

## Harry Potter 691

### Chapter 691: Preparations

Although Evan and Gabrielle were honest and prone, many changes had been made inadvertently after the identity exchange.

In the next Charms class, Evan easily finished the task assigned by Professor Flitwick.

That would normally not be a big surprise. He usually did the same and everyone was used to it.

But after Evan finished the work as Gabrielle, he received unimaginable attention and amazement!

She was a lovely girl with a beautiful look, gentle character, sweet temperament and excellent magic talent...

Gabrielle was very liked among junior boys. They looked at her and made Evan feel uncomfortable.

On the other hand, Gabrielle used her advantage to get along with Ginny and other girls very happily as Evan.

Many people were surprised to find that Evan was so good at getting along with girls.

Colin actually came up and secretly asked Gabrielle for "girl advice"...

After a whole morning's experience, both of them felt very tired.

When he walked into the Great Hall for lunch, Evan hoped that it would end very soon.

Ludo Bagman had already sat at the teachers' table, and seemed quite happy. Fudge did not show up.

A few minutes later, Fleur made a rare appearance at the Gryffindor table, and winked at Evan with a smile.

"My lovely sister, after lunch, Madame Maxime has something to tell you!" She walked over and said, naturally sitting next to Gabrielle, which was originally Colin's place, "She'll be in the hall. You can go to her alone."

"Got it!" Evan replied, looking helplessly at Fleur.

When she didn't use "Gabrielle", but expressions such as "my lovely sister" and "my dear sister"... Couldn't Fleur keep a low profile?!!

There was a murmur around. They saw Fleur and Evan sitting together, Gabrielle and Hermione sitting opposite.

Associated with the scene they saw in the hall this morning, many young wizards began to think their minds hadn't been functioning correctly...

Because Fleur suddenly appeared, the atmosphere at the table was strange, and Ron was nervous and speechless.

There were too many people around, and some words were not easy to say here.

After lunch, Evan shook Hermione's little hand vigorously, then walked alone to Madame Maxime.

Madame Maxime was already waiting at the door, worried and distraught.

“Here you are, Gabrielle,” said Madame Maxime. “Follow me to Dumbledore's office. Everyone is there.”

“What's the matter?” Evan asked, looking up at Madame Maxime, imitating Gabrielle's tone.

“About the second task of the Triwizard Tournament, every champion needs to find someone to cooperate with to complete the task,” said Madame Maxime, pulling Evan upstairs. “Gabrielle, you are the most important person to your sister Fleur. According to the arrangement, you will be sent to the lake in front of the castle, waiting for her to rescue you!”

“Go into the lake?!”

“Yes, although Dumbledore has repeatedly promised to ensure your safety, you are too young to go into the deep lake ...” said Madame Maxime anxiously. “If you refuse, I can find someone else.”

“I want to be in,” said Evan. He had turned into Gabrielle for this purpose. How could he refuse?

He followed Madame Maxime to Dumbledore's office, where Dumbledore, Karkaroff, Ludo Bagman, Moody, and Snape were already waiting.

In addition, there were Professor Flitwick and Cho Chang, who was the most important person to Cedric, and a chubby Durmstrang boy, Krum's target, whose name was Poliakoff.

According to Krum's original intention, he wanted to choose Hermione, but neither Evan nor Hermione agreed. The matter itself required the consent of the chosen target, and Karkaroff randomly found a replacement for him.

Dumbledore happily greeted when Evan stepped in, “Good afternoon, Gabrielle!”

“Hello, Professor Dumbledore!” Evan replied, sitting in a chair in the corner.

Dumbledore had identified him and everything had been arranged.

After a while, Harry followed Professor McGonagall into the office. He looked around and walked to Evan.

“All right, everyone is here,” said Dumbledore gently. “You should already know what will happen. You will enter the lake in front of the castle. I will personally cast a spell on the four of you, which will make you sleepy and breathe underwater. I can assure you that the whole process is not dangerous and you will wake up as soon as you come out of the water. Is there any problem?”

The four shook their heads, having no objections.

“Very well, you know, the whole process of the task is confidential to the champions. I suggest you don’t have to go back in the afternoon until the end of the task tomorrow!” said Dumbledore. “We have prepared a guest room on the first floor of the castle where you can sleep tonight. Dinner will be delivered by the house-elves. We will be out at six tomorrow morning.”

Throughout the afternoon, Professor Dumbledore explained in detail the whole process of the task to Evan, Harry, Cho and Poliakoff. He led them to the lake to experiment with the spell. He communicated with the female leader of the Merpeople who looked very rough and fierce, and kept producing a sharp and screechy voice.

Obviously, he could also speak Mermish.

Cornelius Fudge came to Hogwarts at about three o’clock in the afternoon, and his face was tense and he seemed a little unhappy. Five Aurors were following him, and Sirius was among them. They would be responsible for preparing the entire playing field to ensure that there would be no accidents.

In Evan’s view, Fudge brought so many Aurors here mainly to protect his own safety. Crouch’s disappearance brought him a wake-up call. He realized that the wizarding world was not as peaceful as he thought.

As for ensuring that there were no accidents in the task, these few Aurors would have little effect. During the task, they would not go into the lake, not to mention Barty Crouch Jr. would also participate in the security work.

All in all, preparations for the second task were carried out in an orderly manner.

With the exception of Evan, the other three who were going to the lake were a little nervous, especially Poliakoff, who was not familiar with the others.

Harry seemed to want to communicate with Cho Chang, but didn’t know what to say, so he could only follow the team.

In the end, Cho talked with Evan all afternoon, and it was her who was speaking most of the time.

Cho was more talkative than Evan had previously thought. She talked about all kinds of recent events, from gossip and rumors in the school to the upcoming task, as well as her impression of boys. Many of them Evan heard of for the first time.

She seemed to think that she was getting along well with “Gabrielle”, and because she was scared, she invited her to sleep with her at night...

## Chapter 692: The Start of the Task

Evan naturally could not sleep with Cho. The effect of the Polyjuice Potion was only one hour.

This meant that he would definitely change back when he went to bed at night. It was impossible for Evan to get up every hour to take the potion.

After having dinner sent by the house-elves, he rejected Cho’s invitation and didn’t want to play Wizard’s Chess with Harry.

Evan went back to the guest room on the first floor of the castle, locked the door, blew out the candles, and went to bed early.

He lay down, thought for a while, got up again, took off all his clothes, and then fell heavily on the bed...

After the transformation, Gabrielle's clothes would definitely not be suitable, and the Polyjuice Potion was really troublesome.

He heaved a sigh in the darkness. Today's experience was really special!

Tonight was destined to be a sleepless night, not just for Evan but also for some others.

In the Gryffindor Common Room, Hermione and Gabrielle also kept talking until very late.

When there was no one around in the middle of the night, the two of them realized that it was time to go to bed and could not continue to drag on.

"Come on, they should all be asleep. Let's keep our voices down!" Hermione said, blushing.

A strange feeling rose in her body. Although she knew that Gabrielle was in front of her, she looked like Evan now.

She was personally leading 'Evan' to her bed, which made her head blank.

"I'd better stay here, if someone shows up..." said Gabrielle worried.

"No, as long as you pay attention, there will be no problem!" Hermione actively took Gabrielle and walked to the bedroom, saying, "Come on, I can't leave you here alone, you can't stay up all night."

She repeatedly told herself it was Gabrielle, not Evan, and there was nothing to be shy about.

In this kind of matter, her courage must be a little bit bigger and set an example for Gabrielle!

The defense magic at the entrance of the girls' dormitory was not disturbed, which greatly relieved both of them.

They tiptoed and went into Hermione's bedroom. There was no sound around. At this time, everyone was asleep!

Hermione and Gabrielle looked at one another for a while, and then with Hermione's help, Gabrielle took off her clothes in the dark.

They also did not wear pajamas and climbed to bed as quickly as possible.

Hermione lowered the curtain of the four-poster bed and let Gabrielle lie in it.

The originally spacious big bed became smaller with one more person in it.

Each of them thought about it, tossed and turned for a long time before finally falling asleep.

None of them noticed when Gabrielle, who was clinging to Hermione, had returned to her former appearance.

More than four o'clock the next morning, Evan opened his eyes and woke up.

He took out the bottle and took a sip of the Polyjuice Potion before putting on his clothes and leaving the room.

At the end of the corridor, Dumbledore was already waiting outside, and he seemed to expect that Evan would be the first to wake up.

"Good morning, Professor!" said Evan before noticing that Moody was standing in the dark shadow of the corner.

In the dim light, his mutilated face seemed extraordinarily gloomy and his eyes were fixed on Evan. Today was a crucial day, and his plan was coming true!

He would personally bring Harry Potter to the Dark Lord, and he would prove his loyalty to the great Lord Voldemort.

That was his dream and his greatest wish.

Although there were many changes in the middle, he didn't follow his original plan, let the cunning vampire go, killed his father with his own hands, and even might be sent to Azkaban again or die...

But he didn't care at all, as long as he could help the Dark Lord return, everything was worth it. At the thought of this, there was an air of craziness in Barty Crouch Jr.

"Hello, Gabrielle," said Dumbledore with a smile. "You look tired; didn't you sleep well last night?"

"Yes!" Evan nodded, glancing at Moody. "Maybe I'm too nervous, I feel bad to think of going under that huge lake... you know... I can't swim yet!"

"Don't worry, you won't be in danger," said Dumbledore calmly, and patted him gently on the shoulder. "We have made all the preparations. Believe me, you will return safely. I wish you good luck!"

"Thank you!" Evan nodded, standing beside Dumbledore.

After a while, Fudge, Bagman, Madame Maxime, Karkaroff, Sirius, Snape, Professor McGonagall, and several Aurors also came to the corridor on the first floor of the castle, Harry and Cho stepped out of the room.

Neither of them seemed to have slept well, with deep shadows under their eyes.

Everyone talked in a low voice, Sirius pulled Harry aside and told him something, and Harry nodded from time to time.

While the others were not paying attention, Evan secretly took another sip of the Polyjuice Potion, and he would drink it several times after he went to the bottom of the lake.

It was already past five o'clock. Poliakoff hadn't come out yet. That guy was dead asleep, and everyone was waiting for him.

“Get up, Poliakoff, you disgusting boy!” Karkaroff knocked impatiently at the door, often rudely.

Five minutes later, after he walked out, Dumbledore began to cast spells on everyone.

A blue light flashed, and Evan lost consciousness and entered endless darkness...

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At the same time, Hermione also woke up early.

Feeling that someone was holding her body, she opened her eyes sharply, only to see that it was the little Gabrielle, and then she relaxed.

She had a strange dream last night, dreaming that she and Evan were in her bed...

Hermione hurriedly moved her mind elsewhere. Evan should have gone to the bottom of the lake now, and she hoped everything would go smoothly.

She thought for a while before she woke Gabrielle up and handed her the bottle containing the Polyjuice Potion and Evan's clothes. When she turned back to Evan, the two of them came to the Common Room as quickly as possible without being noticed.

There were more and more people in the Common Room, everyone excitedly talking about the upcoming task.

During dinner yesterday, Dumbledore announced that today's task would be held in the lake in front of the castle, which was really exciting to everyone.

All the young wizards at Hogwarts knew about the depth of the lake, which contained the terrible giant squid and Kelpies.

Being able to breathe underwater was a great achievement in itself.

These discussions upset Hermione. She didn't want to stay here, and took Gabrielle to the Great Hall for breakfast.

They deliberately chose an empty corner, and it was about eight o'clock before they saw Ron coming in.

He was putting his wand upside down in his trouser pocket, and the other pocket was filled with Gillyweed.

Chapter 693: Entering the Lake

“Evan, Hermione, you're here!” Ron sat down and took a slice of bread to himself, saying proudly, “I've just been surrounded by Lavender and her friends. They wanted to know how I would breathe under the water. No way, girls are like this, I had to make them understand that this is not an easy task...”

“We don't care about you and Lavender.” Hermione said dissatisfied and looked at Ron angrily. “You're too late. The champions will gather in front of the castle before eight o'clock and wait for instructions. “

“I know, it’s not too late, I’m keeping track of the time!” said Ron indifferently, stuffing food into his mouth, “By the way, do you know where Harry has gone? He didn’t come back last night, did he? Is Sirius looking for him?”

“He’s in the lake, of course.” Hermione said impatiently.

“In the lake?!” Ron asked, startled, “Why is Harry going there?”

“Don’t you understand? In the second task, the champions will go to the lake to find their most important person, and *your* most important person is *Harry*,” said Hermione, dissatisfied with Ron’s backwardness, “He’s already waiting for you there!”

“Oh my God, I’m going to save Harry under the lake?” said Ron hurriedly, suddenly becoming nervous. “No one told me that. I heard the mermaid song in the Golden Egg and thought I was going to find something! “

Thinking of that, Ron couldn’t help but start worrying. Harry was in the depths of the lake waiting to be rescued by him.

He groped for Gillyweed in his pocket. What if he couldn’t find Harry within an hour?!!

Ron remembered the words in the song, ‘*Too late, it’s gone, it won’t come back.*’ He panicked and was no longer relaxed. He was afraid to lose Harry forever.

“How can they do that? And Harry doesn’t have Gillyweed, how can he breathe under the lake?” Ron said uneasily. “If I can’t find him within an hour, Evan, what should I do?”

“I don’t know!” said Gabrielle, holding a cup and drinking milk.

If she knew what to do, she wouldn’t sit here and worry!

Hearing her answer, Ron froze. He didn’t expect that answer from Evan...

“You just have to do what you usually did during training, and you *can* do it!” said Hermione quickly. “Eat Gillyweed by the lake, find Harry in the lake, and bring Him back. It’s as simple as that.”

She was aware that if Ron knew all the truth, he would never succeed because of the panic.

“Okay, let’s go now!”

Ron swallowed the food in his mouth and followed Hermione and Gabrielle out of the castle.

They walked out through the double oak doors and came to the bright, chilly grounds outside.

As they pounded down the lawn to the lake, they saw that the seats that had encircled the dragons’ enclosure in November were now ranged along the opposite bank, rising in stands that were packed to the bursting point and reflected in the lake below.

They walked around the other side of the lake, and went there.

The judges' gold-draped table was in front of the audience at the water's edge, and Dumbledore, Karkaroff, Madame Maxime, Fudge and Ludo Bagman were already sitting there.

The other teachers and Aurors were standing at the judges' table and would be in charge of maintaining order during the task.

Ron waved at Lavender in the audience and walked over to the judge's table.

Not long ago, he had also received a letter from Percy saying that he would replace Mr. Crouch as a judge.

Ron thought it was a good point for him, and no matter how bad he was, Percy could not give him a low score.

But now, Percy was under investigation because of Mr. Crouch's disappearance.

Sirius told them that the Ministry did not want to make public the disappearance of Mr. Crouch, but they pulled Percy away and questioned him about the instructions from Mr. Crouch. They seemed to think that these instructions might not have been written by Mr. Crouch himself.

Percy was under a lot of pressure. Something went wrong in his fledgling career, which was worse than killing him.

Under these circumstances, he naturally could not be a judge at Hogwarts!

"Here you are, Ron!" Ludo Bagman came up with a smile on his face, took the initiative to replace an Auror, and led Ron to the place where the champions gathered, "Well, do you know what you're going to do?"

"I just found out!" Ron replied, "I can't believe it ..."

"Yeah, yeah ... me neither!" said Bagman, lowering his voice again. "Listen, I just learned the location of the Merpeople village from Alastor. He went there yesterday... just to the northwest. Don't swim anywhere else."

"Thank you!" Ron said in surprise, looking at Ludo Bagman.

He already knew where the Merpeople village was, but did not expect that Bagman would help him at this time.

"You're welcome! You know, I want to help you win the tournament!" Bagman said, his voice returned to normal, "Well, go ahead, the other champions are waiting!"

When Ron passed, Cedric, Krum, and Fleur had lined up along the bank at intervals of ten feet.

Ron was on the very end of the line, next to Krum, who was wearing swimming trunks and was holding his wand ready. He was indeed worth being a world-class Seeker

It was indeed a world-class pursuit. Krum's physique was really strong. He had been preparing almost an hour before the beginning of the task. Ron hesitated, and decided to be in his robes.



After a while, Professor Moody came around, inspected each champion, and ordered some precautions.

Then Sirius and the Aurors did the same. Ron didn't understand why they had to check so many times.

Just when he was a little impatient, he saw Bagman stand up at the judges' table. He pointed his wand at his throat as he had done at the World Cup, said, "*Sonorus!*" and his voice boomed out across the dark water toward the stands.

"Well, listen up, everybody. All our champions are ready for the second task, which will start on my whistle. They have precisely an hour to recover what has been taken from them. On the count of three, then. One ... two ... *three!*"

The whistle echoed shrilly in the cold, still air, and the stands erupted with cheers and applause.

Without looking to see what the other champions were doing, Ron pulled the handful of Gillyweed out of his pocket, stuffed it into his mouth, and waded out into the lake as he had practiced before. It was so cold he felt the skin on his legs searing as though this were fire.

His sodden robes weighed him down as he walked in deeper.

#### Chapter 694: A Terrible Attack

Now the water was over Ron's knees, and his rapidly numbing feet were slipping over silt and flat, slimy stones. He was chewing the Gillyweed as hard and fast as he could; it felt unpleasantly slimy and rubbery, like octopus tentacles.

Waist-deep in the freezing water he stopped, swallowed, and waited for the miracle to happen.

Ron could hear laughter in the crowd and knew he must look stupid, walking into the lake without showing any sign of magical power.

He couldn't help worrying. What if the Gillyweed didn't work?!!

Over the past two months, he had learned many spells he didn't master before, such as *Reducio*, *Stupefy*, *Impedimenta*, and so on.

But none of them could help him breathe underwater, and he clenched his wand nervously.

Ron's lower body was immersed in the icy water of the lake, and a cruel breeze was lifting his hair relentlessly.

He started to shiver violently, and the part of him that was still dry was all in goose pimples.

He avoided looking at the stands; the laughter was becoming louder, and there were catcalls and jeering from the Slytherins...

"How stupid ..." He looked around helplessly.

Then, quite suddenly, Ron felt as though an invisible pillow had been pressed over his mouth and nose.

As soon as he tried to draw breath, he felt his head spinning. Ron's lungs were empty, and there was a sudden piercing pain on either side of his neck...

He clapped his hands around his throat and felt two large slits just below his ears, flapping in the cold air.

Ron realized *he had gills!*

He flung himself forward into the water, and the first gulp of icy lake water felt like the breath of life.

His head had stopped spinning; he took another great gulp of water and felt it pass smoothly through his gills, sending oxygen back to his brain.

He stretched out his hands in front of him and stared at them. They looked a little green and ghostly under the water, and they had become webbed. He twisted around and looked at his bare feet ... they had become elongated and the toes were webbed too. It looked as though he had sprouted flippers

The water didn't feel icy anymore either... on the contrary, he felt pleasantly cool and very light...

He was overjoyed. Although he had heard Evan describe it before, it was amazing.

Ron continued moving forward, and his two flipper-like feet propelled him far and fast through the water.

He also noticed how clearly he could see, and how he no longer seemed to need to blink.

He had soon swum so far into the lake that he could no longer see the bottom. He flipped over and dived into its depths.

There was a strange, dark, foggy scene in front of him, and silence pressed upon his ears.

Ron could only see ten feet around him, so that as he sped through the water new scenes seemed to loom suddenly out of the oncoming darkness: forests of rippling, tangled black weed, wide plains of mud littered with dull, glimmering stones.

The Gillyweed worked, and Ron was ecstatic for a while. Now he just needed to go to the Merpeople Village and bring Harry back.

Everything was too simple, and as expected, he would be the first champion to complete the task.

Ron swam forward for a while, and then stopped suddenly, his eyes wide, staring through the eerily gray-lit water around him to the shadows beyond, where the water became opaque. There seemed to be something hidden in it.

“Probably a fish!” He thought, clenching his wand, “is it the giant squid?!”

Ron didn't dare to move, as though he had seen something big moving in front of him, getting closer and closer...

The next second, something monstrous emerged from the shadow and appeared in front of Ron ... a shark!

How could there be sharks in the lake?! That was ridiculous!

Ron was terrified, raising his wand before he could see it clearly. It was Krum with a human body in swimming trunks and the head of a shark...

He appeared to have transfigured himself... but badly.

Ron relaxed, lowered his wand and swam to the shark-man Krum to say hello.

Perhaps, they could go to the Merpeople village together, and the dark surroundings worried Ron a little.

“Come with me!” Krum made a gesture, and his voice sounded weird in the water.

It turned out that a shark could also speak, but the pronunciation seemed to be different from that of a normal person, sounding very strange.

His head wobbled incoherently in the water, in sharp contrast to his body.

In fact, Ron wanted to laugh a little when he saw Krum’s funny look.

The shark’s head of an internationally renowned Quidditch Seeker... unfortunately, he could not take a picture of it...

They swam over light green weeds that were two feet deep and really looked like a meadow of overgrown grass.

Ron remembered Evan saying that this was the territory of Grindylow, a horned water demon.

That kind of water demon’s attack power was not very high. He learned how to deal with them with Professor Lupin last year, but it was different from what he had been exposed to in class. Ron wanted to warn Krum to be careful, swim higher and stay away from those weeds, so as not to be surprised by Grindylows.

Ahead of him, Krum stopped abruptly, and he turned to look at Ron, his huge shark mouth full of fangs and sharp teeth.

“*Crucio!*” Krum’s voice sounded abruptly, and his wand was aimed at Ron.

The next second, before Ron knew what was going on, a jet of boiling water hit him.

Heartbreaking pain rose in Ron’s body. He opened his mouth and felt like every nerve in his body was on fire.

His body was curled up tightly; his limbs were strangely twisted and swayed meaninglessly.

He wanted to yell out because of severe pain, but couldn’t make a sound, and bubbles kept coming out of his mouth.

“Unforgivable Curse, why did Krum do it, he ...”

But soon, Ron couldn’t think about it anymore. The pain spread in his body and made him lose his ability to think.

Perhaps passing out was a relief, but Ron remained awake.

That was the terrible place to use the Cruciatus Curse, which could torture people to madness.

If one could choose, it would be easier to die than to suffer excruciating pain of that Torture Curse.

Ron's wand fell, fear rose in the shadow, and a terrible crime was taking place in the dark.

Krum stared coldly at Ron, who was incapacitated, and a Stunning Spell followed.

Ron lost his consciousness and fell down into the dense weed...

A green Grindylow quickly reached out and gripped Ron's ankle, dragging him deep into the weed.

Delicious food, it creaked excitedly.

A few seconds later, the surroundings returned to calm, as though nothing had happened.

Krum lowered his wand, and his body gradually disappeared into the shadow of the lake...

Chapter 695: Hostages

Krum, who had left, did not notice that a milky white thing was floating quickly over the weed.

He was looking for the two other champions in the turbid lake.

Then he knew!

Fleur was looking in the wrong direction and was swimming in the opposite direction of the Merpeople village. He didn't have to bother about her; Cedric had already passed this patch of weed...

He was moving fast and just missed Krum.

Cedric was about to arrive at the Merpeople Village, and might be the first to leave with the Ravenclaw girl.

That did not affect the plan. Cedric was very strong, and it was not as easy to get rid of him as Ron.

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Three hours ago, Evan, Harry, Cho and Poliakoff had been tied to the tail of the Merperson's statue.

They all appeared to be in a very deep sleep. Their heads were lolling onto their shoulders, and fine streams of bubbles kept issuing from their mouths.

Evan was between Cho Chang and Harry, and he was still 'Gabrielle', with clouds of silvery hair floating in the icy lake.

The next second, he suddenly opened his eyes.

The magic Dumbledore had cast on him was not as powerful as the one cast on the others, and he woke up early.

But Evan was still able to breathe underwater as though he had eaten Gillyweed. That was a very difficult compound magic with different withdrawal points, and Evan had to admire Dumbledore's casting ability.

The wand hidden in his sleeve slipped down to his hand and the rope loosened automatically. He moved and looked around. Harry and Cho were still asleep.

There was no sound around, and the Merpeople were a little lazy and didn't bother to guard the four of them. There was not even a shadow in the small square. They should be crouched in the crude stone dwellings.

Evan didn't do much. After drinking a mouthful of Polyjuice Potion, he tied himself back.

Counting the time, the game was about to start. Moody's magical eye could penetrate the lake and he could not let him see anything abnormal.

But Evan tied himself to Harry this time. The black rope made of weed was enchanted by him. It was thick, slippery and very strong. It was hard to be untied or damaged, so Harry would not leave his side.

Evan counted the time, and every hour, he swallowed a sip of the Polyjuice potion to maintain the deformation.

Meanwhile, the Merpeople emerged from all directions and looked curiously at the four of them, and the memorable Mersong began to be heard around them. It was not the kind of ritual song Evan had heard before, and the tune was more cheerful.

*“An hour long you'll have to look,*

*And recover what we took...”*

*“Your time's half gone, so tarry not*

*Lest what you seek stays here to rot...”*

That was the song in the Golden Egg. The Merpeople were guiding the champions to rescue their most important people.

Evan opened his eyes quietly, and saw in the dark lake two Merpeople holding spears and guarding them.

Not far away, many Merpeople formed a circle. They were singing, dancing and bustling.

The Merpeople were all dressed up. A Mermaid was wearing thick ropes of pebbles around her neck. She was holding a pet Grindylow, and her dark green, long, shaggy hair was adorned with the ornaments Evan had sold her last time.

Most mermaids were dressed up like that, and the most valuable ornaments on them were the ones that Evan had brought before.

When disregarding their grayish skin, yellow eyes, and yellow broken teeth, the whole image was rather beautiful.

But now, they looked more like a bunch of demons reveling.

More than thirty minutes had passed, and there was no sign of the champions. Why were they dawdling?!!

Just as Evan swallowed the last sip of the Polyjuice potion, Cedric Diggory appeared on the edge of the Merpeople village.

There was an enormous bubble around his head, which made his features look oddly wide and stretched. It was very funny.

Cedric landed, splashing a large tract of black mud, and the lake was swirled with black water because of his agitation.

He looked around blankly, surprised to see the Merpeople.

Then he saw the four hostages tied to the tail of the statue. Cho's head was on the shoulder of the small silver-haired girl, and she looked fine, but the girl from Beauxbatons was ghostly green and pale.

She was Fleur's younger sister, and she usually seemed to be with Evan.

Cedric also saw Harry on Gabrielle's other side, and he was asleep.

"Leave with your own hostage!" A Merman swam over to him and said with an unpleasant smile on his face.

Cedric hesitated and pulled a knife out of his pocket. He swam over to cut Cho free and he pulled her upward.

But soon, he stopped, worried.

It was so weird that he didn't see the three other champions along the way.

Those Mermen looked all fierce, as though they could kill the hostages at any time.

He couldn't leave them alone, Cedric was going to wait here for a while, and when the next champion came, he would leave.

More than ten minutes later, the Merpeople around started screeching animatedly.

Cedric looked up and saw Krum, a shark swimming over. Ron and Fleur should be behind. He nodded to him, pulled Cho upward, and soon disappeared.

Krum, a half-human and half-shark, was close to the hostages, but soon a dispute arose.

He didn't care of his hostage Poliakov, but wanted to take Harry away, and the Merpeople wouldn't let him do it.

"Your task is to retrieve your own friend ... leave the others!"

Krum didn't answer. He waved his wand, and a boiling water column hit the Merman closest to him.

Where the spell hit him, the Merman's green skin quickly turned red, and then he fainted.

The Merpeople around stopped laughing, and pairs of yellow eyes were fixed upon Krum's wand, and they looked very scared.

Despite their large number, in the face of Krum alone, the Merpeople were afraid of magic.

Krum's shark head opened his mouth, and the Merpeople scattered and fled, and soon disappeared without a trace.

"It was him!" Evan could feel what was happening around him. Was Krum under Moody's control?!!

He half opened his eyes, and he saw Krum swim over, and he began snapping and biting at his and Harry's ropes.

Krum's action was so big that it seemed like he was going to rip them apart, but it didn't work...

He waved his wand again and still could not untie the rope between Evan and Harry.

He shook his shark's head, destroyed the statue, and took Evan and Harry away from the Merpeople village, swimming deeper into the lake.

#### Chapter 696: The Transfer

Cedric had just left the bottom of the lake, holding Cho Chang when he saw a group of panicked Mermen rushing up, at least twenty of them.

"What's going on?" He stopped a Merman and asked him, but only bubbles issued from his mouth.

The Merman made a sharp, shrill voice, gesticulating, as though in a hurry and looking very anxious.

Cedric couldn't understand a word. The Merman couldn't speak human language, and he couldn't understand Mermish.

The Merman shook his green head and kept pointing down, beckoning Cedric to follow him.

"The champion who turned his head into a shark attacked us with magic, and he became very abnormal ..." A particularly fierce, ugly female mermaid floated up and said in a strange voice. "He's going to take away the hostages that are not his, and we are going to inform Dumbledore!"

"What, Krum attacked you!" Cedric froze for a moment and had a bad feeling.

He hesitated for a moment, handed Cho to the mermaid in front of him, and followed another Merman soldier to see what was going on.

In fact, he had a good impression of Krum. Although not very talkative, several contacts with him had been quite pleasant.

Krum had a calm personality. He did not have the ego as a world-famous Quidditch Seeker, had a lot of knowledge, and they could find a lot of common topics together.

What on earth happened to this guy, why did he attack the Merpeople and take away the targets of other champions?!!

There must be some misunderstanding in that; that was Cedric's idea.

They were a little slow, and Krum had already smashed the tail of the stone Merperson.

As soon as he returned to the Merpeople village, Cedric saw Krum swimming in another direction with Harry and Gabrielle.

As for his own hostage, the boy named Poliakoff, he'd been casually left on the ground.

Cedric and the Merman soldier quickly followed, but Krum swam fast.

Evan and Harry were tied tightly together with ropes and dragged rudely forward by Krum...

More than a minute later, a large rough rock suddenly appeared in the muddy water ahead. It had paintings of Merpeople on it; they were carrying spears and chasing what looked like the giant squid.

That was what the Merpeople depicted on it. Evan had seen many similar rocks at the bottom of the lake!

Was that the Portkey? And Barty Crouch Jr., was he hiding there?!!

It was really a bold idea. That rock was close enough to the Merpeople village, and it was very confusing and difficult to be seen.

Krum placed Evan and Harry on top of the huge rock. They did not leave directly. It was not time yet.

He seemed to want to separate Evan and Harry, and started cutting the rope between them again. But Krum's efforts, though great, were in vain. It wouldn't work with Evan's charm on the ropes, and that caused him a lot of pain.

Just as he decided to take some action, Cedric and a group of Merpeople caught up.

Krum stopped, turned to look at them fiercely, and held out his wand.

"Krum, what's going on?" Cedric shouted, looking at him inconceivably. "Why did you take Harry and the girl to this place? They should stay in the Merpeople village and wait for their own champions to rescue them..."

The next second, he hurriedly lowered his head to avoid the curse jet, and looked at Krum in disbelief. The student from Durmstrang was actually attacking him.

Cedric and Krum fought together, and the two were casting spells at one another.

Krum's movements were a bit inflexible, probably because he was being controlled; his reaction was always a little slower.

Not to mention, there was a large group of Merpeople soldiers helping Cedric. They didn't choose to escape this time.

Although the Merpeople could not use magic, they had their own way of fighting and rushed up with their spears.

That way, the battle was soon over. Krum was fighting and retreating, trying to run away with Harry. But Cedric did not give him a chance, and a beautifully cast Stunning Spell hit him... Krum fainted.

"I can't believe it. This guy is absolutely crazy!" said Cedric, swimming over with the Mermen.

His body was still shaking because of the battle just now, and they looked at Krum lying at the bottom of the lake.

A Merman took out a rope of weed and tied him up, and Cedric came over to find Evan and Harry.



With that unexpected situation, it was already difficult to continue the task. He was going to take the two of them back together and report to the judges what happened under the lake.

“Don’t come here, get out of here!” said Evan loudly, spitting a lot of bubbles at Cedric.

He no longer cared about being exposed, and as Cedric approached, he felt the magic reaction of the rock beneath him. It was the time set by Barty Crouch Jr., and the Portkey was about to be activated.

Seeing Evan suddenly open his eyes and speak to him, Cedric was stunned and landed on the rock.

“How could it be? Why did the silvery-haired girl wake up?”

The thought had just appeared in his mind, and the next second, he felt as though the back of his navel had been pulled.

Evan floated with Harry in the lake, Cedric was beside them.

The huge rock was floating with them. They were spinning in the lake, and now no one could leave the rock, which dragged them forward in the middle of the whistling wind and the swirling colors.

Soon, Evan felt himself falling heavily on the ground.

“Where are we?” Cedric asked, exclaiming, “What on earth is going on?!”

Next to Evan, Harry also opened his eyes. For a while, he opened his mouth and spit out a large mouthful of lake water, breathing hard.

“Cedric, Gabrielle, you ...” he gasped. “What happened?”

“I also want to know ... no one told me that there would be a Portkey during the second task!” Cedric clenched his wand, stood up and looked around, then lowered his head and said, “Harry, maybe this girl next to you can explain to us what she seems to know.”

Now they had completely left the boundary of Hogwarts, not under the lake.

The dense weeds, the Merpeople, and Krum lying on the ground had disappeared. Only the wet rock with paintings of Merpeople hunting proved that they had ever existed. The fog around was hazy, covering everything, and the outline of a distant hill could only be vaguely recognized!

“Gabrielle, do you know anything?!” said Harry in surprise.

Then he seemed to think of something, his face became extremely pale, and he looked anxiously at the distant hill.

Chapter 697: The Death of Cedric

“It’s like I’ve been here before,” said Harry slowly, his voice trembling a little.

“You’ve been here?” said Cedric in surprise, looking at Harry suspiciously.

“Yeah, I came to this place, but in a dream!” said Harry quickly, and kept looking around, “Absolutely, I remember the shape of the hill, and the yew ... on that hill, there’s also an exquisite old house ...”

Harry would never forget that dream, which was so real and unpleasant.

He did not go on, if all this was real, not illusions or dreams...

Then Voldemort, the vampire, and the terrible statue of the evil god might be not far away, that was really terrible!

The surroundings were gloomy and silent. Harry could not help shuddering.

“I don’t like this place!” said Cedric with a tense voice. “No matter what, we have to find a way to go back. You two stand up. I’ll help you untie the ropes tied to you...”

“Don’t, get out of here!” said Evan directly, panting.

He didn’t expect Cedric to come with him. If he ran now, he should still have time. There was no time to explain to him. Cedric had to leave the place at once.

If he ran away in any direction, there should still be a chance that Voldemort could not chase him...

“Get out of here?!” said Cedric. “Don’t be silly, how can I leave you two tied up in this ghostly place? Besides, I don’t know where this is. If you have any information, you’d better say it all ...”

He stopped abruptly and pulled out his wand as quickly as possible.

“Someone is coming!”

They squinted tensely, and a figure appeared in the thick fog, walking steadily toward them.

Could it be Voldemort? Or Caresius?

Evan couldn’t see the man’s face, but from the gait and arm posture, the man seemed to be carrying something.

He was very tall, a wizard Evan had never seen before. He was wearing a hooded cloak to obscure his face. As the distance between them kept narrowing, Evan saw that the man was holding what looked like a baby.

That was Voldemort. The wand hidden in his sleeve naturally fell into Evan’s hand.

Looking at Voldemort, like Harry and Cedric, Evan was very nervous and kept thinking about the plan.

If Voldemort was going to kill Cedric, he had to do it ahead of time! Although that was bad, he couldn’t just watch Cedric die!

Dumbledore might be able to do this and give up everything to defeat Voldemort, but Evan still couldn’t.

It was too bad that there should be such a big change...

Beside Evan, Harry's body suddenly shook uncontrollably, and his scar exploded with pain. It was agony such as he had never felt in all his life so severe that his head seemed to be about to split open.

He rolled on the ground, his hands tied together covering his face, and he could see nothing in front of him.

Because of the ropes tied together, Evan was dragged closer to Harry.

*"Kill the spare!"* said a cold voice.

There was a swishing noise, followed by a shrill shout piercing the air.

*"Avada Kedavra!"*

A strong green light blazed through everyone's eyelids. It was the Killing Curse. Cedric stood still as though he had been stunned.

The pain in Harry's scar reached such a pitch that he retched. Then the pain eased, and terrified of what he was about to see, he opened his stinging eyes.

He saw Cedric lying spread-eagled on the ground, dead...

For a second that contained an eternity, Harry stared blankly into Cedric's face, at his open gray eyes, blank and expressionless like the windows of a deserted house, at his half-open mouth, which looked slightly surprised.

Harry's mind couldn't accept what was in front of him, and he couldn't feel anything but numb disbelief.

Cedric died like this, in front of him.

Who was next, him or Gabrielle by his side? Fear had gradually dominated him.

When the green light struck, Evan's body had moved a little and stopped abruptly.

The rope that had been loosened, tied him up and Harry again...

Cedric wasn't dead; he was just stunned by the spell.

The Killing Curse flew over, and just as Evan was compelled to start, a strange shadow appeared beside Cedric, taking him away from the spot to escape the mortal attack. When they reappeared, Cedric had fallen to the ground, but he was not dead.

*"Caresius!"* The cold voice became even colder, with a chill penetrating into the bone marrow.

*"Leave this boy to me, Dark Lord!"* said Caresius flatly. *"I will deal with him, I suggest you start that magic right away, Harry Potter is here. I think you can't wait!"*

*"You're right, I can't wait!"* said Voldemort in a cold voice.

Apart from Harry Potter, he had no interest in anyone else, and didn't care whether they lived or died.

Now that Caresius had done what was needed, he could take that boy away!

Caresius bowed slightly to Voldemort and disappeared into the air with Cedric. Before he left, he looked at Evan deliberately, and seemed to have recognized his disguise.

Caresius took Cedric away. What was this guy going to do? Turn him into a vampire?!!

Evan had heard this guy talk about it. He said he'd found many good seedlings among the students when he pretended to be teaching at Hogwarts.

Anyway, becoming a vampire was better than to die here.

No matter what his purpose was, he did solve a problem for Evan, who didn't have to devote his energy to taking care of Cedric.

The cloaked man gently put down his bundle and walked over to Evan and Harry. Evan then saw him clearly; this guy was pale and had no trace of blood.

He didn't recognize him. Maybe he was another vampire or some death eater. Voldemort would never lack loyalists, even if he was already weak and deformed.

The cloaked man came and dragged Harry and Evan to the middle of the wasteland, surrounded by black weeds.

Harry was desperately struggling, and Evan was motionless, as though frightened, observing silently.

"Get out of here ... Gabrielle, I'll protect ..." Harry whined and could no longer speak. He could only kick his legs hard. The man had stuffed some black material roughly into his mouth.

Chapter 698: Evil Magic

After that black material was stuffed in his mouth, Harry couldn't make a sound, but struggled desperately.

But it was useless at all. His hands and feet were tied up and he had completely lost his ability to move.

His body trembled uncontrollably, and the cloaked man began to reach out and grope for him.

He could hear shallow, fast breathing from the depths of the hood. Harry continued to struggle hard, and the man hit him.

Anxiety and abuse mingled, Harry whined and didn't know what to say.

Evan hurriedly hugged him from behind and told him to calm down and not to struggle. It was pointless.

There was nothing they could do now but wait calmly for Voldemort's return...

The man was busy checking the tightness of the cords. After making sure that Harry had been tied so tightly that he couldn't move, he looked at Evan along the rope and hesitated for a moment. He

probably thought that Evan was just a scared little girl that would not hinder the following magic, so he did not care about him.

He left them both on the grass, then, without a word, hurriedly walked away.

Behind Harry, Evan raised his head vigorously and through the thick mist, he saw a stone cauldron in front of them.

Voldemort was just at the foot of the cauldron, and in that baby-like bundle, he was stirring fretfully.

Harry watched it, too, and fear and despair spread in his body.

His scar seared with pain again... and he suddenly knew that he didn't want to see what was in the bundle... he didn't want that bundle opened...

Horrible things were about to happen, and he suddenly realized that he and Gabrielle might die here; just like Cedric, who had just died, and then his body had been taken by the evil vampire for experiment...

The next second, Evan heard noises at his feet, and looking down, he saw a gigantic snake slithering through the grass.

It glanced at the two of them, hissing, staring at Evan and Harry, as though it couldn't help swallowing them.

There was a hissing sound inside the bundle, and the snake retreated some distance, circling them unwillingly.

The cloaked man began to fill the cauldron with water, and he could hear it slopping around.

The stone cauldron was larger than any cauldron Evan had ever seen. It was large enough for a full-grown man to sit in.

The thing inside the bundle of robes on the ground was stirring more persistently, as though it was trying to free itself.

Suddenly, there were crackling green flames beneath the cauldron, like a dancing incarnation of evil.

The liquid in the cauldron seemed to heat very fast. The surface began not only to bubble, but to send out fiery sparks, as though it were on fire. Steam was thickening, blurring the outline of the cloaked man tending the fire.

The movements beneath the robes became more agitated, and they heard Voldemort's high, cold voice again: "*HURRY!*"

The whole surface of the water was alight with sparks now. It might have been encrusted with diamonds.

"It is ready, Master!" The man's voice trembled uncontrollably as if he were scared to death.

"Now ..." said the cold voice.

The man pulled open the robes on the ground, revealing what was inside them.

In front of Evan, Harry let out a yell that was strangled in the wad of material blocking his mouth.

Evan stared blankly ahead and couldn't take his eyes off...

It was as though the cloaked man had flipped over a stone and revealed something ugly, slimy, and blind ... but worse, a hundred times worse.

Voldemort now had the shape of a crouched human child, except that he did not look anything less like a child.

It was hairless and scaly-looking, a dark, raw, reddish black. Its arms and legs were thin and feeble, and its face ... no child alive ever had a face like that ... flat and snakelike, with gleaming red eyes.

It seemed almost helpless. It raised its thin arms and put them around the man's neck in front of him, and the man lifted it.

As he did so, his hood fell back, and Evan could see the look of fear and anxiety on the man's pale, weak face, and a trace of madness. He was glorifying the resurrection of Voldemort, which was an evil magic enough to be recorded in history!

He carried Voldemort to the rim of the cauldron, and the sparks dancing on the surface of the potion illuminated the evil, flat face.

Voldemort was then put into the cauldron, and with a hiss, he sank.

Even if there was a distance, Evan could still hear its frail body hit the bottom of the cauldron with a soft thud.

"Here we go!" Evan murmured, holding the wand tightly in his hand.

Harry was praying for it to drown. His scar was burning almost past endurance. *'Please ... let it drown...'* he thought.

The man was speaking. His voice shook; he seemed frightened beyond his wits. He raised his wand, closed his eyes, and shouted, *"Bone of the father, unknowingly given, you will renew your son!"*

In the blunder on the ground, a fine trickle of dust rose into the air at the man's command and fell softly into the cauldron. The diamond surface of the water broke and hissed; it sent sparks in all directions and turned a vivid, poisonous-looking blue.

Evan had once asked Lupin and Sirius to search for the grave of Voldemort's father, but long before that, Voldemort had sent someone to take its contents away, leaving only a destroyed tombstone. When Voldemort met vampires in the forests of Albania, he was already setting the plan.

In front of the cauldron, the man's body shook violently with the flames, and he paused for a while. Then he pulled a long, thin, shining silver dagger from inside his cloak. His voice broke into petrified sobs.

Then he took a long, thin, silvery dagger out of the cloak, and his voice twisted with trembling.

*"Flesh ... of the servant ... w-willingly given ... you will ... revive ... your master!"*

He stretched his right hand out in front of him. He gripped the dagger very tightly in his left hand and swung it upward.

Both Evan and Harry closed their eyes subconsciously. In the painful screams and gasps, they heard a sickening splash, the dagger fell to the ground, and then something was thrown into the cauldron. It was the man's arm, blood and flesh.

Evan had seen similar descriptions in countless black magic books, but he never thought he would see them with his own eyes.

That was the vilest and most horrible ritual he had ever seen.

Harry was also gasping in pain, forcing the thin air into his lungs. It was as though he'd been stabbed with the dagger as well.

In the cauldron, the potion had turned a burning red, and the light of it shone through their closed eyelids...

#### Chapter 699: Voldemort's Resurrection

On the clearing, there were only painful gasps and groans, hovering and echoing in mid-air.

Evan opened his eyes and watched all this quietly. It was almost done, just one last step away...

The man staggered up to them. Blood had dyed his black robes red. He ignored it completely, let the blood splash, and the last trace of madness flashed on his face.

*"Blood of the enemy ... Forcibly taken ... you will ... resurrect your foe!"* he said coldly, shouting with almost all his strength.

Harry struggled hopelessly at the ropes binding him. Squinting down, he saw the shining silver dagger shaking in the man's remaining hand.

Harry couldn't move, he could only watch the man's movements.

The next second, he felt the point of the dagger penetrate the crook of his right arm, terrible pain, and blood seeping down the sleeve of his torn robes.

The man, still panting with pain, fumbled in his pocket for a glass vial and held it to Harry's cut, so that a dribble of blood fell into it.

He staggered back to the cauldron with Harry's blood. He poured it inside. The liquid within turned, instantly, a blinding, viscous white, sending out a foul smell.

The man, his job done, dropped to his knees beside the cauldron, then slumped sideways and lay on the ground, cradling the bleeding stump of his arm, gasping.

Beside him, the cauldron was simmering, sending its diamond sparks in all directions, so blindingly bright.

"It worked!" Evan stared at the stone cauldron tightly, and Voldemort resurrected with Harry's blood.

Harry's mother's Blood Curse would act on both of them, protecting Harry and becoming extremely powerful!

Suddenly, all the sparks emanating from the cauldron were extinguished.

A surge of white steam billowed thickly from the cauldron, and merged with the surrounding mist, hiding everything.

The senses were obscured and the mystery of restlessness grew stronger, which was a creepy feeling.

Through the thick white mist in front of them, they saw the dark outline of a man rising slowly inside the cauldron. He was tall and skeletally thin, pale and weird.

“Robe me,” said the high, cold voice from behind the steam.

The man, who had fallen to the ground, moaning, hurriedly got up, still cradling his mutilated arm.

He scrambled to pick up the black robes from the ground, got to his feet, reached up, and pulled them one-handed over his master’s head.

The thin man stepped out of the cauldron, put on his robes, and stared at Harry with red eyes.

Harry stared back into the face that had haunted his nightmares for three years. Whiter than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eyes and a nose that was flat as a snake’s with slits for nostrils...

Lord Voldemort was resurrected!!!

Voldemort looked away from Harry without looking at Evan next to him, and instead began examining his own body. His hands were like large, pale spiders. His long white fingers caressed his body, inch by inch... his legs, his chest, his arms, his face... His movement was very slow, delicate and gentle. His eyes, whose pupils were slits, like a cat’s, gleamed still more brightly through the darkness.

After slowly touching his entire face, he held up his hands and flexed the fingers, his expression rapt and exultant.

Voldemort was immersed in the joy of the new body. After so many years, he had finally risen again and returned to the wizarding world. He took not the slightest notice of the man, who lay twitching and bleeding on the ground, nor of the great snake, which slithered back into sight and was circling Evan and Harry again, hissing.

The atmosphere was weird and quiet, and time seemed to be extremely long.

Evan knew it was time to leave. The purpose of the trip had been achieved. There was no need for Voldemort to kill Harry here.

There were many things that were not ready yet, and he was not interested in staying for Voldemort’s resurrection party.

The Portkey Caresius had given him was in his arm, he had already activated it when he first arrived.

It would be a while before they could leave here. If something unexpected happened during this period, he could use what Dumbledore had given him...



Finally, Voldemort had finished examining his new body and looked quite satisfied. He slipped one of those unnaturally long-fingered hands into a deep pocket and drew out a wand. He caressed it gently, too; and then raised it high and made a cold and sharp grin.

“I’m back,” he said softly, “How many people still remember me!”

Voldemort shook his wand and the Dark Mark suddenly appeared in the air, a skull with a snake protruding from its mouth.

It loomed in the air, becoming more and more obvious, rising higher and higher, and Voldemort carefully looked at it.

“They will all have noticed it... and now, we shall see... now we shall know...”  
Voldemort’s face was cruelly proud.

He straightened up, threw back his head, and scanned the desolate open space.

“How many will be brave enough to return when they feel it?” he whispered.  
“And how many will be foolish enough to stay away?”

He began to pace up and down before Evan and Harry, scanning the open space from time to time.

As for the man who had fallen to the ground, moaning, he did not even look at him, as though he were a useless piece of garbage.

The man stopped the bleeding in a special way, but he was still weak and on the verge of death.

The vampire who turned to Voldemort didn’t seem to expect his new master to be so ruthless, he begged weakly.

Evan stared at all this coldly, calculating time, grasping Harry tightly with one hand.

Suddenly, Voldemort pointed his wand at a pile of things on the ground, and they flew up and down in front of Evan and Harry.

It was his father’s remains, one of the necessities of his resurrection, and it had now completely lost its usefulness.

Voldemort’s gaze fell on Harry again, a cruel smile twisting his snakelike face.

“Harry Potter, we meet again!” he hissed softly. “These are my father’s remains... a Muggle and a fool... very like your dear mother. But they both had their uses, did they not? Your mother died to defend you as a child... and I killed my father, and see how useful he has proved himself, in death...”

Voldemort laughed again, as he paced back and forth, looking all around him as he walked, and the snake continued to circle in the grass.

“My mother was a witch. She fell in love with him... she fell in love with that Muggle. But he abandoned her when she told him what she was... he didn’t like magic, my father!” said Voldemort softly. “Like all stupid Muggles, he left her and returned to his Muggle parents before I was even born.”

Voldemort's cold voice echoed in the clearing, and Evan and Harry listened in silence, their bodies taut.

The scar on Harry's head kept hurting, as if to tear him apart, and he gritted his teeth to protect Evan behind him.

He thought Evan was Gabrielle getting caught in this mess because of him.

Harry was determined to take Gabrielle back alive, no matter what happened...

Voldemort continued to pace up and down, seeming to be in a good mood, remembering his past.

"My father abandoned us. My mother died giving birth to me, leaving me to be raised in a Muggle orphanage... but I vowed to find him..." said Voldemort. "I revenged myself upon him later, that fool who gave me his name... *Tom Riddle*..."

Speaking of the name, there was a hint of chill and aversion in his tone.

"This is a name I am ashamed of, it belongs to that man!" said Voldemort, his voice softened and the cruel smile on his face became more obvious. "But it will come to an end. This disgrace of a father who left me was destroyed by my own hands. Ha ha... Harry Potter, you are honored, listen to me, reliving family history... Ah, I am growing quite sentimental... but look, Harry! My *true* family returns!"

His voice had just fallen, and the air was suddenly full of the swishing of cloaks.

In the weeds, behind every dead tree, in every shadowy space, wizards were Apparating. All of them were hooded and masked. And one by one they moved forward... slowly, cautiously, as though they could hardly believe their eyes.

Voldemort stood in silence, waiting for them, a cruel smile twisting his snakelike face.

With a plop, one of the Death Eaters fell to his knees, crawled toward Voldemort, and kissed the hem of his black robes.

"Master... Master ..." he murmured.

The Death Eaters behind him did the same; each approaching Voldemort on his knees and kissing his robes, before backing away and standing up, forming a silent circle, which enclosed Voldemort, Evan, Harry and the man moaning and gasping on the ground.

Yet they left gaps in the circle, as though waiting for more people.

Voldemort, however, did not seem to expect more. He looked around at the hooded faces, and though there was no wind, a rustling seemed to run around the circle, as though it had shivered.

"Welcome, Death Eaters," said Voldemort quietly. "Thirteen years ... thirteen years since last we met. Yet you answer my call as though it were yesterday. We are still united under the Dark Mark, then! *Or are we?*"

He put back his terrible face and sniffed, his slit-like nostrils widening.

“What smell is this? I smell guilt,” he said. “There is a stench of guilt upon the air.”

A second shiver ran around the circle, as though each member of it longed, but did not dare, to step back from him.

“I see you all, whole and healthy, with your powers intact... such prompt appearances! ... And I ask myself... why did this band of wizards never come to the aid of their master, to whom they swore eternal loyalty?! “

No one spoke, no one dared to move.

“And I answer myself,” whispered Voldemort, pacing slowly around the inside of the circle. “They must have believed me broken, they thought I was gone. They slipped back among my enemies, and they pleaded innocence, and ignorance, and bewitchment...”

“And then I ask myself, but how could they have believed I would not rise again? They, who knew the steps I took, long ago, to guard myself against mortal death? They, who had seen proofs of the immensity of my power in the times when I was mightier than any wizard living?” His voice was long, and he looked extraordinarily gloomy.

“And I answer myself, perhaps they believed a still greater power could exist, one that could vanquish even Lord Voldemort... perhaps they now pay allegiance to another... perhaps that champion of commoners, of Mudbloods and Muggles, Albus Dumbledore?”

At the mention of Dumbledore’s name, the members of the circle stirred, and some muttered and shook their heads.

Voldemort ignored them, and his expression became colder and colder.

“It is a disappointment to me... I confess myself disappointed...”

One of the men suddenly flung himself forward, breaking the circle. Trembling from head to foot, he collapsed at Voldemort’s feet.

“Master!” he shrieked, “Master, forgive me! Forgive us all!”

Voldemort sneered and raised his wand.

“*Crucio!*”

The Death Eater on the ground writhed and shrieked; the voice came from the soul.

Voldemort’s power was stronger than that of any Dark wizard. His evil thoughts made the Cruciatus Curse extraordinarily cruel and extremely unbearable.

Evan clenched his wand. It wasn't time yet for the damn Portkey.

More than ten minutes later, Voldemort finally raised his wand. The tortured Death Eater lay flat upon the ground, gasping.

"Get up, Avery," said Voldemort softly. "Stand up. You ask for forgiveness?! I tell you, I do not forgive. I do not forget. Thirteen long years... I want thirteen years' repayment before I forgive you."

Voldemort looked around the Death Eaters, as though looking for the next target.

"I think you must be wondering how I came back," he said softly. "I did get help from a few vampires. Although they were not obedient, they still helped me. And Lord Voldemort rewards his helpers..."

He raised his wand again and whirled it through the air. A streak of what looked like molten silver hung shining in the wand's wake. Momentarily shapeless, it writhed and then formed itself into a gleaming replica of a human hand, bright as moonlight, which soared downward and fixed itself upon the man's bleeding wrist.

It was now attached seamlessly to his arm, as though he were wearing a dazzling glove.

The man tried to flex the shining fingers, then, trembling, picked up a twig on the ground and crushed it into powder.

"My Lord," he whispered. "Thank you, merciful Master!"

He scrambled forward on his knees and kissed the hem of Voldemort's robes.

"Lord Voldemort rewards those who are loyal to him. You deserve it, Durand!" said Voldemort. "You are welcome to be a Death Eater. According to the agreement, I will help you get back what should belong to you."

Watching the vampire join the circle trembling, Evan recorded what he looked like.

He had replaced Peter Pettigrew for Voldemort and got the cursed arm.

It was true that his performance was much better than Peter's.