. He had not tasted food for hundreds of years.

“You’re lucky there’s a feast at all tonight, you now,” Nick stared at the big steak in front of Evan. “There was trouble in the kitchen earlier.”

“Why? What happened?” asked Harry, his mouth full of food.

“Peeves, of course,” said Nick, shaking his head, which wobbled dangerously. He quickly pulled his ruff a little higher up on his neck. “The usual argument, you know. He wanted to attend the feast... Well, it’s quite out of the question. You know what he’s like, utterly uncivilized. He can’t see a plate of food without throwing it. We held a ghost’s council, and the Fat Friar was all for giving him the chance, but most wisely, in my opinion, the Bloody Baron put his foot down.”

The Bloody Baron was the Slytherin ghost, a gaunt and silent specter covered in silver bloodstains, indicating the horrible experience before his death. He was the most powerful of all the ghosts, and at Hogwarts, only he could really control Peeves.

“No wonder, we thought Peeves seemed hacked off about something, he tried to thow water balloons all over us in the hallway.” Ron said sullenly, “What did he do in the kitchens?”

“Oh, the usual,” said Nick, shrugging. “He wreaked havoc and mayhem. He threw Pots and pans everywhere. The place was swimming in soup. He terrified the house-elves out of their wits...”

Clang!!!

Hermione had knocked over her golden goblet. Pumpkin juice spread steadily over the tablecloth, staining several feet of white linen orange, but Hermione paid no attention.

Evan felt secretly bad. Now that Hermione knew that Hogwarts had house-elves, she would surely bring up her ideals of treating the elves well again.

Hermione had spoken to Evan about it every now and then, and she thought she needed to do something for the house-elves.

Hermione's ideas couldn't be claimed to be wrong, but they were absolutely impossible, and Evan didn't know how to persuade her.

When Hermione made up her mind to do something, she wouldn't change easily, and will certainly stick to it, no matter how difficult the road ahead was.

Evan knew this very well and knew that it was useless to try to persuade her to give up. He could only choose to support her.

"Certainly," said Nick, looking surprised at her reaction. "There are more elves here than in any dwelling in Britain. There are over a hundred."

"I haven't seen any of them!" said Hermione incredulously. "I thought Dobby was the only one..."

"Well, they hardly ever leave the kitchen by day, do they?" Nick said. "They come out at night to do a bit of cleaning ... see to the fires and so on ... I mean, you're not supposed to see them, are you? That's the mark of a good house-elf, isn't it, that you don't know it's there?"

Hermione stared at him, her eyes widening, as if Nick had said something terrible.

"But they get paid?" she said. "They get holidays, don't they? And, they have sick leave, pensions, and everything?"

Nearly Headless Nick chortled so much that his ruff slipped and his head flopped off, dangling on the inch or so of ghostly skin and muscle that still attached it to his neck.

"Sick leave and pensions?" he said, pushing his head back onto his shoulders and securing it once more with his ruff. "House-elves don't want sick leave and pensions!"

Hermione looked down at her hardly touched plate of food, then put her knife and fork down upon it and pushed it away from her.