

Harry Potter 241

Chapter 241: Store Planning and Design

Under the joint persuasion, Sirius finally agreed to replace his wand.

He sighed and followed Mr. Ollivander into the wand shop, rubbing his untidy hair, like a young wizard.

“He used to be like this, very stubborn! But as long as it is a reasonable advice, he will most likely give in...”

Looking at Sirius’s back, Lupin told Evan, Harry, and Hermione a few anecdotes about Sirius’s schooldays and made everyone laugh.

In laughter, they came to 36 Diagon Alley, the Black family’s shop.

It was a three-storey street-front shop, located on the corner of the other side of the street, just across the street from Ollivanders Wand Shop, next to the Apothecary, and across a dark alley north of it was the Eeylops Owl Emporium.

That was where Hagrid purchased Hedwig, Harry’s pet, and gave it to him.

In addition to the pet store, the Apothecary was also a famous potion ingredient shop in Diagon Alley. Because the prices were low, Evan often mail-ordered a lot of magic potion ingredients from them.

The outer wall of the magic store was a dark brown brick with only a narrow window. Inside, Barrels of slimy stuff stood on the floor; jars of herbs, dried roots, and bright powders lined the walls; bundles of feathers, strings of fangs, and snarled claws hung from the ceiling.

The goods inside were fascinating, but because of their nature, the store smelled horrible, like a mixture of bad eggs and rotted cabbages.

Worse than that, 36 Diagon Alley was right next to it.

The old bricks were incomplete, and they looked extremely desolate and worn. The two semi-circular windows were covered with dust thick enough to make the inside invisible from outside the shop. Between the windows laid a black, bruised wooden door, covered with worm holes and traces of people scratching it with sharp objects, giving off a rotten smell.

Evan wiped the dust off the window and stood on tiptoe to look inside.

Through a curtain full of dense dust, he saw scattered pieces of furniture and trash everywhere. In a crack in the top corner of the window, there was a brown spider the size of a saucer. The whole place looked like a haunted house.

“It seems like this shop has been idle for more than ten years and has never been used.” Lupin explained, “A lot of people wondered if there was something wrong with it, so it’s been idle, but they didn’t expect it to be the Blacks’ property!”

He pulled out his wand and knocked on the wooden door of the shop.

With a bang, the door opened.

At the very moment of opening the door, a great deal of dust splashed.

Everyone hurriedly covered their nose and stepped back several steps.

Seeing the unexpected intruders, inside the shop, a frightened mouse scurried past, squeaking.

They walked in and left clear footprints on the creaking floor.

The store was decorated with the usual luxury of the Blacks, and its shabby furniture was made entirely of precious mahogany and teak.

Perhaps because of this, it was also the object of thieves' focus.

Everything of slight value in the store disappeared or was destroyed, and the wreckage of various gorgeous ornaments and furniture was scattered on the ground.

The rear windows were also smashed, and a cold wind blew in. No doubt, the thieves crawled in from there.

From the outside, this shop was bad enough; the inside was terrible to the extreme.

If they wanted to use it and open it for business, almost everything needed to be renewed.

"It really takes a lot of effort to clean this up." Hermione wrinkled her nose, took out her wand and said to a carpet, "Scourgify!"

Pink soap bubbles immediately appeared on the carpet, but it didn't work. There was so much dust that the bright soap bubbles instantly turned black and muddy.

Hermione was not willing to give up. She waved her wand and read the spell several times.

"Don't waste your efforts, Hermione, throw the carpet away." Evan said covering his forehead, "Furniture and office supplies can be purchased. But you're right, and as you just said, this place really needs a cleaning. This is not a small workload!"

"This house has been empty for many years, enough for a lot of things to breed. You must be careful when you clean it up." Lupin squatted in front of a cupboard and peeped through the keyhole. "It seems to be a Boggart here. You'd better let him out before you clean it up."

"It's crazy to clean up a place that's been abandoned for more than a decade. I don't want to spend the rest of my Christmas vacation here." Harry walked upstairs and gasped. "This store is much more spacious than it looks from outside. The space above is very large, and there is even more garbage than there is downstairs."

"Do not worry, Harry! I think three days should be enough. We can get Dobby and Kreacher to help. House-elves are very good at doing this kind of thing." Evan also went upstairs and looked around, nodding with satisfaction. "We will visit Ron in a moment, so we can also ask the Weasley family to help with the cleaning. Here's what I'm thinking the first floor and the second floor are enough for the newspaper

headquarters. The ground floor can be used for other purposes, for example, selling Fred and George's joke products..."

"Both of them will be happy. Since last semester, they've started owl mail-order services at school!" Harry said, "The products they developed are very interesting and very popular."

"They're also very dangerous and disgusting." Hermione disagreed. "Look at what they did last semester. They made big Dungbombs that smelled all over the hallway. The whole corridor was full of stink. It was hard to clean them up!"

"That's for Filch to worry about. Besides the Slytherin Tower, they have not used that kind of thing anywhere else in school." Evan said with a guilty conscience.

He did not dare to tell Hermione that the birth of Dungbombs was actually his suggestion. The theory used, however, was inspired by Hermione's contribution to a newspaper article on metamorphosis, to find a way to activate Dungbombs in a way that makes them obey the user's instructions.

"There is a lot of space here; lots of counters can be placed. In addition to Fred and George's joke products, they can also sell whatever other young wizards need for their studies." Seeing Hermione still wanting to continue on the joke products, Evan hurriedly said, "For example, with potions made by our Potion class; besides taking out a little for Snape to score, all the rest is thrown away, it is such a waste. We can put them here, and sell them at a much lower price than the competition."

"That's a good idea, provided that Snape can agree with us." Harry interrupted.

"He will agree. The potions are originally made by the students themselves. He has no reason to refuse." Evan walked down to the ground floor of the store, contemplating future plans and projects. "In addition to the potions, everything made by the young wizards can be sold. Hogwarts' name should be the ideal promotion tool!"

Chapter 242: St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries

Evan, Harry and Hermione excitedly discussed the store's future design and planning, the goods that could be sold there, pricing and so on.

Lupin was alone in the house to check whether there were perils and latent dangers. In less than ten minutes, he discovered two Boggarts, a dozen nests of mice and spiders, a large group of Doxies, in addition to Bundimuns.

The Bundimun is a kind of miraculous creature that could survive and thrive with ease.

At rest, Bundimuns resemble a patch of greenish fungus with eyes. Skilled at creeping under floorboards and behind skirting boards, they infest houses.

The presence of a Bundimun is usually announced by a foul stench of decay.

Once it appears in a house, The Bundimun oozes a secretion which rots away the very foundations of the dwelling in which it is found.

“Very bad, we have to deal with these Bundimuns as soon as possible!” Lupin turned a piece of floor open, indicating to Evan, Harry, and Hermione to look inside.

Evan saw a whole lot of Bundimuns under the rotten floor, and because they were alarmed, they hurriedly scuttled away on their numerous spindly legs.

“Generally speaking, Scouring charms will rid a house of an infestation of Bundimuns.” Lupin clapped his hands and stood up. “But there are too many Bundimuns here, and it is not easy to take action. It is likely to have extremely serious consequences, and even the place may collapse. We need to contact the Pest Sub-Division of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. They will send someone to deal with this matter.”

As Lupin said, the house had been abandoned for a long time, and unlike 12 Grimmauld Place, it was not protected by magic and it was in a very bad condition.

Just as they studied how to deal with the troublesome creatures living in the store, Sirius came in.

He had replaced the wand with a new one: a beautiful black wand, hawthorn wood, and Dragon heartstring core. In addition to the new wand, he carried a cage in his hand. There was a beautiful little owl inside, and after seeing them, Evan shouted excitedly.

“I just went to the owl shop next door and bought this owl, ready to give it to the Weasley boy named Ron.” Sirius said, “He may be willing to raise this owl. After all, because of my fault, he lost the rat...”

“He will be delighted. Ron has always wanted a pet of his own.”

“As long as he likes it!” Sirius smiled, put the cage on the ground, walked into the store and looked around. “Evan, how do you feel about it?”

“The layout is very good. It’s similar to what I imagined, but it needs to be cleaned up. Before you came, we’ve found a lot of Bundimuns. ”

“This shop hasn’t been used for too long, so it is not surprising to have such things.” Sirius opened the floor and looked at it. He frowned and said, “These things are not easy to handle. We should go for lunch first, and then visit your friend. During this period, I will tell Kreacher to clean up in here.”

“Bundimuns can be handed over to me.” Lupin said, “I have an acquaintance in the Pest Sub-Division. He is an expert in dealing with this aspect of biology.”

They talked for a while and then went back to the Leaky Cauldron for lunch.

Then they set out to see Ron at St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. This time, they did not take the Knight Bus, but Sirius and Lupin took Evan, Harry and Hermione with them in Apparate.

After a loud bang, they appeared on a wide Muggle street.

"Where is St. Mungo's Hospital?" Harry looked around curiously. "Why don't we just Apparate into it?"

"When the hospital was first established, people used to be able to do it. But as the number of patients gradually increased, the Ministry of Magic banned Apparate in the hospital, as it led to accidents in many cases." Lupin explained, "As for the location, we are now standing at the door of the hospital. "

In front of them was a large, old-fashioned, red brick department store called Purge and Dowse Ltd.

The place had a shabby, miserable air; the window displays consisted of a few chipped dummies with their wigs askew, standing at random and modeling fashions at least ten years out of date. Large signs on all the dusty doors read CLOSED FOR REFURBISHMENT.

In the vicinity of a particularly ugly female dummy, Evan felt a strange magic.

"Go this way!" Sirius muttered, pushing Evan, Harry and Hermione in front of him. "There are too many Muggles here. There's not enough land in Diagon Alley. The Ministry of Magic had a hard time finding this address to build a hospital so that patients could come and go and fit in with the crowds."

Next to them was a Muggle commercial street, with endless flow of people and cars, in sharp contrast to Diagon Alley.

"Aren't these Muggles going to spend Christmas at home?" Sirius asked strangely. "What are they all running out for?!"

"There is a business district nearby, where people can gather, have dinner, shop, sing, watch movies and so on during the holidays." Evan noticed Sirius's puzzled face. He continued to explain, "A movie is recording people's specific actions through a machine, to be replayed for them later on a big screen..."

"I know, that's Muggle special magic, the effect is almost the same as the Pensieve!" Sirius looked up around him and put his right hand unconsciously on the wand in his waist. "We'll discuss this later. You three had better get closer to me. If anything happens, I'll take action."

Looking at Sirius's appearance, Evan was very doubtful whether he really understood what he had said.

In fact, apart from rare cases like Mr. Weasley's, pure blood Wizards knew very little about the Muggle world and most people knew it only a few hundred years ago.

For the rapid development of science and technology in the Muggle world, the magic circle basically took a disregarding attitude.

An idea popped into Evan's mind that he might try to work with Mr. Weasley to bring some of the more advanced machinery of the Muggle world into the wizarding world, which might have unexpected effects.

Unfortunately, Hogwarts' defensive magic prohibited the operation of all electronic devices and they could only be promoted in Diagon Alley.

Evan thought about the feasibility of this idea as he followed Harry to the dummy in the Green Nylon dress he had just felt to be abnormal.

"We have to go in. Are the three of you ready?" Sirius asked.

Everyone nodded, clustering around him.

Evan saw Lupin, standing in front of him, leaning close to the glass, looking up at the very ugly dummy, his breath steaming up the glass.

"Wotcher... We're here to see Ron Weasley."

For a split second, Evan felt that Lupin looked funny, talking that quietly through a sheet of glass, when there were buses rumbling along behind him and all the racket of a street full of shoppers.

So did Harry and Hermione, who looked up at Lupin and Sirius doubtfully, and then their mouths opened in shock as the dummy gave a tiny nod and beckoned its jointed finger.

The next second, they stepped forward through what felt like a sheet of cool water, emerging quite warm and dry on the other side.

There was no sign of the ugly dummy or the place where she had stood. They entered St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries.

Chapter 243: Visiting Ron

Evan looked up and found himself in a crowded reception.

Rows of witches and wizards sat upon rickety wooden chairs, some looking perfectly normal and reading out-of-date copies of Witch Weekly, others sporting gruesome disfigurements such as elephant trunks or extra hands sticking out of their chests.

The room was slightly less quiet than the street outside, for many of the patients were making very peculiar noises.

A sweaty-faced witch in the center of the front row, who was fanning herself vigorously with a copy of the Daily Prophet, kept letting off a high-pitched whistle as steam came pouring out of her mouth, and a grubby-looking warlock in the corner clanged like a bell every time he moved, and with each clang his head vibrated horribly, so that he had to seize himself by the ears to hold it steady.

Evan, Harry, and Hermione looked around curiously in disbelief.

On top of normal disease patients, there were almost all kinds of curses and dark magic patients in the hospital.

Witches and wizards in lime-green robes were walking up and down the rows, asking questions. The badge embroidered on their chests was a wand and bone, crossed.

“Look at those people, are they doctors?” Harry asked quietly.

“That is the Muggle hospital’s status, they’re called Healers here.” Hermione replied, “Requirements to become a Healer include, as far as I know, N.E.W.T.s of at least the grade ‘Exceeds Expectations’ in the subjects of Transfiguration, Potions, Charms, Herbology and Defence Against the Dark Arts.”

“Oh, Potions class! Then I guess it’s no good. Snape won’t let me pass!” Harry said, “But you definitely won’t have a problem, Hermione!”

“But I don’t want to be a Healer; it’s a job of great responsibility.” Hermione looked up at Evan, not far ahead and whispered, “I prefer being the editor in chief of a newspaper over being a Healer..”

“Yeah, I forgot!” Seeing Hermione’s look, Harry smiled. “You’re going to run a newspaper with Evan.”

Seeing Harry’s expression, Hermione blushed and nodded with embarrassment, which was for sure a confirmation.

While Harry and Hermione were chatting, Evan followed Lupin to the queue in front of a plump blonde witch seated at a desk marked inquiries. The wall behind her was covered in notices and posters saying things like “A CLEAN CAULDRON KEEPS POTIONS FROM BECOMING POISONS”, and “ANTIDOTES ARE ANTI-DON’TS UNLESS APPROVED BY A QUALIFIED HEALER”.

Beside the counter, there was also a large portrait of a witch with long silver ringlets that was labeled DILYS DERWENT, ST. MUNGO’S HEALER 1722–1741, HEADMISTRESS OF HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY, 1741–1768

As the most famous Headmistress, she had a high reputation in history and her portraits were on many important places.

Derwent was a very amiable person. When meeting them in the school corridor, she always greeted the students and provided the new ones with guidance.

Dilys was eyeing the people in front of the counter as though counting them.

When Evan caught her eye, she gave a tiny wink. “Hello, Evan Mason. Nice to see you outside school!”

Derwent greeted him, walked sideways out of her portrait, and vanished.

Meanwhile, at the front of the queue, a young wizard was performing an odd on-the-spot jig and trying, in between yelps of pain, to explain his predicament to the witch behind the desk.

“It’s these ...ouch ... shoes my brother gave me ... ow... they’re eating my ... OUCH ... feet ... look at them, there must be some kind of ... AARGH ... jinx on them and I can’t

... AAAAAARGH ... get them off... " He hopped from one foot to the other as though dancing on hot coals.

"The shoes don't prevent you reading, do they?" said the blonde witch irritably, pointing at a large sign to the left of her desk. "Go to Spell Damage on the fourth floor. Next!"

The wizard hobbled and pranced sideways out of the way, Evan hurried forward a few steps.

His attention shifted to the sign that the witch had just pointed at, reading the above text: ARTIFACT ACCIDENTS, Ground Floor (Cauldron explosion, wand backfiring, broom crashes, etc.); CREATURE-INDUCED INJURIES, First Floor (Bites, stings, burns, embedded spines, etc.); MAGICAL BUGS, Second Floor (Contagious maladies, e.g., dragon pox, vanishing sickness, scrofungulus); POTION AND PLANT POISONING, Third Floor (Rashes, regurgitation, uncontrollable giggling, etc.); SPELL DAMAGE, Fourth Floor (Unliftable jinxes, hexes, and incorrectly applied charms, etc.); VISITORS' TEAROOM AND HOSPITAL SHOP, Fifth Floor.

If you are unsure where to go, incapable, of normal speech, or unable to remember why you are here, our Welcome Witch will be pleased to help.

"Ron was under the Imperius Curse, we should go to the fourth floor!"

As Evan read the sign, Lupin moved forward to the desk and asked softly. "Hello, we're here to see Ron Weasley. What ward is he in, please?"

"Ron Weasley?" said the witch, running her finger down a long list in front of her. "Oh, yes, he has been delivered from Hogwarts a week before Christmas. Fourth floor, second door on the right!"

"Thank you!"

Everyone followed Lupin through the double doors and along the narrow corridor beyond, which was lined with more portraits of famous Healers and lit by crystal bubbles full of candles that floated up on the ceiling, looking like giant soapsuds.

More witches and wizards in lime-green robes walked in and out of the doors they passed; a foul-smelling yellow gas wafted into the passageway as they passed by one door, and every now and then they heard distant wailing.

They climbed a flight of stairs and entered the "Spell Damage" corridor, on the fourth floor.

Before they even looked for it, they heard the Weasleys' voices. Mrs. Weasley was losing her temper and blaming Fred and George for a nasty joke they had just played.

"Ron is recovering, and you two just can't behave..."

Mrs. Weasley suddenly stopped, and she was surprised to see Evan and the others walking into the ward.

In the next second, she hurried over and held Evan, Harry, and Hermione in her arms, red-eyed and thanked them for helping Ron at school.

Evan looked up in embarrassment, and he saw Fred and George winking in front of him, with a cheerful smile on their faces.

Behind them, Percy, with a book in his hand, followed with a serious look.

Ginny, sitting in a chair in front of the bed, nodded as if to say hello, and looked at Harry with a red face.

Beside her, Ron, who was lying in the bed, sat up and looked excitedly at the three of them, looking both happy and embarrassed.

The Weasleys were exactly the same as always.

“Although you said it before, I didn’t expect you to come back today, after all, it’s just been Christmas!” Mrs. Weasley said gratefully, “Arthur has just left. Because of Pettigrew’s affair, the department has become a mess lately.”

After she hugged Evan, Harry, and Hermione, she stood up to greet Sirius and Lupin.

Apparently, she and Sirius knew each other and were very familiar.

After a brief introduction, Harry hurriedly asked Ron about his recovery.

“Basically there are no problems. The Healer just came over and confirmed that I will be able to leave the hospital after a few days of observation!” Ron patted his chest and signaled that he was healthy.

Since they entered the ward, he noticed the small owl that had kept hooting in the cage. Ron looked at Sirius puzzled.

“This is a gift for you. After all, it’s my fault that you lost that rat...” Sirius explained.

“This owl is for me, I can’t believe it. This is the best gift I’ve ever received!” Ron took the cage, looked at the owl inside with joy, and then raised his head. He said with embarrassment, “You didn’t have to do this. I was... I was so dizzy at the time, I doubted you, to help Scabbers...”

“It was not your fault, Ron.” Harry hurriedly said, “You broke free from the control of the Imperius Curse at the last moment.”

Sirius and Lupin also hurriedly followed the persuasion and said they had forgiven Ron for what he had done.

“Who could think that Peter Pettigrew was an Animagus, he was hiding too well!” Fred said.

“Yeah, I still can’t believe that Scabbers is Peter Pettigrew!” said George.

“Unbelievable, he actually lived in our house for more than ten years.”

Hearing his words, Mrs. Weasley and Percy showed a lingering expression on their faces. It was horrible enough just to think about it.

If Peter Pettigrew had other plans, the consequences would have been unimaginable.

Chapter 244: Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes

Everyone deliberately neglected Ron's control by Peter Pettigrew, and their focus quickly shifted to Sirius. The Weasleys were very interested in his fugitive journey over the past six months and the truth of the events 13 years ago.

Fred and George kept asking questions, and their eyes shone with admiration.

Sirius made a few simple remarks about the details not mentioned in the newspaper, and everybody listened carefully. Percy even took notes and recorded them with his pen.

After talking for more than half an hour, the topic was transferred to other matters.

With the optimistic and cheerful character of Sirius, the Weasleys soon became intimate with him.

The atmosphere in the ward became more and more relaxed, and from time to time cheerful laughter sounded, in sharp contrast to the gloom of the other wards around.

Lupin, Sirius and Mrs. Weasley sat together to reminisce the past, while the rest sat around Ron's bed to exchange Christmas gifts and news of the past few days.

Ron took the owl out of the cage and he was discussing with Harry about giving the little pet a name, and Ginny was listening.

On the couch in front of the bed, Percy and Hermione whispered about the vacation assignments given by the professors before Christmas, future jobs, career arrangements, etc.

In half a year, Percy was going to graduate from Hogwarts.

He had already planned to work in the Ministry of Magic. He excelled in the Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Test, and was able to choose almost any department at his discretion. He was then hesitating between the Department of Magical Law Enforcement or the Department of International Magical Cooperation.

In the corner, Fred and George showed Evan two of their new joke products developed in recent days, and Evan told them about the store.

Fred and George were so happy that they could not wait to go to the store immediately.

Since they were preparing for public sales, they decided to increase the output of joke products. Subject to funding constraints, they had finished only a few products and most of the research and development of products had not been achieved.

"Skiving Snackboxes, Fake Wands, Dungbombs, these products are selling particularly good right now. Demand exceeds supply; we can start from these things and raise sales volume a little." Fred took out a small notebook from his arm, full of various products blueprints and test data.

"There's no problem with Fake Wands!" Evan looked back and carefully glanced at Hermione, lowering his voice and saying, "It's best to be careful about the Skiving Snackboxes and Dungbombs. Hermione especially hates these things. She thinks they are too unsanitary."

“My mother thinks the same. She almost confiscated all our products!” Fred said with annoyance. “She found our order when she was cleaning the room. She had a big clash with us and burned it all up.”

“We’ve lost a lot of money, and she will not allow us to do further research in this area.” George went on to say, “She thinks it’s not a good business. She asked us to devote more energy to our studies. Looking at her, she must hope for us to work in the Ministry of Magic like Dad and Percy. That would be terrible!”

Apparently sensing that the three of them were discussing something on the sly, Mrs. Weasley suddenly came up and Fred hastened to put his notebook back into his arms.

“What are you doing? Is it related to Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes?” Mrs. Weasley asked gravely.

“No, we are exchanging holiday homework with Evan.” Fred hurriedly said, waving his hand.

“Evan, didn’t you say you were a little thirsty? Let’s go and have a drink, and by the way, get some drinks for everyone!” George pulled Evan.

The three of them hurried out of the ward under Mrs. Weasley’s suspicious eyes.

“Mrs. Weasley is…” Evan was still a bit confused.

“You know, we’ve been keeping it a secret from Percy, Ron and Ginny about studying joke products.” Fred explained, “Actually, only the three of us knew about this before mom found out.”

“Everyone knows now. Mother was so angry.” George sighed and said with dismay, “Evan, you’d better be careful from now on. Mom has been investigating our funding sources and she is beginning to doubt you!”

“Mrs. Weasley’s reaction may have been a little overdone. It is not as bad as she thinks.” Evan said, “In my opinion, opening a joke shop is no worse than going to the Ministry of Magic.”

“We think so too. In fact, that’s the only career we want.” Fred and George said in unison.

“Maybe we can talk to her..”

“Better not!” said Fred. “She won’t say anything to you, but if she knows that we took so much money from you for research, it’s definitely going to be bad!”

“Yes, mom will kill us both, without hesitation!” George made a gesture on his neck.

Evan listened to Fred and George’s complaints and didn’t know what to do.

In any case, Mrs. Weasley would not agree with them opening a magic joke store unless they succeeded first.

They walked to the Tearoom on the fifth floor, and Hermione and Ginny chased them from behind.

“What are you doing here?” Fred asked vigilantly.

“Mother asked us to come and watch over the three of you. She looked worried, afraid that you would throw some Dungbombs in the corridor.” Ginny said with a grin.

“Oh!” George looked at Ginny pitifully. “My dear little sister...”

“Don’t worry, I’m not going to tell on you. I think the joke products you’ve created are very interesting! They’re very popular in school!” Ginny said.

“But you can’t deny that those things are dangerous and extremely unsanitary. The Dungbomb is the most obvious example.” Hermione didn’t laugh, “Mrs. Weasley is right, you can’t sell those things to others. This is...”

Before Hermione finished, Fred and George hurriedly pushed Evan out.

“She’s all yours, brother!” They took Ginny and hurried to the fifth floor. There were only two people in the corridor: Evan and Hermione.

Because Evan was so close, Hermione’s face suddenly turned red.

“Don’t blame Fred and George. They just want to bring a little joy to everyone.” Evan could feel the breath of Hermione.

“I know...” Hermione whispered, and hurriedly took a step back.

The two of them stopped talking about the matter and talked about the decorations inside St Mungo’s Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries.

Evan and Hermione walked along the corridor through a set of double doors and found a rickety staircase lined with more portraits of brutal-looking Healers.

As they climbed it, the various Healers called out to them, diagnosing odd symptoms and suggesting horrible remedies.

They didn’t know where Fred, George and Ginny had gone, and didn’t see them anywhere.

They both bought a few cans of drinks from the fifth floor and when they returned to the fourth floor, they suddenly stopped.

Not far ahead, behind the small window set into the double doors that marked the start of a corridor sign posted SPELL DAMAGE; a man was peering out at them all with his nose pressed against the glass. He had wavy blond hair, bright blue eyes, and a broad vacant smile that revealed dazzlingly white teeth.

“Oh my goodness,” Hermione suddenly screamed, “Professor Lockhart!”

Chapter 245: Permanent Spell Damage

Under Evan and Hermione's amazed gaze, their ex-Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher pushed open the doors and moved toward them, wearing a long lilac dressing gown that looked the same as before.

"Well, hello there!" he said. "I expect you'd like my autograph, would you?"

Evan and Hermione shook their heads, indicating that they didn't need it.

Looking at Professor Lockhart in front, Hermione did not have much sympathy.

She just felt particularly awkward. She felt that she used to be too naive to worship such a person.

Because of the books Lockhart wrote, Hermione once thought that he was the greatest wizard in the world, and she even was able to recite the contents of each book.

But all of that was fake, and Lockhart was just stealing other people's achievements.

A year ago in the Chamber of secrets, he was going to erase the memories of Evan, Harry, Ron and Hermione with the Memory Charm. Fortunately, he used Ron's broken wand, and the spell ended up hitting him.

In short, Hermione fully recognized the true face of Lockhart as she faced him now.

In reality, Evan somewhat missed the days of Lockhart. He might not be a good professor, but his presence was really convenient.

Whether it was the difficulties encountered in the operation of the newspaper, the approval of the Restricted Section of the library, escaping Snape or Flich's punishment, or giving Gryffindor points, in many ways, Lockhart provided a lot of help to Evan.

Of course, in his opinion, Evan was also his most loyal reader.

"Er ... how are you, Professor?" Evan hesitated and asked softly.

"I'm very fine indeed, thank you!" said Lockhart exuberantly, pulling a rather battered peacock-feather quill from his pocket. "Now, how many autographs would you like? I can do joined-up writing now, you know!"

"Oh, we don't want any at the moment, thanks," Hermione quickly waved her hand.

At the end of the last semester, she threw all of Lockhart's signatures she had collected into the stove and burned them, leaving none.

"Professor, should you be wandering around the corridors? Shouldn't you be in a ward?" Evan looked around, as Lockhart's ward should be nearby.

"You call me Professor; have we met before?" The smile faded slowly from Lockhart's face. For a few moments he gazed intently at Evan and Hermione.

"Yes, we have. You used to teach us at Hogwarts, remember?"

"Teach?" repeated Lockhart, looking faintly unsettled. "Me? Did I?"

After getting a positive answer, the smile reappeared upon his face so suddenly it was rather alarming.

“Taught you everything you know, I expect, did I?” Lockhart said with a smile. “Well, how about those autographs, then? Shall we say a round dozen, you can give them to all your little friends then and nobody will be left out!”

Evan and Hermione looked at each other and they quietly stepped back.

“We have to go, Professor!” said Evan. “You know, the two of us just came out to buy drinks, and our friends are still waiting for us.”

“Are they also Hogwarts students?!” Lockhart said cheerfully, “I can go with you. Maybe they will need my autograph too.”

No one would ask for his autograph, and with the temper of Sirius, the mad Lockhart would definitely be thrown out.

But just then, a head poked out of a door at the far end of the corridor and a voice said, “Gilderoy, you naughty boy, where have you wandered off to?”

A motherly looking Healer wearing a tinsel wreath in her hair came bustling up the corridor, smiling warmly at Evan and Hermione.

“Oh Gilderoy, you’ve got visitors! How lovely, and on Christmas Day too! Do you know, he never gets visitors, poor lamb, and I can’t think why, he’s such a sweetie, aren’t you?”

Evan and Hermione both knew why, they could tell her that with the current Lockhart’s notoriety in the wizarding world, no one would visit him.

Currently, whenever Lockhart was mentioned, people often added the word “fake”.

For Lockhart, living in this delusion for the rest of his life might be the best possible outcome.

“Autographs!” Gilderoy told the Healer with another glittering smile. “They want loads of them, won’t take no for an answer! I just hope we’ve got enough photographs!”

“Listen to him,” said the Healer, taking Lockhart’s arm and beaming fondly at him as though he were a precocious two-year-old. “He was rather well known a few years ago; we very much hope that this liking for giving autographs is a sign that his memory might be coming back a little bit. Will you step this way? He’s in a closed ward, you know, he must have slipped out while I was bringing in the Christmas presents, the door’s usually kept locked ...”

Noticing the expression on Evan and Hermione’s faces, she lowered her voice to a whisper, “It’s not that he’s dangerous! But...bit of a danger to himself, bless him... Doesn’t know who he is, you see, wanders off and can’t remember how to get back... It is nice of you to have come to see him!”

If it hadn’t been for the wand he was using, it would have been Evan, Harry, Ron and Hermione to be in the ward.

They had just finished fighting with the Basilisk, all of them were at the end of the battle, and they had no ability to resist.

Thinking of this, Evan and Hermione lost any trace of sympathy that had built up in their hearts for Lockhart.

“I’m sorry, but we just happened to pass by!” Hermione shook her drink. “We’ve come to see Ron Weasley. He’s in that room.”

“I know Ron, a cute red-haired boy. I heard that he helped the famous Sirius Black clear up his name, which is really amazing!” The Healer smiled and said, “Although you are not specifically visiting Gilderoy, can you come to his ward for a while before you go back? He looks familiar with both of you. It shouldn’t take much time, and this may help him.”

Hearing what she said, both felt that refusal would seem too unreasonable.

Evan and Hermione could only nod, and followed Lockhart and his Healer along the corridor to the opposite direction to Ron’s ward.

The Healer pointed her wand at the door of the Janus Thickey ward and muttered “Alohomora”, and the door swung open.

She led the way inside, keeping a firm grasp on Gilderoy’s arm until she had settled him into an armchair beside his bed.

Compared to Ron’s ward, it was cold and clear.

Everything was white, even the temperature was a few degrees lower than the outside.

There are no recreational facilities in the ward, only cold treatment equipment. Evan could hardly imagine how terrible it would be to live there all the time.

“This is our long-term resident ward,” she informed Evan and Hermione in a low voice. “For permanent spell damage, you know. Of course, with intensive remedial potions and charms and a bit of luck, we can produce some improvement... Gilderoy does seem to be getting back some sense of himself, but most of the others show no signs of improvement.”

Chapter 246: Lonely Heroes

Evan looked at the ward, which seemed to be a permanent home to its residents.

They had many more personal items around their beds than in Ron’s ward; the wall around Gilderoy’s headboard, for instance, was papered with pictures of himself, in all of which he was beaming toothily and waving at his fans.

He had autographed many of them to himself in disjointed, childish writing. The moment he had been deposited in his chair by the Healer, Gilderoy pulled a fresh stack of photographs toward him, seized a quill, and started signing them all feverishly.

“You can put them in envelopes,” he said to Hermione, throwing the signed pictures into her lap one by one as he finished them, just like he used to do at school. “I am

not forgotten, you know, no, I still receive a great deal of fan mail... Gladys Gudgeon writes weekly... I just wish I knew why..."

He paused, looking faintly puzzled, then beamed again and returned to his signing with renewed vigor. "I suspect it is simply my good looks..."

Evan looked into the distance, and there were two patients in the ward besides Lockhart, a man and a woman, lying in the corner of the room, staring at the ceiling. They were mumbling to themselves and seemed quite unaware of anything around them.

"That's the Longbottom couple!" Noticing Evan's gaze, the Healer explained, "They have been here for a long, long time, for more than a decade. They were here before I came to work."

Evan was stunned. They turned out to be Neville's parents!

They used to be Aurors and were also members of the original Order of the Phoenix. During the first wizarding war, they fought bravely against Voldemort and the Death Eaters.

After Voldemort's defeat and escape, and just when people thought the war was over, they were captured by Bellatrix Lestrange, Barty Crouch Jr. and other Death Eaters. The Death Eaters tormented both of them madly with the Cruciatus Curse, hoping to get information about Voldemort and where he might have escaped.

Eventually, they were tortured into insanity, did not recognize their family, or even know who they were, and were sent for treatment at St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries.

Undoubtedly, both of them were heroes, but unfortunately their ending was very tragic.

"You just said the Longbottoms?" Hermione said in surprise, as if she had noticed something.

"Yes, they are Mr. Frank and Mrs. Alice Longbottom," said the Healer. "The old mothers of both of them, Mrs. Longbottom, came to visit them every day, and there was a round-faced boy. I remember his name..."

"Neville!" Hermione exclaimed.

At the same time, the ward door was opened again.

Evan saw Neville, who was unhappy, coming in, followed by a formidable-looking old witch wearing a long green dress, a moth-eaten fox fur, and a pointed hat decorated with what was unmistakably a stuffed vulture.

"Evan, Hermione, you, you..." Neville jumped and cowered, as though a bullet had narrowly missed him.

He looked extremely surprised, and then became horrified. Neville looked at Evan and Hermione, and looked at his parents lying in the back beds. He obviously didn't want his classmates to know about his parents.

The atmosphere was so embarrassing that Evan wished that he had not come to this ward.

“Friends of yours, Neville, dear?” said Neville’s grandmother graciously, and came over to Evan and Hermione.

Neville looked as though he would rather be anywhere in the world but here. A dull purple flush was creeping up his plump face and he was not making eye contact with any of them.

“Are you Evan Mason?!” said his grandmother, looking closely at Evan and sticking out a shriveled, clawlike hand for him to shake. “Yes, I know you. I saw your photos and read your stories in the newspaper the other day. They said you and Harry Potter saved the Blacks’ kid. You did a great job!”

Mrs. Longbottom patted Evan’s shoulder and turned her eyes to Hermione next to him.

“As for you, you must be Hermione Granger.” She shook hands with Hermione and continued, “Neville’s told me all about you. Helped him out of a few sticky spots, haven’t you? He speaks most highly of both of you.”

Neville did not look at them, but stared at his own feet, the color deepening in his face all the while.

“Neville is a good boy!” Mrs. Longbottom said, casting a sternly appraising look down her rather bony nose at Neville, “but he hasn’t got his father’s talent, I’m afraid to say...”

She jerked her head in the direction of the two beds at the end of the ward, so that the stuffed vulture on her hat trembled alarmingly.

Evan and Hermione were silent, and looked back at the two people lying on the side of the bed, not knowing what to say.

“Haven’t you told your friends about your parents, Neville?” Mrs. Longbottom asked sharply, and she noticed the anomaly in the atmosphere.

Neville took a deep breath, looked up at the ceiling and shook his head.

Unconsciously, Hermione gently held Evan’ hand. She looked very sad. She was worried about Neville, but did not know what to do.

“Well, it’s nothing to be ashamed of!” said Mrs. Longbottom angrily. “You should be proud, Neville, proud! They didn’t give their health and their sanity so that their only son would be ashamed of them, you know!”

“I’m not ashamed,” said Neville very faintly, still looking anywhere but at Evan and Hermione.

“The way you’re behaving is very strange!” Mrs. Longbottom looked at him, then turned to Evan and Hermione proudly and said, “My son and his wife were tortured into insanity by You-Know-Who’s followers. They were Aurors, you know, and very well respected within the Wizarding community.”

Hermione covered her mouth with her little hand, and she looked back at Neville’s parents.

Hearing the noise, Neville's mother sat up from the bed. Her face was thin and worn, her eyes seemed overlarge, and her head was white, wispy and dead-looking. She didn't seem to want to speak, or perhaps she was not able to, just sitting on the bed and motioning at Neville.

Seeing her movements, the Healer hurried up to greet her.

"Alas!" Mrs. Longbottom sighed, looked at Neville again, and staggered up to her son and daughter-in-law.

In her old back, there was a lonely desolation.

Neville didn't move. He took a deep breath, raised his head violently and looked at Evan and Hermione, his expression defiant, as though daring them to laugh.

Evan thought he could never find anything less funny in his life. His eyes moved to other places, and he did not look at Neville.

Beside him, Hermione's tears swirled in her eyes, watching Neville worriedly.

The two of them didn't know how they left the ward at last. In the corridor, Hermione, who looked tearful said, "I never knew..."

Evan didn't speak, and his heart was equally heavy.

Neville's life was similar to that of Harry. In a sense, he was even more pitiful than Harry. Although he could often see his parents, they couldn't recognize him. He didn't even dare mention them to his friends.

For Neville, this was an endless pain.

Evan sighed and once again realized the cruelty of the Death Eaters and the cruelty of war.

Facing a dangerous future, enhancing their strength as much as possible was the only hope they had.

Chapter 247: Pettigrew's Verdict

On top of his forgetfulness, Neville's problem was having too little self-esteem. Because of his parents' matter, Mrs. Longbottom's excessive expectations, and his own bad magic talent, he had been suffering from losses and self-doubt, unaware of the hidden courage in his heart.

But he was to grow up slowly as time went by.

Evan and Hermione did not tell anyone about Neville's parents. If he wanted them to know, he would have told them himself.

Ron recovered the next day and was discharged from the hospital. Evan, Harry and Hermione also went to the Burrow that afternoon. The Weasleys welcomed them warmly.

For the rest of the Christmas holidays, Evan had a very good time.

Since Sirius's incident, he had not been as relaxed as he was at the moment, with no conspiracies, Dark Wizards, vampires, or any threat of death to face.

He discussed Muggle Machines with Mr Weasley, and followed Fred and George to work on new joke products in secrecy.

On the first day of the New Year, Sirius also took some of them to see the match between Puddlemere United and Wimbourne Wasps.

The game was held deep in the mountains, and everyone planned to sleep in the wild for that night, but the Puddlemere United's Seeker caught the golden Snitch in only twenty minutes.

Although the game was short, it was still very exciting.

The caliber of technique and the high level of confrontation were all higher than what Evan was used to watch, and the teams' performance kept his eyes wide open.

The fans of Wimbourne Wasps all wore yellow and black wizard robes, and a wasp was sewn on their chest and back. Whenever a player scored a goal, they made a wave, with a rhythmic buzz in a spectacularly coordinated manner.

When the Seeker of Puddlemere United seized the Snitch to end the game, the entire Quidditch pitch sounded their team anthem "Beat Back Those Bludgers, Boys, and Chuck That Quaffle Here." The cheerful melody echoed throughout the audience, and even Evan muttered a few words along with them.

For fans like Harry and Ron, the game that ended so fast was certainly not satisfying.

Evan didn't care about this. He paid attention to the setting of the Quidditch pitch, the advertisements placed around it, and the souvenirs, badges and the like of the two teams sold by the staff. He was considering whether it was possible to refer to these experiences in the Hogwarts Quidditch competition.

In addition to these things, Evan spent most of the time in the shop in Diagon Alley, where everyone worked together to clean up and repair the store.

This matter was mainly handled by Lupin, Sirius and Mrs. Weasley. The House-elves Dobby and Kreacher helped. Every morning after breakfast in the Burrow, Evan and the others would fly to Diagon Alley to help.

According to Evan's plan, the ground floor of the store was to be mainly used to sell Weasley's joke products.

Therefore, Fred and George were the most active people. They designed and decorated the place according to their own ideas. If it wasn't for Mrs. Weasley, they would have definitely stayed up in the store for a couple of nights.

Although Evan did not participate himself, he was not idle.

He and Hermione wrote a lot of promotional articles, used two sections in "Hogwarts Magic" newspaper to publicize the store that was about to open in a week, and even bought ads in the "Daily Prophet".

With everyone's efforts, the store opened successfully on the last day of the Christmas holidays.

The ground floor of the store was full of exquisite goods, that were both numerous and diverse.

They were all made by the Hogwarts wizards, and Evan had contacted and collected them with his classmates through owls and Dobby in the past few days.

Among them, Fred and George made most of the joke products.

With the persuasion of Evan and Mr. Weasley, Mrs. Weasley finally reluctantly agreed to let Fred and George continue their research on Weasley's magic tricks, provided that she got to check those things for safety and that the matter wasn't affecting their studies.

Mrs. Weasley quickly found a helper. She and Hermione joined forces to rigorously sift through the joke products that Fred and George were preparing to sell, such as Dungbombs, Skiving Snackboxes, Canary Creams, and all of the things that were listed as prohibited.

Most of the joke products currently placed in the store were mild, not dangerous, and very hygienic.

Fred and George had complained more than once to Evan about this, saying it affected their mischievous inspiration.

However, they did not give up the development of other mischievous products that they themselves called "really valuable", but moved underground.

Fred and George were going to work hard and save money and then open a joke shop on their own.

In addition to the various things made by the young wizards, in the corner of the ground floor, Evan also deliberately opened up a small place to sell Muggle items, such as light bulbs, video cameras, game consoles and other products that wizards rarely touched.

Evan didn't know how it would work. He was ready to try to sell them.

These things were very practical, and should be very interesting to some people. And from Evan's understanding of wizards, they would not go to the Muggle world just to buy them.

On the other side of the ground floor, there was a spacious wooden staircase leading to the first and second floors of the store. It was the headquarters of the Hogwarts Magic newspaper, mainly run by Lupin and used as a place for daily newspaper operation and advertising contacts.

In order to celebrate the store's smooth opening, Evan also printed a special issue featuring the facts of the event and the experience of Sirius when he fled.

He even got inspiration from Lockhart to persuade Sirius to sign up autographs in the store on the opening day to attract more public.

Despite all the preparations, Evan was caught off guard by the number of customers waiting outside the store on the first day of business.

Many wizards gathered outside the store, and there were thousands of people, including many foreign wizards, almost all of whom came for Sirius.

After all, the case of Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew was the hottest topic in the magic world, especially since it was related to Voldemort's secret. Everyone was very interested.

Two days before the store opened, the Wizengamot, after a lengthy trial, finally sentenced Pettigrew to life in Azkaban.

Evan heard the grapevine from Mr. Weasley that most of the Wizengamot members had planned to make Pettigrew's verdict to be kissed by a Dementor, but there were many peace organizations outside demonstrating and writing to the Ministry of Magic against such a cruel verdict.

In the current low support rate, Fudge worried that this incident would cause unnecessary trouble, and he finally decided to adopt a more conservative judgment by keeping Peter Pettigrew in Azkaban forever.

After all, such a judgment had a precedent to follow. After Voldemort's fall, many evil Dark wizards were also punished the same way.

To Fudge, what was most important was dodging being questioned by the masses.

It was said that after Peter Pettigrew heard the judgment, he collapsed on his knees in an instant, like a child, crying loudly on the ground.

Not out of fear, but out of overwhelming joy.

He didn't expect to escape death, and Azkaban, no matter how bad, was better than losing his life or having his soul sucked away by a Dementor.

He even had a bit of illusions about the day when Voldemort would return.

For all the Death Eaters who were trapped in Azkaban, as long as they were alive, there was hope!

Chapter 248: The New D.A.D.A Professor

The Wizengamot's verdict on Peter Pettigrew was half praised and half protested, and many people were not satisfied with the outcome. They thought that Peter should be executed, whether it was by having him be killed directly, or through the Dementor's Kiss.

When the truth of the incident was first revealed, such voices were very loud.

As time went on, wizards gradually calmed down, and some people began to think that such a practice was too cruel. Even if Peter Pettigrew deserved it, the Dementor's kiss was too inhuman. The number of wizards who held this view gradually gained the upper hand.

However, when Peter was placed in Azkaban Wizard Prison, people were not at ease. After all, there was the instance of the escape of Sirius.

Even with the Ministry repeatedly guaranteeing that Pettigrew was to be strictly monitored, the outside world was still full of doubts. They did not believe in Fudge and the Ministry of Magic.

Under such circumstances, wizards became more and more curious about Sirius Black, the only wizard who managed to escape from Azkaban guarded by the Dementors.

Many wizards lined up early to wait for the store to open after learning that the day's special issue from Hogwarts Magic Headquarters, 36 Diagon Alley, would publish the first exclusive report on Sirius's escape.

Besides those loving novelty and adventure, many people simply worshiped Sirius.

Just like they worshiped Lockhart a year ago, after the truth was revealed, the brave and fearless Sirius became the object of admiration of many people.

Unlike the Muggle world, the magical world worshiped power, wizards needed their heroes.

After Lockhart's true face was made public, people were disappointed and began to look for new people to replace him. The emergence of Sirius Black filled the gap.

He was a well-deserved hero, a fighter against the Dark forces.

To top it off, the new hero looked very handsome, and everything about him was even better than before. Many witches of Mrs. Weasley's age worshiped him madly.

The signing of the day was the first public appearance of Sirius Black after being acquitted.

Although it was the last day of the Christmas holidays, his admirers gathered there to see him and get his autograph.

In the crowd, there were also many young wizards. They didn't come for Sirius Black, but to buy the Weasley's magic tricks and other interesting magic items made by other Hogwarts wizards that were about to be sold on the ground floor of the store.

In the newspaper, Evan had publicized almost everything.

His strategy was successful and he was able to move the entirety of the magic world.

At this time, a long queue was arranged outside the store, and it was all the way to the corner of the street. More and more people were joining in.

"Relax, Sirius, you just have to sit here and sign. It's very simple." Evan was looking at Sirius who seemed to have some uneasiness.

"I would rather fight the Death Eaters than do this again!" Sirius Black clenched the quill in his hand, and almost broke the pen holder because he was too rough.

Unlike Lockhart, he had not yet adapted to being in the spotlight.

"Harry, Ron, Hermione and I will help you, and the sales of the ground floor are all handed over to Fred, George, Ginny, Dobby and Kreacher." Evan ordered, "Especially Dobby and Kreacher, you two must work hard to get used to it. After today, you'll be in charge of the day-to-day camp and sales work."

"Yes, sir!" Dobby said excitedly. It was the first time he had done such a thing.

Kreacher didn't answer. He looked suspiciously at the Weasley fireworks in front of him. It seemed that he was studying this thing; and looking at his eyes, he was apparently thinking that what was happening in front of him was absurd. If not because of the orders of Sirius, he would have long turned and left.

In Evan's plan, due to financial constraints, he did not intend to hire too many people. The compilation of newspaper manuscripts could still be completed as before. In the store, there would usually be Lupin and Dobby. Kreacher should also be able to help.

As for Sirius, he was also ready to help in the store.

But this morning, he received a letter from Dumbledore, inviting him to replace Lupin as Hogwarts's new Defence Against the Dark Arts class Professor.

He accepted the invitation and everyone was very happy after knowing the news.

Harry, in particular, was the most excited. He couldn't believe that his godfather would become the new professor of Defence Against the Dark Arts, his favorite class.

Evan was also very much looking forward to see Snape's face after seeing Sirius.

Unlike Professor Lupin, who was gentle and unwilling to fight with others, Sirius would definitely be tit-for-tat with Snape for his explosive personality.

There was no doubt that the second semester should be very exciting. It was not just between the two of them, it was also a confrontation between Gryffindor and Slytherin. This year's House Cup competition should definitely be fierce.

On the top of that, Sirius promised Evan to help him get the recognition of the Centaur tribe in the Forbidden Forest, and then get the key to Gryffindor's Treasure.

Evan had been unable to wait for this item that could enhance magic.

In fact, the happiest people, besides Evan and Harry, were Fred and George. The more confusion was created, the more they had a chance to play tricks. Many of the mischievous products that Mrs. Weasley and Hermione thought were dangerous and banned could be sold.

"Are you ready? It's almost time. We are going to open the door." Evan went over to help Lupin open the store door.

Dobby, the House-elf stood nervously behind the counter on the ground floor, watching the crowds pouring in like the tide. They were talking excitedly, and headed straight for Sirius into the center of the hall.

Just as Lockhart was selling well before, the Wizards bought a special issue of the Hogwarts Magic newspaper, and took with them two photos each that Sirius signed.

Sirius smiled stiffly, and struggled hard to cope with this matter.

While queuing, the Wizards looked curiously at the vast array of goods on the counter, many of which were very interesting and practical. It was hard to believe that these were the works of the young wizards. When they saw something interesting, they would buy it.

In front of the counter where Fred and George were in charge, there were early crowds of young wizards buying prank products. Their products were very popular and quickly swept away.

Evan noticed that Fred and George would sneak up on Mrs. Weasley and Hermione and put a thick order in the hands of a young wizard who bought their wares, full of items that had previously been banned by Mrs Weasley.

In short, the opening of this shop that seemed to be a hodgepodge had been a massive success. Even the Muggle items that Evan deliberately placed in the corner had attracted many people to buy.

Although the number was not that large, little by little people were beginning to flow into that corner. For wizards, these were very novel gadgets, and there would definitely be more and more interested people.

Chapter 249: Reopening the Dueling Club

Due to the unprecedented success of the store sales and the good news that Sirius was going to teach at Hogwarts, the dinner atmosphere was very pleasant.

With the help of Hermione and Ginny, Mrs. Weasley made a large table full of dishes.

In the courtyard of the Burrow, everyone sat happily around the table, eating delicious dishes and watching the fireworks display of Fred and George.

Professor Lupin and Mr. Weasley also told a few jokes that made everyone laugh.

“I can’t believe you’re going to be a school professor!” Harry smiled at his side.

He had been laughing all night long.

Harry was still immersed in the great surprise that Sirius was going to teach at Hogwarts. He felt like he was dreaming: Ron recovered from the damage of the Imperius Curse, his godfather was going to be a Hogwarts Professor, Evan’s shop had achieved unprecedented success and he received the Firebolt as a Christmas gift...

The recent events made Harry feel the happiness he had never felt before.

“Nor did I think of it a few months ago, I just wanted to take revenge on Peter Pettigrew, even if my life was at stake. But now it’s good this way. Evan was right. It’s probably the best outcome for me.”

Sirius’s face was filled with a cheerful smile, making him look younger and more like he was at Hogwarts more than a decade ago. .

“Speaking of that!” Hermione asked curiously. “Sirius, I’ve been wondering, what are you going to do about the Defence Against the Dark Arts class in the next semester?”

“I’ve just talked to Remus. I am going to continue with his methods, so that you can see other Dark creatures. Besides, I am going to teach you some real dueling skills. I’ve seen a few of you fighting, and your combat experience is scarce. Take Evan for example. He has a lot of magic, he masters many magic spells, not even worse than me, but he can’t use them to their full potential. What you need now is more skill and experience, something that can only be learned in real combat.”

“Battle experience and skill, you mean...” Evan suddenly had an idea in his mind, “Aren’t you going to reopen the dueling club?”

The club, which aimed to teach dueling skills to the wizards and enhance their combat experience and strength, was formed last year on Lockhart’s suggestion.

At that time, the response was so great that everyone expected that almost all the young wizards in the school would join in.

But the club had become a joke. Lockhart was no opponent to Snape at all, and could not even resist a move.

In the end, they all saw that Harry was a Parselmouth, and that was just awful for the club’s debut.

“I have that idea, but I need to get Dumbledore’s consent.” Sirius slowly turned his wand in his hand and continued, “I’ve heard about last year, and if Snape wants to, I’d like to invite him to be my opponent and show you a few things about a real duel.”

He added an accent on the “duel”, and it seemed that he could hardly wait to play with Snape. The new hatred and old grievances between the two men were not clear at all.

They were sick of each other, and their feud exceeded that of Harry and Malfoy.

“God, I can’t wait!” Ron raised his head from his plate and swallowed the contents of his mouth. “Teach the old bat a lesson! He always looked for Harry’s trouble, he’s got us locked up, and he’s deducted points from Gryffindor. We’ve put up already enough with him...”

“RON!” Mrs. Weasley grabbed Ron’s ear and said harshly, “How dare you say that about your Professor?”

“Oh, Mom, you don’t know...”

Everyone laughed at Ron’s embarrassment.

This topic did not go on, but looking at their faces, they all couldn’t wait to see Sirius and Snape’s duel, even for Percy and Hermione, who had always behaved properly.

After a brief calm, there was another burst of laughter on the table.

Fred and George tricked Percy who ate a new variant of their transfiguration biscuits. Percy became a frog and then reverted to his normal appearance.

Under everyone’s laughter, Percy chased Fred and George around the yard, and Mrs. Weasley hurriedly stopped them.

Just then, a small gray figure flew out of the house and landed at Ron’s plate.

It kept on twittering and fighting with Ron for food on the plate.

“Shut up, Pig,” Ron hurriedly waved his hand and the owlet in front of him rushed to the side. “Don’t touch anything on my plate.”

“Why are you calling that owl Pig?” Hermione asked curiously, she had been busy with Evan in the store recently, and had no time to care about the name Ron gave to the owl.

“Because it’s being stupid.” Ginny, sitting next to her, grinned and said, “the name Ron gave it before was Pigwidgeon.”

“Yeah, that name is not stupid at all.” Ron said sarcastically, “I thought about it for a long time with Harry, and I came up to the name of Pigwidgeon, which is very well matched with Hedwig. But when we were about to call it, Ginny had already got the name. ”

“Don’t you think this name is very cute?” Ginny asked.

“I don’t see anything cute. I tried to change this name, but it was too late, he won’t answer to anything else. So now it’s gone, he’s Pig.” Ron wrinkled his nose and said.

Pigwidgeon zoomed happily beside him, hooting shrilly.

“Pig is a pretty good name, it is really cute.” Hermione used the breadcrumbs to bring the owl over.

It flew up to Hermione at once, which made her giggle.

The dinner lasted until more than ten o’clock, and ended in laughter.

The next day, because Sirius was also on his way to Hogwarts, he rushed back on the Knight Bus instead of returning to school on the Hogwarts Express at King’s Cross Station Platform 9?.

They hurried to have breakfast, put on their coats and scarves, and got ready to go on the road.

The early morning of January was cold and the sky was grey.

At 7 o’clock in the morning, a violently purple, triple-decker bus had appeared out of thin air in front of them on the doorstep of the Burrow. The Weasleys stood at the door and waved them away.

The first stop of the Knight Bus was Diagon Alley, and Sirius was already waiting for them on the top of the bus.

Evan climbed in. He saw all kinds of mismatched chairs on the bus, grouped haphazardly around windows.

Chapter 250: Tit for Tat

The chairs on the Knight Bus looked like ones that could be found casually on different Muggle streets, and several wizards were sitting on them, muttering, looking for comfortable postures.

Because the bus stopped abruptly, somebody’s shopping bag slid over the length of the bus; an unpleasant mixture of frog spawn, cockroaches, and custard creams was scattered all over the floor.

“Looks like we’ll have to split up. Today is the first working day after the holidays. There are a lot of people on the bus.” Sirius explained, “Harry, you sit in the seat next to me, and the others sit behind me. Percy, you take care of it.”

“Do not worry, leave it to me!” Percy promised with a look of pride. He raised the Head Boy badge on his chest, and led by Evan they walked towards the rear.

“I’ve always wanted to go on this thing,” said Ron happily, sitting in the seat behind Harry, looking around excitedly.

Evan and Hermione continued to move backwards, and they found two empty seats at the back of the carriage.

When the two had just sat down, the bus set off again, swaying ominously. It rumbled around the Burrow, weaving.

With another tremendous BANG, they were all flung backward.

Ron’s chair toppled right over and Pigwidgeon, who had been on his lap, burst out of his cage and flew twittering wildly up to the front of the bus where he fluttered down upon Hermione’s shoulder instead. Since Hermione had fed it with breadcrumbs last night, the owl particularly liked her company.

Hermione's right hand held on to Evan, who grabbed the candle bracket beside him. They both managed not to fall.

They looked out of the window: they were now speeding down what appeared to be a motorway.

"This is outside Birmingham." The conductor, Stan Shunpike, came over and said hello enthusiastically. "Hello, I went to the shop in Diagon Alley yesterday. I didn't buy a newspaper. There were so many people. By the time it was my turn, the newspapers were sold out. But it doesn't matter, for I already have Black's autograph."

Evan and Hermione each handed Stan eleven sickles, and he gave them the tickets.

On the streets of Muggles, the Knight Bus was slantingly slanted, over the inside of a small car, rushing straight into the surrounding sidewalk.

Hermione covered her eyes in fear, Pigwidgeon still swaying happily on her shoulder.

With a bang, chairs slid backward again as the Knight Bus jumped from the Birmingham motorway to a quiet country lane full of hairpin bends.

Hedgerows on either side of the road were leaping out of their way as they mounted the verges. From here they moved to a main street in the middle of a busy town, then to a viaduct surrounded by tall hills, then to a windswept road between high-rise flats, each time with a loud BANG.

"Can't they slow down a bit?!" Hermione shuddered.

"This bus has only one speed!" Evan held Hermione with one hand and the other hand held the candle bracket next to him so to keep them from being thrown out.

Compared with the Hogwarts Express train, the Knight Bus was very uncomfortable.

This was especially true when it was full of people, the environment in the bus was even worse than when Evan came to school in Mr. Weasley's car with Harry and Ron last year.

"Attention, our next stop is Hogwarts," said Stan brightly, swaying toward them, not affected at all.

In the carriage, people were retching, followed by a horrible spattering sound.

Evan opened a small aperture in the window, and with the cold fresh air, he saw the Knight Bus speeding through a shabby bar, squeezing itself out of the way to avoid any collisions.

It was the Hog's Head Inn, and the severed boar's head sign was creaking in the wintry wind. Not far away, there was the snowy Hogsmeade, with no one on its streets.

Flecks of snow hit the large window at the front of the bus. At last they rolled to a halt outside the gates to Hogwarts.

"Here we are, kids!" Sirius helped them off the bus with their luggage.

Immediately afterwards, Ron rushed out of the bus.

He looked very bad; he had picked himself up from the floor six times along the way. He muttered, "I never want to ride on here again."

Evan also got off the bus and everyone waved to Stan.

The Knight Bus restarted and disappeared in thin air.

The nine of them struggled up the slippery route toward the castle dragging their trunks. Although it was cold, everyone was very excited and talked about topics of interest.

A few seconds later, the voices stopped instantly.

In front of the gate of the school wall, Evan saw Snape in a black robe, with a cold fake smile on his face, and his black eyes squinting. Sirius looked at him with hatred.

Evan had naively thought that Snape would improve his attitude after knowing the truth about Lily's death and helping them catch Peter Pettigrew.

But he found out he was wrong, and Snape showed even more contempt than before.

"Welcome, welcome!" he said in a low, sarcastic tone.

"What are you doing here?" Sirius immediately said with vigilance, his hand instinctively placed on the wand on his waist.

"I'm here on Dumbeldore's orders." Snape said disgustedly, "It is a terrible errand to be ordered to meet the new Defence Against the Dark Arts professor."

"What about other professors?" Harry asked, "Why didn't Hagrid come?"

"Obviously, apart from me, the rest of the staff are reluctant to accept this unpleasant duty. They have loud opinions about a murderer becoming a professor at the school." Snape said, his voice was getting more and more sinister. "But it's not surprising. The Headmaster has always liked to hire some strange fellows..."

"Go away!" Sirius shouted, "I don't need you to welcome me. Get out of my sight before I can't keep myself from beating you up."

"That's just right; I didn't intend to waste too much time here." The cold smile on Snape's face was more obvious, "I am not like you, I don't have unlimited leisure time."

Snape turned around and was about to leave.

"Hold on!" Sirius suddenly shouted. He frowned and said, "I've heard a lot lately about what you did to Harry at school during my absence. I have to remind you that if you are trying to bully Harry, you'll have me to answer to."

"How touching, the loving godfather's concern for the godson!" Snape sneered, "But surely you have noticed that Potter is very like his father?"

"Yes, I have," said Sirius proudly.

“Well then, you’ll know he’s so arrogant that criticism simply bounces off him,” Snape said sleekly.

“Hey!” Sirius pulled out his wand and he strode toward Snape.

Snape whipped out his own. They were squaring up to each other, Sirius looking livid, Snape measuring his opponent, his eyes darting from Sirius’s wand tip to his face.

“Sirius!” said Harry loudly, but Sirius appeared not to hear him.

“I’ve warned you, Snivellus,” said Sirius, his face barely a foot from Snape’s, “I don’t care if Dumbledore thinks you’ve reformed, I know better...”

“Oh, but why don’t you tell him you think so?” whispered Snape. “Or are you afraid he might not take a murderer’s word seriously? Hiring a pug to teach at Hogwarts is the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever seen.”