

The 'other' end

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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."

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."

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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.”

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.”

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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 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!”

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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.”

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.”

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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 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 com-

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motion 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!"