

Harry Potter 641

Chapter 641: Step 1: Contact With the Merpeople

“What can I do to become a Metamorphmagus?” Hermione asked, interested in this spell.

“Metamorphmagi are really rare, they’re born, not made. Most wizards need to use a wand or potions to change their appearance,” said Tonks. “But you can do it, learning hard.”

While Hermione and Tonks continued their conversation, Evan and Lupin were also talking.

“Evan, don’t worry about Tonks. She’s one of us. We’ve known each other for a long time. She’s always been like this,” said Lupin with a wry smile, looking helplessly at Tonks, who had changed her hair color on the other side of the room. “You may not know that her mother, Andromeda, is Sirius’s cousin and she had also been disowned by the Black family.”

“Sirius has told me that Andromeda was his favorite cousin. Because she married a Muggle-born wizard, she’d been removed from the Black family tree,” said Evan. “I can trust Tonks ... is there anything else? I have to go back!”

He was ready to leave. He did not want to stay here and disturb Lupin and Tonks to be alone and develop their feelings. Besides, Sirius and Harry were still waiting for him and Hermione in the Shrieking Shack.

“It’s not good for you two to stay here for too long, if someone finds out, you’ll be in trouble!” Lupin nodded, took out a cloth bag and handed it to Evan. “These are the gifts you asked me to buy for you some time ago. They are all made by the best craftsmen. They are very exquisite. I personally selected them and the Merpeople should be satisfied.”

“I hope so!” Evan took it and sighed.

It was really difficult to deal with the Merpeople. After several consecutive communications, he worked so hard just to make the Merpeople not turn around and run away at his sight, nothing more. To further deepen their feelings and trust, he still needed to continue giving them gifts.

Fortunately, through this period of contact, Evan found that besides music, the Merpeople also liked all kinds of human-made items, such as furniture, mirrors, all kinds of jewelry and so on, which were very popular among the Hogwarts Merpeople clan.

For these items, they were willing to exchange some herbs and magic materials that grew deep in the lake. Among them, Evan had selected all the precious and rare magic materials to make potions and refine alchemy.

The rest of the ordinary stuff would be handed over to Fred and George, who were used to make prank props.

These materials provided by the Merpeople far exceed the original value of the goods exchanged with Evan, and the profit of the transaction was very high. Even if there was no clue about Ravenclaw's secret treasure key, he was willing to continue the transactions.

More than ten minutes later, Evan and Hermione Apparated back to the Shrieking Shack.

Sirius announced that Evan could use Apparition alone. He also gave him a copy of *Common Mistakes in Apparition and Ways to Avoid Them*. It was an exam textbook printed by the Ministry of Magic, which summarized various problems and solutions that could occur in Apparition.

Not sure how long it would take to communicate and trade with the Merpeople, Evan had decided to act after dinner.

He greeted Hermione and asked her to cover for him.

In the eyes of others, the two of them, like other couples, went to a secret place in the castle for a date after dinner. But in fact, Evan was going to dive alone into the lake outside. Because of worry, Hermione wanted to go with him, but he deterred her!

It was not so peaceful under the lake. It was more convenient for him to move alone, and he didn't need to be distracted protecting Hermione.

He and Hermione slipped out of the castle, mingling in the crowd after supper, before the sky was completely dark.

Many Durmstrang students were leaning on the side of the ship to chat, and there was laughter and noise.

Through the huge shadows of the castle and the statues on the lawn, they bypassed the large ship of Durmstrang, and Evan walked from the other end to the lake.

The lake was very cold, and his rapidly numbing feet were slipping over silt and flat, slimy stones.

When the bitter wind blew, he shivered, took out his wand and cast two spells on himself with the fastest speed.

There was a bubble around Evan's head. That was the Bubble-Head Charm!

Under the action of the warm-up spell, the lake was no longer cold and piercing, just a little cool. Given the surrounding temperature, it was still uncomfortable to soak in it.

That was one of the reasons why Evan did not let Hermione follow him. On the coldest night of January, it was not a pleasant experience to dive into the dark and cold water of the lake and contact some rather terrifying Merpeople.

If he had a choice, he would rather curl up on the sofa next to the warm and comfortable fire in the Common Room and read quietly.

Evan shook his head and finally glanced at Hermione standing on the shore, turned over and flung himself forward into the water.

Silence pressed upon his ears as he soared over a strange, dark, foggy landscape, avoiding the places where the giant squid often appeared and the large water plants where the Grindylovs might be lurking, and went to the Merpeople village at the bottom of the lake.

The Merpeople colony tonight was very lively. It seemed that there was a ritual activity, and the Merpeople all came out from rough stones.

When Evan approached, he saw more than two hundred Merpeople gathered all over the square in the middle of the village.

They were barely dressed up, all with long hair, and their iron-gray skin was painted with strange patterns of dye. From time to time, their powerful, silver tails were beating the water.

Their dark green hair was long and disheveled, but it was decorated with shells, corals and pearls. They wore thick ropes of pebbles around their necks. The same was true for their bodies that were full of various ornaments.

They were just talking about something and kept spitting bubbles, as though they were waiting for something.

Evan landed at the edge of the circular square, took all kinds of things that Lupin had given him out of his cloth bag and placed them at the bottom of the lake.

While eavesdropping on the Merpeople's conversation, he was wondering what they were doing.

Noticing Evan's presence, many Merpeople faces showed a trace of joy. It didn't take long for some of them to come and trade with him.

They picked out their favorite items from the things Evan brought, and then they went back to their homes and moved out a pile of materials for exchange.

The whole exchange process was going on very fast and easier than expected.

The Merpeople did not bargain at all, and the materials given to Evan were of great value and quantity, far exceeding the actual value of the goods he brought.

Chapter 642: The Gap in the Mersperson Statue

Despite their proximity to Hogwarts, no wizard was allowed to go to the nearby waters to collect magical materials.

The Merpeople themselves were not proficient in magic and potions, so they were less likely to be interested in these things.

Over a thousand years, various materials and herbs in the nearby waters had accumulated to a terrifying amount.

When Evan first gave the Merpeople a gift two months ago, they were delighted to exchange graffiti, pebbles, shells and all sorts of clutter for decoration.

It was hard to turn down that warm-hearted offer; but in the end, Evan could only reluctantly accept the magical materials and herbs brought out by a few of them.

The Merpeople were worried that they could not find anything suitable to exchange with Evan. Compared with human wizards, their village was too barren in any way.

Seeing that Evan was willing to take these things, they felt that they had finally found the right direction. The Merpeople began to collect these magic materials to trade them with Evan.

Over time, the matter became more and more widespread.

The number of Merpeople who knew this news was growing, and it had evolved into what it was today.

In fact, although the Merpeople looked very horrible, they were not really evil Dark creatures. They were not as arrogant as the Centaurs, who did not communicate with humans, and only lived in the small circle of their own clan.

On the contrary, the Merpeople were very open and friendly.

They kept awe and yearning for magic, were willing to make friends with human wizards, and were especially fond of articles made by humans.

Unfortunately, there were a few wizards who could speak Mermish and were willing to come into contact with them, and wizards who could communicate with them would not do the same as Evan. Apart from him, no wizard would exchange items with them for magical materials to meet the needs of the Merpeople.

At this moment, a strange picture appeared under the lake.

A large group of Mermen surrounded Evan, with precious, priceless magical items.

As there was a ritual in the Merpeople colony today, the number of Merpeople swarmed in more than usual.

They floated around Evan staring at him. Their eyes were yellow, as were their broken teeth.

Every Merman leered at Evan, trying to show their goodwill, but that looked like terrible smiles with bad intentions.

Of all the things Evan brought, mirrors were their favorite, and they were snatched madly!

It was to say that this was really a bit unexpected! Evan was not sure if these Merpeople would not be scared if they saw their ugly faces in the mirrors.

After a few words of greeting, he irresponsibly left his belongings on the ground to let the Merpeople choose for themselves.

After all, they were very trustworthy. They would consciously leave the magical materials for exchange in place, waiting for Evan to collect them.

Evan went to the center of the square and found the strong Merman he had stunned by magic for the first time.

After several contacts, he knew that he had a high status in the Merpeople colony. He was a very powerful warrior and was respected.

Evan gave him the gifts he had specially selected for him. The Merman said a few words, probably to express his gratitude to Evan, and invited him to his house to get the corresponding magical materials after a certain ritual.

“What’s this ritual you’re doing?!” Evan asked directly, spitting out a lot of air bubbles.

“It’s just a traditional celebration,” said the Merman in a husky, low voice.

His mouth also spit a bunch of bubbles. The Merman spoke very quickly, and Evan could not grasp many words.

But the general meaning was clear. This kind of ritual was inherited from the Merpeople's ancestors, and had to be carried out once a month.

What interested Evan was that he told him that there were rumors that the ritual was originally an agreement between the Merpeople ancestors and the castle builders.

Over time, the ritual had evolved, today, into a celebration of the ancestors and large gatherings in the colony.

In other words, it was very likely that this matter was related to the treasure key left by Ravenclaw.

Evan immediately became interested. After chatting with the Merman, he waited for the start of the event.

More than an hour later, more and more Mermen emerged from all directions, and there were over 500 of them.

Many of them did not live in this lake, but settled in other waters near Hogwarts.

Even in the central lake of the Centaurs' colony, there were traces of Merpeople activities.

They came from all directions, and many of them looked at Evan curiously. They pointed at him and whispered with their hands over their mouths.

The things that Evan had brought over had been sold out as early as forty minutes ago.

A variety of magical materials and herbs were filled in his two cloth bags that had been extended by the Undetectable Extension Charm.

A large number of Mermen floated above the square of the Merpeople village, and a very strange sight appeared in front of Evan at the beginning of the ritual.

The Merpeople swam in a circle, and some of them began to sing in unison.

It sounded very strange, but it was very pleasant. It was totally different from the Merpeople's normal voice.

Even the language seemed to be different. Evan couldn't understand it, but this wonderful song was the Mersong in his impression.

They danced and sang around the square. Although they were in the depths of the cold lake, the atmosphere was getting warmer and warmer.

The so-called ancient ritual now looked like a grand celebration.

The Merpeople asked Evan to join them, and they slowly danced along a special path.

Right in front of the square, rose a crude sort of statue; a gigantic Merperson hewn from a boulder.

When the ritual activity reached its peak, Evan found that a strange wave of magic began to appear in the whole space.

There was no magic in the Merpeople themselves nor in their singing. Evan had confirmed it!

But these singers seemed to be able to resonate with the gigantic Merperson statue, casting a strange magic, a magic that only the Merpeople could use.

Although not very powerful, the rumbling sound kept ringing inside the statue.

Evan stopped and looked warily at the huge statue.

“Don’t worry!” said a Merman next to him with a smile, continuing to dance.

After a while, a deep gap appeared in the tail of the Merperson statue, as though a door had been opened and the lake quickly poured into it.

The Merpeople did not enter, still dancing and welcoming, but they motioned to Evan that he could enter.

Evan hesitated for a moment, swam to the gap, and looked inside through the light of the outside.

Chapter 643: The Raven’s Heralding Death

In the light of the refraction of water and some fluorescent plants at the bottom of the lake, the whole Merpeople village was surrounded by a faint green light.

“Lumos!” Evan waved his wand and gave out a stronger light.

The Merpeople looked curiously at him and the shining wand, but they didn’t come up. They were still singing and dancing.

When Evan got closer, he found the gap between the tail fin and the waist of the Merperson statue.

It was covered with thick algae and moss, looming in the light of the wand.

Evan examined carefully the gap, which turned out to be formed after a scale disappeared from the statue.

He dived his wand into it and poked his head in. Inside the gap was a narrow stone corridor, which could allow only one person to crawl through.

According to the terrain trend, this corridor continued directly under the Merperson statue, which was a naturally formed crack. There was no trace of man-work inside, and the rock walls on both sides looked very rough and winding.

There seemed to be something inside, but because of the angle, he couldn’t see it clearly from the outside.

Evan spit out a few bubbles, the wand across his chest, forward into the gap, swimming down the tilt.

In the light of his wand, he looked closely at the gray rocks on both sides. The texture was not as hard as he had expected. These rocks were easy to be damaged by external forces, and the natural cracks inside were very narrow.

This meant that without using the right magic to open it, it was almost impossible to rely on brute force to enter.

With destructive force that was too small, the stone gate on the outside of the statue would not be opened. A little too much force however would make the cracks on the ground collapse completely and annihilate the narrow corridor.

It was difficult to gauge the amount of force needed. The original designer must have made very careful calculations before they built the Merperson statue on it.

In the gap, Evan swam ten feet down the slope and landed on the ground.

The corridor formed by the gap disappeared, and the space in front of him became bright and spacious.

The surrounding cold water of the lake and the water pressure quickly disappeared, and the air became dry again.

Evan turned around and reached out his left hand to feel it. In front of him, there was an invisible magic barrier, which isolated all the lake water.

The Merpeople outside could not use magic. How did this magic barrier appear here?!

The magic barrier that appeared here was very powerful. It must have been left by a powerful wizard. Would it be Rowena Ravenclaw?!

In such a place, it seemed that it could be no one but her!

No wonder those Merpeople were not willing to come in. They must have known that they would come out of the water at that point.

Evan quickly evaporated the water on his body and continued to move forward, feeling more and more curious in his heart.

He just stopped after two steps. The Merpeople song from above did not disappear, but became clearer...

It sounded very ethereal and beautiful, just like a sound of nature. The singing echoed in the corridor, making everything in front of him unreal, like a dream.

“There seems to be something wrong with this sound.” Evan froze for a moment, and his thoughts gradually became lost in the song of the Merpeople.

The song ringing in his ears had the charm of magic. He couldn't help but immerse himself in it, and didn't want to do anything else.

Listening to the wonderful music, Evan was getting more and more tired, more and more unable to rise his spirit. He just wanted to lie down and sleep.

“Muffliato!” He just used this spell on himself, and his ears were filled with an unidentifiable buzzing. It was like the whole school in the Great Hall talking together, or whispering in class.

The singing of the Merpeople was back to normal, and the power of the charm that had suddenly emerged disappeared.

Evan continued to move forward and was increasingly curious about the magic left here.

This magic depended on the Merpeople without any power to launch, fusing and influencing each other. The design was very ingenious.

At Evan's current level, not to mention the involvement, there were a lot of things that he didn't quite understand.

Along the passage, he whirled down to a stone door. There was no handle or key hole on the door. There was only a light brown board with an eagle shaped bronze door ring and a dark blue Raven at the top.

The raven's eyes were eerie red, staring at Evan. He pointed his wand at the Raven above and blinked to see that its eyes were two rubies.

Shining in the light of the wand, it looked uncomfortable.

Evan didn't know what material it was made of. It looked very realistic.

In front of the door, Evan had a feeling of being watched, but abnormally, there was no magic around him.

He lowered his head and looked away from the raven and moved to the main body of the gate.

Looking at the familiar eagle door knocker, Evan thought of the door of the Common Room of Ravenclaw House.

It was said that the current Ravenclaw Tower was once the laboratory of Rowena Ravenclaw. That's why she left such a unique door there to test the wisdom of the visitors and whether they were qualified to enter

Unlike the other three Houses that required passwords, only the wizard who gave the correct answer could enter Ravenclaw.

Even Ravenclaw students could only stay outside if they couldn't work out the answer.

If students from the other Houses were transferred to Ravenclaw, there would probably be many people sleeping in the corridor outside every night!

However, the students of Ravenclaw House were delighted and thought the test was very good.

Since there was such a door here, there was no doubt that Ravenclaw left it.

Perhaps the key to her secret treasure was inside. Evan hadn't expected it to be so simple.

Next, all he had to do was to answer the question raised by the door to unlock it. Apart from the Merpeople's song with seductive power, he did not encounter any obstacles along the way.

Evan did not let down his guard. Since Gryffindor left a test, there was no reason Ravenclaw would do nothing.

He walked to the door with his wand in one hand and knocked lightly on the door with the other. In the silence, Evan felt that the sound was like a shell.

The beak of the eagle opened at once. It did not make a bird call, but said in an indifferent, gloomy voice, "Strange visitor... you will be judged here, and death will be your only destination."

Its voice just fell, and the powerful strange magic instantly swallowed magic into an ethereal space.

He immediately issued a Patronus Charm, but it didn't work.

The sudden power of the surrounding space was too strong, and Evan found himself under the Full Body-Bind Curse and lost control of his body.

Just then, the raven above the gate flew up like in a dream.

It was over Evan's head, its blood-red eyes staring at him.

This time, Evan could clearly feel the death from this raven!

Chapter 644: Raven's Claw

Like black cats, the wizards generally believed that ravens had strong magic and were a very special animal.

The wizarding community attached great importance to this kind of animal and gave it a moral that went far beyond many magical creatures.

As for the origin of the Raven and Ravenclaw, it could be traced back to history.

It is well known that in Celtic mythology, the raven often appears with the warrior goddess known as the Morrighan.

It is considered a symbol of uncertainty and death, as well as the incarnation of the Morrighan.

The Ravenclaw family is considered a direct descendant of the raven next to the warrior goddess, a family of pure-blood wizards known for their wisdom and cunning long before Hogwarts was founded. It was one of the top wizarding families of the time, ruling and leading the entire wizarding community.

The hidden meaning in the name of Ravenclaw family is "Greedy Predator", which is used to describe their thirst for knowledge.

According to the Sorting Hat, Rowena Ravenclaw was teaching philosophy, and the inheritance tenet of the Ravenclaw family could be clearly seen; that is: We'll teach those whose intelligence is surest.

In Ravenclaw, wisdom was the most important trait.

Nowadays, Ravenclaw's symbol had changed from a raven to an eagle. However, their valuing of wisdom never changed

Regarding the symbol of Ravenclaw House, the debate over whether it was a raven or an eagle had been around for a long time.

Although the Ravenclaw family's emblem was a raven spreading its wings, many wizards believed that the harbinger represented by the raven was not very auspicious.

What's more, there had been rumors that Madam Rowena Ravenclaw's own Animagus form was an eagle, and Ravenclaw's most famous knocker had the shape of an eagle's head, and the House was also featured in Hogwarts emblem as an eagle.

Over time, the symbol of Ravenclaw House became an eagle.

However, history was not as simple as it seemed, and there were many secrets hidden.

Evan recently discovered through the review of ancient books of history that hundreds of years ago, when the Ravenclaw House symbol changed, many conservative wizards believed that the Raven should be the real symbol of Ravenclaw House, and they held different ideas about the so-called change.

The vast majority of these people were evil Dark wizards who set up heretical sects to carry forward their ideas.

What impressed Evan most was an evil force named “Raven’s Claw” recorded in the book. They were founded more than six hundred years ago, and lived by the legacies of Ravenclaw, trying to collect the remaining information left by the era of the Morrighan, the warrior goddess.

“The Raven’s Claw” developed believers everywhere, propagating the fanatical heresy of “the Last Judgment”.

Surprisingly, they seemed to really find some sort of ancient energy, hoping to use this power to rule the entire wizarding world.

Evan was the most impressed with the description of this paragraph and would never forget it. Because the so-called miracle of the warrior goddess the Morrighan they had found, no matter how to look at it, was like the power of some evil god, such as whispering in their ears, worshipping the power of darkness and chaos, and so on.

These terrible fellows actually wanted this ancient evil god to come to the world and help it return to its former dominance.

Because of the differences in beliefs and ideas, acting mysteriously, bloody, and cruel, the “Raven’s Claw” had been jointly suppressed by the great powers of the entire wizarding world since its inception.

In the end, some of them went on a frenzy to wage war on Hogwarts.

It was said that the original clue came from Hogwarts Castle and was believed to be a gift from Madam Rowena Ravenclaw.

They attempted to occupy Hogwarts, completely destroy this ancient School of Wizardry and look for more clues.

Undoubtedly, that was crazy, even crazier than Voldemort’s actions!

But Evan doubted that Rowena Ravenclaw might have left a message of evil spirits.

After all, judging from the case of Gryffindor and Slytherin, the Four Founders all had secret ties with ancient evil gods.

The specific situation was not known. After the war, the heretical organization of “Raven’s Claw” completely disappeared and faded out of sight. Whether they still existed or not, Evan did not know and did not care.

He only hoped that the terrible woman, so-called goddess of war, the Morrighan, who might actually be some horrible evil god, would not be summoned.

Seeing the raven hovering in the sky, Evan remembered the “Raven’s Claw”.

The sound on the gate was still going on, with a strange tone.

“If you were allowed to choose the only achievement to be remembered after death, what would you choose?”

This question tested what was most important to the heart of the respondent. There seemed to be no margin, and it was difficult to answer.

It was conceivable that if the answer was wrong, what awaited Evan would be real death.

Although it was difficult, considering that Ravenclaw was the person asking this question, there was obviously only one answer.

“Wisdom, I hope my wisdom will be remembered by the world!” said Evan softly.

“Correct answer,” said the voice “The smartest mind deserves a reward!”

The strange power that controlled Evan disappeared instantly, as if it had never existed.

In the rumbling sound, the stone gate slowly opened and the raven, which had been hovering above his head, took the lead to fly in.

Evan followed in, and inside was a large circular room that looked very ethereal.

The decoration and layout were similar to Ravenclaw Common Room, with blue and bronze silk hanging on the wall.

But because of the long time, these decorations had become a bunch of rotten rags, which could only be vaguely identified.

The carpet on the ground was also rotten, and now there was only a lot of thick dust left.

The ceiling above was domed with stars painted on it.

In the corresponding position under each star, there were bookshelves filled with various magic classics.

There was a fake purple light of summer, and the books were completely isolated and protected by magic barriers.

While ensuring that the books inside were not affected by time and bacteria or insects, they could not be taken out for viewing.

Evan took a closer look and didn't touch the books in the bookshelf, although he was really very tempted. But he was not sure that the protection magic he'd never seen before was not aggressive.

What's more, even if he could crack it, it would take him a long time. And Evan could not stay here for too long. No one could guarantee when the Merpeople singing outside would stop.

Chapter 645: Looking for the Lost Diadem

The access to this place depended on the resonance magic generated by the Merpeople's singing, which would not last for a long time.

Once the singing stopped, the gap between the entrance and exit would be closed and Evan would be locked in here.

He had to seize the time to learn the secret of the place and get out before the gap was closed.

Evan followed the raven's flight path and quickly walked through the rows of bookshelves to the inside.

At the innermost side of the room was a sunken alcove, in which stood a tall white marble statue.

It was Rowena Ravenclaw!!!

When Evan and Luna had visited Ravenclaw's Common Room, they saw her statue.

The marble statue of Ravenclaw here was larger than the one in the House Common Room.

She seemed to be looking at Evan, with a seemingly innocent teasing smile on her face, beautiful but somewhat daunting.

The raven stayed above her head and cocked its head, its blood-red eyes staring dead at Evan.

It uttered a harsh, mournful cry that made him shudder.

“Wit beyond measure is man's greatest treasure!”

The cold, strange voice that Evan had heard before sounded again. This time, he noticed that the voice was from the raven.

“If you want Ravenclaw's reward, bring her Diadem, and I will show you all the secrets!”

“Ravenclaw's Diadem?!” Hearing it, Evan's gaze removed from the raven, and only then did he notice that the famous Diadem was not on the head of the statue of Rowena Ravenclaw.

That was really incredible! Indeed, the Diadem could be clearly seen in the portraits and sculptures of Rowena Ravenclaw, even in all the written records. Ravenclaw herself hardly took the Diadem off.

It was considered to be a symbol of Rowena Ravenclaw and had special significance.

For hundreds of years, many wizards believed that Ravenclaw's Diadem had magical features and could enhance the wisdom of its wearer.

It was a very famous legendary magic item that had been handed down from generation to generation in the Ravenclaw family.

It was not clear whether Ravenclaw's Diadem had other uses besides increasing wisdom, but it was undoubtedly proof of wisdom and status.

It was believed that only the smartest wizard in the world was qualified to wear the Diadem, also known as the Diadem of Wisdom.

In the eyes of the world, Ravenclaw had always been crowned because she was recognized as the cleverest wizard. But after her death, this precious magic prop had disappeared.

No matter how the posterity searched the castle and her relics, they found no trace of it, and the Diadem disappeared out of thin air!

Since then, the Lost Ravenclaw Diadem had become a mystery, and various rumors had flown everywhere.

Some said that Rowena Ravenclaw was reluctant to give up the Diadem and took it to her grave.

Others believed that the Diadem had been automatically hidden, and only when a wizard with intelligence comparable to that of Rowena Ravenclaw showed up would it reappear.

But Evan knew that Ravenclaw's daughter, Helena Ravenclaw, had stolen the Diadem. She wanted to be smarter and more prestigious than her mother, so she fled with her crown and hid in a forest in Albania, hoping to monopolize this treasure that did not belong to her.

No one knew about this, Ravenclaw had never admitted that the Diadem was gone. She had been pretending that it was still with her.

She even concealed her loss and her daughter's terrible betrayal from the other three Founders.

She didn't even look for her Diadem, just as though it had never been.

Later, Ravenclaw was sick and very ill. She hoped to see her daughter again before she died.

She sent the Bloody Baron, a man who once loved Helena, to find her.

But the Baron ended up killing Helena, and then he stabbed himself with the same knife.

Centuries had passed, and he was still wearing his chains as an act of penitence.

After their death, they both eventually returned to Hogwarts, just in a ghostly form.

Because of all kinds of regrets and remorse, they would stay there forever, wandering in the old castle.

Helena didn't see her mother in the end, and didn't get her forgiveness, though Ravenclaw probably never resented her.

The Baron blamed himself for killing his beloved with his own hands, living in infinite pain, and couldn't be relieved after death.

As for Ravenclaw's Diadem, Helena had hidden it in a hollow tree in the forest of Albania.

The story did not end here. Evan did not need to go to a desolate Albanian forest to find a thousand-year-old tree, nor did he have to go to the Ravenclaw Library to look through ancient books and ask about the painful love between Helena and the Bloody Baron.

Because Voldemort had found the whereabouts of the Lost Diadem, he went to the distant forest and took it back.

He made the Diadem of Wisdom his precious Horcrux, instead of being in the humble tree.

Then, Voldemort brought the Diadem secretly back to its real home and hid it in the Room of Requirement in Hogwarts.

On his way back, Evan had been thinking about these things.

In this case, he should thank Voldemort for making the challenge left by Ravenclaw very easy.

Evan had just to return to the castle, find the Diadem in the Room of Requirement, and take it to the next Merpeople's ritual. Thus he could get the secret treasure left by Ravenclaw.

The only thing he needed to pay attention to in the whole process was not to be affected by Voldemort's Horcrux in the Diadem.

Speaking of which, Evan had always wanted to deal with the Horcruxes, but because the matter wasn't very urgent with Harry still one of them, he kept delaying it.

At the right moment, he would take this opportunity to dispose of the Horcrux and check whether there were any secrets hidden in the Diadem.

Evan said goodbye to the Merpeople and resurfaced with the magic materials he had exchanged.

It was now about ten o'clock in the evening. The dark moon was swaying in the thick clouds and the cold wind was blowing.

Evan was surprised to see Hermione waiting on the bank, curled up in the grass, clutching a glass bottle of blue magic fire.

She was looking nervously at the lake, trembling with cold and looking very pitiful.

"Oh, this girl ... I thought she had gone straight back to the castle ... she's still waiting here!" Evan's heart was warm, and he felt some remorse for Hermione.

He knew that Hermione was not at ease, so she kept waiting for him by the lake.

Sure enough, as soon as she saw Evan crawling out of the lake, Hermione rushed over and hugged him tightly.

Chapter 646: The Prefects' Bathroom and the Golden Egg

While Evan dived into the lake, Harry and Ron also sneaked out of the Common Room.

They walked slowly because Ron was hiding the heavy Golden Egg under his robe.

"Lavender is so enthusiastic we should have done it earlier. By the way, Harry, do you have the invisibility cloak and the Marauder's Map?" Ron asked nervously, avoiding the three first-years who were staring at them. "No one can say how long this bath will take. We must be careful not to be seen when we come back."

"They're with me!" said Harry, glancing at Ron's bulging clothes. "You said you've already solved the clue to the golden egg?"

"Keep your voice down!" Ron said in a low voice, and kept looking around. "You know, if I didn't say that, Hermione wouldn't have let me go to Hogsmeade. I had an important date with Lavender. Besides, we're going to make this thing clearer now!"

"Why did Bagman tell you this?!" Harry continued, "Why would he help you cheat?"

More than twenty minutes ago, Ron told Harry what had happened in the Three Broomsticks during the day.

The real content of Ludo Bagman's conversation with Ron was that he told him the secret of the Golden Egg.

Bagman said that as long as Ron took a bath and took the egg with him, all the clues and secrets of the second task would be clear.

In any case, it was suspicious, and Bagman had no reason to help the champions.

If it were Harry, he would definitely not accept his help. It would make him feel very bad.

"What's going on?"

"He said he wanted to help me because of my father," said Ron, shrugging his shoulders. "I'm not sure if what he said is true, but it's no big deal. Without help, I can't figure out what the damn golden egg is shouting. Remember ... Cheating is a tradition of the Triwizard Tournament. In the first task, I reckon the other three champions must also have accepted help from others. They can't just rely on their own ability to solve difficult problems."

"Bagman and Hagrid are not the same," said Harry. "We should talk to Evan and Hermione."

"The two of them must have gone somewhere for a date, hiding in a corner to be close!" said Ron impatiently. "Don't worry, Harry! It's just a bath with the Golden Egg. Even if Bagman was lying to us, there's nothing to lose if we try. At worst, it would be a bit stupid."

"All right!" Harry nodded hesitantly. "Where's the bathroom, you said?"

"It's the Prefects' bathroom on the fifth floor," said Ron. "Fred and George told me about it. They know from Percy. I've never been there before! But there is generally nobody in there, and the password is never changed!"

More than twenty minutes later, they came to the end of the corridor on the fifth floor, in front of the statue of Boris the Bewildered, a lost looking wizard with his gloves on the wrong hands.

Ron led Harry to the door next to the statue, leaned close to it, and muttered the password, "Pine Fresh!"

The door creaked open. Harry and Ron slipped inside and bolted the door behind them, nervously looking around.

"It's really big here!" Harry exclaimed. For the first time, he found that it was not really bad to be Prefect. This bathroom was ten times the size of the boys' common bathroom. Not to mention other rights, it was worth just being able to use this bathroom.

Ron also nodded and was shocked by the sight.

If there was a word to describe here, it was luxury!

In front of them, the room was softly lit by a splendid candle-filled chandelier, and everything was made of white marble, including what looked like an empty, rectangular swimming pool sunk into the middle of the floor. About a hundred golden taps stood all around the pool's edges, each with a differently colored jewel set into its handle. There was also a diving board. Long white linen curtains hung at the windows; a large pile of fluffy white towels sat in a corner, and there was a single golden-framed painting on the wall. It featured a blonde mermaid who was fast asleep on a rock, her long hair over her face. It fluttered every time she snored.

They moved forward, looking around, their footsteps echoing off the walls.

Ron walked to the side of the pool, placed the golden egg on the floor, then knelt down and turned on a few of the taps several faucets.

Harry followed suit and turned on the taps. He was surprised to find that these taps carried different sorts of bubble bath mixed with hot water, though it wasn't bubble bath as he had ever experienced it. One tap gushed pink and blue bubbles the size of footballs; another poured ice-white foam so thick that Harry thought it would have supported his weight if he'd cared to test it; a third sent heavily perfumed purple clouds hovering over the surface of the water.

In the bathroom, Harry and Ron amused themselves for a while turning the taps on and off, particularly enjoying the effect of one whose jet bounced off the surface of the water in large arcs.

In the blink of an eye, the deep pool was full of hot water, foam and bubbles. It took a very short time considering its size, which was amazing.

The two looked at each other and quickly turned off all the taps, pulled off their clothes, and slid into the water.

"It's so comfortable!" Ron whispered softly.

"It's awesome!" Harry agreed. If he could, he hoped to be able to bathe here in the future.

It was wonderful to swim in hot and foamy water with clouds of different-colored steam wafting all around them.

The two swam back and forth in the water several times and played heartily for quite a while before they remembered the serious business of this evening.

"What should we do?" Harry lifted the Golden Egg in his wet hands.

"I don't know, open it first!" said Ron, swimming to Harry to help.

Suddenly, the wailing, screeching sound filled the bathroom, echoing and reverberating off the marble walls, but it sounded just as incomprehensible as ever, if not more so with all the echoes.

"Close it, close it!" shouted Harry.

Ron snapped it shut again, and the two gasped and paled, worried that the sound would attract others.

“It was so stupid of me to take a bath with the Golden Egg. Bagman must be fooling me!” said Ron ruefully.

“I’d try putting it in the water, if I were you.” A voice rang beside them.

Ron was so startled that he dropped the egg, which clattered away across the bathroom floor.

Chapter 647: The Secret of the Golden Egg

“Ah!” Ron hurried to the golden egg, his foot slipped, he lost his balance of gravity, and he fell heavily.

Harry fell down too, and Ron pressed on him. And they both accidentally swallowed a considerable amount of bubbles.

They hurried to separate, stood up panting and sputtering.

“It’s you!” Ron looked up and saw the ghost of a very glum-looking girl sitting cross-legged on top of one of the taps.

It was Moaning Myrtle!!!

It was a troublesome ghost. She was the first victim when Tom Riddle opened Slytherin’s Chamber of Secrets more than 50 years ago to release the basilisk.

Since then, she was often to be heard sobbing in the S-bend of a toilet in the out-of-order girls’ bathroom.

“It’s me!” she said, with a rare teasing smile on her face.

Following her gaze, Harry looked down to see himself completely naked.

“Myrtle!” he said in outrage, “How can you be here? I ... we’re not wearing anything!”

Watched by Myrtle, Harry had a very uncomfortable feeling.

The foam was so dense that it covered everything, but he had a nasty feeling that Myrtle had been spying on them from out of one of the taps ever since they had arrived and undressed.

“I closed my eyes and saw nothing!” she said, blinking at Harry and Ron through her thick spectacles, her eyes fixed on Harry longer. “Speaking of which, you haven’t been to see me for ages. And where’s Evan?”

When searching for Slytherin’s Chamber of Secrets in the castle the year before last, Evan, Harry, Ron, and Hermione had contact with Myrtle.

Ron, in particular, had to apologize to Myrtle for inappropriate remarks at Nick’s deathday party.

It was a nightmare-like memory. When he thought about it, all the hair on his body stood up.

“Only Evan can deal with her!” Ron whispered, approaching Harry. “What should we do?”

Harry shook his head, bending his knees slightly, just to make absolutely sure Myrtle couldn't see anything but his head.

“Why don't you come to see me, do you hate me?” Myrtle asked, looking sad.

“Well ...” said Harry. “We're not supposed to come into your bathroom, are we? It's a girls' bathroom, and boys are not allowed to enter it.”

“You didn't use to care,” said Myrtle miserably. “You used to be in there all the time.”

“We got told off for going in there!” said Harry, pushing Ron. What he said was half-true. Percy had once caught them coming out of Myrtle's bathroom.

“Yeah ... so we thought we'd better not come back after that!” Ron continued. He wrinkled his nose and tried to stay away from Myrtle.

This evening was really terrible. He took a bath with the Golden Egg foolishly, and he met Myrtle who was spying on them.

This way, it might be better for him to admit defeat and go straight to Evan and Hermione for help.

“Oh ... I see ...” said Myrtle, picking at a spot on her chin in a morose sort of way. “But you can still come later. I allow you to come. Yes, you can also call Evan, and come to see me together!”

Harry and Ron nodded in a hurry and said they would definitely come later. Anyway, Evan would be there, and he was very good at dealing with Moaning Myrtle.

“Anyway ... I'd try the egg in the water. That's what Cedric Diggory did,” said Myrtle.

“Have you been spying on him too?” Harry asked. “What do you do, sneak up here in the evenings to watch the prefects take baths?”

“Sometimes,” said Myrtle, rather slyly, “after all, it's boring to be in the bathroom all the time. I need some change, but I've never come out to speak to anyone before.”

“We're honored,” said Harry darkly. He and Ron looked at one another. No one wanted to go out and take the golden egg rolling to the distance under the watchful eyes of Myrtle.

Finally, Ron had to get up. Who told him to be a Champion?!

“You keep your eyes shut, Myrtle!” he said loudly.

Ron made sure Myrtle had her glasses well covered before hoisting himself out of the bath, wrapping a towel firmly around his waist.

Harry blinked and saw that Myrtle was looking at Ron through her fingers, and could see everything clearly.

That was terrible. He swore he would never come here to bathe again.

Ron ran back with the golden egg breathing heavily.

Harry thought about it and didn't tell him what Myrtle had just done, especially that when he was holding the egg, the towel slipped down.

“What should we do now?”

“Open it under the water!”

Ron lowered the egg beneath the foamy surface and opened it.

This time, it didn't wail. A gurgling song was coming out of it, a song whose words they couldn't distinguish through the water.

Harry and Ron looked at one another again. So that was the case!

“You need to put your heads under the water too,” said Myrtle, who seemed to be thoroughly enjoying bossing them around. “Go on!”

Harry and Ron took a great breath and slid under the surface. They sat on the marble bottom of the bubble-filled bath and they heard a chorus of eerie voices singing to them from the open egg:

“Come seek us where our voices sound,

We cannot sing above the ground,

And while you're searching ponder this:

We've taken what you'll sorely miss,

An hour long you'll have to look,

But past an hour ... the prospect's black,

Too late, it's gone, it won't be back.”

“What does that mean?” Ron asked, drilling out of the bubble-filled bath.

“You've got to go and look for people who can't use their voices above the ground!” said Harry, and he followed. “But who could that be? Who can't sing above the ground?”

He shook his hair out of his eyes, and there was a flash in his mind.

“Ron, do you remember Hermione's speculation this morning?” said Harry quickly. “What she said when we saw Krum jumping into the lake, and Gabrielle said that her sister was going to swim in the lake too!”

“You mean the lake in front of the castle.” Ron’s face turned pale and he couldn’t believe it. “This is impossible!”

“Yeah, the second task is definitely in the lake, letting you find what you’ll sorely miss.”

“Well, that’s what Diggory thought,” said Myrtle, looking at Harry with appreciation. “He lay there talking to himself for ages about it. Ages and ages ... nearly all the bubbles had gone.”

Chapter 648: People on the Marauder’s Map

Ron was still digesting this shocking news and couldn’t believe he was going into the lake.

“Myrtle ... what lives in the lake, apart from the giant squid?” Harry continued.

“Oh all sorts, far beyond your imagination!” she said, seemingly a little unhappy. “I sometimes go to the lake to hang out ... sometimes I don’t have any choice, if someone flushes my toilet when I’m not expecting it...”

Harry tried not to think about Moaning Myrtle zooming down a pipe to the lake with the contents of a toilet, though it was funny. He would give it a try if he could.

“Well, does anything in there have a human voice?” Harry asked. “Hang on...”

His eyes had fallen on the picture of the snoozing mermaid on the wall and hurriedly pushed Ron.

“The Merpeople, Ron, it must be the Merpeople!” he said quickly, “Myrtle, there aren’t Merpeople in there, are there?”

“Oooh, very good,” she said, her thick glasses twinkling, and she looked at Harry with satisfaction. “It took Diggory much longer than that! And that was with her awake too” ... she jerked her head toward the mermaid with an expression of great dislike on her glum face ... “giggling as usual and showing off and flashing her fins to the students bathing...” she said, dissatisfied.

“Harry, you mean...” Ron’s eyes also fell on the portrait of the mermaid.

“That’s it. The second task is to go and find the Merpeople in the lake and ... and ...” Harry couldn’t say any more. He suddenly realized what he was saying, and he felt the excitement that he had just discovered the secret drain out of him.

He remembered that the lake was very large and very deep, and the Merpeople would surely live right at the bottom...

This was no longer a matter of swimming. How could Ron breathe in there?!

Obviously, Ron thought the same. He no longer had the joy of finding the secret of the golden egg, and his face was bloodless.

“Myrtle, do you know how we are supposed to breathe underwater?” he asked hopefully.

At this, Myrtle’s eyes filled with sudden tears again.

“Tactless!” she muttered, groping in her robes for a handkerchief, “talking about breathing in front of me!”

There were more and more tears in her eyes, and she jumped off the tap.

“You know that I can’t!” she said shrilly, and her voice echoed loudly around the bathroom. “I haven’t ... not for ages...”

She buried her face in the handkerchief and sniffed loudly.

Harry remembered how touchy Myrtle had always been about being dead, but none of the other ghosts he knew made such a fuss about it.

Ron thought of this too, but he didn’t want to comfort Myrtle at all. He just wanted to leave.

He was to drown in the lake soon, and now he needed to apologize to an annoying ghost?!

“Sorry!” Finally, Harry said impatiently, “We didn’t mean it ... we just forgot!”

“Oh yes, very easy to forget Myrtle is dead,” said Myrtle, gulping, looking at them out of swollen eyes. “Nobody missed me even when I was alive. It took them hours and hours to find my body ... I know, I was sitting there waiting for them. Olive Hornby came into the bathroom ... ‘Are you in here again, sulking, Myrtle?’ she said, ‘because Professor Dippet asked me to look for you...’ And then she saw my body ... ooooh, she didn’t forget it until her dying day, I made sure of that ... I followed her around and reminded her, I did. I remember at her brother’s wedding... and then, of course, she went to the Ministry of Magic to stop me stalking her, so I had to come back here and live in my toilet.”

That was really an unpleasant memory. Myrtle seemed to bear grudges beyond imagination.

Harry and Ron didn’t even listen. They didn’t even care about being seen by her.

They retrieved the golden egg from the bottom of the bath, climbed out, dried themselves as quickly as possible, and put on their clothes again.

“Fred and George must have known about this. They knew that Myrtle would come and peek, and gave me the password to get in here,” said Ron angrily, “to see her?! Unless all the toilets in the castle are sealed with earth, I’ll never go near that place again.”

“Myrtle is really bad, but she helped us after all!” said Harry. “How are you going to do to dive under the water?”

“I don’t know. Go back and ask Evan and Hermione, they must know!” said Ron weakly.

Although unwilling to admit it, he did not have any way to deal with the current situation.

He had thought that this time he might not rely on Evan’s help, but he couldn’t.

After seeing Hermione at the Yule Ball, Ron had been very uncomfortable, always thinking of the scene of Evan and Hermione dancing, and the parchment with terrible patterns that Evan took out in the pub that morning...

This was not the time to get into conflict with Evan. Ron reminded himself that this was the lesson he learned in the past few years.

Evan’s power was very strong, far beyond his imagination, and he needed his help.

“Ron, we must hurry back,” said Harry, putting the invisibility cloak on top of their heads and checking it carefully. “It’s getting late. Come on, I’ll take the Golden Egg. You check the Marauder’s Map.”

They came to the dark corridor, and Ron absently checked the Marauder’s Map. The dots belonging to Filch and his cat, Mrs. Norris, were safely in their office.

Nothing else seemed to be moving apart from Peeves, though he was bouncing around the trophy room on the floor above.

“Let’s go!” said Ron, but he stopped abruptly.

Peeves was not the only thing that was moving. He saw Evan and Hermione suddenly appear at the gates of the castle.

What were they going out for? Was it a date?!

It made him feel uncomfortable when he thought of the scene of Evan and Hermione kissing.

Ron went out on a date with Lavender recently and finally knew what boys and girls were doing alone.

Think of it that way, Evan and Hermione had been together for a long time, they must be the same...

“What’s wrong, Ron?” Harry leaned over and saw Evan and Hermione at the gates. “Strange, how could they be there? Let’s go!”

He tugged at Ron’s sleeve, and Ron came to his senses.

“Oh!” He was about to put away the Marauder’s Map, and his eyes suddenly came to a standstill.

He saw a single dot flitting around a room in the bottom left-hand corner.

It was Professor Snape’s office. But the dot wasn’t labeled “Severus Snape” ... it was Caresius Slytherin!!!

Chapter 649: People Who Appear and Disappear

“Caresius Slytherin, who's this?!”

Ron blinked and saw the name blur, twist and disappear completely in front of him; as though it had never appeared before and everything was his illusion.

Before Ron could look away, Snape popped up in his office the next second.

He stayed for a while, then turned and went out to leave the dungeon and walked to the hall.

Snape was so fast that he seemed to be running after someone, just in time to meet Evan and Hermione who had just slipped into the castle.

Ron's gaze remained there, and then moved to Snape's office to look at it, hesitating for a long time.

It was really weird. Was the Marauder's Map damaged?!

He was impressed by the name Caresius, which had appeared and vanished just now, as though he had heard it somewhere...

Ron immediately recalled that this was the name of the vampire who had attacked at the Quidditch World Cup.

The week after the World Cup, the newspapers were full of reports of his deeds and arrests.

He remembered Evan saying that those vampires were now working for Voldemort, and they were very, very evil Dark wizards.

Ron's blood became cold, his breathing quickened, and his body trembled uncontrollably.

The vampire who was being hunted by the Ministry of magic actually sneaked into the castle. What did he want to do?

And why was he in Snape's office? Was there any relationship between them?!

Ron felt that he had caught something. Like Harry, he thought Snape had a problem.

What he saw just now seemed to prove it all. Did Snape have secret business with Voldemort and the vampires?!

Ron held his breath and subconsciously searched for Dumbledore's name, but the latter was not in his office.

Then, Ron thought of Mad-Eye Moody, the strongest Auror.

There must be nothing wrong with finding him for such a thing!

But when Ron's gaze moved to the office of the professor of the Defence Against the Dark Arts on the second floor, he actually saw Barty Crouch!

His name came out, now inside the fireplace of Moody's office.

Of course, Mad-Eye Moody was also in the office, and they seemed to be chatting at a certain distance.

Ron couldn't believe his eyes. He blinked hard and stared at the two dots.

Oh God, the Marauder's Map must be damaged!

In the middle of the night, he first saw a terrible vampire appear in Snape's office. And now, he saw Mad-Eye Moody receiving Barty Crouch in his office!

He still remembered Percy saying it on Christmas Day: Mr. Crouch was seriously ill, could not go to work, and could not attend the Yule Ball.

However, what did he come to Hogwarts for in the middle of the night after everyone had gone to bed?

Ron speculated that Crouch must have come by the Floo Network. Otherwise, his name could not have appeared in the fireplace.

But why? That was really hard to explain.

A sick person unable to work went to Hogwarts via the Floo Network to meet Moody, the professor of the Defense Against the Dark Arts.

Given the time, this kind of thing was very strange, no matter how to look at it. It was so weird and incredible just to think about it!

Mr. Crouch, who had always been strict, disciplined and law-abiding, would come to Hogwarts in the middle of the night and meet Moody secretly.

No matter what important things he had to say to Moody, this was not in line with Crouch's character.

If Percy knew about this, he would be shocked by Crouch's actions!

Ron looked at the dot. He just wanted to call Harry's attention to look at it, and Barty Crouch's name had vanished, as was the case in Snape's office. Did the vampire named Caresius leave by the Floo Network?!

"What on earth is going on?!" Ron gasped and squinted at the Marauder's Map, feeling a little out of his mind.

In his opinion, the Marauder's Map was definitely damaged!

He actually saw the names of two people tonight, and no way were they normally to appear in the castle.

If he said what he had just seen, Harry would probably not believe it, and he would definitely think he was crazy!

When he got back to his senses and noticed where they were, Ron hurriedly said, "Harry, we'd better not go to the hall!"

At this time, the two of them did not feel that they had come to the first floor!

"Why?" Harry asked, looking at Ron puzzled, feeling like he was acting strangely.

“It’s the Marauder’s Map, I was checking it...” Ron paused and said everything he had just seen in one breath, regardless of whether Harry believed it or not. “I know it’s incredible, but I did see their names.”

“Caresius and Barty Crouch?!” said Harry, and he leaned over. “You’re probably dazzled!”

“You’re maybe right,” Ron rubbed his eyes and sighed. “I’m probably under too much pressure after I knew about the second task. Anyway, we can’t go down now, Snape is down there right now, and this is absolutely right!”

“Yeah, he seems to have caught Evan and Hermione,” said Harry worriedly. “They’re too unlucky!”

“They ran into Snape, who was rushing out of the dungeon. I don’t know why he was in such a hurry.”

“I don’t know. Evan had always been very vigilant. I didn’t expect him to be caught by Snape! You’re right, Ron ... we can’t go now. Let’s go back to the Common Room and wait for them there. I hope they won’t be punished too severely!”

Ron nodded and tried not to think about the vampire and Barty Crouch. If he talked about this incredible thing, nobody would believe him, just like Harry’s reaction.

Harry and Ron walked down the stairs of the west tower and took a different route.

They crept as quietly as they could towards the main central staircase, trying not to make a sound, though the faces in some of the portraits still turned curiously at the squeak of a floorboard, the rustle of their pajamas

At this point, they were in a corridor on the first floor.

Harry and Ron hurried to stop as though they could hear Snape’s roar in the hall, which was terrible.

The people in the portraits also heard Snape’s roar, and all ran to the hall on the ground floor.

Harry prayed secretly for Evan and Hermione. Taking advantage of this opportunity, he and Ron quickly headed for the main staircase.

At this time, both of them were a little distracted, and from time to time, they glanced at the map.

As a result, Harry’s leg suddenly sank right through the trick step Neville always forgot to jump.

He gave an ungainly wobble, and the Golden Egg, still damp from the bath, slipped from under his arm...

Chapter 650: Peeves Stealing?!

Harry lurched forward to try and catch the egg, but too late!

The egg fell down the long staircase with a bang as loud as a bass drum on every step.

Dong, Dong, Dong...

The Golden Egg fell through the tapestry at the bottom of the staircase, burst open, and began wailing loudly in the corridor below.

“Oops, it will wake everyone up in the castle!” said Harry. “Come on, Ron, get it back!”

His feet were still knee deep in the trick step, and he could not pull them out. He could only urge Ron anxiously.

“No, someone’s coming, I can’t go there!” said Ron in a panic. He had just taken two steps and ran back quickly.

He pulled the Invisibility Cloak over himself and Harry, and they straightened up in the middle of the staircase, listening with trepidation...

And, almost immediately, they heard someone shouting ... “PEEVES!”

It was the unmistakable hunting cry of Filch the caretaker. They could hear his rapid, shuffling footsteps coming nearer and nearer, his wheezy voice raised in fury.

“What’s this racket? Wake up the whole castle, will you? I’ll have you, Peeves, I’ll have you... Eh, what is this?”

Filch’s footsteps halted. He picked up the egg doubtfully and closed it.

Harry and Ron just heard a clink of metal on metal and the wailing stopped!

They stood there very still, Harry’s leg still jammed tightly in the magical step.

Any moment now, Filch was going to pull aside the tapestry, expecting to see Peeves... and there would be no Peeves.

But if he came up the stairs, he might find Harry and Ron.

“Golden Egg?!” Filch said quietly at the foot of the stairs. “My sweet cat, this is a Triwizard clue. This belongs to a school champion! Ah ... I see ... PEEVES! You’ve been stealing!” He roared loudly, with irrepressible glee.

He ripped back the tapestry below, and Harry and Ron saw his horrible, pouchy face and bulging, pale eyes staring up the dark and deserted staircase.

Harry’s heart beat like a drum, and Ron’s eyes widened and he swallowed hard.

“Hiding, are you?!” said Filch softly. “I’m coming to get you, Peeves. ... You’ve gone and stolen a Triwizard clue. Dumbledore will never spare you this time, you filthy, pilfering, poltergeist...”

Filch started to climb the stairs, his scrawny, dust-colored cat at his heels.

Mrs. Norris’s lamp-like eyes, so very like her master’s, were fixed directly upon Harry and Ron.

Harry’s back was covered in cold sweat. He had had occasion before now to wonder whether the Invisibility Cloak worked on cats.

He was so horrified that he almost fainted, watching Filch drawing nearer and nearer in his old flannel dressing gown.

He tried desperately to pull his trapped leg free, but it merely sank a few more inches.

Ron didn't help either. He was too scared and stood still as though he were a wax figure.

Any second now, Filch was going to walk right into them...

"What's going on, Filch?!"

Filch stopped just a few steps below Harry and Ron and turned.

At the foot of the stairs stood Snape, his chest heaving violently, his wand clenched in his hand, as though he had just run up, and he looked livid.

Beside him were Evan and Hermione!

.....

Evan had just climbed up from the lake, and Hermione rushed over and hugged him.

She didn't care that Evan was all wet. She held him tightly and never wanted to let go.

She had been outside, just staring at the dark lake, waiting for hours, and she was afraid something might happen to Evan.

In particular, the last hour or so had been a torment for Hermione. Evan had been gone for too long. If it weren't for the lack of means to breathe underwater, she even wanted to go in and look for him. Whether it was the Bubble-Head Charm or human Transfiguration, they were senior courses, which Hermione had not yet mastered.

Thinking of this, she felt she was useless. Her magic was so poor that she could not help Evan at all.

In this complex and tense mood, Hermione sat alone for hours by the dark lake.

Her body was frozen, but she didn't care at all. She only hoped Evan would be safe.

When she saw him coming out, she was naturally overjoyed.

Tightly held by Hermione, although it was really cold with gusts of cold wind blowing, Evan felt warm in his heart.

They just hugged one another for a while before they were awakened by the cold water of the lake and the cold wind.

Although Evan wanted to do something for Hermione. They hugged each other back to the shore, feeling sweet and at ease being together. Evan listened to Hermione talk about her worries, her concerns, and the hope that she would be stronger and help him in the future...

This girl was much stronger than he thought.

Hermione had always been excellent, not so reluctant, but proper practice was really necessary.

As for her current biggest problem, it was also a common problem for young wizards of her age, the lack of magic...

Evan was thinking that maybe he could give Hermione the Philosopher's Stone left by Ravenclaw. Anyway, the extra one would be useless to him.

As for the use of magic powers of the Philosopher's Stone, he had recently worked out several tricks and had made progress in his research.

Unlike Harry, Ron, and Colin, who lacked theoretical foundations, Hermione's biggest problem now was the lack of sufficient magic.

Like Evan before, Hermione was very clever, read a lot of magic books, and knew a lot of magic, though their focuses were different.

Evan was more focused on Transfiguration, Dark magic and Defense Against the Dark Arts. Hermione, on the other hand, liked Charms, History of Magic, Potions classes, ancient magic texts, Arithmancy and other non-combat magic types.

But the problems encountered were all the same. Limited by magic, she could not exert most of the magic she knew. Because of this, Hermione was now unable to fully demonstrate her strength.

The Philosopher's Stone was the only way to increase magic power with the best effect and the fastest speed.

Evan thought that the next time he got to the bottom of the lake; he should take Hermione with him.

More than twenty minutes later, they returned to the castle hand in hand.

Just entering the hall, they saw a person's figure quickly disappearing in the corner of the stairs not far away.

Evan was stunned for a moment. The man looked like Caresius...