

**The long awaited
prequel of
JK Rowling's
Harry Potter series**

Spreading Your Wings

**Second year of
Lily Evans Diary**

Spreading your wings

Year two of Lily Evans
Diary

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Titles in the Lily Evans Diary series:

Year one: An Amazing Girl

Year two: Spreading your wings

Year three: Broadening Horizons

Year four: Choosing is Losing

Year five: Painful Confrontation

Year six: Possible Futures

Year seven: Permitted in Love and War?

Final year: Truth and Tears are Bitter

**IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER:
“Warner Bros. Entertainment and J.K.
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tent”**

Lily Evans Diary, Year two, Spreading Your Wings

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Note from the author

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All rights with regards to people, places, events, that are described in the “Harry Potter” books remains with J.K. Rowling.

The only reasons for starting this writing exercises are these:

- Experiencing the sensation of strange feelings visiting some ancient places
- The pages of year one filled much quicker than anticipated.
- Reaching 400 pages, I decided to split the pages of the first year off.
- While elaborating on a single storyline, many others popped up.
- Finally, after starting writing, my head was bursting with possible storylines, faster than I could write.

All names (of new persons) were generated by an application, if people with the same name exists, they have absolutely no relationship with my stories.

FINALLY: I do not (REPEAT: NOT) seek any personal gains by writing this.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Table of Contents

A fresh start.....	6
Holiday trip.....	17
Diagon Alley.....	31
Contemplations.....	37
Back at Hogwarts.....	44
Cutting Corners & Need for Speed.....	50
Outlook.....	66
The 'other' end.....	80
Boredom.....	94
Sad history lesson.....	101
PA's heir.....	108
Next Saturday.....	126
Picking up the pieces.....	133
A new week.....	147
Staff meeting.....	162
Daphne's warning.....	167
Longing to go.....	174
Through the eyes of a bird.....	177
Attack!.....	184
Closure.....	191
The future is ahead.....	196
END – year two.....	211
Sneak preview: chapter 'the contest '.....	212

A fresh start

Monday morning, Lily slowly woke up with the sound of her mother's singing from the kitchen.

Nothing special, as countless girls woke up in such a way that morning. But Lily was special. She was a witch, or to be more accurately, she could do magic, and had just returned from a year at a school in the far north of the country. Not just a school, no! She had just finished the first year at Hogwarts, the famous “School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.”

“Good morning, Lily,” she heard.

She opened her eyes and saw Alexandra sitting on the extra bed that her father had put in her room late yesterday evening.

Alexandra McGonagall was her dearest friend, and in the same class as she was. She also was learning to become a witch.

And she was also the niece of one of the professors at school.

“Morning Alexandra, slept well?”

“It feels like I was unconscious. What is it, that I hear?”

“Something you'll never hear at school. Sounds like my mother is in a good mood.”

“And it smells like she is preparing breakfast.”

After a quick shower and getting dressed they witnessed a scene that would have caused a huge sensation if witnessed by any other school students.

Lily's mother was giving instructions to professor McGonagall, who followed them obediently and exactly.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Professor McGonagall was their teacher transfiguration and also deputy head of Gryffindor, one of the four school houses. Very stern, never accepted a cheeky reply, and expecting that students would follow her advice and instructions to the letter. Now she behaved like a student, modestly following Lily's mother instructions.

“Priceless,” was Alexandra's comment.

They both looked for a moment and enjoyed the view, as both ladies were seemingly very content. The spell was however broken when the doorbell rang.

“Will you answer it, Lily?” her mother asked.

“I am on my way, mom.” Lily said.

She opened the front door, and she was greeted by another co-teacher from Lily's mother school.

“Hallo Mrs. Miller. Won't you come in? I'll fetch my mother.”

“No need to interrupt Margareth. I just came along to drop off this package. It contains stage clothing for the upcoming dress rehearsal. Will you give her my regards! Bye Lily.”

“I will do that. Bye, Mrs. Miller.”

Lily left the package standing in the corridor and reported to her mother.

“It was Mrs. Miller. She was in a hurry and just brought stage clothing.”

Minerva was curious, “Are you just organizing the play or are you participating on stage?”

“Both, actually. We are short of participants.”

“What play are you staging?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“MacBeth! We have tried it before, but last year we had to quit after some months of practicing when one of our participants' home caught fire, and all costumes were gone. But now we have new '*old clothing*'. I hope they are suitable for that period of time” And she added, “Although no-one could spot if we are a century off.”

“May I see them?”

“We will do a medieval fashion show, after breakfast.”

After dishes were done, Lily mother changed in what they considered old costumes.

She said dreaming look in her eyes, “I understand that it is something impossible, but I wish I could sniff up the atmosphere of those times gone by...”

After a short moment contemplating, and with a glimmer in her eyes, Minerva said to Margareth, “I think I have a nice proposition to do that.”

“That is impossible, there are no voice or video recordings from that time. Paintings and written accounts are the personal transcriptions and interpretations of the author or painter.”

“No, that is indeed impossible, but a visit to 'Diagon Alley' might be as close as you can get.”

“I am sorry, you completely lost me. What is this 'Diagon Alley' you are talking about?”

“Just like previous year, all the Hogwarts' students need to shop for books and other school requirements. Last year I went there with both girls, as it can not be found by non-magic folks. Time has passed slowly in that area, it still feels and looks like England as it was 150 years ago.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Minerva had made up her mind.

“Visiting of non-magical people is strongly discouraged, but in my opinion, our school headmaster has some favors to pay back. There would not be many objections if you and your husband came along with me this time. I hope you understand that you have to keep it all to yourselves of course. And while there, you should not draw any attentions, so that implies you have to bring some of these clothes along.”

“That sounds wonderful, any idea when?”

“How about last weekend in August, before the girls need to return to school?”

“I will inform Henry when he is back home.”

Minerva turned to Lily, “There is something I wanted to ask you last evening, girl. It is about a year now since our first visit. How do you feel now about it? Did it live up to your expectations?”

“Last year really turned my whole world upside down. I realized that I was pretty well ahead with reading and writing, and dad's profession intrigued me. I was just thinking of doing my very best at the secondary school, whichever my parents would choose for me. Then, when you told us about me being a witch, and that I was selected to go to a special school where I was allowed to learn about magic, my dearest dream came true. But the reality is totally different again. The fact that magic has to be kept secret is disappointing. It is hard working, but I don't mind, as I already expected that.”

“You've only seen the first year, girl. There is much more ahead in the six years to come! I'm glad you worked so hard, and you've seen that the more you put into it, the better the results.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

The restriction of secrecy is the main reason why some wizards decide to live in a strictly non-Muggle environment, like Diagon-Alley or Hogs-Meade.”

Then she looked at Lily's mother. “Your daughter learns much, and quickly about our world at school. But not you and your husband. We know that this can cause parents and the child to drift apart quickly. In order to avoid this happening, we subscribed you to 'The Daily Prophet', that is the common newspaper among wizards. I hope you understand that it is vital that you keep them for you and your husband. Never throw them away, but burn them. Normally they are delivered through an 'owl service', but you neighbors might find that odd, so they will be delivered by pigeons.”

Professor McGonagall got up and said, “Mrs. Evans, girls, thank you so much for last evening, it really was wonderful. But I think it is time for me to go, I have much to do and so will you, I presume. Enjoy the holiday and we will meet last Saturday of this month, alright?”

“But shouldn't you wait for my husband to bring you to the station?”

“No, as Lily became part of our world, I took the precaution to connect your fireplace to the Floo-grid, with the clearance of the ministry of course. With these connected fireplaces, wizards can travel quickly and also undetected by non-magical people. Would you give your husband my regards!”

Without any further explanation, she stepped into the fireplace, grabbed some Floo-powder from her purse, simply said 'My home', and after a green flash, she was gone.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Lily's mother looked with total disbelief, "I thought I had seen quite a lot, but this beats everything."

Alexandra replied, "Oh that is nothing!"

Grinning Lily said, "It is nice outside, let me show you around."

And a moment later, both girls left on bicycles in the direction of the forest.

Halfway she stopped and explained, "Here live Mr. and Mrs. Dent. You know, the lady from the maze I told you about. Let's say hello, if she is at home. I have not seen them for such a long time."

Some tea and pie later, they left, and Lily sighed, "I can not believe it. It just happened just a year ago. And now, my whole world is totally different from what I ever thought it would be. It all started here by clearing her garden and a simple hospital visit."

She looked at Alexandra, "How did it start for you? Can you remember?"

Alexandra did not reply immediately.

"Something wrong? Or something you rather not talk about it?"

"No, but for me it was a bit awkward and indeed painful. It's a long and vague story, even for me."

"I am all ears!"

"I can see, you're not nosy," She grinned. "Just like you, I initially grew up totally unaware of my gift. My mother is a Muggle and my father was rarely at home because of his work. So I saw little magic being practiced. My mother never liked it. I

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

think it was when I was brought to the primary school. One of the first days of the final year. It was one of the rare occasions that my dad brought me, instead of my mother. That itself was already special for me. We were early and doors were still closed, much of the other children were playing around. I said to my father, 'You see that little girl with the green coat? That is Jennifer. Isn't it sad?' He didn't understand what I was talking about and asked, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'Well, she is ill and will die!' He asked how I knew, who had told me. And I said no-one, I just *know* it. Now I understand the strange suspicious look in his eyes. When he talked to the parents, it turned out that neither of them knew, and told him he was mistaken. My mother did not believe me at all and said that those subjects were no joking matter. Until some months later, after the burial. But even then, she still insisted I made it all up. Purely coincidence. My father had the gift, but decided never to use it, but nonetheless, he passed the gift on to me. Sometimes I can feel, sense, guess, know things, long before they happen. I can not control it. Sometimes I even know what people are thinking. I look at their face, hear one thing and know they are lying straight-faced, that is horrible.”

“Isn't that handy? Knowing what other people think?”

“Seldom! What they think, and firmly believe what is the truth, does not have to be the truth. It is more tiresome, confusing. I have to remember two things. What they say to me, and what they were thinking. I always have to be very careful when I say something to them. I could respond wrongly to them.”

“Complicated! You might as well not know it at all. Did you ever confront them with it?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“In the first place just my mother, but she just plain denied. My dad told me never to talk about it because no single soul in this world would believe me, and I did until now with you. After my birth, he named me Alexandra, without a second thought. He must have guessed.”

“What does your name have to do with it?”

“Haven't you heard about the story of Kassandra?”

“No, what about her. Who is or was she?”

“According to the legends, long time ago, she made a deal with Apollo to sleep with him, who gave her the gift of prophecy, foretelling. But she came back on her word. I was told he could not take the gift away, so she was cursed that no-one would ever believe her, thus making her gift useless.”

“So you can look into the future. Can you tell about mine?”

“Sorry Lily, but it doesn't work that way. It is something beyond my control. And I only see flashes, feel things. And afterward, they are like memories of dreams. Vague and quickly fading away. Only when you think deep about them, you can come to the conclusion that some events indeed have taken place. Like the death of that child, I told you about.”

“Did you ever told anyone else about this?”

“No, but I now understand that my aunt always knew or suspected such. She regularly visited mother and me. Always showed a keen interest in me, and last year she brought the invitation for Hogwarts. Mother wasn't very pleased, but aunt Minerva indicated that it was beyond her control.”

“So you never said anything, no even to your aunt?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“No, besides disbelieving, just imagine that I got it wrong, that someone did believe what I said, changed his life to what I saw or felt. It would be my fault.”


Alexandra took both hands of her friend into hers, and for a long time, she looked intense and straight at Lily with her deep blue and bottomless eyes.

“If I were to tell you, that much later in life, you will have a son, who will become famous worldwide, wearing glasses, with deep dark black hair, but with green almond eyes, just like you have. Would you lose interest in people with blond, brown or red hair? If so, it could be a self-fulfilling prophecy!”

Lily felt a tingling sensation on her back and shivered. “This is more than just an example you made up, not Alexandra?”

“Perhaps, but perhaps not. I could be wrong. I hope I didn't scare you. The point however is, that you now believe from the bottom of your heart, what I just told you. I can see that in your eyes. But in a week time or a month, you will be doubting.”

“Knowing what other people believe or think, isn't that horrible?”

“Sometimes. When you are in a shop surrounded by people, all smiling but filled with murky thoughts. But right now I'm glad to know that you believe me. But honestly, most of the time it is not so fine. Many years ago I found out how to build a sort of  transparent wall around me. But either, I feel I get drowned in other people's thoughts, or get I start feeling lonely. Both are bad, but the first is much worse. Now you understand why I don't need, or even *like* many people around me. This is just perfect for me. I can be myself, no pretending or hiding. And someone around who believes in me.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“That's what friends are for...”

The responding smile said enough.

They drove silently for quite a while, both deeply sunk away in one's own thoughts until they reached the forest.

“We have to walk from here on, but we can take the bikes along.”

“How far is it?”

“Just a couple of minutes, wait, from here you can already see our tree-house!”

“Lovely! It looks old but also very solid!”

“My dad checks it every year. Did I ever told you, that I met Snape here? That feels now like centuries ago.”

“What! Our Slytherin Snape? You must be joking! Was he by that time also such a creep?”

“No, he was rather friendly then, but acted and dressed up a bit strange.”

“Just a bit?”

“He comes from another kind of family, his mother came from Hogwarts, Slytherin for certain. He already dressed up like a tiny wizard, I guess. And I can assure you, within the Muggle world that IS strange.”

Grinning she pointed, “Look! Butterflies over there.”

“That reminds me of something..”

Lily stretched her arm and focused on the butterflies. A moment later the tiny colorful insects landed off the palm of her hand, rested a moment and flew away again.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“That, I showed to Sev. I never realized I was using the attraction spell we learned only two months ago. I simply thought that any person could do that. Nothing to do with magic. Strange how your world can change in some months time.”

“Eh, Lily. Honestly, now you scare me a bit.”

“Why? We do such things now all the time.”

“True, but at school, we can use our wand. And non-verbal spells is material for the fifth year.”

“Now you mention it. I didn't think of that.”

“And even in class, most of them needed the entire week of practicing before they could move a little piece of parchment. Let alone a living creature.”

“I didn't realize that.”

“And finally, before you forget, we are not allowed to practice magic outside of school.”

“Oops! Perhaps we should better get back home. Unpacking, washing and so on.”

Most of the rest of the afternoon, they helped with tending their clothes.

Holiday trip

During dinner, that evening, Lily's father said, "Girls, I have phoned Miranda this afternoon." And towards Alexandra, he explained, "You know, the lady that was cured by Lily. She is eager to see us, and would like to welcome us next Monday."

Lily's mother replied, "Yes, I know that you are very excited to see all of your old professors again. I have managed to find a small cottage in Swindon for next week. My college from school is abroad, so we can stay there. And Ta-da! For the week thereafter, a nice holiday home in Brighton. I only hope that the weather cooperates."

Alexandra looked tense, "Mrs. Evans, may I still stay here with you?"

"Absolutely not! We all go, and you must come along."

"A real holiday? Me too? Oh, thank you so very much."

Most of the week was needed for planning and preparing, as two adults and three girls need quite some luggage. In the end, Mr. Evans had to drive twice to Swindon with his car, that was more than sufficient for visiting patients, but fell short when trying to do a small relocation.

Next Monday, they decided to split up, Lily's mother and Petunia went sight-seeing in Swindon, while Henry, Lily, and Alexandra were heading for Oxford.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“From the days gone by, when I was studying here, I learned much about the city, so I know some unfamiliar parking spots, but much is changed since then.”

Behind a small park, the faculty of medicine was located. They were admitted by the janitor after Lily's father told him he was a former student and had an invitation from professor Mrs. Dibbet.

“You are rather early, I'll take you to her, at this moment the professor is giving a special summer-lecture. Come along please.”

Lily stated, “This looks just as old as our school, the only difference is that time didn't stand still here.”

“Yeah, but can you feel the atmosphere? All of those famous bright people that studied and worked here. People like Darwin, Edmund Halley, Thomas More, Tolkien, Einstein, Jonathan Swift. It is indescribable.”

Many corridors later, the janitor softly knocked at a door, opened it and took a small glimpse around the corner.

“She is still busy. But if you manage to keep silently, you can take a seat over there!” And he pointed.

A large room was almost deserted, but here and there were some students listening to the professor and making notes. At the other end of the semi-circular room, near the blackboards, stood Miranda.

When they all sat down, Lily looked closely to some of the students. She saw some making notes at an unbelievable speed. While Miranda spoke, the blackboard filled with additional explanations and drawings, but it almost looked like it was not the professor who wrote it all down.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Alexandra draw their attention, “Did you see him? I can not believe that is a student!”

And indeed, near the window was an old man looking at a heap of papers and apparently playing with his pencil.

At half past eleven, the professor decided it was more than enough. She inquired if there were any questions, asked the students to study the notes and prepare for test-papers, after which all students left.

They walked towards the professor and were warmly greeted. Lily hardly recognized her, the previous time she was a sick and fragile patient, now she was a radiant woman in the strength of her life.

She firmly embraced Lily, “I am so glad, we meet again. And that I can show you around here, the temple of wisdom, where I have the opportunity to pass on a little bit of knowledge. I have to admit, when I heard a year ago the bad news, it broke my heart that I had to abandon this place. But you gave me a second chance for doing research and teaching. Thinking about it, still, makes me weep for joy.”

“It is good to see you all here,” she heard a familiar voice saying, but it was not Miranda. She turned around and noticed the old man was still sitting near the window. “During the summer I always like to visit my granddaughter,” he said.

“Professor Dibbet!” Alexandra and Lily both exclaimed.

“Around here, I am just an old relative. Miranda is the professor here. I presume you are Lily's father? Pleased to meet you!”

Next, Lily introduced Alexandra to Miranda, “Professor McGonagall and I have told her all about the extra lessons”, she explained to both Dibbets. “Just like my father.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Alexandra looked at the old professor and next to Miranda, who had no chalk on her hands. “You never wrote anything on the black-board, didn't you? And your pencil, isn't that your wand in disguise? You just copied existing notes on the blackboard!”

They all laughed and Hogwarts headmaster said, “I told you, our students are that much brighter, she noticed it right away, while yours never had the faintest idea what was going on!”

Then she continued, “Actually, Lily, you have set quite some wheels in motion, even here at the famous traditional center of learning and studying.”

While walking to a coffee corner Miranda explained. “Last couple of weeks, my grandfather, your biology teacher, some profs around here and I have been discussing the possibilities of assisting people like you, who are well ahead of their contemporaries. If you continue at this pace, in a couple of years time, you will soon run out of study material, and then what? But that is not going to happen very soon, I think. But it opened our minds of assisting people who want to study, but are not able, for whatever reason, to go to a university. Not just Oxford in particular, but any university. So we are starting to experiment with the idea of people doing studies from far, far away. And only do exams and practical exercises here. It seems there is a lot of interest for such possibility, I heard from my colleagues. They were already joking about moving to an annexe, even moving to Milton Keynes. But that is for the future.”

“During my illness, all of my research projects were either completely abandoned or taken over by others, so I had the

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

opportunity to think of something completely new. Then I thought about the way you cured me and got stuck in my mind. Just like other normal schools, some special classes continue during the summer holiday. We have a dozen or so students who need to catch up and doing lab exercises. So I wondered if you would like to participate in an experiment? Staff and students know nothing about your world, and that has to remain so.”

“Tell me about it.”

“We have a group of persons, and we want you to tell us whether they are healthy or ill. They will be completely unaware, and think you are just another medical student, so your secret is safe. Even I do not know who has been chosen and who is ill or who is not, so the test is completely blind.”

“Just that?”

“Just that and nothing more. Each one has a number, and you, like all other students, will be given a set of empty cards, also with a number. Other students will do afterward the examining of the people and the statistics.”

“Piece of cake!”

Next morning they were all dressed up like doctors and walked through the university hospital ward. There were two lines of beds with sleeping people in them, but all charts had been removed and replaced with only a number.

“Am I allowed to draw my wand?”

“As other students can see you, I don't think that is a very good idea! And besides, you're not allowed to do magic outside of school.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Does anyone having a contagious disease?”

“No, you are absolutely safe!”

“OK, let's start!”

At some beds, Lily didn't even stop, but at others, she looked closely or touched their hands or heads. Her father, as a doctor, observed not only the patients, but also his daughter closely, and also wrote down his own conclusions.

Other groups of students had done exactly the same, 30 minutes ago, some were walking just behind them and another group would do the same exercise later on.

Several days later, Lily, her father, Alexandra, Miranda and all of her students met in one of the lecture rooms.

Much to Lily's astonishment, Miranda's recapitulation was quite different from what she had told her and her father previously.

“The whole idea of this exercise was that you should just observe patients getting an intuitive impression, without being influenced too much. Some patients suffer from one ailment, but will send you into the wrong direction by what they will say to you. Therefore you visited the patients in *four* different ways.”

Lily looked questioning at her father, but he didn't know much more either, or at least he didn't show that.

Miranda continued. “So the first round through the ward was while all patients were sound asleep, thus they were not only not able to speak, but also their posture in bed should be beyond their control. The second round...” Now Lily listened carefully as she was going to hear something new. “on this round all the patients were awake. But they were instructed not

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

to say or respond to you. On the third round, you were allowed to speak to all of the patients, while on the final round physical examinations, like all doctors do, was also included.”

Miranda looked at all the students while giving Lily a faint smile. As expected there were some easy cases, but most of them were nearly impossible to guess. These became more of a statistical experiment. Or even better, a statistical control group.

“So Abigail, number one, please share with us your findings!” She asked to one of the other girls.

A tall girl, brown-haired and wearing glasses, cleared her throat and started. “The first round on the ward learned little on itself, except two people in plaster. Some lay restless in their beds, probably caused by pain, though all others looked perfectly healthy. On the second round, I noticed that some of them tried to get non-verbal attention, by moaning or their facial expression. Personally, I got most indications on the last two rounds, as you might expect. But for more clear conclusions I need the outcome of the laboratory tests.”

Miranda nodded in agreement. “Very understandable. Due to time, I would focus at the moment just on the findings of student number twelve, that is you, Lily.”

Lily felt nervous, clearly being the youngest around, as everyone looked at her.

Miranda continued, “Strange thing is, except for two people, you indicated that all of the rest had 'something wrong', can you tell me about that?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Almost all of them, smoke, drink alcohol or don't do enough physical exercises. That had, or will have an impact on their liver, lungs, and arteries. Patient number three, I think is an addict, his liver is near collapsing.”

“Oh, yes.” To the other students, Miranda explained, “Her private school was very strict about these things, here we tend to overlook these social diseases.” And to Lily, “Patient five was obvious, not?”

“Yes and no. The plaster made obvious his leg is broken. But he has many healed bones, previously broken and some are on the brink of breaking. How is that called? Brittle bones, or eh, eh osteoporosis, or something like that, I believe.”

When she noticed disbelief on some faces, she quickly added, “He didn't look like a martial art fanatic, so it was either this or one who was and still is abused at home.”

“Very well deducted, how did you spot number ten?”

“She was moaning too loudly to be realistic. Nothing wrong, except for her attitude.”

Loud laughter!

“But you missed on number twelve, besides the smoking, I know he his healthy, as it happens to be my own father!”

“I can be mistaken, for sure, but I sensed something lurking. Something tropically: Malaria!”

Astounded, Miranda replied, “When I see him I'll ask about it. Blood test might prove you are right or not. We will compare your findings with the others, later on, thank you all. Next, I'll have some guiding to do for our visitors.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

The rest of that day and the next day Miranda and Lily's father showed both girls all around the bio faculty, botanic garden. To Alexandra they said, "Even if biology is not your cup of tea, this university holds so many treasures, it is mind boggling. If I was well informed, you are more attracted to the classical world? In that case, we should visit the history faculty and our own museum."

"From a magazine, I learned that next month they will start with an exposition about early history in England and Wales," Lily's father brought up.

"In that case, let's try if we can get a sneak preview. I can not promise anything. If we are not allowed in, you all have a good excuse for returning."

After some explanations, they were allowed in, but the exposition was far from finished, it was dark and a slight disappointment.

"Dad?" she said softly.

"Yes, Lily. What do you want to ask?"

"I was wondering. Next week we are heading for Brighton, correct?"

"Yes, some fresh sea air will be a good counter-balance to all the dust."

"While on the way, could we do a small detour? Around there is one of the oldest monuments of our country..."

Understanding rose in Henry's eyes.

"Ah, yes, I know what you mean. Perfect idea!"

Due to the number of people and the volume of their combined luggage, Henry had again to drive twice from Swindon to

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Brighton. During the first trip, Lily and Alexandra stayed at the University while Henry brought Margareth, Petunia and all bags to their holiday home. He returned to pick-up both girls and when Alexandra noticed that they missed a junction, Lily explained, “No! We are doing a special sight-seeing detour for you!”

At first, her friend was completely lost, but when she noticed the road signs with “Stone Henge”, she timidly inquired, “Are you doing this all for me? Unbelievable. I have always wanted to visit that place.”

After parking the car, they slowly walked towards the monumental place. It felt like with each pace they stepped back a century in time. They were lucky to be there outside the tourist season, so they had the whole area to themselves. In awe, they looked at the outer circle. Even today with modern equipment, it would have been a major operation to get some of those huge monoliths upright, even more, to put others on top of them. Inside the outer ring was another, with smaller stones that were slightly more blue, but still weights much more than any human could handle. And in the middle, stood the center stone.

“The amount of vague stories about them surpasses the questions connected to them,” he said to the girls.

“Some claim it to be a sacrificial stone, while others claim it to be “just” an astronomical instrument. It is said that druids used to celebrate solstice here. What do you think of it?”

“Well dad, I think that is as accurate as the easter bunny might being related to Santa-Claus. What is your impression, Alexandra?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

But Alexandra said nothing. Like in a trance she walked with big eyes from the center stone to a stone of the inner circle and back again to the center. Touching it, walking to another blue stone, touched it and stare trough the outer circle.

“What is it, Alexandra?”

“Hush! Can't you feel it? The place is drenched with magic and memories. Through the ages, thousands of wizards have been here!”

“What! How do you know?”

“I don't know. I sort of remember it. It feels familiar like I have been here before, but that can't be true. There is something on the tip of my tongue, like a dream you try to remember.”

“Can you describe the feeling? Strong ones, mixed ones, like fear, anxiety, hunger, desire, hate?”

“No, something else. I have felt it before, but I can not remember it.”

Henry softly said, as he did not want to disturb the girls, “Take your time, we are not in a hurry. I like the break after all that traveling around.”

Alexandra turned around, with a vague look in her eyes,

“Yes, yes! That was it. I felt like this before at the beginning of a long journey when I was little. These stones have something to do with traveling -and magic-. I feel a bit of fear, uncertainty, parting sorrow, desire, expectations, wanting. And strange places, far far away. Those feelings changed while I was walking. But at one point, I also felt something familiar, about school.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“I’ve got an idiot idea. Let me try something Alexandra, it probably leads to nothing. Please close your eyes, take my hand, and follow me.”

Alexandra complied without asking and followed Lily slowly. They walked to another blue stone, the one facing North-North-east. They stopped between the stone and the center one and Lily placed Alexandra's both hands on the stone. “Keep your eyes closed, and tell me of which place you think right now.”

Moments passed. “I was thinking about... -that's funny- our own school, the forest, the lake, the hills nearby!”

“When you look through the outer ring, you are looking in a northerly direction, Alexandra.”

“Do you think, that these are something like portal-keys? I never used them, but James was telling me about it a couple of months ago. His father used them for traveling to a predefined place.”

“I never used those either, but aren't portal-keys supposed to travel with you? Rather unlikely or even unpractical to take those tiny *pebbles* with you.”

“Perhaps they work differently: stones remain here and the people just travel between them.”

“In that case, there must be something like these stones in the area of Hogwarts.”

“I have never seen or heard of such a thing. Not necessarily. Perhaps there is over there just one single stone. Oh, I wish I was back at school, in our library, there must be records of this. If I am correct about this. Perhaps we can ask one of the professors about traveling in general.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“If your assumption is correct, I wonder what sense or feeling you get when concentrating on the memories of one of the other stones. Dare we try?”

“This one makes me think about a lonely, cold island.”

Alexandra moved counter-clockwise to the next one.

“Ice and fire, volcano's, and sea.”

“Wind, rain, green hills. Shivers”

“Heat, damp, moisture, jungle.”

“Same, but different forest, denser.”

The stone facing straight south was either missing or had never been there. Alexandra tried one facing a bit more to the east, and closed her eyes again.

“The Mediterranean sea, huge city, thousands of houses and a desert,” was all she said, and moved to another one.

“This feeling reminds me of the pictures I've seen from Egypt.”

“And this one, it was in our history textbook, something about hanging gardens or so.”

“I sort of feel and see a huge stone staircase, hundreds of meters.”

At the next one, Alexandra stood there for a long time, finally,

“This feels so remote, weird temples, tigers, elephants.”

“Fear of heights, mountains.”

After the final one

“Cold, icy cold. Endless forests.”

“Well, we won't get any wiser here and now. It has to wait. Sunbathing! The sea is calling me right now.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“You are right. It seems that this is a medieval sort of Heathrow Airport. Each stone intended like a gateway for a specific destination. But how would it work? But on the other hand, let's not get carried away, I very well might just be making things up. I wished Dumbledore or one of the other professors were here. They know much more AND are allowed to use their wands.’

“It just has to wait for more important things like beach, sea, kites.”

“And don't forget: soda and ice creams!”

“Indeed!”

Before they left, Lily called, “Dad! Can you do us a favor?”

“Sure.” Henry replied, “What?”

“Can you make a photograph of Alexandra and me, behind the central stone, please? It would make a nice souvenir!”

Next Henry made several photos of the girls in front, behind or even on top of some of the stones. They were just like any holiday snapshots by other tourists, but these would play a more important role than either would have expected.

Diagon Alley

The week at the sea-side worked perfectly for changing the minds of everyone. Henry could forget for a while all about patients and regulations and Margareth banish all thoughts concerning students and meetings. As Lily and Alexandra were not allowed to practice magic outside of school, they weren't tempted to waste any minutes on trying spells or potions, although fresh questions about all sorts of magical possibilities concerning traveling sometimes came up and were hastily postponed for later. It seemed that Petunia had not many worries to forget, so they were all enjoying the lovely weather.

Unfortunately, the week only lasted seven days. No magic could do something about that, and all three girls had to prepare for another year at school. For Petunia it was easy, most articles were obtainable in the local bookstore. But for Lily and Alexandra, this was slightly more complicated. The ministry of Magic took proper care that books on spells were never to be found in Muggle bookstores! And even simple sheets of parchment were hard to obtain in the non-magical world, let alone dried dragon mucus!

As promised, professor McGonagall visited them the last Saturday of August.

One single look of her at Alexandra told her all she needed to know, letting her stay for the holiday had been one of the best decisions she had ever made.

“I see that you two grew a healthy complexion. What did you do, nothing?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Oh no! We all went to the sea. I could have stayed there forever. Sunny weather, the beach.”

Without exchanging any words Lily's parents and Minerva looked at each other. The happiness and gratitude in their eyes said more than enough.

“So what do we have to do for encouraging you for another year full of homework and studying?”

“Nothing, we are eager to go! It was just a week ago, we said to each other, that we wished we could meet some of the professors and go to our own library again.”

“Remarkable, how so? A serious heatstroke? Brains melted away?”

“Almost. No, first we visited the university Oxford, a beautiful place! At one hand overflowing with young people with new ideas, while on the other hand, a sensible respect for old achievements and tradition. You never guess who we met there! Our professor Dibbet! And especially for me, we visited Stone-Henge. We might have discovered something, but we have so many questions, I almost couldn't sleep of it.”

“That still have to wait. For moderate old material you can ask Dumbledore or Dibbet, and real old things is the area of professor Binns. He is History himself!”

“Speaking of old material, do you still have those old costumes?” Minerva asked Lily's mother.

“That is if you still want to come with us, to the restricted magical parts of London for doing our shopping.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Yes,” she said holding up tow bags, “One for me and one for Henry.”

“Alright, up to London then.”

Many conversations later, they found themselves at the doorsteps of “The Leaky Cauldron”, and as was to be expected, neither of Lily parents looked overwhelmed with joy with the prospect of entering such gloomy place.

Minerva disrespected the sign “closed”, opened the door, walked straight to the counter and said, “Five for doing shopping.”

Bob, one of the waiters, looked quizzically at Minerva's guests and responded, “Alright, why not? You know the way.”

But instead of going directly to the dead-ended corridor, she instructed Lily's parents to change their clothes.

With his normals clothes now in his bag, Henry stated: “I feel ridiculous. Everybody will laugh when they see us in these outfits. I am glad I will not encounter one of my hospital staff. They would have me admitted the mental department straight away.”

But some moments later on, he felt and said something completely different.

When he walked arm-in-arm with Margareth on Diagon-Alley, she said: “I wouldn't be surprised if we bump into Charles Dickens any time.”

Margareth replied, pointing to one the bags with Muggle clothing, “If we would still be wearing these, we would certainly be the odd one out. It is just unbelieving. Two worlds, so near and so far apart.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“I see what you mean. Do you remember, last year I was at a medical congress in Bombay? There you have also multiple worlds near each other. Those were social class worlds. This is, eh eh indescribable.”

Just like last year, they had to pay the Gringots bank a visit. Clearly, the goblins had the same effect on her parents as on Lily.

They continued their journey at “The Proper Needle”, just for some new shoes, for both girls.

Mrs. Pinnacle immediately recognized professor McGonagall and the two girls.

“This is where we bought that robe for your daughter,” Minerva explained to Margareth.

Margareth turned to the shopkeeper, “My compliments of that magnificent robe. Even I couldn't believe my eyes. It really transformed my daughter into a head-turner.”

Lily got a color and softly said, “That wasn't needed, mother!”
“If you like, we can provide the same service for you, dear lady.”

“No thank you, not for now.  Perhaps later, if we have a special event to celebrate.”

They left with not only the intended shoes but also another robe, blouses, stockings, gloves winter coats for both girls and lots of hair ornaments. Lily was glad they had paid a visit to Gringots'

Alexandra looked at her aunt, “Next?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“I think it might be wise to leave Lily's parents at the tea-room, while we perform a refilling of your potions ingredients. There they can observe lots of people, while the chemistry is located in a less visited area of the Alley.”

Henry commented that he regretted he didn't study human behavior. “With what I encounter here, I could fill my life writing books.”

Margareth, on the other hand, wondered whether the quality of tea and pies were unchanged, or that they had incorporated the latest fashions from their world. “Intriguing.”

Finally, they were heading for “Flourish & Blots”. Even Lily's father was impressed by the sheer number of books in stock. He also left with some, on “Muggle ways of healing”.

During the train journey back home, Henry asked, “Professor, my wife and I are very grateful for today's trip, but I can not grab why both worlds are so different. Why is it like your world stood still for the last couple of centuries?”

“Oh no! You look at it from *your* perspective. I don't say you are seeing it wrong, but it is just the common view of the Muggle's world. There has been innovation and changes. But not at the same rate, as it happened in your world, where changes and life itself is constantly accelerating. A big change came since the invention and productions of cars, but the rate of changes exploded in your world since electrical devices became common good.”

“What do you mean?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“I mean, in your world you have all kinds of inventions and techniques that makes your life comfortable, am I mistaken?”

“No, that is a pretty good observation.”

“On the other hand, in our world, no-one ever had the need for such inventions. Our way of using magic in every day's life is comfortable enough. But more important, there are two major points against it.”

“The most important one is like it or not, your whole world became very dependent on oil products, electricity. Our school and the village nearby are completely self-sufficient. Because of our secret way of life, we can not become dependent on others from your world. Besides that, we hardly produce any waste, and even in your world, for a cozy atmosphere, you do prefer candles above electric lights and fireplaces above central heating, not?”

“Yes, I have to admit, you are correct.”

“We will not, and even can not, stop any changes. I have seen wizards with radio sets, and the idea of telephone appeals to me, as long as we are completely in control, and not dependent on others.”

“People tend to speak about the good-old-times, but I think they have forgotten all the less favorite aspects of the life people lived centuries ago. Consider health, education, exploitation, politics. How about working conditions, slavery. Not to mention the position of women.”

Contemplations

At that very moment, far away in the north, the evening was falling near Hogwarts.

At a bench near the lake, one professor was looking at the darkening sky, full of twinkling stars, while another teacher approached him.

“Ah, Albus! I thought I might find you here.”

Without looking the old man replied, “Yes, Minerva. Next week all the students will be here again. Every day some many important but still insignificant matters to deal with.”

“So, you just enjoying the starry evening, or are you refreshing your astronomical knowledge?”

“Ha ha! Actually, Minerva, I am using the tranquility to contemplate about school, our department and some students.”

“And?”

“As always, the ministry indicate that they would appreciate if I would join them. But as always, I politely declined. And I'm sure that I'm doing the right thing. I presume you too noticed Dibbet is getting older. I don't mean to say that he is getting too old for his job, but the load of the responsibilities is getting heavier, he confided with me.”

Minerva nodded. “Is he already thinking of stepping down? You very well know what that would imply. Are you ready to become the next head of Hogwarts? There is no other suitable candidate.”

“No! Dibbet is fiercely against the idea of retiring. He will stay until someone send him away, and who would do such a thing?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

And for any successor, is one ever ready? Probably not! Although some think differently, I'm not pursuing anything. Teaching and helping students is more than enough for me. I have learned my lessons a long time ago. I am very much content with my position. But if that comes on my way, I'll not hesitate to pick it up.”

He looked at Minerva, “And how about you, dear college?”

“Oh no! I'll not be available for such post. Ever!”

“No, but if the board ever asks me to take over Dibbet's posting as head of Hogwarts, we need another head for Gryffindor. It is not proper that one person should hold both positions. Are you ready and available for that, Minerva?”

Silently she thought about this question. “When the time comes, we'll find out whether we are ready or not. But available, yes. Though I would not mind if you might ask others.”

“Any other concerns, Albus? Certain classes or students?”

“Quidditch! Now Martin Steward is gone as captain, the chances of Gryffindor winning the cup are astronomically slim. And the ongoing rivalry between the houses. As long as it does not become too foul I don't mind.”

Dumbledore laughed silently.

“And probably the everlasting conflicts between Filch and some students. Black and his friends are giving him a hard time. Normally first years are afraid of him, but that group of boys is only considering it a challenge how far they can go. Discovering your boundaries is part of growing up.”

“You better convince Archus about that! He sees everything as a personal challenge to his authority. Nothing else?”

“A couple of things. It seems that we need a different teacher for 'Defense Against the Dark Arts' each year. Although the

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

most challenging subject, it is difficult to find a qualified teacher each year. Some teachers complain about their pay-ment. The previous time that all of us got a raise in salary, it all went to the pub in Hogsmead. But how about you, Minerva, are you this year continuing with your 'dream-class'?"

"Certainly, providing we have enough participants. It still looks promising and exciting enough. Sharing dreams is revolution-ary! And we can even do healing through dreams!"

"So, you are still content with miss Evans?"

"Absolutely! She brought us tens of years ahead. I mean fifty, or even hundred years! Any news about the nightmares?"

"No change. The official Aurors can not make head or tails of it. Even some of them are afraid of going to bed. They are now all looking at Hogwarts. Quite a responsibility you are facing."

"That is something I already expected, even feared. So no as-sistance from that direction."

For a moment they said nothing, just looking at the sky. Simul-taneously they looked at each other.

"You heard that too?"

But before Albus could reply, they realized they had company. Of course not a student, as none was at school, but it was nei-ther one from the staff. It was a visitor from the forbidden for-est. A huge mythical creature, half human, half horse: a cen-taur!

"Good evening! Is it you, Firenze? It is a bit too dark for my eyes to recognize you."

"Minerva, have you met Firenze before? Most of the centaurs refuse to speak with us, but he is one of the few still willing to do so."

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Yes, we met quite some time ago, at a previous gathering. But I kept myself at the background then.”

The mighty creature looked at the two professors. Then he spoke.

“Good evening indeed! Yes, you are right, at least considering my identity. But probably mistaken about much else. My friends looked at the sky and noticed 'huge challenges' for the humans and disregard them straight away, as it did not concern us.”

Minerva looked skeptically. “You know that we consider you and your people very wise, but don't ask me to believe that the planets have any influence on us!”

The centaur looked at her, showing no emotions at what might be considered an insult to the centaurs, who were keen astrologist.

“You humans have so very much to learn. Didn't I tell you several years ago, that a new student would arrive, showing uncharted new ways!”

“Yes, you did, but that could be applied to any of them...”

“Perhaps you all should be persuaded to look beyond your magical boundaries. Don't think you know it all! The non-magical humans are learning fast!”

“What! They believe in astrology as less as in the existence of Centaurs!”

“And you claim not to be narrow-minded! Didn't you follow their news? Even we, Centaurs heard that Muggles claim that they have discovered strange huge dark objects in the heavens, that absorb literally everything, even light!”

“So? Yes, perhaps I heard such a thing. But how does that relate to what you have told us, the last couple of years?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Firenze sighed. “Why don't you, who claim to be professors, comprehend such a simple thing. Every living being seeks wisdom, happiness, respect, recognition and sometimes also gather other physical properties. During your short lives, some people shine, help others to find their way, love, share and teach.

While other only gather and keep it for themselves, depriving some poor of what they need and deserve.

Just like any object in the cosmos, each pulls with gravity at others. Some stars use gravity to start to shine, while other pull so hard that even light can not escape. And when they 'eat' other stars, their hunger only grows as they devour others.”

Now Firenze looked very concerned. “Your 'black-hole-wizards' radiate only polarization, fear, coldness, and hatred. And one of them, you know very well who, is growing while it comes nearer to all of you. Those two concepts match perfectly.”

With an air of a learned professor, trying to explain something to a young child, he continued, “Most of you, humans, regards others as dwindling in the dark, isolated from magical powers and proper knowledge. And that they even shield those who want to learn from available resources, not?”

Without waiting for an answer he said, “many years from now, the non-magical humans will discover something what they will name 'dark matter' or 'interstellar dust'. Those too block the light of the most brightest stars. Just think about that! To me it seems to be the astronomical counterpart of the people working at your ministry, blocking all knowledge.”

Dumbledore looked dumbstruck. “The astronomical aspects of what you said, are a bit beyond my horizon of understanding, a

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

riddle, but still I think I do understand what you're trying to say to us.”

Then the centaur looked at Minerva, but Albus continued.

“When you look at a pond and try to use it as a mirror, you never see the same reflection twice. A mirror's reflection does not say much, but might remind you that you need to comb your hair. And even when you are able to read and cook, a cookbook is full of recipes, but seldom either of them fits exactly what you want or need.”

Firenze looked confused but amused, “That is much too down to earth for my comprehension, but I think you do understand my concern for you, humans! We noticed some very strange, unfamiliar events in the skies. Never seen before, but old nonetheless. Comets! Bright as the sun, visiting us only once and are gone forever.”

Suddenly professor McGonagall shivered all over and said to Dumbledore, “Events, or... Evans?”

Firenze stared intensely at her, but said nothing, then he pointed at the sky and said, “The signs of the Zodiac are exact, returning at the exact moment. Now, millions of years ago, and millions of years from now. Nothing can change that. However, Nova's, meteors and falling stars only happen just once in a lifetime, even in eternity. Be careful what you choose, but DO choose, waiting too long, looking away and disregarding is no option. Either black-holes are causing a long death-struggle, and nothing can escape when you fall into their grip.”

After the centaur left, a large cloud drifted away, disclosing a tiny, but waxing new moon.

Albus pointed upwards, “See how beautiful! A new start which reminds me of new students.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Let's get back, and get prepared as much as possible.”

“Wise words. Very wise words.”

Minerva looked at him.

“I fear not just the upcoming year with students, but also the *other* changes in our world. We must be prepared, if possible.”

Back at Hogwarts

Along with the list of books and materials was the train ticket included for the Hogwarts-express. Just like previous year, Henry and his wife brought the two girls to London, Charing-Cross railway station, and likewise they had to say goodbye at platform nine, as only the girls could cross over the platform 9³/₄. Learned their lesson from the previous year, they were well in time, so had no problem finding an empty cabin.

In contrast to last year, they were now welcomed by numerous other Gryffindor students. And all had to give full reports of their holiday activities.

When the train finally stopped, they noticed Hagrid, the half-giant, gathering all the first-year students around him.

“Do you still remember, Alexandra only a year ago?”

“Yes, nice boat trip at dusk.”

This time, the students found countless carriages waiting for them.

“What is pulling them?”

“Dunno. Magic?”

When all the seats were taken, the carriage started moving by itself. After a bumpy ride, they got off and walked through the main portal.

“Ah, this also feels like home!”

“Then you understand the meaning of the proverb: 'Home is where the heart is.'”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

All students quickly tried to find a seat at one their house tables.

Sirius commented, "I hope for a short ceremony, I'm starving."

Finally, Hagrid presented the fresh group of first-year students, pointed them to their own table and handed them over to professor McGonagall who addressed the new students.

"Dear students, you might, or not know, that our school is divided into four sections. Each of them is named in remembrance and to honor the four founding wizards, Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuf, Rowena Ravenclaw and Salazar Slytherin. The houses will be your family for the time here at school. There is a fair competition between the houses. Anything you achieve above expectation will earn you points, any transgression or bad behavior will cost you points. And the house with the highest score will win the Hogwarts' house cup at the end of the year. Last year the house of Gryffindor managed to achieve this, but all the houses will start right now on an equal level again."

Minerva unrolled a scroll and looked at the fresh students. Some were obviously nervous, others had a blank facial expression, not showing anything. She pointed to a nearby standing chair, with the sorting hat on top of it.

"Right now the sorting will start, I will call each name, the student comes forward and takes a seat right here. Next, I'll place this hat on your head and the magic will do the rest."

Lily looked at the new students with compassion. She very well remembered the tension and the adrenaline rushing through her veins. And the idea that the rest of the school was

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

looking at you, wondering who you are, how strong you were, your capabilities, whether you are a likely person or not.

It sounded simple, and the required steps to be taken were, but the impact on the children was huge, as all the students remembered.

“Patricia Mguffie”

She walked towards the chair, sat down, got the hat and a second later: “Gryffindor.”

“Madyson Sleight”

A sluggish boy went forward, received the hat and the verdict was: “Slytherin.”

“Violet Caldecott”

And also Hufflepuf could welcome a new student.

A silence felt when she introduced the next one: “Regulus Black.”

A boy with dark hair and a self-assured expression in his face walked to the chair. The sorting hat hardly touched the boy's head when the hat gave its verdict. “Slytherin!”

A sigh of relief came from the boy, who quickly joined the other Slytherins.

Sirius looked at his brother, but said no word.

Minerva announced the next one: “Braeden Haseltine”

And a moment later, “Ravenclaw.”

This went on and on and Fiona Kilb, Heather Cheetham, Katelyn Rosenberg, Bryana Stellon, Warren Mackinnon, Tiffany Balshaw, Camille Stowell, Evelin Leask, Valerie Mccalden,

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Andres Mckinstrey, Gwenllian Cadwallader, Mererid Morgan, Morwenna Pritchard, Jaimie MacCrie, Coinneach MacCurrach and many others were all divided among the houses.

Alexandra noted, "I always expected that all students were equally divided among the houses. But apparently not. Clearly more Hufflepuf's and Slytherin's this year."

James answered, "And far more girls than boys."

Lily, "So what James?"

"Eh nothing, I just noticed."

Alexandra grinned, "Boys!"

Minerva got up again, and said briefly, "Before dinner, may I have your attention for our headmaster, professor Dibbet!"

"Dear students, a warmly welcome to our new students and welcome back for the others. First some administrative reminders. Next days all of you will be tested for each of the subjects you will follow. These will be done by each professor. They will find out whether and how much of what has been previously taught to you is still present. I sincerely hope you can produce some encouraging results, for a change. Let me warn you, that you should take these tests no lightly. If any person scores badly for all subjects, we might reconsider the promotion to the next year. One student, who's name I won't disclose, needed ten years for he could leave school, and almost eleven years. Please don't try to beat that record.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Subject transcending matters will be dealt with by the head of each house.

I have to inform you all, that Professor Dumbledore has now been officially appointed as deputy head of Gryffindor. Up to this moment, he was head of Gryffindor, in this position he will be succeeded by professor McGonagall. Any objections can be sent to either me or the board of directors. We will discard them equally.

Our teacher flying lessons, professor Transgressia has returned to Italy with his son, those lessons will now be given by Professor Hooch. All first-year students, and all others in doubt of their capabilities should report to her next Wednesday.

This year, like any previous years, we will have to replace the students who were on either of the four Quidditch teams. This year we will start the per-selection early on in the year. So all with the right attitude and determination have some extra time for improving their skill before they make a complete fool of themselves in public. The official Quidditch season starts as usual at the beginning of November, as soon as the weather is foul enough.

Last year, some Slytherin students indicate to me that they were very much interested in flying on their broomstick as fast as possible without getting into troubles. The ministry has granted the request that students of our school can practice and hopefully compete in the international-speed-broom-contest. This is, however, a serious matter, only students that are up to it may join the practice team. I will not allow our school becoming a laughing stock for the rest of the country. The ministry will inform me as soon as the selection will take place. If our students perform very well, there might even be a chance, that

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

we will be given the honor of organizing the international contest next year. Perhaps that increases the motivation.

Next, I remind all students that the third floor and the forbidden forest are off limits for all students. With regards to our beautiful lake, I was informed that the lake people are willing to welcome all students, especially those with some meat on their bones, as they are rather fed-up with only eating bony fish. And as I touched the topic of eating, this seems a very good moment for us all to dig in.”

Dibbet drew his wand and used it to touch one of the empty plates on the table. That one and all the others were immediately overloaded with all sorts of meat, potatoes (cooked and fried), fish, freshly baked bread, chicken and even some vegetables.

“I nearly collapsed, moaned Sirius. I think that I already passed away!”

“In which case I would gladly escort you, hovering through the corridors!” said Sir Nicholas, rising up through the table.

Cutting Corners & Need for Speed

As Lily knew, all students except the new ones, had to redo their final test papers of the previous year again. Not everything was examined, but enough for the professors to get an indication of what level the students were able to follow their lessons. Some tests were written exercises, some were practical tests, like those for potions, while other were just a short interviews. Also, charms was divided into a paper and a practical test.

Lily started with one of her favorite subjects, biology, so she went to the bio-classroom and knocked.

“Yes, come in.”

Professor Slughorn looked up and started to smile,

“Ah, our brightest star. Don't be so modest miss Evans. I presume you understand why all of the other students except you, have to do a written test.”

“Sort of, professor.”

“Did you know that we spent quite some time discussing your progress with the head of Gryffindor and our school. Actually, more time than we needed for all the not-so-good performing students together.”

“I am sorry, professor.”

“Please don't be. Talents like yours are very rare and have to be treated carefully. The point is, however, is how to continue.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“I thought and hoped just like the previous year, professor? That is, if I get this year again enough exemptions from some of my other classes.”

“Yes, of course, we understand that, but let me remind you again, you absorbed like a huge sponge three years biology lessons in a single year. Each trimester an entire year. Unprecedented and unbelievable. What would happen if you continue at this rate?”

“Eh, another three years material?”

“Theoretically perhaps, if your brain can cope with it. You should remember from the third year material, about the nerve system, that learning -any learning- slightly alters the structure of your brain cells and how they interconnect. That is why learning is a very weary activity, it makes one just as tired as physical exercises, where you train your muscles.”

“But when I look at other students, I noticed that they have to rehearse many times, while for me it all seems that I already know it, I hardly need to learn, but just need to refresh it. Just like the others do before a week of test-papers.”

“As long as you remain careful with it. As soon as you feel any sort of pressure, physically or mentally, or headaches let me immediately know. Agreed?”

“Agreed.”

“That leaves me to the second point. If, and with a very big IF, you continue at this rate, you will run out of regular school material at the end of this or next year. You know, the seventh year is mainly for slower students, rehearsals and finishing lab-exercises. You are aware of that?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Yes, professor, last July professor McGonagall visited my parents. But she mentioned something about other, non-standard material.”

“Ah, did she already raised that possibility? We'll we will see if it comes to that. But it clearly demonstrates your determination to go on with it. Just like the previously year, I would like to propose that we evaluate each month carefully how you feel about it all. Yes?”

“Yes, thank you, professor!”

“OK Lily, see you next week.”

Lily waited until Alexandra returned from her history-evaluation. Those lessons from their ghastly professor seemed to have an extremely inspiring motivation, in which Alexandra was actually the sole person. Like all other students, Lily had quite some difficulties keeping their eyes open during his lessons.

“And?” She asked when her friend appeared again.

“He is competing with our teacher classical languages. They both consider me as as... a sort of showpiece. Both want me to study ahead, but that is way too much for me, I think.”

“So what now?”

“I'll guess you go to English-evaluation, Undertow isn't it? And for me it is Greek. I'll bet I get exactly the same story, but from the opposite point of view.”

Alexandra was correct with regards to Lily going to professor Undertow, for the subject of English lessons. But her classical languages teacher had a surprise for her.

He greeted her warmly, “Hi Alexandra, considering the time, I presume you have gone previously to my history college? He

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

probably asked to shift your emphasize to history instead of Greek? Don't say anything, I already expected such a move from that sly devil. And now you fear the same sermon from me.”

Alexandra just nodded.

“Well, it is of course entirely up to you, but I have one suggestion and one request. My request is this: would you like to help other students with either Latin or Greek? I already noticed pupils from even the third year are turning to you with questions. And your pronunciation is already as near-native. Just think about it.

My suggestion for you, and that would also please your history teacher: Try to focus on the history of the near-east, or dive deeper in the period from 3000BC till 500AD specifically for that area.”

“You mean, I can practice my knowledge of Greek and Latin while doing history?”

“Exactly! But only if you like to. No strings attached!”

“To be honest, I don't think you should formalize any help I can offer to the other students. I don't think many students would accept me as an assistant. Perhaps later on.”

And with these words Alexandra left a slightly disappointed teacher and found Lily waiting for her.

“What did he say?”

“I am also still far ahead compared to the others. He asked me if I was interested in the area of teaching, that is, if would help him.”

“So, he also! What did you say?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Not yet, perhaps later on. Right now I'm just a second-year student, regardless how much material I have absorbed. That would imply that I would be doing the reviewing for him of the test-papers of the other students. I'm not contending for a popularity contest, but that would result in the opposite.”

“What is next on the agenda?”

“Practicing broom-sticks. After two free hours. 'Spells' is still in a meeting about the progress of some students. And likewise for 'Potions’”

“Who is teaching Flying? Last year we had Transcrashia, but he left at the end of the year.”

“Let me scratch my mind. Hm. Dibbet mentioned someone named Hooch. Ever heard of?”

“Vaguely. Sirius told me about her. She used to teach flying before Transcrashia came to Hogwarts, and is the main referee at Quidditch games. She also organizes them.”

“So a fair chance I lose my exemption, I fear.”

“We still have our own broomsticks, so why not practice ourselves?”

“Good idea.”

So Lily and Alexandra carried their broomsticks they received last year as a present on their shoulders and walked into a bunch of Gryffindor boys.

“Hi girls, going to clean-up?”

“Nah, we keep our rooms tidy. But we heard stories about rats and mice in your places.”

“Actually, we were thinking of doing some '*brooming*', it's been such a long time.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Good thinking. Do you mind if we join you?”

“Not as long as you can keep your hands on your own broom.”

“Then, please wait, we have to fetch some practicing brooms.”

The girls had to wait much longer than expected and when Sirius and James returned their robes were damaged and James' nose was a bit bleeding.

“What happened? Did you walk into eh a *broomstick*?”

“No, into several Slytherin snakes. Let's go!”

Seconds after they took off, the Slytherin boys returned. Unnoticed they crept up from behind and managed to kick the others from their brooms. Alexandra was slightly hurt when she hit a tree, but Lily had landed in a pool of mud and all of her clothes were covered with it.

“You finally found the best place suited for you, you pigs! You have the tools for cleaning it up.” They heard Lucius Malfoy scornfully commenting.

James and Sirius grabbed their brooms and went after them.

“Are you hurt?” Lily managed to say after she removed the mud from her mouth.

“My arm, but mostly my pride. But look at you! You look like the Russian-mud-dweller from the Mystical animal books.”

“Let's get back and change.”

“No more flying?”

“I never said that. I don't let them take away one of my pleasures!”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

After changing the girls returned. But within minutes they saw Sirius and James walking. When they landed they noticed why. Both of their brooms were broken in half, Sirius was limping and James helped him, although it was obvious that he was not feeling all too good either.

“What happened?”

“We were ambushed. Humiliated. And with their Quidditch brooms against our practicing ones, we didn't stand a chance. It looked like we were standing still in mid-air. And it seemed they came from everywhere.”

Lily looked at Alexandra, then said to James, “If you want you can take my broom for a spin...”

Smilingly Alexandra presented hers to Sirius.

He looked at her broom and said, “What are these?”

He examined closely the label “N4S”, and said hesitatingly, “I recognize those letters, they look like the ones in the commercials from the new company, Nimbus. But they produce only brooms for the Italian national Quidditch team, they are not for sale. What are these: N4S, '*envy for students*'?”

“Yes, they are indeed genuine Nimbus brooms. They were given to us as a present, but this acronym stands for '*Need for Speed*'. Like to try?”

Lily held her broom under James' nose.

“Before you tried to guess, yes, this one is also a Nimbus, and these letters, CC they stand for '*Cutting Corners*'. Sound typically suited for you.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“By the way, these are prototypes, straight from the factory and probably out-perform any broom, so they might have some quirks. And we do want them back, in one piece please.”

Even all the magic from the hospital ward of madam Pomfrey could not have cured the boys faster.

James said to Sirius, “I look at the Quidditch practice fields, you check the lake.”

Like a bullet from a gun, Sirius took off. He remembered that this morning, on behalf of Slytherin, there would be preselections for speed-brooming on one-mile distance at the nearby lake. They would probably be there. Theoretically, all Hogwarts' houses were allowed to join but neither Hufflepuf, Gryffindor nor Ravenclaw were invited. From a distant Sirius saw a professor and some students near the beginning of the lake. He maneuvered his broom to them, and shouted, “Where are Malfoy and his gang?”

One replied, “Not here. Perhaps at the other side of the lake, at the finish.”

Without any words further, Sirius flew between the two poles marking the beginning line of the single mile track and raced towards the finish line. “I hope I'll find those misfits there!”

But Sirius only found some other Slytherin students, again no Malfoy. So he tried again: “Where is Malfoy and his gang?”

“We just arrived. Haven't seen him perhaps at the other track for the real contenders.”

“What?”

“Some thought just a single mile was nothing, so we also applied for contending the ten-mile contest. In the next valley, the

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

ministry also placed official start and finish poles for time measuring, so perhaps there.”

Sirius raised his hand as a sign he got the message and took off again.

At the other start poles, he found again some students.

“Malfoy?” he briefly asked.

“Last contenders left some minutes ago.” was all he got back.

“Blasted!” Sirius said and took off again. It looked like he was every time just too late. But this time, he was going to get him.

“What was the nickname of this broom? Need for speed! I certainly need it now.” And he imagined that he was an arrow, just released from the bow. He held the broom closer, became one with it, completely streamlined. With just one thought on his mind: FASTER! But ten miles isn't a distance covered easily.

His muscles started to ache as they got cramped, and the longer he flew, the more he felt his bones and the beating he had received. It was madness, he knew, such distance for a hardly trained person, but he would not give in or give up! Because of the humiliating beating up, the name of Gryffindor, the girls, Lily and Alexandra. Especially Alexandra! Remembering the pain on her face gave him even more determination, more strength. He would get even with those boys responsible for harming her. He wanted revenge! Time passes without noticing. Then suddenly: the end poles. With an empty mind he raced to the poles and the students behind them and none other than professor Dibbet, who just looked very much surprised. “I didn't know you would like to compete?”

The most friendly greeting from the students was, “Still some Slytherin blood in your veins, Black?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

But some just remarked “Show-off!”

But he couldn't care less: “Still no Malfoy!”

Immediately he felt miserable, not just his bones and muscles that had turned sour, but an empty feeling, all for nothing!

He turned his head quickly away because he felt ashamed for his tears.

Very slowly he flew back and wondered what he would have done if he would have found his adversary standing near the school's headmaster. He could not have done anything. That felt even more miserable. “All that effort for nothing.”

When he returned and arrived at Hogwarts, he only found Lily and Alexandra. They immediately asked, what he was thinking: “What about James?”

While Sirius was looking for Malfoy at the speed contest, James gambled that he would find him near the Quidditch field. He noticed several players in the air, and flew around the field, in such a position that he was in between them and the sun. He looked closely at all the players, and: Yes! There he was. James immediately dived steeply but became aware there was a small object in his trajectory, a small golden ball with wings. Without any thoughts, he snatched it out of the air and put it in his pocket. He dived underneath Malfoy and shouted provokingly “**Slimy bunch of Slytherin snails!**” and took off again. But Malfoy and his gang immediately all forgot about Quidditch selection and started to chase James for another session of thrashing. James realized that this time, he was in a better position, at least with regards to the quality of brooms. But there were ten Slytherin students, while he was all alone.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“I think I know where to find some steadfast allies,” He turned steeply towards the forbidden forest. At full thrust, he zigzagged through the trees. One by one another Slytherin student was stopped by a tree-branch. He played his game until only Malfoy was chasing him, the branches of the trees had taken good care of the others. He planned to make a steep turn at one of the open spots, and kick Lucius of his broom when he heard a deafening “HALT!”

The open spot was not empty, but a couple of professors were standing and looking in amazement to the airshow they just bumped into.

“What in the name of Merlin's beard are you thinking you are doing here, Potter?”

“I was trying to get even with him!”

“Why?”

“They deliberately crashed into us, they deliberately broke Sirius' and my training broomsticks.”

“Is that so, Malfoy?”

“Yes, but...”

“But nothing! We will look into this. This will have consequences, for both of you!”

“But?”

“No but. Just get out of this forest, back to Hogwarts. Right NOW! You first, Potter.”

James flew back with mixed feeling, he got most of the culprits, but at which price?

If he got kicked out from school would it have been worth it?

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

When he got back at told Sirius and the girls what had happened, he didn't have any regrets.

James was still telling about his chase among the trees again, to other Gryffindor students, when he and Sirius were summoned to the headmaster.

“Young Mr. Black, is it correct that you two were beaten up?”

“Yes Sir. No point in denying such humiliation to Gryffindor.”

“And during that, two of our costly practicing brooms were damaged? Even beyond repairing!”

“Yes Sir.”

“Why?”

“Probably envy, Sir.”

“And you were trying to get even at the subscription selection for both speed-broom-contests?”

“Yes sir, but I failed miserably, none of the boys were at either lake.”

“O! Is that so? Did you fail? Come over here with your wand boy. And touch this document.”

Dibbet put a folded piece of parchments towards him.

“May I take a look at...”

“No, you may not! It is a full report of what you have done. No denying now anymore.”

Sirius did as required.

Sirius felt uneasy, as he understood that he had signed a document without reading. Had he signed a confession leading to his own removal?

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Mr. Potter, I was told you were trying to teach some Slytherin boys a lesson in maneuvering during their Quidditch player selection?”

“Yes, Sir, and for the same reason.”

“Do you know, that those trees in the forbidden forest, has left quite some impact on some students? And that because of the height they fell from and some animals that live there on the ground, some students will have some difficulty with practicing Quidditch for some time?”

“No Sir. It seemed to me a proper lesson.”

“Now did you. Are you aware, that due to the disturbance, one of the valuable tiny practicing balls got lost?”

“Eh, no Sir, but might it be this one?”

James had completely forgotten about the little golden ball in his pocket. He placed it on the desk, in front of Dibbet.

“Indeed. The snitch.”

Dibbet took a long and good look at both boys.

“I don't know what you were up to, -and I don't want to know- but let me warn you, that you two operate very near the edge. Am I clear enough?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“In that case, dismissed. But let me remind you two, that is not the end of it, you two will hear more about it. Just as the others.”

While walking back, Sirius commented, “A close shave? Certainly not. We didn't even get penalty house-cup subtractions for Gryffindor.”

“You are right! And did you noticed the twinkle in his eyes?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“The old man is up to something! I wonder if, and what, we will hear about this stunt.” He felt better than ever before.

And, the next Saturday morning they were confronted with the results of their stunts. After breakfast was devoured and weekly mail was distributed, Dibbet got all students attention.

“Students, and staff as well, I have some announcements to make.”

All the talking seized immediately.

“You might have noticed that there was quite some 'brooming activity' last week. Perhaps you remembered that the house of Slytherin had applied that our school would join the contest for speed-brooming. The ministry was so kind to grant this, and also for installing accurate time measuring equipment to be able to find out who of the students was fit enough to join the contest.

That went very well, for both distances, the single mile, and the ten miles, we now have ten students who qualified...”

Load cheers at the Slytherin table. Silence at the others.

“...but unfortunately, we also have some kill-joys among us. I would like Mr. Sirius Black to come forward, please.”

Whispering at the Gryffindor table and grinning at the Slytherin table.

“This individual, flew unannounced, both distances. As the start- and finish poles and time equipment was installed by the ministry, both results are alas official and can not be made undone. As a punishment, you will have to wear and bear these badges.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Dibbet drew his wand and with a small move two badges were magically attached to his school robe.

“The punishment will be that all other students can see what is imprinted on it but as they are firmly attached, not you! And mirrors won't help you either,” he concluded with a faint smile. “You can fetch the corresponding ministerial paperwork at my office later today.”

Next, I have here a list of names with Slytherin boys who clearly demonstrated for all to see, that they still have difficulties with the art and responsibilities of flying on a broomstick. Normally the flying lessons are compulsory for first-years only, and voluntarily for other-year, but these students will have to report each week for the lessons, together with the first year-students. Either they did not pay enough attention initially, or they forgot too soon.”

Moaning was clearly heard coming from one of the tables after he read out loud the name of the students who had beaten up James and Sirius.

“Finally, the flying acrobatic maneuvers of Mr. Potter must be harnessed properly.”

The moaning from that table turned into laughter, though not for long.

“He has to report as soon as possible, at a certain practicing field nearby. Unknowingly Mr. Potter has applied as a seeker and has been assigned as such for the Gryffindor-team. We all hope that he is able to demonstrate his skills between the lines. That is all!”

Loud cheers at the Gryffindor table, and again moaning at the Slytherin table.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Hey Blacky, what is on your badge. Are you an official kill-joy? Recognized by the ministry. Come let us see us!”

But Sirius went back to his own place at the Gryffindor table, where his fellow students curiously looked at his badge. Then a deafening cheer broke out and Sirius was carried upon their shoulders several times through the great hall.

“Official, official!”

“Official holder, official holder!”

“Official record holder, official record holder!”

“Official world record holder, official world record holder!”

“For both distances, both distances...”

At the teacher's table, Minerva asked madam Hooch, “The cheering is obviously. Explain me about kill-joy, I don't understand?”

“The Slytherin boys were practicing for so long, and they manage to cut once in a while some seconds of their best time. Now young Mr. Black has even sliced the old world record, without even practicing, so they don't stand the slightest chance when they compete. How about that for motivation?”

“Oh, yes, I see. How inconsiderate and unsporting of Sirius. He needs absolutely some training, don't you think?”

But obviously, both teachers were extremely proud of his achievements.

Outlook

Few students were looking in anticipation for their class Potions, normally given in Hogwarts dungeons. Peatery started with his sermon. “The subject of Potions is just as difficult as 'Spells and Charms'. Besides the use of substances, does anyone know the *essential* difference between Spells and Potions? Ten points for the correct answer!”

“You could poison one?”

“No! Even with spells, I could make you ill, and even kill you!”

“Eh, the duration of the effect?”

“Coming near, but still wrong. The strength of a spell depends on the strength of the wizard. The effect of a potion depends on the quality of the ingredients and the skill of the person making it.”

“Potions last longer?”

“No, not necessarily. Potions made by young students mostly last minutes, if talented hours. Normally the effect of spells ends if the wizard dies. But even that can be prevented, though the truth demands that very few wizards are capable of altering a spell in this way.”

“With potions, you need a cauldron, and with spells you need a wand?”

“Still wrong. For very strong potions, you also need your wand, and very powerful crafted wizards can cast spells without needing a wand! And your suggestion is only about the making of potions.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“So, no-one at all?”

Alexandra tried carefully, “Distance and time. When casting a spell the wizard and the subject must be near.”

Peatery looked delighted, “That is good enough! Like I promised, ten points for Gryffindor! No wizard I know can cast a spell having an effect on someone or something not near to them, although there are recorded exceptions to that rule. But there are potions made by wizards generations ago, and are still potent.”

He pointed at a pile of papers, “I've got the results from the initial tests, the written theoretically ones. You all succeed, meaning that there is no objection for you starting this second year. However...”

All instant relief died away in split seconds.

“However, I still hold on to the tradition of cooking at our first lesson. I dare say that the level of expectation is raised somewhat, compared to previous year. Consider that as the practical part of the test.”

Instead of picking a recipe from a pile of them, they were given one by Peatery himself.

Lily heard several sighs of relief, even from Snape sitting behind them, “Oh, just soup!”

The professor reminded them, “Do not forget, at the end of the class, you have to eat what you made, and if I consider it safe enough, other will taste it also.

“Oh, no soup for us! What is this, a souffle? It looks difficult...”

“And indeed it is miss. McGonagall. Soup or basic pastry is the much I can ask of most of them. However, considering what

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

the two of you were able to do last year, I am entitled to expect more of you. Good luck!”

She looked at Lily, “What is it, and is it very difficult?”

Smiling self confidently, her friend replied, “Remember those tiny pies my mother made last week, the evening before we left? Those were souffles.”

“The one that earned your father a slap on his wrist?”

Now Lilly grinned at the memory, “Yes. They are not difficult to make. Important items are preparations and self-constraint. You have to take care that the oven is at the right temperature, and that it remains at the same temperature. So you can not open it to see if all goes well. Give it its designated time and have faith in it. So lets start with firing up our oven!”

Next they went obtaining the ingredients. Most of them were to be found in one of the cupboards or one specially chilled ones. But when Lily turned to the Peatery, and asked, “Where can I find a proper thermometer, Parmezan, Gruyère, and Comté?” He said nothing, but looked quizzically, surprised and just pointed.

Later on the professor still said nothing when he looked when Alexandra was grating the cheese while Lily was making a white sauce. After they filled 24 molds and placed them in the oven, waited for several minutes and reduced the temperature from 400 to 350, Peatery asked, “There nothing I can do for you, I believe?”

“Actually, there is, sir. Can you place a spell of the door so that it remains locked for the next fifteen minutes?”

“I'm glad to find out that there is still something for you to learn,” and he obliged.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“It is just to avoid temptation for myself and *accidents* by others...” And she left, starting to clear her desk.

At the end of the lesson, Peatery said, “I can honestly come to the conclusion that you all have passed the practical test. You all succeeded the test, all considering your abilities. I hope you enjoyed it much more than the previous time. You are all free to go, except two, Potter and Evans.”

Alexandra looked surprised, while Potter mumbled, “Not again.”

When all other students were gone, Peatery started, “I'll begin with you, Potter. Did you really think that I didn't notice that you swapped salt and sugar at Snape's desk?”

“He started, but Snape just managed to swap sugar with sugar. I knew what he tried to do, so I made a pre-emptive swap. Thought it was fair to get even.”

With a sly smile, James added, “And it didn't make his 'result' taste worse.”

“Idiot! That's not the point. The rivalry between Slytherin and Gryffindor goes back ages, centuries. I could or should have responded immediately, but that would have cause you to flunk, going back to the first year. You and Snape. That's not worth it. If you want to beat him, do it differently. If he gets a 'Poor' for something, YOU should get at least an 'Acceptable'. If he get's that, you should try for 'Exceeding' or 'Outstanding'. That is the proper and the only way to beat them.

“Thank you, Sir. That very kind of you. My parents would not have been too pleased if I was put back a year.”

“That is also the major reason for not acting like I should have done.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Oh?”

“Your father and I go back a long, long time. I considered him as my friend, still do, even before he swore his oath not to trust an adult anymore again.”

Peatery looked back through the years.

“Your dad and I were classmates, and facing an impossible physics exam. Our teacher was half-human, half-goblin. Not liked by neither students nor colleges. He made it impossible to get a decent grade for physics. If you've learned everything and worked really hard on your exercise, you were glad to have finished 60% in time. A real Ravenclaw nerd managed to obtain 72%. According to rumors, he had claimed to retire if a student would manage to properly answer 100% of all questions.”

“So what happened?”

“We borrowed an experimental 'time turner', and improved bits and pieces of it. Near the end Edward asked permission to have a leak, and returned, So did I. But we also moved back to the beginning of the examination time and entered the examination hall at the other end. The other 'US' started the same examination papers, but at the second half. So that year there was not one, but there were two students doing 100% of all questions. In time.”

“Wasn't that slightly cheating, Sir?” James asked carefully.

“Perhaps, perhaps not. Everyone was relieved when that teacher retired. Even Dibbet. But we did the exam ourselves without any help, just some extra time. We just 'bent' the rules a bit, deviated.”

After a brief moment of silence, he turned to Lily.

“And that brings me to you, young lady.”

With a shock, Lily found herself looked at.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“What did I do wrong, professor?”

“I gave you the recipe for a vanilla souffle, and you changed it into a cheese souffle...”

“That would match better with all the soup the others were making.”

“Without a recipe at hand?”

“Eh, yes, Sir.”

Peatery sat still for a moment.

“You must understand this very well. You did well, very well, I enjoyed it and it was tasty, and like you said a better combination with what the other made or try to make. However, do not try this with real potions. Not unless you know what you are doing!”

He quickly made a note in his agenda.

“This is an omission in our textbooks. They all expect students to follow the instruction to the letter. I'll deal with it our next lesson. That is about it.”

“Thank you, Professor.”

“Potter? I think you should pay more attention to miss. Evans. You could learn from her!”

“Oh, and Lily? Can you write down your recipe?”

With a big smile, she left.

Although Lily had received exemptions for attending the class English, she attended every time the class had to make test-papers, like all of the other students that were not obliged to be present at all classes. In this respect, Lily was not such a huge odd-one-out, all though most of the others relieved students were from Ravenclaw or were students that had to do the entire year again as they flunked some of the other essential subjects.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

So Lily found herself behind a desk with some empty sheets of parchments, like all of the other students, waiting for instructions.

This time, it wasn't about spelling, idioms, or proverbs. A little later professor Undertow arrived, with a number of empty canisters.

“Good morning to you all. Today we are doing an unscheduled exercise. I mean, it is something we do at school with every second-years, but it is not something you could prepare for, meaning no prior learning. Although I am aware that for some students, who have been thinking about their future, it will be slightly easier.

You all know by now about both worlds, I hope.

I want you all to write an article, about 500 words about what you think you'll be doing and having achieved in ten years time from now. That is roughly two pages. Don't come up with lame excuses as 'I am the eldest in my family so I must follow-up my father, so I'll be a lawyer, doctor, reverent, drunk, a no-good.' Neither will I accept your gender as the cause for just tending children. Even if that is predetermined, write about what you would have liked to become.

Every 100-words missing will cost you a point, every extra 100 words will compensate for other errors. Duplicate lines don't count.

After error reviewing your papers will not be returned. That is no excuse for writing nonsense. The most hilarious ones, will be on display in the teachers room. In ten, twenty, perhaps a hundred year from now, we will read them all again. Yesterday I came across the paper written by our current minister of

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Magic. When he was your age he was convinced he would remain unemployed. Mostly the families with strict traditions ended up on positions they wrote about. We even had a student thinking, or hoping, he could start a career at Gringotts, as he was good with numbers and with communicating with people. Now we all know Tom, as the bartender of 'The Leaky Cauldron', which proves that one never can tell. Most informative are the papers from students expecting to work at a traveling fair, doing divination. None were right, which indicate they were not meant or suited for the job.

Perhaps in some years time, you'll be invited to the banquet at the start of the year, and see how reality had caught up with you. The most interesting will be published. I would advice five to ten minutes contemplating and making a draft. There should be plenty of ink and sheets of parchment available.”

All students, including the more literate students receiving exemptions, needed the full available time.

Fifteen minutes before the lesson ended, Underhill warned them all, to round up their immortalizations, and finally “Quills down!” came.

Later it looked like the students left a battlefield instead of a classroom.

Some students exclaimed, “Even though I know what I want to do, how to spend 500 words on a shop assistant at Flourish & Blobs?”

And another one said, “My parents reminded me constantly that I'm predestined to work at the Hogwarts Express...”

“Why?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“They complain that I'm always late with everything, and my room stinks. That is why!”

But Lily complained: “As a little girl, I dreamed of becoming a doctor, like my father. But for a girl, that is still very hard. I knew I had to be realistic, so being a nurse appeared to me as achievable. When I first learned about my gift, I hoped I could follow my mother’s ideals, simply ‘making a difference’ but bound by the vows that magic should be kept hidden, that was a huge disappointment. Truly, what can you do with the gift that is worthwhile making a living off? When I look at the people on Diagon-Alley, Hogsmeade, the Leaky-Cauldron, they are absolutely no examples. The only possible destinations we heard of, are here at Hogwarts, St-Mungo hospital and the Ministry. With as little information as we have, it seems like shooting blindly. Coming from an all-Muggle background, I am still exploring this Magical world and it's possibilities. How do I know what kind of jobs are available here? I didn't get the impression that they were looking for new staff at Olivanders'. If I can become a doctor at St-Mungo, that would imply that in ten years time, I'm still studying.”

Alexandra confirmed her trouble with the assignment: “I was also brought up hardly with any witchcraft. I too have truly not the faintest idea, exactly what I could become. My background is one on teachers and professors. I would like to help children, to motivate them, communicate. Some teachers say, when in doubt, be realistic, focus on what you think is achievable, don't go chasing your dreams, you'll get disillusioned. When you

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

play-it-safe, you might not get disillusioned, but after some years you might become disappointed, 'What if I did try to...?' and then it is too late. I remember what my father used to say, as a pilot, he gave the advice: 'when not sure, aim higher!'

Lily looked surprised, "With what you told me before, that as a little girl you could sense who was lying or not, I would think you would be contemplating about becoming a judge in the Muggle world, or reside on the Wizengamot, the magical tribunal!"

"But then I have to tell them, that it is just my feeling!"

"No, my friend! Those who accuse and defend, they have to come up with prove. It is up to others to decide if they believe what is presented to them. If you know, or feel, that someone is lying with a straight face, whatever the presented proof, you are miles ahead."

"No Lily, you are wrong. There is no such thing as an absolute truth. What I sense, or what might be revealed with 'truth position' and proper questioning is 'what the other believes to be the truth', that could be something totally different!"

"True, but still... you could help investigators?"

"Perhaps. But often the people in control, are not interested in *the truth*. They have already made up their mind, and only need other people to come up with reasonable evidence that suits their outcome. I'm not so naive to think that a girls *feeling* can make any difference."

"That's rather gloomy, not? So what did you came up with, what are your deepest desires?"

"To be honest, growing strawberries, or studying philosophy."

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“That sounds much more realistic, you could combine those two: finding out what people think when they ate a strawberry ice-cream!”

Though James had other difficulties: “I knew magic as long as I can remember, but still it isn't easy. I felt my future was as flexible as a concrete brick. As an only child, I am supposed to follow up my father. Money, numbers and even more numbers. Horrible! Accountant or clerk at Gringotts. I was glad that dad also became interested in the environment. And traveling is also nice. But flying has opened my eyes. The feeling of being free! Perhaps I can become a Quidditch player or teacher. Writing 500 words wasn't difficult, but I feared I made too many spelling mistakes.”

Sirius wasn't overoptimistic: “I'm a no-good, and excel in frustrating people, doing devious things, cheating, lying. Telling people what they like to hear and do something else. So that leaves only one career: politics! Although a newspaper journalist might also be something. Perhaps there is an opening with the Daily Misfit eh Prophet.”

Remus had other concerns, “I wonder if they would let me work in the zoo... I really fancy doing night shifts there.”

Peter Pettygrew reassured him, “I've heard there is some sort of safety arrangement at the ministry, they rather have you doing nothing meaningful there than having too many unemployed wizards hanging around in the Cauldron or Hogshead. And there is always a shortage of people willing to work at Azkaban.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Are you insane? Working at a prison? I heard that the guards can drive the prisoners insane. And it is crawling with rats.”

“Yummy. Working there is still better than being locked up there, I've heard.”

Next Saturday, during breakfast, Dibbet called for their attention. “Please continue to devour the sandwiches, porridge or juice or whatever, while I have some announcements to make. Please heed my words if you want to avoid injuries or even worse. For those students from the third year and beyond who have permission to visit the village 'Hogsmeade' nearby this is indeed important.”

Even though neither James nor Sirius were in possession of such permit, they listened carefully.

“You all know, half way between Hogwarts and the village there is an abandoned, some say a haunted house, that is named 'the shrieking shack'. We know that sometimes students make wages who dare to come near or even visit the place. I advise you all not to do so anymore. We heard that some villagers were found unconscious near the house. Initially, they wanted us to see into that matter, but I told them that it was more something for the ministry. However, the Aurors declined, saying they had already more than enough to deal with, considering living beings, so they might have time to investigate in about hundred fifty years from now. They said that the issue was now known and filed, so no need for any more complaints. Honestly speaking, after they burned their fingers investigating our haunted corridor on our third floor, they are not so eager to go ghost-hunting. But still, they do see metaphorical ghosts

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

where nothing is to be found. I believe that our caretaker Mr. Filch isn't very keen of recuperating students from that location and unless you are a very close friend of him, neither should you.”

Most of the students grinned hearing the professors attitude with respect to the ministry.

“The other point that I need to bring to your attention, lies much closer at home, I mean Hogwarts.

Last year we started an experiment, with madam Sprout, some other teachers and some volunteers of the seventh year. But despite a much promising start, it seems to have gone wrong and beyond our control. The initial idea, that some had the previous year, was to experiment with giving tree's some sort of consciousness, awareness. Something intriguing, exciting. Breeding some new sorts of Ents, beings described in the books of Tolkien. And perhaps their wood might be used for making a new type of wand.”

Here Dibbet paused for a moment.

“We knew that there was a possibility that it could lead to some unexpected behavior. That is always possible when doing new experiments. Initially, all went very well, all seeds sprout very quickly and grew very well. Once in a while, we noticed that some of the little trees started to misbehave, tearing the buttons of one's coat, make you stumble and so on, we initially suspected that they reached puberty. But it seems that one of them, this willow is aware he can move his branches, but that he is stuck in the mud, however, this time, literally. And he takes it out on anyone who comes near.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

After Madam Sprout was severely beaten up, when she tried to prune that tree, we informed the Ministry, Department of Mystification, that we were thinking about giving it “the axe”. But promptly I received a howler (yes, indeed, even heads of schools don't escape those) that I was not allowed to condemn a living entity. Technically speaking we are very well able to end this nuisance, but the Ministry, again, will not let me do so. So, to cut it short, I mean my warning, some of those trees are willing and capable of attacking teachers. I very well understand that for some of you this makes it very tempting to try to become friends with them, but no! Please stay away from them. I will not risk any of my staff to rescue any of you from their branches. I leave it up to your own fantasies what could happen if you get caught by those roots.”

He picked up a dry biscuit and ground it in one hand.

“We placed countless times fences around those trees, but that seems to infuriate them, especially the willow. He, or perhaps she, smashed them to tinder wood, since then we named it 'The Whomping Willow'. It is nothing magical, just a nuisance. In either case, Hogwarts was, is and remains the safest place on earth, if you know where to stay away from.”

The 'other' end

As to be expected, both Lily and Alexandra were eager to ask any of the seasoned professors about traveling in general and the ancient stones in particular, but especially the first weeks all of the professors were constantly busy with testing students, reviewing papers and preparing for upcoming lessons. A quick glance at their new teacher spells, professor Flitwick, told them enough, much too young. Finally, they managed to speak undisturbed with Dumbledore.

“Sir, can you tell us a bit more about how wizards travel?”

“There is very much to tell about. You know about broomstick-flying, although it is said that some wizards can make any device flying. Secondly, we have the Floo-grid. If you have clearance from the ministry, department of traveling, you are allowed to connect your fireplace to the grid. This is very helpful for wizarding families that live in the Muggle world, as they can leave and return without being seen. The downside is that Floo-powder is expensive. Oh and I forgot about riding on the back of Mythical creatures, although there are not many dragon-riders anymore, and you can not use them to fly over Muggle-territory. Then we have apparating and disappearing. Before you are allowed to travel this way, you need to do an exam, lessons for this are given in the sixth year. If you can not master it properly enough, you can get splinched. Very unpleasant! And finally, you have portal-keys.”

“Yes! Can you tell us about those, Sir?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

They are used to travel almost instantly. Most of them are produced by the travel department of the ministry, and must be ordered well in advance. Some can even be used by Muggles. You have single-fair keys that only work in one direction and some that work vice-versa. When ordering you can specify a moment or a window-of-time in which they operate. And also the number of times it can be used. All of these aspects are reflected in its price. Currently, there is a high demand for them, they are included in commercial adds so that people instantly visit those shops.”

“Only wizards from the ministry can make them?”

“There are some wizards who are capable of making their own keys, but as far as I know, they all work at that department. It pays well and there is a high demand for them. The magic behind it is so complicated that it is no school material and even slight mistakes can cause grave injuries, like with apparating.”

“And those keys travel along with the person, the traveler?”

“Indeed, at least for two-way keys. Pointless for a single-fare-key. But why are you so interested?”

“Well, Sir, this summer we were near some old stones, and Lily and I felt the strange sensation of traveling. But these were much too lumpy and heavy to travel along.”

“Ah, you have been at Stone-Henge?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“In that case, yes, you are close. You can ask professor Binns much about them. He knows much more than I do.”

“But can they be used as such?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Oh no, my girl. But before I tell you what I know, I must warn you: they are dangerous!”

“What do you mean, in what way are they dangerous?”

“You accidentally discovered what many wizards have discovered. A very very long time ago they have been used as such. But the knowledge about its use is lost and gone. And for centuries they try to solve the puzzle. But it has taken its toll. Many wizards died while trying or completely disappeared without a trace, forever. They found out that the central stone controls it all. You can put them in sending or receiving mode. But they never found out where you could travel to or how to set the destination. So again I warn you two, don't temper with them, the magic is extremely delicate and the power behind them is unprecedented. I remember that Binns once told me, that according to a legend, they trapped all energy of an entire thunderstorm into Stone-Henge.”

“Thank you, professor, I will treat them with more respect than just another wizardry item.”

“Very wise indeed! Long talking makes me thirsty. Are you perhaps interested in a Lemon sorbet?”

“Are they magical? We are certainly willing to investigate them.”

Moments later the girls walked back to the common room.

“Are we any wiser?”

“Yes and no. We now know that our findings and assumptions are correct. Its purpose was traveling. And we have been warned, they are dangerous.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“But also that previous wizards found out how to switch them, on-and-off.”

“True, but you can bet your life on that no living soul is going to tell us how to do that.”

“In that case, we have to turn to the non-living!”

“What?”

“Either the library or professor Binns.”

“I don't expect such info to be found in the normal section of the library. Probably the staff section, or even the restricted session. So unreachable for us.”

Lily thought for a while, “Probably for you, but perhaps not for me. With my special class, I also have special permissions in the lib.”

The next Friday afternoon professor McGonagall and a dozen students gathered together in one of the classrooms. As always they had formed a circle of chairs. A number of students were new, they were replacing the students that were in their final year and had graduated and left school.

Lily realized that she would be missing Martin Steward, the former Gryffindor head boy, Quidditch captain and also a member of the dreaming-class.

A number of other students introduced themselves:

“Mary MacCammon, Gryffindor.”

“Peter Mangnall, Gryffindor”

“Nicol MacMartin fourth year, Gryffindor,”

“Marissa Hemsley Ravenclaw, fourth year”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Daimh Geddes, the same”

“Morwen Merricks, Gryffindor.”

All of the others members did the introduction. As expected the new members browsed their eyes in surprise when they found out that Lily was only in her second year at school.

Peter said, “Don't be surprised, in some aspects she is many years ahead of us.”

Minerva stated “My intention is to continue, where we stopped previous year. I would like to do this under the same conditions. Can you explain them to the new students, Peter?”

“Certainly. We have the privilege to use your first name here professor, but only here, else face points subtraction.”

Grinning.

“Secondly, we should treat each other as equals with respect no matter what we see, hear or do in any dream.”

“Correct and very important.”

“Thirdly, none of what we learn or encounter here, may leave this room! No telling to other students, teachers, staff or family. But on the other hand, all of our observations must be noted down, in one of the special books. I presume you have some new ones, Minerva.”

“Yes, but I have some additional information. Besides us, the head of Ravenclaw and the schoolmaster knew about our experiments. However, at the end of last year, the heads of the other two houses were also informed. This was not my doing, but a decision made by professor Dibbet unfortunately, something even he regrets now. This might implicate that there are more students within Slytherin or even some people outside of

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

school who are more or less aware of what we do. Finally, another second-year student from Gryffindor is fully aware. I can vouch for my niece silence. Next Peter?”

“Thanks to the findings of Lily, we can share dreams. She can do this all by herself, but we can do the same if we use a special potion and spell, the Simul-Somnia.”

Much of the facial expressions changed from surprise into awe.

“And finally, I think, she also discovered it is possible to heal people, at least Lily can, we were not able to do that, yet I hope. Something worthwhile investigating”

Expressions changed from awe in deep respect.

Here Minerva took over, “That very well sums it up Peter, thank you. The discovery how to make the potion and the sifting for the new spell have been done by Martin Steward, who graduated last year.”

“So what next?”

“I have to confess something. Lily has done several healings: A Muggle-woman, the son of a professor, and a relative of one of Hogwarts' staff. This, combined with the discovery of a new spell and potion is known by people from the ministry. Unavoidable this resulted in a lengthy list of people with any sort of ailment.”

This news didn't please Lily very much, “I fully appreciate that for those people it is an ultimate or final option, a chance in a million, and I am thankful that it is me, Lily, who can offer them help, but....”

“But what?”

“Perhaps I still know too little about biology and medicine to appreciate the extent of what I am doing, but to me, it is much

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

of the same!”

“Absolutely not! The first couple of *patients* you have cured had some mysteriously *wrong* inside their head. What exactly was wrong with them was impossible for us to determine.”

“But with Miranda, that was absolutely something else, just as your father wrote, even with traditional Muggle medicine, the illness was for every doctor to easy to diagnose, and there was nothing they could be done. Even your father had given up hope for that patient. And look what you have done! You have given back her life! A wonderful thing to do.”

A vivid discussion started. While many questions were asked, Lily looked at all of their faces, all enthusiastic, but afraid to ask if they perhaps might also share the experience.

Suddenly she realized that it had turned very quiet. Minerva had asked her a question, and they were all looking at her. “Everything alright with you, Lily?”

“Yeah, perfectly. But I was just contemplating, I would like to try something.” She looked at all the others. “I can imagine that you all want to try something like what I just did the previous year with Martin. But that would take long, while there *might* be another way.”

Looking at Minerva she asked, “How about trying a circle exercise in which we all participate? I am not sure if it will work, but can't we try?”

Minerva was slightly taken apart, “Aren't you rushing now? I'm not sure if it possible, where would you focus on? The previous time I asked Martin to hold on to a happy thought or feeling he would like to share with you. But on the other hand, I would love to experience something like that.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Then Peter said, “It is indeed a wonderful feeling, a once in a lifetime event Martin said and I’m eager for another trip, but I think as a precaution at least one should not participate, just in case. I am not so experienced as Minerva, but I think of all here present she should be at least one of us to go along with Lily. If I stay here, and something goes wrong, I can get help.”

“Very well thought of!” Minerva concluded. “Very well then. Let’s make a circle, keep the chairs close together, otherwise, it is not so comfortable for your arms.”

Because many of the students were too excited about the prospect of sharing their dreams, it was decided that those too eager, would use a sleeping potion to calm down.

Minerva sat at the right hand of Lily, and Mary on her left. They were complaining about the potions taste, one of the naming it a mild version of “living death”, and suggesting to ask the aid of a certain first-year student at potion making. While she still heard the grinning, Lily tried again to concentrate and to clear her mind. Still, some vague thoughts crossed here mind, “Wasn’t it dangerous? What was that ‘living-death’ they had mentioned anyway, a joke, something serious?” She tried to let it all go, and tried to remember a summer holiday.....

It was so warm in the classroom, it reminded her of a garden-party, long ago. She opened her eyes and found herself there. But this was not the garden at home. No, this one was huge! She looked around and there were hundreds of tables with drinks and food on it, and she heard from far away music, wasn’t that a band playing? She neither knew nor care. There


Lily Evans' Diary - year two

were thousand or more people around, all unfamiliar faces but in a jolly good mood.

Suddenly she noticed some of the students. “Nice party Lily, any idea what the occasion is? All of them are nicely dressed-up! And have you seen Minerva yet?” When she looked at all the other people, she suddenly realized, most of them were old. Their group of young students was the odd one out. As soon as she realized this, it felt, strange, like they were party crashers and didn't belong here.

They could not find the professor among all these old people, and actually, it was Minerva, who found them. “Glad to find you all, strange place. Strange bright light, though no sun. And did you notice that despite all the parasols, there are absolutely no shadows here! And have you seen the entrance?”

None of the others had, so Minerva led them away.

All the people around here seemed very content, Annabel, the sixth year student from Ravenclaw, said, “Wait a moment, I want to know how real this is.” She walked towards one on the tables and return with a tray full of glasses. She took a little sip from it, and thought for a while and took a big gulp. “Seems safe enough, before we went here, I had a dry throat, It certainly helped against that. I'm sure it is not wine or cider, wait a moment, I have heard about it long, long ago,  ambrosia!”

Robin tried to get the attention of Minerva, “Prof, I know it sounds silly, but I think I sort-of recognize one the people here. I must be mistaken, it is probably a look-a-like, but that woman over there, in the green dress, is just like my mother. But it can not be so, as she is ill, and in a wheelchair for over more than fifteen years. But the resemblance is scary. And also that

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

woman keeps on looking at ME, with a strange look in her eyes. She said 'Is it you, Robin? You shouldn't be here, it's not your time.' After I replied that I was only visiting she whispered in my ear: 'I was Murdered, by Voldemort'. This place plays scary tricks with your mind, for sure."

They continued to walk toward the perimeter, it looked like the was a half height fence all around the party, with neither beginning nor ending.

A short moment later on, they found the entrance Minerva spoke about. The entrance was formed by a long dark tunnel. How long that tunnel was no one could determine, neither where it originate from. Neither of them was able to get near the tunnel. It seemed to repel everyone.

Suddenly Mary remarked, "Did you notice that there are constantly people coming in, but I've not seen anybody leave." And indeed, once in a while people came out of the tunnel, blinking their eyes against the very bright light. Most of them were welcomed by other people.

"Perhaps there is a separate exit..."

Minerva and her students decided to stay at that position for a while and analyze the constant stream of arrivals. Each one of them looked happy and surprised and was welcomed as a long-missing relative. "I wonder if they can see us, either they can not, or they don't pay any attention to us." Angelina looked closely, and said, "No, I do think they do see us, but simply disregard us because they too know that we don't belong here, and they are looking for familiar faces, and once they found them they seem to vanish into thin air."

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

She hardly finished speaking, when a rather odd, old looking lady came directly towards them. She examined each of them intensively, one by one until she was standing in front of Lily.

“Ah, finally! There you are, I am glad I finally have found you.”

Lily managed to say “Excuse me for saying, and I certainly do not want to be disrespectful, but have we met before? If so, I am afraid that I can not remember that anymore.”

While saying, a feeling of some familiarity grew, but Lily still thought that the lady was mistaken, and had recognized her as somebody else.

“No, Lily, certainly not, it was a bit hard, but I recognize you from the photo's your family sent to me. I have waited such a long time, but I knew that one day, sooner or later, we would meet in this very place. It turned out to be later, much later.”

At that moment Lily was absolutely dumb-struck. How in heaven's sake could she know her name? What could she say? As she had guessed Lily's thoughts, the granny said, “Perhaps if you think at home, try to remember the old photo's there. I am ... your grand-grandmother!”

Without waiting on any comment, while looking around she continued, “I have always thought and hoped it would be like this.” Suddenly a small group of other party-residents came towards the old lady. At least *they* seem to know and to recognize each other.

The old woman spoke again, “Oh Lily, just look who are here, my own parents and uncle Gustav.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Lily thought she heard one of the others saying to the woman, who believed she was her grandmother, “What took you so long Diana, did you lose your way?”

The old lady turned instead, looking straight in Minerva's face and said. “No, I had to wait, until I was sure Lily found her way here. I know that she is dreaming, but I am ... not. Please, Minerva, take good care of my granddaughter, she will definitely need all of your help. And remember, no joking! I am dead-serious!”

She turned again saying, “Now I can continue, at last! A new generation that can take over the burden. Behave and be brave!” and she walked away talking and laughing with others and a moment later they were indistinguishable melted into the huge amount of people or might even have vanished all together.

Lily and Minerva looked at each other and said simultaneously: “Time for us all to leave!”

That very moment, as they opened their eyes, most of the other student were also awake, or half way. Most of the students were talking about the strange party and were excited to be together in such a strange place.

Minerva sat silently, winked Peter, and said softly “Fetch Dippet and Dumbledore: Immediately, no excuse, highest priority.”

Within (it seemed seconds) Peter returned with both professors looking very much alarmed. “Is it THAT seriously, Minerva?”

“Absolutely headmaster. It is way much more far-reaching than we ever have contemplated. I'll explain it to you.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

She turned around looking at the still excited group of students.

“Have you any idea where we just came from?”

“No, absolutely no idea, probably an imaginary place, nice party, though. Plenty of good food and drinks. A pity I didn't ask for the address. I still can taste that drink.”

“A grand opening of a home for the elderly, perhaps? I mean, most of them looked rather old.”

Facing Dibbet, she said “Professor, let us all be thankful we found Lily first instead of someone else. She has dormant powers and capabilities that might have been described in myths and legend but were never taken seriously. She must be properly guided and protected. I can tell you she is the first true dream-walker in about 1500 years or more. And I don't mean someone who walks while sleeping. She really walks through other people dreams, and take them along to strange places.”

Looking at the group, she said with a quirk in her voice, “Dear students, where we have been, is one of the several places where we will all go, once. And I hope, depending on what you do with your lives it will be *this* option. I think we've got a glimpse of the after-life, heaven. But never in recorded history did someone go there and returned, let alone bringing along some witnesses. You all have seen the other end of the tunnel that dying people talk about. We have visited the afterlife, but without dying. And we were able to return to our normal lives. I very much understand that what I now ask of you is hard. But please keep this to yourself, while we are trying to find out

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

what the consequences and possibilities are. Just imagine what will happen if other people find out.”

She looked at several students. “Robin, Lily and I found out that 'others residents over there', not part of our group *here*, can speak to us while we were *there*. And say sensible things. Just imagine what other dead people might say to us. But also, is a trip to this 'destination' reproducible? Is it safe to do so?”

Dibbet confirmed, “When the ministry heard that you could help ill people that no-one else could help, that caused a commotion that still isn't over. Then the discovery of a brand new spell. If they ever find out about this, I fear they'll take you, Lily, away for examination, and keep you there. The Ministry is filled with people that would like a word from or sent a message to a relative who passed away. So, not a word to anyone!”

Boredom

Not all lessons were as exciting as the extra dream-class that Lily participated in. Few of Hogwarts' students were aware of what was happening there, and if they were, they would have been quite jealous, as most classes were simply studying, practicing and evaluating. For the few students, like Lily, who came from a pure Muggle background, everything that was even the slightest related to Magic, was in itself already special and exciting. Most of the other students had different opinions. Even subjects that would have been impossible to attend to at 'normal' Muggle schools, like Divination, were to them boring, at least to some.

Sirius dare to complain half-load in the class, “Perhaps Muggles find this interesting, but I have huge difficulties keeping awake. I thought History was dull, both Muggle or Magical, so I was expecting much more from other subjects. For instance, each and every week we are cleaning the crystal balls!”

This got noticed by the teacher, “Well Mr. Black, we at Hogwarts are sorry that your levels of expectation do not meet with the intended educational path. That might indicate that Divination is not one of your strongest talents, otherwise, you should have known this. Before you can understand any of the metaphysical meanings of the patterns of the cards, you must learn to understand each and every one of the 78 different cards.

What the picture shows, what it might mean, what it does not mean, irrespectively how you lay down your cards. Therefore we started with the first of the four minor arcana, sticks or per-

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

haps you recognize them as spades. The intention was to close this tarot-subject with the major arcana, but I'm open to persuasion to alter the order of doing so. Furthermore, I need every week a class to check if all cards are still present. Every year we find that some students try to collect cards thirteen or twenty to scare others, but *death* and *devil* are not something sinister. For instance, Death means change, possible liberation, new paths. But we come more to that later."

Lily asked, "And the crystal ball?"

"Well someone has to clean it at the end of the day, not? You don't expect me to do such chores!"

"But why us?"

"Someone, I won't disclose who, thought he was funny, tried to clean it once with sand and soda. Scratching the surface that badly that even students in the seventh year hardly saw anything anymore."

All the students looked at James, who tried to look very innocent, but the grinning Sirius beside him made obvious he knew more about it, even without using any divination.

Quickly, to divert the attention, Sirius tried, "But defense against the dark arts? Some days I can leave my wand at the dormitory."

"Dada? You have to know and understand fully what it is that might come in your way before you can defend against it. In the first place the theory, what and why, and perhaps later on practice!"

"Or even Transfiguration! Last week we had to transform needles into pins. So pointless!"

"Well then, do you know the difference, when you need one or the other?"

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Uh... no. They both are thin and you use them for clothing, I think.”

“One has a thick head, like some of you, and the other has an eye, but still can not see, again, like some of you.”

Many students laughed.

“Both of them are used for position fixing, one momentarily, the other permanently with the use of a thread.”

“That is so Mugglish! Real wizards just use a simple spell for that!”

“But real wizards do not have to learn transfiguration anymore. That's the point!”

Looking at the class, the professor continued, “That is why the main focus of the first few years lies on the subject of Spells. The better you perform at that subject, the sooner you will be ready for advanced use of Magic. And if not, be content with refreshing exercises like flying!”

Obviously, most of the students were are content with that answer. So to make it even worse they heard, “And please understand, if you fail to get 'Spells' to an acceptable level as soon as possible, you will be condemned to stick to 'Muggle-arts', 'Muggle-behaviour', 'Muggle-society', 'History of Magic' or 'tending magical creatures'. And you have to face the risk that if you fail the OWL's, the Ordinary Wizardry Level exams, you will never be able to leave the school with your wand, no matter how talented you think you are.”

To make things even still worse, the next lessons after a short break wasn't also living up to many students expectations.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

With a big yawn Sirius and James entered the classroom for another lesson “Defense Against the Dark Arts.” and they took their seats and the last row.

“I don't understand why some of the teachers name this 'DADA'! It is just DAFT.”

“And what does 'DAFT' stand for?” a familiar voice behind him asked.

Without looking over his shoulder, to check who replied to him, James answered, “I don't know yet, but when I wake up at the end of this hour you might ask again. Perhaps I know by then.”

The same voice, but at a considerable sharper pitch said, “In that case, Mr. Potter, Mr. Black you must change positions towards the first row. So I can detect if and when you return to the land of the awakening. For you two, DADA means '*Defense against Detention Again!*'”

Immediately the classroom, where all students were talking to each other became perfectly silent. James turned his head and looked into the face of his teacher, who stood on one of the shadowy corners.”

Totally taken by surprise, James apologized, “Sorry professor! I wasn't aware of the fact that you were...”

Still pointing towards the first empty row of seats, the professor looked at them and then turned to the class.

“This subject has very mixed reputations. Most of my colleges are unwilling to give it, while a very few are very much eager to teach Defense. You know why?”

Without waiting for an answer, he continued.

“It is beyond reasoning to agree that the subject by itself is very important. But.... According to most of us, it is ridiculous to

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

start with it in the lower classes. Some of the first year students don't even know how to hold their wand properly! And they should start with the most delicate spells?

That is why some years ago the first three years this subject was given by a squib, as it was only theoretically, not practice.” He gazed at the class while walking to his desk.

“Some parents, however, try to convince the board that even junior students should give the opportunity to practice. Each year they try again and again. To avoid one student harming another one, our head found it wiser to appoint this subject to a teacher capable doing magic.”

He pointed at a pile of books, intended for students from the first til the final year.

“Look at those! A waste of parchment. According to the list of grades, you have been able to reproduce some of it contents, with various degree of success. I presume that can be accredited to the degree of sleepiness during the class.”

And with these words he looked specifically at James and Sirius. All students knew that professor Peatery looked very amiably, but could be very strict.

“After a first year of silly wand-waving, I seriously hope that you manage to cast some spells as they are intended to be. You should realize that any spell, yes, ANY SPELL, can be used to defend yourself. Besides those, there are indeed spells to block or revert curses aimed at you. I presume you know about or even practiced the summoning spell 'Accio'. This could be used for obtaining you opponents wand, but if he is more potent or experienced, that will not work. So the more specific spell for disarming 'Expelliarmus' might work better.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Any spell can be used to defend yourself, even the most simple ones. Is there anyone who can imagine one that could not be used?”

James raised his hand.

“Yes, Mr. Potter, do you have an answer of did you find out what daft means?”

Still embarrassed, James tried, “How about 'Lumos', a helpful spell in the dark, but not able to protect you?”

“No. Even something to lighten up. My college McGonagall found that out at her own peril. Some time ago, one of her students produced a far more brighter light than anyone had expected. Even she was blinded for several moments. In a situation, it could mean that you render your opponent completely defenseless. That technique is even used by my Muggle armies in flash bombs when they attack at night.”

Suddenly Lily felt very sorry, “So even such harmless spells?”, she asked.

Peatey looked at her. “There are no such things as 'harmless spells', Miss. Evans.”

“Yes, there are spells that only kill or harm your opponent.

Those will not be taught in any year, and the use of them are forbidden. Use of them will result in a 'single-fair' ticket to the wizardry prison Azkaban. But even simple spells can be used with drastic effects.”

“Anyone to try to come up with a different view?”

“How about the spell to freeze someone for a moment, 'Petrificus Totalis'? That should be harmless enough!”

“Did you think so, Mr. Black?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

The teacher seemed to have forgotten the silly remarks at the beginning of that class or considered their positive attitude enough remorse.

“When dueling one-to-one here in the courtyard perhaps. But did you ever thought of what would happen if your opponent was swimming, or flying on a broom at four hundred yards altitude? Death would be inevitable.

“Nice try, though. Anyone else?”

Alexandra tried, “How about temporarily memory loss, 'Obliviate'?”

“Very good indeed! If your opponent forgets what he wants to do, who his enemy is, you could gain the upper hand. However, what if he blocks and reflects that spell to you or your friends? It would render yourself defenseless. So you see: Any tool or spell is dangerous in the hands of untrained people!

With a scorned looked he looked at all of those books. “In neither of those, they point out how important it is to use your common sense! For instance 'Expelliarmus' is indeed a nice way of protecting yourself by disarming your opponent. But they failed to emphasize that you must keep your opponent disarmed. So it should always immediately be succeeded by an 'Accio wand', before your opponent does so. Or before he gets up and walks to his wand and simply picks it up again.

A student asked, “How about disabling the wand?”

“Dear boy, if you break them or burn them, you might have got rid of a wand, but you would have created an enemy for the rest of your life!”

Sad history lesson

Next Friday they found themselves in the dungeon again, for potions. Because of the previous explanation, most students began to understand why some lessons, which they started with high expectations at Hogwarts, started so awkwardly. Just for everyone's safety.

“Students, before we begin our lessons, a small unannounced test.”

Lily looked at Alexandra, knowing what would come.

“At what temperature freezes and boils water?”

“Easy, freezing at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, or zero Celsius and boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit, or 100 degrees Celsius. Or at any temperature with an appropriate spell.”

“You all agree with that answer, are you sure?”

Most students looked bewildered, what was this?

“I thought so, yes. Zero and 100 degrees Celsius. I presume this is a trick question!”

“Indeed! Pure water, H_2O , boils at that temperature if nothing is dissolved in it and at zero altitudes. And at 70,000 Atmosphere, ice will not melt anymore, no matter what temperature. That may sound like unearthly conditions, but during bad weather, low air-pressure, high up in the mountains, pure water can boil at around 70 degrees Celsius. Normally it boils at 100 C, but if I add table sugar to it, or salt, it boils at 102 degrees.”

“So why is this important, Sir?”

“If one of your potions needed to be heated up to 97,2 degrees, and you happen to be in a place where water boils at 70 degrees, how can you produce that potion? You simply can't!”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

He looked at the class, all dumb-struck.

“Some recipes tell you to boil it at 100 degrees for one minute and THEN add sugar to it. What happens if you deviate and first add the sugar? It probably tastes the same, but it will boil at a higher temperature. Most magical ingredients can not stand such alteration. This textbook is specifically revised for Hogwarts, here at this altitude in Scotland. The potion from page 473 has to be stirred seven times and clockwise before adding grinded bat-teeths. It is essential that after each stir, you have to wait until the fluid comes to rest. If not, you have to adjust temperatures or amount of other ingredients. Some potions need to be made during full or new moon. Some during thunderstorms. Deliberate alterations to existing potion recipes will be taught at NEWT-level. Very few have the gift of changing them correctly intuitively

After they were dismissed and enjoyed a small bread, they're were heading for another dull lesson: History. Immediately at the end of the class, they were waiting to have a quick word with the professor.

Dumbledore's warning with regards to the Stone-Henge's portal-stones only made Alexandra wonder about them even more. Previous wizard-researchers were able to solve the mystery of the central stone, but Lily and she thought that they knew the secret of the destinations. So at the end of dusty hours at professor Binns, when all other students had left, she decided to try to ask.

“Professor Binns, you have witnessed many events and magical discoveries. I know many of them are probably recorded in some books in our library, but I don't know where to look. Per-

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

haps you can help me with some background information or give some directions...”

“Certainly miss McGonegall.”

“Lily and I have been speaking with professor Dumbledore about the portal-stones at Stone-Henge. Can you also tell us something about them, do you know which wizard have examined them or so?”

Professor Binns laughed hollow, like only ghosts, can do,
“They seemed to haunt me like a ghost. The old traveling-stones from the Henge! The mere thought of them makes me feel as young as a first-year student.”

Alexandra realized that she has finally found a way to influence this professor.

“Yes, I very well remember the work of Meredudd MacChoiter and Eideard MacCaskill, sad story, sad sad story.

It must have been around 1800, yes 1805. Meredudd's hometown was near the stones, so she knew them like the palm of her hand, and Eideard was very much gifted, but also wrapped around her finger. If you know what I mean. He constantly tried to please and impress her. We visited them a lot at that time.”

“You said: we?”

After a ghostly sigh, “Yes, Lachlan Ayson and I. My dearest Lachlan.”

Both girls realized that they touch a very sensitive spot at the professor, and remained silent for a moment, while he dug up memories buried very deeply.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Then he continued. “After a longtime, Eideard finally found out how to activate the center stone. He was so excited! The next week he wanted to demonstrated it to us. I was standing near the central-stone. His girl Meredudd was sitting on one of the blue stones and Lachlan was standing near when Eideard performed his trick. And it had a horrible result, as his girl vanished immediately without a trace. It took some time before we realized what has happened. First, we all thought she was hiding behind one of the many stones or so. When we found out she had gone, we feared Eideard went crazy! We had no idea where she had traveled to. We did the only thing we could think off, try to reproduce what he had done before. Eideard connected Lachlan and me with an extremely powerful binding-spell. Perhaps she needed help or so. She sat down on the same stone, while I hold back with all of my power. The idea was that as soon as she had gone, I had to pull or summon her back again. When Eideard activated the central stone again, I was almost drawn into a huge vortex. I resisted and tried to hold back with all of my power. A split second later Eideard turned it off. As I blacked out, I had no recollection of what exactly happened at that dreadful moment. When I regained consciousness again, I was sitting against a stone, with the lifeless remains of my girl. Lachlan's head was on my lap and a letter on top of her. And no trace of Eideard anymore. In his letter he wrote that because of him and his dangerous experiment two people had died. The receiving stone at the other end was probably toppled up-side-down, and the girls were crushed the moment they arrived. Meredudd never stood a chance, but Lachlan survived some seconds. Eideard wrote that he had lost everything worthwhile living for: His girl and the respect and

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

trust of his friends. He wrote that he would join Meredudd and asked me to forgive him and to deactivate the central-stone afterward. I could not do anything anymore for Lachlan, so to avoid any awkward questions about my girls' death, I laid her gently on the cursed stone, and sent her also over to the unknown again. If Eideard had not asked me to deactivate it all, I would have done the same as my friend, but there had to be someone to stay behind. Up till this day, I don't even have a grave to visit.”

He looked at the girls, who both had tears in their eyes. “Now you know why Albus has warned you two that these stones are extremely dangerous, even lethal. Later I've heard other wizards returned crushed, burned or drowned. The ministry has closed all investigations about the traveling-stones.”

Clearly, telling the story had brought back lots of painful buried and forgotten memories back. All he said was “Lachlan, my dearest Lachlan!”

And with these words the professor left the girls.

With a lump in her throat, Lily managed to say, “What a sad, sad story. I feel so sorry for him.”

“After all these centuries, he still mourns for his girlfriend.”

“Just imagine, waking up and holding the one you love, dead in your arms!”

“Yeah, you can feel the longing in his story. I think I'll remember his tale each time we have History scheduled.”

“After such personal story, you'll look completely different at a person, eh ghost.”

For a moment they both sat still, lost in memories.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Lily...”

“Hmm?”

“Do you realize we just got another piece of the puzzle!”

“What?”

“Well, I mean, the other side of Stone-Henge could be a single stone located anywhere.”

“Yes, but it could also be overturned or encapsulated inside a brick wall!”

“Of course, but I mean, one of them reminded me of the school and lake, viewed from nearby, so one of the recipient stones must be located here somewhere.”

“Or used to be!”

“You are right, I got carried away.”

“Perhaps...”

“What?”

“Just imagine -it probably is impossible with all Muggle villages around here- just imagine the two of us flying around on our broomstick, trying to find the other stone...”

“You are mad!”

“Absolutely, shall we try next weekend?”

“Ah, just imagine if...”

“Indeed!”

“But when we find something, we have to be extremely careful. We now know what can happen. It is not just vague tales anymore, but a report of a witness.”

“A pity that we don't know how they are controlled.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Just one step at the time. We can also search the more restricted part of the library.”

“Let's get back, finish homework!”

PA's heir

Thankfully McGonagall's experimental lessons were always done at the end of the week on Friday afternoon.

That was intentional, so all involved would be more tired after a long week working and studying.

But this time, they needed proper time to recover from the previous circle-exercise.

Immediately afterward, all students were reminded by professor McGonagall again not to say anything at all to other professors, students or even at home, at their family.

Most of the school only knew, that some of the students and staff, were involved with some magical experiment. This itself was no surprise. If you left school with good enough marks, you could go to a university in the Muggle's world. But only for regular subjects. Of course, it was not possible to study any subjects that are related to magic in one way or another. So, once in a while schools like Hogwarts, but also others like Durmstrang or Beauxbaton encouraged students to stay after they graduated, and some became assistants and teachers themselves.

On Saturdays, mostly around lunch time, when all students are gathered in the main hall, most of the owls delivered their messages. And especially for messages to and from the Muggle world, there was a gateway in between, where stamped letters are attached to owls and vice-versa. The reception of any mail was always much looked after for, as it was the only way of

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

communicating while being here at Hogwarts. The only exception was when a student receives a “howler”, a message that was read, or actually shouted for all to hear. These were an absolute embarrassment and turned the receiving victim into the laughing stock of the entire school, which was, besides the original message also the purpose of it.

But not all mail was forwarded to the students directly.

After all regular mail was received, distributed and either read or thrown away, the schoolmaster stood up and asked for their attention.

“Dear students, most of you received mail from home or elsewhere. I hope it was good news. However not always is news *'good news'*. Here I have *'bad news'* for two students. Real bad news, I have to say.”

He stopped and showed some letters he held in his left hand, looking very sad.

“There are those, who think that such news should be given personally and in private. I have a different opinion. All the four houses are your family while staying here, but besides that, we are all Hogwarts, staff, and all students together. So if one student reacts a bit differently, please have some consideration for that person. Each of us deals with grief and loss in a different way. I trust that we all understand and show compassion.”

He paused for a moment, to emphasize his words. None said a single word. Most of the students looked bewildered, but some knew what would come next, and feared their name would be mentioned.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Now I want two students to come forward, from Ravenclaw, Robin McCallister.”

Immediately started the whispering among the Ravenclaw table.

“Ahum, and from Gryffindor”, he hesitated a brief moment, and looked sideways to Dumbledore and Minerva, “and from Gryffindor, Lily Evans.”

Lily turned pale, her stomach transformed into an ice pillar and her legs became jelly.

“O no! What had happened, with an announcement like this, you could only fear the worst! Daddy! Mummy? Sis? Fire or car accident?”

Alexandra offered her help, that she gladly accepted. The noticed that Robin was accompanied by Annabel, the Ravenclaws' head-girl. The four of them walked towards the head table where Dibbet was standing. Some students looked curiously, but most of them looked sympathetically, probably glad that they were still sitting and not walking to the headmaster. They walked slowly, trying to postpone the inevitable. Until the words were spoken, it wasn't real.

Dibbet spoke softly to Robin, so only the four of them could hear him, “Robin, I received a message that your mother has passed away.” And gave her one of the letters. “On behalf of the entire staff our condolences, we feel along with your loss. Leave and transportation will be provided.”

Next, he turned to Lily. All she could think was, “Please hurry up, let's get over it.”

Alexandra put her arm around her for support.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Lily, this morning I received a long-distance albatross, from Crete. I have to inform you that your granny died last week. On behalf of the entire staff, our condolences, if you need time off, or visit your parents...”

“Granny?” Lily said surprised, but also relieved that no-one else had passed away.

“Yes, your grand-grand-mother.”

He looked at the other letter left in his hand with a peculiar look in his eyes, worried, investigating. “This other letter is loaded with spells and other forms of magic. It was not sent by just another relative, but by non-other than the deputy head of the Greek ministry of Magic, with absolute pertinent instructions to give it to you immediately, in person and also publicly. He just succeeded your grand-grandmother.”

With these words, he gave the large and extremely heavy letter to Lily.

She looked at him in disbelief, and with the passing of the letter, it looked like he was relieved of a heavy burden.

Lily simply said, “Thank you, for your kind words.”

And to Alexandra, she continued relieved, “For a moment I feared something had happened, something horrible to my parents or sister.”

Understandably she felt reluctant to return to the table, so they went directly to the girl's dormitory. Alexandra looked at Lily, and Lily asked, “Please stay when I open the letter.”

They sat down at a table and looked at the letter. What would be in it? “Will you open it for me, I still feel slightly shaken,

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

my fingers keep on trembling.” and gave the letter to Alexandra.

But whatever she tried, there was no way she could open the letter. Lily tried but with the same result. “What next?” she said. “I will ask Peter, he is in his final year, he might know.” He tried several times, but with no luck either. “It seemed to be protected by spells. Perhaps a professor can help us.”

Slowly, curiosity was winning from grief. “OK, let's do it”.

They never liked disturbing the teachers during the weekend, but it seemed the only solution. Lily and Peter went to the room reserved for the teachers, which was normally off limits for any students. When the professors saw two students arriving they didn't look not too friendly, but as soon as one of them recognized Lily they all change their attitude immediately. “Is there anything we can do?” asked professor Undertow, standing nearby.

“I have received a letter, probably the official obituary or so, but I am not able to open it as a second-year, would you be so kind to help me, please?” asked Lily. The professor looked at the letter, touched it and immediately pulled his hand back.

“That is serious magic business, way beyond my skills, I would suggest the professors that are experienced with these kinds of spells and perhaps also in protection against black-art, you might start with Dumbledore, isn't he the whizzkid of the school?”

They looked around but he was not there. One said, “Either in his study, or otherwise he is out. In that case, you can also ask professor McGonagall, she might help, or knows who can.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Some time later they found both professors in McGonagall's study.

“I wondered when we would see you,” Dumbledore observed friendly.

Minerva said, “Robin just came along, in the letter it said, that Robin's mother died all alone, by natural causes.”

“Do you remember what Robin noted lately, during our session? The lady that looked like her mother. It truly must have been her mother, not a crippled invalid trapped in her body, but how she really want to be: her real essence. But much more disturbing is what she have said to Robin. That she had been murdered and by who!”

Looking at Dumbledore, Minerva said “This is way beyond anything we can do about that. We should inform the ministry about it. But they will ask questions, They will need to know, know it all. The realm of the dead. And I am not up to that, yet. All in the open!”

Dumbledore replied, “I feel the same, I will talk with Dibbet. As headmaster, he should know also about that detail, but IF the ministry must be informed we will let you know that decision straight away, Lily.”

He looked at the letter in Lily's hand, and said friendly, “But I presume you have something else to say or ask?”

Lily explained that neither she, nor Peter were able to open the letter, and needed help, and lay the letter on Minerva's desk.

With a worried look, Albus drew his wand, and swiftly touched the letter with it.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Hm, thankfully no obvious black magic at first sight, but just a temper-protected nondisclosure spell. Only the addressee, that is you, Lily, can open it or even destroy it. But the sender forgot to remember, that the receiver should also be capable of opening it. It is not part of the spells you learn here at Hogwarts. Normally they only know those spells in the security department at the ministry, all very hush-hush.” Lily looked very disappointed.

“Now, come on girl, do not give up so quickly. Even if we don't *teach* you this sort of magic, that does not mean we are not able to help you,” he said with a big smile.

“Come, draw your wand, and let me take that hand into my hand, and pay attention.”

Lily draw her wand and placed in good faith her hand in Dumbledore's hand.

Dumbledore started to cast a counter-spell, but she could not make head or tails. “It sounds like he is talking backward.”

“You can try again now, Lily,” Dumbledore invited friendly.

She now could open it without any problems, the envelope contained several parchments and a heavy object. The letter, an official declaration, said that “Daphne Celaeno Veritiakis, born in Heraclios around 1689AD has died in Athens 1972AD. All her possessions, powers and obligations will be transferred to Lily Evans. As proof of the transfer, she will receive this token, and she is only allowed to pass it on to a member directly in her bloodline.”

The heavy metal object was wrapped inside another piece of parchment.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

On it was the picture of an ancient person perhaps Roman or Greek, and below it was written: "For PA's true heir."

The object itself was an elaborate golden key with all sorts of unknown decorations, perfectly sliced in half and a cord attached to it.

Lily picked it up, looked at it, and said, "I am not much into jewelry, certainly not gold, but this piece certainly looks appealing." And with these words she hung it around her neck.

Noticing the worried looks from Dumbledore and McGonagall, she said, "I will wear it under my robe, so nobody will notice." And she did immediately what she had said. Strangely, the fact that the key wasn't visible anymore to both professors, seem to lessen their objections of the girl running around with something old and important.

After she left, Dumbledore said to Minerva, "It is not the gold of that key I am worried about, but the powers and spells it contained. Initially, I would have liked to keep it for examination, but I feel relieved that it is out of my sight."

Minerva acknowledged, "Did you noticed its weight, I could absolutely not even lift it, let alone hang it around my neck, but to her, it weighted near to nothing."

"Yes Minerva, it means she is indeed the rightful owner, and I have the feeling I have seen it before but I can not remember where or when. Perhaps it was in a book or so long time ago. But did you also notice the letter: all the powers and obligations are transferred to her? What would that mean?"

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Only time will tell. But do not worry too much, Not everything in this world is evil or a bad omen. There is also much to be grateful for.”

Returning to Gryffindor's common room, James and the others shared their condolences. But Lily replied simply, “Until yesterday I was not even aware that I had a relative far far away. I have never seen her, so there was no bond or relationship between us. I didn't lose anything.” And while saying that, she realized it was not entirely true.

Two weeks later, most of the students were preparing for Halloween.

But not all, a number of students that were becoming close friends gathered at the classroom of professor McGonagall.

“It has been quite a nerve-wracking couple of weeks, not?” she started.

“Rowena Ravenclaw, you know, one of the house founders might have concluded, that finding one answer, will raise ten new questions.”

“I presume you all appreciate the seriousness of the matter we are dealing with. Simply the fact that Robin knew about her mother's death before the letter arrived proves the validity beyond any doubt. Same can be said about Lily's grand-grandmother. When I just remember where we have been, still chills me to the bone. Unheard of. But it also means that we might have to be more carefully, and not sending Lily into the unknown, and following her blindly.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

But Mary objected, “That is all very well said, and you are probably right, but we still know so little, and the only thing we can do something about it, is exploring, not?”

Minerva knew she was right, “So, how about another innocent experiment? The whole idea of dreaming together is even for me so exciting. I would like Peter to concentrate on the subject he and I agreed upon earlier on, and Lily to try to put us into contact, if possible. We wonder how far our dreams could take us. Perhaps even beyond our country!”

Just like the previous time Minerva arranged for optimal conditions, and like previous time, some of the students opted for the Simul-Somnia potion, others for a simple sleeping potion. Just to rule out any influence, they decided to take the seats up in a different order. The only constant factor was Minerva sitting next to Lily. “Just about fifteen til thirty minutes, is that alright?”

Instead of a feather falling down, like she had done before, Lily decided to imagine a starry sky and concentrate on it. They all had astronomy lessons, even Lily, so she knew what to expect when looking through a telescope.

“There, in the northern sky, should be the 'big-dipper', and the 'small-dipper', so that should be the polar-star. Hm, a bit boring, what if I should turn the sky all together? I'll take you, where no-one has gone before. Even beyond your own imagination!” In her mind, she turned her imaginary telescope 180 degrees, aiming for the southern sky. She noticed a shooting star. It sort of looked like a firecracker. “What would happen if you sat on a huge firecracker?” Lily imagined lighting up a fuse, waiting a few seconds, and UP she went! Looking down she saw the

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

school getting smaller and smaller. Looking up the clouds got nearer, and went through them into the black sky. Just like on a bike going downhill, she felt getting faster and faster. With a whoosh she passed the moon, heading for Mars. But something peculiar happened! Instead of slowing down, she still got faster, that much that she unable to steer properly. They passed Jupiter and Saturn. Looking over her shoulder, Earth was just a tiny spot and even the Sun became smaller and smaller. When she turned her head again, looking forward, she noticed something very strange. It seemed that the stars changed color! Some were initially bright red but they suddenly changed to orange, yellow, gradually turning blue and after becoming violet they disappeared altogether. And it only happened to the stars in front of them. The mere thought she could not return to Hogwarts almost made her feel like crying, so she shut her eyes. But when she opened them again, that was weird. She was wearing some sort of diving suit and was standing somewhere. Where was she? Thankfully, she wasn't alone, all the others were just behind her, she just had not noticed them yet. And all were wearing those strange suites. Peter pointed with his hands to the sky, and she looked up. Very strange! It looked like day and night at the same time. She could see the sun, but at the same time, the sky was ink-black, and she could also see the stars. She saw Minerva waving with her arm, so she tried to walk. Indeed, she tried, because even walking was difficult. It felt like she had lost most of her weight. She could make steps of ten yards. Strange, but funny. Then she saw Minerva pointing to her wristwatch or so. Had too much time passed already? Did they have to return? She looked again at Minerva, and no-

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

ticed she was not wearing any silly suit anymore, and neither did she.

“Good heavens! What happened?” was all she said.

Peter replied, “Most of us know, that astronomy is one of my favorite subjects. And if you did not, you know by now. Yesterday I was discussing with a Prof if there might be other planets, outside our solar system. And if so, how they would look like.”

Mary chimed in, “Well I think you got a nice impression. But getting there, scared me shitless, if you don't mind me saying that. But why did not you warn us before?”

‘The whole point is of having an open mind, implies not being instructed in advance, at least most of us.’

Minerva explained. “But what puzzles me, is WHERE we have been, I thought you mentioned the planet Mars if I remembered well, Peter?”

“Yes prof,” Peter said. “That was what I had in mind. But obviously not so. We 'went' somewhere else. This was a completely other place. Didn't you notice?”

“I noticed we were heading to the constellation of Orion.”

“I thought you could only see that during the winter?”

“On earth, on the northern hemisphere, yes. But in space, there are no seasons.”

“Orion, you said. I wonder why? And particular towards the belt of the hunter. According to the old legends, he carried his secret weapons there.”

“But we went towards that spot below the belt. Some say that the nebula contains worlds beyond anyone imagination or dream.”

“Anyone, except us.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Lily replied, “Well it was strange enough, that place, day and night at the same time. How can that be?”

“That is not so strange. It only means that there was no atmosphere. It will look like that if you were on the moon, or on mars. Did any of you notice the stars?”

“Well yes, you could see them clearly.”

“No, I mean, the constellations! They were 'different'. When we simply look at a starry sky, all stars seem to be at the same distance: far away. The only thing we are able to observe with the naked eye, that means without telescopes or so, is that their light comes from a slightly different direction. Recently observers noticed a small difference in photo's made of the same piece of sky in summer and winter when the earth is at the opposite side of the sun. It is called parallax, It is similarly of how we can see depth. Our eyes are about two inches apart, but from the different angle, we can deduce distance. It is assumed that if you go to the moon, mars or further, the shape of star constellations will slightly change as their real distance from us varies enormously. But I was not able to recognize any constellation at all! I wished I could have made a drawing of them, then I could work out where we have been.”

After some pause, Mary asked, “And did you see that some of the stars were changing color? I always thought that a star's color stayed the same and was only dependent on its composition. Or is that also a dream-side-effect?”

Peter tried to explain. “I'm glad you mention it. I saw the same and feared I was the only one noticing that. It could be dream-related, but I think it may be related to what I heard before.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

I noticed the colors of them changing from orange to yellow, white, blue and after purple, they disappeared. And moments later all in exactly the reversed order. Did you ever notice the change of pitch when an ambulance or police car passes close to you? That is known as Doppler-shift. Astronomers are examining something they call 'red-shift'. When stars move away from you, the wavelength of their starlight increases and becomes 'more red'. The higher the speed, the greater the phenomena!"

Mary looked puzzled, "OK, very well but..."

But Peter continued, "Yes, I know what you are going to say. This was the opposite. No red-shift, but a blue-shift and from what we all saw, a very extreme one. Red light turning to yellow and blue and even ultra-violet so we could not see them anymore with our own eyes! As the stars position and speed remained the same, that would imply that we, the observers moved with an incredible speed towards them. But according to what we have learned at physics, no mass can ever travel at such speed."

It seemed that he still had difficulties with coming to turns with his experience. "Like I said, we wanted to know how far a dream can take you. I presume neither of you all knows how far we traveled? The stars from the belt are over a thousand light years away. And the Orion Nebula we were heading to is about 1400 light years away. And we traveled it in minutes, just impossible!

Minerva smiled and replied, "Nothing can, impossible... I read from old books that if you sailed too far, you would fall off the earth. That the earth is the center of the universe! No human would ever fly and no airplane you ever breach the 'sound bar-

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

rier! What, just what, are your objections, if no mass was involved, just our immaterial minds? In the universe, everything is limited, except stupidity and curiosity! What is the mass or weight of an idea, your imagination, your consciousness, awareness? How much does a kiss weight?"

Mary replied with a blush, "That can weight a lot, put you down or even break you. But also near no nothing, it can lift you up and make you feel like flying!"

Even Peter had no fitting reply to that.

"You should talk with that other student, Mr. Sheldrake. He's got likewise idea's like isomorphic fields, beyond my comprehension"

Lily just smiled a big smile. "So, you got more than you bargained for. Detour through the galaxy, everyone safely back home?"

"Before it gets even anymore technical, how about a tea-break?", Cynthia suggested.

"Very well, Annabel, can you fetch me some tea, please? All of you, back in fifteen minutes, then?"

As soon she they left, Mary asked, "So what are you trying to tell us? Is this real? Did we really go, where-ever we went to?"

Peter continued, "I mean this: Lily, as a second-year student, has only elementary astronomy knowledge, no offense meant, Lily. This summer holiday, I visited the Oxford-observatory, and there a couple of professors were debating on how to calculated your position, by measuring the different shapes of constellations and discussing the implications of red-shift. This is something that Lily, how bright she may be, could never

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

have imagined. We, or at least our minds, really have traveled in seconds, millions of light years – and back!”

Half an hour later, everyone was back, and another attempt was suggested.

“From what I read at the library, it is more or less suggested, that you not only can visit other places, but also other moments in time. Did any of you ever thought of that, and it's implications if, big IF, possible?”

“If that is true, there is so much knowledge lost we could recover, just think about the Inca's.”

“I would rather very much like to know what lies ahead of me,” Mary said.

“But isn't that pointless? If the future is all fixed and set, we are sort off lab-rats, but on the other hand, if you can change it, what you saw wasn't true in the first place.”

Lily just commented:, “It sounds like you are contradicting yourself, but we might try, nonetheless. Perhaps, if possible anyway, it is A possible future, how about that?”

They reformed the circle, and all tried to think of something hopeful. Somewhere still whispering while Lily closed her eyes while trying to think of something related to hope, happiness and future. The only thing she could imagine was a wedding party. And indeed, when she looked around they happened to be at a merry party. Everyone was in a jolly good mood, Lily looked for Alexandra and Sirius, but failed to locate them. Suddenly she noticed that someone was standing right behind her. She could smell the soap that he had used.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

A familiar voice said, “Sorry for being late. I had to help Sirius getting dressed, but Peeves was throwing inkpots. Sirius got away, but I was hit, so I needed a shower.”

Suddenly the person behind her, put his arms around here, his hands on her belly. When she turned her head, she looked at...

James Potter! Strangest thing, however, was, that he looked older, and had a small beard while she was still wearing that aubergine robe that Mrs. Pinnacle had sold her. But before she could say anything, the happy couple was announced.

And there Peter and Mary walked in. Not in sorceress clothing, but traditional Muggle wedding dress and suit. They both looked lovely and very happy. After the official part ended, James whispered in her ear, “What do you think about it? Isn't it time?” The place was crowded with people, and most of them Lily did not seem to know. Until she looked a bit better. All the students present looked at least ten years older, but Minerva looked the same, and Dumbledore also, all though it seemed he was wearing some official Hogwarts-robe. And Martin, who appeared to be slightly drunk and somber kept toasting to 'absent friends'. Despite the merry conversation, she could not understand a word people were saying. Until it looked like someone was calling her name over and over again. “Lily! Lily! Lily!”

She looked closely who was trying to get her attention until she saw an old lady. She thought she had seen the face before, but could not remember, until... Yes, it was her grand-grandmother! What was SHE doing here? She walked up closely to Lily and showed her the half of the golden key. She held it in front of her eyes, and instructed: “Look for the other half! After all of these years, it must be reforged again. It is dangerous, but it is

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

the only option to block the Dark Lord. He should not have access to this realm. It must be reforged!” And after these vague words, she slipped into the crowd and disappeared.

Before she had time to respond, Dumbledore got everybody's attention. “Dear all beloved, remember this day because it's a day of pure happiness. The bond that binds these two people together, love, is the strongest known to mankind. From this day forward, these two people will pass through time together. The reason for locking it into your heart is that in the future there maybe days ahead, that you need to be able to think back to a more happier day.”

“Grumpy old Dumbledore again. Why can't he be merry for a change? Always looking for misery and misfortune!”

She turned, and looked into Minerva's face. It wasn't happy! It looked like she had been crying! She realized they were not at the party anymore but at Hogwarts' courtyard, near one of the towers. She saw that all the people gathered around pointed their wand up to the air, and let it illuminate. Up in the sky, she saw something horrible. A huge frightening skull, as big as a cloud. Instead of looking up, she looked down. Someone was lying on the ground. The person apparently had felt from one of the high towers and his broken body was beyond any help or healing. It was professor Dumbledore. A boy sat on his knees, crying bitterly: “No, no, no!” When he looked up, Lily noticed an unknown but somehow familiar face. And suddenly a horrible pain in her heart.

Horrified she woke up. They all did.

Next Saturday

Obviously, all participating in the dream experiments were flabbergasted, but it seemed that professor McGonagall was the person mostly affected.

When they all returned to the “normal” awakening world, the first thing Minerva did was pouring a large glass of brandy. “Sorry, but it is just too much for me to comprehend.” was all she managed to say.

Peter said, “Minerva, if what we just witnessed was a glimpse of the future, we can not be sure if it really will happen. It very well might be a possible option.” Looking at Mary he continued, “What would happen if we both strictly and stubbornly would insist on a traditional witch and wizard wedding gown? Would that imply that we don't get married? No! All those years in divination class, we learn that it is just a possible outcome. We rule our lives in this world, it is not the world that rules our lives, and we are not mere spectators or puppets on a string. It might be meant as a warning what could happen if we do not do anything!”

Minerva was still shaking and sobbing, “It felt so real, so horribly wrong and real.”

“I got the creeps from that sign in the air,” Synthia said.

“That is one of the worst parts,” Minerva said. “Have any of you seen it before?”

“No,” all said.

“Be thankful, you never have. It is a sign from Voldemort and his gang of death-eaters. It is a worldwide announcement that

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

they are responsible for an attack or a murder. It implies that they were able to kill a professor, staff or student, here at Hogwarts, where we all say, believe and propagate to all students that we are safe here. This can have grave implications.”

“Lily, can you come along with me to my office? And the rest of you, perhaps we should all take courage from Peter's kind and wise words.”

Back in Minerva's office, she said: “What surprises me Lily, is that all of it hardly seems to affect you.”

Lily was taken back for a while, with a seemingly unfriendly remark, examined herself, and replied “Please Minerva, don't misunderstand me, but I hardly know professor Dumbledore, and he is still very much alive. And also, all the time since I started here, I learned things I held for unbelievable. All of those potions, spells and all of it what you all consider normal.”

She pointed to everything around here. “Brought up as a Muggle, this all seems so unreal to me. I regularly have to pinch myself, to check I'm really here, at school. But Peter told me that you can even dream pinching yourself.”

Minerva sighed, “I am sorry, girl, I seem to understand what you mean. All of what we encountered in your dream-world is as new to me, as all our regular magic is to you. But like I told the others, that dark-lord sign brought that horrible and violent world outside back here, where we feel safe and sheltered. That last trip brought it horrible close. I just don't know what to do. At one hand I feel an urge to warn Dumbledore, but at the other hand, what will I cause by doing it. It was something simple like missing a train, dropping a glass or so, I wouldn't mind just

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

waiting to see what will happen. But death? And how would somebody react, if I was telling him: 'I just saw that you will be murdered!' You see Lily, these are fundamental questions that remained unanswered by the most keenest philosophers for centuries. Come to think about it, I just made the decision to tell Albus about it. If we don't, what is the whole point of what we are doing? If (what Peter suggested) a possible future can be changed, for the better. If not, he has at least the opportunity to get prepared, not?"

"I think that it is the best option we got, Professor."

"OK, off you go. Wasn't it this evening Halloween celebration? I will talk with Albus. Perhaps he would like to talk to you also, later on."

A moment later Minerva walked through the empty corridors of Hogwarts. Even the paintings were deserted, as all the inhabitants had gathered together to celebrate Halloween in their own way.

She knocked on Dumbledore's door and entered without a moment waiting.

"Albus, we have to talk." She simply said to the old professor who was studying some books.

"Yes Minerva, I already thought so. You didn't bring a bottle of pumpkin juice, so I presumed it wasn't a social call."

"I think we need something stronger than pumpkin juice Albus. It is about those sessions I do with Lily and the other students. Each time we are getting much more than we bargained for, and it starts to frighten me, Albus"

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Please be honest with me, Minerva. What are you trying to say to me? I presume you performed another session? Where have you been this time?”

Minerva sat down, and looked at Albus' face, not knowing where to start.

“Come on Minerva, is it that bad, remember always look at the bright side of life, you know. We two are too old to play hide-and-seek.”

Minerva sighed. “Oh well then. We knew that Lily is a dream-walker, who has the capability to enter somebody else's dream, somewhere in nowhere-land, yes? That alone is already an incredible achievement. I think we could spend years and years just analyzing that. And the fact that she was able to cure several people in this way! Again enough to spend an entire lifetime over. Next, we were witnesses that beyond any doubt that she could visit, and bring us along to the other side of dying. Likewise again enough to let several professors spend an entire lifespan on. Thank goodness she brought us 'UP', the mere thought of even visiting for a moment hell or purgatory keeps me from sleeping.”

Albus grinned and thought for a while, and said, “If any of your students were talented painters, they could produce fantastic, realistic paintings, if they visited 'downstairs', not? So where have you been this time?”

“We have *traveled* to two places. The first one was apparently somewhere beyond the stars. Even Peter Mangnall, you know, final year student, could not make head-or-tails of our whereabouts, although we wanted to have a look at the surface of the planet Mars. And there was also something about speed, but

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Peter kept telling about red-blue-orange-purple shift. It's a pity that we couldn't have taken Firenze along on the first trip.”

“So there was also the second one. Just to another spectacular place?”

“No! We remained here, at Hogwarts. But we traveled in time so it seemed. Ahead.”

“Splendid! That could save me a lot of troubles pursuing pointless errands!”

“Serious, Albus! The latest session was something that would make any anyone who teaches divination green of jealousy! And it is not a joyful scene. We witnessed somebody's death, perhaps, I mean.”

“Well, well, you know that some teachers expect at least one student to die each year? Who is it this time?”

Minerva looked straight in Albus' eyes.

“It was you, Albus. We saw you dead. And to be honest it was so horrible real, it scared the wits out of me. After all these years I'm used to quite something, but even me!”

Albus was taken back for a moment this time, grabbed two glasses and the nearest bottle. While pouring he asked “Would you mind being a bit more specific, please? It is about MY life. I mean my death.”

“We just saw your broken body lying on the ground. Here at Hogwarts. All the students around it. And that horrible skull-announcement from the death-eaters in the sky. You are going to be murdered, Albus. Probably thrown off the astronomy tower. Right here at school, where we all feel safe.”

“Anything else?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“No, not anything relevant to this. But don't you think this is bad enough?”

“Any idea how much time I still have? Could it be a warning? Should I do something about it?”

“You can never be sure with predictions. It could be a warning, but on the other hand, whatever you do, or do not do, may lead to that event.”

“In which case, I should even more be thankful for every day in this life! I'll drink to that.”

“Lily is now a second-year student, so she does not have yet any proper divination classes yet. Just some introductory ones.”

“But all of the other students are fourth or advanced. The divination aspects might be coming from them, you know.”

“We could have her tested for divination aspect of her gift.”

“True, but that does not detect the possibility of predictive dreaming.”

And with these words he looked for another bottle of red wine. He filled both glasses again, gave Minerva one, and said, “To life, how long it may last.”

Staring into the flames of his fireplace, Minerva said, “If you want to, I can ask Lily if we can do a session with just the three of us. You can witness it, and decide how seriously you will take it. Perhaps you can even learn something from it?”

Some wood logs later, they suddenly found the bottle was empty.

“I still don't know, Minerva.” Albus sighed. “Perhaps ask, I am curious. Perhaps it does not change the outcome, but I would very much like to be prepared if and when the moment arrives.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

On the other hand, as you said, whatever I might do, might lead to that event to take place. Foresight is extremely treacherous. In whatever you do or don't”


Picking up the pieces

Meanwhile, the students got themselves prepared for the Halloween party in the main hall.

Lily changed her robe and wore her aubergine robe again, while Alexandra was wearing her snow-white dress. When she walked into the common room, Lily noticed that something had got into her left shoe, so she sat down and bowed to examine her shoe. At that moment the golden key fell out of her dress. Lily immediately tried to put it back, under her robe, but James noticed the glimmering object.

“Pretty thing!” He said.

“Thanks for the compliment, James.”

“Oh sorry, yes, you look nice too,  I also meant the thing around your neck. What is it?”

As it got detected by now, there was no point in keeping it secret for her friends, so she took the necklace off and put it on the table.

“It probably is nothing, but I inherited from my grand-grandmother.”

“No! It is beautiful! It really suits you.”

“Thank you, James.”

“Half of it is missing! Funny thing is, however, I feel like I have seen it before, but I can not remember where at the moment.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

The great hall was magnificently decorated by the house elves. All the hovering chandeliers were replaced by hovering heads, with a brightly light coming from the holes where the eyes were supposed to have been located. This was all very much to the discomfort of Sir Nicolas, who was not pleased, at all.

James and some other Gryffindor boys were discussing the merits of making a magical map of Hogwarts. “With our current knowledge, we can beat the magic of the moving staircases,” James concluded.

“Yes, but how about all the secret and forbidden area's?”

“Except for the common rooms of the other houses, I've seen every inch of the castle...”

Suddenly James stopped talking, he remained kept at Lily.

“Hello James, are you still there?”

“I remember it!” was all he said loudly.

“Fine to hear your memory is still functional, how about the rest of your brains? What are you talking about!”

“I remember about the key!”

Lily immediately knew what James was talking about, and hoped he would have kept that information to himself. Except for her friends, all of the others looked at James if he had too many butter-beers been drinking. At parties like this, only pumpkin juice was officially served, but many students had their own supply.

“Last month we were examining some of the corridors and I was caught by Archus Filch. As punishment, I had to copy a chapter of a book he randomly took from his bookshelf. It was about historical artifacts kept here at school. In that book, I saw

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

a picture of your key. It was vaguely described. They only knew it was one of the eldest objects around, but not where it came from, or what the occasion was. As it was a golden object, it probably is in the trophy room, on display.”

“Do you think it was the same?”

“Almost, but there is only one way to find out, and that is finding it! Anyone coming with me?”

Because some of the students were trying to dance, very few were willing to come along to investigate.

“And getting caught by Filch, this very evening: no thanks!”

So finally only James and Lily were walking through the dark and deserted corridors.

“Bit spooky, not?”

“Isn't that the whole idea about Halloween?”

“Indeed, that's so.”

“Where is that trophy room's cupboard located?”

“Second floor, opposite to the small room where the teachers meet.”

Entering the second corridor already gave them more than enough fright. When they carefully turned around the corner two huge green eyes stared at them. A next step resulted in an unearthly hissing. In a reflex, Lilly grabbed James hand. A split second later they realized it was just Mrs. Norris, sitting on a bookcase and they sighed of relief. Nevertheless, James did not let go of her hand.

When they continued, Lily said, “I wonder what my parents may say if they knew what I was doing right now.”

“What do you mean?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“I am walking hand-in-hand with a boy all alone in a pitch dark castle, that is what I meant.”

That very moment James realized that when he walked from the Gryffindor common-room to the main hall, almost all of the students and teachers had stopped and turned their heads to take another look. And he realized it wasn't him they were gazing at. Lily was actually a pretty girl, one of the prettiest girl from his class. From Gryffindor. From Hogwarts. And he was walking hand-in-hand with her! It definitely felt good. Very good. What should he do? What should he say? He envied his friend Sirius. For him, it was so easy. He was photographed after receiving his speed-record and was published in the 'daily-prophet'. Some of the girls had been fighting for a photo that was detected in some of the girl's dormitories. Sirius probably knew all about girls. And this moment he was dancing with Alexandra! Lucky fellow! Right now he would have given anything for holding Lily that close. Steal a kiss. Nah! She could get any boy, why would she be interested in him? He'd better stop daydreaming and just enjoy the moment.

Much too soon to his liking, they found the cupboard.

But to their disappointment, the cupboard was almost empty.

“It has been cleared away.”

“Can't believe they threw it away. Where would they have stored it?”

“Along with other junk, people can not depart from.”

“And where would that be?”

“Only place I can think of is the room-of-requirements!”

“The room-of-what?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“The room-of-requirements! Last week Sirius and I were chased by some boys from Slytherin and we desperately need a place to hide away. Suddenly a door appeared, we have never seen before. So we slipped in and it looked we ended up in some sort of lumber room. I noticed lots of trophies and paintings from over several hundred years ago.”

“And where might that room be located? The other end of Hogwarts?”

“No, no, by the way, are you in a hurry or so, Lily?”

“As long as I don't get caught or have to walk alone, I don't mind.”

Without even any thoughts he held out his hand. And without any hesitation Lily took it.

He felt like a great roman warrior coming home after winning a battle, almost bursting with pride and joy, but dare not say a word about it. She probably would completely misunderstand what he would have liked to say.

“Previous time, we were one floor up. Let's go there and think very hard that we need to find that room.”

Some staircases later, James found the door again.

Especially for the occasion, even here were the torches replaced by spooky ones.

They dwindled some time looking at all the strange object that were stored there.

Suddenly Lily said, “So Quidditch is something of your family!”

“How do you come to that conclusion?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Look here! A trophy from eh .. eh 1873. Quidditch trophy for Gryffindor, won by Alistair Potter, by catching the snitch within the first minute of the game.”

“I never knew!”

They continue to search until James said, “Founded!”

And indeed, in a glass showcase they saw a golden key, almost the same as Lily's one. She lifted her own key from under her robe and compared it.

“Strange, it almost looks similarly, though also different, it looks like its mirror-half.”

Beneath the object was a small sign, “Rowena's private collection. Origin: unknown. Purpose: unknown. Spells: Unknown. Composition: unknown, heavier than gold. Warning: It should always remain at Hogwarts premises, may never leave Hogwarts for expositions elsewhere or should be permanently guarded.”

“Do you want to take a closer look?”

“If possible, yes.”

James opened the glass door, and tried to pick it up, but failed.

“Either it is glued to the cabinet or that thing is really heavy. Is yours the same?” and stepped back, letting Lily nearer.

She picked it up as it weighted nothing.

She held her own in one hand, and the Hogwarts' trophy in the other.

“Look! Same inscriptions! And also sliced in two. I wonder if...”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

And before James might have warned her that her next step might not have been such a good idea, as in a trance, Lily put both halves on top of each other.

She was about to say “They fit!”, but the next moment a light appeared so very bright, that it blinded them both. At the same time, they heard a loud rumble, like lightning had struck nearby, and the floor trembled under their feet.

“Are you alright, Lily?” A slightly scared James asked.

“No, I am in trouble, deep trouble!” she replied softly.

“What's wrong, are your eyes hurt by the flash?”

“No, this!” And she held the key up.

“What is wrong with the key then?”

“Don't you see? Both halves are stuck to each other, they won't let go!”

“How did that happen? Are they warm, melted together?”

“No, both halves are as cold as ice. I think that it was magic that separated them, and now forced them together again.”

“Taking the object away is already bad enough, it will probably be detected by some. But the warning worries me. We have to admit it, I guess.”

“We better get back then.”

A bit scared they walked slowly back. James reached for Lily's hand, which she accepted and earned him a grateful glance. Finally, they reached the main hall, but neither were in the mood for a party, not even Halloween.

Without saying a word, Sirius and Alexandra look with much envy to Lily and James, both with a color on their cheeks, that wasn't there previously.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Moments later the other students at the Halloween party said to them that they just missed a spectacular event, but neither James nor Lily dared to say that they probably had caused it to happen.

A guy from Slytherin came towards him pointing with his elbow towards Lily and said, “You do know how to find them Potter, but did you really have the nerve to DO it?”

Completely unprepared and not knowing what he exactly meant, James wanted to avoid to make a fool of himself, so he answered, “Yeah, what else did you think I was doing! Playing hide-and-seek?”

The boy gave James an approving look, “Probably a final gift from her to you. THE last chance to do it!”

“What on earth are you talking about?”

“Did you forget? Tomorrow first test-match Slytherin against Gryffindor! Better say goodbye to your friends, that is, if you have any.”

Next day, Saturday, Lily gathered all her courage, and after breakfast, she asked as polite as possible, “Professor, can I have a word with you, today or later on?”

The professor, still trying to cope with the revelations of previous Friday and subsequent gathering with Dumbledore, looked carefully at Lily, “Problems, Lily?”

Timidly Lily replied, “I am afraid I have done something very stupid, Professor.”

“Is it just related to you?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“No professor, it involves Hogwarts, I think you have to alert the heads of Gryffindor and Ravenclaw also.”

“Does it have anything to do with our sessions?”

“No, professor, I don't think so.”

“Well then, come to my office in fifteen minutes, I will decide who to alert.”

“Yes, professor.”

Lily and James walked directly to her office and sat on one of the chairs outside. All she could think was, “Why did I ever do that, why wasn't I thinking. What will be the consequences? Removed from school?”

A little later, Minerva came and let the two very nervous students in.

“Please sit down, Lily, James and stop trembling like a straw. Have a glass of water or so and tell me, slowly please. And don't leave out any details, I'll find out anyway.”

An hour later Minerva looked stern.

“This is indeed serious, very serious. I didn't know there were such objects stored there. Potter, I understand and respect you came along, but I know you have other responsibilities right now outside. You can go. Lily, please wait here, while I fetch the others.”

When James left, he turned around and noticed a scared little girl, waiting for an unavoidable harsh verdict and felt sorry for her.

Some time later the professor returned with Dumbledore, Binns and professor Vaughn, the head of Ravenclaw.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Minerva started with, “Professor Vaughn, we have an issue with one of your trophy’s, that ancient golden key from the display cupboard.”

He replied “Oh no, that one! What is the problem? Did someone complain that I removed it? For ages we try to find out about its origin, or what those symbols were meaning. The failure of doing so was a constant insult to me. It took me so much effort to get rid of it. Lifting spells did not work, neither that a number of house elves do the trick. Only a couple of final-year students were able to move it inch by inch and it took them several weeks until we could move it to the room-of-requirements. Please do not tell me that someone wants the hideous thing back on display.”

“No college, this girl took it away.”

“This young tiny girl and that heavy object? You got to be joking, or we are talking about a different object.”

Minerva made a gesture to Lily, who took the cord with the mend key-halves from her neck, and laid it single handed onto the table.

Vaughn looked at it and commented, “It looks the same but ...”

At that point, he tried to pick it up, put just as might as well have tried to pick up a mountain. Astonished he looked at Dumbledore. “This is indeed that key, I think, What is happening?”

Albus replied, “Lily, is that the same key as the one you received from your grandmother?”

“Yes and no, Sir. In the cupboard was one-half of the key, and I had the other half. I held them together to compare them, to see

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

if they would fit. But now I can not separate them anymore. After a bang and a flash they got stuck together.”

“I heard stories last evening about a single lightning strike and a thunderclap. Students were much pleased and impressed, but it was fair weather and not of our doing. Were these events related, perhaps?”

“Yes, professor. That occurred the moment both pieces touched each other.”

“Well, it is obvious those pieces belong together. But why is something completely different. As head of Gryffindor, you get 10 points reduction for such dangerous act. If I am not mistaken, professor Vaughn will be satisfied enough for finding a permanent keeper, for the upcoming six years, not?”

The professor shrugged and nodded.

“Well then, miss Evans, hereby you are also sentenced as the permanent keeper as no-one else can move it. Previous examination of separate halves resulted in nothing, now as the key is whole again, you must be available if we are going the re-examine it again. I wonder if professor Binns might be able to find something about its origin.”

Minerva concluded, “I think this girl has learned a proper lesson, to be extremely careful with any unknown magic-related objects. I would suggest to leave it like this.”

Albus finally reminded, “Lily, as you keep this key at you, all the time, there is one point I must bring to your attention. This object might influence you, or any spell you cast. Don't do anything related to magic until this afternoon, when you should report to professor McGonagall and me. It might be nothing but I

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

want to take no risks with old magical objects. See you at, eh two o'clock?"

After Lily left, Dumbledore asked Vaughn, "And, what do you think?"

"There are several angles to look at it. At one hand, I am glad to get rid of it, although it sort of belongs to Hogwarts, secondly, she seems indeed the rightful owner of the other half whether she likes it or not, and obviously both pieces belong to each other. And I wager the half of a golden key on it, that we will not be able to split those two halves again. But finally, it is quite irresponsible what she have done."

"Binns, what do you say?"

"Just that this magical key was split into two with a good cause, that worries me. I fear that it holds too much magical power or gives access to areas that people centuries ago were not capable of handling. And remember the warning added to that trophy. And what when she leaves school, either holiday or permanently. When she graduate?"

When Lily returned that afternoon, she felt slightly relieved. At least Gryffindor had won the game.

Dumbledore and McGonagall looked at her when she entered Minerva's study.

Holding a piece of parchments he said,

"We have some new information about your key. Whether it is good news or bad, I don't know yet. All I do know is that you have unknowingly unleashed quite something. We just received this," and showed it to Lily.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Ανώτατο Διεθνές Ξόρκια Συμβουλίου.

Τα κεφάλια όλων των υπουργείων έχουν ενημερωθεί τα ακόλουθα.

Το σπασμένο οστό Key έχει πλαστογραφηθεί.

Είναι νέος τερματοφύλακας έχει ανατεθεί στο στρατό ΠΑ.

Συγκέντρωση θα πραγματοποιηθεί, θα ακολουθήσει τις οδηγίες.

My Greek is a bit rusty, I just had it translated by several colleges, every time they end up with:

Supreme International Wizardry Council.

The heads of all ministries have been informed the following.

The broken key has been forged.

Its new keeper has been assigned to PA's heir.

Gathering will take place, instructions will follow.

“What does that mean?” Lily asked.

“Well, several things. The key was obviously monitored, without any of us even knowing it. Both halves clearly belong together, and you are it's keeper, it almost sounds like this was meant to happen.”

“And what is this council?”

“It took me some time to find out, no-one knew, there were only some vague references in ancient scripts. It is a worldwide organization of wizards, predating the United Nations, besides the permanent members, all countries or regions have a single representative, for us that is the head of the ministry of Magic.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Looking at Lily, he added, “If you ever come across a corresponding lock Lily, try to restrain yourself not to perform any experiments with that key, please! That's all for now, off you go! We'll examine your key later.”

After Lily left, Minerva stated, “You didn't tell about Binn's suspicions?”

“He only *suspects* that PA stands for: 'Pallas Athens'. He is now examining the old drawing that was on the parchment holding the girls part of the key. What do you want me to do, say to that girl: *Oh, by the way, Lily, it seems you are the heir to the goddess of wisdom and war. Have a nice day?*”

“Let us carry that responsibility. Her young shoulders already have more than enough to bear.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“None of us could lift that key, but she can without any obvious effort. To me, it seemed she is lifting the weight of the entire world. But more, when I touched the whole key, it felt different from the half she received via the post. Now it dazzled me, a dark relic from a different place or time. I got so scared that I almost panicked and ran off!”

“You are not alone in this. The fact that all representatives of all countries are notified of the reforging, is a clear indication that you are right. That such important council permanently watched over it, proves that it is important and dangerous.”

“But what I would like to know, to WHOM is it dangerous?”

“Indeed, to us, or to enemies of us? Either case, it seems wise not to turn the keeper of the key into our enemy!”

A new week

A bit later, Lily waited until she could speak to James alone in their common room. “James?”

“Yes?”

“Thank you for coming along yesterday to McGonagall. I am not as brave as you are.”

“No big deal. I have to report there regularly. I should be thanking you, actually.”

“How so?”

“For borrowing your broomstick. That's how we won the match. And for our walk through the castle...”

James did not dare to admit that he had taken a very, very long detour.

And Lily did not tell him that she knew, as she had noticed they had passed the display cupboard over three times without mentioning that.

“I liked it as well. A pity we can not do it again.” she simply said.

“Why not?”

“At daytime, the place is crowded with students or staff, and the atmosphere is different. While after dark, we get serious detention when caught wondering around.”

“If caught, you mean. Normally students are not allowed to dwell at night, except coming from, or going to astronomy lessons.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

For the first time, James was looking forward to this lessons that he normally considered a waste of time. Pity however that the exercise in the observation dome was only once a month.

“James, aren't you forgetting something?”

“What then?”

“Your class English, from Undertow!”

“Blasted! I'll be late. How about you?”

“I'm still excused, but you might as well alert the others. I have to report at Dumbledore for examining the key.”

Next moment James, Sirius and some other boys dashed off, like being pursued by a daemon.

She prepared herself for seeing Dumbledore.

When she entered his study the professor was busy with several ancient books. He explained, “First I want to have a closer look at the key itself, now both halves are in place. As studies of the separate halves never showed anything, I am pretty confident it is a waste of time, but you never know.”

She took the little golden key from the cord around her neck and put it on a small table.

“Remarkable isn't it? The key itself hardly weighs anything, but none except you is capable of lifting it up easily. Obvious a spell, that also explains why lifting-spells are ineffective.”

Dumbledore poked at the key with several objects and looked at it with different optical instruments. “As I expected, waste of time. You put it back again.”

He thought for awhile, and continued, “Next I'll try to shield you completely. Then you must try to perform something very simple, like moving this feather some inches.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

He placed a small feather on the table, where previously the key was. Draw his wand, and produced a pink cylindrical shield around Lily and the table. Immediately Lily noticed a difference. Her wand just felt like a simple wooden stick. And whatever she said or did, nothing happened.

With a sigh Dumbledore removed the shield, “That is a difficult and costly spell, I could not maintain it much longer.”

“I am glad you did. It felt odd, like I looked at a fireplace, but could not feel its warmth!”

“Yes, we all take the power of the gift for granted. It is how squibs experience it, except that they have never felt the true force ever. Or people who got squibified. And sometimes, when wizards or witches do a spell above their capabilities, they burn-out. Luckily for them, their gift returns after days or weeks. But I once heard at St-Mungo that they had an unfortunate wizard who lost it permanently.”

“What happened to him?”

“He also lost the will to live...” Dumbledore said simply.

“Next I'll make a simpler shield. With my wand, I can probe anything coming in or getting out.”

Dumbledore waved again and now there was a green cylinder all around Lily.

“I feel nothing at all, just normal.”

“Good, very good. Can you try to lift it?”

Lily waved with her wand, “Wingardium Laviosa!” and the feather flew and circled within the cylinder.

At the same time, Dumbledore held the tip of his wand against the cylinder.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Nothing special, only the expected spell.”

This went on and on, while trying all sorts of spells Lily had learned and mastered. In the end, he said, “If there is something it remains dormant as I can not see, hear or feel anything. If you ever do a spell you did before, and it feels different, please let me know at once. Unfortunately, there are thousands of spells you still have to learn, with those you will never be able to tell the difference.”

“OK, can I go now?”

“Yes, but again be more careful. As for a Gryffindor, I should have said: please try to remember to be just a little bit more careful the next time!” And smiled.

When she got back to the common-room, most of the other students also had returned from their class.

Alexandra walked up, “Everything OK?”

“Yes, he couldn't find anything. But the shielding was awkward. I really feel sorry now for non-magic people.”

She looked outside and noticed the lovely weather.

“Feel like flying?”

“Always! Specific direction or goal?”

“Instead of the lake, the other way round. Looking for a certain stone, up the hill?”

“Yesssssss!”

They fetched their brooms, and while walking outside, Lily asked,

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Who are those other guys James and Sirius are constantly talking with?”

“Since Sirius got his photo in the prophet for speeding, he got a lot of attention, both from boys and girls, but for different reasons, however. And the same for James as a seeker for our Quidditch team.”

“Yes, they follow like flies, but there are two that James frequently seeks.”

“Oh, eh, yes, Sirius told me some time ago. Let me think, about their names. I remember! They are Remus and Peter. Peter Pettigrew is a weird fellow, he tries to be friends with everyone. The other, Remus Lupin that is a nice guy, a bit of a loner, a solitaire. At the beginning of the year, one of the professors came to Sirius, and asked him if he could help him with school. I noticed that he is absent regularly. Sirius told me he has some strange disease. Funny thing however, is, that his illness strikes regular, VERY regular.”

“You mean after every potion lesson or so?”

“No, every month! Now you bring it up, could it be that he looks like a boy, but is actually a girl having her period?”

“What a horrible thought!”

“So, if you are so curious, why don't you ask him!”

“What! Asking if he might be needing some sanitary towels?”

“Or asking him or her to drop his pants!”

Bursting with laughter Alexandra just managed to comment, “You are so devious, Lily!”

“Or you can ask Sirius if he ever saw him doing a pee standing.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Clever thinking, professor Evans!”

“Thank you, professor Alexandra! By the way, we are near the top of this hill. We can go on to the next hill, but we have been there before. You have a nice view around, but you can not see the lake anymore.”

“You are right, but last summer's memory was vague anyway and has faded even more. I do remember you could see the castle and the lake, but different, only part of Hogwarts.”

“If your view was blocked by trees, it is of no help. Those trees might have been cut down centuries ago.”

“That's so, but the view was blocked by a little hill. Let's go to the left, there is a landslide beyond that hill.”

When they arrived, they got off their broom and looked around.

“Nice place for camping. What do you think Alexandra, same view?”

Alexandra said nothing, nodded and walked to and fro.

“The view looks the same and it even feels the same, much less intense than at Stone-Henge, but alike. So where is that stone?”

“Impossible to tell. What are we looking for? A pebble, a boulder, a rock, you tell me!”

They looked around, but there were no signs that would indicate someone was ever here before.

“Alexandra? The view you told be about at the Henge, was in the direction where you could see the lake. Weren't there any others?”

“Well yes, but they were inside with torches and rocks to sit on and table, no really helpful I thought. Won't give any direc-

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“In that case, we have to do it like porcupines!”

“What?”

“Very, very carefully!”

An hour later, they observed what they had accomplished so far. A small path, less than a meter long was cleared.

“Sorry, but we are doing it the wrong way.”

“What do you mean?”

“If we continue like this, it will take us ages. We must ask Flitwick to help us.”

“The new teacher spells? Why would he come over here?”

“No! With the spells we know of, we can move single objects around. What we need is some sort of grouping spell, to move lots of objects around. Perhaps it is even in one of our books. And we can also ask one of the ... boys perhaps?”

“But don't give away anything, at least not yet. It still is very likely that we are still wrong, and the only thing under that pile of stones is just more ordinary stones.”

She sighed, “Yes, that is the best. We might say that we think we know the location of an ancient temple or so.”

“Let's stick to that story for the time being.”

“Let's get back. It's getting dark and I'm getting tired and hungry. I feel like I moved a mountain.”

As planned, they asked the next spell lessons professor Flitwick, and tried not to reveal too much.

“Professor, I have a question that is probably interesting for most of us.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Please continue, miss McGonagall,”

“Suppose I have some sand to remove...”

With a wave of her wand, Alexandra covered her whole desk under the sand.

“As a first-year student we learned to move single objects starting from small to bigger ones. This year we learned to move all of it.”

With another wave, she moved all of the sand onto the desk of James. Much laughter.

“But what if you what the move just a specific group of objects? For instance, if I am in a dessert and want to clear just the sand blocking my door? I can not move grain for grain, but I also I can not move an entire dessert?”

Even more laughter!

Flitwick waited until all laughter had died away, “You can laugh as much as you like, but it is one of the best questions I had for years. Spell refinements like this are normally given in the fourth year, it is done by speaking the spell with a different emphasis, and pointing the wand from beginning to the end of the area while speaking the spell. I'll demonstrate it.”

Flitwick walked to James' desk, draw his wand and while speaking the spell slightly differently, moved his wand in a circle, pointed this wand to Lily's desk, and half of the send moved from one desk to another.

The girls said nothing but looked very satisfied from one to another. However, they had to be patience until the end of the day, and only after dinner and homework were finished you could escape on their brooms.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“What are you going to do?”

“Practicing!” was their short reply. First, they had to practice to repeat what Flitwick had learned them. But finally, they were able to move each time large patches of boulders away from the landslide. When the sun set, Lily warned, “We have to get back, it works much faster now, but we still have to be careful not to start another landslide.”

“You are right. I initially was thinking making wall of rubble by means of spells, but how long would they last?”

“Another question for our spell-lessons, and perhaps we should ask one of the boys to help here.”

After finishing-up dinner during homework rehearsals in the common-room, they decided to ask for general information.

Most students came up with all sorts of bizarre spells, but Alexandra pointed out, “What would happen if the person who produced the spell went away? How long would those protecting walls last? A year, a month, week, an hour, or even collapse as soon as he turns his back?”

“Well if you only need the save something from beneath a pile of rubble, who cares?”

“True, but if you want to restore the entrance to an old building, for instance, that should last ages, then what?”

“Try ask Flitwick!”

“We already thought of that, will do that next lessons.”

But some hours later, James approached the girls.

“Lily, Alexandra, your questions were not hypothetical. Or am I wrong?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“No, you are right James. We think we have found the location of an ancient building. Probably a cave in the mountain, uphill from here at Hogwarts. But we are not sure, we could very well be mistaken. But when correct, it has been covered by a land slide for ages. We started to move rubble, but we don't want to be surprised by a new land slight.”

“What are you looking for?”

“When we find something, we'll tell you!”

“Ah, the famous detectives Evans and McGonagall are at it again!” he joked.

“Actually trying to avoid: the mindless cows Lily and Alexandra managed to make of fool of themselves!” she replied.

“I've been thinking. My father has been building his own boat, and the last couple of summers I helped him quite often. With some wood, we can make a supporting construction, and use some spells to put that into place. If it is supposed to last longer, well, you have to show me first.”

“That is OK.”

“Oh, can we bring the other guys as well?”

Lily and Alexandra looked at each other, finally Lily shrugged her shoulders, “It's your party!”

“Alright, as long as they don't embarrass us if we don't find anything.”

Next afternoon a complete Gryffindor delegation followed Alexandra. When they arrived at the spot the girls gave some additional explanation, “You might consider this as an archeo-

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

logical thing. Besides a cave entrance we are looking for prove of people been here, and also an unusual stone.”

“Stones enough,” commented Peter Pattygrew. “What is supposed to be unusual about this one?”

Slightly embarrassed, Alexandra replied, “We aren't sure, when I see them, I'll tell you.”

First, they demonstrated their experience with the grouping spell. Then, with six wands at work, they managed to move a huge pile of sand and stones away. James carefully looked at the hill. “For the time being, we can continue, as long as there is no storm or heavy rainfall.”

Just before dinnertime, Remus complained. “It does not seem to work anymore.”

A closer inspection learned that he struck a huge rock. After they removed the rubble around it the noticed the sheer size of it. The more rubble they removed, that larger it became.

“Perhaps it is part of the hill itself?” Remus suggested.

“No, this seems complete different material, another kind of rock. Might that be your stone?”

After some clearing away the stone seemed at least ten feet long, and four feet high, and five feet wide.

“Just imagine you got that on your foot,” James joked.

Remus replied, “That would leave a lasting impression, I would wager.”

Lily asked, “Could it be possible to clear the rubble around this rock?”

One said, “Sure we can!” But after few minutes he called for the girls.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Look!” he said, and he pointed to the ground.

And not without reason, what he was pointing at, was not a stone, but obviously a bone and a skull. A human skull.

“Unbelievable! How can he be surprised here by such a land slight?”

Alexandra commented, “If I am right we will find two or three persons here..”

“Yeah, yeah, certainly,” said Peter Pettygrew, “and you probably also know who they are...”

“Actually, yes, they are, or were, Meredudd MacChoiter, Eideard MacCaskill and perhaps Lachlan Ayson, and they were trapped here since spring in the year 1805.”

Lily added, “There is probably not much left of them, but lets carefully collect what is left of them, to give them a decent burial and a headstone. I'll go back to school and fetch a little wooden box, as a real coffin won't be needed anymore. I'll skip dinner.”

“But if there are indeed the remains of two persons, who do you know which bones belonged to who?”

“That doesn't matter. Alive those two were a couple and a close friend, I won't separate them now anymore.”

Confronted with the remains of the sad story, Lily flew back with a lump in her throat and felt intensely sorry for her history teacher. When she returned, she found that the others had continued very carefully. Alexandra approached her and explained about two small piles of bones.

“We found two places with remains. One was obviously of two people, the other was a single person. Between those bones, I

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

found this.” And she put a ring and a simple necklace in her hand. On it was inscribed: *'Forever in my heart, Diderick Cutbert Binns.'*”

“Have the others seen it?”

“No. it is far too private. I think we should give it back to Binns.”

“Well done, very considerate, Alexandra!”

When the sun finally set, a single and a double grave were made at the edge of the plateau viewing Hogwarts and the nearby lake. Near the single grave, they erected a small stone as an obelisk, and magically inscribed on it the words of the necklace, “Here rest Lachlan Ayson. Forever in my heart.”

The other grave also got a marker, with the words: “*Meredudd MacChoiter and Eideard MacCaskill. In life and death together. Among friends forgiveness is never needed, just understanding.*”

Despite the late hour, they looked for their history professor. As he needed neither food nor sleep, they found him in his study.

“Professor, we have something you should see.”

And with these words they laid the ring and necklace on the table, with a result, they could have expected.

Many ghostly tears later, that fell, but never reached the table on which the necklace laid, he just managed to utter, “Where? How? Why?”

“I'll just answer the -where- for now, the rest can wait. Nearby up the hills. One of my friends said that in your current condition, you can not leave the castles' premises. So we made a

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

marker that you can see from up here. Tomorrow, when you look straight North, you can see it.”

Finally, she showed him two photographs they had made, so he could read the inscriptions.

“I would almost say, that neither of you could have any idea what this means to me. But in your case, I could be mistaken. Let me simply say that this world is a much better place with you two around.”

Staff meeting

Regularly, according to some, too often, all the staff of Hogwarts school for witchcraft and wizardry was assembled in a meeting to discuss student progress, or the lack of it. But besides that, all other sort information was shared between the head of the school, the head of the four houses, teachers, and other staff, like gamekeepers. Some teacher had indicated that monthly meetings were a waste of precious time, as most of them met during breakfast or diner. So it was reduced to a meeting at the beginning or approaching end of each trimester. Immediately after Dibbet had officially opened the meeting, Flitwick, the teacher Divination asked: “Is it again all about some students of year-71?”

McGonagall looked unpleasantly surprised, as she suspected that he actually mean either her niece or her friend.

Dibbet however completely played his comment down and started. “I contacted all parents of the students in their final year. When, yeah WHEN their children graduate, they are welcome in the small party, the day before the closing ceremony. All of the parents are either wizards or witches or married to one, so I could invite them all without any special protective actions.”

He looked briefly at the heads of the houses.

“All the students in their fifth or sixth year have indicated that if they succeeded in obtaining their OWL or Muggle diploma's, they will continue at Hogwarts for their NEWT.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Filch asked, “So no drop-outs. Did we get a number of students to expect for the next year, from our Ministry?”

“No, Archus, I have stated over and over again to them, that we would really like a list of names a month before the year start, but sometimes we receive that list a month after they all started here.”

He looked apologetically at Hagrid. “Yes, Rubeus. We all understand that it is difficult collecting all fresh first year students for their initial test at the boats if you don't know how much to expect. But until now, it only happened once or twice that some were forgotten and got lost in the Forrest. Since then we appointed head boys and head girls for each house, and they are very well instructed to send wandering pupils to you.”

Looking at the others, he continued, “Normally the new ones are spread evenly over the houses, but the Sorting-hat can produce unexpected results. Thankfully, Hogwarts castle can deal with a lack of dormitory places by itself. But let us not look too far ahead. One year at the time. What are the rough estimations of students moving on to the next year?”

House by house, the head gave their ideas, and Dippet heard the same story over and over again. Hufflepuf indicated serious concern about half of its students, but he knew that except some isolated incidents, all of the miraculously managed to improve the average results. This in contrast with Gryffindor and Slytherin, where no troubles were expected, but during the final weeks, some students had to cope with much less sleep than others.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Dibbet looked at Dumbledore, “Albus, how about that boy who has a 'monthly problem', I heard that he misses quite some lessons!”

“Yes headmaster, that is indeed so. Every full moon, he is kept in isolation, and thus missing some classes. But with the joined effort of the teachers and some of his friends, he manages. You have my assurances that his complexion poses no problem to neither students nor staff. And potions reduce the effect.”

“Thank you for assuring all of us. If that ever became know outside of these wall, it could lead to serious implications, to even you, Albus.”

While looking at Dumbledore, he asked, “What about those two from the advanced accelerated learning program?”

“One of the girls is doing Biology. If she continues at this pace, and there are no signs that she won't, she is entitled to her certificate, a partial Muggle diploma at the end of the year. Her test-papers and practical assignments have been changed according to what other students might expect to face in their sixth year. The Muggle ministry of education has been informed. They have granted me the freedom to decide, along with the student and her parents, how to proceed afterward. Exactly the same is true with regards to the other one, who is doing Classical Languages. As she became practical an orphan, professor McGonagall, as her legal representative has an important say about her future.”

“I presume you are talking about miss Evans and miss McGonagall?”

“Yes, that is so, headmaster.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Again, be careful not to push too hard. If I have to accompany a ministerial delegation to St-Mungo hospital, explaining about burned-out students, they will reduce the amount of freedom you have right now, Albus!”

Dumbledore made an inviting gesture to Slughorn and Corstophine. “Eh yes head master. It is actually more the other way round. Corstophine and I are not pushing, but holding them back a bit. Especially young miss McGonagall.”

“Well then, I'm pleased all goes well. Can we close the meeting?”

But Filch raised his arm, “No, headmaster, I want to bring something else to your attention. There has been last week a dueling between the Black brothers.”

Some of the teachers were slightly grinning.

“Yes, I heard a rumor about it. So it was true. Sometimes students dueling can not be avoided. But was it a fair duel?”

Filch raised both hands questioningly “What is fair? A second-year against a first-year student? At one hand it was the younger Black, but with Crabb, Goyle, Malfoy and Snape.

And at the other side, it was the elder Black, Potter, Pettygrew, Lupos.”

Minerva added “And half the school as an uninvited witness. Regulus warned him that if he would win, he would let the other eat dirt.”

“And did he, despite his age, he is ambitious enough, more than Sirius!”

“His brother just laughed. Against his brother, Regulus had no chance at all, he might have held a toy wand.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“So, what did the other do?”

“He broke his brothers wand in four pieces.”

“Really? A precious wand! How dared he do that!”

“That's not it. In front of them all, he ate one piece, and gave his friends also a piece.”

“He did WHAT?”

“It seems that he, or one of his friends are pretty good in transfiguration. One of them changed Regulus' wand into chocolate.”

Dumbledore started to laugh hilariously.

This is a grave matter, Albus!

“Certainly. Absolutely. I never realized they were that good at transfiguration.

“Doing something like that is strictly against the rules of dueling, so Filch punished them for rule-breaking. Detention and cleaning.”

“ It seems they are almost Filch permanent assistants.”

“Fortunately, it won't cause any angry owl's from the parents.”

“Indeed, there is no love lost between Sirius and his parents. Remarkable though, that two brothers can be so different.”

“Well, nothing can be done about that anymore. Perhaps we can tell at the defense lessons, that dueling should only be done among equal opponents. But now you mentioned chocolate, how about ordering some coco for all of us?”

All of the members of the staff considered that the best decision of the evening.

Daphne's warning

Next Sunday, Lily noticed her friend looking at her, hesitatingly to say something.

“You want to ask or say anything? Or do you just want to join my daily early-morning running exercise? It's a splendid morning, and later it will be too warm!”

“Good idea, Lily!”

After they ran several miles, they were taking a break.

Then she asked, “Lily, I noticed that my aunt and several heads are often talking about you, and stop when I or another student comes near. We share all our classes and do our homework together. Is there anything I can help you with? Is it perhaps about your special class with my aunt? That dreaming stuff?”

Slowly walking Lily thought about it.

“You are one of the few others outside that class that know about it, so you know that we are all bound by Minerva's spell to preventing us from talking about it, even unaware or unwilling.”

“Yes I realize you are limited, but my aunt thought it OK to include me in your dreaming-circle.”

“You are right. Something unprecedented happened. I'll try to explain. But still my tongue might be bound about specific details or persons.”

“I'll understand that. In that case I might be able to fill in the gaps.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“It might be related to a place we visited while dreaming.”

They turned and started walking slowly back to school, on a narrow country side road between the fields, bordered by a low traditionally made stone wall.

Lily continued, “Minerva said that we visited 'the after life', 'the other end of the tunnel', that some dying people or those with a near-death-experience talk about.”

She was relieved to find out that she was able to talk about this to her friend.

Amazingly Alexandra said, “So that all is really true? No fable by referents, pastors or Imams?”

“It appears so. Robin saw her deceased mother there, before Dibbet told her about her death. A place of ultimate tranquility.”

Stunned, Alexandra grabbed her arm. “Cool! How did you do that, what was it like? Can you tell me more about it..”

Arm-in-am, like best friends do, they continued to walk slowly along, while Lily started to tell her friend all about that unearthly experience.

“Funny thing is Alexandra, that all of the others, except your aunt, were thinking that we were visiting a garden party. An opening of a new home for elderly or so. I felt very much out-of-place. Only after waking-up, or returning you might say, when your aunt explained it all they realized that it wasn't a normal garden party.”

Alexandra laughed warmly, “I wonder what they would have done, if they would have known...”

Then suddenly, she stopped abruptly and looked around.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Did we walk too far, missed a turn or so? This doesn't look familiar to me! Or did we ran that far.. The road we walked on looked different, no bushes but a stone wall. I'm sure I've never been here before!”

Lily also turned around, and looked slightly worried.

“I've forgotten to take my wristwatch along. When we left the sky was clear, now it is all covered with clouds. No telling what time it is or give us a hint in which direction we walk.”

“Look! There are some trees over there!”

“So what?”

“Dad once told me that you can recognize the North-side of a tree, it is the only side never seeing sunlight and therefore covered with moss. He learned that trick at scouting.”

After a small sprint they reached the group of trees, but became no wiser.

“Look at those! All sides are covered with moss! All of them. How is that possible? It means that the sun never shone on them. Now what!”

Lily looked at her. “We have few options. We can go back or go further on this road. If we are heading in the right direction and go back, we have to walk this piece a fourth time.

So I rather look ahead instead of looking back!”

Alexandra was not entirely convinced. “Sounds reasonable, but what if, just if, if we are wrong?”

“They we will have to walk any to find out where we are, not?”

“Right!”

“Lily?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Both girls turned startled around.

Just behind them they saw a very old and tired looking old lady.

“Lily!” the woman said again.

The old lady seemed to know and recognize her. So she searched her memories. When she finally recognized her, shivers ran through her spine.

“Grand-ma? Grand-ma Diane?”

“Grand-grand-ma actually.”

Alexandra looked frightened at her friend. “Are we gone...”

Lily replied, “My grand-grand-ma is dead, so that means that we must be...”

“You two are dreaming. You are not dead. Not yet at least.”

She looked at Alexandra. “You wanted first hand experience? Well, welcome at the after-live. Although quite a different place your friend probably have described.”

Lily stuttered “Why.. what.. where..”

“That is quite a story. Do you mind if I walk along? I presume not. By now you know I lived a long time. A very, very long time. For many years I was Hecate's key keeper. I thought it meant that I just had to keep, protect and observe. Hence my prolonged life span. I was wrong, so wrong. It just was an expanded possibility to act and react. But I did nothing. I just observed and kept the object that was entrusted to me. My parents, teachers and guardians told me over and over again, that the more power you have, the more responsibilities you get along with it. I just did nothing when others obviously needed some help. I thought I had other responsibilities.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Now Alexandra asked, “So?”

The old lady looked intense at Alexandra.

“You have still a historical strong gift for divination, Kassandra! Although you fear to do something with it. As always, afraid of not being believed”

Alexandra froze. Hope could that woman she knows that...

“Either you keep silent and do nothing with your gift, like I did. Or you will try to find other ways or means. It is up to you!”

While turning to her grand-grand-daughter, “I can say that I'm glad, even pleased, that you were able to mend, re-forged the key so quickly. Clearly they made the right choice appointing and selecting you. Despite your very young age!”

Hopefully Lily exclaimed, “Are you now going to tell me what and how I should use this key?”

And with these words she displayed the reforged key that she always kept under her robe.

“Sorry girl, but no. By now you realize this is a special key, feared by countless. Many witches and wizards have stored their knowledge and power in it. Only if you discover those yourself, you can use them. Only then. I know that you have found that it gives you magical power in the dream-world. Never mention that to anyone else. Keep it to yourself. For your own protection.”

“There must be something you can do to help, to find my way, give some directions or so? Please!”

“What I can tell you is not directly related to what you should do with this key, at least so I think. A certain wizard has found

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

in Albania a chapter of 'The Black Book', he unfortunately learned much too much from it. About dread, dreaming, diseases, death. And he is willing to put it into practice. He is now starting to find out what he can do with it, but he should never had gained that knowledge.”

“Black Book?”

“Written by the previous owners of the key. The book is named after one of the wizards who contributed most to it. It contains horrible spells. It is important that their existence should be recorded, but never used by any wizard. Fortunately he found only a draft of a single chapter. The book itself is hidden at a different place. For years he tried to find the rest, but was unsuccessful, though his access to this single chapter is bad enough. Very bad indeed. It should have been destroyed when the Key, your key, was sliced.

“But what about my key. Can't you tell me more?” Lily asked.

“You know who's name is connected with this key. Learn about her and the other objects that are associated with her. And...”

“And?”

“And make haste! Learn as quickly as you can, that wizard is practicing and gaining knowledge and experience every day. He will sicken people, drive them mad, torture and enslave them. He fears death but has no respect for life. That's why it is important that you know how to look after people, treat them, cure them, find causes. Later he will kill people. Perhaps he will start a war. He must be stopped before he goes too far.”

“But what can I do? I'm just a girl! A second year student!”

“You are already far ahead compared with other second-years. You will continue to learn and grow faster. That will help you.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

There is a price though. When you grow and learn faster, you might find 'others' behaving childishly. Consider yourself lucky that you can share some of the burden with your friend.”

With pity and sadness in her eyes she continued, “And as a woman and grandmother I should say: don't forget to live.”

The old lady looked at the two girls. She, over three hundred years old knew a bitter truth, but she could not make her self telling them. Too bitter. That they should get everything out of every day, because these two girls would never reached such age. Not even a tenth of it. Both girls, at thirteen, were already over half their lifespan.

“I have wasted my live on trivial things. That I know now. I still have a long way to go before I'll have peace.”

When Lily wanted to ask her another question, she noticed several things. That she was alone again with her friend, the road looked normal and familiar again, the sun was shining and that they were near one of the gates of Hogwarts.

“How is that possible?”

“I think we have been 'dream-walking', on an uncharted path.”, Lily replied.

Longing to go

Some time later however, Binns wanted to know more.

“Of all the places in the world, how did you know where to look?”

He spread his arms wide, “Eideard was never able to find one other travel-stone destination. Not one single one!”

“Well, I didn't know, or still know, much, but I suspected much. When we visited Stone-Henge, I felt many emotions, some distant and vague. Most like good-byes, departures. One made me remember about school and its surroundings, along with a very strong feeling of sadness. But other contained memories of previous traveling. I focused on one of them as it reminded me of what we have seen during the broom-stick-flying lessons, but slightly different. Finally we found a site that more-or-less resembled my memories. But the portal-stone and much of its surroundings were covered by a huge land slide.”

“And how much time did it take to find out?”

“A single morning at the Henge, and about a day looking around here. Why do you ask professor?”

“It took Eideard nearly ten years to re-discover some of the secrets of the central-stone.”

“You still want to solve the riddles of the portal-stones, not? And my help solving it.”

“Yes we do, but we both do realize that disaster could be just a wave of your wand away.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Then why do you still want it? Nowadays people can travel around the world with boats and airplanes. Unlike 2000 years ago, there is no need for the stones anymore!”

Lily was much surprised with Binn's changed attitude, something she had never expected it.

“One aspect is the challenge, of something described as impossible and lost forever.”

“And the other?”

“Besides being very much related with magic and thus to our school, to be honest, sheer curiosity,” Alexandra admitted.

“Obviously Gryffindor! I am not saying I will help you, but what did you find out so far?”

“At the Henge, there is a central stone controlling it all, and each of the stones from the inner-circle is related to a destination. Lily got hold of a map of how people though long time ago thought how the world looked like.”

“How much did that map helped you?”

“Not much, we just started. From the visions I got, we presumed that one is or was, located near Hogwarts, as I recognized some of it. The rest is a wild guess.”

“Such as?”

“One stone, slightly more towards the east, was about ice and fire. When you combine that with north-north-east, you end up on Iceland.”

“Nice deduced.”

“Much other stones were very vague, like the north-eastern one. Cold, green, rain, islands. Perhaps Wales or Ireland, but is could be anywhere.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“And at least one portal-key, we know we will never find back anymore.”

“How come?”

“I felt, or saw the Mediterranean sea, and a city in the desert. It strongly resembles an artist impression from long ago of Cartage. Lately someone showed me a photograph of North-Africa, where Carthage used to be. All the stones of an entire city carried away.”

“Sounds rather gloomy, girls.”

“A couple of others showed me just forests. Either cold, which could be Scandinavia or Russia. Or warm and humid, which is totally impossible: finding a stone in any rain-forest.”

“No better candidates?”

“Not within the reach of any schoolgirls: Alexandria in Egypt, Knossos in Crete, Borobudur in Java. Babylon Iraq”

“What where your ideas then?”

“Well, try to find the other, corresponding stone, or perhaps another circle. To see if it was toppled, taken away, destroyed, immured, sub-merged. And try to find anything in the library. Perhaps at the time we leave school, we know a bit more.”

“So you two have enough time to think and dream about them.”

Lily replied, “Yes indeed, professor, thank you!”

Through the eyes of a bird

However, the dream-session next Friday started differently. One chair remained empty.

Minerva started, “As you are aware, one student is missing, Synthia. Synthia Kilbride. I was not able yet to find her. She is neither in the Gryffindor common-room, nor the dormitory, nor one of the classrooms. All I got is seemingly a goodbye letter, in which she writes that it has all been wrong and next battle is obviously in vain. *The Dark Lord will win and we better get prepared.*”

She looked at them all. “Never in history did a student leave during the school year, and this is certainly NOT the proper way. If you leave before passing the OWL's, you can not take your wand with you. Ministry regulation.”

After a deep sigh, “I can only understand that previous session has left a much deeper impact than I expected. Perhaps I should have noticed, but my own emotions were also upside-down. It was very unprofessionally and the only excuse I have is that Albus and I go along a very long time.”

Peter commented, “They way she wrote it, I mean how you read it, sounded like it was written by someone else. No Gryffindor would say something like that. More like one from Slytherin.”

She looked at Lily, “We have spoken before about this, do you want to say anything?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Lily slowly shook her head. But then said “I never intended this. I do not know how to control it, where or to which moment in time we go. I feel so sorry causing this.”

But Minerva was rather strict about this.

“We all knew from the beginning that this is experimental. If after any session you feel confused, changed, lost or so, don't keep it to yourself and start brooding, seek anyone of the others or me. Any moment of the day – or night. Do you all understand what I'm saying. What we are doing might, yes, might be dangerous!”

“Peter, as one of the eldest students here now. Anything else to get of you chest?”

“Like I said before, it was a dream about a possible future. Because we want to, for organizational reasons and to prove that the future isn't cast into concrete, so we changed our wedding date ahead!”

“That is wonderful, lovely, congratulations!”

“Perhaps some students think we are much too young for such an important step in one's life, but Mary and I know each other from primary school, so it is no infatuation. The original plan was after graduation from Hogwarts, finding a job, saving enough money for settling down and a splendid holiday. But my father died two years ago, since then my mother is pining away, only thing that she holds on to is seeing us married. But we recently fear that she might not hold out until the original wedding-day. It totally overhauls our planning. Many other things have to be postponed or even canceled, like a big party, dresses, holidays. ”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“So, are you ready, I mean can you already afford it all?”

“To be honest, at the moment we are try to use all of our sav-ings for our new home. So we have to postpone our honey-moon, probably to next year, or even later.”

“I'm sorry to hear, Peter. But did you or Mary had any plans, wishes?”

Peter looked at his bride to be, and continued, “Well, I knew that Mary once said....”

“Hush Peter!” Lily said suddenly, “Peter, Minerva can I have a moment together?”

Surprised they followed Lily to the other corner of the room.

“What is it, Lily?”

“I just thought of something. I won't be offended if you reject it, but I could take you in a dream almost everywhere. Of course it isn't the real thing, but it is free, and you don't have to worry about luggage or bad weather.”

Peter was speechless. So Lily asked her teacher and groups-mentor. “Minerva, what do you think, would you allow me to try this. Is it alright with you?”

“Allowing isn't an issue. More important is what Peter thinks and feels about it.”

He inquired “Who would be involved? Entire group, some, or just you, Mary and me?”

Lily looked first at Minerva and then at Peter, “What ever you want, and Minerva thinks about it. I'll leave her the final word. She has to official responsibility what we do here.”

“If possible, we can do a field trip with the complete group an-other time. But I wouldn't intrude on their try-out honeymoon.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“In that case, it would be just the three of us.”

“And any place particular in mind?”

“We both were looking at brochures from the near east, but hadn't made up our minds. Mostly where the weather is fine. Do you think that is possible?”

Lily smiled, “I think so, yes, specially if you can let me see your brochures.”

Minerva looked approvingly, and said, “In that case I'll take the others outside, and enjoy some sunlight in the awakening world.” and she left, take all the others, save Mary, with her.

Peter prepared his fiancée, “Ready for a honey-moon try-out?”

Smiling she replied, “Can not wait!”, But she had, because her fiancée had to fetch both magical and Muggle brochures about resorts and hotels around the Mediterranean sea, that also showed them possible excursions in their vicinity.

“I won't give you too much details in advance, to avoid any disappointment.”

They made themselves comfortable as possible while maintaining a tiny ring.

While Lily close her eyes, she softly whispered, “Just concentrate on a lovely summer morning, blue sky, some tiny white clouds and a soft breeze through your hair...”

Lily did it herself also, but also imagined three huge white birds. Just imagine to see those birds fly. It was excellent whether to fly, so why shouldn't the birds fly. Why shouldn't they? She tried to imagine what it would be like, to have wings instead or arms. She flapped a couple of times, feeling the lift the wings gave, jumped, and was airborne! She looked over her

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

shoulder and saw that the other two birds following her. With a number of powerful strokes she gained so much height that she flew at the same altitude as some of the clouds. With each next stroke she saw the landscape change. The crossing of the channel happened within the blink of an eye. In order to preserve her strength Lily decided to glide for a while. After a long shallow dive across France, when they reached the Mediterranean sea, they climbed again. In a next dive they passed Italy and landed in Athens, on the top of the Acropolis. During a fortnight they visited all the places, like the ruins of Troy and Santorini, that Lily knew from one of Alexandra's study books, Delphy, Rhodos, Kos. At one moment she felt attracted to fly straight south, so she did until a huge island appeared. They passed a major city with white houses, until she saw a huge staircase. Then she realized where she was: at the famous palace of Knossos, Crete. With slow strokes she flew over the long staircases until they reached the top. There they landed, each of them on a separate pillar to rest for a while, but Lily felt that she did not recuperate. How did birds rest? How long did she need? Then she realized it was all still a dream but lost all sense of reality or time in the real world. And she got the feeling that she didn't belong here, that she had to return, so she did the only option left, wake up.

When she opened her eyes, she saw Minerva sitting nearby with a book and a cup of tea.

Simultaneously both asked to the other, "How long..."

Slowly also Peter and Maria opened their eyes and stretched out.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Minerva answered “You were away for over two hours, and it is near dinner time. I do realize that when doing something like this, we should make some arrangements and agreements how long will be dreaming, and wake up us when needed, although we prior must find out the consequence of interrupting a dream”

Lily replied, “For us, at least for me, it felt like weeks!”

Peter explained to Minerva, “Same for us. She gave us a guided tour at all the spots of the ancient world. Breath taking, marvelous. Although I feel exhausted. I presume we have to use our wand to give us the corresponding sun-taint that comes with two weeks holiday in the sun. How about you, love?”

Mary was still trying to cope with all impressions, “You are indeed an exceptionally talented, Lily.”

“I am glad we could share a dream without any unpleasant moments. I hope I didn't intrude too much. Company is not usual at a honeymoon, I presume.”

“Oh no, certainly not. The trip was lovely, and I hope a real trip won't be a disappointment compared with this. But I meant something entirely else.....”

While looking at Minerva, she explained, “She gave us a sight seeing, through the eyes of a bird. But you should know, just an hour before our *departure*, Peter changed symbolically his patronus in the same as mine, an albatross. Birds that remain with their partner their entire life. Can you guess what bird Lily had chosen? Indeed!”

“You must tell me all about it! What was it like?”

“Not me, perhaps Peter or Mary. I am so exhausted, I think I'll even skip dinner and go straight to bed.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Nothing wrong, Lily?” Minerva asked concerned.

“No, just tired, very tired.”

So they split up. Mary, Minerva and Peter walked to the main hall, where dinner was served, telling all they had seen.

Minerva listened very carefully, and even made some notes.

“It is a pity that this all has to be kept secret. Just imagine what this could do for the lessons History or Geography. Even if such dreams show only the images stored inside her memory, student motivation would definitely benefit from them.”

Meanwhile, Lily went directly to the girls-dormitory.

As soon as Lily reach her bed, she let her self fall. Without bothering to undress, she pulled up the blankets while closing her eyes and fell into a black bottomless pit.

Attack!

When Lily opened her eyes again, it was pitch dark in the room. After a quick 'Lumos' she looked around. All the other students seemed to be sleeping. For how long did she sleep? She must have been exhausted. But still she felt the pounding of her heart. Like she had been running for a long time. Or was it something else? She felt discomfort. Her grandmothers golden key lay exactly on her heart! When Lily touched it she almost burned her fingers, how could that have happened? Something did happen, but what? In contrast to the key, her hand and legs, actually everything, was ice cold. Her dormitory was freezing cold. Worried she got out of bed. She had promised to warn Dumbledore if something was wrong, but he probably never thought that to occur in the middle of the night. The moment she decided to see him, she knew that it was the correct decision, but still something felt wrong, horribly wrong, like imminent danger. But how could that be? They were all safe here at Hogwarts, protected by spells that would far beyond the comprehension of simple students. She ran through the empty corridors and with each step, the fear grew. When she reached the staff area, she nearly felt panic. One of the doors was ajar and light shone out. When she opened it, she found out it was Dibbets room. Perhaps speaking to the head of Hogwarts was even better than Dumbledore. When Lilly got in, she immediately noticed the professor. He was lying still on the ground, with two hooded figures standing beside him. All

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

dressed in black, Death-eaters! When they noticed they were not alone anymore, they looked up.

A man spoke and a strange merciless voice said, "This time it is YOU who are alone. The girl was weak, but still capable to bring me here! Two against one, and together we are stronger, much much stronger. And now we will finish this threat to the Dark Lord. We will just stop his interference by halting his heart forever. That meddling old fool."

Instinctively Lily drew her wand.

But the man coldly grimaced, "You of all the people, you who gave us the means to dream ourselves inside the castle bypassing all useless spells, you should know that these wands don't work here, you stupid girl! Now it is muscle against muscle. I can leave it up to her to smother him, so it is you against me, dare to try it?"

Suddenly Lily felt furiously like never before. With her left hand on the key, she waved her other and cursed instinctively with all her power, "To hell with you two, Maledictus Confundo!"

A purple light flashed out of Lily's wand and hit the two dark hooded attackers. This was not the harmless 'Cunfundus' charm she had learned during the defense against the dark arts!

Immediately both figures froze, fell to the ground with a final look of total disbelief and horror on their faces.

Discarding them, she hurried to professor Dibbet. While she still held the key, she pointed her wand to his heart and simply said, "Ut Permanerent."

She checked and noticed a very faint but regular heartbeat.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Next, she looked around for help, but when she looked in one of the mirrors she failed to see her own reflection! The she realized what was happening, this was another dream, a horrible one, a nightmare. The feeling of panic and fear was gone, but was replaced by emptiness and helplessness. All she could think and wish for was to wake up from this nightmare.

Even though she did wake up, the scenery remained the same, the school headmaster lying on the floor along with two dark figures. Only difference was that she heard the voices of other people nearby in other rooms. With all of the rest of the power left in her she screamed as loud as possible.

“Help me, please!”

A single heartbeat later many alarmed professors were arriving.

“Another attack, by them!” the figures in the portraits explained needlessly, pointing to the dark figures.

Professor Slughorn quickly examined Dibbet, “He lives”, was all he said.

Dumbledore first looked after Lily. “I'm alright, I think.” she said.

Next Dumbledore examined to other darkly dressed strangers. “That is something I can not say for these two.”

“One is, or was, a girl, fifth year Gryffindor student. Synthia Killbride.”

“And the other?”

“Don't know, a man I have never seen him before. Neither student nor staff. Unfortunately I do recognize this clothing however.”

“How did he get in Hogwarts?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“For strangers that is not possible!”

“How did they die? Hit, hurt, cursed, something else?”

“No, no signs at all. No injuries at first sight, not suffocated, nothing at all. It looks like they were just shielded from life. Life force taken away.”

Finally Albus asked Lily, “Do you know what happened. Do you think you can tell us?”

“I think I was here in a dream, a real horrible nightmare. Our school head was already lying on the floor. They were trying to strangle, suffocate him. They said they would finally fulfill a prophecy and something about a Dark Lord or so. When I entered the room, I think they got scared. I vaguely remember we had some words, and finally I woke up. But I can not remember that I walked towards here. I must have been sleepwalking. How else could I wake up here?”

Dumbledore looked at her, not knowing what to believe, as it was not that easy to enter the well protected room of the head of Hogwarts. Two students and a stranger had been able to breach or to circumvent all installed security measures, but how? That was something he had the sleep about, or otherwise he would get sleepless nights from it. And how did the attackers die? Those spells were never taught to any student.

Then he thought about something. “Do you have your wand here, Lily?” He remembered that he could retrieve all spells that were cast by a wand. That way he could find out what this girl had done, even if she could not or didn't want to tell.

She touched her sleeve, but it was empty.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“No. It is still in the dormitory.”

He put his old hand on her arm, and noticed how cold she felt.

“Well then, I could say 'back to the dormitory', but I presume you won't be able to sleep right now.”

Lily nodded.

“How about a nice coco? To warm you up a bit.”

“Isn't the kitchen closed?”

“Oh no. It is just half past eleven. And for me they are always open. That is one of the few privileges that comes with my position.”

Dumbledore was relieved to see a very small smile returning to Lily's pale face.

After they visited the kitchen, they returned to the main hall and sat with a dish loaded with all sorts of biscuits and cookies near one of the burning fireplaces.

All other staff-members and some alarmed students knew better than interfering right now and kept their distance.

“Do you remember who told you the password for Dibbets' room? Did he told you himself?”

But Lily shook her head, “No. No-one ever told me. I didn't use the spiraling staircase, but another door, and that one I didn't had to open, it was still ajar.”

Dumbledore said nothing. He very well knew that the room to the headmasters offices had only one single entrance, as far as he knew, that was. Another entrance no-one knew about, the mere thought made him shiver.

“Is there anything you want to get rid of, tell me, or ask me? I heard from Minerva, that you have done two other students this

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

afternoon a huge favor and came from far away. Whatever it is you've seen or done this evening, I'm grateful to hear about and it will stay between us.”

Again, Lily shook her head, “No professor. It is a complete mystery to me. I went to bed exhausted, you can ask Peter, Mary or professor McGonagall about it. I dreamed that I woke up and that I hurried to the staff corridor, finding one door ajar. After arguing and finding the head-master on the floor, I wanted with all my might to wake up. But I woke up there, in his room, instead of in my own bed, where I fell asleep. How is that possible? I just don't understand!”

“Neither can I.” He replied, “But here we teach and learn many things that other people consider impossible. Don't break your mind over that. Leave that to others, like me, who are assigned for that task.”

After poking in the fireplace, he added, “The more you know, the more ones come to the conclusion that there is much more to be discovered.”

“Professor?”

“Yes, Lily?” he eagerly replied in anticipation of some revelation.

“Thank you for the biscuits, coco and sitting here with me, but I rather go back to bed now, if you don't mind.”

“But of course not!” he lied convincingly. “Sweet dreams this time. You want anyone to accompany you?”

“No sir. I'm a big girl now.” She grinned and walked away.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“And?” As soon as the girl had left, McGonagall approached Dumbledore.

“I'm sure she saved Dibbet's life, but I also think that she killed two others. Her wand is still in her dormitory! And she said she cannot remember anything. Not even how she got into his study. Do you understand what that implies? She is doing magic without a wand! She told me the truth, as I scanned her cautiously. She did not keep her wand hidden. And how did she get in? How did the other two get in?”

“So,” Minerva concluded, “We are thankful and very scared!”

Closure

The end of another year at Hogwarts approached rapidly. Final test-papers and pending rapports of previously done lab-exercises. Most students found help with each other, but not for Alexandra and Lily who had additional difficulties, as their schedule for Greek and Biology was totally different to other students. Sometimes they could ask a final year student for help, but it happened more than once that even those came to either of the girls for help.

Most Gryffindor students managed easily, though some had a close shaving with potions. Shortly before years end Lily and Alexandra were called to Dibbet's study. The room was crowded as Dumbledore, McGonagall, Slughorn, Binns and professor Corstorphine were already present.

“Lily, Alexandra, we asked the two of you here, because we have more than enough reasons to celebrate. Besides the normal school activities, and the post-school activities you participated in an extra fast learning project. Each of you absorbed three years of material in a single years, and you did this twice. So, Alexandra, Lily the scope of the class material equals of what other students manage in six years. As the final years is for most students rehearsal and catching up, it is with unmeasurable pride that we, the staff of Hogwarts school of wizardry and magic, received from the ministry of education your exam-certificate for Greek for you Alexandra, and the exam-certificate for Biology for you Lily. It simple means you two have graduated for these subjects.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

And with these words he showed them official certificates from the university.

“Normally those certificates or diploma we give to students at the farewell party, but neither of you are leaving. You understand that you will receive them at the official school year closure, shortly. But I am extremely proud of you and your professors. Well done! In theory, this means that for the next couple of years here, your timetable, your schedule could be reduced. But I have the impression that this was not what you intended, correct me if I am mistaken.”

He looked at Lily, “For you, it means that you can start with the modules that Miranda can provide. So you can start earning certificate points for Oxford.”

Next he turned to Alexandra, “Same is true for you, if you want. One of our own former students, Margaret Potter, is a graduated Oxford professor. She can provide the modules for Greek. She is the mother of one of our other students, James Potter, you might have heard of him! Did you have thought about that, Alexandra?”

“Yes, professor. I too want to continue.”

“I'll ask her to contact you, but that is for later. I think this warrants a glass beer or wine, not?”

That afternoon, all students and staff were gathered in the main hall. Each of them at their own department-table. Dibbet raised and addressed them all.

“Dear staff and students. Many months have passed, another year is over. Joy-full events and things we rather forget. Let me briefly highlight some of them.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Unexpectedly, one of the most commemorate worthy events was the fact that one of our students sliced two world records for speedbroming on one and ten mile distance. We are still extemely proud to have the holder among us.

An event that we all know returns every year, is the Quidditch cup. This year the house of Gryffindor is entitled to win it with just ten points difference from Slytherin. Sharply played!

Something I hoped for, but seldom achieved has happened at our school. May I ask miss Evens and miss McGonnegal to come forward. These to ultra bright students have passed their biology and greek final-exams. Each trimester absorbing the material of an entire year! For both occasions I reward Gryffindor hundred points, twice! This itself is exceptional, but combine that, with the fact that our sorting hat placed them in Gryffindor instead of Ravenclaw indicate that this isn't the last thing we 've heard from these two.”

Most of the students were completely unaware of the scope of these achievents, but the amount of points was clearly some indication. Lily and Alexandra received their certificates and rejoined the other Gryffindor students.

“As usual, Huffelpuf as broken the least rules, which earns them ten points. Alas for Slytherin they hold this year the top record for transgression, so minus ten points.

This means that again, this year Gryffindor wins the house cup. Well done, and good luck for the other houses the upcoming year.

Before dinner, I have some very special final announcements to make.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Two of our finale year-students, Mary MacCammon and Peter Mangnall were planning to get married shortly. Last month they informed me that they would advance their wedding date.”

After much whispering, pointing and grinning. “No, this is not the usual cause, but they wanted to share it with all of us, here still at school. The party is next Tuesday. You are all invited.”

Next he looked very pleased, like he had won an important trophy.

“Today I received the word from our ministry, section sport, that our school has been selected for hosting the national-speed-broom-contest next year. For those who are able to do so, please keep practicing during the holidays.

So, unless any other member of the staff has something to say, I presume it is dinnertime!”

And as usual, all the carafes, bottles and plates were magically filled by a simple tick of Dibbet's wand to one of the plates.

But Lily's plate remain empty.

“Not hungry?” Alexandra inquired.

“I don't know. Somehow I lost my appetite.”

“Me to. I thought I would be overjoyed, receiving my certificate for Greek, but not. I feel weird, empty.”

“Exactly! Something like walking in the lake-district or Highlands, climbing a huge hill and expecting a magnificent view. And when you get there, you find that another hill is blocking your view. I feel tired and empty. Over and done.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Indeed, how about some fruit to fill our stomach and a quick tour on the broom to clear our heads?”

“Splendid idea!”

Some apple's, banana's and oranges later, both girls were cruising just inches above the lake.

“Alexandra?”

“Yes?”

“Are you going to Peter's and Mary's wedding party?”

“Of course! I have never heard it was done here at school, having doubts?”

“I think I'll stay away.”

“What! Why would you miss out?”

Lily told her about one of the previous dream-sessions.

“So you already dreamed about this wedding, you are saying?”

“Indeed, splendid party, but a horrible ending.”

“And you think, by not attending, you can change the outcome?”

“Sort of, perhaps. I just don't know what to think or do!”

Moments later, “You better talk to my aunt. I can not give you any advise. My mind is in a twist when I think about either case. Yes, you should talk it over with aunt Minerva!”

“I'll guess that is the best thing to do.”

The future is ahead.

And that is what Lily did next morning.

First she tried professor McGonagall's study, but when it was deserted she went to Dumbledore's, where she found the both of them, perfectly dressed up for the occasion.

As soon as they noticed Lily's expression, and the fact she was still wearing her daily cloth, they invited her in.

“What is wrong Lily? This is the happiest events in their lives, and we are all invited to share it with them. Why so gloomy?”

With tears in her eyes Lily reminded them on one of the previous dream sessions, that started with this wedding and ended in Dumbledore's death.

“I can not let this happen!” and finally she failed to hold back the tears.

“Dear girl,” Dumbledore said.

“Do you really think you can change the future, simply by staying away?”

“I don't want to sound harsh, but that is quite an assumption you make. Peter and Mary are already diverting from the original dream, by changing their wedding-day!”

“You can not say that. Perhaps that was required for that dream!”

“Let's just assume you are correct -and I am certain you are not- you could save my live in this way, perhaps you would cause Minerva's death, James's or your own. No Lily, you can

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

do either way, stay away or come along, but don't have the illusion that it is up to you to decide about my life. Thank you very much for the consideration, but no thanks.”

Lily felt like an enormous burden was lifted from her.

“That is a relief!”

Minerva tried to conclude, “So please Lily, change into festivity robe, this standard Hogwarts robe is not suited for the occasion! Both Peter and Mary consider you as a special friend. Come on, I'll walk along with you, I'll keep an eye on you before you change your mind again.”

She escorted her to the Gryffindor common-room, where she waited until Lily was presentable again. From there they walked to the Quidditch playing field, where a number of pavilions were put down. Most of the students that actually didn't know either broom or bride and were more interested in the abundant supply of beer and wine simply sat on the spectator tribune. But most of the Gryffindor students and the Quidditch players from the other houses and other invited guests, dwindled on the main field.

“I presume you still remember Martin Steward, Quidditch captain and member of our previous dream-team?” Minerva asked.

“Absolutely, why”

“He was invited also, and I heard that since the moment he arrived, he was looking for you. And it seems he has the impression you won't show up.”

Lily looked in the direction Minerva was pointing. Two boys waking very unsteadily, one supporting the other, who constantly said, *'To absent friends!'*

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Is THAT Martin?’ asked Lily”

“I am afraid so. Here at school, he was in a safe and protected area, with just promising expectations. It seems that the real life at the ministry is quite something else then he had expected it to be. Regrettably.”

Together with her teacher she walked over the field, trying to locate some of her friends. When the arrival of the happy couple was announced, Lily stopped searching and paid full attention to bride and groom. Both were wearing full traditional wizardry robe and costume and radiating with happiness.

Minerva said softly, “Just take a look around you Lily. Look at the expression on their faces. If you look at the young people you might see longing and desire. While if you look at the older, you see remembrance, something like: *‘yes, that was how I felt many years ago’.*”

Lilly looked and noticed Minerva was right, except for some people with straight faces.


“How about the people with no so pleasant memories?”

“What do you mean by that, Lily?”

“Well, for instance, professor Binns?”

“He can not be here. As a ghost he is bound to the castle, but what's the matter with professor Binns?”

“Well, his best friend and his girl died accidentally while doing an experiment. And his own girlfriend died in his arms! His friend took his own life believing he caused it all and toke the blame for it. He grieves for her some centuries.”

Astonished, Minerva looked at Lily, “Did you really speak with him about his youth? To us he never said a single word. 

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

as the grave -so to speak-. We just assumed he was married with his work. What you told me explains a lot.”

“I think Alexandra is very good with people, or ghosts in this case. She can actually feels what goes on beneath one's skin.”

The compliment for her niece surprised Minerva slightly, and made her think. “You two are quite close, not?”

Lily just nodded.

“Look, Dibbet has arrived! He recovered completely. What is that man wearing. He looks ridiculous, even at wizard standards.”

Using his wand as amplifier, he said, “Dearly beloved! It is my privilege to join these two people into marriage. In all my years as student, teacher and later as head, I can not remember this has been done here before. From the ministry I received temporary permission to make it an official, legal ceremony, even according to Muggle regulations. So when you shortly reply to the well-known question I will ask to you both, in front of all these witnesses, be sure as there is no turning back. As head of this school, I witnessed the beginning of many stories. '*Great expectations*' to quote Dickens. But do not underestimate the amount of work that lies ahead on the road you have chosen to travel together, but to comfort you, it is the labor of love. Our teachers will agree with me, that during all the years you studied here, you were exposed to powerful potions and spells, but I seldom seen something so strong as the bond that bind two people together, love.”

Dibbet paused a moment to clear his throat.

“So, Mary MacCammon, will you take Peter Mangnall as your husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Yes I do!”

“And Peter Mangnall, will you take Mary MacCammon as your wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward?”

“Yes, I certainly do!”

“Then, by the powers instated to me, I declare you husband and wife. My congratulations! You may kiss the bride.”

Immediately Dumbledore got up and cheered “Hip hip, hur-ray!” And many others joined in or applauded.

At that moment she smelled something familiar, and noticed one standing right behind her. “Sorry for being late, I had to help Sirius dressed with his enjuired arm, when suddenly Peeves hit me with an inkpot, so I had to shower again...”

Did her dream still had come true? The moment her legs gave way, she felt two strong arms around her. “Sorry for holding you that way, but I fearded you would tumble to the ground.”

Lily turned her head, and looked at the worried face of James!

“Are you alright, can I let go?”

“You just gave me a fright, feeling better now.”

But nevertheless, she did not try to move his arms away. She really considered that she was entitled to some moral and physical support, after all she had been through. And after the scene with Peter and Mary exchange their vows, this tender touch simply felt heavenly. She had enjoyed their walk hand-in-hand through the dark castle long ago, but this felt better much, much better. Lily placed her hands on his, partly to avoid any further 'exploration', but also to avoid him letting go.

She heard him whisper “Sorry, you looked so beautiful, I just could not resist doing this.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

For a split second she wondered if it was just her dress doing all the attraction, but then decided she didn't care. For a moment she was daydreaming that it was her, standing there in front of all the people. She didn't even mind James doing this in public, for all to see, because everybody's attention was somewhere else and some students were even kissing.

Then like a lightning strike, it dawned upon her. Her parents had told about it, and she had learned about it from her biology books. But experiencing is quite something else. Hormones were playing a trick on her. For a couple of years she got used to strange and new feelings. But she had contributed them to something else. Exitement of going to a secondary school. Finding out she had magical talent and would become a witch. Her first potion. Her first spell. Sharing dreams. Visiting the afterlife. Hormones had simply ticked slowly, but now here, at the wedding, being held so tenderly by a boy had caused a dam to breach, and her veins seems to be flooded with oestrogen. She started to understand why and how people sometimes behaved in a irrational way. Analitically understanding this, was difficult already, dealing with it seemed nearly impossible.

“James, do you realize what you have done?”

“Rescuing you from falling to the ground. You could have hurt yurself rather bad. Here and there are still some nasty rocks.”

She squeezed his hands.

“I mean, what you are doing right now?”

For a second she felt his grip tightening.

She heard him repeating, “You look so beautiful, I just could not resist doing this. Still can't”

“Have you done this often before? Holding girls like this?”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

James chuckled, “No! Never! My parents would kill me if they would even know.”

She was tempted to ask, 'Do you know what you are doing TO ME!' But suddenly she felt a strong urge to turn around and to kiss him. Would she dare to turn around, and do that? No! At least not yet. Having him so close was already more than she had hoped for. She decided to enjoy every single second with her eyes closed, him holding her so close while it lasted. Therefor neither she nor James didn't even hear and head the professor's warning.

Just like Lily, James seemed also lost in thoughts.

Initially he was slightly irritated. He and Sirius had to do some forgotten detention left-overs. While others were enjoying time-off, they had to do all sorts of gasty chores that Filch came up with. “Either now, or you'll have to stay another week, until the Hogwarts Express returns...” Their final detention job was for Herbology. Re-potting mandragora's. Last month they had sliced Snape's protecting gloves, causing him to wear bandages for an entire week. “Look out for the mummy” was the catch-phrase all that time. Even though they were caught, he didn't mind. If you live near the edge, you must bear the consequences. Today they had to use the same gloves. But while prof. Sprout was observing Sirius, James had immediately applied the 'Reparo' spell to his gloves. Sirius was not so fortunate. His fingers looked like objects from outer-space. So doing buttons was totally impossible. So his friend need to help him. And while already late for changing into their festivity robes for the party. Peeves had thrown ink-puts at them. They had missed, of course, but still he got ink all over his head. So he needed to shower. Therefor he was late and the ceremony had

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

already commenced. The crowd was thick and he could only join the last people arriving. The only familiar face he could detect were professor McGonagall and Lily. That was a consolation. So he approached them carefully. The moment he noticed the girl, in her stunning dress collapsing, he acted on instinct. James had been Quidditch seeker for quite a while, and to be able to catch the Golden Snitch, meant acting on instinct. And so he did, though catching a falling girl is totally different from catching a small ball while flying. The same instance, he remembered them walking hand-in-hand, some months ago. A feeling new and overwhelming.

His parents had been talking with him about girls time after time. But not about this. They were concerned about him behaving irresponsible, or girls try to take advantage of him and the family's fortune. But they never said a word about how he was feeling right now. Something so good, so precious, so wonderful. For a moment he imagined he was a knight defending home and castle. And his wife. WHAT? NO! He grinned to himself. He was sure he wasn't under some spell, and had not been drinking anything that could have been tampered with. Also a pertinent lesson from his parents. But still the warm feeling in his heart remained. Something like a cozy fireplace on a freezing winter day. He lessened his grip, but the girl didn't want to let go of his arms. He wished he could talk with someone about this. He knew for certain that his class-mates would have scorned that he should have taken her to the lonely hill nearby, or the dark spots in the forbidden forest, and do all sorts of things they had shown on the pages on top of their beds. But no. No words or pictures could approach the feeling in his heart right now. Something perfect, almost sacred. Per-

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

haps his friend Sirius would understand. He seemed to have special feelings for that girl Alexandra. He smelled the summer in Lily's hair, and her perfume. It dazzled him. The only thing he could come up with, was to kiss the top of her ear. He felt her shivering and tightening her grip on his hands. Why did his parents never talk about this? Now he could no do that anymore. This was something he could not hide from them, he thought. They would look right through him. If he would confess on doing this, they would kill him on the spot, or worse, send him to another school. So he was glad neither of his parents could see him.

Minerva threw an investigating look at James, "James, before you start examining the beverages too quickly and too closely, I have to warn you that on the list of invited guests are also your parents. So try to behave, for your own sake! - Ah I think I have seen them near Dumbledore. Sorry! They noticed us. The three of them are coming to us." But her words fell upon deaf ears. Only the feeling of an approaching awkward situation made her return to reality.

Perhaps James was surprised, but Lily didn't even had time to feel surprised. Or embarrassed, as James was still holding her close. Along with Dumbledore she spotted a couple, walking arm in arm towards them. Both of them several years older than her own parents. The man was tall, untidy black hair and wearing glasses. She noticed that James' father was looking at his son with an understanding smile as he greeted him. Could that smile be related to the fact that James had still his arms around her? But his mother did not look at her son! She only looked at her. Stern. Slightly worried, probing, investigating who the girl might be her son was holding on to.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Lily realized that the fact could not be made undone, and decided to make the best of it. So did he.

Finally James let go of her. "Hello father, mother. Quite a surprise finding you here. May I introduce Lily to you? She, also Gryffindor, is in the same class as I am. Lily, this is my father, my mother."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Potter, Mrs. Potter."

"Glad to meet you, Lily eh?"

"Evans. Lily Evans. Yes Mrs. I understand that you and your husband were also at Gryffindor?"

"Indeed, quite some time ago. I was in the same year as Mary's mother, hence our invitation. I have promised myself to visit Hogwarts many times but every time something got in the way. As always, it feels good to be back here, but strangely, the students look much more younger. By the way, do you know where James' other friends are? Dumbledore said he would like me to meet Alexandra, the niece of professor McGonagall. I believe she is also a friend of yours?"

"Absolutely Mrs Potter, we are best friends."

"Very good. As my husband seems to get Quidditch fever again, after seeing the broomsticks and this field again, could you introduce me to them?"

"But certainly! Did you know that your son became Gryffindor's seeker?"

"No, he didn't mention it. Obviously there is much more he could have told us..."

Lily looked around and saw Alexandra standing near Hagrid, Sirius, Remus and much of the other Gryffindor students.'

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Please follow me, Alexandra is the girls with fair blond hair in the white dress over there.”

Lily lead the way to the group of students.

As they approached, Sirius promptly joked, “Hi Lily, your mother-in-law..., I presume?”

Slightly taken back, she ignored his remark and replied, “Mrs. Potter, this is Sirius Black, this is Alexandra McGonegall, Remus Lupin, Peter Pettigrew and Rubeus Hagrid.”

Mrs. Potter replied, “Dear Hagrid, it is good seeing you again after all this time, everything well, I hope? Nice meeting you all.”

For a moment Lily was very much relieved not to be in the center of James' mother focus.

The lady continued, ”Specially meeting you, Alexandra! Dippet, Dumbledore and your teacher Greek asked me to come and see you about next year.”

“Oh, I am sorry Mrs. Potter. Dumbledore just told me about you. You've got your master's degree at Oxford, I believe. He told me that you could help me perhaps with the upcoming year, but he certainly did not tell us that James' parents would be here at the wedding party.”

“Ah, typically Dumbledore. Yes that is true, but if I caught you unprepared, I think this is neither the place or time to talk about serious matters like that.”

She thought for a second and continued, “Perhaps it is a nice idea, if you and your friend visit us? One of our houses is not so far from here. The next valley. It is the place we stay most of the time during the summer.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Hearing this, Lily knew and felt that despite her casual words, she was still very much in the center of James' mother attention, and probably would remain for quite awhile. She thought, "Why did James had to hold me like that? Quite a first impression. She'll never forget, nor will I. That I'll know for sure."

She heard Alexandra saying, "You are too kind Mrs. Potter, or should I address you as professor Potter?"

Laughingly she replied, "I am not used to much of that formality, Alexandra. Walking here, I feel myself a student again, not a professor."

Lily suggested, "Alexandra, there, talking to James, is his father, shall we go there?"

And moments later, Lily introduced her friend to James' father. Dumbledore noticed the vivid conversation among James' parents and the students, and commented, "Margaret, Edward, so good to see you again. I see that you all found each other, well that saves me the introductions. And leave more time for some beer." When he intended to obtain a fresh round of drinks, James' mother quietly asked him, "Albus, may I have a word in private. I want to ask you something about one of your students..." But she was interrupted by Filch, the caretaker.

"Sorry lady, professor, but I can not find professor Dibbet, he left and has not returned yet, so as deputy I came to see you..."

"Alright, what's the matter this time?"

"An important letter, again! Perhaps we must reply?"

Albus apologized, "Excuse me, Margaret, school business I presume." He opened the letter and after a quick glance, he frowned and put it back in the envelope, "Not again!"

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

He looked around and obviously didn't find what or who he was looking for.

“Any one seen professor Corstorphine?”

McGonagall knew, “Yes, he just left an half an hour ago. Along with Dibbet to see the minister. Why?”

“Letter to be translated. Greek.”

Mrs. Potter looked at Dumbledore, “May I have a look at it, or are you expecting confidential hush-hush things?”

Dumbledore thought for a while and draw his conclusion, “Certainly, why not. I presume you will keep things to yourselves if needed that is.”

“Sure!”

And with these words Albus gave her the letter. Margareth sat down, and looked for an empty sheet of paper and something to write with. She looked at the letter and immediately said, “Albus, do you know who has sent you this letter?”

“Not yet, though I've seen that symbol recently before.”

“It is from the Supreme International Wizardry Council!”

“Oh, them again?”

“What? You know about them? Many people consider them as parts of tales. I only found vague references towards them in letters 2000 years ago. So they do still exists! And apparently you receive regularly letters from them?”

She looked impressed and intrigued. With these words she eagerly started reading. Suddenly she turned her head sharply, with her mouth half open. Shook her head in utter, total disbelief and began reading over and over again. But this time she made notes. After some time she re-examined the paper again

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

and compared it with her notes, like she was doing a test-paper. Finally she gave the letter and her translation to Dumbledore. But instead of the professor, she looked at Lily again. But her gaze had changed, initially it had been one of a mother confronted with unexpected situation related to her son, to one of surprise, curiosity, amazement and even some admiration.

Albus read the message and re-examined it again.

“What is it?” Minerva asked.

“An organizational challenge for us. The head of our ministry has been summoned to appear at the Supreme International Wizardry Council. Along with all other heads of the ministries of all other countries. It hasn't happened in 150, 200 years. As far as I can remember, the previous one was held in Damascus, but with the current situation in the Muggle world, that poses a problem. So now they are organizing it in Greece.”

“Excuse me for intruding, but what is the challenge?”

“Our minister has his own means of transportation, but someone else is also invited, who has not.”

“Who might that be, if I may asking?”

“Certainly you might ask and you even get an answer Minerva. It is Lily. She is invited also!”

Before Lily could say anything, Dumbledore continued, “So you see, being invited is one of the highest honors there is, she has to accept. But such invitations are normally only for seasoned wizards or witches. As a student Lily has not got the means to go there, no floo, no grid, no portals and a broomstick? Much too far and not practicable.”

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Finally Lily found some words again. “Professor, when does this counsel summit take place? And what do they want from me. Why am I invited?”

“That's the problem Lily! Already in one week time! And they don't said a single word why or what. Perhaps something to do with your key? Remember that their previous message was explicit about you and your key.”

James father and mother exchanged two or three words with each other and probably some more without speaking. Then he turned to Dumbledore. “Albus, If you and her parents agree with it, we think we can help you with this.”

“How?”

“You know Margaret is still researching ancient history, and as such we were going anyway to the Peloponnese. If she wants to, and all others also agree, she can come along. Our yacht was completed last year, and ready to sail in a couple of days.”

“How much time does take you to get there?”

“Don't worry about that! I know my way around as we have been there before. And don't look so anxious Lily, my wife knows all about Greek, and if they care, you Albus, Minerva, Alexandra and your other friends, perhaps her parents, can come as well, cabins enough.”

Albus seemed relieved, “That's sound extremely tempting, Edward, but we all need some time to think it over.”

James certainly had made up his mind and was already day-dreaming. Sailing to the Mediterranean!

Minerva made a suggestion, “I can travel with Lily to her parents and explain as much as possible as even I can. Probably

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

Alexandra can accompany us. I certainly will not go, unless strictly summoned. Boats and myself are not a good combination. I have no objection against Alexandra going. Actually, on the contrary. That seems to me a pretty good idea.”

The mere idea of a summer holiday in Greece with his friend and Alexandra made it for Sirius easy enough to decide. “When can I board?”

Edward concluded, “From here James and Sirius can come to our home, we ready the ship, and sail from Fort William toward the port of Brighton. Lily, her parents and Albus have then enough time to consider all options. Right?”

'δεξιά' ¹replied Lily, still slightly overwhelmed.

END – year two

1 Right

Sneak preview: chapter 'the contest '

.....
What ever the official result was, Hogwarts and particularly Gryffindor were celebrating, celebrating big!

Just to prove his point, Sirius was wearing both batches he earned previous year, indicating he was still the world champion on the single mile, but also of the ten mile distance. Although the consumption of alcoholic drinks was totally forbidden for students at parties, it was clearly by the behavior of some that they had managed to bypass all detection. Some of the boys had difficulties with standing up, some had problems with talking sensible, although some were considering that as normal behavior for them. A group of girls acted in a way the would certainly not do during breakfast. Standing on the table singing, dancing, cuddling with Sirius, offering him “indecent” photo's and underwear.

At one point Alexandra got so fed-up, she walked to Sirius standing on one of the tables of Gryffindor common-room. “You are a bit late Alexandra, but you can put your photo on the pile there and leave your bra here.” Sirius hands out his broom with countless bra's and nickers.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“You are such an an an *adolescent*!! Your eyes only see what your dirty mind tells them to see! I can not believe you are so ignorant, so blind!”

“What are you saying, you're only jealous!”

“No just take a look!” She grabbed one of the photo's. One girl was constantly putting her underwear on, starting from scratch.

“They are all modified, adapted! The original photo's are commercial ads from dirty magazines. Made by men and intended for dirty old men. The women on it got paid for doing this, they don't like doing it.

And some girls put a photo of their own head on top of these photo's. Look for your self.” Alexandra removed tiny parts from the photo, exposing the original girls of the photo of it. Highly disappointed Sirius had to agree with Alexandra.

“But these bra's look real enough!” And he pointed to one from the photo, and hanging on his broom.

“Did you really thought they got them off when you won? They just had them in they pocket, it was all planned and organized far ahead.” Alexandra said with much conviction in her voice, even though she knew it wasn't entirely true.

“And what do you intend to do with them? Wearing them? I'll bet those from Slytherin are willing to publish such photo!”

“No, of course not! No idea yet.”

“Perhaps you should also realize another thing. These are expensive piece of clothing. Any idea what this one costs?”

She picked up a challenging one.

”No, not the faintest idea.”

“For money this one costs, you can buy more chocolate frogs than you can eat in an entire week. Just this single one! You

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

must return them.”

“How? There are no names attached.”

“I suggest you, or one of your friends if you don't dare, give them to our schools' care-taker, You know, the lost-and-found items. If he puts them all on display, the rightful owners will recognize and collect them.”

“But why would they all do that then?”

“Are you that thick? Look at this photo, did you read the words below it?”

Sirius looked again at a photo of a hardly dressed girl. The text below read: “...*I know what I want...*”

“Did you really think any of them wanted **you**, Sirius Black?

The one and only person responsible for all this only want one thing, and that is winning tomorrow, and her plan is distracting you so much that you have your mind on anything else except flying!”

Utterly disappointed, Sirius threw the photo's away, “isn't there anything real anymore around here?”

“Oh yes there is. Take a look at this photo, even though it is just a Muggle-photo, it is very real. And so is this.”

After these words she grabbed his head with both her hands. And kissed him on his lips for quite awhile.

“And if you manage to win tomorrow, I'll give you the other half! Think about that for a change!”

And with these word Alexandra got down, leaving an astonished boy behind, and went to the girls-dormitory.

Lily asked, “I didn't knew you were that much interested in him.” Her friend responded, “I was so utterly disgusted by his

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

behavior. I had to do something about it to stop it. And no, I wasn't."

"Alexandra, how did it feel, kissing a boy like that? I've never done that. Kissing or being kissed that way."

"Neither had I. But it felt good."

She thought for a second and then continued, "Lily?"

"Yes."

"Sometimes I feel so strange inside. A couple of days before my period, sometimes it lasts a week. It isn't painful, just a distracted, a slightly light feeling in my head, breasts very sensitive. Yesterday I had no fitting bra, so I thought I leave it off. That even felt more horrible, I thought all the boys knew and were looking at me. Immediately after the first class I hurried back and got an older one, slightly to small."

"I think it is about hormones rushing to your veins."

"And just a moment ago, I was going to give him a piece of my mind, and suddenly all I could think about was to kiss him."

"Hormones impacts your feeling and thinking."

"But now I feel ridiculous! What would he be thinking?"

"Can't tell. What did you give him?"

"A copy of the photo your father made of us, at Stone-Henge. And to be honest, he does look cute and it did feel good, I'll hope he does win tomorrow."

Changing the subject, "Alexandra, did you finish your essay for French? I was late, and still have to hand mine over."

"No, I finished it already last week."

With a sheet of parchment, Lily left, but instead of going to the her french-teacher, she headed for Dumbledore.

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

“Sir, do you have a minute?”

“But certainly. What is it about?”

“The contest, the final and closing. Who is giving the medals to the winner?”

“No idea! As Dibbet is away, I presume I'll do it. Why?”

“In the Muggle world, they often ask an attractive girl to do that. Could we do that the same way?”

“Are you volunteering for the job, Lily?”

“No, but Alexandra would certainly not refuse, if you ask her.”
Dumbledore smiled, “Youth... I think about. Well why not.”

An hour later when Lily returned to the common-room all 'surplus clothing' was gone, and all photo's were burning in one of the fireplaces.

“Eh, Lily?”

Sirius was standing behind here.

“Yes, I see party is over, all cleaned up!”

“I feel silly and ashamed. Your friend Alexandra was right. Though you should have seen Filch eyes when I said I had 'found' something. That was priceless. But I wanted to ask you something...”

“As long as you don't want any of my clothing, ask!”

“Uh? No! That photo of Alexandra and you, do you have another one?” and he looked quickly away.”

“O no! Don't tell me you burned that one also! Alexandra wouldn't be pleased when she finds out!”

“I could certainly understand that, of course! The one I've got is safe. It isn't for me. James is awkwardly jealous, he wants

Lily Evans' Diary - year two

mine. He keeps on asking, but I won't give mine away.”

Of all possible replies, this one she had never expected. She felt surprised, flattered, but also something else, like a small butterfly taking off, from her stomach. She flew to her dormitory. A split second she returned.

“Sirius?”

“Yes Lily.”

“I have two things for you. The most important thing is this,” and she handed a second photograph to him. “For James. You better not tell him you got it from me. He'll probably feel ashamed if he finds out that I know about it. And the other thing is this, but only on loan, I need it back. James uses it almost always when playing Quidditch.” and with these words she handed her own broom over. “It has the name 'Cutting-Corners', you can outmaneuver anyone. James can almost do straight angles. Good luck with it.”

“But that is cheating, against the rules!”

“This isn't just about winning, but about getting even.”

She thought for a while, not sure if she should say it,

“And eh Sirius, there is this particular blue-eyed Gryffindor girl, that would very much like to see you win, if you know what I mean....”

The next day, the French girl didn't stand a slightest chance, but it wasn't clear what caused it, the different broom or the motivation.

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About this book:

This second book in the series containing 'Lily Evans Diaries', is the continuation of “An Amazing Girl”.

Where did Lily and Alexandra go during their summer holiday? Why did they go to Oxford University?

What tragic event connects a Hogwarts professor with the ring of Stone Henge? What magic is involved with those monolithic stones that can be found world-wide? How far can you your mind drift while sleeping? If you die, where does your consciousness go to? What ancient magical object lies waiting when she walks hand-in-hand with James through the dark castle? And what about Lily's grand-grand-mother and her dark warnings?

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