

## Harry Potter 961

### Chapter 961: Combat Training

Evan was thinking about what Sirius said. There was a lot of information here. Was there any connection between vampires, evil gods and Grindelwald?

Salazar Slytherin had left Hogwarts a thousand years ago, and he carried with him a very powerful thing. Evan didn't know what it was, but he could confirm that there were the whereabouts of the Caduceus and pieces of the evil god's brain and body that were yet to be determined...

Regardless of which item it was, each was crucial. Among them, Evan felt that the possibility of the evil god being a part of Salazar Slytherin was quite high.

Voldemort already had a statue of the evil god in his hands. Allowing him to obtain a part of the evil god's body...

Evan couldn't bear to think further. He felt it necessary to go to Norway; if the situation changed, he had to intervene swiftly.

Additionally, there was Elaine's situation. Apart from the last farewell letter she had sent at the end of the last semester, there had been no further contact.

He wondered what could have happened to her. Had something unexpected occurred?

By the fireplace, Harry and Hermione asked a few more questions, and Sirius answered them one by one, seeming a bit impatient.

"Okay, enough about me. Don't bother much with the situation in Norway, I'll inform you promptly if there's any news," said Sirius, smiling again. "How's everything here? Is there anything you want to tell me?"

Indeed, since the summer vacation, they had too many things to say to Sirius.

Although they wrote a lot on parchments through several letters, they still had a lot to tell Sirius face to face.

Especially Harry, who had a very tough summer, staying alone with the Dursleys, cut off from any magical news, attacked by Dementors, and facing the terrible media and everyone's reactions since the start of the school year.

Harry wanted to confide in Sirius, to tell his godfather everything.

However, the words got stuck in his throat as he thought about how dangerous Sirius's situation was, and he couldn't be of any help, let alone burden him with these troubles.

"Harry's scar!" When Harry hesitated, Hermione said directly, "Just a few days ago, when Umbridge touched him, his scar suddenly hurt, and we're all worried about it."

"Harry, your scar hurt again?" Sirius asked.

“Yeah, Dumbledore and Evan both said it hurt whenever Voldemort was feeling a powerful emotion,” said Harry. “So maybe he was just, um, really angry or something the night I had that detention.”

“This may be a coincidence!” Evan added.

“Maybe,” said Sirius. “Now he’s back, it’s bound to hurt more often...”

“So you don’t think it had anything to do with Umbridge touching me when I was in detention with her?” Harry asked.

“I doubt it,” said Sirius. “I know her by reputation and I’m sure she’s no Death Eater.”

“She’s foul enough to be one,” said Harry darkly.

“Yes, but the world isn’t split into good people and Death Eaters,” said Sirius with a wry smile. “You don’t have to bother to verify anything; she should have nothing to do with Voldemort. I know she’s a nasty piece of work, though — you should hear Remus talk about her.”

“Does Lupin know her?” asked Harry quickly, remembering Umbridge’s comments about dangerous half-breeds during class.

“No,” said Sirius, “but she drafted a bit of anti-werewolf legislation a few years ago that makes it almost impossible for Remus to get a job. It was just before he started teaching at Hogwarts, so he went through a tough time.”

“Yeah!” Everyone remembered how much shabbier Lupin looked these days and their dislike of Umbridge deepened even further.

“What’s she got against werewolves?” said Hermione angrily.

“Scared of them, I expect,” said Sirius, smiling at her indignation. “Apparently she loathes part-humans; she campaigned to have Merpeople rounded up and tagged last year too. By the way, what are her lessons like? Is she training you all to kill half-breeds?”

“Don’t even mention it; she’s not letting us use magic at all!”

“All we do is read the stupid textbook,” said Ron, “and copy it down.”

“Ah, well, that figures,” said Sirius. “I can tell you one more piece of information. The Order of the Phoenix got information from inside the Ministry of Magic that Fudge doesn’t want you trained in combat.”

“Trained in combat?” repeated Harry incredulously. “What does he think we’re doing here, forming some sort of wizard army?”

“That’s exactly what he thinks you’re doing,” said Sirius.

“The few of us are indeed learning magic with Evan, but it’s not combat training, and it has nothing to do with forming an army.”

“We’re currently learning basic defensive spells, hardly anything that could be considered combat training,” said Evan. “However, I plan to pass on the Auror knowledge and combat training content you taught me to everyone in a while, and help them improve their skills.”

“Sounds good to me. In fact, I think you should all learn more magic. If it weren’t for coming to this place, I was going to take you guys on an adventure last summer,” said Sirius. “But not everyone thinks it’s a good thing. That’s exactly what Fudge thinks now, or rather, that’s exactly what he’s afraid Dumbledore’s doing — forming his own private army, with which he will be able to take on the Ministry of Magic.”

After hearing this, everyone fell silent for a moment.

“He’s simply gone mad. No normal person would think like that.”

“That’s the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard, including all the stuff that Luna Lovegood comes out with,” said Ron.

“I finally understand what’s going on. So we’re being prevented from learning Defense Against the Dark Arts because Fudge is scared we’ll use spells against the Ministry?” said Hermione, looking furious.

“Yep,” said Sirius. “Fudge thinks Dumbledore will stop at nothing to seize power. He’s getting more paranoid about Dumbledore by the day. It’s a matter of time before he has Dumbledore arrested on some trumped-up charge.”

Another moment of silence followed as they learned more from Sirius. Fudge really seemed to have lost his mind!

“So, the four of you need to be careful while at Hogwarts. My advice is not to engage Umbridge directly and definitely not to give her any reason to hold against you. But it’s a good idea to continue learning magic with Evan. You can keep going, and if you need any help, just let me know.”

Chapter 962: Recruitment and Detention

Fudge’s worry about the students engaging in combat training had infuriated them, and at the same time made them more concerned about learning magic from Evan, especially Hermione, who was already thinking about this. Now that they heard Sirius’s advice, she simply proposed to form an army.

Since that was what the Ministry of Magic feared the most, they wanted to do the opposite.

Even if they were discovered and expelled by the Ministry of Magic because of this, they would not hesitate to fight against the Ministry to the end.

In Sirius's words, it was better to be expelled in self-defense than to sit safely in school with your eyes in the dark.

The war had started the moment Voldemort returned, and they couldn't just stay at Hogwarts and do nothing.

Because they needed to be prepared to fight Voldemort and the Death Eaters at any time, practicing combat and improving their skills had become more important than studying and taking exams.

It had to be said that it was quite surprising that such words came out of Hermione's mouth.

And once she became passionate and decided to do something, or thought her reasons were right, then she would absolutely follow through to the end and would never give up, no matter how many school rules this might violate, Hermione didn't care.

Just like no matter how busy she was now, she found time to spend in the kitchen every week to promote the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare among the house-elves. In fact, no one listened to her except Dobby, but she still didn't give up.

If it weren't for Evan's persuasion, Hermione would have planned to sew clothes for the house-elves as gifts...

Since they planned to form an army for combat training, the first priority was to "recruit soldiers."

With their current scale, they couldn't do it, and they couldn't post notices directly. Evan and Hermione studied it and decided to adopt a recommendation system to develop members.

That was to say, everyone would find and recommend reliable candidates, informing them secretly.

Of course, that was not something that could be accomplished overnight. They decided to gather everyone to discuss it first.

Evan had no objection to that; he originally wanted to form such an organization.

Before the start of the war, he wanted to help as many people as possible to improve their skills. Although it might be a bit too fast and unsafe to directly recruit people from the entire school, he also did not have much time to advance step by step.

The information brought by Sirius had let Evan know that the situation with the vampires was already very unstable.

Although Dumbledore was there, Voldemort was also there, and no one knew what would happen.

Once the situation changed, Evan had to intervene immediately, which meant that he might leave the school at any time.

With Hermione's efforts, the first draft of the plan and regulations for this matter was drawn up.

The first meeting was finally scheduled for the day they first went to Hogsmeade, and the location chosen was the small, dingy, and very dirty tavern "The Hog's Head Inn ". Hermione thought it was less crowded and inconspicuous, and Evan had no objections.

On the surface, the secrecy there was not very good, but considering that the owner of the tavern was Dumbledore's younger brother Aberforth and the Order of the Phoenix had permanent members there, it was actually the safest place.

Everything was unfolding in an orderly manner, and three weeks had passed quickly since Sirius appeared in the fireplace, Hermione proposed to actually form an army, and everyone separately informed the others.

During that period, Harry was given detention again for contradicting Umbridge in class.

The reason was that when Umbridge asked the fifth year students to continue reading Chapter two, of *Defensive Magical Theory: 'Common Defensive Theories and Their Derivation,'* Hermione informed her that she had already read the whole book.

She originally meant not to waste time on this, but to learn some knowledge that could be used in the exam, but Umbridge obviously regarded this normal inquiry as another challenge to her authority.

After losing to Hermione in a debate, she directly deducted five points from Gryffindor House.

This set Harry on fire, and he confronted Umbridge head-on again.

"Why did you deduct points for Gryffindor?" Harry asked angrily, standing up from his seat.

"Don't you get involved!" Hermione whispered urgently to him.

"For disrupting my class with pointless interruptions," said Professor Umbridge smoothly. "I am here to teach you using a Ministry-approved method that does not include inviting students to give their opinions on matters about which they understand very little. Your previous teachers in this subject may have allowed you more license, but as none of them — with the possible exception of Professor Quirrell, who did at least appear to have restricted himself to age-appropriate subjects — would have passed a Ministry inspection ..."

"Yeah, Quirrell was a great teacher," said Harry loudly, "there was just that minor drawback of him having Voldemort sticking out of the back of his head."

This pronouncement was followed by one of the loudest silences Harry had ever heard.

"I think another week's detentions would do you some good, Mr. Potter," said Umbridge sleekly.

This was Harry's second detention, and Umbridge had already ordered a new quill that cut the user's hand, and this time, the detention wouldn't be as easy as the last one!

With Rawya's help, Evan had figured out how the curse worked. But he doubted whether telling Harry would make him understand and successfully use the counter-curse.

Evan originally wanted to warn Harry to be calm and ignore Umbridge, but he soon found himself in detention, too, thanks to Umbridge.

The reason for Umbridge's anger was due to Rita Skeeter's latest article in *Hogwarts News*. Umbridge believed it was all fabrication, and as the actual controller of the *Hogwarts News*, Evan naturally had to bear the responsibility.

Since Harry's hearing at the Ministry, Rita had been relentlessly focusing on the incident of the uncontrollable Dementors attacking Harry. She used it to criticize the various loopholes in the Ministry's management. The Ministry, however, did not respond to this matter nor conduct an investigation.

Fudge believed Harry was lying and that there were no uncontrollable Dementors involved.

The Order of the Phoenix secretly investigated, and finally found that two Dementors had left Azkaban uncontrollably and never returned. Lupin provided the relevant evidence to Rita, and she immediately published the story.

As expected, the news of two uncontrollable Dementors roaming freely caused a huge uproar. It quickly surpassed Umbridge's becoming Hogwarts High Inquisitor to become the hottest news in the recent period.

As the real mastermind behind the scenes, Umbridge might have panicked a bit!

However, she had been careful not to leave any evidence that could link her to the matter. It was a pity...

#### Chapter 963: A Satisfactory Punishment

At five o'clock in the evening, Evan and Harry were in detention together in Professor Umbridge's office to receive their punishment.

As expected, she took out two black quills during their detention and placed them in front of both of them.

With a wide grin and a smug smile, she told Evan and Harry that proper pain could make them both more awake.

"But, professor, Professor McGonagall said you're not allowed to use this dangerous quill anymore," said Evan.

"I make the rules here, Mr. Mason. I believe a bit of pain will do you both good, helping you learn the difference between fantasy and reality," said Umbridge in a sickly sweet voice. "Now, let's not waste any more time. You both know the rule—write with this quill: '*I must not tell lies*,' until I am satisfied."

"Are you sure you want me to write this sentence with this quill?" Evan asked again. "I must emphasize once more that I find this pen and its effects extremely dangerous and potentially leave permanent marks on a person's body."

"It won't put your life in danger, just firmly remind you of your place," Umbridge proudly stated, seeming to think Evan was afraid. "However, if you can promise not to continue spreading those rumors or publishing them in the newspaper, I might consider ending this punishment. After all, my goal is to make both of you realize your mistakes."

“Well then, I’ll write the sentence!” Evan answered with a prolonged tone. “After all, the truth is undeniable.”

Harry sighed. What’s the use of saying all this now? In his view, besides making Umbridge’s punishment seem weaker and boosting her arrogance, it served no purpose.

He reluctantly picked up the black quill, this time with Evan by his side; it would be a bit more bearable.

But in the next second, Harry saw the quill in Evan’s hand flashing black brilliance, and a complex magic rune flashed past. He blinked to make sure he was not mistaken. Harry saw Evan Smiling to him before lowering his head to write.

Evan placed the quill’s tip on the paper and wrote: “*I must not tell lies*

.”

“Ah!” Umbridge, who had been smugly watching them, let out a scream of pain.

Harry froze for a moment, and noticed that the back of Evan’s hand hadn’t been cut open, but this line of words appeared on Umbridge’s cheek, a red piece, bleeding, deeply sunken into the flesh, as if carved with a scalpel...

Harry was puzzled for a while, not understanding what was going on?

It wasn’t until Evan wrote it again, and Umbridge yelled again, holding her face with her hands, her toad-like wide mouth twisting; that Harry suddenly realized, and there was a burst of ecstasy. The quill was enchanted by Evan, causing the harm it should have inflicted on them to be transferred to Umbridge’s face.

It was simply incredible. How did Evan do it?!

Harry stared dumbfounded at what was happening in front of him, feeling extremely excited!

Evan had been constantly advising Harry to be patient and not provoke Umbridge, but now he was doing much more than Harry had expected.

Umbridge also quickly realized what Evan was up to.

Every time Evan wrote a word, her cheek would burn with excruciating pain, as if her flesh was being cut with a knife.

It was the magic on that quill—Evan was transferring the harm onto her. The feeling was terrifying; it was as if someone was really cutting into her flesh, and blood was running down her cheek, making her look even more hideous and horrifying.

“Stop, stop! You little brat, how dare you...” Umbridge screamed deeply.

“I’m sorry, Professor, what are you talking about?” Evan asked, but his hand continued to write at a fast pace.

“Ah, I told you to stop, ah, stop quickly, stop writing!” Umbridge shouted in a sharp voice, and she rushed forward to snatch the quill from Evan’s hand.

But there was a flash of red light, and Umbridge flew backwards and fell hard to the ground.

“Professor, I hope you calm down a bit. It’s not stated in Hogwarts’s rules or the Ministry of Magic’s laws that a professor has the right to attack students, while they cannot defend themselves properly,” said Evan. “And right now, I am accepting your punishment. You made it clear just now that I must not stop writing until you’re satisfied. I cannot be sure if you’re satisfied yet.”

With each movement of Evan’s hand, Umbridge felt the burning pain on her face as those words were carved into her skin time and time again. The wounds would normally heal rapidly after a few seconds, but Evan was writing so fast that the healing rate couldn’t keep up with the cutting rate.

Red marks were left behind, with tiny droplets of blood oozing out.

If Evan continued to write, Umbridge would probably be disfigured. The damage caused by this kind of witchcraft was difficult to heal. No matter where she went in the future, the first thing people would notice would be the words on her face: *I must not tell lies*.

‘She deserved it’, Harry thought with glee, feeling all the pent-up frustrations from the beginning of the school year dissipating.

“Stop it, you’ll regret it, Mason, one hundred points from Gryffindor, I’ll have you expelled!” Umbridge yelled.

Enduring the pain, she took out her wand and cast a few spells on Evan.

But it didn’t work at all. Green flashes flew towards Evan, and there were several bangs.

A crimson shield with exquisite patterns appeared in front of Evan out of thin air, blocking all Umbridge’s magic.

As long as she didn’t use the Killing Curse or other highly forbidden curses, Evan was confident that he could withstand her attacks with this shield.

If Umbridge lost her temper and used those extreme curses, she would be in real trouble!

Regardless of whether she was the High Inquisitor or the Senior Undersecretary to the Minister for Magic, just using an Unforgivable Curse on Evan would be enough to get her locked up in Azkaban.

“Stop, Mason!” Umbridge said in a flattering tone, the attack was useless, the threat was useless, she seemed to finally understand the current situation, and the pain on her face was almost unbearable for her...

“Professor, I’m so stupid. I haven’t heard you say I’m satisfied. I’m not sure if I should stop your punishment,” said Evan calmly, imitating Umbridge’s tone. He had already figured out how this situation would end!

“Satisfied, I am very satisfied, you are doing well, Mr. Mason, stop now!”



“Alright, Professor!” said Evan. “But I still have to say, you really don’t want to use this quill in the future, it’s too dangerous!”

Chapter 964: Follow-up

Harry had never been so happy before, as if it were Christmas. He swore to himself that he would imprint the scene before him, along with Umbridge’s pleading and subservient demeanor, into his mind and never forget it for the rest of his life.

When he and Evan left Umbridge’s office, he was still a little dazed, with a smile on his face.

It was only after passing through a dimly lit corridor that Harry calmed down, his great joy replaced by worry.

Umbridge would surely have her revenge, and they might be expelled from school!

Harry didn’t care at all. Just seeing Umbridge’s miserable appearance was enough for him. He had wanted to do this for a long time, to charge forward and give that old toad a good beating.

But Evan did even better, using her quill to leave the mark ‘*I must not tell lies*’ on her face.

Using her own wicked method, with her own blood, he gave her a lesson memorable enough to last a lifetime. And then, let’s see if she would dare to intentionally distort the truth in the future. If Harry were Umbridge, he probably would not have the face to show himself in public again.

Coming to think of it, how would she explain the scars on her face to others?

And how would she explain the meaning of the phrase ‘*I must not tell lies*’?

There was simply no way to explain it. At least Harry couldn’t figure out how to say it. He learned from Evan that because of the witchcraft damage, the words would be difficult to erase and might take an extremely long time to fade away. If they couldn’t be erased, she would forever carry this shame.

Everyone who saw her in the future would know that she was lying and that she was an untrustworthy person.

This was what she deserved; no one deserved this punishment more than her.

“Evan, how did you do it?” Harry couldn’t help asking. “Was it the magic on that quill?”

“Oh, that’s witchcraft that sacrifices the user’s own blood. In essence, it’s similar to our Dark magic. Once you understand how it works, it’s easy to break the curse and redirect it to a different target.”

Harry nodded half-understanding, as long as he knew the effect.

After this incident, Umbridge would never use that kind of quill in her life, and Evan’s actions tonight would probably leave an indelible shadow in her heart.

“By the way, what should we do now?” said Harry, taking a deep breath, preparing himself for the possibility of expulsion.

“It goes without saying, of course we’re going to find Professor McGonagall!” said Evan calmly. “Although the problem with Professor Umbridge’s quill is her own business, we’d better inform other professors to handle this unexpected accident.”

“Uh... unexpected accident?!” Harry blinked, suddenly realizing they might not be expelled after all!

Indeed, they hadn’t actively attacked Umbridge, and they hadn’t even disobeyed her orders. She had instructed Evan to copy the sentence until she was satisfied, and Evan had followed her instructions. The only problem was the black quill.

And the quill had been provided by Umbridge herself...

In the end, with Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall’s intervention, the matter was resolved. Evan denied all of Umbridge’s accusations, insisting that the quill Umbridge had given them had malfunctioned, and that they hadn’t done anything.

Evan wouldn’t admit to having that kind of ability. He even claimed he didn’t know what magic was on the quill.

Thinking about it, this was the “normal” level of a young wizard at Hogwarts, and there was nothing wrong with what Evan said.

Dangerous magical items like this quill often had problems, one thing or another. They could even accidentally hurt the user.

That’s why Evan had told Umbridge not to use this quill to punish students anymore. It was too dangerous!

In the end, even Dumbledore said that the witchcraft on the quill was very unstable, and it was normal for problems to occur. Therefore, this incident was not that Evan violated school rules and attacked Umbridge.

It was just an “accident”.

Although anyone with common sense could see what really happened – Umbridge still had blood on her face – she had no evidence. No matter who investigated, it would be the same. Evan hadn’t physically attacked her on the surface; he had simply followed her instructions...

Umbridge could only admit that she was unlucky. If she wanted to trouble Evan again next time, she would need to come up with a more cunning plan.

Using such a dangerous magical item to punish students was a terrible action. Dumbledore had explicitly told her to stop using it. Sharing this incident would harm Umbridge’s own image, and she didn’t want more people to know about it.

Now she despised Evan to no end, yet there was nothing she could do.

No matter how you looked at it, she couldn’t hold Evan responsible for this matter. In fact, she should commend him.

Because Evan had faithfully carried out Umbridge's orders, even though he knew the demands were unreasonable.

It wasn't until hours later that Evan learned from Professor McGonagall that Umbridge had lost her composure in Dumbledore's office, demanding that the headmaster immediately expel both Evan and Harry. She was nothing like her usual self.

She kept mentioning the Ministry of Magic and Fudge, but Dumbledore wasn't buying it.

Unsurprisingly, he flatly rejected Umbridge's baseless demands.

He told Umbridge that such a request was unreasonable, and that even the headmaster of Hogwarts could not expel students without reason.

No one else had that right, not even the High Inquisitor or the Ministry of Magic.

However, he promised to strengthen the management of Evan and Harry. Evan should have stopped immediately when he found that there was a problem with the quill, instead of continuing to carry out Umbridge's order, causing her to suffer great harm...

Now that Evan and Harry were Gryffindor students, Dumbledore asked Professor McGonagall to decide on their punishment and complete the remaining detention, and advised Umbridge to seek treatment for the scars on her face at St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries as soon as possible...

Professor McGonagall prepared biscuits for the two of them, and added Gryffindor twenty points to each of them because they completed their Transfiguration essay very well.

The commendation was evident, and if Umbridge found out about it, she'd probably go berserk. After giving them some admonitions, Professor McGonagall let Evan and Harry go, informing them that the detention was over, and the whole ordeal had lasted less than half an hour.

In the Gryffindor common room, they were greeted with a celebration. Everyone rejoiced in their standing up to Umbridge.

Although the two of them had been in Professor McGonagall's office, during this period, many people had already seen Umbridge with blood on her face, the words '*I must not tell lies*' engraved, as she stormed through the corridors in frustration....

#### Chapter 965: The Hog's Head

Evan didn't really care about Umbridge. He wanted to ask Dumbledore about the situation with vampires, but Dumbledore didn't give him the chance. After dealing with the matter, he disappeared somewhere; certainly not in the headmaster's office.

Umbridge was not seen at school for several days after that.

Many people were speculating whether the scars on her face could not be removed, and she had no face to stay at Hogwarts.

If any professor encountered such a shameful thing, he might as well resign directly.

Such rumors had been going on and on, and many people swore that Umbridge had submitted a letter of resignation to Dumbledore, as if it were true.

Anyway, in such a pleasant atmosphere, the first Hogsmeade visit of this term arrived.

Everyone had been looking forward to this day for a long time. Evan and Hermione had also planned to discuss with everyone about forming an extracurricular group to conduct combat training and learn defensive skills.

Compared to dealing with Umbridge, this was a more serious matter.

The morning of the Hogsmeade visit dawned bright but windy.

After breakfast, Evan, Hermione, Harry, Ron, and Colin queued up in front of Filch, who matched their names to the long list of students who had permission from their parents or guardian to visit the village.

Since Umbridge had left, Filch had become somewhat more manageable. He waved them through with a gesture.

“It’s a good feeling. The atmosphere in the whole school is much lighter without Umbridge,” said Ron. “Well, if it were possible, I hope that woman just resigns and never comes back.”

“That’s impossible!” said Hermione. “We have to be careful, she won’t just let it go, but then again, you two went a bit overboard last time. I heard she was injured quite seriously ...”

“She got what she deserved!”

“Yeah, that’s right, but after all she...”

“Okay, Hermione, where are we going anyway?” Harry asked hastily, “The Three Broomsticks?”

“Oh, no!” Hermione’s attention was diverted, and she wasn’t worried about Umbridge’s revenge, which was already the topic they discussed the most recently. “No, it’s always packed and really noisy. I discussed it with Evan and I’ve told the others to meet us in the Hog’s Head, that other pub, you know the one, it’s not on the main road. I think it’s a bit ... you know ... dodgy ... but students don’t normally go in there, so I don’t think we’ll be overheard.”

“That pub is pretty quiet. We can get a private box,” Evan said.

They walked down the main street past Zonko’s Joke Shop, where they were unsurprised to see Fred, George, and Lee Jordan, past the post office, from which owls issued at regular intervals.

Then they turned up a side street at the top of which stood a small inn. A battered wooden sign hung from a rusty bracket over the door, with a picture upon it of a wild boar’s severed head leaking blood onto the white cloth around it.

The sign creaked in the wind as they approached. All five of them hesitated outside the door.

“Come on, let’s go in,” said Hermione slightly nervously.

“Don’t worry, there’s nothing wrong. It’s just... um... a bit shabby!” said Evan, leading the way inside.

In fact, the place was not a bit shabby.

It was not at all like the Three Broomsticks, whose large bar gave an impression of gleaming warmth and cleanliness. The Hog’s Head bar comprised one small, dingy, and very dirty room that smelled strongly of something that might have been goats.

The bay windows were so encrusted with grime that very little daylight could permeate the room, which was lit instead with the stubs of candles sitting on rough wooden tables.

The floor seemed at first glance to be earthy, though as they stepped onto it they realized that there was stone beneath what seemed to be the accumulated filth of centuries.

Evan had been here a few times before, but he still couldn’t help but sniffle, unaccustomed to the strong smell of goat in the air.

Speaking of which, Dumbledore’s younger brother Aberforth really had a soft spot for goats.

“Do you remember?” said Harry in a low voice, “Hagrid once said he won a dragon egg here, which was Norbert, the Norwegian Ridgeback, it was our first year.”

“Yeah, he said he won it from a hooded stranger,” said Ron, swallowing nervously.

“It fits the style here, doesn’t it? I’ve always wondered why Hagrid didn’t find it odd that the stranger kept his face hidden throughout their encounter,” Harry continued.

Now he saw that keeping your face hidden was something of a fashion in the Hog’s Head.

There was a man at the bar whose whole head was wrapped in dirty gray bandages, though he was still managing to gulp endless glasses of some smoking, fiery substance through a slit over his mouth

Two figures shrouded in hoods sat at a table in one of the windows. If not for their strong Yorkshire accents, they could easily be mistaken for Dementors.

In a shadowy corner beside the fireplace sat a witch with a thick, black veil that fell to her toes. They could just see the tip of her nose because it caused the veil to protrude slightly.

“I don’t know about this, Hermione,” Harry muttered, as they crossed to the bar. He was looking particularly at the heavily veiled witch. “Has it occurred to you Umbridge might be under that?”

Hermione squinted, and cast an appraising eye at the veiled figure.

“Umbridge is shorter than that woman,” she said quietly. “Besides, she should be in the hospital right now. And anyway, even if Umbridge does come in here

there's nothing she can do to stop us, Harry, because I've double- and triple-checked the school rules. We're not out-of-bounds; I specifically asked Professor Flitwick whether students were allowed to come in the Hog's Head, and he said yes, but he advised me strongly to bring our own glasses. We're not really forming an army; it's just an extracurricular group for Evan to teach us magic. And I've looked up everything I can think of about study groups and homework groups and they're definitely allowed. I just don't think it's a good idea if we parade what we're doing, because Fudge and the Ministry don't want us to do it."

"Wait a moment, haven't you figured out who she is?" Evan whispered.

"who is she?"

"Of course it's Mundungus!" said Evan. "This disguise looks great, doesn't it?"

Chapter 966: Information from Mundungus

Harry, Hermione, Ron, and Colin all looked at Evan, and then turned their heads to look at the woman in the corner in astonishment.

Except Colin who had no idea who Mundungus was, the others were all well aware, having seen him many times over the holidays.

In their minds, Mundungus was a squat, unshaven wizard with short bandy legs, long straggly ginger hair, bloodshot baggy eyes, smoking foul-smelling tobacco, and always emanating a strong smell of mingled drink and stale tobacco.

In any case, it was nothing like the veiled witch in front of them.

It would be amazing if there was a way to turn a dumpy man into such a slender witch!

"You're kidding, Evan. There's no way he could be Mundungus..." Ron said.

"We can go over and ask to make sure!" said Evan, walking quickly to the side of the witch.

The witch dodged back for a moment, but quickly regained her composure.

"Get lost, brat!" she said roughly, in an ugly woman's voice.

"Stop pretending, Dung, we recognize you!" said Evan. "How about the things you're supposed to buy?"

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Oh, if that's the case, then I won't pay. You know, there are more orders to come..."

"Wait a minute, you can't do that. It took me so much..."

Mundungus stopped, and he saw Evan looking at him with a smile.

“Damn, how did you recognize me? I’ll post those things to you in a few days, now you guys stay away from me!” Mundungus said in a panic, looking around, “Listen, I can’t be discovered, the bartender here has a great memory, because of a minor incident, he banned me from the Hog’s Head twenty years ago, I can’t be noticed by him...”

“Goodness, you really are Mundungus!” Hermione said in surprise, as if transfixed!

“Why are you here?” Harry asked, “And in this state.”

“Keeping an eye on you, of course. This is my task. You don’t really think that Dumbledore will let you guys leave Hogwarts without any protection,” Mundungus muttered, returning to his own voice. “Don’t give me that angry look, Harry, it’s not up to me, I still have a lot of business to do, but now I have to come here early in the morning. Can’t even smoke, just sitting here. As for my current appearance, Tonks helped me with this disguise. We lost Moody’s spare Invisibility Cloak when Sturgis was arrested.”

“Sturgis Podmore?” said Ron, “but he’s that bloke who looks like his head’s been thatched, isn’t he? He’s one of the Order...”

“Ron, shh!” said Hermione hastily, casting a terrified look around them. “Keep your voice down, you shouldn’t have said that word.”

They gathered in a circle, Colin looked curious, and Mundungus, who was sitting in the corner, almost fainted.

“Sturgis was arrested? What on earth is going on here?”

“I don’t know...” said Mundungus in a very low voice, realizing he might have said too much.

“Remember when he was supposed to be part of our guard going to King’s Cross and didn’t show up!” said Harry. “Moody was all annoyed because he didn’t turn up. He was doing something for us, wasn’t he?”

“Yeah, at least I thought so, you five...” Mundungus said, but was cut off again.

“I remember now, it was said in the *Daily Prophet*, the paper from the day the Gryffindor Quidditch team first practiced,” said Hermione, squinting as she recalled, “I read that article and I was going to tell you about it.”

Because of Ron’s poor performance, the atmosphere that night became so awkward that Hermione forgot to mention it.

In the past month, Ron had participated in four more Quidditch training sessions, and in the last two, he hadn’t received any loud scolding.

Angelina thought that his progress was too slow, but at least he was still making progress, so she couldn't say anything.

“What did the *Daily Prophet* say?”

“I remember they said that Podmore was arrested by a Ministry of Magic watch-wizard, who found him attempting to force his way through a top-security door at one o'clock in the morning. Podmore, who refused to speak in his own defense, was convicted on both charges and sentenced to six months in Azkaban.”

“Six months in Azkaban!” whispered Harry, shocked. “Just for trying to get through a door?!”

“Don't be silly, it wasn't just for trying to get through a door — what on earth was he doing at the Ministry of Magic at one o'clock in the morning?” Hermione said in a low voice, “It must not be that simple.”

“You must know what's going on, right?” They all looked at Mundungus.

“Don't stare at me like that, they seem to be guarding something, and that thing is kept in the Ministry of Magic.” Mundungus said quickly, “What is it? I don't know. They never let me go there and I didn't ask about it. As for Sturgis, who knows what kind of madness he went in, trying to break into the secret Ministry of Magic area that day, yeah, I heard Mad-Eye say that. I don't know anything about other things. Please, can you go away? The bartender may come out at any time, and the five of you are too conspicuous here!”

They left Mundungus and walked back to the bar, with the conversation still revolving around Sturgis's arrest.

“From what Mundungus said, it seems like Mad-Eye and the others didn't know about this, they seem shocked by Sturgis's actions,” said Evan. “They didn't expect him to get caught, it's really strange!”

“Not strange at all. It could be a frame-up!” Ron immediately exclaimed.

“Well, there's a possibility that the Ministry of Magic suspects he's one of Dumbledore's lot.” Hermione continued her analysis, “So, perhaps, they lured him deep into the Ministry, and he wasn't trying to get through a door at all! Maybe they've just made something up to get him!”

Evan nodded thoughtfully. It was also possible that the Death Eaters tried to enter the Ministry of Magic's Department of Mysteries that night, but they were discovered by Sturgis who was on patrol. They might have deliberately framed him and controlled him to see the power of the Ministry's protective enchantments.



“I’m more concerned about what Mundungus said just now, that they are guarding something, and that thing is kept at the Ministry of Magic,” said Harry. “Could this thing he’s talking about be the weapon Voldemort wants?”

“Who knows!” said Hermione, thoughtfully, “but it’s hard for me to imagine that if there’s such a powerful weapon, Fudge would keep it in the Ministry of Magic and not use it. It’s not like his style, is it?”

Chapter 967: The First Gathering

Indeed, Fudge was not the type to keep his composure.

If the Ministry of Magic really had such a powerful weapon, he would have used it against Dumbledore by now.

But if it was not a weapon, what were members of the Order of the Phoenix guarding at the Ministry of Magic?

Or rather, what did Voldemort truly seek?

Ever since his return, he had remained elusive, hidden in the shadows, but he was plotting something in Norway and at the Ministry of Magic.

Evan didn’t know what was going on in Norway, but he knew that at the Ministry of Magic, there was the Prophecy Record, containing ‘*The Prophecy*’ Voldemort wanted to use to figure out why he had failed in the past. From this perspective, because he placed such significance on death, he seemed to be someone who particularly believed in “fate”.

As soon as they reached the bar, the barman sidled toward them out of a back room.

Aberforth was a grumpy-looking old man with a great deal of long gray hair and beard, vaguely resembling Dumbledore, tall and thin, with almost identical eyes, but a shorter beard, the lines on his face were also much sterner.

It must be said, he was another oddity from an ancient pure-blood family, bearing the title of an eccentric.

“What do you want?” He mumbled and asked, as if he was not surprised that Evan and the others appeared here, but his eyes quickly scanned over.

His eyes rested for a fraction of a second on Harry’s scar, and then he looked at Evan again.

“Five butterbeers, please,” said Hermione hastily.

He reached beneath the counter and pulled up five very dusty, very dirty bottles, which he slammed on the bar. (T.N. The author mentioned ‘three bottles’, probably a mistake just copying from the original.)

“Ten Sickles,” he said.

“I’ll get them, do you have a larger private room upstairs?” said Evan, passing over the silver coins. “We’ll be having a private gathering later, and there will be a lot of people coming. It may not be convenient to sit downstairs.”

“No, this place is the largest one around here, upstairs are all guest rooms!” Aberforth replied rudely, depositing Evan’s money in an ancient wooden till whose drawer slid open automatically to receive it.

“This guy has such a bad attitude, as if people would actually come here to stay.”

They each took their butterbeers, and quickly retreated to the farthest table from the bar and sat down, looking around.

Meanwhile, the man in the dirty gray bandages rapped the counter with his knuckles and received another smoking drink from the barman.

“It’s not a bad thing, is it? You know what?” Ron murmured, suddenly looking over at the bar with great enthusiasm, “We could order anything we liked in here, I bet that bloke would sell us anything, he wouldn’t care. Honestly, I’ve always wanted to try the firewhisky...”

“Don’t forget, you’re a prefect, Ron!” snarled Hermione.

“Oh!” said Ron, the smile fading from his face. “Yeah... I should set an example, right.”

“So who did you say is supposed to be meeting us?” Harry asked, wrenching open the rusty top of his butterbeer and taking a swig, “I informed Neville, Dean, Ernie from Hufflepuff, and the rest of the team, and besides that, Cho, whom I met alone on the pitch the other day...”

“Speaking of which, we all seem to know the same people,” said Hermione, checking her watch and then looking anxiously toward the door. “I talked to Lavender and Parvati. Of course, Lavender already knew about it from Ron. I guess there might be a dozen people coming; most of them are from Gryffindor.”

“I told the Frobishers, I think they’re more reliable!” said Colin, “and my brother.”

“I have here mainly a few first-year students who I think are trustworthy. After all, I’ve been in contact with them more recently,” said Evan, opening his bottle of butterbeer, “Oh, besides, there’s Luna.”

Many people in the school knew Evan, but Evan did not know many people.

He usually didn’t have much time for social activities. He couldn’t even remember all the students in his own year, let alone those from other years!

“Oh, by the way, I told Astoria Greengrass about it after Charms class a few days ago, and she seemed very interested.”

“Astoria Greengrass?!” Hermione froze for a moment, “You mean the pure-blood Greengrass family?”

“Evan, you actually informed a Slytherin!” They all looked at him in surprise.

“Well, not all Slytherins are bad, are they?” said Evan dismissively, understanding why they were so astonished. “I’ve had contact with Astoria a few times, and she seemed nice.”

“But...” Ron hesitated for a moment before continuing, “But she’s a Slytherin!”

“As long as she’s willing to stand up against Voldemort, I consider her on our side,” said Evan. “Slytherin is also part of Hogwarts. Not all Slytherins support Voldemort.”

From Harry and Ron’s expressions, they didn’t seem entirely convinced by Evan’s explanation.

Just then, the door of the pub had opened. A thick band of dusty sunlight split the room in two for a moment and then vanished, blocked by the incoming rush of a crowd of people.

First came Neville with Dean and Lavender, who were closely followed by Parvati and Padma Patil with Cho and one of her usually giggling girlfriends then, on her own and looking so dreamy that she might have walked in by accident, Luna Lovegood. She stood at the doorway, taking a moment to adjust, as if just realizing what was going on.

Behind her were Katie Bell, Alicia Spinnet, and Angelina Johnson from the Gryffindor team, with this year’s new substitutes, Ritchie Coote and Demelza Robins.

Because of the training during this period, they were now quite familiar with Harry and Ron.

And then there was Kate Olney and three first-year students who walked in hesitantly, seemingly intimidated by the Hog’s Head Inn’s air.

Colin ‘s younger brother Dennis Creevey also entered, almost as small as a first-year student.

He was accompanied by the Frobishers, apparently meticulously dressed.

A few seconds later, Ernie Macmillan and Justin Finch-Fletchley from Hufflepuff also came, followed by Hannah Abbott, and a Hufflepuff girl with a long plait down her back whose name Evan did not know.

Then there were three Ravenclaw boys named Anthony Goldstein, Michael Corner, and Terry Boot, who probably had been informed by Ginny who followed them.

Unlike some of the others, Ginny was quite popular in school and knew many people.

She was followed by a tall skinny blond boy with an upturned nose whom Evan recognized vaguely as being a member of the Hufflepuff Quidditch team. He was holding hands with Ginny.

Judging from the simple act of them holding hands, it seemed that Ginny’s relationship with him was not that simple...

And then, bringing up the rear, there were Fred and George Weasley with their friend Lee Jordan, all three of whom were carrying large paper bags crammed with Zonko's merchandise.

Chapter 968: Doubt

"All the people are here, and there are still a few who can't come today. We'll inform them of the discussion results later."

"Well, there are more people than expected. The idea seemed quite popular," said Hermione happily.

"Yeah, everyone wants to learn magic from Evan."

"Thank goodness, the Slytherin girl didn't come!" Ron looked at the crowd, seemingly relieved.

Evan had also invited Astoria with a willingness to give it a try. He believed that in improving their strength to confront Voldemort and evil gods, Slytherin shouldn't be singled out, and not everyone in that House was a Dark wizard or irredeemable villain.

Salazar Slytherin was a great wizard, and so were the students who carried his will.

Not to mention, Astoria had a great personality, and unlike traditional Slytherins, she was not a fanatical supporter of the pure-blood ideology.

But even if she didn't come, Evan could understand. After all, she still had to consider the opinions of others around her.

Not everyone had the courage to be an "outsider," especially in the "cruel" environment of Slytherin.

"Don't stand there stupidly; let's quickly pull up some more chairs."

Inside the Hog's Head Inn, students came in one by one. Aberforth The barman had frozen in the act of wiping out a glass with a rag so filthy it looked as though it had never been washed. Possibly he had never seen his pub so full.

"Hi, barman," said Fred, reaching the bar first and counting his companions quickly. "Could we have ... twenty-seven butterbeers, please?"

Aberforth glared at him for a moment, then, throwing down his rag irritably as though he had been interrupted in something very important, he started passing up dusty butterbeers from under the bar.

"Cheers," said Fred, handing them out. "Cough up, everyone; I haven't got enough gold for all of these."

The large chattering group took their beers from Fred and rummaged in their robes to find coins. They seemed excited and curious, as if they were on an outing. Only Luna sat alone in a daze.

When everybody had pulled up a chair, the chatter died out. Every eye was upon Evan and Harry.

Evan was fine, but Harry's mouth was exceptionally dry. Cho had just smiled at him and sat down on Ron's right.

Her friend, who had curly reddish-blond hair, did not smile, but gave Harry a thoroughly mistrustful look, and then glanced at Evan with the same look, the expression on her face plainly indicating that, given her way, she would not be here at all.

“I don’t need to say much, I think you know why you’re here today!” said Evan, seeing Aberforth glaring at them angrily from behind the bar, as if they were having an illicit meeting. Mundungus also leaned forward.

“Evan, I heard that you want to teach everyone magic?”

“That’s right!” Hermione replied directly, “As you all know, Evan is going to teach us Defense Against the Dark Arts and learn some real skills, not the rubbish that Umbridge is doing with us. If you don’t have any objections...”

“I have no objections at all, what you said is great!”

“That’s right; nobody could call that Defense Against the Dark Arts!”

“I believe in Evan’s strength, just look at what he’s done.”

“We’ve already had Evan teach us magic before, and he’s been great at it.”

“Well, what Evan and I mean is to carry out formal training, so that everyone can learn how to effectively defend themselves, not only to learn those theories, but also to get in touch with actual combat and conduct real dueling practice,” Because of the enthusiastic response of everyone, Hermione’s voice became suddenly much stronger and more confident. She took a deep breath before finishing her words, “Because Voldemort’s back!”

As expected, as soon as she finished speaking, the reaction was immediate.

Cho’s friend shrieked and slopped butterbeer down herself, Terry Boot gave a kind of involuntary twitch, Padma Patil shuddered, and Neville gave an odd yelp that he managed to turn into a cough.

All of them, however, looked fixedly, even eagerly, at Evan, Harry, and Hermione.

“That’s the plan, and that’s why I called for the formation of such an organization.” Evan followed Hermione’s words, “If you want to join us, we need to decide how we’re going to proceed. Besides Hermione, Harry...”

“Wait a minute, where’s the proof You-Know-Who’s back?” said the blond Hufflepuff player in a rather aggressive voice.

After entering the Hog’s Head Inn, he let go of Ginny’s hand, but sat down next to her.

Ginny seemed a bit displeased; the guy had seemed a bit forceful at the Inn’s entrance, trying to hold her hand in front of so many people. When she entered, she had shrugged off his hand, but she hadn’t refused to let him sit next to her.

“Oh, we have talked about this topic many times!” said Evan, not wanting to continue explaining.

“Yeah, Dumbledore also believes...” Hermione was interrupted before finishing her sentence.

“Are you trying to say that Dumbledore believes them?!” said the blond boy, raising his chin and nodding at Evan and Harry, “But the Daily Prophet says otherwise. It says they’re lying.”

“Who are you?” said Ron rather rudely, not liking him since he first laid eyes on him.

Exchanging a glance with Evan, he also noticed that the guy went straight for Ginny’s hand.

If there weren’t so many people around, he’d definitely go and ask what was going on.

“Zacharias Smith,” said the boy, “I admit Mason is very strong and has done a lot of things, but before learning any combat skills with him, I think we’ve got the right to know exactly what makes you say You-Know-Who’s back.”

“Look,” said Hermione, intervening swiftly, with a slight frown, “that’s really not what this meeting was supposed to be about.”

“And I don’t want to continue talking about it either. Since the beginning of last term, Harry and I have explained many times,” said Evan. “In my opinion, it hasn’t achieved much, and it’s just satisfying your curiosity over and over.”

“People have the right to know the truth. Where did you and Potter go, and what did you do during the time you disappeared at the bottom of the lake last term?” Zacharias continued on, as if he hadn’t heard Evan and Hermione’s words, “Tell us, why do you say You-Know-Who has returned? Also, why did Cedric transfer to another school? What did you do to him, and where’s he now? Potter said a while ago he became a vampire, what’s that all about?”

Chapter 969: Persuasion and Protection

His series of questions changed the atmosphere suddenly, and everyone seemed to be holding their breath.

Even Aberforth was listening, and he kept wiping the same glass with the filthy rag, it was becoming steadily dirtier.

“What is the truth?” Zacharias asked proudly, looking at Evan provocatively, as if asking him if he dared to say it.

“The truth is that Voldemort is back, and Harry and I saw him come back with our own eyes!” said Evan, looking at Zacharias straight in the face. “Dumbledore told the whole school what happened last year, including Cedric’s transfer, and if

you didn't believe him, you don't believe us, and Harry and I are not wasting an afternoon trying to convince anyone."

"Yeah, I don't want to talk about the situation back then," said Harry.

"Dumbledore has made it very clear!"

"Hmph, Dumbledore didn't actually say much last term. He only gave a conclusion. He didn't tell us the specific details or what really happened with Diggory," said Zacharias dismissively, "I really want to know....."

"That's enough. I think he didn't let you know the specific situation because you don't have the corresponding strength. Knowing more is of no use but to satisfy your meaningless curiosity and provide a boring after-dinner conversation," said Evan bluntly. "Think about it, what can you do? Are you rushing to fight Voldemort, or to avenge Cedric? You can't do anything, people have the right to know the truth, but with your current level of magic, you have no qualifications to know the truth."

Evan's words left Zacharias alternating between pale and red on his face. He was far from the overbearing attitude he had just exhibited. He seemed to want to retort, but thinking about Evan's past experiences and the rumors in the school, he truly didn't know what to say.

However, he continued to gaze intently at Evan without showing any weakness, as if he wanted to see just how outlandish Evan's lies were.

"I'll repeat, if any of you came here for this reason, you can leave now. I won't teach magic to someone like that, and I don't welcome such individuals," Evan continued, shifting his gaze away from Zacharias. "I also hope you understand that my promise to teach you magic isn't contingent on you fighting Voldemort or doing anything for me. You don't need to worry about that, as it's not necessary at the moment. Your current abilities are utterly useless against real Dark wizards. To be frank, you're all nothing more than trash right now. Besides throwing your lives away or burdening others, you're useless trash. I don't need the help of trash."

The atmosphere was extremely tense, and under the oppression of Evan's sudden burst of momentum, no one spoke.

Although what he said was ugly, the fact was true. Whether they were willing to admit it or not, their strength was indeed very poor.

If Evan wished, he could easily defeat everyone present.

This was a display of dominance based on strength; he had the right to speak these words to them. In his eyes, these students were all trash!

“I’m willing to spend precious time teaching you magic, because you’re students of Hogwarts. I hope that when danger strikes, you can have the strength to protect yourselves and the people you hold dear. I hope you can stand up and fight like true wizards, even if it means dying in battle, because it would be honorable and remembered. You will have struggled and fought, not helplessly kneeling begging for mercy. You’ll be surviving, not crawling under the robes of Voldemort or Death Eaters, shivering.”

As Evan spoke, everyone’s expressions were obviously much more serious than before.

As long as there was courage and uprightness, no one wanted to beg for mercy or flee. If possible, everyone would want to fight to the end, giving their all to protect what mattered to them. Many people in the room felt a deep resonance with this sentiment.

Most of them had already agreed with Evan’s words, even the girls.

Only Zacharias seemed a bit unwilling. He still retorted, “If you’re talking about danger from You-Know-Who...”

“It’s not just Voldemort. In the past few years, I’ve experienced many things you haven’t, and I’ve witnessed evil and terrifying forces that surpass Voldemort by countless times. These dangers could strike at any time,” Evan interrupted. “That’s why I’ve decided to teach you magic, help you with combat training. I can tell you plainly, the Ministry of Magic and Umbridge wouldn’t approve of this. I know some of you might succumb to pressure and report this, but I don’t care, because when that dreadful evil arrives, all these petty disputes will be nothing more than a joke.”

“A greater danger? A danger more evil and terrifying than Voldemort?”

Everyone murmured in interest, many seemingly skeptical, yet unable to refute Evan.

At least the aura Evan had just exhibited was beyond their means to contend with.

And what he said was also very reasonable. Evan’s willingness to spend time teaching them magic was already an unimaginable opportunity for them.

Behind the bar, Aberforth stopped bothering to clean the dirty glass, tossing the rag aside.

His mouth hung open, his bright blue eyes locked onto Evan, as if he thought he had gone mad.

“If you have no more doubts, I hope we can continue...” Evan lightly nudged Hermione with his foot.

“Yeah, that’s right!” Hermione reacted immediately, and her voice became sharp and thin again, “Evan made it quite clear just now. I think you should understand. Let me ask again, do you all agree to let Evan teach us?”



There was a brief silence, and then everyone murmured agreement, except for Zacharias, with his arms folded and disdain on his face.

“Come on, you’re not seriously buying into his nonsense, are you? Greater danger than You-Know-Who...”

“Of course, we’re willing to believe Evan. He’s never let us down,” said Colin. “If he says You-Know-Who is back, then he’s definitely back. If he says a greater danger is looming, it’s bound to arrive. Evan’s right. I want to learn more magic before that day comes, to protect my family, friends, and Hogwarts!”

“You’re crazy...”

“Oh, shut your mouth!” Ron shouted, raising his voice. “Evan made it clear. Either leave now or stay quiet. And you better keep your distance from my sister. You’re sitting way too close to her.”

He was now looking at Zacharias as though he would like nothing better than to thump him. Zacharias flushed.

Ginny flushed too, and she glared at Zacharias before leaning closer to Hermione.

She really regretted it now, why did she bring this idiot here? ...

Chapter 970: List and Curse

“Of course I’m here to learn from Mason, so he should at least show some magic,” said Zacharias.

“Do you think this is a sideshow or a performance? Evan doesn’t need to prove anything anymore!” Fred said angrily, “Is there anyone in school who doesn’t know his strength? And yeah, you really need to stay away from Ginny, The distance between you makes me uncomfortable.”

“What, I...”

“Hufflepuff, you’ve got too many questions. Would you like us to clean out your brain for you?” inquired George, pulling a long and lethal-looking metal instrument from inside one of the Zonko’s bags.

“Or any part of your body, really, we’re not fussy where we stick this,” said Fred.

Looking at the instrument in George’s hand, Zacharias hummed a few words, did not dare to speak, and did not explain his relationship with Ginny.

Speaking of which, the two of them had just started dating, and they’d barely even held hands. He didn’t want to lose such a beautiful girlfriend over this. Ginny was one of the best in school, and she had never promised to date anyone before.

What’s more, he also felt that there was no way to continue to question Evan; the difference in their abilities was clear!

“Okay, right!” Hermione said quickly, “To get to the point, since you all agree that Evan will teach everyone magic, the next question is how often we do it. We used to have lessons once a week, so I don’t think having them less frequently than that would be useful.”

“Hang on,” said Angelina, “we need to make sure this doesn’t clash with our Quidditch practice.”

“No,” said Cho, “nor with ours.”

“Nor ours,” added Zacharias Smith.

“I’m sure we can find a night that suits everyone,” said Hermione, slightly impatiently, “but you know, this is rather important, we’re talking about learning to defend ourselves against future dangers, Not to mention Quidditch, this matter is even more important than our O.W.L.s coming up.”

Hermione paused, but no one contradicted her, and everyone seemed to think that what she said made sense.

But even so, they couldn’t afford to neglect Quidditch training. It was a contradiction.

“You’re right, Granger!” said Ernie Macmillan of Hufflepuff. “I, personally, am at a loss to see why the Ministry has foisted such a useless teacher upon us at this critical period. Obviously they are in denial about the return of You-Know-Who, but to give us a teacher who is trying to actively prevent us from using defensive spells. In my opinion, they’re crazy. It’s a waste of time. Any High Inquisitor is purely superfluous.”

“As Evan said just now, the Ministry of Magic will of course oppose our practice of Defense Against the Dark Arts, which is not surprising at all,” said Hermione. “You may not know, but Umbridge’s got some ... some mad idea that Dumbledore could use the students in the school as a kind of private army. She thinks he’d mobilize us against the Ministry.”

Nearly everybody looked stunned at this news; everybody except Luna Lovegood, who piped up, “Well, that makes sense. After all, Cornelius Fudge has got his own private army.”

“What?” said Harry, completely thrown by this unexpected piece of information.

“Yes, he’s got an army of Heliopaths,” said Luna solemnly.

“Impossible,” snapped Hermione.

“It’s absolutely true.”

“What are Heliopaths?” asked Neville, looking blank.

“They’re spirits of fire,” said Luna, her protuberant eyes widening so that she looked madder than ever. “Great tall flaming creatures that gallop across the ground, burning everything in front of them.”

“They don’t exist, Neville,” said Hermione tartly.

“Oh yes they do!” said Luna angrily.

“I’m sorry, but where’s the proof of that?” snapped Hermione.

“There are plenty of eyewitness accounts. A lot of people have seen them. They’re hiding underground at the Ministry, and just because you’re so narrow-minded you need to have everything shoved under your nose before you.”

“*Hem, hem,*” said Ginny in such a good imitation of Professor Umbridge that several people looked around in alarm and then laughed. “Forget about Heliopaths. Weren’t we trying to decide how often we’re going to meet and get Defense lessons?”

“Yeah, let’s get back to the serious stuff,” said Evan. “These guys are way too opinionated!”

If Hermione and Luna were allowed to continue, they could argue all day, and in the end, no one would convince the other.

As for Ron and Zacharias, if no one else was around, they would probably start fighting right away.

As long as Cho was here, Harry couldn’t speak at all, and just kept stealing glances at her.

Neville was pretty much believing whatever was said and was earnestly discussing with them. The Creevey brothers were similar.

Fred and George were entirely focused on the prank products they had just bought. Zonko’s Joke Shop didn’t need to sell them anything anymore; the twins had cracked all their core products and were producing even better prank items. If this continued, Zonko’s would close!

As for Angelina, she hadn’t given up on persuading the Frobishers to join the Gryffindor team.

And the other girls on the team chatted enthusiastically with the boys from Ravenclaw, and the boys from Hufflepuff seemed to be very interested in the seniors.

If it continued like this, this discussion would completely turn into a dating meeting. Ginny was probably the only one who was still somewhat normal.

“Yeah!” said Hermione, “we’re talking about serious business now, do you have any good advice on timing?”

“No problem, once a week sounds cool,” said Lee Jordan.

“As long as —” began Angelina.

“Yes, yes, we know about the Quidditch, we’ll make sure it won’t clash with your Quidditch practice,” said Hermione in a tense voice. “So, let’s settle on once a week for now. As for the meeting place, we used to use an empty classroom or the Gryffindor common room, but obviously that won’t do. We’re deciding on the Room of Requirement on the eighth floor of the castle.”

“Never heard of such a room.”

“Because it’s hidden and only appears when needed!” Hermione said simply, “When we confirm the time for the first meeting, we will notify everyone. Now ...” She rummaged in her bag and produced parchment and a quill. “I think everybody should write their name down, just so we know who was here. But I also think,” she took a deep breath, “that we all ought to agree not to shout about what we’re doing. So if you sign, you’re agreeing not to tell Umbridge — or anybody else — what we’re up to.”

Hermione seemed a little hesitant, and Evan knew that it was time to say the following words himself!

“To ensure the secrecy of the organization, I’ll cast a spell on this parchment. Anyone who personally signs their name on it should uphold this point – they mustn’t discuss this matter with outsiders,” said Evan. “Once leaked, you’ll face a dreadful curse, I promise, a magic you’ll be remembering forever.”