

# Lily Evans Diary

Year four

Choosing is losing

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

### 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**

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**Final year: Truth and Tears are Bitter**

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Lily Evans Diary, Year four: Choosing is losing

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## Note from the author

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 this writing exercises are these:

- Narrative writing can be highly addictive,
- Much to my own surprise, pages got filled quickly.
- Although I realize the chance of any feedback is slim, I hope a reader might sense some of the emotions I tried to put into it.

My apologies in advance, if people feel offended by the language I used, or the scenes I pictured. I abhor any violence, specially violence against children or women.

All names (of new persons) were generated by 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.

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## Aid

After a long trip on the Hogwarts Express traveling from the north of Scotland, Lily Evans and Alexandra McGonagall safely returned to London. But after they left the special platform that was only visible for non-magical persons, the girls only found Lily's mother waiting for them.

“Where is papa? Something wrong?” She worriedly inquired.

But her mother calmed her, “No, all's well. One of the other G.P.'s is away, so your father is looking after an extra number of his patients for some weeks. So he asked me if I dared to pick you up. And there I am!”

Margareth looked at the girls and hugged them both. “It is so good to see you two again. You look well, grown again. I won't ask anything until we're back home, or you have to tell everything twice. Your father wants to hear as much as you two can tell us. No dashing off this year, that we are not aware of?”

Carrying her luggage towards the exit, Lily smiled and confirmed, “No! We are just staying here.”

With a quick glance at Alexandra, “You look very well girl, radiant, I would say!”

Lily said provokingly, “Well, with some helping hands...”

When Alexandra started laughing, Margareth looked puzzled.

So Lily admitted what she had done. How she, Miranda and James' mother applied '*special printing*' to her underwear.

Her mother grinned, “I'm glad that you can use your gifts also for something funny. You two are always so 'Sirius-ly'.”

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While driving the car carefully through London, she said, “Do you remember the Snape family, that lived in that old house? Last winter their entire house burned down! Thankfully they escaped unharmed, but they had nothing left anymore. They moved away, out of the village.”

Alexandra replied, “Did you know, that their son, is attending the same school as ours? A different department, but we do see him once in a while.”

“Oh! I presume that it means he is also a wizard!”

“That is so. I presume we are now allowed to say that his mother is also a witch.”

“That explains a lot, Lily! Your father always wondered why none of the Snape family members ever came to his practice.”

“Now you know!”

Much later Margareth parked the car besides the house and helped with the luggage.

“Hi, dad! We're back home!”

When Henry greeted Lily and Alexandra, Lily looked at her mother. Her father looked worried and tired. “Hi girls, I'm glad to have you back at home. All good at school? Last week we received a letter from Miranda. I understand that your OU-study goes well. And Alexandra has sent us a beautiful Greek poem. It took some time as my Greek is a bit rusty, but well done! It helped me to remind me there are still other things in life than work.”

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Alexandra smiled gratefully, “Thank you for the compliment, it proves that you did read it and understood, as that was exactly the underlying message in it.”

“And how is your mother's driving?”

“Safe and sound! I didn't realize she could!”

“She got her license this year. Like I said to everyone, women are as good as men. Sometimes they drive even safer.” A remark that earned him a grateful glance of his wife.

After a nice but rich meal, they all sat down in the living room. Minutes later, Alexandra noticed that Lily's father was asleep.

“Excuse me for asking, but is everything well with your husband, Mrs. Evans, eh Margareth?” she asked.

She sighed. “He is taking over a fair share of new patients, but it is taking its toll. Not only visiting them but also the extra administration. My husband stubbornly refuses any help.”

Lily looked first at her friend and next to her mother, “Would you mind if we tried to persuade him. I think we might help.”

“Please do. But don't be offended if he turns you down.”

Next morning Lily's father apologised, “Sorry for last evening, I had too much to eat and I was too tired.”

“Can I perhaps help somewhere? I'm no doctor, but you can say I'm studying medicine, and most of the people know me.”

Henry thought for a while, then said, “I love the idea of seeing you a bit more, and you might learn something as well. You can come along as my little girl, but you must understand that some of them might object, you being there, you know, privacy. This



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weekend I'm off duty, but on Monday I'll see starting the Dents. They'll certainly not object to you being there.”

And Henry was right, they were very pleased to see Lily, their 'amazing girl'.

Initially, Henry let his daughter only carry his bag with instruments, and explained to them that his daughter was a medical student and Lily mostly remained silently except for some polite commonplaces. But as the day grew older, Henry noticed that some of his patients, mostly the older ones, were a bit more openly, even to him. And while driving from one patient to the next one, father and daughter were discussing several 'cases'. Sometimes Lily asked simple questions, something like “How do you know that... Could that be caused by... or might it be related to...”.

When they drove home, after seeing the last patient, Henry was in a good mood, in a very good mood, not tired and sometimes even singing. When they stopped the car Margareth came out in a hurry. “Is everything alright with you, Henry?”

“Absolutely, never been better, why are you asking?”

“Last couple of weeks you never returned home before half past six....”

“So what?”

“Did you had fewer patients to see then?”

“No! Why, what's wrong?”

“Nothing, but it's not even four o'clock!”

Henry and Margareth looked at Lily, “Did you do something...”

But Lily sighed, “No, honestly! Outside of school, we are not allowed to practice magic, until we are seventeen and passed

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our OWL-exams! But indeed, the patients flew, instead of time.”

Lily went in, looking for Alexandra. “Hi, were you able to help a bit here?”

Her friend pointed to a corner of Henry's study, where several piles of files were cleaned away. “I'm glad that I showed much interest in History, besides my Latin and Greek.”

“What does *that* have to do with administrative chores?”

“Well, compared with that other doctor's handwriting, hieroglyphs are a piece of cake!”

Meanwhile, Margareth asked her husband, “And what was it like, on house calls with your daughter, how did the people react. Did they object?”

Henry thought for a while, recollecting the entire day. “No, now you mention it, I was expecting that lot of people would object and Lily would have to stay in the car most of the time. Especially with the Petersons, you know that difficult man, but not at all, on the contrary. Most of them remembered Lily as a toddler. After I informed them she was no doctor yet, only studying, they were all curious about her. They felt much more at ease, relaxed. But the best thing was in between patients. I could talk about all of them with Lily. Like I had an experienced college along with me. I'm not sure if she really understood all that I was saying, but it helped to clear my own mind, seeing things more straight. How were things here?”

“Well, Alexandra and I have been talking most of the time.

About school, about Lily, about the boy Alexandra spends a lot of time with. It feels like I gained another daughter. And we did manage to reorganise some files for you. And tomorrow?”

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“We'll see. How about some music, and a glass of something?”

“Great idea.”

Next morning, before Henry could ask, Lily was already prepared to go, but her father warned her, “Today won't be a nice day, girl. Two cases of children that got burned. Hot tea. An elderly lady that should be healthy and several people with vague symptoms.”

“May I help, for instance changing the bandages?”

“Would you dare? It's not a nice sight!”

“One of my profs told me that there is a first time for everything, but on the other hand, a friend of mine, told me that you can not be prepared in life for most.”

“Wise words, Lily. From both of them!”

Most of the day was a repetition of the previous one, except that Lily was more present. However, something peculiar happened at the Rawlinson's. Mr. Rawlinson had a bad case of pneumonia, and the medication didn't seem to help. Henry gave him a fresh supply of other medications he had brought with him, and explained later on the use of them to him and his wife. Lily, however, paid most attention to Mrs. Rawlinson and had a long conversation with her. When they drove home, Henry asked, “You hardly spoke to Mr. Rawlinson, how come?”

Lily hesitated for a moment. “I paid all my attention to his wife. Dad, you know that she's ill too?”

He abruptly stopped the car and looked worried, “No, she has never complained to me before. At least not lately. She's has been weak for ages, but stable. What did she tell you?”

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“Something strange, she felt like *loosing time*. She said that sometimes she got up in the morning, making breakfast and tending her husband, and when she sits down, and looks up again it is getting dark again, as the whole day has passed away in several minutes. She wanted me to tell about dying and what is beyond. I'm not sure if I did the proper thing, but I told her I've been there, how it looked and felt. Strangely, she never asked how I knew about it, but believed every single word I said. She felt so relieved afterwards. I think she is worried about her husband, that he's not able to carry on much longer. Is he really that ill?”

Henry looked at his daughter, “There are several kinds of antibiotics, some work better or differently than others. You have broad-spectrum antibiotics, that are effective against a large number of bacteria, but also have the most side effects, as it also affects the useful bacteria in the intestines. More effective are target specific drugs, but these only work on specific bacteria, so you either have to change a couple of times, or send a sample containing those bacteria to the lab. But our own lab is highly understaffed, so it will take some time before I get the results back. Most medications have side-effects. Each person is unique and responds in a different way. You can't tell in advance if a treatment will catch on. But for him, I don't know, I've changed antibiotics before, but it has no effect. I, or we, will check on them both tomorrow. But now something totally opposite!”

“What then?”

“Sarah, you know her, the bakery's daughter, is pregnant. Just before we left I've got a phone call to check on her. She slipped when she had a shower. Her husband called, she has no pain,

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but she is just worrying. It is probably nothing, but most of my time I just check, comfort and assure people.”

Gladly this was indeed the case, mother and father just needed to be reassured that everything was fine. With his stethoscope, Henry listened to the steady beating of the tiny baby heart.

With a glad expression, he said to the expectant mother, “Hearing this, is one of the most beautiful parts of my job, witnessing the miracle of new life. Would you let my daughter listen to it?”

With a smile and an inviting gesture, she invited Lily.

“How many weeks are you?” she asked.

“Around eighteen, we think.”

While Lily had some difficulty finding the source of the soft but quickly pounding heart, Henry explained, “For her, it is the first time. I didn't succeed at all my first time, I just heard the mother and myself.”

But Lily kept on moving the stethoscope between two places. “Perhaps I'm doing something wrong. I know that the mother's pulse is much slower, but I keep hearing the quick pounding at two different places. What am I doing wrong? What is the proper place?”

Henry frowned and listened in at both places Lily indicated again and again and again.

Finally, he put his stethoscope away, shook his head disbelieving and asked the expecting parents, “Do you have any twins in your family?”

“No, not that we know of. But we can ask our mothers. Why?”

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“Well, if everything goes as steady as until now, there will be in a couple of months time. In this very family. Double congratulations. I must have missed the twin baby the previous time, perhaps one was hiding behind the other. You know this could have some implications, an extra cradle, clothes and so on. Sometimes twins are delivered slightly earlier.”

From the looks of the expecting couple, it was clear for all that they were twice as happy as some moments before.

In the car, Henry asked, “You surprised us all. How did you know, and how did you feel about your discovery?”

“Excited, Nervous. At first, I only heard my own heart beat, like you said. But then I even felt one kicking. Marvellous!”

“By now you know in real life not everything is so fine, but these are great moments of joy, even for me.”

At that moment Lily placed her hand on her father's arm.

“Dad, perhaps I'm ridiculous, but could you do me a favour?”

“I think so, yes. What is it?”

“Can we go back to the Rawlinsons? I know you said you want to check on them tomorrow, but can we do it today, now. Please?”

Henry stopped the car, “Is something bothering you?”

“No, but I feel strangely worried, very worried.”

Without any further questions, her father turned the car again and drove off at high speed. But when the rang the doorbell it remained unanswered, even though they knew there should be two people inside, and at least one of them should be able to

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open the door. Henry tried the doorknob and found the door wasn't locked.

“Normally I'm worried when people forget to lock their doors, but now I'm glad they didn't.” Moments later Henry felt all sorts of things, but he wasn't glad – not anymore.

He walked straight the Rawlinson's bedroom and felt the old man's pulse, realizing it was useless at his first sight. The man was gone. Cold and without seeing anymore, his empty eyes stared at the ceiling said it all. He had taken his medication while they were still there, on their previous visit, the half emptied water glass still beside his bed. With his hand, he closed Mr. Rawlinson's unseeing eyes. Automatically he looked at his watch and noted down the established time of departure. And made arrangements for the transfer of the body.

“No need to come near, Lily!” he said to warn his daughter, but he had not needed to do so, as she was with Mrs. Rawlinson.

“Dad!” she said softly. “Please, daddy come. Please!”

Quickly get got downstairs again, finding Lily in the living room with Mrs. Rawlinson. She was sitting in an armchair and had suffered a severe stroke or attack. With an extreme weak pulse and no strength left in arms or legs, she looked at Lily and tried to say something.

“Shouldn't we do something! Phone an ambulance or so?”

“I just did, but I think they don't have to hurry. Not anymore.”

Suddenly Lily understood what his father meant, and also why the lady had asked her just some hours ago so much about death and dying. With much effort, the widow managed to whisper, “Thank you, girl. You're right, so right, thank you...”

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As a GP, Henry knew what was coming, he had seen it many times before, “The only thing we can do now, is keeping her comfortable as possible, and don't leave her alone. When someone's end is near, stay as long as possible with that person.”

Suddenly, with an unexpected strength she managed to lift her arms up and with clear eyes looking at someone not there, at least not someone visible to Lily and her father, she smiled and stretched her arm and said, “Dear husband, you waited for me!”

After that, she felled back on the pillows and closed her eyes.

While waiting for the ambulance, they noticed her breathing getting more shallow each time, until it completely stopped.

When the ambulance went away, Lily asked, “Wasn't there anything we could do, dad?”

“That is the most difficult part of this job. Knowing when to let go. Mr. Rawlinson worked for many years in the mines. After they closed, he got fired and started looking after his wife. Perhaps in some years time, we could have postponed the inevitable, but what kind of life she would have had? Without any children, she would have been all alone. They lived a long life together, and now they went on their final journey together. I know, at first it sounds harsh, but that's life.”

When they slowly walked back, he asked, “That is also part of the job, still so eager to become a doctor?”

“Yes, dad. Now even more than ever! I'm grateful that I might have helped her.”



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Next day, for a change of minds, Margaret took both girls for swimming and shopping, but the fourth day Lily insisted on helping her father again. “How many extra patients do you have to see? If you go on like that, you'll become one yourself!”

“It isn't as bad as that!”

“Perhaps, but do you remember us going to Oxford, the experiment with Miranda? Would you let me help you that way?”

“What do you suggest?”

“Besides the list of people you are scheduled to visit today, can you make a list of all others you have to see the next couple of days, weeks? For making an unscheduled visit, if any time left?”

Without waiting for confirmation, Lily turned around, looking for her mother and Alexandra that were busy in the study.

“Mom, dad needs some days away. If we ask James' father, do you think he would like some days on his ship, sailing, fishing, no work, no patients? Would he like that?”

Her mother replied with a sigh, “Do you think he would listen to you? Another doctor is supposed to be helping him, but your father has absolute no confidence in him. In two weeks time, the patients can see their own GP again.”

Turning her attention to her friend, “And Alexandra, do you think we could ask James' father such favour? Just away for a week or so?”

“You can always ask, but they might have other plans and perhaps they are not even at home. But I think you make a fair chance, more than that actually. Shall we send an owl to ask?”

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“Would you do that, while dad and I are away?”

The next couple of days, having his daughter coming along, seemed already to be a relief of a huge burden. Almost all of his own patients remembered and welcomed Lily. And the new patients were curious about such a young female student. At the beginning of each visit, Lily's father clearly asked permission for having a student around. But actually, with every day, Lily became more present, talked and examined more, while her father just observed from a distance corrected her sometimes and administrated medication. Some of the unscheduled visits produced unexpected results. Especially elderly or single persons were not able to disguise the fact they were not so good taking care of themselves. Many suffered more or less from dehydration, just to avoid a cumbersome visit to the bathroom. But she also managed to detect urinary infections, that people were reluctant to mention.

“It is pity that none of us, GP's, can ever do such a thing, we never have time to do that. Normally time flies and at the end of the day I still have to see some people. Now, it seems that the patients fly, and after the final one, there is still some hours of the afternoon left.”

After returning home a week later on, Margareth and Alexandra had a surprise for Henry.

“Last summer when you brought the girls away to the port of Brighton, we saw you living up, seeing all those ships and boats. Your work has been dealt with, Doctor Gimly takes over, he'll see your patients. I received an invitation for you and me, we may sail along a couple of days with Edward and Margaret

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on the ATOM. They are picking us up “the Muggle way” next Monday.”

And to the girls, Margareth said, “If you want, you two can go ahead to them through the fireplace, tomorrow. They enclosed some of a sort of powder.”

## Exposed

After three long weeks, Lily and Alexandra arrived through the fireplaces by their own, unaccompanied.

They found James' mother on the terrace, sunbathing with her friend.

“Hello Margaret, hello Miranda. Good to see you. Everything well?”

“Hi, girls! So your parents let you finally travel through the grid? Good! It saves so much valuable time.”

“Hello Margaret, Miranda! Thanks for your help and inviting us ahead.”

Lily looked around. “Your husband and James not here?”

“No, both of them are in London, Edward is introducing him to some of his former colleges. Awfully boring I fear. They will be glad when they find you here! They will pick your parents up on the way home.”

Lily looked at her friend to remind her about the 'item' Lily gave her, but was made by Miranda and Margaret and nodded towards their host.

“Margaret, I wanted to thank you, personally, for *'the gift'* you made.”

With a giggle, Lily added, “It certainly kept her spirits high, and not just that! Very *handy!*”

Promptly they all started to laugh, “She is doing all sorts of mellow word jokes on me for the last couple of weeks. I'm glad no-one else knows what she is hinting at!”

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“Well, Alexandra, while we were making it, we also had quite some laughs here. I wonder if it fits well, that is the most important thing!”

“It is really very, eh comfortable, supporting..”

She quickly looked around, besides Miranda, Margaret, and Lily she saw no-one. “I'll show you.” and took her blouse off, showing the piece of underwear they had made for her. As women among each other, she did not see any harm in doing so.

“And Alexandra, how does it feel? It was Miranda, who suggested having Sirius arms printed on the straps, so in a sort of way he constantly had his arms around you...”

She replied, “Oh, I couldn't tell you.” but her sparkling eyes said enough.

“If you want to change, your luggage arrived this morning, I put all of it the second guestroom.”

“Yes, A good idea, I stumbled over some logs when arriving at your fireplace!”

Both girls got up to do so, but Margaret held Lily back.

“You go ahead Alexandra, she'll follow shortly!”

Lily looked surprised, but said nothing. When Alexandra was gone, Margaret asked her, “And did she tell Sirius about it? Did she show it, after she opened the package?”

“Oh no! Not the slightest chance to do so. She wore it most of the time since she got it. I can not imagine what he would say if we told Sirius. Let alone if saw her wearing it. I don't think she'll ever dare to do that.”

Miranda grinned, “Then it won't be long until we find out!”

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Lily looked puzzled, “What, did you tell him?”

Margaret started to laugh out loud.

“No! You silly! Normally with all male population gone, I'm not so prudent, and don't even care about my bikini. But now, with our other guest, I'll have to show some decency.”

“Oh, I have all forgotten all about that. You mean...Sirius is here?”

“Yes! The poor boy had no place to go, so we offered him a place to stay, until the dust settles down at his home. People can say horrible things in a rush. It was a decent thing to do, and it's also doing James good to have him around. Right now James and Edward are gone, but Sirius is still here.”

Softly singing a song that got stuck in her head, Alexandra walked towards the house, with the blouse in her hand. When she opened the door, her eyes needed some time to adjust to the slight darkness. Hence she did not see the other person standing there. Sirius on the other hand, looking against the bright light, only recognised the girl by her voice.

“Hi, Alexandra! Need a helping hand with your luggage, or did you came here, in search for a kiss?”

Without thinking or the slightest hesitation, she jumped into his arms. And this is how Sirius walked back onto the terrace.

“Look, what I just caught!” he said triumphantly.

“Good catch indeed, Sirius! But she was going to change.”

“Right now we have some catching up to!” Alexandra replied and started to kiss, and both were out of reach for the rest of the world.

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Margaret looked at Alexandra, now with four arms around her, and ask softly “Lily, how about you, how do you feel, seeing them?” but Lily didn't answer immediately.

But some silent minutes later Alexandra jumped up, “I'll just change. Don't you dare to leave!”

When she was gone, Sirius laughed sheepishly, “I'll get some eh drinks.”

After he was gone, Margaret asked again, “And Lily? How do *you* feel?”

Lily turned her head towards James' mother, “Very mixed feelings. Actually, the subject 'love affairs and relationships' is something Alexandra and I would like to talk with you about relationships for quite a while.”

“Well, it seems to me that you can speak freely.”

“When I look at them, I feel happy for them, I can even feel a bit of their joy and a little bit glad for helping fate sometimes a little bit, but...”

“But? Envy? Jealous?”

“No, that even didn't cross my mind! Alexandra told me that my time would come and I trust that it will. No! She and I were wondering about something entirely else... Someone else.”

“Dare to share it with us?”

“Of course! I already suggested to Alexandra to ask you two about it, as you are a bit older, wiser and more experienced with emotions and relations.”

“Perhaps you give us too much credit!”

Instead of waiting for Sirius to return with lemonade, she poured Lily a glass of white wine.

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Lily looked a moment at Miranda and Margaret, but after a vague smile, she took a little sip.

“From my textbooks, I learned that the change of hormones at my age can cause some drastic effects, and Alexandra confide with me that she experience it much more than I do. But nonetheless, it is so difficult, what is real, what is not. She sometimes worries she is making things up. What do boys think? Is Sirius honest, serious and true, or is it just an adventure, or worse, is he deliberately trying to see how far he can get. You have gone through this all before!”

Margaret nodded, “Yes, but with each romance or relationship it is unique, though also similarly. You haven't experienced anything yourself yet, Lily, but you came close as a witness. Sometimes you have people, only obsessed with the physical part, age or gender irrelevant. That girl Camilla you told us previous year about, became a victim of that. But don't blame just men. They too have their rush of hormones causing erratic behaviour, but some girls can just be as bad. Although that can never be used as an excuse.”

For a small moment, Lily remembered the Slytherin girls she met on the very first trip of the Hogwarts Express.

“Yes, that was horrible, but I was thinking about someone else, concerning Nimue. It seems a person can be fooled so easily, some people only see what they want to see or believe.”

“Wasn't she also one of you dream-class?”

“Yes, she was from the same year of Camilla. She had a very low self-esteem, so some of the girls and profs tried to help her by asking a guy to pretend to be her sweetheart. How can you



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ever ask someone to do that! It seemed to have worked, but so much could have gone wrong if she had found out.”

“Sometimes things evolve not as you intended to. Perhaps it started that way, pretending, but they became real sweethearts? Situations like that happen, you know.”

“That could be, Miranda, time will tell. But how about Sirius and Alexandra?”

“One can not be hundred percent sure, but I think you don't have to worry about Sirius, from what I heard and saw so far. I just watched them through my professional view. Perhaps you didn't see it but Sirius hadn't even noticed she had her blouse off and he certainly didn't see the print on her bra. His eyes were fixed on her eyes and nothing else. And Alexandra? I never detected a thread of deceiving, using or exploiting people, she comes to me as a sincere girl. But I can be mistaken.”

Lily replied, “I'm not concerned regarding Alexandra. If there is anybody in the whole world I would trust, it is her!”

“I am glad to hear that. Not only for Sirius, but also for you, as she is your best friend.”

When those words died away, Sirius came back with drinks. If he was surprised to see Lily drinking a glass of wine, he did let it show.

Later Alexandra returned in her bikini, “I did a quick wash-up, so it can dry, although the need is less, now I have the '*real thing*' around.” And she held onto Sirius' arm. It was only at that very moment, that Sirius noticed what it was his girl was hanging up to dry.

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“What is that?” he asked needlessly.

Margaret confessed, “Sorry, Sirius, it was a small joke of us.”

“So because of that...print...” and he pointed to the hands and arms hanging on the washing line, “...you needed to make photos of my arms and hands! I thought it was for some project you were working on, Lily!”

Alexandra remained silent and tried to get on his lap, but after she succeeded Sirius didn't dare to do anything with his arms right now, holding them still.

Lily replied, “Well, the project was '*keeping Alexandra happy for the summer!*' She even missed you before the school ended! She had you very near and your arms around her for weeks!”

All Sirius could say was, “I've been cheated by my own arms.” After that, all he might have wanted to say was smothered in another kiss. To that, he did replied eagerly, but still, he didn't dare to do anything with his arms. Putting your arms around a properly dressed girl was already quite something adventurous, but she was now only wearing her bikini. “If I now put my arms around her like before, I fear she'll get angry, behaving indecently, slap my face and walk away from me.” When he was with other boys in the dormitory, some had wild fantasies about what they would do, but finding yourself seated between adults, having a hardly dressed girl on your lap is quite something different. Especially if that happens to be the girl you admire and don't want to spoil everything you have achieved so far.

When Margaret detected the shyness of Sirius, she got up.

“Dear boy, I don't think she would mind or object. On the contrary, I would wager.” And subsequently, she took his arms and

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placed one on Alexandra's shoulder, the other on her waist.

For a split second both froze, she trying to cope with waves of unleashed hormones and feelings, while Sirius fearing he had gone way too far. But a split second later, she held him close with all of her might and her kisses told him all the rest.

With a sigh of relief, Sirius responded likewise.

And to the others, Margaret said, "Let's go inside. I feel like I'm intruding into something sacred." But actually, her motivations were something else. Seeing those two, she longed for her husband to be back and hold him. She knew that it would only take a couple of hours before Edward would return, but she hadn't the slightest idea how long Lily would have to wait to experience that simple feeling of affirmation, confirmation, and affection. And perhaps she was wrong, and Lily would have to wait forever...

Inside she continued to Lily, "Now you see what some modest 'encouragement' can do. I had no thread of a doubt that either one would have objected. I presume you should think about Nimue and Timothy in the same way."

"But Sirius and Alexandra both knew what they were doing. With Nim and Tim, it is so different, so artificial!"

"Only time will tell. Perhaps in due time, when they celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary, it will be the joke of the day, Timothy helping her transforming from an ugly duck into a swan. Or perhaps they both have different people in their minds and hearts next year."

And Lily had to agree, that was a possibility, but she still didn't feel relieved. However, was that about Nim and Tim, or was it that she had secretly hoped that someone would give her and

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James a push in the right direction? Last year, after that dreadful event with Camilla, James had kissed her. The first time and the only time a boy had ever kissed her. But after that? Nothing had developed. There were moments Lily wished that James hadn't done it. He had awoken something inside of her, that seems to die of neglect. Sometimes it looked like he had only other things on his mind. Quidditch, hanging around with other boys, trying to impress others at Spells or Potions. But never was she the focus of James' attention, there were always others. She swallowed something bitter away, sighed and replied, "Yes, I really hope you are right, for both of them."

In the course of the Monday, Edward and James returned, bringing Lily's parents along. In the meantime, they all prepared for their trip at sea, except for Miranda, who had to work and already had left Sunday evening.

Lily walked straight towards Edward, "Thank you, for doing this for my father." But Edward replied, "Absolutely no need for that, young Miss Nightingale! On the contrary, I'm most grateful and we should be asking your apologies!"

"Why then?"

"Well, for intruding on your privacy. All the way from your home to here, is quite some hours driving. The four of us have been discussing quite a fair number of things, from politics, sports, education up to the national health service, but in the end, we were still talking about the same person. We drove nine hours, but we could have talked for another three."

"What?" she exclaimed.

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But grinning her mother, as a teacher, corrected her, “No girl, the proper question should have been 'WHO' instead of 'WHAT'. *Who* refers to persons or a single person, such as you. I can tell you that it was very informative, for all of us.”

One of the present persons looked very embarrassed, some looked proud and some looked secretively with admiration.

Despite the long drive, after resting and refreshing they left with two cars for Inverness.

Just for leaving there was an awkward moment. James had to confess that he could not come along.

“Sorry dad, I have some unfinished schoolwork, that I need to complete before the new year begins. I'm almost done, but one of my friends, Remus Lupin, who is often ill, he needs all of my support. So I sort of promised I would help him.”

His father didn't look all too pleased, but concluded, “Son, I would rather have heard this much earlier. We, and I think also our guests would have liked you coming along. Don't do that again. You are disappointing others.”

Edward looked at his wife for a moment, but continued to James, “But school comes before pleasure, and I will not allow you coming back on promises you made to help others.”

Hearing this, suddenly Lily felt rather lonesome, as Alexandra devoted most of her attention to Sirius, and her parents were more interested in their current environment and upcoming voyage. Edward was in his mind already busy with his ship and the visitors, but his wife seemed to notice something. Without saying much, she walked to Lily and put her hand on her shoulder. It was like Margaret was silently saying to Lily *'I under-*

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*stand how you feel girl, I know all about disappointment and loneliness',* but instead she said cryptically “We will make it up with you!”

Because of James' plans, they had to make a detour, dropping him off at a Hogwarts railway station. It seemed that James had expected, or at least hoped that his friend Sirius would have joined him, but Sirius looked at Alexandra, and said to James, “You don't need me, Moony and Wormtail will help you! I think your father would like some helping hands while you're gone.”

He hugged his parents and waved good-bye to the others, with a simple “See you soon!” to Sirius, Alexandra, and Lily.

Like the others, Lily waved back and replied simply “Bye!” but James' mother knew that again this girl had to swallow something bitter away. She too had hoped and anticipated that her son would have joined them. For the rest of the ride, Margaret joined Lily on the back seats of the car, and started gossiping about James' mischievous behaviour as compensation.

An hour later, while dawn was setting, they reached the port of Inverness.

Edwards' ship, the ATOM was at one of the quays, reserved for visiting ships. After the went on board, Edward invited them to choose a cabin.

Looking at Sirius, Margaret said to Alexandra, “I presume that you, Alexandra and Lily, want the same cabin you had the previous time?”

If Sirius had had any vague idea's, hopes or other naughty dreams about another possible cabin arrangement, he was wise enough not let it show. And Margaret wanted to be sure that

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Lily wasn't alone during dark hours and would have her friend around to talk to. Alexandra and Sirius could see each other all day, but Margaret knew that the quiet hours before falling asleep or just after waking up, could be very lonesome.

When they all were settled, Edward spoke to Henry. “Because of all delays, it is not wise to leave port right now anymore. When having urgent meetings or tight schedules, I don't mind sailing in the darkness. But now it is the contrary, time is all on our side and in contrast to the wide open sea, it is nice to look around, lots of things to see when sailing close to the coast. So I would suggest leaving tomorrow in the morning with the next tide, after breakfast. The only thing that we have not discussed yet is a possible destination. Anything special to do, any special place to go to? If you like fishing, there are quite some secluded places where few other people fish. Or just sailing into the open sea or a bit around the coast. The weather is nice, but there is never a shortage of wind around here. It appears steady, but the weather can change rapidly here. A real sailors delight.”

As he already expected, Henry didn't have the faintest idea. “I don't intend to hurt your sailing ambitions, but I have absolutely no idea or suggestions. The moment we left town, was already the beginning of a holiday feeling. Just simply being away from it all. Different people, other surroundings, the smell of the sea, I'm already content! I'm a happy man and don't want to cause much trouble or effort.”

Sirius recited “...Just a tall ship and a star to steer her by...”

Lily's mother responded by inquiring if he had “see-fever”.

“Masfield, It seems you paid attention while discussing English poetry, young man,” Margareth noted approvingly.

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“Well if I may make some suggestions...” Edward said, “Besides some side-seeing, there is a quiet fishing spot, a distillery we can visit, and also a nice restaurant although the menu isn't as half as good as what some of these ladies can come up with. Margareth, do you have anything to suggest?”

“No, not really.”

“In that case, I'm off, long day driving, but you can stay up as long as you like. Breakfast at 9 AM? It might be for I care any later, but I noticed that the first night in a strange bed will give you a short and often restless night, and I don't want to miss the next tide.”

The next morning, at ten, they found themselves sailing on the Atlantic Ocean.

“Just the idea that Canada, Greenland, and Iceland are on the other side of the water, strange!” Henry said, but his wife shivered, “Actually, that fact there is just some plywood between us and this bottomless sea!” But Edward laughed, “Right here, it is not so deep, but it was just for fun, not being able to see not a single spot of land. Just the sea all around us!” And he turned the ship around.

“Where are we heading for?” Sirius asked.

“The long island, Harris-and-Lewis, there is a smaller island nearby, Berneray, I'll anchor near Loch Gealava. There we can relax, fish, swim, and have supper.”



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Later that evening Margareth announced, “Dear all, tomorrow we are doing some site-seeing on one of the islands nearby, it is about a mile from here, so we walk.”

Henry asked, “Is that distillery you mentioned around here?”

“No this is something else, this is something old for the youngsters, just wait and see.”

When they left the ship after breakfast, they all looked quizzically, but Edward refused to say anymore, smiled mysteriously and cast hopeful glances at his wife.

While walking, they all looked around, but it seemed just a place like any other, despite a weak sun it was cold and rather windy. Most of them were discussing the weather and wondering what their destination might be. Except for Alexandra, the further they walked, the more silently she became.

“Is something the matter, Alexandra,” Lily asked?

“No, it is just..., well I don't know. I think I've seen this place before, which is ridiculous. I've never been here before and why would anyone make a photo of this and put it into a magazine or book.”

A little later Edward stopped. “Girls“, he asked, “Can you do me a favour? If you two close your eyes, Sirius can guide Alexandra, and you, Lily can you give my wife your hand, she'll help you the last two hundred yards or so.”

For Alexandra it wasn't so strange to do, walking hand-in-hand with Sirius, but when James' mother held her hand out, her heart pounded quickly. She thought 'Why is James' mother guiding me and holding my hand instead of my own mother?' All Margaret said was, “Come on Lily, you can trust me!”

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With their eyes closed, Lily walked considerably slower, imagining where they were lead to. Obviously, it was something spectacular, because her parents repeatedly said, “Unbelievable, did you know this existed here? Have you ever seen something like this?” To the latest remark, Henry answered vaguely, “Yes, I did once, some time ago!”

Finally, they stood still, both girls shivering with excitement. “OK, you can open your eyes now, before you fall asleep!” Edward mused.

Both girls were swapped off their feet.

“This can't be true! Where are we? Is this... Is this...” Lily stuttered.

Silently, with bulging eyes, Alexandra looked around, looked at the smiling people, enjoying their response to the surprise, and looked around again.

“Yes, yes, yes! I did see this before, I mean, I experienced or remembered this place before. Once, at the Henge, and also later at Hogwarts-stone, looking north. This must be one of these places. This is really one of these other traveling places!”

Alexandra looked again at all the thousands year old stones in a circle and at a central stone nearby.

“Lily!” she said, “we are at Calanais! Not only just one of the other traveling places, but also the home place of Goleuddydd.”

“Indeed we are,” Margaret said, smiling at Lily, “Welcome at Callanish or its Welch name, Calanais. We knew we would surprise you with this.”

Sirius nodded, “So, this is the place where James picked some poppies last year, and scared the living daylight out of us.”

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Alexandra already rushed ahead to the central stone, but Lily asked Edward, “I'm not allowed to use my wand, but if my information is correct, an ancient wizard should have his shed around here, but probably hidden with all sorts of spells...”

With a small wave, a simple old shed became visible. But neither Henry nor his wife was able to approach it.

Edward said, “I don't think it is wise to temper with those spells, I don't want to lift them but if I may hold your wife's hand Henry, and you hold my wife's hand, we can cross the boundaries and don't need to lift any spells.”

Grinning Lily watched the crossed couples, each of James' parents accompanying a Muggle through the barrier, formed by the Muggle-repellent-spells.

Henry and Margareth had visit Diagon-Alley some time ago guided by Alexandra's aunt, professor McGonagall. There they had sensed a world that almost had hardly changed for 150 years. But that was nothing compared with this. Here time really had stood still for countless years, even centuries.

What had appeared to be a simple shed, was inside actually a huge house and they were now standing before a long staircase. Between all the covered windows were paintings and tapestry and all of the torches lit automatically, the moment they entered the house.

“This is so old!” Was all Henry could say.

“Yes, from letters we read, we dated it back to around 900, but we could be mistaken. Of course, the ring with stones themselves is much older. This building is much larger than I expected from Eideard letters,” Alexandra said.

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Margareth sniffed up the atmosphere. “So very old, but still no sign of decay. No broken windows, or collapsed roofs. Some sort of magic I presume.”

Margaret confirmed, “Indeed, but still something special. Our house is protected in the same way, but we have to renew it every year.”

“I think we have to go upstairs,” Lily said.

“Why?”

“His library! Eideard said he could not bring the books home to study.”

While slowly climbing the staircase, Edward did constantly a “sanitato” and said to Lily's parents, “That thousand years old dust is hard to get away with, too much and too sticky.” But they both kept silently, totally impressed, looking like they were invited for an exclusive tour into a museum that was never opened for other people.

When they opened two wide doors upstairs, all torches lit and even all the fireplaces started to burn. That itself was more than enough to impress any Muggle, but even Edward and the others stood in awe.

To everyone's surprise, it was Henry that broke the silence, “In my whole life I have seen many books, but this... Compared with this, the University Library is a simple joke.”

Indeed. Books, hundreds of books, thousands of them, probably much, much more. Countless books.

“That explains why he could not bring them home, there were just too many of them. His own house was simply too small!”

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Henry looked at the girls, already examining some of the books, “That's quite an early Christmas surprise. Lily told me that she was looking for some missing information concerning the stones.” He looked at the countless numbers of books, “I presume there is a fair chance that what the need might be here, but there are much more books than they can examine in a lifetime, let alone read them.”

“True, but I think my wife can assist them, shall we investigate the rest of this house?”

“I've been at many archaeological excavation sites, but seeing something like this, is even a thrill for me,” Margaret confessed.

“Girls, are you looking for anything specifically?”

Alexandra thought for a moment, holding a book about magic in ancient India, “Hard to tell, but I presume there must be something where he wrote all his findings and experiments down.”

To everyone's surprise, Lily's mother suggested, “I haven't the faintest idea what you can do with those spells of yours, but it sounds to me, that you are perhaps looking for the youngest item in this room...”

Impressed Margaret looked at Margareth approvingly, “Sharp thinking!” she said.

Several hours later Henry and Edward went back to the library.

“And, any success?”

Lily looked slightly desperate “So many books!”

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Margaret explained, “Even the most recent hundred books, are priceless and contains unspeakable treasures for my friends in Oxford, but nothing for the girls.”

Lily's father handed out a leather-clad book, “Edward thinks that this might be something.”

It's title read: “Wizardry congress, travelling progress, ancient stones accounting.”

Surprised they all looked up at the two fathers. “Where did you find this?”

Edward told them, “Your father, Lily, has a keen eye. When we walked and examined the rooms downstairs, we found nothing spectacular, just common rooms, for sitting, eating, sleeping, bathing, smoking, cooking, meeting larger groups of people, just ordinary rooms you see everywhere. When we were back at the staircase, your father pointed, and wondered why the ceiling is so high, The second floor starts at sixteen feet, not needed for the places I mentioned. He asked if there might be places that he, as a Muggle, could not detect, just like the whole building. There was indeed one door, that even I could not see, until I pierced through the cloaking spell. It looks like the room was the main room where that wizard used to work. You should see it! Besides his working notes your father now holds, there are two huge stones inside the room, and lots of maps. Maps of Scotland, Wales, England, but also maps of the entire world. Can you imagine, a thousand years old map, so pre-Columbian, that shows America!”

Despite all the treasures the library held, it had immediately lost all its interest to all of them. Quickly they left, just before Margareth closed the door, she verified that all the torches and

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fireplaces were extinguished. With his wand, Edward disclosed the presence of two huge doors.

“That wizard must have been rather paranoid, just think of it: an almost deserted island in the north of Scotland, a house that Muggles can not approach, and a room, that is even hidden for wizards.”

The huge, over eighty feet long room, held several tables, and in one of the corners were dozens of stones, either fresh to be processed, or waiting to be shipped. As Edward already mentioned, there were maps lying on the tables and maps hanging on the walls. But the most impressive objects were two circular stones, three feet wide, five feet high located at either end of the room.

“Dad, can you make some photographs of here, if possible?”

Margaret and Margareth were standing at one of the maps, a map of the world. It did indeed show the continent of America. But Alexandra was more interested in some of the explicitly drawn locations. Quickly she grabbed an empty piece of parchment and wrote down:

- 1) Hogwarts's (seen)
- 2) Stone-Henge (seen)
- 3) Athens (seen)
- 4) Crete
- 5) Alexandria (submerged)
- 6) Cartage (gone)
- 7) Calanais (seen)
- 8) Iceland
- 9) Scandinavia, probably Norway

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- 10) Middle-East, Babylon
- 11) Java, Borobudur?
- 12) India
- 13) Mexico, Aztec area?
- 14) Peru, Inca area?
- 15) Switzerland / Austria
- 16) Arabia (west coast)

When she found the others looking at her, she explained, “Whatever else we might see and find, this is the most important piece of information we need right now. These are the major points, or smaller that I think I know about. There are hundreds of others, but all that I can tell about them is rather vague, like northern-Italy, or Siam, Australia, New Zealand (southern). It seems that I should have paid more attention at topography.”

Margareth pointed, “It is a rough and very old map. There is a fair chance, that what you jotted down as 'Arabia', is a place you can never visit as an 'unbelieving' western woman, if my recollection of maps is correct, that place is now one of the sacred places of Islam, Mekka. Oh, you missed one! The island west of southern America: Rapa Nui.”

“Rapa what?”

“Rapa Nui is the official name of what we know as Easter Island.”

And Edward added, “Did you noticed that there are several regions with quite a concentration of dots? Middle-East, England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, southern but not northern France. That huge spot on the map in Scandinavia, I wonder if



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that would be the area where the other major magical institute is? No-one knows its exact locations, except for Durmstrang students and staff, but they can't and won't disclose its exact location to other wizards. Just like we keep the location of Hogwarts hidden and secret.”

Before he was finished speaking they all heard a peculiar rumbling sound that echoed several times. Scared they all looked around, only to find Sirius with a red head.

Apologetically, Sirius said, “Well, by now it is no secret anymore that my stomach would welcome some food...”

Edward laughed, but said, “We've got only some sandwiches, which is probably by far not enough for you.”

Lily said looking at her watch, “I wonder..” and with these words she walked towards one of the circular stones.

“Receiving is to the right, Alexandra?”

After a quick nod of her friend, Lily concentrated and seemed to turn an invisible ring with both hands. After the humming sound had died away, she turned it back into its original position. But all the grown-ups looked in amazement. Minutes ago the top of the stone had been empty, now it was covered with dishes some small, some larger, but they all held food.

Her mother asked, “What did you do, use magic to create food?”

But James' mother replied, “No that is not possible, according to the basic laws of Magic, you can not create real nutritious substance. Magic can be used to multiply it, or change it, but the creation of food, no, that is impossible.”

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“So what did you do, Lily?” Edward asked interestedly. He first tested the food with his wand, and Henry carefully smelled at it and finally tasted it. “It is real enough to me.”

Lily looked at the others, “I hope I did a good deed. I thought at Java it was about dinner time. Some months ago, we received at the Hogwarts' stone some sacramental flowers. I just thought to give it a quick try and see what would happen. No-one will give any god something uneatable, so when we return empty dishes, someone far, far away will think gods are still alive and willing to receive.”

After they had tasted everything, Margaret asked Lily, “But does that not conflict with your vow? You remember, when we were in Athens. Not posing as gods?”

But Lily replied, “Along with the empty bowls and dishes, I will return a golden coin with it.”

“Sending them a galleon, what can they do with that?”

“No, I found a golden sovereign, an ancient but still a valuable Muggle coin. It's been worth it, both for the demonstration and for the food, and with such coin, I don't reveal any secrets.”

“Lily! Can you go that other stone?”

She turned her head, and found Alexandra standing near one of the huge stones at the other end of the room.

She held a large amphora in her hands and said, “Catch!”

But instead of throwing the heavy vase, she placed it on the stone before her, placed both hands on the stone, just below the top, and turned left. All were looking at her and saw that the same instance it was gone.

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When they heard Lily grinning and saying “caught!”, they turned, just in time to see the object, before she replied, “...and back again!” She made the same movement as her friend, and the object was gone again.

Edward and his wife looked at Lily, and he asked her, “I dare-say this has been quite a success. Is there anything else you want to see or do right here? We can stay longer if you want, or come back later today, if you want.”

“Alexandra has her notes, I have this book, and my dad has made some photographs. By itself a huge amount of material to study and wonder about. We can do a pilgrimage to here later on if we want or need to.”

But Sirius said, “Just a pity we can not take one of these stones with us. Just imagine...”

From that day, until they returned to James' home in Scotland, two weeks later, Lily was not plagued by the thought that she was the only one, alone on board. She had other things on her mind. And precious books to read.

## Shopping with Miranda

After some refreshing days, they, unfortunately, had to return home. Arriving at Edward's and Margaret's home, they were welcomed by Miranda.

She looked close at Henry, “I see it has done you good. With our profession, it is dangerous not to bury yourself with work. Mostly its is 'just another patient...', or 'he has nowhere else to go to...' Specially with you, as a GP, seeing patients at home, is tricky not to loose yourself. Schedule some more time off, and don't wait until for family gets concerned. Doctors are horrible patients! I know for myself.”

Lily grinned. “Coming all this way, to give my father a prescription for holidays?”

No, not really. I knew that like most of the students, you'll be needing other books and so, while I also like to visit Diagon Alley. So I would like to suggest to go together, stay a day in London, and drop you off at the main station for the Hogwarts Express.”

Looking at Edward, she continued, “You don't mind using your apartment in London for one night?”

“Certainly not! Be my guest. But you also have to fetch books for James. He is already at Hogwarts.”

“Yes, I was already wondering where he was.”

“Helping another student, catching up for the next year, he said.”

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“Among the mail here, I found correspondence from Hogwarts, three letters. I think they send the list of material for James directly to him at school, as he was already there. Although he does not have the possibility for shopping there.”

Margaret confirmed, “I'll send him an owl that you'll take care of his things.”

Edward added, “If you use the Floo-grid, you can travel directly from here to my other apartment. I presume you take Sirius and both girls along? Then my wife and I can bring Henry and Margareth back. When we are there, we can send the rest of the girl's luggage through the grid.”

“Will you stay a couple of day's with us, Edward, Margaret?”

Margaret looked at her husband, then answered, “Thank you, yes, Margareth. Very kind of you.”

Miranda turned to the youngsters, “Shall we leave in about an hour time? That should be enough to gather all of your things around here. Oh, by the way, Lily, did you leave anything at your parent's place?”

“Yes, a couple of books. But I don't think I need them this year anymore.”

“For the better. I was already wondering how -if anything- should be sent to Hogwarts and arrive in time. Margaret, is there anything I can bring along for you, or for you, Edward?”

“No. Well, I hardly had the time to think about it. Perhaps you can bring a pouch of Floo-powder with you. Last time we ordered it by mail, there was a tiny hole in the bag, so it all leaked away while the owl flew from 'Diagon Alley' to here.

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When you are here next month for Lily, we'll go shopping afterward together. Perhaps you can check for some books.”

A frown appeared on her face.

“I wished that James was here. I know that his list of books and other requirements are about the same as that of Sirius, but he needs other things as well, like clothing. Either he grew, or his clothes shrunk. You have about the same posture, but you have different size for shirts, shorts, and trousers. I know for sure that much became too small. When you do shop for Sirius, can you bring something also for James? The usual thing, just one size larger. Best would have been if he was there to try it one. So it is his own fault if it does not fit well.”

“Did you know that the people from 'The Haystack' have changed the shop's name? Now it is '*Madam Malkins' shop for robes for all occasions*', but they only changed the name, nothing else. Perhaps they raised the prices.”

“So they still sell sub-standard quality? 'Whatever you buy, you'll wear it only once!'" and she started to laugh.

“Whatever. We can have a quick look when we are there. But for now, please go to Mrs. Pinnacle, you know who.”

A little later, the students had collected much of what they needed at school, mainly their school uniform, but they had left much at school. They all said goodbye to the Potters' and the Evans'.

“We'll write!"

And Miranda explained to them, “We'll go to Mount street 22, London.” and passes the pouch with Floo-powder to Lily,

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Alexandra, and Sirius. Four flashes later, they were all gone. But the same instance, or actually some heartbeats later, they reappeared somewhere else. The change of scenery could not have been greater. Coming from a house with all latest modern gadgets, they now found them somewhere completely opposite. This house looked very much like an old house from the middle of the previous century, very much Victorian style. Fireplaces inflamed the moment they did arrive, and even some electric lamps were lit.

Sirius was the first to comment, “This looks very much my parents... house. They too have this kind of tapestry and paintings, but these seem frozen.”

Alexandra noticed that he used the word 'house' and not 'home', said nothing but reached for his hand.

“Don't be misguided by a first impression, I've been here often before. Few of the rooms are in this style. Only the entrance and the living room are Victorian. Here does Edward meet some of his business partners, so he has a rather modern meeting room.”

And she continued, “As they are all Muggles, you won't see anything clearly relating to magic.”

“I remember Margaret said something about this place,” Lily added, “Something about meetings taking too much time, and therefore he needed a 'pied-a-terre'. So he didn't have to travel too often, and could avoid sleeping in awkward hotels, but had a place of his own.”

Miranda commented, “That's correct. This place shows much about the Potter family: Both liking traditional housing, looking back and digging in the past. But on the other hand, they

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are also always exploring new things. Few 'established people' care for nature. Some consider that a whim of young people.” She opened a couple doors, leading to a bathroom and bedrooms. Some of them could be been put in ultra modern design magazines.

“First we have to do some Muggle shopping, collecting books for Lily's and Alexandra extra studies. It is not far away. Berkeley square is just some minutes walking away.”

After they left their luggage, they left via the main entrance. But after they opened the front door, they were unpleasantly surprised by the amount of traffic. “That stench and noise of cars is something I don't miss.”

Fortunately, Miranda was correct in her observation, despite the drizzling weather, they reached the bookshop after a small walk.

Magg's bookshop fortunately not only had all the supplementary books needed by Lily, but Alexandra too found some additional background information for her study. After they agreed with the shopkeeper that he would send all of the books this afternoon to Edwards house at Mount-street, they continued shopping. Just before the weather became really unattractive, they found themselves before the entrance where most people would rather not pay much attention to. At least non-magical people, as they were in front of 'The Leaky Cauldron', one of the famous gateways between the Muggle world and the wizardry world. Miranda waited a moment to make sure that they were not seen by Muggles, then reached for the doorknob. The enchanted door immediately detected the presence of wizards



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or witches, automatically unlocked and opened for them. Quickly they all got in and Sirius closed the door behind them. The girls already walked towards the door at the other side of the taproom, but Miranda waited near the bar and greeted the bartender.

“Hi, Tom! We came to do some shopping.”

“Hello Mrs. Dibbet, eh professor Dibbet. You know the way.”

Miranda looked around and stated, “It's quiet Tom! I have never seen so few people around here!”

“True. There's something in the air. People rather stay at home.”

“Well Tom, in that case, four pints, please! To make up.” and she walked to one of the many empty tables and grabbed a chair.

The girls looked surprised, not only by this sudden interruption but also by Sirius reluctant response.

Miranda explained, “If there is one place to go to for the latest news, just in general, go to the pub. In all of my years, I've never seen it so deserted like it now is.”

After Tom brought their pints, Miranda asked him, “Any particular reason why people are staying home, as far as you know?”

“No! Not exactly. But there are rumors about a wizard that came back from Rumania, practicing a side of magic that decent wizards would never do. But much worse, he is gathering followers around him. Unpleasant types. And because their number grows they become more and more intimidating. Even descent wizards are afraid of standing up against them. Those

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dark ones never do something in public, but when they find you alone, in dark alleys, they'll beat you up. Or even worse.”

He quickly looked over his shoulder. “Rumors had it that some of them gather at 'Borgin & Burkes', well I hope they will stay there instead of coming here. Yesterday they held a debate about blood-status and their view about Muggle-borne wizards. They scared most of my clients away.”

Sirius asked, “Why isn't the ministry doing something about that?”

Tom looked at him, “That now is a very good question, lad. Why indeed! Are they stupid? Are they afraid or are they perhaps told to look the other way.... Only time will tell.”

When he walked away, the girls looked astonished. Miranda reached for her glass, but when she raised it for a toast, Lily quickly said, “To genuine horse piss!”

Sharply Sirius turned and looked at her. “What! How do you know! Did James told you?”

Laughingly Lily explained it to the others. “The first time I even came here, Alexandra and I were escorted by her aunt. She discovered a number of other first-year students and transformed their beer is something rather distasteful.”

Alexandra smiled at the innocent memory, but Sirius complained, “We paid dearly for it, and whenever one of us comes here, or even order a round of pints anywhere else, I'll still remember it!”

“So, I'll inform my aunt that she had succeeded beyond her imagination, turning a one minute lesson into a lasting memory.”

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After they finished their drinks, they got up and walked to the blind wall hiding the entrance to 'Diagon Alley'.

As always, their initial goal was clothing. As advised by James' mother they were heading to 'The Proper Needle', but they saw that lots of students and adults-wizards went to madam Malkin's shop for 'robes for all occasions'. When they passed it, they could not help looking in, and Sirius abruptly stood still.

“You rather want to go here? In the end, it is more expensive, you know.”

“No, I must be mistaken. But I thought I recognized a familiar face, that's all.”

The other clothing shop was slightly further away, and not many customers inside. As soon as they got in, Mrs. Pinnacle immediately recognized Lily. “Welcome miss Evans. Good to see you back.”

And quickly Miranda said to her, “Remember you had to find a stunning dress for her friend that had to make a lasting impression?” And she pointed to Alexandra and Sirius, walking hand-in-hand behind them looking at robes and shirts. “Well done!”

Glowing with pride, she said, “Thank you Mrs. Dibbet. One of the nicest compliments I've had for a long time, but I think you give us too much credit. Perhaps she will think of us, when she needs to be dressed up for a special day, in some years time.”

For a second, the three of them looked with different eyes to Sirius and Alexandra. But then Mrs. Pinnacle asked “But that might be many years from now. Can I help you with something else in the meantime?”

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Lily sighed and Miranda said, “For that lad, we need some fitting trousers and shirts, as he grows too fast. That won't be too hard. But we need the same for his friend, who is already at school. So the problem is that he can not try it on.”

Mrs. Pinnacle looked doubtful, “That's difficult, does he has the same posture, size. Or did we ever sell anything previously to him?”

“Oh yes, he too is one of your regular customers. It's Mrs. Potters' son, James!”

Strangely, when Miranda mentioned the Potters' name, Mrs. Pinnacle immediately looked at Lily and smiled faintly.

“Ah! I see. Mrs. Potter. Well, that won't be too hard, I think.”

Unavoidably, the girls were fitted with latest blouses, robes, and stockings and even Miranda found it impossible to leave without some dresses.

“So, what next?” Sirius asked, while carrying over a dozen bags.

“Perhaps we now first visit 'Slug & Jiggers' for completing your stock of powders and other ingredients for the Potion class.” Miranda suggested, “I think it is wise to finish at 'Flourish & Blotts', to avoid carrying too many books for too long.”

He looked grateful, but he muttered “Feeling like a pull-dog, I'll get James for this.”

While heading for the magical-apothecary, Miranda pointed at a dark side-way, “That's Knockturn Alley, a place to avoid as you have heard from Tom.”

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When they peered into it, they witnessed a dreadful scene: One figure lying down and five or six around them. Some were punching and kicking.

Sirius looked and recognized one of them. “Regulus! What are you doing here?” And he jumped into the alley to help the victim. Seeing one approaching and hearing his name being called, one of the by-standers quickly turned and ran away, followed by the others.

“Can I help? Are you badly hurt?” They heard Sirius asking.

“No, you were just in time, if you would have passed ten minutes later.... Hey! Sirius!”

Alexandra saw her friend helping the victim up. He limped and had a black eye, but recognize him none-the-less. Another Hogwarts student, but for a moment she could not remember his name. Another Quidditch player, Hufflepuf but not from their year. When they got near Sirius said, “Do you remember last year the Quidditch final game? This is the keeper doing so very well, Douglas MacCuish.”

Immediately Miranda cut him short, “I'm a doctor. Where did they hurt you? What happened!”

“Thank you. I think it looks worse than it really is. The worst thing they did, was that one of them punched my head, causing me to stumble. They were pestering some students at the book shop. Indecent remarks about their parents, not being wizards or so. When I got tired of it and stepped in, they turned to me, telling that they knew where to find me. I didn't take it seriously, but after I left they re-appeared, and dragged me into the alley. I'm glad that Divination saved me.”

“What?”

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Douglas tried to smile, but that proved a bit too painful. I dreaded the subject last year and wanted to drop it. But my mother convinced me to turn my decision back again, so I had to pick up one of the books. Hence my visit. As I wanted to keep my hands free, I stuck it under my shirt. It absorbed all of their kickings. It's a pity I can not thank McVail for it anymore.”

Next Lily asked, “I presume you don't know who they were?”

Douglas looked at them, and a bit longer at Sirius. “I do know that all of them are Hogwarts students, as I recognized the symbol on their clothing. None of them were thankfully from my house, the wore silver and green. So I presume you know what that means.”

“Horrible!” Sirius said, “Did you recognize any of them?”

“Just some.” Douglas said, “But as fellow Hogwarts student, what can I do? If I report this and make a formal complaint, he'll know where it came from.”

“Well, in that case, let my friends and me deal with it. There is no love lost between Slytherin and Gryffindor!”

He shook his head, “I don't think so, when you know who it is.”

“Why do you say so! Do you think I would hold back on any of them? Some Muggle-born students are very dear to me. Do I know any of them?”

“I should certainly say so about one of them. The one I recognized was your brother, Regulus, Regulus Black. He was the one who hit me. But it were those two girls that kept kicking me, even when I lay down. I heard their names, Synthia and Samantha. Worst was that creepy Lucius who spurred them on.

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I'm not sure if that younger pale boy did anything, while I was down I protected my head with my arms, so I mostly heard them, and did not see.”

Finally, Miranda finished her quick examination. “You are a lucky young man!” Next, she cast several 'Episkey'-spells to heal several bruises.

“I was lucky that you came around!” He ticked on the book under his shirt, “It must have been written in the stars, I presume.” he concluded with a faint smile. After he refused any further help, he thanked them again and indicated he would rather go home.

Sirius and the ladies slowly continued their voyage to the bookshop, discussing the cowardly and abject attack. “Did you know that Regulus was involved with friends like that?”

Alexandra asked.

“No, we never got along very well, and I absolutely have heard nothing from them, since eh since my mother's letter. I rather successfully avoided my family, remember!”

Next, they passed 'Broomstix'. In one of the showcase windows, there was a description of a new broomstick, and all of its features were compared with currently available broomsticks.

This time it was Alexandra who froze when she looked at it.

“Did you see that, Lily?”

“Just a glance. I'm satisfied with my own one. I don't need another broom.”

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“I think you certainly want to see this early announcement. It's for the Nimbus-1000. Available probably next year. Estimated price....”

“I don't want another one. Why would I be interressssss” And the word froze in her mouth. Just like Sirius, who stared speechless at a model of the new miracle broom.

Much of the features, like acceleration, maximum height, or sharpest angle were not specified. But for neither of them, it was needed. They knew already how well it could fly. Lily and Alexandra were flying on prototypes of this Nimbus-1000 for quite some time.

“Did you see the price-tag?” Sirius whispered.

Totally unaware of the girls' flying equipment, Miranda said, well, that more-or-less explains the name of that broom, probably.

Then finally they reached their final destination: Bookshop 'Flourish and Blotts'. As today was the final day before the Hogwarts Express would leave for school, it was extremely busy with students who had postponed the shopping for the last moment. One of the shop-clerks sighed, “I'll be glad when that train finally has left the platform. This week most of the students are coming. And tomorrow we will be facing students that find out their booklist has been written on both sides.”

Lily smiled, as she perfectly understood what the man complained about. “Perhaps you can ask the teachers to send the list slightly earlier? I would love to be able to have come earlier, but had to wait for the list.”



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“Thank you, young lady, but they will still postpone until the latest moment, I'll wager.”

Miranda reminded them, “You know that you can send most, if not all books ahead, under the condition that you have brought your wand with you!”

As they had done before, they collected their fourth-year Muggle-books, but before sending them ahead, Sirius noticed that Alexandra had put another book on the box. A thick and heavy book. “What is it, don't you have enough already?” he said.

“That is an Atlas, with proper maps from all over the world. Lily and found out that we were missing some topographical knowledge. If you understand what I mean.”

Sirius opened it and saw recently updated maps, but also very old ones, when British, Portuguese and Dutch sailors were discovering the world.

After they signed the forms with their wands, the boxes containing those books vanished to the luggage the baggage car.

Next, they had to find their own books for the magical lessons. Because the lists were produced too late, the bookshop had not been able to create pre-packaged packages.

As Lily and Alexandra followed the same classes, they had split up the list, each of them bringing two copies of the books. Finally, they split and sorted them on a table.

“Let's see: Spells, we need: *'General book of spells - volume 4'* but also: *'Tricky and Treacherous Transformations'*.”

Lily opened it and cast a glance: 'never, ever transform a wand!' she read. “Hm, obviously! Who would do such a thing.”

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Alexandra had started with one of her favourite subjects, History.

“Two books,” she said. “First one is 'Mythical Cult and Culture' and the second one is 'Time is required to mature wine and wisdom' by the Dionysos high priest association. I wonder if it also contains some practical classes.

Sirius brought also some books for all of them, including James. 'Here, for 'Defense against the dark art': *'Avoiding the underworld turning UP (or you going down)* That will be sheer fun to read. Or how about this one: *'Tut's spells (how to combat or to improve them)*'. This one was not exactly on the list, but I'm just too tempted to leave it here behind: 'Curses with a twist.' Perhaps we can earn some extra points with it.”

“I have the books for Potions:

- 1) Rapid Recovery (when dangerous potions didn't work as expected)
  - 2) Potent Poisons with Sprouts by RIA.
  - 3) Perfect Poisonous Paella by RIA - Rhoslyn Iomar Arbuthnott
- I hope those lessons will not spoil my appetite.”

Sirius verified, I think these three math-books are not on your list, I think. The first is: *'Statistics, aka Muggle Arithmancy'* (how to fix the outcome, irrelevant what the variables are). Sounds nice, if you want to become a Muggle-accountant or so. Here I've got: *'Algebra, How to master this branch of the Dark Arts volume-1'* and finally also *'Geometry, How to master this branch of the Dark Arts volume-2'*” And he placed one copy of each of them onto the pile of books for him and for James.

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Next, Miranda asked, “Is any of you studying Muggles? Here I got: *'Magical Murphy'* and *'When bread crumbs aren't enough to find your way'*. Anyone?”

Quickly Sirius replied, “I've got my hands full of with one witch.” A remark that caused him to be tickled for quite a while.

Lily asked Alexandra, “How about divination? Do you still require books or not! I've got here:

- Tarot: another 78 answers yielding millions of possibilities.
- When the future ain't near enough.
- Psychological awareness when dealing with customers: When their day finally comes (or fails to come)
- How to avoid short-sightedness (when you fail to see the obvious about your own future).”

“No, I don't need them, I'll look into yours if you don't mind.”

But Sirius said, “I still don't know why we selected it, but James and I are still doing Divination, so we do a copy of those as well.”

Next Miranda said, “I have a couple of books here, but I think that they are even far beyond NEWT-level. I think I take them along for myself. It is a combination of Physics and Spells.

*'Theoretical basis of the working of Magic'* by Warner Heisenberg. Its subtitle is: Muggles need at least another 100 years before they start to comprehend. And also the first title in a range of volumes: *'Quantum-Magic explained'*, (proof how magic works, with understandable examples) see also *Quantum-me-*

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*chanics, Quantum-Biology, Quantum-Economy, Quantum-politics, and Quantum-relationships.* Perhaps I should buy also one copy for Edward. He will certainly love it.”

Finally, Sirius walked to Lily, and put something in her hands. “Perhaps this might be a nice 'birthday present' for someone. She looked down and read the title: 'Quidditch-strategy-through-the-ages'.” She understood, smiled and nodded. “Thanks!”

After they'd paid for all the books, Sirius looked at the huge pile of books they had bought. “I'm not sure how to get them all to Edward's apartment, Miranda!”

“Oh, don't you worry about that, dear boy. You don't have to carry them all the way. I remembered that Margaret asked me to get her some Floo-powder, so I got more than enough. Both their London apartment and the bookshop are connected to the fireplace-grid, so we send them that way. We can do the same, or return via 'The Cauldron'. What do you prefer? Oh, and we also have to think about dinner. If we stay at home, we can cook there, but then we need to do some extra shopping I think. We can also do some takeaway curries. Majority rules, but I would strongly advice against eating in the Leaky Cauldron. Their beer and other drinks are good, they could hardly spoil that, but I don't trust anything coming out of their kitchen.”

Lily looked at them, “You know I don't mind doing kitchen-work, but I'm too tired already. And I fear if we go to a Muggle pub for dinner, we'll stay there also too long. I would rather opt

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for a take-away, a bath and perhaps a nightcap from James' parents' stock. That's more than enough for me.”

Miranda looked at Sirius and Alexandra, “I agree with you, it's been a very long day for the three of you.”

Some time later, when they were all sitting around the table in the Potters' dining-room, Sirius looked at all the small boxes containing all sorts of dishes. “This reminds me of that trick you did, in that old house on that deserted island with the stones, Lily.”

His remark triggered countless remarks and questions from Miranda.

“...You should have seen Lily parents. They were totally flabbergasted. Food, good food appearing from no-where!” Sirius said.

“I can imagine that. They have hardly seen any practice of magic.”

But Alexandra commented, “That was to be expected, but also James' parents were swapped of their feet. And I presume that they must have seen quite some magical tricks in their lives.”

Lily sputtered, “I was only trying!” but she realized that she had made a huge and lasting favourable impression on James' father and mother.

While others were discussing the Cauldron bar-tender remarks and the fight in Knockturn Alley, Lily kept thinking about James mother. She was glad that others had the impression that she was thinking positively about her. Perhaps, someday.... But then she thought about Mrs. Pinnacle. When the shopkeeper

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had mentioned 'Mrs Potter', she had been looking very intense at her! And that other remark of her regarding Alexandra and Sirius! That could only refer to buying a wedding-dress. In her imagination she saw Alexandra and Sirius all dressed up for the occasion, saying to each other the magical words: 'I do'.....

“What do you mean Lily, 'Me too, me too, me too'? What are you talking about! It's time for bed. Remember, tomorrow all day Hogwarts Express, and we still have to do some packing.”

“Just a beautiful but silly dream, my friend. I must have dozed off.”

Lily hoped, by quickly going to bed, she might continue her dream, but alas. Once awake she had difficulties falling asleep again. Physically she had been resting for a while, but her mind was still contemplating, what, when, who, where....

Still, the next morning came just minutes after falling in sleep, or at least it felt that way. After a quick breakfast consisting toast, scrambled eggs, sausages and orange juice, they packed and left for King's Cross railroad station. After they passed to the magical platform 9¾, they found the train with countless coaches ready and waiting for them.

Finally, Miranda helped them with their luggage, and after reminding Lily about their next meeting, where they would be discussing the next couple of chapters of her medical study, they parted.

Being early at the railway station, had the main advantage that they could choose any cabin they liked.

Sirius said, “James father explained, that the coaches near the locomotive might smell more, but the pulling and pushing is far

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less than compared with the coaches at the end of the train.” So therefore they walked until they reached the second coach.

For a long time, it was just the three of them, until finally, two girls asked if they may join them. “Are these seats taken? No? Do you mind if we join you?”

“Of course not! Please do so.”

Sirius and the girls looked at them, but fail to recognize them. However one of the other girls said, “You are from Gryffindor, not? Aren't you Sirius Black. The speed-broomer?”

“Yes, that's correct. Don't tell me, still that old photo from the 'daily prophet'?”

The other girl blushed, “True. I'm Amanda and this is Gwilly. We are from Hufflepuf. I presume you must be Alexandra? Good catch, girl.”

“Absolutely!” And Alexandra glowed with pride.

Gwilly said, “So, then you are Lily. You two are also famous, for obtaining your Muggle exams that fast. That too should be a world record.”

Surprised said Lily, “I never thought about it that way. Well, perhaps we should ask the profs about that.”

With every single mile they traveled on the train, the more Gwilly seems to relax. “I'm glad I'm going back to Hogwarts, away from horrible home.”

“I too am fond of school, but I like home too, not for you?”

Gwilly slowly shook her head, “No, not exactly. Right now I long from my broom, and start practicing again.”

Then Lily remembered her name, “O yes! You are Hufflepuff's team captain. Now I know! I heard about you.”

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“Yes, that my most favourite spare time, if any. Aren't you James Potter's friend. He told me so much about you. I haven't seen him around. Isn't he on the train? I hoped that I could discuss Quidditch strategies with him.”

“No! He is already at school. I, or actually we, went on holiday with James' parents. Sailing to the north, but it seems that he had promised to help Remus Lupin along, another friend of his, who is regularly ill and misses a lot of lessons.”

And Sirius added, “And that silly fool had forgotten to tell his parents about it. He father was furious!”

Gwilly seems to feel some tension. “By the way, if you see James and I talking a lot, it is just about Quidditch, don't be scared of possible competition.” Then Lily noticed that Gwilly and Amanda were holding hands, and said. “I don't mind that, that's fine by me.”

“Thanks! You should have heard my parents about it, and I know that some, if not most, among Slytherin, despise me.”



## **Dibbet's final introduction speech**

When all Gryffindor students were seated, and others were still finding a place to sit, professor Dibbet was already impatiently walking to and fro... As soon as he noticed he'd got everybody's attention he started right away.

“Dear, dear students and staff. Welcome, welcome welcome! Once again it is my privilege to open the scholastic year. As always it comprises of speeches, the sorting ceremony of the new students and the banquet. Nothing new about that, it's tradition for many hundreds of years. However, this year will be slightly different: There is so much I like to share with you, that some students will suffer from starvation. Hence I will deliver my speech during dinner. I am so excited about the latest news, I hoped for many decades in vain, but I just received some hours ago, that I can not eat at all myself.”

Constantly he walked before the high table, his eyes shining brightly like a super nova.

“So please professor McGonagall, proceed with the sorting, I'll take over after you again. Hurry up, please don't waste any time!”

Obviously, none of the staff were informed, as they looked as surprised as any of the students and thrilled like all first-year students.

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Professor McGonagall got up, “Dear boys and girls, a very warm welcome here at Hogwarts, our school of witchcraft and wizardry. I am professor McGonagall, all of my colleges you find at the head table. Some of them will be teaching you several subjects. You see here four long tables. Each table is for one of the four departments, or houses as we name them. They are named after the founding wizards and witches of our school, Godric Gryffindor, Rowena Ravenclaw, Helga Hufflepuf and Salazar Slytherin. They will form your family for the next seven years. Between the houses is a fair competition.”

When she mentioned the 'fair competition' she looked sharply at Slytherin, the department that thrived at competitions, but regularly forgotten all about the word 'fair'.

If you perform above expectation, your house gets rewarded some points, getting caught at breaking the rules will cost your house some points. At the end of the year, around July, the house with most points wins the house cup, and gets mentioned in the 'Daily Prophet', the most prominent newspaper for the wizardry world. The procedure is as follows, when I mention your name you come forward, I'll place our sorting hat on your head. The hat analyzes your motivation, capabilities and preferences, and comes with a proper suggestion. Although possible to deviated from its suggestion, we normally follow it up. The other students of the selected house will welcome you on their table.”

Minerva looked at the line of children, much longer than previous year.

“Alfonso Hindle”... “Hufflepuf”

“Kristen Gallo”... “Gryffindor”

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“Aggie MacAlonie”... “Ravenclaw.”

“Skye Gillon”... “Slytherin.”

“Gilbarta MacLaghlán”... “Ravencl... no, Hufflepuf.”

“Angus Dunnachie”... “Ravenclaw.”

“Medwyn Lewis”... “Gryffindor”

“Dai Sayer”... “Slytherin.”

“Cothi Sayer”... “No, not with your brother, Ravenclaw!”

“Rhiannon Vaughan”... “Gryffindor.”

This continued until all thirty new students had found a new home. Each of them was warmly welcomed. After each house was mentioned by the sorting hat, the entire house cheered and applauded, though the decision to separate brother and sister Sayer caused some surprise.

“Before I give the audience back to you, professor, first some important things for our new recruits. Everyone, no exception must follow broom-stick flying lessons, regardless if you have been flying at home or not, regardless if you will ever fly after leaving school. As you have read in the introduction letter, private broom-sticks are not, I repeat NOT, allowed for first years, unless you can prove by written approval by our head. Previously we had special introduction lessons for children coming from Muggle parents, this year it is compulsory for all first years. We maintain strict hierarchy, you should follow up instructions from the head of your year, and head-boy or girl of your house.”

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It no longer surprised the elder students, that the basic ingredients of the speech remained the same, but its accents varied each year.

As soon as professor McGonagall finished, Dibbet jumped up again in a way none of the students or even staff had seen before. “Thank you, Minerva, thank you very much...”

Professor McGonagall frowned slightly by hearing one using her first name in front of all the students, but remained silent, curious about the upcoming news.

With a wave and tip of his wand against his own plate he opened the banquet as usual. All bowls plates and bottles had filled up completely, but no-one dared to start. Everyone looked to each neighbor to take the first bite.

Noticing that, Dibbet reached for his own glass, and started. “Again, very, very welcome to you all, staff, students, whatever your house may be, whatever your background is and whatever your future may bring to you. And please eat, I'm too excited myself.”

After mentioning each part of his audience he bowed slightly to them. After a small sip, he continued,

“As I said, this year I've got so much news, that it would be unfair too you, and disregardful to the kitchen staff to let you starving. I have bad news and better news and some neutral news if you are not into sports.

As I mentioned at the end of previous year, some had the magnificent idea of having all winning Quidditch teams compete against each other. As the house of Slytherin has won last year, they have the privilege of upholding the name of Hogwarts.

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Last year we held the broom-stick competition here, at Hogwarts. This year, the honor of organizing it goes to the Scandinavian Durmstrang Institute. Those of us who ended up in the top ten positions are considered as 'qualified'. So far the good part of this. Obviously, not all of last years contenders were pleased with the unexpected outcome, hence I received an update of the regulations. Those who paid attention to geography might perhaps remember that Scandinavia is part of mainland Europe, therefore the European rules apply for all contenders. From Brussels, I received some reminders.” With these words, he pointed to a pile of documents, roughly a yard high.

“Even I have to admit, some really do make sense, some wizards have thought about precautions I never thought about. For instance, there is a regulation, for the safety of the person on the broomstick that exactly indicated the minimal length. Very good indeed, safety above everything! And there is also another regulation about the maximum broomstick length for protecting fellow contenders. Again my deepest respect for all the hard work they have been doing in order to keep broomstick-flying safe. However...” and here the sarcasm became obvious for all, “However, even those two examples conflict. The minimum stick length is roughly over a feet longer than the maximum length. Furthermore all who want to be able to fly there, must not only have the European certified license to fly, only obtainable for wizards and witches over eighteen years old, but they may not have more than more than three speeding tickets while flying and must provide prove of that. Furthermore everyone must also have a broom-racing-license.”

Sirius initial enthusiasm completely disappeared.

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“You all understand that this is totally unobtainable..” and he waved with his wand.

“Thankfully we do can do something useful with our own gift, so I took care of that.” He quickly waved with his wand.

The same instance Sirius and some other students felt in their pocket some documents appearing.

“However, to make you clear what kind of devious games are played, let me continue. In the racing-regulations I found an additional document, written in French, indicating that all contenders must be regularly tested minimal six months before the game is held. Each person must be tested and proved free of the use of speed enhancing potions and spells. Those tests must be performed by an independent institute with its head-quarters in Paris. As an example they send along the test reports with all mandatory required thirty-one signatures of all involved officials of one of the French players, the one who ended last year second place. Strange thing is, her test-records date back for an entire year, with outstanding negative abuse records. Point however, is that this testing and investigating bureau only exists for three weeks.”

A murmuring started through the entire hall.

“Fortunately, we have some experience in avoiding obstacles, bending rules and even bending time...” He waved again.

“At Durmstrang, they are rather strict with regards to access regulation. Only contenders and their replacements are allowed entrance. So I expect beginning of May, Hogwarts will be accommodate some fewer students. So compete, but fly safe and please return in one piece. An additional word of advice, there they have funny rules about drinking! Nothing is really al-

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lowed, but still they all do it. If you get caught while drinking, or you test positive, it is the end of the game. Who, why and when they test seems all part of the broader game. You better stay away from it, to avoid awkward situations.” And he closed this part of his speech with a third wave. Sirius found all sorts of papers in front of him. The test against the use of illegal potion testing started several years before he was even born! He grinned “Dibbet's revenge!”

After Dibbet cleared his throat, he got every one's attention again. “This was the 'neutral' part of this years speech. But please, please eat while listening. Let me think how to start the next part without confusing you all...”

For a moment he played with his beard.

“Ah well, let paint it more broadly. I overheard some of you once wondering about our status as 'professor', here at school. You all know, if you want to become a professor in the non-magical world, you have to finish with more than average results your secondary school, go to a university. After several years learning and examinations you can become a candidate or bachelor, and after some more years you can get a master's degree. After following a teaching course and while doing research you can graduate again and after much teaching and publishing you finally become a professor. In our world, where the use and teaching of magic remains hidden, this is of course not possible.”

Dibbet took a long swallow and looked sideways to the teachers.

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“Some of us, like me, got their degree after leaving schools like this, while studying regular subjects on Muggle-universities. Many have studied languages, chemistry or history, like me. I can tell you that it is very hard to keep silent about your background, when you find things in Muggle-history-books that are totally wrong or out of context, while your own parents have witnessed those events themselves. A study-friend of mine failed for analyzing the deeper meaning of an ancient play. His teacher claimed he was totally mistaken. Of course he couldn't say that his father was a close friend of Shakespeare, so he very well knew what the play was all about, despite common beliefs.” His eyes were glimmering with the happy thoughts.

“With regards to Hogwarts however..... You are all aware that you can only leave school if you passed the Ordinary Wizardry Level exams with on average an 'acceptable'. If you leave earlier, or even fail to reach that rather low-examination level, you have to return your wand to the ministry, and you will be kept under surveillance for quite a while. That only happens once in a while, mostly those students have attitude, concentration- or health problems. However over 95 percent of you manage to pass their OWL's in the first attempt. During the centuries, the number of students staying at school for the regular subject have increased. Four hundred years ago, it was rare to continue at school, now it is rare not to. Because of this, students coming from Muggle parents are allowed by the Muggle authorities, to attend this school, and their diplomas after the sixth years exams are recognized everywhere and give you entrance to Muggle universities or other higher forms of education. After again another year studying here, you can get your NEWT's. With these diplomas you can apply for more serious jobs at the min-



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istry of magic, and can become aurors for instance. Until recently, this was the end of the line, here at Hogwarts.”

With eyes radiating gratitude he looked at the heads of Ravenclaw and Gryffindor.

“A short while ago, the Ministry send me the permissions to officially start post-graduate classes again. There, under the surveillance of a professor, students can perform research into potions and the use of all sorts of spells that are way beyond the normal lessons. This in itself is already special. All of this is because the breakthrough of the work done semi-illegal by the houses of Ravenclaw combined with Gryffindor. Their discovery of a complete new spell caused a world-wide sensation among wizards and witches. This means that students now can prolong their presence here, do research, publish articles that will be reviewed by other schools of magic around the world. I can tell you, this feels like the best day of my entire life! Some of you can even graduate into a professor of spells or professor of potions. As usual, our students can do their research on other, foreign institutes, but their students can now do their work also here. Shortly, there will be an equally balanced exchange project among schools. Next month we will welcome our first international student from Italy, the son of the professor who had taught flying here before, professor Transgressia. Some of you might still remember him.”

Lily exclaimed, “So Mikey is coming back!”

Dibbet looked towards the students, and when he saw Lily, he confirmed, “Yes indeed, miss Evans! So will Martin Steward. Now what will be the impact upon Hogwarts? Initially not much. All houses will be allowed to form post-graduate study

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classes, and I presume some undergraduate students will be invite to participate, to get the taste of it and to help. We really hope it will result in a few years time in more and much younger professors. Right now it means that world-wide, we got our recognized and got our status back.”

After another gulp from his glass and a distant glance, he continued.

“You should know, that initially many professors originated from Hogwarts, but our position was played down some time ago. Hundred fifty years ago, while I just became deputy head of Hogwarts, our license was revoked. Something terrible happened. The ministry claimed we lacked all sorts of security measures. All of you, except the new-years, know that each-and-every year I warn everybody that the third floor is off-limits for everybody. A very long time ago, that third floor is where the post-graduate students resided and experimented. I remember that some were investigating the vanishing closets from Cromwell's age. And another group was investigating some dark spells that one from Durmstrang had re-discovered. No-one knows exactly what went wrong, perhaps they dug too deep, use of wrong spells at the wrong place & time, or the experiments collided. But on that day many students went missing. After initial investigating there was bitter arguing, lost notes, we were unable to find students ever back. Even professors and ministerial aurors got missing while investigating.

They somehow got trapped inside the building or worse, we think. Perhaps they traveled towards unknown destination and never were able to return, or perhaps they simply died in the event.

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Even today only Archus Filch, a squib, seems to dare walking there, but only when accompanied by his cat, Mrs. Norris. Something seems to lurk there and grab you, hence 3<sup>rd</sup> floor is and remains off limits.”

Lily looked at James, who stopped eating and seemed to be frozen stiff.

“Nice story for Samhain, or Halloween if you please. But what's wrong James, you look so pale? The third floor is far away!”

“You remember the map we were making? Last week, before the arrival of all of the students, we investigated each and every staircase, hall and corridor. Including the third floor....”

“You did what?”

“We improved the old map. It now covers the whole of Hogwarts, see for yourself!”

James lay a large piece of parchment in front of him on the table. Drew his wand and softly said something about 'doing mischief' when none of the others were watching, and unfold it. Like he had claimed, all the floors of Hogwarts were sketched. That itself was already an enormous achievement. But Lily noticed some remarkable things. Like the real staircases, those on the map changed accordingly. Very neat! But all the restricted area's, even including the private room's and studies of the professors were also mapped in detail.

“How were you able to measure that all up undetected?” she wanted to know.

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James softly explained. When I returned from school for last years summer holiday, dad gave me already my fifteenth birthday present. An item that always remained in the family and given from father to son. If you wear it, you can not been seen.”

“You got an invisibility cloak?” Lily inquired disbelieving.

“Hush! Not so loud. Yes, indeed. And last week, Peter, Remus and I have been using it all week.”

“And you told your parents you had to do schoolwork?”

“Well, isn't this schoolwork?”

Lily wanted to say something, but didn't. She looked again, closely at the map.

“What are all of these dots?”

“Ah, that is something special. To prove that the cloak does more than just visibility, Sirius used it to enter the restricted section of the library. There he found books of spells about location and whereabouts. Together with Remus he tried to apply what he had found on this map. Each of that dot represents one of the persons sitting right here and now. Look! You can see Mrs. Norris walking on the first floor.”

“This is is is incredible! That must have required some very advanced sort of magical spells.”

With much awe, she looked at James.

Slightly flattered he said, “Much of the work was done by the others. And I almost gave myself away when I stumbled into a one of the medieval armors. I thought the whole of Hogwarts must have heard it. Thankfully Mrs. Norris was chasing a mouse, so she got the blame for it....”

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None of the staff-members, and none besides the intended students were aware of this conversation.

Finally, Dibbet concluded, “....So, I invite all heads of the houses to think about subjects to study in the future. Of course, the combined project of Ravenclaw and Gryffindor about dreaming will be continued, and Slytherin's proposal about helping endangered species will be granted. Perhaps Hufflepuf can raise their cultivating project to a higher level. It is up too you all. If students have interesting suggestions, please present them to the teachers or to the head of your house. It seems we can even anticipate funding for them from our ministry. Perhaps you all now understand why I feel as excited as a young professor.”

## Analysis

As all the students knew, before regular classes started, they all had to do their latest test-papers again, to determine if missed answers were indeed omissions of knowledge or a result of other factors.

Although Lily didn't have to follow any Biology lessons anymore, as she had successfully passed her exams for this subject the second year at school, due to an accelerated program, the current Biology teacher, Slughorn, was still very much interested in her progress at her Open-University study, so Miranda, her tutor, was also at the school. Besides that, it was agreed that she could still do all sorts of practical exercises at school.

Without any specific thoughts Alexandra walked along with her friend.

“Hello Lily, hello Alexandra, we were not expecting you,” said Slughorn. “No, no. There is no need to leave, I think. I feel flattered by all the feminine prescience. Please Miranda, can you tell us about our brightest star progress?”

“Sure Horrace. Lily has passed all material about general and advanced anatomy, bones, digestive system, respiratory system, nerve system, from most elementary animals up to the human body. Both pure theoretical but also clear cut dissections. We will start with studying general illnesses and injuries. It will be a tough year, no room for mistakes. Honestly I think we have to slowdown a bit, Lily.”

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But the girl replied calmly, “As long as I don't feel pressurized, shall we let the results of the test-papers decide?”

“If we can come-up with proper test-papers quickly enough. Those have to be evaluated also, not just your results, young lady.” Miranda replied.

“That was all, as far as I'm concerned. Notice me when you think you are ready, Lily!”

And with those words, the two young ladies were excused. After they closed the door behind them, Slughorn asked, “That sounded rather brief, almost unfriendly, Miranda. Why?”

Miranda sighed.

“That was not intentionally. I'll apologize to her later. But remember that she is the first student doing this study in this way. We have to think of new exams, that have to be approved. That itself is not such a big deal, we expected this. Major problem is however the rate in which she is doing this. It is scary. Colleges are beginning to ask questions about it. They suspect that Lily is an already graduated doctor and it is us who are being examined, not this young girl.”

“You remember she managed to squeeze six years of normal Muggle material into two years, while still attending all other subjects...”

“Yes, I am aware of that, but my Muggle colleges are not, and never will. But as a result right now, I can hardly spent my time on my own research, most of the time I'm busy with educational matters.”

“That comes with the job, professor!”

“I know professor, I know.”

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“Without intending to be disrespectful to the young lady involved, but you could take *her* and her learning as a research object.”

“You mean, we would learn and benefit from each other!”

“I’ll think about that, professor! But I can not study the learning progress of one single student, I should monitor several. All of them is out of the question, there are way too much of them. And when I find out that one of them, namely my pupil, is accelerating much faster then the others, then what? Then I’m officially into problems.”

“No, it only means that you have one pupil that falls beyond your defined expectations. The reason why is something else.”

Meanwhile, Lily and Alexandra were walking towards Corstophine 's study, where James' mother as her university tutor was present.

Alexandra asked “Do you mind that Lily came along?”

But neither Corstophine, nor Margaret had any objections.

The scene from Slughorns study, was repeated here again.

“Alexandra, we admire your attitude, but you are moving at a scary rate. Each week you devour the same amount that other students need at least a month for. Your series of Greek poems was refreshing to all of my colleges. Some of them needed carbon-dating to prove they were contemporary writings by you, and not recently found old writings.”

“Actually, some of them were just for fun, the latest one was for Lily's father as a birthday present.”



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“All nice and well, but in your final note to me, you wrote that you were thinking about writing an entire classical play. Quite something else.”

“So?”

“If you don't mind, I would rather have a talk with your history teacher, as these two subject are more and more converging. You could be practicing Latin, Greek and Aramaic, while doing history lessons and test-papers, if you don't object against private lessons from Binns. We all know he won't. On the contrary. You seems to be his favourite pupil.”

Alexandra inquired “Does that imply more work?”

“No, not really. Just different kind home homework. Theoretically that would mean that other students would not be able to assist you, but as far as I know, that has never happened. At some days you now have the first two hours History. You don't need to attend those, instead you get a single individual hour at an other moment, later that day.”

Alexandra shrugged her shoulders, “Fine by me, I think.”

When the two girls had left, Corstophine asked Margaret,  
“What did you have in mind, if I may ask?”

“They don't have to know, but I want to rush her through History, like you did with Latin and Greek. And when she has finished normal material, I would like her to concentrate on Middle-East history. Mesopotamia, Egypt, Crete, Greek, Roman. All of those can be combined with your classical languages.”

“Very well, but why?”

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“Did I tell you that I went to Athens last summer, and attended the meeting of the ancient secret wizardry council? Young miss Evans has been given some vague secret task. She needs all the help she can get from her friend. So she must be able to give that help.”

“Do you think that we need to inform her aunt, professor McGonagall about a change in selected study material?”

“Just the fact that her niece gets an adapted course, there is no need to trouble her with, for her, such insignificant details.”

And indeed, the acting head of Gryffindor had enough on her mind. At the beginning of the year, she had the idea that some of the books in her bookcase were at different positions where she had left them. For quite some time she had told herself to properly reorganize them, but recently she noticed that all of them were strictly on alphabetical order, but she could not remember having doing that. Neither could she remember asking one of the house-elves doing this. And this week, McGonagall had twice the vague feeling that she wasn't alone in her study, even though she could not see anyone else.

And she also had her special class to worry about...

Later that Friday afternoon, Minerva looked at all students.

“Dear all, this is the fifth time I find myself at the beginning of this special class. Previous years only the Dibbet and the heads of Ravenclaw and Gryffindor knew about it. In his enthusiasm, Dibbet told the entire school about it. There is nothing we can do about that now anymore. They now know our class is about dreaming, and it should stay that way. No further details. Be-

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fore we continue I want you all to swear that neither of what you see, hear, feel or suspect, should leave this room and be shared with others without my prior approval. That includes your classmates, your family, your closest friends, other teachers, the heads of the other remaining two houses, not even staff of the ministry. It is not only for our protection, but also for theirs. Nothing is what it might appear to be. If you don't feel confident about that, please leave while you can. Trust is among the most important things here.”

After those words Minerva bind each student again with a vow to remain silent.

“Before we do our traditional round of introductions, this: Now five years ago, or actually four and a half, we started to investigate sleeping and dreaming. It is of essential importance that whatever you see, hear, feel, learn does not have to be real. For instance, “and here she smiled at Martin, “If I dream that Martin is trying to poison me, it might very well that just before entering the dream world, a cup of tea he presented me was not up to my likings. This is an extremely innocent example, but I don't have to spell out what might be happening in romantic dreams or in nightmares. Each time we do experiments or meet here discussing things, we make notes, and only in these special prepared note-books. Only we, from our group can read it. If other people open these, they only see notes made by a first year student at potion-lessons.”

Most of the new students realized, if not already, that this was not a fun class to attend to, but something serious.

“Now lets start with the introductory round, here, and here only you may or should call me at my first name, Minerva. I do this

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to be on equal terms with you because your dreams and findings are just as valuable as mines. Here at my left, this is Martin...”

“Hi all, I'm Martin Steward. I'm one of the post-graduate students Dibbet told you about. Four years ago I was one of the Gryffindor students in my final year also participating in this class. I'm glad to be back. After my graduation I started to work for our ministry, but I was utterly unhappy there. This year, I got transferred to the department of mystification, receiving, administrating, describing and storing incoming prophecies. I presume not much has changed here, but compared to that work, even the classes here of professor Binns are a world full of excitement and entertaining. So I grabbed this opportunity with both hands, not knowing where it will lead me to.” He looked at the student next to him.

“My name is Robin, final year Ravenclaw, fourth time here.”

“I am Nicol MacMartin sixth year Gryffindor, third year here.”

“Marissa Hemsley Ravenclaw sixth year, third time here”

“Daimh Geddes, the same”

“Camren Garnett, Ravenclaw sixth year. Been here last year”

“Eoin MacRaild, Gryffindor sixth year. Second year around”

“Lily Evans, fourth year Gryf, fourth year here.”

Martin cast a glance with understanding and memories to her. Though the new students thought they had miss-heard.

“My name is Teifion Powell, fifth year, Ravenclaw, new here.”

“Bedwyr Owen, Gryffindor fifth year, first time here.”

“Hello, I'm Coira MacDuff, same year also Gryffindor.”

“Damian Garraghan, fifth year Ravenclaw, also new.”

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Minerva continued, “Now we all know who we are, it is time for some more information. Most students are senior students, who already know pretty much about magic, potions and have more than enough practice. Only those with 'Exceeding expectations' or better were invited to participate. This also means that you can only attend this study for three year, with some exceptions, and then you graduate. We hope that Martin can contribute some permanent presence.”

But he looked slightly puzzled. “Minerva, now you mention it, you make me wonder again. I was never so good with potions or spells, just ‘Acceptable’ for my owls and newt”

But Minerva replied: “I knew that you had, or still have, other gifts, one of your gifts was being exceptionally good to communicate with others. It was exactly the same with Peter Magonal. He was very good with analytic skills, researching deducting, looking beyond well-known options and solutions.

But now I would like to ask Lily to tell about all of our achievements so far. She is indeed our youngest participant, but like Martin knows, don't let her age misguide you. She is a natural talent, and is responsible for most of our progress. Some of our staff feel like a junior in her presence. Lily...”

And with a gesture she invited her to take over.

“Well now, classical dream interpretation is now part of the Divination class, in order to give that class more body. But there is where we initially started. Main reason was that wizards and witches started to complain with letters to the 'Daily Prophet’, to St-Mungo and even to the ministry about nightmares, more horrible than usual, and those were influencing,

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sometimes unaware, their normal awakening lives. Very unhealthy, but hard to check or validate.

We found out that we could share our dreams. The first time we did, Martin and I flew together on a broom-stick, and afterward we could remember exactly the same details. From subsequent exercises, Peter Magnal was able to detect a faint echo of an unknown spell, and together with a potion you all can now share dreams. That effort of him, helped him graduate and returned our Hogwarts the privilege of advanced studies for post-graduates.”

Mentioning it earned her a grateful glance.

While Lily took a sip from her tea, Minerva quickly added, “She also found that she has the ability to cure people, demonstrated it countless times. Unfortunately that is something we were not able to reproduce with others. We can now enter people's dreams, without their approval or even knowing it. It seems that the dark lord has also found this way, perhaps before us. And is now using this to torture people.”

Eoin took over, “And these nightmares are so horrible real. I too had them.”

Before Lily could continue Robin spoke. “Horrible as they were, Lily led us also to 'other places'. We are absolutely sure, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we have visited what some call 'the after life', both up and down.”

It was for all plain to see that Robin wanted to have said this and making it clear that, for her, it was not a pleasant experience. So Minerva added “She also took us so far away to a place you can never travel to them, but she also gave Peter and Mary a preview to their honeymoon in Greece.”

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While Minerva mentioned this, the happy memory of it gave her for a second the feeling back of flying as an albatross between the Greek islands.

“There is however a down side. At least Lily can heal, but others can do the reversed, even kill. Worst thing is, while in a dream, you can not perform lasting magic. What ever you do, you have to do it yourself and entirely with your own hands.”

When Teifion looked bewilderd, “In dreams everything is possible?”, Minerva explained, “In normal dreams, both ours or those dreamt by Muggles, indeed everything is possible. But that kind of magic only last while you are dreaming. The dreams we are talking about and studying here, have lasting effects, even when you wake up. However, in those dreams we are all Muggles, no magic their.”

At that point, Lily felt totally no aspiration to tell the others about her key, hanging on a cord around her neck that gave her even magical powers in other realms.

When Minerva looked at the empty chairs, Lily noticed the sad and tired look on her face. “Accidents happen everywhere, it is sad when people die, specially promising young people, like Synthia, Camilla.”

So Lily said “Seeing you also so sad and depressed, I think we need some uplifting...”

Except for the remaining empty chairs they almost made a circle, four to Lily's left and four to her right.

“Please, hold each other's hands, Just relax and close your eyes.”

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When she saw that everyone, including Minerva and Martin did, she closed her own eyes and thought about flying away in the sunset, over the hills, over the lake, around Hogwarts. No broomsticks, no carpets, just a line of people flying hand-in-hand, like a flog of birds cruising through the sky.

When they all 'returned' to the classroom, they looked at Martin, a man much taller and wiser than all students. He had tears in his eyes. He came to Lily and said, "When you were a first-year's you were afraid to fly, we shared a dream in which I wanted to let you experience how good it feels to fly. And we did some simple practicing. Dear God, I can not believe that you are still the same girl. This is the ultimate feeling of flying. No broomstick comes even close to this. You're an amazingly gifted witch."

With perhaps a sense of guilt, Robin now looked at all of them, and particular Minerva and Lily. "Thank you, Lily. That was as refreshing as a shower or a deep dive. Lily and I are in this class now for four years, and she had led us from surprise to surprise. I'm sorry if could not appreciate it all. Some people have a much more resilience than others. I'm sorry Lily, if I made you feel uneasy."

Surprised but glad, Lily responded, "Dear Robin, if there is one single person responsible for making other people uneasy, it has been me. I'm pretty sure that the first time we visited heaven, it scared the hell out of Minerva. And the other trip, when we went to hell. Well, even the memory still gives me the goosebumps."



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And to the others, Minerva said “Last couple of years we have done things and visited places that were not exactly scheduled. We learned a lot, we helped people, we we also were confronted with limitations, what we can not do, and what people should not do. While making up the list for new candidates, we not only looked at your magical capabilities, but also how strong you are. Just as in the rest of real life, you never know what lies ahead of you, if it might be dangerous or not. But we from Ravenclaw and Gryffindor are known for seeking new knowledge and daring to look beyond well trodden paths. It isn't purely academical, danger might be ahead.”

Looking at Lily and Martin, “I think that is about it for a first time, more than enough for our new participants. But can I have a word with you two?”

Such private conversations were no longer something special for Lily, so she waited patiently. When all others save Martin had left, they all sat down together.

“As you see Martin, we had quite some progress, and you understand that some of it was considerably more than some expected.”

“I'm overwhelmed, even though I heard some bits from Peter and Mary some details.”

“Quite so, but some of those things didn't have a happy ending, on the contrary. Some were triggered by Lily's unprecedented abilities, No Lily, I don't say or mean that you were to blame, Lily, not at all! Actually, with previous year accident, I only hold myself responsible.”

Due to Martin's expression, she knew she had to explain a bit more. “Last year, I specifically looked for students have night-

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mares themselves, in order to find out what went on in the first hand, instead of vague and distorted reports from helpful but incompetent staff. The fact that I completely missed the possibility of a predictive dream, and that we were not able to find the cause of any of the nightmares, weighs heavy on my shoulders. Even though the other three students were helped.”

Martin responded, “The fact that you didn't manage to achieve your goals, could also indicate that what you tried to achieve was not realistic. Your goals were too high, you can do magic, but none of you are miracle workers!”

It seemed that Martin's words were some sort of relief to Minerva.

“Thank you Martin, perhaps. Perhaps you are right. We will still observe the others closely. And we now have four new ones.”

Lily asked, “Anything wrong with them? As you didn't ask, I presumed they didn't suffer from nightmares... Or did you postpone that for a next sessions?”

“No, this is different. I checked on them before I approached them for this class. None of them claims to have ever had any nightmares. But...”

“But? Something else is troubling you, I see from your frowning.”

“Yes Martin. At the end of last year, madam Pomfrey asked my attention for something that was worrying her. When exams are approaching, it doesn't strike her as odd that some students are asking for something to calm them down. Of course no students receive any medication without being thoroughly checked, but she notice that she ran out of her stock more often

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and more earlier in the year. She reported that to Dibbet and she got clearance to obtain new medications, but it seems that some students now need medication against something else than just 'nerves', like high blood-pressure, breathing problems, coronary problems. With students at this age, that is strange! I does happen, but in those cases some other relatives also suffer from it, and it is not something that suddenly develops. Initially madam Pomfrey thought it might be related to food, that some students only eat what they like, and not what is good for them. But kitchen menu's haven't changed since ages and neither did the ingredients.”

“So these four, use medications that they didn't use when they came to Hogwarts for the first time?”

“Correctly, not even until their fourth year. None of the students are concerned, or strike it as odd, they consider it as 'regrettably but normal'. And none are aware they they are selected out of the other candidates because of this.”

After a second, Lily responded, “The very first year, perhaps you'll remember Martin, you said that this wasn't an extension of the medical ward, and objected against us helping patients. Why the change of hearts?”

“Yes, you are right, by then, I didn't want to collect all sorts of people that should receive attention and treatment elsewhere. I certainly hope it is nothing related to us. Just before I had to do the usual selection, madam Pomfrey confronted me with her findings. But you are right. Next year this selection might be something for you to do Martin.”

She looked at Lily, “What do you suggest?”

But then she realized she had some additional explaining to do,

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“There is something else you should know Martin. Four years ago we had two students participating in an accelerated learning project. Lily was one of them, doing biology. She now is doing part-time a university study becoming a doctor, so when she says something is good or wrong, I believe her more than any other collage here at Hogwarts. That is also something a few people here know about.”

While Minerva explained this all to Martin, Lily had the opportunity to give the matter some thought.

“I think we, or actually you, should encourage the four new, to practice Occlumency. Tell them it is important for attending this class.”

“But that does not solve anything!”

“True, but if they do, AND they become less dependent on medication, we gained at two fronts.”

“Such as?”

“Almost every medication has side effects, the less you take, the better it is. And secondly, then we know that there is some bad influence involved. Although we still have to exclude any placebo-effect.”

Martin looked at Minerva, nodded and then said to Lily, “Very well, *doctor* Evans!”

## Helping Hagrid

While her friend Alexandra had to go to her class Biology, Lily remembered that Hagrid had asked students to help him with feeding the animals he had to take care of. It seemed that one of them had scared Hagrid's assistant away as he hadn't showed up for a week. Lily remembered Hagrid saying, “With that Slytherin program, I have twice the number to look after for, and we also received a visitor from abroad. It's too much for me, much too much...”

Lily knocked at the Hagrid's door, that was half open, but there was no response. When she stepped inside, she was pretty sure that he hadn't missed her knocking, as he wasn't in. In his single-room house, Hagrid wasn't someone to overlook. On his table she did find a note. Some sort of instruction pamphlet, it had a strange, foreign symbol on it and it read:

- Norwegian Jknhgywhcuieg
- Despite size, five feet tall, still infant!!
- Adult size: at least 20 feet,
- Un-breedable,
- Daily fresh meat, picky, selective
- Stay with them while eating.

With amazement, she thought, “That is indeed something for Hagrid. Can you imagine, a five feet baby! And who wants to eat alone, that is so sad. Let's try to find the visitor.”

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And that was what she did, none of the animals were kept near Hagrid's hut, but she knew where to go to. With a simple “Alohomora” she opened the gate, and starting to look for either Hagrid, or the visitor. She noticed some fresh signs with the word “Nomo” on it and followed them. She had to pass several heavy doors, and she was grateful that her wand could take care of them, as she was very much aware that she could never have opened them herself. After turning around a final corner, she was confronted with a strong iron fence, and besides it a table with some plates on it. Some hardly touched with stinking meat on it.

“What a stench, horrible. Who would willing to eat that!”

After some “destructo” and “sanitato” spells she got rid of it and cleaned it a bit up. “Let see if we can get you something else...” And quickly she left for the castle's kitchen. There it cost Lily quite some effort to convince the house-elves that she wanted raw meat, not cooked, and that she wasn't ill. But when they asked what kind of meat and how much, she hadn't a clear cut answer. “Pork, goat, sheep, veal? I don't know. It's for one of Hagrid's visitors!” In the end she returned with bits-and-pieces of everything, even some fish. She returned and with a satisfied feeling she put all she got onto several plates. Then she looked at the cage. She couldn't see any one or anything, but that didn't surprise her. The cage was long and she hadn't the foggiest idea what to expect. But she knew, she felt that she wasn't alone. Something was there. Something living. Something conscious. Something observing her.

Not exactly knowing what to do, she looked in the cage. She saw several trees, but nothing to put the plates on, so she picked up some plates, opened the gate, walked inside and put

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them on the ground. After done so, she returned for the other plates. Finally she closed the gate and sat down on one of the chairs. “What was on the note? Stay while eating! So she picked from her bag some bread and cheese she had brought along. After she cut away some of the cheese edges she looked up. Something had moved inside the cage, but what? She looked closer, could those creatures be invisible? Highly unlikely, she had never heard of invisible creatures, but still, some of the plates were empty now. After she had finished her sandwiched, all plates were empty, except the one with pork.

“OK, fine by me. So you favour salmon and sheep. I'll remember that. Then she thought of something else. Something to drink! There wasn't anything decent around, so apologetic she said to herself, “sorry, but there seems nothing around here but a bucket.” So she filled it with fresh water and carefully put it inside the cage, walking slowly not to spill anything. Next she fetched the empty plates and the one with the pork still on it and looked around. The bucket was still there, was was empty. “It seems that someone around here was quite thirsty!” and she fetched another one.

Finally she turned around, “Bye! Whatever, whoever you are. I'll try to come tomorrow morning again.” And with a satisfied feeling Lily left the area where magical creatures were kept.

Next couple of days, Lily returned before the classes started. At one point Alexandra inquired if she was seeing someone secretly, but with a clear conscious she could tell her friend that she saw no-one, and laughed heartily about it when she explained it.

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Much to Alexandra's surprise, she found Sirius on a Monday morning early at the students-study.

“I'm pleased and flattered, Sirius! And when she saw one of the thick books Sirius was studying, she added “and even impressed. Are you taking school seriously, at last?”

After a kiss, he replied “Good morning Alexandra! Yes, sort off.”

With a quick glance she looked at the book he was working on. A book she had not seen before.

“Something 'new' from the restricted area?”

“More about transfiguration, transformation and so on.” he said.

“Tough subject, trying to impress my aunt?”

“No! Remember that neither she, nor James' father was willing to disclose more about the Animagus spell? So James came up with this one.”

Alexandra remembered. Under the excuse of helping another student with belated schoolwork, James had used his new invisibility-cloak to wander unseen through whole of Hogwarts, able to map places that were strictly off-limits for any student.

While Sirius was busy copying several pages from the book, along with some hand-written notes or corrections, Alexandra asked “May I have a look?”

When she did, she was shocked. She recognized the hand-writing. It was the same she had seen so often on birthday cards she had received. Also the same she found if she had made some unfounded statements in a test-paper. Her own aunt.



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In the book were just numerical references. They referenced to additions or corrections elsewhere, in a notebook that Sirius was also copying.

When she closed the notebook and looked at the title-page her assumptions became facts. It read: “This belongs to professor M. McGonagall, Gryffindor, Hogwarts.”

Disbelieving, she asked Sirius, “Did he really 'borrowed' this from my aunt, while she wasn't at school?”

Relieved to be able to tell the truth, he admitted, “No! Of course not. Last week your aunt was at school!”

But then he also added, “But he made sure she was nowhere near her study!”

“If she ever finds out, he'll be severely punished.”

“James told me that he needed a whole week for clearing out her bookcase, by itself already an imposition!”

Alexandra felt she was torn between several thoughts, at one hand she liked Sirius quite a lot, but stealing from a professor, and moreover a professor being her own aunt. Before she came to a conclusion what to do, Lily arrived from her morning exercise. “Morning you two!” But she immediately noticed that her friends seemed to be in a difficult situation.

Quickly Sirius explained “James nicked Alexandra's aunt notes about the Animagus spell.”

“What are you up to?”

“Copying all that we need!”

For a split second Lily remembered how it felt to be swimming like a dolphin.

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In contrast to what Sirius was expecting, Lily said “Don't hurry, be very careful. With those spells you can not afford to make mistakes. When you are done, it must be returned. If James cannot do it, either Alexandra or I will do it.”

“I'm done, I'm now making the final copy for myself!”

“Did you try it out? If not, don't ever do that without enough friends available, just in case something goes wrong!

“Yes we did, we appointed Peter Pettigrew to be our first volunteer. He finally had the opportunity to do something useful.”

“And?”

“James first transformed Peter into a mice and back. Next Peter wanted to do himself. He changed himself into a rat! When he got his old form back again, he asked James about the result. He initially said that he could not see the difference, but Pettigrew failed to see the joke. Since then, we gave him the nickname of 'wormtail'!”

Lily commented, “Very suitable! And you, did you and James try?”

“James tried out several different ones, but found out that the animal of his patronus worked best.”

“What is it?”

“A stag. Didn't you know that? Among ourselves we now call him 'prongs', I'll tell you to avoid confusion.”

“A deer!”

“Yes, dear!”

Lily turned around and found James was standing and listening in to their conversation.

She could not believe her ears, “What?”

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“Ehhh, you are correct Lily, A stag is a specific deer. By the way, you know we had some nick-names for you to?”

Sirius looked like he would have said to his friend “No James shut up about that!”, but Alexandra exclaimed “what did you do???”

James answered, “Sirius sometimes calls you 'sun-ray'!”

Sirius apologized, “Sorry, I didn't know what your patronus was.”

It seemed that Alexandra felt sightly flattered, “And you, how about you Sirius?”

“I haven't tried yet, but I just read that a wizard's patronus seems to be advantageous for the Anymagus spell with regards to stability. They are already referring at me as 'pad-foot'. My patronus is a wolf-hound.”

Lily taunted, “How considerate of you.”

“Why?”

“So if something goes wrong and Sirius got stuck, she can keep him and walk the dog!”

“And?”

“It is hard, really hard! We just manage to shape-shift for some minutes. We need to practice, but we can only do this when we are together.”

But Sirius added, “We got a deep respect for James father. Remember that he transformed all of us in dolphins for about an hour?”

And that remark brought some very happy memories back.

## Art

Slightly later, Lily found a small note, asking her to come to professor Dibbet, Hogwarts head.

Although she knew he had not broken any house rule, and even though if she had done so, she would have to report to the head of their house, Gryffindor, not the head of the entire school. So she was wondering why he wanted to have a small chat with her.

After opening the door that led to his study, she knew more, but not what she had been thinking about. In the study, completely stuffed with portraits of all former heads, instruments and books, she found three persons waiting for her. The first one was one she had expected to be there, professor Armando Dibbet. The second one was one of the other professors, she became to know very well, both as teacher, but also as the aunt of her friend, Minerva McGonagall. The last one however, she had only met once and shortly. The son of the professor that had started to learn her flying. In her first year at Hogwarts, she at examined and accidentally cured an Italian boy, Mikey Transgressia.

Seeing him, here brought several thoughts back to Lily, she was glad to see him again, when they parted long time ago, they had mentioned to keep in contact, but were never able to do so. Life interferes sometimes too much. For a small moment she had feared the terrible headaches had returned, but then she remembered Dibbets introduction speech, announcing the return of some graduated students. Before she could have said

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anything, Mikey jumped us as soon as he noticed the girl entering the study.

“Ciao, bella. Comme stai?”

Although Lily didn't spoke a word Italian, she completely knew what he had said.

“Hi Mikey, good to see you! Glad to see you are doing well. Or are you longing back to your old piercing?”

Smiling he replied, “Nah, that one got in the way with my hair. I've heard that my little princess Nightingale had made quite some reputation!”

Lily responded, “I should have raised a shield against flattery. But I presume we are not gathered here for exchanging compliments...”

Dibbet replied, “That the cold northern practical mentality, I presume. But you are perfectly right. Last year Mikey graduated at Malena's Scuola Magia. Like many students he was confronted with the difficult choice, what to do next. Obviously it had to be something related to art, although combining that with magic isn't so easy to imagine. When he was talking with his father about his recovery, he mentioned that our school was accepting foreign post grads again. I knew you would certainly see each other again, but I wondered if you could be the source of other inspirations.”

Towards Mikey he said, “I've heard from professor McGonagall, that young miss Evans has seen and even has shown to a selected groups of others, some places unimaginable. There are one or two restrictions though, like you can never disclose your source, so you should contribute it all to your artistic imagination. So what do you think about that?”

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Minerva hesitated slightly, “As long as it doesn't have too much impact on the lessons. Her lessons. All of them.”

Lily however was thinking about all the possibilities. “Would it be alright if I involve Alexandra? She is very good with impressions and memories, much better than I am.”

“I don't see any objections, do you, Minerva?” Dibbet asked.

“That is fine by me, my niece know perfectly what she can talk about and what not.”

“Settled then! I wish you all good luck and I'm eager to see any results.”

Obviously that indicated that the gathering was over, but McGonagall had other things to discuss, as she remained seated.

Mikey and Lily said goodbye to the professors and left the study.

“I'm not sure what these professors here know about art in general, but it isn't something you can produce on demand.”

“As you can see, there are lots of paintings and sculptures around, and some do really look good, but I've never heard about who made them.”

For a moment she looked at Mikey, “I know that you are a good painter, three years ago we received one of your first paintings after you were cured, I believe. But what is it that you like, or don't like. Are you into modern art, or more traditional Muggle painting styles? Can you tell me? I just found out that I know near to nothing about it...”

While slowly walking, Mikey tried to explain. “This is not something easily explained. At our school art absorbed many hours each week, for many years. I think the most important di-

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vision you can make, is magical and Muggle paintings. As you can see here, he pointed to some of the paintings hanging in Hogwarts corridors, the subjects of magical paintings move around, like in Magical photographs, where they use modern techniques that were used for painting for many centuries. Because of this, the paintings must be realistic. Can you imagine using styles like Impressionism or Expressionism or Cubism in a magical painting?”

Lily grinned by the idea of a piece of modern art, where lines and circles were moving by themselves.

“Of course it can be done, bouncing cubes is one of the exercises all students must do, when they start applying magic to a painting. Perhaps in the future people can appreciate that, but for now, all students at our school must learn to paint as realistic as possible. Even for that to succeed, many years of practicing is needed. Lots of our students never succeed in even passing that exam, and end up as assistants in galleries. Highly demotivating, if you would ask me.”

“I can imagine that, and understand what you explained. Although you still didn't explain where your heart lies.”

Mikey quickly looked around, to see who might be hearing him. “I don't think that my person, being here, have much to say about what to do.” and softly, so that even the persons depicted in the pictures behind them could not hear him, “How about the staff here at Hogwarts? What if you do or say against their likings? I presume you heard stories about what happens at other schools, when students disagree with teachers!”

Probably Lily looked rather unintelligent, so Mikey continued, “There are certain schools, where students become test-objects,

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or even suddenly disappear, in the midst of the year. Durmstrang, Beaux-batons, and others in Russia and Africa”

“Oh, no, Mikey! I never heard of such a thing. At our school we have a more-or-less fair competition between the four houses, and some teachers unofficially favour some houses more than others. But that is all. If there is anything going wrong between a student and a teacher, he gets detention, or less pleasant chores, but nothing worse than that, although some students think they get more punishment than others. And if you seriously break the rules, you have to report to the head of your house, or even the head of the school. But certainly no corporal punishment, that was abolished long time ago. And magic is never involved as punishment. So you can speak freely around. We all do so, even some of the staff.”

Mikey sighed with relief. “So, my friends played a joke on me, I'll remember that when even I see him again. They came up with the most horrified actions, when you even dare to think differently, let alone act differently or oppose to a teacher.”

“You still didn't say what you prefer to do, bouncing sculptures instead of bouncing circles?”

Mikey started to laugh relieved, a nice warm laugh.

“No, when I heard your professors talking, I've got the feeling they are mostly interested in strange landscapes or so. But I rather paint people, trying to catch their thoughts, their feelings into a painting.”

“But the painting you send us...”

“Oh, that one! I made that a week after I joined that art-class. I felt rather embarrassed when I heard they send it away. But what is done is done, you can't cry over spilled milk, can you.”



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“That's an optimistic way of looking at it!”

“OK, Lily, they mentioned to have seen or been at strange places. Can you tell me more about them. Can you take me there, or can you describe them to me? Or even more important, is there anyplace where I can get myself a decent cup of coffee?”

“I don't think so, yet. But if you can instruct some of the house-elves, they are very good in following instructions or examples. Until then, it is tea or water.”

“In that case, water. But about those places...”

Lily thought for awhile. She knew Mikey wouldn't tell anyone else, but still she found it hard to talk about her dreaming exercises.

“Alright, it boils down to this. I have the gift to steer dreams, enter them, enter other people's minds and dream. That is how we made contact in the first place, you remember?”

He nodded silently, the pain in his head was not a nice memory.

“I presume at art class you studied biblical scenes of 'the after life'?”

“Yes, the traditional concepts of heaven and so-on, but also those of Dante and Jeroen Bosch and others...”

She decided to venture it, “Mikey, I went there, both sides, heaven and hell, along with some other students and we all came back. Certain people would be thrilled if you were able to...”

After that revelation the magical art student was frozen, “What! Really?” And he was thrilled to go there too, but Lily was considerably less enthusiastic. “I'll certainly will not take you down there.”

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“We'll talk about that later, anyplace else?”

Slowly an idea was forming inside Lily's head.

“Perhaps, but that depends how well you can paint. We've seen nothing else of your hand.”

“Ouch! Are you examining me? Give me paint and an interesting model, then I'll prove it to you!”

At that moment they had reached Hogwarts main-hall, where they not only just had missed lunch, and where greeted by some of her friends.

“Alexandra, James, Sirius, Peter, Gwen, Robin, this is Mikey, a post-grad student from Italy. He will be doing some advanced studies and painting for the next time.

“Mikey, I would like you to meet my best friend, Alexandra. Be careful and behave, she has a boyfriend and her aunt is one of the professors.”

“This is James and Sirius, most of the time they are looking after the experimental broomstick we got from your father.”

After a quick bite, Mikey asked, “Is she also part of that special-class of your aunt?” and pointed to Alexandra.

“No, but she knows much about it.”

After a quick thought Mikey said, “Lily, you wanted proof to know how well I can paint. May I make a portrait of you, of your friend? Or do you object.”

Alexandra felt and looked flattered, amused, intrigued.

“Do I have to pose? How often, how long? I have schoolwork to do, lessons to prepare and other studies.”

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“Just a coupe of times, not so long. They gave me a deserted study in the Ravenclaw-tower. The brightest room they had. After Mikey had shown some of the house-elves how to make a descent espresso, they agreed to do some initial sketches.

“No, don't look yet. I'll tell you when I think it is good enough for other people to look at. It is considered improper, indecent to look at or read the work of an artist if he is still working on it.

Meanwhile Lily and Alexandra where discussing what Mikey might choose for objects to paint.

“You said you like to capture a person's feeling and like to express that, right?”

“Absolutely!” he confirmed while busy sketching.

Alexandra wanted to know all about it. “Do you need to meet them, in real life?”

“No, but if you can only describe them, it is much harder, and I need you feed back, if I'm heading to the right direction, so it will take much more time.”

“And those expressions, feelings, must they be really visible present on that person?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well, if you met a sad person, could you paint him or her, pretending the person was happy?”

“Yes, though it is debatable if that is a bit of falsification, or artistic freedom. If all people know a certain person was always sad, it is strange to paint him-or-her being happy. And I might paint him with distorted facial expression.”

Lily asked carefully, “Alexandra, are you up to something?”

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Obviously she was, but it was Mikey who replied. “Splendid! The way you look right now. Marvelous!”

And he explained, “Sometimes I have a sort of vision, a picture in my mind. Then I've got all that I need, I don't need a model any more.”

Intrigued and slightly excited, Alexandra asked, “Can that be any image, even imaginary?”

“I don't know, what do you exactly mean with an imaginary image? But I think so, yes, why?”

“If you are up to an experiment, I would like to try something, if I can pass images on to you, that I have received.”

“What do you want me to do then?” Mikey asked.

“Just sit still, relax and close your eyes. I'm suppose to concentrate as well, and place my hand on your head, but they failed to specify exactly where. Could be the front or the rear of your head, or perhaps I have to touch your eyes, therefore I want you to close them.”

First she held his head in between her hands, next she stood behind him, two fingers of each hand on a closed eye. After they tried several positions of fingers and thumbs, Mikey said “Hold on. Is it a woman you are thinking about? It is rather flurry, old!”

“That is correct, Mikey. A very long time ago, a young woman died unexpectedly, a sudden accident. Not so long ago we discovered her final resting place. For many years she wore a necklace her friend gave to her. When we returned the necklace to that friend, and I touched it, I got the vision of a young woman, a person I none of us ever met, and there are no pictures or paintings of her. Both of them lived a very long time

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ago. The ghost of her boyfriend is still here in the castle. If you are able to paint her, and Binns recognize her, I think you can call that a huge success.”

Lily hesitated, “Two things. First, would Binns not be offended? And secondly, one's memory slightly alters through the ages. So if he fails to recognize her, that does not say much.”

“That is something you two can break you mind over, but Alexandra, now I know what to expect, you try to do that trick again?”

“OK, but Lily, can you make sure we are not disturbed by anything, anyone. You know the spells.”

For quite awhile, both girls thought about Binn's sad story, the memorial stone they erected, the roses around her new grave, and the necklace.

Minutes later, Mikey looked at them with completely different eyes, “That is extraordinary! I've seen her like, like, like I've never seen anybody before. Like in a mirror. I can almost remember what she has been thinking, her last memories. I don't have to change anything of the image of her. She was just as glad as anyone can be. She had almost just one thing on her mind, her upcoming wedding-day.”

Startled Lily said softly, “That is something we were never told about!”

The rest of the week, was a week you'd find on any school. The fact that some herbs had magical powers, and that some historical facts had some magical background could not change the fact that they all had to learn, rehearse, and learn over and over again. What made things much worse for Lily, was the fact that

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it constantly rained, making her early-morning exercise a dreaded chore and inhibiting the chance of clearing her mind while cruising on her broomstick. There were no dreaming-classes scheduled, and even Mikey seemed to be too busy and occupied with other assignments. Even James divided his time equally between 'The Marauders', Quidditch and school. Not her.

With those gloomy thoughts on her mind she wandered through Hogwarts's corridors, all alone. “What was the point of it all? Why was she putting so much effort in this school. Never public recognition for her talents. For a moment she almost envied her sister Petunia. She could visit her parents any weekend she liked, and certainly returned home every holiday. With those thoughts on her mind she walked through the corridors, opened and closed doors, climbed staircases without knowing where she was heading for.

“Just the person we were looking for! We searched all of Hogwarts!”

Lily looked up, and found professor McGonagall speaking at her.

“Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were looking for me, I was just wandering around. But it seems you have found me...”

“Quite right! It is about young Mr. Transgressia. He let me know he had finished something you asked of him. He didn't want to tell me before you, specifically you, had seen it.”

“Oh in that case, I'll look for...”

“No! I presume you were referring to my niece, please don't do that. Not yet at least, he specifically asked.”

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Now totally confused Lily looked up at Minerva. “Why did he asked that?”

“I'm not sure. We'll find out as soon as we get to the Raven-claw-tower. I wished we could have given him one of the regular studies, but he considered them too grim and too dark. So girl, prepare for a nice walk upstairs...”

When they finally reached his study, they found the door locked, so they knocked.

“Mikey, it's me. Lily. And professor McGonagall is with me!”

Immediately they heard the key in the lock turning, and saw Mikey opening the door, and quickly peeking around. “Good, no-one else! Come in, quickly.”

As soon as they entered the room, he nervously closed and locked the door again.

Concerned, McGonagall asked, “Everything well, young man? I've never seen you so tense!”

He pointed towards two easels, with two covered paintings on it.

“Last time, Lily wanted to know about my painting skills and suggested a test paint of her friend, your niece Alexandra. She however came up with a much more realistic assignment. I've almost spent every hour since on them, and started over several times. I knew exactly what and how to paint, but was not satisfied a couple of times. Now I think I am. However, since a couple of days I don't dare to show it. I'm so afraid that I don't live up to your expectation, that you consider it utter rubbish.”

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When they looked into his eyes, they realized that his anxiety was for real.

“You've never painted for others, as an assignment, and have them on display?”

“No, only anonymously, between lots of other paintings of other students.”

Lily put her hand on his arm, “There is no need for fear, Mikey. It is time for your next step and show them to us. Trust me, we will be just and gentle. I won't give you false praise, that won't do anyone any good, but I think you worry way too much.”

Minerva nodded, “I know that every artist gets confronted with this emotion. Performers before the beginning of a show, sculptures and painters before an exposition, writers before publishing. That's part of the trade. So will you...”

Mikey swallowed something away.

“Ecco, I'll show you first, the second one. The one your niece suggested. She told me that no-one but a teacher here, knows how she looks. So before you get him here, please have a look.”

Despite holding his wand in his hand, he walked towards the painting and quickly removed the paintings' cover.

Minerva and Lily looked intense at the painting.

Mikey started to apologize, “The conditions were quite new to me, so I might be wrong with the level of magic I put into it..”

From the linen cloth a young lady was looking at them. A young lady, around mid twenties, with darker than dark long black hair that seems to have a blue-ish glow over it.



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“So this is, or was Lachlan, the fiance of professor Binns!” Lily finally said.

“I really hope so. The first attempt was located outside, but regarding the story, I considered that perhaps inappropriate, so I changed it for a domestic scene as a filling up background.”

It was that Mikey was mentioning the background, because she hadn't even noticed it. She could only look at the painted woman. With a happy, content expression, like she just had said, 'It is good...'. Even though the woman didn't move, like in many of the other paintings in the castle, it was obvious that Mikey used magic, but probably a different kind of spells. The ring she wore almost jumped out of the painting, and the necklace was very prominent there. But the eyes were indescribable, when you looked away, there was no-way of telling what color they were.

Mikey found the tension unbearable, “And?”

“What ever Binns may say to you, this is an exceptionally piece of art. Well done! Both technically and as composition.”

Lily nodded, “Somehow, you feel like she is trying to say something, or just had said something, a compliment or an affirmation. And those eyes, magnificent.”

The painter was clearly relieved, “Yes, I'm specialized in painting eyes. They are the most important part of your face. A mirror of the soul, some say.”

Mikey looked at the other painting, still covered, “In that case, I dare to show you also the other, I do hope I manage to capture some of your niece, your friend essence. As I met her in real life, I was able to put some more magic into it...”

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This time he simply used his wand to uncloak the other painting.

For minutes they could only stare. Like in trance Minerva shuffled inch by inch towards the painting. At arms length she reached out and touched the paint.

Slowly she turned to Lily, who remained staring, “Tell me that I'm in one of your dreams, girl!” But she shook her head.

Suddenly Lily rushed away without saying anything.

“What is wrong, did I offend her?” Mike asked concerned.

“No boy, on the contrary. I think she feels ashamed for testing you. This is a truly master piece!”

Next moment Lily was back. She had tears in her eyes. “I just had to check if everything was alright with Alexandra. Your painting is so good, it even scares me. She is so alive, so present. I feel her eyes touching me. We heard at the 'dark art class', that it is possible to damage your soul and store it into an object. For a moment I feared you took a piece of her soul and put it into your painting. That good!”

“Thank you, that is the most rewarding compliment I ever got.”

Obviously Mikey was relieved with her response.

Professor McGonagall said, “She is even more real, more present, more nearer, than the reflection of a mirror!”

“That is, because with any reflection, the mirror doubles the distance. I reduced the distance.”

“There is no doubt who this girl is, but it also raises a problem. It is too good. We can not keep it here in the castle, if any of the other students ever sees it, it will get Alexandra into problems. And I don't assume that either of you wanted that!”

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“Yes, I fear you have to take it home, Mikey, or to your old school. It could be a valuable center-piece of any exposition. Perhaps, after my niece graduate, we are able to put it here.”

“I wonder what she might think about her own portrait?”

“There is only one way to find out. I'll sent for her, if no-one objects, that is.”

Minerva looked at Mikey and next to Lily.

“I'll fetch her, and if possible, prepare her in the mean time.”

A bit later Alexandra spotted her friend again.

“I just thought I spotted you, but somehow you dashed off again. Practicing for a busy bee or so?”

“Almost. No I came to fetch you. Do you remember the task I gave to Mikey? He's finished...”

While walking through the corridors, Alexandra asked, “How about the other painting, how is he going on, or don't you know?”

“Yes, your aunt and I just got a pre-view. It is good, frightening good, both of them.”

When they arrived, Alexandra looked at her own portrait. She looked at it as if was a mirror. “Is my hair *that* long! I must have it done this week! Looks good, but what now?”

Next, she was mainly interested in Lachlan's image. “Yes, that is how I imagined how's she must have looked like. Remember that we've never met! Those eyes, her necklace, her ring. O yes those eyes! I truly hope I got the correct person, I wonder how would Binns react?”

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Minerva nodded, “I’ll hope he’ll take it possessively. We already have more than enough deceased persons with some mental depression hovering here.”

“Lily, would you be so kind to fetch Dumbledore and Mr Binns?”

“But of course, but this painting is as good as the other. They better be warned! Specially Binns.”

While she was gone, she explained to her niece, “I hope you’ll understand that we can not put your picture on display in the castle?”

Alexandra didn't look surprised, perhaps slightly relieved, “I was already wondering where to put it and others might say. It is good and I feel flattered, but other students won't understand. To put it better, your painting is too good to be hidden away here at Hogwarts. I hope you're not offended?”

“Absolutely not, on the contrary. I'll keep it on loan, perhaps in ten or twenty years or so, it won't cause any upheaval.”

On the way back, Lily already prepared Binns, “Professor, my friend Alexandra is able to retrieve stored memories, images from objects. She tried to transfer something she detected, to someone who can make magical paintings. A very good artist. The paintings look very good, very alive, so don't be scared. You are the only soul who can tell if the woman he painted really is your Lachlan, it could very well be someone else.”

As soon as they entered the room, Binns seemed to be frozen solid.

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Dumbledore concluded, “I presume this says enough. If we give this object to our professor, students will never get another history lesson anymore, I fear. So the classroom or his own study is out of the question.”

McGonagall thought for awhile “How about the gallery on the second floor?”

Dumbledore agreed, “Although she never was part of the staff, I think very can put this painting among the pictures of others who made a significant contribution to our school. She enabled a breakthrough in Magical-art-science. No-one can make any objections against that.”

Finally Lily made a suggestion. “Could you persuade some of the other spiritual-entities around here to help professor Binns? Perhaps it is possible he could 'enter' the painting.”

This suggestion and the painting, made that the professor, who still hadn't said a word since he saw the painted woman, was the happiest ghost around for a very long time.

## Nomo

After the lunch Sirius reported in their common-room, “Those interested in weird animals, should go to Hagrid. Although your presence might earn you some points, I’ve seen lately too many animals.”

“But we all dropped tending Mythical animals?”

“I know, but it seems that it is something special, a rare visitor, Nomo or something like that. I never heard about it.”

Hearing 'Nomo' immediately triggered Lily.

“Shall we go?”

But all of Gryffindor immediately replied, “No-no!”

“I’ll like to see Hagrid, he’s a nice giant, half-giant!”

“Only half of him!”

“Yes, but which half?”

Only Alexandra doubted for a moment, “I’m almost done with homework about trolls. You go ahead, I’ll be there in some minutes.”

And that is how Lily went to see Hagrid and his 'Nomo', hoping to find out more about his visitor.

By now, she could walk the way through the castle, to the cage almost with her eyes closed, and the most important reason for not trying to, was that she knew that you always have to be careful with animals. Before doing do, she went first to the kitchen, getting some fresh fish. When she arrived at the cage, she notice some students but no Hagrid.

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“Where is Hagrid?” Lily asked.

Sylvia, a Slytherin girl she met before on the train when she traveled to Hogwarts the first time, said, “He just left, getting some freshly slaughtered pigs.”

The girl looked at Lily, “By the way, is that your perfume I smell, or haven't they explained yet to you the working of the showers at Gryffindor?”

Lily felt it below her dignity to respond. She filled a bucket with fresh water, and put the fish she had brought on an empty plate.

Without hesitating Lily took a chair, opened the cage and closed the door behind her.

“Hello! I've brought you something extra to eat, and more to drink.” Next she put plate and bucket on the ground and sat on the chair.

Now with just some feet away from the plate, she could not miss it. In a split of a second, Lily noticed that one of the branches of a middle height tree, reached out like an arm, grabbed one of the fishes and held it near a split in the bark that had not been there before.

She was so astounded that she didn't notice that all of the students were dead-silent. She also didn't notice the arrival of Hagrid with Alexandra.

Rubeus instructed all gathered students, “Hm, now then. Pay close attention and STAY FAR AWAY from the cage. These animals are extremely dangerous. This one comes from the depths of the woods of Scandinavia. Like here, parents tell the children up there never to leave the roads. And there, the children listen, as they know if one of these creatures see you, you have

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absolutely no chance what so ever. They are faster than lightning. This one is still small, about five feet, but they are much more dangerous than adults, because of their heights, twenty feet they are much slower. He or she, is on loan, because the needed to repair and extend the cages at Durmstrang. Last months they have devoured their own mother, I was told. Nice kiddies, not? Rumors have it that they feed unwelcome, uninvited visitors to them. But these are just rumors. We have special security protocol for feeding them, extremely aggressive little jerks. They have a horrible long name, that even I can not remember or pronounce, hence I called them Nomo, for NOrwegian MOnster.” Hagrid told the students with his back to the cage, not seeing who was inside.

None of the Slytherin students said a word.

“Hagrid?” Alexandra said.

“Yes? Are you afraid girl?”

“Perhaps, but the creature liked to be called 'Patrick', not Nomo. And he hates pork. It stinks and smells like unwashed students.”

“Now is that so? How do you know that all?”

“Because they hunt in groups, they learned to speak without words, in order not to scare the pray away. And if you don't believe me, ask Lily. Patrick seems to like her.” And she pointed to the cage.

When Hagrid turned around, he turned several shades paler.

While leaving the cage, Lily added, “And they are fond of fish, particularly salmon.”



## Less is better

The next dream-session, was as always at the end of the week, when most students were tired of a full week hard studying and sleep was at arms-length. The fact that some students were willing to participate in a voluntary additional class, said enough about the positive attitude of all of them.

“Dear all, “professor McGonagall started, “There are a couple of things that need to be said before we continue. The first thing is that I'll participate less, and mainly will observe. I'll delegate most of the work and initiative to Martin and Lily, but I'll remain present and responsible for it all. Last year Lily did already most of the work, but I have to admit that wasn't fair towards her. So I'm glad that we can depend on Martin. I presume this is where I can leave it to you, Martin?”

Here Martin took over, “The longer this study-class exists, the more difficult it becomes and the longer it takes for new ones to get acquainted with it all. Part of it was the compulsory training of one of the techniques from the other class. Occlumency is something at NEWT-level from 'Defense against the Dark Arts', but is quite essential here. I'll explain why. We received rapports that more and more students are requiring more and more potent medication. We were wondering why. Previous years we saw an increase of brutal nightmares, there people were helped with occlumency, and we were thinking if this might be working here also.”

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Knowing in advance the answer, but avoiding to show prior knowledge, Martin asked innocently, “Teifion, are you currently on any medication?”

At first, the Ravenclaw girl seemed surprised. “No. Eh, yes. Actually I do. I was troubled by a pounding feeling in my throat and chest. Sometimes leading to headaches. When I got fed up with worrying, I mentioned it to madam Pomfrey, like anyone would do. After examining she told me that I had a much to high blood-pressure 180 over 100, and gave me something that helped quite good. My parents were informed and got initially quite scared, but when I wrote that the treatment was successful they were much relieved. Of course madam Pomfrey is still looking after me, and she gradually reduced the amount of medication that I need.”

Lily asked, “Does that drop coincide with you practicing Occlumency?”

Like it just dawned upon her, she said surprised, “Yes, it did! How did yo know?”

Without asking, Bedwyr, Coira, Damian all said that they had suffered much less from asthma, angina and fatigue and needed likewise less medication, though Coira found it scary to reduce her medication. “You know, just in case.” But she continued, “I was healthy all my life, and finding you have some sort of heart-failure was very frightening. I didn't know what was happening. The help of madam Pomfrey, and the medication made that I could continue here at school without thinking twice or worrying. Otherwise I had to quit and return home without diploma's or my wand. Since I used the potions I never had any pain anymore, so when she said that I might be decreasing the

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dose, I was rather sceptically, as there was no obvious cause for the change.”

Bedwyr confirmed. “I initially ascribed the decrease of asthma-attacks on me, doing more exercises, but the improvement came indeed after practicing Occlumency.”

After Martin gave the words sometime to settle, he added, “Some know, that Lily is already studying for becoming a G.P. but still I am very reluctant asking anyone to reduce one's medication. However, if it was already suggested that you can, and you had no problems with it, there is a proper way to see if occlumency plays a role. For the next week, block that spell from your mind, if the symptoms return, you'll know for sure. If you are willing to try, let us and madam Pomfrey know in advance about what I asked. Lily and I already spoke to her, but it is only proper that she hears from yourself, if en when you stop with Occlumency, just in case. Also, ask some of your friends to have a close eye on you. Sometimes others note a change in behaviour earlier then the person themselves.”

Lily confirmed, “In general, never just experiment with medication. So when you are completely off medication AND occlumency, and you feel any discomfort, let me know when I'm near.”

“You're no doctor yet, Lily!”

“I know, I know, they should warn madam Pomfrey, but I was thinking about something entirely different. If there is 'an other influence' causing this all, we need to know. Just like with the nightmares, we focused initially of those who suffered. Very

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understandably, but shouldn't we try to find the cause of it all? Now we are only treating symptoms.”

After a long pause, Minerva agreed, “I've told you Martin, she is a clever girl!”

Robin asked, “Is there anyway we can provoke it happening?”

But Lily explained, “If it is just a pure medical issue, yes we can, but that serves no purpose. We are only interested in non-medical causes.”

Minerva walked in a small circle, while analyzing her thoughts, finally she said, “I'll have to check with some others. What we need is far more advanced then ever taught here at school.”

“What do you mean, Minerva?” asked one.

“Lily is right. Absolute right. But detecting such spells or hexes is the playing ground of senior Aurors. That's even beyond me. It implies that we need assistance of the ministry, something I would rather avoid as I know for sure it will attract unwelcome attention. But it is inescapable, I fear.”

Martin brought up, “I still have some connections within the Ministry...”

But Lily interrupted, “Can't we ask Dumbledore? Last year he showed me that he could do such things...”

This resulted in Minerva's comment, “Yes, that is true, I forgot that Albus was capable of doing that. Obviously he does not have the time to do these kind of tests, but we could ask him if he is willing and capable of teaching this team that sort of technique. I certainly hope that one does not need outstanding-NEWT for this, and it is possible to fit it in, in the remaining time.”

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Martin looked slightly disappointed, "That means less dreaming, Minerva!"

"You can dream every night in your own bed, Martin! Perhaps, but if achievable, all of us learn this way much more. It will payoff in time, I hope."

Hence, next week Dumbledore joined them at Minerva's class.

On one of the desks, there was a huge pile of books and manuscripts.

He looked very seriously at them. "This", he said, "is not going to be easy. It belongs to the set of skill that you learn when you become an auror, working for the ministry. Then you have to be able to analyze accidental and miss-use of magic in any form. And before you are accepted as auror on the ministry, you need some years of field experience and several NEWT-outstandings. Some consider this as highly advanced defense against-the-dark-arts, but as with all of what is taught in that class, it can also be abused.

With all of the spell's you make a shield around one person.

Obviously, the longer the shield last, or the larger it is, the more difficult and consuming it becomes. It passes all spell transparently through, coming in or going out. Biggest problem however is that you never know if you can detect all of the spells. That is already hard enough."

In order to demonstrate, he cast a spell and created a cylindrical shield around Martin. "If I now hold my wand against the shield, you can sense, or actually recognize all spells. That is obviously also it's weakness. If he is capable of doing a spell

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I've never heard off, I can not recognize it. I presume that is initially enough and obtainable for most of you.”

The most severe spell, that creates a complete blocking of every spell performed by the test person, effectively turning any wizard into a squib. It also blocks everything directed at the test person. However, the stronger the test person is, the more demanding it becomes. The real dangerous aspect of this spell is, that it can become too demanding, you might overload yourself. And to a degree you can squibify yourself. Hence only experienced wizards are allowed to do this.”

For a short moment he created a pink cylinder around Minerva, and within seconds she showed her unease.

He looked at the students. “For the next weeks, months, you can practice carefully on each other. But never, ever do this on anyone without their knowledge and confirmation. That is highly unethical. And for your own well being don't try to block professor McGonagall or anyone else of the staff. They not only detect it straight away...”

And with his wand he made a tunnel around all of the students for a couple of seconds. Their feeling that they could not perform any magic was bad enough for some to panic.

“... that will lead to immediate expulsion, but it is also much too hard and demanding for you.”

All of them clearly understood the risks involved.

Finally he looked straight at Lily.

“Oh, and a final warning by the way. If you have the slightest pleasure in doing magic at all in your life, do not even try to shield miss Evans. You'll not be able to stop your own spell and crumble.”

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Lily instantly remembered Dumbledore's pain and fatigue, when Dumbledore had isolated her, after she had re-forged her key, that she kept always hidden under her robe.

For a moment, all of them looked at her, wondering what was so special about her, but Lily shrugged and smiled.

Next, Albus helped Martin and two of the most experienced seventh-year students to cast a simple shield around the youngest one.

They practiced all afternoon and evening. In the end, Minerva concluded, "Practice and pass on. Don't forget to write down your experiences. And remember about the warnings."

And Martin added the warning, "When you are practicing, make sure you do this undetected. As Albus said, these spells are normally not learned at any school. There are countless people who want to use this technique on others, and probably will use you against your free will, to force you doing these spells for them."

Minerva agreed, "I hope that you all are aware that this is serious-magic and no longer some waving with wands anymore. With this, you can become a danger to yourself and also to others."

## Revived memories

Now both girls were totally convinced about Mikey's painting qualifications, they were elaboration on what to do next.

“Do you still want to go ahead with the original idea?” Alexandra asked.

Lily thought for a while.

“Yes, It seems that the stones operate on the image in your head, or with the older central-stones a combination of thought and position of directional-stones. You have captured some of those images by picking up stored memories. I think it is important to store and share those images.”

“You are right, let's do so. Shall we ask Mikey?”

“Straight away!”

After a long stroll up to the Ravenclaw tower, where Mikey's studio was located, they knocked at his door.

“It's us Mikey, Alexandra and Lily.”

When he let them in, they noticed that one of the paintings was gone. Lachlan had moved to the corridor on the second floor.

For a moment Lily found herself between two Alexandra's, one in flesh-and-blood, and another one, almost alive.

“Please Mikey, can you do me a favour?”

“Certainly!”

“Can you cover the other painting? It is so much alive, I almost started talking at it.”

With a grin and a wave of his wand, one Alexandra was gone.



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“Well ladies, what can I do for you? Portrait of someone else?”

Lily shook her head, “No. No persons. Landscapes this time. We need to transfer as good as possible the memories of some landscapes. I know that eyes are your specialty, but what can you do for us in this respect. Any magic you can apply to them?”

At first Mikey looked slightly disappointed, as he rather painted persons, but when she mentioned 'magic' he started to think.

“Those places, have you been there yourselves?”

“One place we have been both, but all of the others, no. It is...”

Here Alexandra interrupted her friend, “No Lily, we've been at four places, our initial ring, up in the hills here, the one with the humming stone in Greece, and with James and your parents at Calanais.”

“True, you are absolutely right! I am constantly thinking about our first visit. And the impressions you got there are much like that of our professor history. Mikey, she has memories of stored impressions.”

“How can you verify whether I painted them correctly?” he asked. “I could be painting anything.”

“I think, that if you are able to paint them correctly, I will also be able to go there. Although we think that some of these places no longer exist anymore.”

Mikey looked puzzled, “So these places are far away but also from a long time ago? I might add something, but I have to dig up a book about it. Can you tell me something about some of the places?”

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Alexandra nodded, “Some at least. One is located in Athens near the Parthenon, another we think is on Crete, at Knossos. We have seen three others. One is on a small island at the Hebrides, and the fourth is submerged in the Mediterranean. The fifth one, you might have visited yourself, Stone-Henge.

The sixth one is probably in Norway, near the Durmstrang institute, at least, that is what we think. And most of the other places, we have absolutely no idea whatsoever where they might be located.

“So, in that case, it seems to me as a good starting point to use one of the locations you’ve been before, not? But be careful that you do not mix the original impression with your own memory.”

Lily commented, “Very good point, Mikey! So what destination are we going to do?”

Alexandra looked at her. “You’ll have to be the judge, so just wait and see.”

Turning to Mikey, “Ready for another experiment?”

“Ready when you are, fair lady!”

Alexandra walked to the back of the chair, Mikey sat down on, placed her fingers on his eyes and head, and concentrated deeply.

Finally Alexandra said, “That’s about it. Perhaps I should visit the original place, for refreshing my own memories. Can you start one the first one?”

Mikey sat still for some time.

“That is a weird feeling indeed. But yes, I think I can do something with it. No promises though. I’ll try next week.”

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But it wasn't the next week Lily got invited to see the results, and neither the week after, nor the month after.

At the same moment Lily got slightly disappointed, even annoyed, the two McGonagalls came to fetch Lily.

“Miss Evans, may we invite you to a very special exhibition? It took some time, but believe me, it was worthwhile waiting!”

This time they were not heading for Mikey's studio, but one of the larger classrooms. At the door they also found Mikey and Dumbledore waiting. The first one glowing with excitement, the other full with expectation, just the way like Lily felt.

“Ladies and gentlemen. My I present you my first full private presentation. I've named it 'revived memories', though you may rather name it: 'A travelling show'.” And with a wide gesture, he opened the door. Lily expected the paintings to be hanging on the wall, but she saw none, the room was pitch dark.

Suddenly a light appeared and shone on one painting. A site Lily knew very well. Greece, Athens, near the Parthenon. The site she had visited along with Alexandra, Sirius, James and his parents. But the scene was different, not how she remembered it. Somebody must have read or sensed her mind, because a second light showed a second painting, directly next to it. This was exactly how Lily remembered the place.

“I don't understand, they are different but what, how?”

Mikey explained at a low voice, “These two paintings are about exactly the same object, even the same location. However there is a time lapse. The left one is 2500 years older, from the original memory. Your friend and I traveled to Athens some weeks ago. What we saw, is on the right picture.”

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Now, when she looked closely to the first picture, she noticed the difference. People wearing ancient clothing, and the temple was still whole and decorated.

“I presume we don't have to tell you where this is located?” and with these words a third painting lighted up.

Lily's heart started to glow. Yes, this was Knossos. Even before their holiday, she had this picture in her mind. Strangely she seemed to remember it, how it used to be. A long time ago.

The third one, everybody recognized. Stone-Henge. Again multiple paintings. One as it was this present day, one several hundred years old, and a rough sketch, from vary long time ago.

“Did you also traveled to that place?”

“No that came from the fresh memories when you and Alexandra visited the place.”

At the fourth one, Dumbledore said: “Desolated spot. Where is that?”

Now Lily responded, “That is on the Hebrides, Calanais or Calanish. We visited the place this summer.” This time there was hardly any difference between the left and the right paintings.

Mikey said, “From here on, only old impressions.”

Alexandra pointed to the next one, “This is how Alexandria must have looked liked, in the old days. If you look good enough, you can even see the lighthouse and the library in the distance.”

The next painting showed a forest, a long wide lane, and a building at some distance. “Norway. Some say it is the main building of Durmstrang.”

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“Indeed,” said Dumbledore, “I’ve been there, but it is much larger now.”

While walking to the next one, Lily was thinking, “Nice paintings, and the transfer obviously worked well, but what kind of magic had Mikey put into it?”

Before she could ask her question, it got answered by the next painting. She saw a large valley with mountains that were covered with snow or ice. Except one. It looked like another mountain, but it radiated heat through the picture. She had to step backwards, being afraid that she got burned.

“We think that is, or better was, Iceland. It became unreachable, just like this one.”

And she pointed to another one.

Here they saw spread over the desert hills, lot of tiny stone houses, colored by the sun setting. And at one side a huge sea, unbelievable blue tinted.

“We think that this was Cartage, before it was demolished. It must have made a huge impact on the one who traveled to that place. The image was extremely strong.”

When Lily looked at the painting, she could feel the longing of going to that place, realizing that it was totally impossible, as that entire city was ruined by the Romans.

“This one is the cause of most of the time you had to wait,” Mikey said, pointing at the next one.

“Exceptionally well done!” Dumbledore said. “I like mountains. Those hills, those flowers, that view... But where is it located, do you know?”

“No, not exactly, we assume somewhere in the Alps.”

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Albus took another step closer to the painting, “If you painted those mountains accurately enough, and I have no doubt whatsoever that you did, you can perhaps find out comparing it with other pictures or photographs.” With another step he was inches away from the painting.

“Normally when you get this close, the image of the painting gets lost, and you only see the paint on the cloth. But not here! I could almost smell the fresh air. And I long to walk there, climbing up to the next hill, knowing that there probably will be another hill blocking my view.”

When he turned away, Lily noticed a small tear in his eye, and she knew that professor Dumbledore would probably never find the time to go there anymore, and certainly not be able to make such adventures hikes.”

The final one didn't need any introduction either. The huge building near, had such a characteristic shape, that everyone recognized it, The Borobudur, Java.

“As you remember Lily, there were many more places, but those were too vague, I had to refresh my own memory before I could pass them to Mikey. Last week I did, and he will work on the other ones, but we wanted to show you these already.”

Finally it started to dawn at Dumbledore and professor McGonagall. “Hold on. Just a minute. Alexandra, you told us that you captured memories on images. That is already extraordinary. Are you now trying to tell us, that these were or even still are, destinations of those travelling-stones?”

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“Yes I do and even did. And with these images, I think I can pass that information to others. Don't you think you can use these, Lily?”

But Alexandra didn't get answer straight away. Lily had walked back to one of the previous paintings. She stared at it. Like Mikey had said, these were from memories, old memories, some of them perhaps over 500, 1000, 1500 years old. Perhaps even older.

But still she felt like she recognized one of the minute figures on that painting. Although this was totally impossible she started to become dizzy. It looked like someone she saw not so long ago. It felt her brains started to melt. Someone she saw recently, very recently.

When her knees gave way and it appeared that someone turned the light off, she realized and remembered. The one in the painting was she same one she had seen this morning. In the mirror!

Next thing Lily noticed were a very concerned looking Alexandra and madam Pomfrey.

“You give us quite a fright, young lady”, the last one said, and she noticed she was not in her own bed, but lied in the hospital ward.

“What happened?” she asked.

“Don't you know? You are very ill. What is the last thing you do remember?”

Lily closed her eyes and thought...

“Stay with us Lily! Don't doze away again.”

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“I was just thinking! Mikey's exhibition. Yes, after a long day classes and teaching, Mikey Transgressia's paintings, at last.”

“That was over four days ago!”

“What's wrong with me?”

Lily tried to sit, but it felt like her limbs were icy cold, made of lead, and her head, felt light and semi-detached.

“As you are almost a semi-doctor I'll be straight and honest with you. Quite a bit. Besides dehydrated, hyper tension, kidney failure and a diabetes hypo, your heart beats very irregularly.”

“I've never been ill a day in my life, as far as I can remember.”

“That is also what your father wrote, nothing in your family!”

“What!”

“When you passed out, and didn't regain consciousness again quickly, we informed your family. Standard procedure. After they took all regular measures, Dumbledore and McGonagall pointed that you might be also one of the unusual cases we've seen this year. After Dumbledore placed you inside a protecting shield, you immediately started to improve. But in contrast to other students, it took quite some effort. He is resting now, but instructed me to tell you after you woke up, that like all other effected students, you have to practice occlumency as soon as possible.”

“But I feel horrible, weak.”

“That might also be the effect of being shielded, and all of the potions. I'll inform your parents about your current improved status. You'll be up-and-running by the end of the week.”



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Alexandra reached for her hand, “Martin will teach us how to do occlumency. He said I was already doing it without being aware of it.”

Before madam Pomfrey left, she said, “Before I sent that owl, I'll fetch Martin Steward. You need to practice enough before the Christmas holiday, otherwise you have to stay here.”

When Martin arrived, he looked concerned.

“This caused quite a shock through the entire school. All of the teachers now must learn, practice and when needed teach occlumency, and help students. Only Binns is excused. As a ghost there is little he can do.”

“Martin, you know that Alexandra is aware of our dream-class. I had such a horrible dream. I was with lots of other students in the main hall. We were all told to slice our wrists.

With some students only a tiny drop appeared, that transformed immediately into a rose. But with others, instead of blood only mud came out! And they became statutes. Petrified!”

Alexandra looked horrified, but Martin nodded. “That fits with our findings. We noticed that all of the students with those strange, unexplainable complaints, had a Muggle parent. In your case, both your parents are Muggles. So you got hit twice as hard. Concerning your dream, you know that some use a very uncivilized term when talking about Muggle-borne children: Mud-blood!”

“Who would do such a thing!” Alexandra asked.

“We are not quite sure. Only thing we can do right now is teaching occlumency to avoid the effect. You, as a pure-blood, have nothing to fear about, but as her best friend and the fact that you learned it almost yourself, we all consider it wise that

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you also learn it properly. Normally students get occlumency in the fifth year when they have opted for the subject of 'Defense-against-the-dark-arts'. All students do that for centuries.”

He looked at Lily and took a deep breath, “Are you up for the introductory speech?”

“Yes, please do, my head is much clearer now. Don't ask of me to run across the staircases, but yes, please continue.”

“Minerva asked me last week to teach it to all of our dream-class members. First the usual compulsory warnings: This spell, like any other cost energy. The stronger you make it or the longer it should last, the more it drains from you. If you make it to last too short, you'll be unprotected by the rest of the night. If you make it too light, too dense, it becomes useless. If you over-do it, well theoretically, you can block yourself permanently and you need another wizard to un-squibbify you. If you overload yourself too much, just like with any other spell, your can burn yourself away. Understood?”

Both girls nodded.

“I'll demonstrate first. Together with Albus we created a demonstration mode to the spell, so you can see what is happening. First you have to clear your mind completely, just like we do at a dream-session, Lily. Any strong emotion will render it useless. Then you start to build a tower around you, brick-by-brick. As you can see, I left some escape hatches.”

Slowly but surely a cylinder arose around Martin.

“Now neither of us can see each other, but you can still hear me. If I would use other sort of bricks, we could see each other, but not hear anything. Very useful in a train, when some of the other passengers are snoring, but tricky if you failed to hear

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alarm-bells going off. With other type's of 'bricks' can can block spells getting in, or getting out. Perhaps I should not have said that, but then you are making a prison around someone. That is why I always make an escape-hatch for myself. Just in case. Normally the shield, the tower or cylinder is invisible to the eye, and you can even make it invisible for wand-detection. As I said, you have to clear your mind as good as possible. Any lingering thoughts or unconscious feeling will make holes in the cement between the bricks, making it a useless exercise. There are all sorts of bricks, the more spells it should block, the 'heavier' they become. I would suggest you start with the simplest ones, just making it one yard high, so you can physically step out of them. Here is the spell and the list of all their variations.”

And with these words he gave them a parchment.

“I recognize the writing!” Lily said.

“Yes, it is from Slughorn, according to the ministry, he is one of the best Occlumense. All clear?”

“There is however one but... Are we allowed to use this outside school?”

“Yes, the ministry has excluded this spell from the prohibition of under-aged-sorcery, for the time being, I presume. And Muggles won't see the difference anyway.”

With the help of the professors, Lily recovered quickly enough and her friends helped her to master Occlumency well enough that she could get back home for the holiday. But instead of a tiring train journey, she was granted to return home through the grid of connected fireplaces.

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This time she was not only escorted by Alexandra, but also by Professor Dumbledore.

Although the Evans' were informed in advance, they were still quite overwhelmed. Margareth had witnessed twice professors leaving this way, but now her own daughter and her friend appeared this way.

When Dumbledore noticed the worried look on Henry's face, he said, “Specially as a doctor we understand your concern, but your daughter is fine now. I'll explain in a while.” And he looked in the direction of Lily's sister, who he obviously didn't want to include in the conversation.

After Petunia left with a sour face, Dumbledore continued, “I have to admit, for a moment it looked rather scary. She had all the symptoms combined of what we witnessed separately at other students. Thankfully it happened under my own eyes, so we could act quickly.”

Henry asked, “Please can you explain, was she really ill, or was this because of some spell or potion?”

But Lily explained herself, “It was both dad. Someone used spells to cause those illnesses or related symptoms. I now feel completely recovered.”

But nonetheless, did Henry want to examine Lily, and draw some blood for laboratory examination, that confirmed later on, that she was completely recovered.

## Gone wrong

Days before returning to school both girls received an express-owl. It read:

“Dear Alexandra, dear Lily,

We currently have an issue with some of our staff-members.

Some of the problems we can solve by reorganizing the assignments. As some teachers will take double shifts, we would be much obliged if you take some of the burden and help-out with some of the first-year's classes for Classical languages and Biology.

Please send reply after considering.

If you accept this for the rest of this year, you will be briefed as soon as possible. In that case please use the small amount of included Floo-powder, it will accommodate you to travel to the single fireplace of Hogwarts that is connected to the grid, the one in my study.

Kind regards,

Armando Dibbet, Head Hogwarts school of Magic and Wizardry

Albus Dumbledore, Deputy head, head of Gryffindor

Minerva McGonagall, Deputy head of Gryffindor,

Horrace Slughorn, head of Slytherin, former teacher biology”

Both girls looked at each other in utter amazement.

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“Did you notice the *former* part, in Slughorn's signature?”

“Indeed! I'll show it to my parents, if you don't mind.”

“No of course not. Please do, I wonder what they think about it!”

Lily let Henry and Margareth read the letter, but they could not add much to it.

“The only thing I can conclude is that some staff have left.

What do you think about it, this helping-out? Are you up to it? I mean facing first-year students? You are just fourth years students yourself! The material for Greek and Biology should not pose any problems, I think?”

Alexandra was the first to reply, “They've asked it before and I always declined. I don't have a problem with facing first-years, both of us are helping a lot, but teaching to other houses, and reviewing their test-paper's is something else. The heads of the houses were both always very much against it!”

And Lily added “And when it comes to bad evaluation's of test-papers, what is my position?”

Lily's mother, a teacher herself, said “If these are all your major considerations, write them in your reply. Your biggest advantage, compared with my position, is that you will be facing much more motivated students. I have some books about didactic, you can always ask me for advice or your uni-teacher, Miranda Dibbet!”

“Dad?”

“You have to consider several points. They wouldn't ask you if they didn't think you were up to it. It will give you invaluable experience. But beware that it won't come at the expensive of

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your own studying. If you decide to do this, than just for a short while, while they look for proper replacement.”

They wrote down their acceptance along with their main concerns, and returned the owls.

Next day, packed with some extra books, both girls were about to travel through the grid of the fireplaces again.

Lily said to her friend and her parents, “I feel as excited and nervous as the first time I went to Hogwarts.”

Alexandra replied, “So am I, Lily. Another huge step into the unknown.”

“Good luck girls, and write me if you know more, and how your first class was, at the other side of the desk!”

Lily stepped in the cold fireplace threw some of special powder and said “Hogwarts, Dibbet's office!” After the green flames were gone, so was she.

Margareth just said, needlessly, “look after each other!” and Alexandra followed her friend likewise.

At the other side of the grid, they only found Alexandra's aunt waiting for them.

As soon as both girls arrived, she fetched Dibbet, “Armando, the girls are here. Your show! But remember how I feel about it. They are not up to, for this.”

While approaching, they heard him saying, “Yes Minerva, I know, I know. They are just young students”

He invited them all to sit down. “Please be seated, Slughorn will be here in a minute, with some tea I hope.”

Moments later Slughorn and Dumbledore arrived.

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Instead of Dibbet, Dumbledore started to speak. “Excuse us ladies, for such brute ending of your holiday. But when I'm done explaining this all, we all hope you will understand.”

He looked at Dibbet, and continue.

“The point is, both Corstophine and Peatery are gone. As Corstophine was not only teacher Greek, but also head of Hufflepuf, Dibbet will be acting head of that house for the time being. With Peatery gone, Slughorn will replace him as teacher potions, leaving an empty place at Biology.”

“Sir, why did they leave? Is it something you can tell us?”

Much to their surprise Minerva started.

“Do you remember Nimue Maddox, Ravenclaw? She is in her sixth year now. Last year she joined our dream-class. The girl with the eating disorder!”

“Certainly!” Lily said, “what is wrong with her. What does it have to do with this situation?”

A moment later Alexandra added, “Wasn't that the girl that changed from wall-flower to Ravenclaw's beauty queen?”

Minerva replied, “Yes, that's the very one. No there's nothing wrong with her, but eh... Well you can not blame her, we all here are responsible, no, not you girls! Just some of us, of the staff. What do you still remember Lily?”

“Eh... Last year she joined our dream-class, but that was just for a single year, she didn't joined us this year. In her dreams she was instructed to stop eating, and old she was way too fat and ugly, that no-one would really like her. I was looking after Camilla and Ginger focused on Nimue.” The memory of Camilla's death still made her shiver.



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“Ginger told me that they had to work on to fronts, her self-esteem was blocking all other attempts to feed her.”

Finally Dibbet started, “Yes, that is how it started.” For a split second he looked at Alexandra. “The kiss Alexandra gave young Mr. Black in public after the contest triggered an idea. We hoped that some boy could help her. So, we asked most of the heads and teachers who might be able to help us. Someone believable, no hot-shot like Black, Potter or Malfoy, who are constantly in focus with all of us, girls, boys and staff, all for different reasons. Just before Samhain, we settled for Timothy Mascall, at that time a fifth year student from Hufflepuf. A young fellow attracting no-one's attention. Not bad, no high-flyer, a silent type, and just doing some extra work for Corstophine.”

Alexandra interrupted the head master. “I know Timothy! That is the guy who won the love-poem contest!”

“Yes, that is indeed the guy. We told him about the situation. At first he refused and told us he had not experience with girls. So we carefully maneuvered them having classes together, letting them doing all sorts of exercises together, apparently accidentally. We just asked him to pay some extra attention to her, making compliments, show some extra attentions. Slowly but surely he began to like his 'assignment', he even gave the suggestion about the poem-contest. We didn't even had to cheat with the outcome, you all have seen submissions! When he admitted that he had written it for her, Nimue, all ice was broken.”

Lily confirmed, “Near the end of the year they were the example of high-school-sweet-hearts.”

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Minerva added, “From our point of view, we had succeeded to achieve all objectives. She knew for certain that she was liked and loved, and was looking much better after herself. The end of the issue, at least we thought so.”

“So?”

“As you might remember we gave Hufflepuf at the end of the year fifty points bonus for helping other houses in general and some specific students, without mentioning Timothy, although he knew it was just about him. So we thought all went well, but...”

“But?”

“But it went on a bit too far. This year Nimue blossomed and start to fly like a butterfly, from one flower to the next. Just like many other boys and girls. So we saw no harm, on the contrary.... We saw in this behaviour the proof that the changed we worked on for Nimue was permanent, and that she had some catching-up to do.”

After she wiped her tears away, she continued, “Initially we monitored them both closely, though the majority of our attention was given to Nimue. When we noticed she was doing so very well, we felt confident that we could focus on other important events. Beginning of the year is always troublesome.”

Here Dumbledore continued.

“I'm not sure if you remember it, or even heard about it, some time ago there was an accident in the potions laboratory...”

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Lily confirmed, “Yes I do, some bottles and cauldrons were not safe enough or so. One of our lessons was skipped because of it. They were waiting for cauldrons with thicker bottom.”

“That is so, it was a sixth year class, preparing more dangerous potions, like LD, liquid death, and others. Some days later, after all had been recovered, Timothy asked permission to visit his parents, off-schedule, he said he had obtained his first 'out-standing'. Because of this, and what he had done for us before I granted that permit without any hesitation. It was then that he told his parents that he was dating a head-turner.”

“A what?” Dibbet asked.

Lily sighed, “I know the phrase. They use it to 'classify' girls. If they pass you, they turn their head to look again.”

“Oh, so. I heard from his parents that they found him changed since he returned for the previous summer holiday, more mature, determined, apparently with an obtainable goal in life, to live for. Timothy never told them that she had dumped him shortly after the start of the next year.”

Alexandra became pale and put her hand to her face, “oh no!”

Dumbledore nodded silent and sadly.

“Next day on the Hogwarts Express they found a student at the end point, who did not get off at our station. It sometimes occur when they forget about the protecting spell on the long bridge and the fall asleep. But young Timothy wasn't asleep. He just wouldn't wake up anymore, because he had no goal to live for anymore, just a reason to die for.”

Slughorn continued, “In a farewell letter to us he wrote he caused the commotion in the lab to be able to get a bottle of L.D. undetected outside. That is what he used on himself. Liq-

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uid Death. He also wrote that he knew, that for Nimue it was just a puppy-love and he was glad and grateful for being there to help her along with her life, but for him it was much more. When he realized she became totally out of reach, he wrote that he just couldn't cope anymore. He thanked us for the opportunity for a final goodbye to his parents and asked not to tell the students, particular not Nimue.”

“Now you can understand why Peatery left, he blamed himself for letting slipping such dangerous potion as Liquid Death out of his lab. Of course he wasn't to blame, but he left without a trace. Another loss for our school, he had such a career here ahead of him.”

“Professor! I think it was just a final drop for Peatery.”

“Why do you say so, Alexandra?

“He told us he was leaving anyway. He said he would go to mainland of Europe. To become a chef.” Dibbet shook his head. “Brilliant student, one of the best aurors ever, a stimulating, motivating teacher here, and finally a cook! Well we are glad that Horace Slughorn said he would take over the position of potion-master. But that he could not combine it with being a Bio teacher. Hence....”

McGonagall continued, “And professor Corstophine blames himself for choosing Timothy. He thought he knew him quite well, stimulating to participate. He is still here, we think, but no-one have seen or spoken him since.”

With big eyes Lily looked at Alexandra. This responsibility for students, obviously sometimes a heavy burden, was an aspect of being a teacher that they never had thought about.

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Dibbet seemed to have guessed her thoughts, “It seems easy to say, *'don't let that trouble you too much'*, but it is more the burden of the heads of departments and the school. Teachers often change from position or even between schools. And every year we have to say goodbye to students who graduate. Even that is not easy when you worked with them closely and seeing them grow from eleven year old child until they are eighteen year old adult. Loosing students halfway is horrible, whatever the reason is. When they move, it is a disappointment, when they get ill or have an accident, that is extremely sad. But this? Indescribably sad.”

He sighed and remained silent for a while, thinking about all the students he had lost while being the head of the school.

Then he tried to concentrate on something positive. “I received your reply and we totally agree with you. A major point is to be above all houses, not favouring one above another, or showing resentment about another house. Much more difficult will be keeping your distance. When you stand at the other side of the desk, you are the teacher, not one of 'the-other-students'. Be friendly, nice and open, but never too friendly. Remember to keep your distance. You both are competent enough to help out in all years, but it will become very difficult for you maintaining order in a class with older students, we fear. Next Saturday we will announce the absence of two of our staff, and that two of our own students will act as assistants while we still supervise it all and still hold all responsibilities. It is only four hours a week, twice a combined class, until the end of the year. Horrace will help you Lily, while Minerva will help Alexandra. If you run into any problems, with either the lesson material, students in general in class or if your own fellow students treat

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you, contact us immediately. Likewise, if you feel you run into troubles with your own lessons, tell me, and I will sort it out. Your only change in status or permissions, is that you will be allowed to enter the room reserved for teachers, used for coffee breaks and meetings. And even that is hardly ever respected by most students. So I would suggest, unless you have any pending questions, to come along to the teachers room, where I will clarify your changed status to the rest of the staff.”

There, the absence of two of their college's, one of them the head of Hufflepuf, and the tragic death of a student had left the traces on all of them. The study had the atmosphere of a waiting room at a graveyard.

When Dibbet announced that he had found a solution for the rest of the year, all teachers hopefully looked up. Seeing two young but familiar faces was a huge relief for all of them. Like a possible way out of an awkward situation.

They were both welcomed with a round of applause.

Professor McGonagall however pointed out: “We are all very, very grateful for their help. Please forget all of our little bickering and prejudices. Some of us have a tendency with the arrival of new colleges to wipe their own desk clear, and transfer many chores to the newcomers. These two need all of our help as professional teachers. I'll keep a close eye on my niece and her friend.”

As Dibbet had told, he was going to inform the students about the tragic events. Next Saturday, most of the students arrived with the 'Hogwarts Express'.

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Shortly before the joined opening meal, Dibbet and McGonagall came to see Lily and Alexandra.

“We came to ask if you still stand with your decision. If you have second thoughts, please say so now, before I make the announcements. All of the staff appreciate what you are doing, but we understand if you think you are not up to it.”

Alexandra put up her most bravest face, “I think that I can speak for both of us. Yes, we are scared stiff, that we are not up to it, that we are not good enough, not able to maintain order. But we are Gryffindor, so that means we continue anyway!”

Extremely proud, Minerva said, “In that case your place is at our table, just this one time, I presume.”

Neither of the girls had ever thought about that. The high table, reserved for only the staff! When Lily looked at Alexandra, Dibbet asked again. “Yes, you should sit there, among the other teachers. Are you still sure?”

Lily thought what her class-mates would say or think.

Smilingly, she answered, “Yes, I'm sure. I'm ready”

“In that case come now to our teachers-common-room.”

Moments later, the students from Hufflepuf, Gryffindor, Slytherin and Ravenclaw gathered in the main hall, finding a seat at their own house-table.

At the Hufflepuf table one seat remained empty, one that would stay empty but at that moment, Timothy's friends were simply thinking that he had missed his train or was delayed by other reasons and would join them a little later. Several students at the Gryffindor table were looking for friends.

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James asked his friend, “Sirius, do you know where the girls are? When they were not on the train, I assumed Miranda or so would bring them to Hogwarts’s train station. But they were there not either. Have you heard of Alexandra?”

“Last thing I heard of either, is that they were staying at Lily's parents. That's all. They must have missed the train, understandably with that horrible weather. I wonder how and when they will come to the castle.”

Their questions were quickly answered, when they noticed them among the teachers arriving, Lily and Alexandra walking between Minerva McGonagall and Albus Dumbledore.

Sirius pointed at the teachers-table, “Merlin's beard! Did you see...”

When his classmates followed his finger, noticing two students among the teachers, whispering and gossiping started at the Gryffindor table.

Filch got up and said, “Please be seated all and listen, our head master has some announcements.”

When all students were finally seated and silent, Dibbet got up.

“Thank you Archus. For those who left for home, welcome back.” He looked at the teachers-table, and transferred his gaze to the Hufflepuf-table.

“Indeed I have some announcements to make, some sad ones that will impact one house more than others, and two that effects most of us.”

He put on his graves face.

“A couple of weeks ago, a very sad accident has happened. This means that the Hufflepuf students will miss one of their



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house-mates. Those in their sixth year will have to go on without Timothy Mascal. Our staff and his parents have exchanged condolences. Sad but true. He will be missed. Please one moment silence to commemorate him.”

Silently Dibbet took a step backwards and bowed his head.

Surprised and shocked faces at the Hufflepuf table, but no-one said a word.

A decent pause later, Dibbet continued.

“Two of our staff will not return either. Professor Peatery has resigned and left. Potions will be taken over by professor Slughorn. Also, Greek and Latin will no longer be given by professor Corstophine. For the time being, I'll take over as head of Hufflepuf.”

Massive whispering started on all tables, as many students knew both professors.

“Some of their colleges can, temporarily, take over some of their lessons, but we still had some problems for the rest of this year. As you all know, some students learn faster than others, and we also have our accelerated learning program. Some of them are rewarded each year with additional points for the house cup. You all know who they are. These two have already finished all Hogwarts material and passed even their exams, and continued beyond. The entire staff of Hogwarts is extremely proud that miss Evans will be assisting Slughorn. She will give Biology in the lower classes.”

When Lily got up, all the jaws of the Gryffindor students dropped, which got unnoticed in the round of applause that

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started with the teachers, and was taken over by the rest of the students.

“The other student helping not only our staff, but also the Hogwarts students, is miss McGonagall, professors McGonagall's niece. She has proved beyond any doubt that she can continue the lessons in Latin and Greek. She also will focus on the lower classes, while her aunt will help students facing their exams.”

Another round of applause filled the main hall when Alexandra got up.

Dibbet continued. “As I said before, their knowledge of Biology, Greek and Latin is such that they could very well teach even in the seventh years, but that would cause all sorts of conflicting situations. And before some of your parents will start sending nasty letters, this is all in full acknowledgment and agreement with the ministry. So no problem with that. However, both ladies are young and miss many years of teaching-experience, if any other student will cause problems at their classes, punishment will be ten-fold. If you really have to try to be funny or otherwise, I suggest you do that at other lessons if you care about the house-cup or dread cleaning lavatories, or chores in the forbidden forest. So all of the classes will continued as scheduled.”

He looked at the empty dishes, “Now you see that even tragic events can lead to something good. Let us be hopeful for the future and enjoy our dinner.”

## Ending illusions

After Dibbet's warning, all students behaved extremely well. Alexandra was the first to face junior students, first years. They all sat waiting in anticipation, wondering what lessons, given any another student would look like. But When Alexandra arrived, she was accompanied by her aunt and Lily. With a single word, the latter two walked to the back of the classroom sitting on the final row.

With a faint smile, slightly nervous, Alexandra started, “Hello, as you heard from Dibbet, I'll fill in for the time being. As you all know, I'm no professor, yet I hope, you can just call me by my name, Alexandra. It will take some time for me to remember all the name correctly. And please raise your hand before asking.

The subject-material will not change, Greek remains Greek and Latin also remains the same. She picked up her copy of the Illyad. I understand that Corstophine was at page 72?”

She looked at a girl in the class.

“Yes, that is so, Alexandra.”

“Well, although the grammars remained the same for centuries, all teachers have their own study-material. I think I have something more to your likings.”

With her wand, Alexandra raised a pile on thin books, and send one to each student. When Minerva and Lily received their copy, her aunt started to grin.

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When she opened her comic-book, it looked like any other comic-book, except for the balloons with dialogues. They were not in English, but in Latin.

Lily softly whispered, “Now I know what she spent her time on the last couple of days.”

Minerva replied, “Yes, she has put quite some effort into it. But according to her, it will make those ancient stories more appealing to young students. She told me that she had three objectives: her first one was to get students more attracted to the old stories, secondly enlarging their vocabulary, and finally proper grammar. Totally different from any other teacher, I can give you that.”

At the end of the lesson, Alexandra had to use her wand, to stop the students from reading, warning them not to be late for their next lesson, after giving them a fair share of lists of words, that would help them with the next lesson.

Lily and Minerva walked to Alexandra, still behind her desk. She looked exhausted.

Minerva gave her a well-earned compliment, “Well done, girl! I am really impressed.”

“Phew! I never realized that it would be that hard! I was so afraid that they might be calling me a fraud, an imposter! What do you think, and please be honest with me, don't spare me any critics. I don't ask for compliments, I'm willing to learn from my mistakes, probably millions, but those students were perhaps too afraid to misbehave!”

Lily looked surprised at her friend, but Minerva nodded and thought for a while, while she reached for her notes she had been making. Something Lily had not even noticed.

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“You are ready for the full and ugly truth? You are certain, girl? Brace yourself then!”

Alexandra sighed deep, “I've asked for it, so give it to me. I'll hope I can use it for my next teaching session, if I'm allowed and fit to do so...”

With a glimmer in her eyes, Minerva started.

“Well then, I'll give you the same report and advise, that Dumbledore and Dippet wanted to know, because next, I'll have to report back to them. No, it was not flawless. But, the idea of swapping a dull textbook by a comic book is priceless. Their limited amount of vocabulary was compensated by the pictures, so they all understood what the story was about. I skimmed through the next chapters and noticed you increased the number of words each time, probably including all the words you will give them as homework. You had their full attention from the very first second until the end of your class. You almost had to kick them out. Further, you observed each of the students while they were reading. You didn't stay behind the safety of your desk, but walked constantly through the class, helping once in a while someone.”

“What did I do wrong then?”

“I don't think it is wise to let your students call you by your first name. That is something you should do between equals. You are their teacher, they are your pupils. You have a responsibility. No matter that you are a student yourself, here and now you are their teacher. You should not seek their approval, friendship or sympathy, you must earn their respect!”

“Point taken, but that's something I can not change anymore. What next?”

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“All teachers must always prepare for their next lesson, but by using different, your own material, it will cost extra time, it will cost you dearly. Can you afford that? Does that come at the expense of your own classes?”

“It served a double purpose. I based it on my own O.U.-project for popularizing old texts. I've discussed it with my own tutor, Margaret Potter. She agreed and even helped me finding a proper comic book about Odysseus. Next?”

“No, not really. Did you see anything to comment on, Lily?”

“Sorry, no. Your textbook got my full attention. I was completely absorbed, like all of your students.”

Alexandra looked amazed, “Is that really all? I had the impression I did thousands of things wrong, made silly mistakes. That being a teacher required all sorts of magical skills I obviously still lack and have to learn for ages.”

But the old seasoned aunt comforted her niece. “I'm afraid I have to end that illusion. The whole magic is that you have acquired some skills, and that your pupils lack. The other is that you have their undivided attention. We as teachers might know more about our own subject, but we can not learn our pupils anything at all. They must do the learning on their own. Perhaps we can raise their interest, their motivation. With 'spells', 'Potions' or 'Transfiguration' that is easy enough. With Greek or Latin, it is nearly impossible, but you succeeded with flying colors. Again well done!”

Likewise, Alexandra and Slughorn witnessed the lessons given by Lily. In the first class, they both attended, observing Lily as she stood also in front of her class.

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“Good morning class. I'm stepping in for professor Slughorn, he is filling in the empty position since professor Peatery has left. My name is Evans.” At that point Lily wrote on the board behind her with clear writing: 'Miss Evans'.

“No, I'm not a professor, but I did pass my exams for this specific subject some years ago and attend university while I'm still here a Gryffindor student for my own other subjects. However, Gryffindor students will find that in this particular case, it will not be an advantage. Biology will be given to all students the first three years. After that it is a subject that you can optionally choose. Or drop. You might consider it a boring Muggle subject, just like History. Even for fresh students like you, it is obvious that the history of magic and the magical world is interwoven with the history of the Muggle world. Many important facts of our world led to changes in the Muggle world, and the other way round. The battles and argues of wizards and witches were the main reason for the collapse of Muggle empires. But also the other way round, changing demography and Muggle religion has led to huge changes in the Magical world. Forming of governing organizations, not just our government and our Ministry of Magic, but also foreign ones and broader ones are related. So it is possible but ludicrous, especially for those subjects, to choose one subject, but discard the other one.”

Lily noticed that some students looked doubtful. She looked at one at the first row, “You wanted to say or ask something, Deoiridh?”

The girl blushed for a moment, because of the attention.

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“Sort of, miss Evans. I always thought that our ministry of magic was the organization that effectively ruled our country. But I heard from my father, who works at the ministry that its head, the minister was summoned abroad. Is that one of the 'broader organizations' you just mentioned. I always believed we were an independent state? But I presume you can not tell us more about that?”

Lily smiled at the memory.

“Yes, I can. A couple of years ago I received an invitation from that Council. Funny that you mentioned it. Almost all countries and regions are represented there. But is old, very old. From the Hellenistic times. That council does not recognize silly borders, the raise, and demise of countries and states. Now, half-way through the twentieth century, the Muggle world knows three power-blocks, USA, USSR, and China. When you go back in time, it was France, England, Spain, Holland and so on. Our country, France, Lithuania, Greece, and Egypt have permanent seats on that council. Some countries, like Holland, have so little wizards, that their seats remained empty. The USSR is not represented, although some believe that it won't exist in fifty years or so. We are independent, but bound by the council's decisions.”

“You were there?”

“Yes, I even met our minister there, just briefly. He didn't look comfortable. Something to do with a dark magic or so.”

When Lily looked at the rest of the class, she felt that something had changed. The atmosphere. At the beginning of the class, it was a bit noisy, challenging, waiting in anticipation. But now it was just awe, deep respect that a teacher that looked



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so very young, knew things and had met people that were obviously restricted to a very small circle of people. Much more than met the eye.

“But returning to my own subject, realize, that many, many other subjects, like 'Potions', 'Tending magical creatures' and others require knowledge of how the living world works. You simply needed this, if you want to understand what you are doing at other, more magical subjects. And if you want to succeed with more than just '*Acceptable*' for them, stick with this subject and pay attention. Needless to say, if you are interested in tending, healing or curing in either Magical or Muggle world, this subject is essential. But besides that, with Biology you might learn about the beauty and diversity of the living world.”

Lily pointed her wand at a single sunflower in a vase, fired a range of spells at it, changing it into over a dozen different commonly known and exotic plants and flowers, finally ending with a lily.

“So much about me. Now you. I need to find out how much you already know, so I can determine where to pick up. I do know where in the book you *should* be, but if you have been reading ahead, I'm wasting your and my time by repeating that. On the contrary, if I'm skipping material, we'll have to repeat it later on, while struggling through the next chapters. So I borrowed from the university a game, it is a huge collection of cards with questions. I want each of you, one-by-one come forward, pick a card, read the question out loud. If you know the answer, you'll get a bonus point. If you don't, we'll discuss it with the whole class. If anyone can come up with a solution, it is the turn for the next student. Otherwise give the card to me and I'll save it for later on in my class.”

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As to be expected the cards resulted in a challenge between the different houses. Long before she ran out of cards, the class was over.

“Well then, Ravenclaw won, Slytherin second, Hufflepuf third, and Gryffindor fourth. You all witnessed this was a fair game. Next time, please study herbology, the chapter about photosynthesis. See you next time!”

While Lily cleaned up her desk, Slughorn said to Alexandra, “She is a real clever young one, that friend of yours. The entire class was thinking she was just doing a nice quiz. Even I thought so, but finally, I noticed she was doing a test-paper in disguise. Most students think that Biology is just a Muggle subject, needed for their Muggle-exam, but the idea of involving magic to Biology is a refreshing idea.”

“Did you notice the change in the class in the beginning?”

“That's another brilliant move. Perhaps not planned as such, but by the end of the day, when the word has passed from one class to another, they all know they Lily is not just-a-student but walks and talks with people that matter in our world.”

Alexandra always sat in the back-row when Lily was facing her class, just like she did with her class. Afterward, they always discussed how their class went on. She noticed that the next couple of classes, Slughorn was also there, one time accompanied by Dumbledore, but later on, they stayed away.

With another month approaching its end, it was time for the girls for another set of test-papers under the supervision of their tutors, Margaret and Miranda. The nature of the subjects, for both girls, had been changing since the start of the new year.

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Alexandra concentrated more on the (possible) background of certain scripts and plays, and looked at possible alternative endings or extensions of existing material.

Lily's material also had changed. She had concluded all of Anatomy, and was facing two totally different chains of subjects. One was a rehearsal and deepening of botany, while on the other hand she was given a lengthy overview of known illnesses and possible remedies, with proven positive or negative results through the ages.

At the end of a day, full of papers, Lily looked worn out, something they all noticed. “Anything wrong, Lily? Going too fast? We made an agreement that whatever troubled you, you would be honest.”

“Yes, I do remember that, I'm just not sure. All day I have a vague feeling that I'm missing something, That I'm forgetting something, that I have to do something, but I haven't a clue what it might be. Missing cases, or a book that I should have been studying with a lost chapter or so.”

Miranda nodded, “I won't be the botany. But 'cases and treatments' are huge and vague. Mind and body can play unimaginable tricks. Patients can come to you with pretty clear symptoms, easy diagnosis, and treatment, but still, there might be something totally different at hand. Of course not something like a broken leg or an infection, but more vague complaints, like pain, fever, itch, digestion, respiratory. Your mind can trick your body so well, that you got exactly the same symptoms, but with different causes. Hence medication and treatment won't work if you came up with the wrong diagnosis.”

From the looks, it was obvious they needed some explanation.

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“For instance, if a patient is complaining about the loss of vision, deteriorated eyesight, 'seeing things double', one of the first steps to take is the examination of the eye itself. If you detect something that comes close with pre-recorded cases, one might jump to the conclusion that this will probably also the same cause, and the same treatment is the first thing that comes to mind. However, the eye is only a single part responsible for what we call 'vision'. To the eye, many nerves are connected spreading to certain parts of the brain, in this case, the rear of the brain. It could very well be that there is something hindering the nerves so that the information got stuck or altered when it travels through the nerves. When that is well, it could also be there is something wrong with the visual-cortex, or the most complicated possibility is that we perceive it differently. And to complicate things even more, its is hardly ever the case of good-or-bad, but mostly of slightly deteriorating, up to a level where people start noticing it and start to complain. And mostly it is a combination of causes. For instance, we now know that diabetics can have negative effects on the physical eye. When you treat that, the symptoms will be back shortly, because you treated consequence, not the cause.”

All remained silent for a while, to think it over.

Then Alexandra asked, “Excuse me for asking something stupid, but there is something I can not see...”

“Seems the right subject!”

Alexandra looked first at Miranda, but then turned to Margaret. “You see, since the first time I met you, I started wondering about something, and it still comes back, but I never dared to ask because of its insignificance.”

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“What then?”

“I know you master the craft of magic very well Margaret, better than the average witch. I presume, including healing...”

“Thank you, Alexandra, however, I expect a 'but'?”

“Indeed! Lately, I noticed that your husband dropped his glasses and one of you used magic to repair them.”

“So what? I've also repaired James' glasses uncountable times over and over. I presume the both of you can do the same.”

“Yes, but why do they still wear glasses? Couldn't you do something about the eye-lenses, eye-muscles or eye-nerves? Then your son or husband wouldn't even need glasses anymore! Ever.”

Silently, the clock ticked some seconds away.

“Clever thinking, girl,” Miranda replied, “However, there is even something else to consider, namely what a patient says or wants.

Edward and James hate their glasses, especially when it rains or when they get fogged. But they also find it makes them interested, looking distinguished, learned. And for vanity isn't a cure yet.”

Before they all burst out laughing, Alexandra could only respond with a single word, becoming her expletive: 'Men!', causing even more laughter.

The girls' regular visits to Margaret and Miranda had an unofficial, but fixed schedule, they arrived on Friday and had plenty time to discuss any urgent matters with regards to the upcoming test-paper. The examination itself was normally scheduled

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for Saturday and it was only because Lily had to do also some practical test, that they moved the examination to the first day. The first part of the morning, Miranda and Edward needed their time for changing one of the spare-rooms into a fully equipped O.R. Last night Miranda had informed her, “Tomorrow we are going to operate a real living animal, a rabbit. I'm going to remove its appendix, and you are going to assist the first time. Then, if you feel you are up to it, you may repeat the procedure on a second one. No matter how wise and learned a student is, cutting a living creature open, seeing real blood and being responsible for its well-being is something completely different. We made it compulsory for any students to practice this. I'm pretty sure that it won't pose any problem for you...”

However, this practicum went totally different than anyone might have expected. After Miranda was ready with checking all required drugs and equipment for monitoring heart-rate, blood-pressure and oxygen-saturation, the prof and the student prepared themselves.

“The procedure we are going to follow, is almost a routine handling on humans, mostly performed by assistants under the supervision of a real surgeon. For students we always use pigs, for lots of experiments, because in many respects they resemble humans. Now I use a rabbit, as pigs don't have an appendix. There is quite a number of students who have difficulties with this. Nothing they should be ashamed of, it only limits their career opportunities. After they sedated the animal, shaved cleaned and sterilized that area, Miranda took the scalpel. And asked, “Are you ready?”

After a firm confirmation, she made the first cut.

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Immediately, Lily made sure that none of the blood was hindering the view.

“For beginning students, it is tempting to make longer incisions than strictly required. Why should you not do that?” she asked Lily, while carefully made new incisions.

“Firstly, you increase the risk if cutting something else, extra loss of blood, patience discomfort, and more work in the end: you have to stitch every back together again.”

It became quickly clear to Miranda, that her student belonged to the group not having problems with the sight and smell of blood. After she clamped off a part of a seemingly useless part of the intestine, she led Lily cut it off and stitch the wound.

Meanwhile, one of the neighboring farmers phoned Edward. They needed help. While exploring the hillsides, one of the horses got scared, tripped crossing a brook and broke a leg. The neighbor was aware that the horse had to be put down, but waited for Edward, who owned the animal. The farmer apologized, knowing the horse's fate was inevitable but wasn't able to do it without Edwards consent. Sadly he asked Miranda if she could do anything for the horse. She looked skeptically, knowing that a horse anatomy did not allow for those animals to lie down, like most others animals. That, and the fact that broken legs can not stand the pressure caused by the weight of the horse, are normally the reason to quicken the inevitable result.

Tension and atmosphere were such that words weren't needed. Miranda asked, “Edward, would you mind if Lily and I would have a look at your horse? I can not promise anything, though.

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“Please do! Healing was never one the subjects with best outcome for Margaret and me. I'll take care that the Muggles are gone.”

Little later they were confronted with a difficult situation.

Clearly the horse was suffering from much pain, but Miranda explained, “I could easily take the pain away completely, what that would lead to much worse. Now the pain avoids the horse standing up, and put its full weight on it. If I divert the pain, she feels no restriction and the injury will become even worse.”

“What can we do, then?”

“Three things, and also simultaneously. I will slowly reduce the pain, you must use a spell to put the horse to sleep, while Edward must lift the horse.”

She looked at him. “That is quite something else than a simple “Wingardium Leviosa” applying to a feather, not?”

“And then what?”

“We have to bring her to the barn near Edward's house. There we can have a look at the horse's leg.”

The horse felt instinctive that the humans were trying to help her and it was soothed by Lily and Miranda. Slowly but steadily they let its consciousness slip away, while Edward made sure that the injuries didn't increase, by reducing its weight, and finally let the body of the horse slightly hovering.

Miranda looked at Lily, “Before I any healing can take place, we should exactly know what is wrong and where the fracture is located. But regardless how well Edward was able the room we were working in this morning, I doubt that he can get us an X-ray device.”



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Edward looked doubtfully, but Lily replied, “You don't need to. She got a number of nasty bruises, but her leg is just broken at two spots, here and here!” And with her finger, she pointed to an area on the mare's left fore leg.

“How sure are you?”

“Without any doubt, but it needs to be repositioned a bit.”

She took some splints, held it tightly and looked at Miranda.

Pointing with her wand exactly at the spot Lily had appointed, Miranda said “Ferula!”

Lily nodded slowly, “Can you do something about the bruises?”

“I think so, yes. Where?”

Lily pointed elsewhere, “there, there and also there and there.”

Miranda started with an “Episkey!” but then turned to Lily.

“It is ridiculous that I'm doing this! You know this better than I do. Don't you think, Edward?”

He nodded, and said, “Draw your wand, Lily. The ministry can not distinguish who is casting these spells here.”

Glowing with pride she drew her wand and did several healing spells.

Looking at Edward, she said, “How will you explain this to your neighbor?”

“I'll tell his that the horse had extensive bruises, from which she will be recovering, and I'll thank him extensively for not putting her down. That and the relief of the good outcome will make sure he won't give it a second thought.”

“And you won't have to lie about it, she had many bruises.”

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“By the way, Lily. Today you were involved in two cases of surgery, how do you feel about what you have done? I mean, compared to the healing you've done before.”

She thought about it for quite awhile. “Both feel good because of the outcome, but are completely incomparable. What I've done before was just magic and completely on intuition. On the other hand, the surgery we performed this morning was entirely and strictly according to what I've learned of Muggle medicine. And the horse with the broken leg that is something in between. I knew and understood what was wrong, and was able to use magic to heal. The best of both worlds. It's a pity that is probably unobtainable in the Muggle world.”

That remark started Edward to think about something, but Lily had to wait many years to find out about his brilliant solution to help people from either world.

When Margaret came along, she could see on her husband face, that everything had turned out better than expected. One of his animals was saved.

“I have tea ready, when you are. How about it?”

“I'll stay here for awhile, with Miranda. As soon as she wakes up again, we'll join you.”

Thus Margaret and Lily walked back to the living room.

“And Lily, how's your quest going on? Do you know anything more about the key? Or aren't you allowed to speak about it.”

“I searched our library upside down several times, But of everyone who ever gets mentioned in that ancient period, Hecate is the least known, it seems.

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She was a descendant of one of the Titans, respected by Zeus, and was allowed to dwell in the underworld, the realm of his brother Hades. There is only one person we know, to publicly worship her, Medea, of others there are no records, although we have found specific rites and prayers. Especially here in England, Wales, and Scotland.”

“In that case, we could search through some of my papers, I've been investigating Medea for quite a while, but on different subjects.”

“If you could spare me the time, yes, please.”

“For the rest, there were some references to the objects she carries in some pictures. Most of the people always regarded them as symbolic items, but I received one of them, the key, in Athens. And professor Binns showed me that I was carrying a second one, an endless piece of rope, for ages with me, without even knowing I did. That gave me the inclination to look for the third one, a small dagger. According to the tales it had the power to cut through illusions.”

“I presume you don't have a description of that dagger?”

“It was never clearly painted, and mostly differently. Why?”

“Many musea hold lots of excavated object, that are normally not on display.”

“I know, I'm thinking about going to back to Athens. Many museums there.”

“But don't forget that many objects can be found in a foreign museum. Even in London, they have many objects that the Greek people want back.”

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She pointed with her hand towards her study, “Actually even I have some parts, things we dug up at Thebe. Eventually, they will be transferred to Oxford when I'm done with them, although I'm quite sure that they do not appreciate some of them. Lots of pots and vases, some scriptures, some pages of Medea's own writing, plates, armor jewelry, a piece of her cauldron. Unfortunately we never found her wand. Can you imagine what that could tell us.”

Suddenly Lily got an idea.

“If I show you the key, would you know if you have ever seen something with the same printing?”

“Perhaps, probably, I have a good memory for pictures.”

Without saying anything further, Lily got the key from under her robe, and put it on the table, between Margaret and her.

When Margaret's eye fell on it, she shivered, like most people did when they were confronted with it. She could touch it, but was not able to turn it upside down.

“That object holds more magic than the entire Hogwarts castle. Can you turn it upside down. It seems it has a will of its own, and won't let me turn it.”

With a simple gesture, Lily flipped it with a single finger. On the back of the key they saw some strange symbols and words in an unknown language.

“Does that ring a bell? Seen it before, perhaps”

With a strange look in her eyes, Margaret viewed Lily.

“Yes girl. Yes I did. On the most splendid thing I've ever recovered. I thought, well, I still think, it was the object that Medea used to kill her own children as revenge on her husband.”

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Like in a trance Margaret walked to her study, and returned minutes later, with a small wooden box in her hand. She placed it on the table and opened it. Inside was a protecting cloth.

With one hand Margaret uncovered it, and with the other hand she moved the box towards Lily. With a flat voice she said, “Take it, it is yours obviously. It was the very first object I ever found. And now it seems I was destined to pass it on to you.”

Without looking, Lily realized that Margaret was right.

Hecate's dagger lay in front of her. The objects were together again, but why, with which purpose? She still was as clueless as before. What did she had to do? What was she now capable of doing that she could not have done before? She didn't know.

“Is there anything you found about either objects?”

“Some vague references. And old article talked about 'the philosophers stone' and compared it with the stone of recurrence. There it was said that, though exceptionally powerful and well crafted, it was insignificant compared to the recurrence stone made by Medea, who longed to see her children again. That is all!”

A second later, she added, “This dagger should be used as protection against illusions, dis-illusions, not against dreams or against living beings.”

## **Life without living, dead without dying**

The leaves on the calendar seemed to disappear as quickly as they re-appeared on trees and bushes. Much too the dismay of the other students of the dreaming-class, Lily was often discussing teaching related subjects with Minerva and other professors.

Along with other colleges they were reviewing test-papers Latin, Greek, Botany and Anatomy. Lily felt slightly uncomfortable with the results. There was no single 'troll', 'poor' or even just 'acceptable'.

“Does it mean the tests-questions were too easy?”

“No, they are about the same as those of previous years. I think that most of your pupils understand that it is harder for you, than for them. Some of them remember very well the warnings given at the beginning of the year, so they don't dare forgetting homework or doing mischief in your lessons. Or perhaps a much younger teacher is some sort of an encouragement for them. Time will tell. Right now you are envied by your older colleges, even by Slughorn.”

“So you all agree, we can put the list with results on the boards?”

“Do so! They will be glad for several reasons: They never had their tests reviewed so quickly, and they will rejoice it's outcome. It will compensate for other subjects. And exalted spirits is very appropriate at the Ostara-party this weekend, when we celebrate the Spring equinox.

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As was expected, the results for Biology, Greek and Latin caused quite a stir. Some students could not believe their own eyes and returned several times to check if the result was still the same. “All of these months, I never had something above 'acceptable' and now I got an 'outstanding', I'll send an owl to my parents straight away! They will be delighted.”

Most staff regarded such remarks as juvenile cheap-talk, but it turned out differently. Next Wednesday both girls were invited for a meeting with other staff members. Dumbledore asked them to come some minutes earlier.

When they walked to the teachers-room, Lily said “Unbelievable that we are allowed in, and even got invited.”

“Indeed! Not that long ago we avoided this area!”

After entering the room, they found Dumbledore, Slughorn and McGonagall waiting for them.

“I'm glad you came earlier as I asked. We have such meetings regularly. It give us the opportunity to gossip about the students. Some of the meeting however is about you. Let me briefly tell you that we are all very pleased and satisfied with the results. We hope you will consider to continue your effort.”

Slowly, one by one other teachers arrived. After all were seated, Dibbet opened the meeting.

“My fellow colleges. To avoid unneeded gossiping I added some extra point to our agenda. Of course we will be discussing some students that need our attention, but first we have to discuss the situation about our two youngest teachers. At the beginning of the trimester I warned all students that any penalty for miss-behaving would be multiplied ten-fold. I presume that it have worked, because I never had to put this warn-

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ing into practice. Neither did I receive any complains from a student.

That is, with regards to these two subjects. We have however still a situation at hand. We did receive messages from students, parents, and indeed some from the ministry. Some, or to be honestly most, were in praise for handling the awkward situation we had found ourselves in. Right now I can admit that we initially got approval for appointing Evans and young McGonagall as teachers, though they were very skeptical and doubtful, but gave permission after I declared my full support and backing. It seems that several parents have been writing the ministry. Their attitude changed through 'slightly positive', 'encouraging' til 'blatant success'."

Both girls felt totally embarrassed by the compliments, when some of the other teachers congratulated them, Alexandra replied, "This was only possible with all the support from all of you. Every time we asked for help, any of you would be there to assist us."

"Even though that might be the case, there are some other sides we have to consider. There is no point in postponing or denying some other effects." Dibbet looked tired.

"All of us are grateful for the effort you have put into and the result it clearly gives. But I repeat that it is not something we should have asked you. And we have to consider the future. Is it needles to say that all of us, students and colleges would want you to continue what you are doing right now. Not only until the end of this year, but also thereafter. Though we fully understand that your own studying should prevail. If that might be so, we have to double our effort finding new teachers."



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Next, some of the students were evaluated. Some junior students missed several classes due to illness or being admitted to the hospital ward after visiting the forbidden-forrest against better judgment. Others needed some extra motivation and support in order to pass upcoming OWL, regular-Muggle or NEWT exams.

An hour later, when all were leaving, Dibbet asked the girls and Dumbledore to stay.

“We also received some less favourable letters. Again from students, parents and unfortunately even from, yes, again, our ministry!”

Lily looked anxiously at Dibbet and Dumbledore.

The head master sighed deeply, “I find this very hard to say, but some want to put the new way of teaching as an example for other lessons. Even I was accused of negligence for not doing this earlier. Of course I did explained that it was for the first time in fifty years or longer, since we could apply the accelerated learning program. But still... If some of the other teachers will hear this, they will look differently to you, I can promise you that. I thought you should be the first to know about this. Success not only breeds friends I fear but also envy.”

Dumbledore got up and concluded, “In any case, I think my wineglass is in dire need of a spring-clean, what do you say about that? Are you joining me?”

“No professor, but thank you for the invitation. I believe that Martin wanted to discuss something.”

But Martin wanted to do more than just discussing about the haunted corridor on the third floor. Once again Martin urged to

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re-investigate the whispering on the third floor. “Yes, I know it used to be dangerous, but there has not been any missing person reported for ages. And just imagine what we could achieve: The discovering of all sorts of mysterious findings, and the clearance of Hogwarts and a lot of former professors. Perhaps we can find and rescue some of the lost souls!”

Martin very well knew how to play students and staff alike.

That evening a small group students were heading for the third floor. As soon as they walked through the corridor, they sensed a drop in temperature. “It is just because no-one has lit the fireplaces here, nothing special...”

But the torches they brought along, were burning irregular, like there was some drought passing through the halls.

“What did you say?” Lily asked.

“I didn't say a word. I thought you were whispering something,” Martin replied.

With each step they took, the whispering became a tiny bit louder, but still undecipherable. When they were at two-third of the corridor, the vague sound diminished again.

“We went too far, we have to go back!” concluded Eoin prophetically.

They turned, and walked slowly back, they stopped again at the very solid looking black door at their left hand.

Martin put his hand on the door-knob and shivered. Of course it was locked. He drew his wand, “Alohomora!”

Still with much effort he opened the door, and the same moment all the torches extinguished.

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Immediately Lily said, “Lumos!” and Martin lit the torches again.

With a modest bang, the heavy door closed behind them.

Martin held his torch a bit higher. Pieces of cloth covered the few remaining paintings in the room, most of them were removed. Few toppled chairs were left, like people had rushed out in an extreme hurry. In the middle, was an olden oak table, that would stand very appropriately in any museum or medieval castle. At the other side of the room was one single door, that much looked like the door they just had passed.

When they got near to it, the whispering became again louder, almost excited, but still no-one could understand or even distinguished a separate word. But all of them were drawn nearer to it.

“Perhaps I am imagining things, but for a moment I thought I heard one whispering 'at last'!” Marris said.

Without asking anyone Martin unlocked the door, and opened the equally heavy door. “Did anyone...”

But although none of the students had done anything, several fireplaces started burning. But they hardly produced any light and absolutely no warmth, the flames were as cold as ice.

“Magic flames.” Martin confirmed.

Although the fireplaces did not warmed the room, Eoin discovered something else: “Strange shadows! It seems they move by themselves.”

“Shouldn't we report the others?” Lily asked.

“There is little we can tell now!” Martin replied and started moving ancient chairs around a round table.

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Moments later they were all seated, and observed silently. Each of the fire-places caused for all of the students several shadows, but there were much more shadows then logically could be possible. And while the students were sitting still, the shadows remain moving.

“Welcome!” a strange soft voice whispered.

“Welcome, at last”

“Welcome, but so few. Too few I fear. Too few for all of us..”

“But welcome nonetheless.”

“So few...”

Finally Martin said “Who are you, or who were you?”

“We still are Hogwart students!”

“But who are you, what are your names, and what are you doing here?”

After long undecipherable whispering,

“Maia Mckerracher.”

“Marquise Ellershaw.”

“Ewart MacRaith.”

“Keir MacRory”

“Chisholm MacGilledon”

“Rhydian Perry.”

“And what are you doing here?”

“We eh eh were waiting...”

“Waiting on what?”

“Waiting for help, something went horrible wrong!”

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Lily raised one of the torches too have a better look at the shadows, but as soon as she did that, she shadow near her was gone. “NO! We are nothing but shadows. That is all that remained of us.”

“How many of you are here?”

“Many! Several dozen. We were on duty, on guard.”

“On guard? Why, for who?”

“To call out for help, when we hear anyone approaching.”

“What were you doing? What went wrong? How can we help you?”

“Did you know about the vanishing cabinets. Ever heard about them?”

“Weren't they means of escape from the time of Cromwell?”

“Yes, but some were much older, and those cabinets were not really reliable... Inside of one we found some notes. We thought it were spells to operate them.”

“But.....?”

“But not! Something, or someone was waiting for us instead. We managed to get it back into the cabinet and also leave them again a bit later, but then we noticed that the world seemed to be changed. Objects were vague, and somehow we were bound to this room, this corridor. None of us was able get help. We could see and hear others, but none answered to our pleas. Also none of our magic seems to work anymore!”

“So what can we do? Get the others?”

“They are probably afraid of us. If you still can perform magic, perhaps you can change one or more of guys back to our origi-

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nal form. If you succeed, you can persuade others to help our other friends here.”

“Hm, that sounds reasonable. But still, how can we help you?”

“That will be different for each of us. We all have the story of our lives written down, we were afraid we would forget. We keep on reading it to each other. If we don't do that, we become a nameless shadow, something without a history, present or future, and then we are lost forever.”

“So, we just have to read this?”

“Read it out loud in a plausible, credible way, and believe what you read. How incredible it may sound. Please!”

Eoin started to read the story of Keir MacRory, a Slytherin student who vanished a long time ago. It wasn't very spectacular, a boy going to school, having troubles with some subjects, finding others easily, hating some of the school-menu. Longing to go back home during the summer-holidays and doing some mischief. It ended with being asked to help with some special investigating-classes, and some unknown spell. When he was finally done, Eoin remain sitting silently.

One of the shadows answered “I hope it was enough for me..” It seemed to have some effect, because the shadow seemed more solid, and spoke with a normal voice, much alike Eoin's voice, who still remained silent.

“And now?” Martin asked.

“Please do likewise.”

Lily started with Maia Mckerracher story, Martin was reading Marquise Ellershaw's notes and Marrissa reminisced Rhydian Perry live.

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While others were still reading, Lily was almost finished, she came to the part with the strange spell. Halfway Maia's shadow got so near to Lily, that she blocked all light, hence to couldn't read it properly and stopped.

“Finish it!” The shadow hissed angrily.

At that moment Lily realize she almost got herself trapped, and shouted loudly “STOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOP!”

Lily looked at the shadow, but it wasn't vague and misty anymore, she was looking at her self, though the figure moved by herself, it clearly wasn't a mirror reflection. She turned to look at the others, to Eoin sitting in the chair next to her. But in that chair, Eoin wasn't sitting anymore, but a vague figure hollowing crying and sighing. In the other chairs Marrissa and Martin looked like figures in the fog. She felt she rapidly got weaker, with one hand she grabbed her Hecate's key and dagger and stabbed herself, and screamed, “No way, I feel, I am alive! And threw the notes she was reading in one of the fireplaces. With a flash the entire room was illuminated. With her wand she summoned the other three story's note's to one of the fire's. Again three times the flames absorbed them, causing loud moaning and flashes.

When Lily's eyes got accommodated to the darkness of the room again, now only illuminated by some of the torches, she could see that Martin and Marrissa were in the chairs again. All of the shadows were gone. Except one. Where Eoin was sitting a vague figure moaned, “What have I done?”

Marrissa begged “We must leave while we still can!”, but Eoin's shadow cried “Don't leave me here, with them!”

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Martin panicked, “We can not stay, they are fetching the others.”

Again Eoin's shadow desperately cried, “Don't leave me here for centuries to wait, haunt and pine away. Please Lily let me borrow your dagger.”

The menacing whispering from behind the doors became louder and louder.

“Pleaseeeeeeeeeeeeeeee Lily! Now!”

Not knowing what else to do, Lily reached for the dagger, the grip towards Eoin.

“No! I can not hold it anymore. I'm faded too far already. Turn it the other way round, and hold it firm!”

The moment Lily complied, the Eoin's shadow rushed forward, causing the dagger to pierce him.

Another torch went out, and they faintly heard, “Thank you Lily, now RUN for your lives, while you still can!!!!”

Martin grabbed Lily's hand and dragged her along, following Marrissa towards the first black door and slammed it behind them. Seconds later later they were before the second door, but it seemed that doors formed hardly any obstacle for the angry shadows. When they were back in the corridor rescue was waiting for them. With large green eyes and loudly hissing Duncan, Lily's cat charged towards the shadows....

“We must see somebody, Dibbet, Dumbledore, the lot!”

When the three students approached Dumbledore's study, they found professor McGonagall there also, and very much upset.

Not knowing how to bring the bad news Martin just announced, “Professors, we must see you, before we bring the



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bad news to the head master. The four of us, we just returned from our experiment.”

Dumbledore asked “You just said that you left with three other students. Who was the fourth person? And now you returned with three!”

Martin sighed, “The forth was Eoin MacRaild, also Gryffindor sixth year student, but...”

Here Dumbledore interrupted him. “Now hold on for a moment. This can not be true. That student lies on his bed.”

“What? Eoin is there?” Screamed Lily with hope in her eyes.

Albus looked at Minerva, “Do you tell it, or shall I do?”

Professor McGonagall said nothing, but wiped a tear from her eye.

Dumbledore understood, “There is no easy way of telling you this, Martin, Marissa, Lily. But Eoin died some minutes ago.”

He looked at Martin, “Martin, the girls already know, but he was also member of Minerva's dream-class previous year. In his nightmares he had to kill his brother or he got killed by him. Because of that and his metnat cindition he was kept at a closed ward at St-Mungo hospital. This morning I received an owl that Eoin brother is missing. I thought the four of you were not attending the party for some experiment, so we didn't miss him and could not inform him. Late this evening another student found Eoin lying on his bed. He reported it some minutes ago to me. None of us knows what happened there. As far as I know his twin brother is not here in Hogwarts building, but either his brother, or he himself decided that Eoin had to die this night.”

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Uncontrollably Lily started to cry.

Minerva said, “Poor, poor girl, now she lost twice a student, first Camilla, now Eoin.”

“Professor?” Martin started, “There is much more to it. Lily lost Eoin before. I was thinking I could solve the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor mystery in my vanity. But I was so wrong. So utterly wrong! The deadly trap is still there.”

With open jaws they listened to Martin's report.

After he finished Dumbledore said, “Yes, Dibbet needs to know this. I'll sent for him.”

He called for a house-elf, and instructed him, then he thought for a while and added, “Fetch also Lily's friends, Alexandra and James, perhaps Sirius if he's around.”

Moments later the four invited entered Albus' study. His upbeat face grew long when he noticed the facial expressions and the sobbing girl.

Albus said “Students, the headmaster already knows this, but another student died this evening.” and he told them about Eoin.

Then he turned to Armando, “Head master, some students visited the haunted corridor on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please Martin can you tell professor Dibbet what you just told us?”

Martin explained his motivation why he did it and tried to include as many details of what they observed.

Dibbet remained silent, But finally Dumbledore spoke, “Martin, you are a reckless fool. You not only put yourself in danger, but also other students and perhaps the entire school! But I admit, I have been tempted for many years to have a look myself,

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but until now I have always been able to repress that urge. If, and a very big IF, if the outcome had been different, your name would have been in the newspaper by tomorrow. Yes, you all have achieved very much, we now know much more than before, but at what price? You have been outsmarted by the cleverest ghosts waiting there for you. They had nothing to loose and with every captured person the army of haunted ghosts only increases. Now I understand, the cabinet-people placed a trip-wire-spell into their devices. Every uninvited person was captured and enslaved. But that spell got twisted, mangled by something even much more sinister. The trapped people are neither dead nor living, but somewhere 'in between'. Even experienced professors and experienced aurors who tried to rescue some of the victims walked into the trap. “

Dibbet remarked, “But about that Gryffindor boy, Eoin. Even though we don't know what exactly happened, it remains a tragedy either way. If he got killed by his brother, we have to find him. But if he died by his own hand, the tragedy is no less. The same holds true if he became the latest victim of the haunted corridor.”

Finally Minerva also got hold of herself and turned her attention to Lily. “Dear girl, you really have been very brave. You were the very first one to recognize the haunted trap. Remember, you have absolute no information of neither your key nor dagger. You acted instantly and correctly, I think.”

“But Eoin...”

“Yes, that was a horrible moment, I agree. But you ran out of options! If you stayed they would have captured you all again. And leaving him there, knowing he must remain there for all

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eternity. How could anyone do such a thing? You could neither go nor leave!”

“BUT I HELD THAT DAGGER WHEN HE WALKED INTO IT! I KILLED HIM.” Lily screamed.

“You saved him from eternal torment, dear girl! You did nothing wrong... He was already dead. You did him a huge favour. He begged for it, and thanked you for helping him in the end.”

James put his arms around her. “Remember I told you last year about being stuck, having no options? I hoped it wouldn't ever happen again.”

For a brief moment, Alexandra pierced through Lily's past, present and future and knew. This was only just a test, her friends bitterest moment was still many years ahead of her. But Lily didn't need to know that, yet. This was already bad enough.”

## Durmstrang

Finally the time came for the selected students, to embark on the voyage to Durmstrang, Scandinavia. Initially Sirius had been looking much forward to the event, but when he realized, James couldn't be there, because Slytherin had previously year won the Quidditch-cup and not Gryffindor, his enthusiasms was diminished, he would only be accompanied by Slytherin students.

He asked what kind of transportation arrangements were made at deputies Gryffindor's head, as he rather minimized the amount of contact with the Slytherin's, as he wouldn't trust their replies anyway.

If Sirius had been thinking about flying carpets or portal-keys, he was heading for a bitter disappointment.

“What did you say: A BUS?”

“Yes, a bus, but not just a normal bus! We were able to borrow it from the ministry! This is the bus that normally collect stranded wizards and witches. They made for us a very special adaption, so it can drive through the Channel, directly to France! No boat needed. You'll be the first one to try it out. Just think of it, the potential is enormous! And it only takes you about six days to get there!”

Being confided to a bus, with a bunch of Slytherin students was bad enough. But the news that Alexandra wasn't able to come along was devastating. Missing her for two and a half week! Last summer he'd taken the photo of her and Lily along, but the

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idea of the other students seeing him with that photo, and perhaps taking it away was something he wouldn't dare doing. Finally he asked James for assistance, "Can you help me? Something like our Marauders map, when others look at it, they see something different than we?"

"I returned those special notes from McGonagall. Perhaps you can ask her?"

"Great help! Did you forget that she isn't aware that we had 'borrowed' it, and secondly, that her own niece is on this photo?"

"Hm, yes. That slightly complicates things a bit."

Near the end of the class they were told to stay, for disrupting the silence while they were supposed to be studying. Their history teacher said, "I may be dead, but I'm certainly not deaf. What was it, that couldn't wait for the end of my class?"

Sirius confessed to Binns that he would have to miss his girlfriend, and didn't want the others to know about it. Initially Binns was much interested, but when his eye fell on the photo, he completely changed. It was the photo that Lily's father had made the first summer holiday that Alexandra and Lily had spent together, at Stone-Henge. Out of all possible places, the Henge, that held so many precious memories for Binns.

"Ah! You are the friend of of young miss McGonagall! Why didn't you say so immediately. And you want a complex transfiguration? You know that transfiguration is the specialty of Professor McGonagall! Please walk with me, if I ask her, she won't refuse!" Initially McGonagall reacted a bit void, but realizing it was concerning her own niece, she became much more

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cooperative. After a split second and the wave of her wand, the photo and the sheet of parchment melted together.

“If you hold the photo upside down, you have your original parchment with a table holding intermediate times.” she explained.

“May I suggest to add another layer of protection?” she suggested, “to avoid others taking it away?”

Without waiting, she waved again, but Sirius did not see any changes.

With a smile she said, “I added a SN-spell to it.”

“A WHAT?” Sirius replied.

“One of the many spells, we will not teach students. It was rather popular while I was studying. If anyone else besides your friends touches the parchment, it will feel like the leaves of stinging nettles. Highly unpleasant but very effective. There you are Sirius. Good luck there!”

After a long and heart breaking goodbye, Sirius left. As part of his luggage he had two ordinary broom-sticks. He was warned that it was not uncommon that the competitors material was sabotaged. After a lengthy and horrible bus-trip, they finally reached a barrier at a dark and deserted spot in the middle of a dark forest on the morning of the sixth day. Some officials were behind the barrier that was blocking the road. One by one they had to leave the bus not being allowed to bring any luggage with them. At the end of that day they were allowed to enter a Durmstrang coach, pulled by strange wild and fierce creatures.

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Twice they had to cross a bridge over a moat. Each time they had to change coaches. And at each point the same line of statues.

After a final, miles wide ring of dark and dense forest and pitch dark tunnels, they saw on a hill a huge castle. Perhaps as big as Hogwarts but very different. The first time he ever saw Hogwarts, as a first-year student in the magically propelled boats on the lake, their castle had looked friendly, inviting, trustworthy. This castle was much more the opposite, black and gray, grim, hostile, repellant, unwelcome and utterly cold. Sirius pointed to the next line of statues. “Who are these fellows?”

Slughorn replied, haven't you studied, 'Concise History of Durmstrang'?”

“Eh, no. Should I have done so. I dropped History.”

“Durmstrang Institute has seven departments, like the four of Hogwarts. Each statute reflects one of their departments. They are named after the old Norwegian gods:

Forseti, God of justice and peace

Freyja, goddess of love, fertility and battle

Loki, goddess of mischief

Magni, god of strength

Thor, god of thunder and battle

Vioarr god the forest, revenge and silence

Vor, god of wisdom

I vaguely remember reading somewhere that these statues play a role in assigning new students to their department. Each of them is larger than the whole of Hogwarts, all houses combined together.

“Are we staying there?”



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“Oh no! We are not allowed in. And one pointed to a miserable building at some distant of the castle. “That's for us, I believe.”

They found that their luggage was already there, in front of the gate. And Sirius was glad that he had heeded madam Hooche's warnings and had brought two broomsticks with them, as one was too deeply inspected by Durmstrangs' inspectors, that it was beyond repairing. Many Slytherin players had not been so wise, that resulted that all players and the spare ones, just had enough broomsticks for one single team.

When Sirius got in the building, he wasn't neither pleased, nor surprised actually. “They are not actually the welcoming sort of people, not?”

Though there plenty of fireplaces, the interior reflected the Durmstrang atmosphere, cold, damp, dark and unfriendly. A huge room with some tables at one end, and scattered beds at another side.

“Is this all?”

“What else did you expect, a private luxury hotel?”

“No, but just a single dormitory, won't those girls complain?”

“They? On the contrary! That's why some of them came...”

While Malfoy and the others where having a wild party, Sirius found a bed at a small corner. He managed to block his mind from what else went on, and concentrated on the small Muggle-photo he held with both hands. Long long time ago someone had warned him before one of his first races. Concentrate! All the others want to do is wear you down, distract you. So until he fell asleep and perhaps even afterward, Sirius focused his mind on just one thing, the girl on the photo with the intense

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deep blue eyes that could make him feel hovering in midst air, without a broomstick.

Because of his concentration, he wasn't aware that some of the Slytherin students pointed at him and were lively discussing. Slowly one of the girls walked towards him and startled him when she touched his shoulder.

“Hi Sirius, I'm Samantha also in my fourth year, just like you. We saw you sitting here all alone. I know you're a Gryffindor boy, but your family was always Slytherin, so I don't think any of us would object if you would like to join our party. There are more than enough girls.”

It took Sirius awhile before he understood what she was suggesting. “What?”

“Most of us don't care about flying or Quidditch, but we were selected for cheering while you fly, and cheering you all up during evening and night.”

Then he politely declined. With an artificial smile he said, “Thank you for the invitation, Samantha. That's is very nice of you, but no thanks, my head isn't in for feasting.”

While she still didn't let go of his shoulder, she tried, “I can also keep you company here...”

After she waited for a moment, she started to un-buttoned with one hand.

“I'm all yours, if you want, and from your pulse I know I've got your attention.”

“I'm flattered, but you should know, I have already a girl...”

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“So what? No-one has to know. I won't tell. I can even... keep you company on the long, long way back home. Or thereafter.”

At that moment her robe didn't hide much any more. But Samantha saw that Sirius kept on looking at the parchment he still held in his hand.

Perhaps slightly offended, she looked around there.

“I have a girl...” Sirius said.

“Is that so? I failed to see anyone!”

That horrible truth stung, and she continued.

“And what do you think that girl is doing right now? We left Hogwarts over a week ago. Do you really believe she is alone and simply waiting for you. Nights can be lonely and cold! Even at Hogwarts.”

Those words came as a huge blow. He was utterly speechless. The idea of Alexandra seeing other boys had never occurred to him.

“If you change your mind, you can find me there, if I'm not busy. Otherwise there are plenty Durmstrang girls.”

Sirius totally lost her, “Now what are you talking about?”

“You don't know about what goes on here? Didn't you pay attention at the 'history of Magic' lessons?”

“No, I dropped that subject!”

“OK, but weren't you reminded before we left school? The background information?”

“No, that was given in the Slytherin common-room! Can you remind me?”

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As it seemed that he was showing some interest in her, she sat on his bed, and started to tell.

“You know, some of us in Slytherin are very keen on their blood-status. Here at Durmstrang, they go even much further. They are actively trying to increase that number. All the first years, have to submit their family tree. Students with pure-blood have several privileges. Half-bloods are not allowed to pass beyond their OWL's, and quarters are not allowed to keep their wands outside school. And girls are considered and treated, eh differently.

Sirius began to suspect something ghastly, but said nothing, which invited Samantha to go on.

“They can stay at school as long as they like, their whole life if they want, but they have to do something in return. Not only cooking and cleaning, as house-elves are considered vermin. We were told that their status grows with their productivity or re-productivity.”

Sirius was appalled with what he had heard.

“By the way, that was the reason why all the boys from Hogwarts had to submit their blood-status and family-tree. I heard that you caused quite a stir, Sirius!”

“Why, is being pure-blood such a big deal?”

“They consider a persons blood-status 'pure' enough, when a certain percentage of your ancestors were wizards or witches, but most of them can only be backdated to three or four generations. I heard yours went back before the year 900. That already cause some excitement, any offspring from a such a pure bloodline that alone, would automatically be considered as

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'pure', but that was nothing compared when they noticed your family name – Black.”

“What is wrong with my name?”

Samantha stared disbelieving, “Don't you tell me you don't know! At Slytherin it is a famous tell, but it is about your family, so you should know much more about the real details, what is truth or tale than either of us!”

Sirius felt like an idiot and that he stumbled from one unpleasant surprise into another. What did they know about his family? His mother had never told him anything at all about his ancestral background before he ran away, or actually was kicked out.

“Will you tell me your version, I will commented later on,” with these words he tried to conceal that he didn't know anything at all.

“OK, but most of it comes from the 'history of magic' book, so you should... but I've forgotten that you didn't follow that anymore. Many years ago, around the time that magic was considered part of every life in Europe, A powerful wizard lived in central-Europe, the area now know as the **black**-forrest. He had everything any ruler could desire, land, cattle castles, except for the title, he could have been a king or an emperor. And he had a wife, a beautiful Muggle, he had met and brought along from one of his many voyages. She came from the southern regions, now know as Spain and Portugal. At some point he began to worry that all of his many children were born without the gift. Although unusual, that can happen, so he wasn't suspicious. Until the moment that one of his ship was wrecked and he came home in simple, borrowed cloths without being recognized. He found that his best friend was much too friendly with

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his wife. During a fierce row, his friend told him that none of his twelve children was actually his. And that her whole family knew about it and considered it him a nitwit.”

“Was that the end of the story?”

“No, far from it, just the cause of what comes next! It is said that after his blood turned ice-cold, he thought of a way to revenge this year-long public humiliation. He could have easily have killed them on sight, but that wasn't enough for him. The whole world should know not to fool around with a wizard. So he send them back home. His wife, his friend and all of their children. That may sound lenient, but he did also something else. Being that wealthy, he also had many ships, not unusual at that time. On one of them, still sailing from China towards home, was something his wife greatly desired. At a distance of over 10,000 miles he cursed the ship and all on it. With his magical power he managed to bring that ship to one of Spain's port. The people unloading black's ship didn't live long, they had brought a terrible decease to the continent. About ninety percent of all living in Spain and Portugal died, those who fled, just spread the disease. Muggles have all forgotten about it, but that is the origin of the Black's death. At our house it is a nice story not to fool around with wizards, but here at the continent, and specially in Spain, you will be considered as the offspring of a multi-million-mass-murderer.”

Sirius just managed to stutter, “That sounds quite like it.”

As he made no move towards her, Samantha sneered, “Well that was a nice bed-time story, boy, nice dreams!” and she left.

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Next day was reserved for training purposes for the Quidditch teams, and for track surveillance for the broomers.

Immediately some of the Slytherin team were disqualified for using illegal performance enhancing potions. “The price for pleasing some of the Slytherin girls, I guess.” Sirius concluded.

In contrast with the Hogwarts' race, the start and ending was at the same place at a huge stone with lots of start- and finish banners. Half way, for both the single mile and the ten mile distance, there was a turning point. Between them was a twenty feet wide corridor, a lane with at both sides tall pine trees, unnaturally closed besides each other, to block any peeking looks.

Sirius flew a couple of times both tracks and explored the much more difficult hindrance track. The tracks themselves were not such a big deal. But now he had to fly on an ordinary broomstick. All of his competitors would probably have their own racing broomsticks. The other thing that bothered him, was that he didn't know at what time the racing would take place. Would it be in the early hours of the morning, when it was cold, would he be hindered by the sunshine? After all his test-runs, the resulting time was written down, and the Durmstrang officials laughed with disdain, was this the world champion? They would teach him a nice lesson shortly.

Slughorn, the head of Slytherin called for him.

“Boy, if you remain so sloppy, everything will become a disaster!”

“What do you mean, professor?”

“Well, they, those of the Quidditch-team, fly, like they are about to have their first lesson, and you left this lingering

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here.” And he pointed to a package with his name on it, lying on the stone. Looking at the shape of the package, long and thin, he immediately knew it could only contain one thing, a broomstick. But Sirius was mistaken, the package did not contain a broomstick. It contained two of them. Two he recognize immediately, need-for-speed and cutting-corners. But how did they get here? Clearly not with the rest of the luggage on the bus.

According to official regulations, the start position at the hindrance race was determined by the achieved results of the training run, so Sirius ended up at the final place. The same regulation was in effect of the speed exercises: because of the narrowness of the track, the number of participants to start was limited to four thus multiple runs were spread over the days the tests would take place. Just like the hindrance race, Sirius was scheduled at final positions, much to the amusements of all other contenders.

In contrast with the contest at Hogwarts, they started here with the hindrance race. Since he knew he could fly on Lily's broom, "CC", he was pretty confident to make a good time, but he had no idea about the quality of the other students.

The first eight contenders were all Durmstrang students. "Evidently, they know the route by heart," Sirius thought. Official results were kept secret, until everybody had their run, but some of the students made their own measurements. Much to their disdain, the first student, one with the best test-run and obviously a local hero, took too much risks. As a result he returned well overtime battered and bleeding at several places.



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The trees in this route may seem harmless, but appearances deceive. He returned at the finish after 5 minutes and eleven seconds, a 311 second run. The day before it had taken Sirius also about six minutes to complete. The next three students returned all within four minutes, all with just seconds difference. Next couple of students all needed longer to finish. The final four were Hogwarts-students, three from Slytherin and Sirius as the final two, returned seven minutes, later. One with a broken broom, the other without anything, but both were furiously. After the third Slytherin student started, they all had to wait horribly long. After fifteen minutes some worried officials appeared with an injured student on a stretcher.

Waiting for the start whistle to blow, Sirius mounted his broom, and visualized the route. After the third left and second right, he had to dive deep to avoid that strange tree with wide branches, and the straight part, he needed to fly as much as to the left, to avoid being blinded by the sun, and...

A sharp whistle blew and Sirius took off. Yesterday, when flying on the ordinary broom, some of the turns, specially the hairpins, were rather difficult, but Lily's "CC" broom was flying like a charm. Near the end he noticed some student clothing and the remains of a broom. The low leaning oak tree indicated that he was almost done, so he dived deep, his feet almost touching the ground, but still he noticed one of the branches almost wiping him of his broom-stick. Nasty surprise! Finally he concentrated on speed. Seconds later he reached the finish line. From the looks on the faces of the officials and the other students he learned that they were neither expecting him, nor that they were pleased seeing him. They were ticking on their chronometers and finally came to the conclusion that there was

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something wrong. The best of their own student finished in three minutes and one second, and this long haired foreigner returned in two minutes and thirty two seconds. Just to give their own students another opportunity, they invented at the spot, the rule that the best four had to fly again. Sirius, very well aware of what was going on, thought, “So you think you can cut corners too, and I can not repeat the same results? Well don't believe me, and just watch!” Now, with the best time, Sirius flew first and returned with an even sharper time, two minutes twenty-two seconds. The three Durmstrangers looked nervous, knowing what kind of world-record they had to beat. Again they tried hard, like they did before, but the first two needed again at least three minutes and the fourth student never returned at all.

When one of the officials asked about his lousy test run, the day before, Sirius simply said, “Your students have been practicing several times, I just took my time exploring and memorizing the route, so I needed my time.”

The next day, the officials and some of the students looked at Sirius differently, obviously there was more than the eye met. Slughorn, although he as Slytherin official had to be at the Quidditch field, but nonetheless he asked, “And young Mr. Black, are you looking forward to the racing? It seems you are the only Hogwarts student in reasonable shape!” He patted Sirius on the back and left. Despite previous training results they said that he was allowed to go first. “So they really think they can beat my time? Just a simple lane, to and fro. If I have a good start, the others won't get in my way.” And that was exactly what he did. Before the sound of the whistle had died

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away, Sirius was already half-way. He imagined being an arrow piercing through the air. Half-way he flew a dangerous hairpin, and again off he was. By the time he finished it looked like one of the others just had left the starting point. Slightly hesitatingly one of the officials approached him. “Mr. Black, Hogwarts? Most of my college's won't be pleased that I'm doing this, you being the main competitor, but my congratulations. I do recognize quality. You have bettered the world record time, I believe that you were the current holder, not?” And a huge, dark looking official in Durmstrang clothing offered his hand, that he gladly shook. During the next round, students from other houses also participated, one of them the girl from Beauxbaton he defeated previous year. He imagined all sorts of rude remarks, about what she could do with her own broom, but he remained silent. The news of the new record spread quickly, so the others flew, but they lacked motivation, knowing the impossible task ahead.

Sirius looked at them, taking off and returning some time later on. For most Durmstrang students it was an understandable exciting event. But Sirius just sat silently with a piece of parchment in his hands, simply wishing Alexandra was there.

At one point in time, he thought that he sat too long in the sunshine, and started to hallucinating: for just a split second he thought he'd seen James and Alexandra. But he came to the conclusion that it was not possible, thinking how long the bus-trip had taken and the time needed for getting into the Durmstrang-institute. It probably was another trick by some. So he quickly got up, found something to eat and went off for an early sleep. He applied a 'Murmilio-spell' on himself, in order not to be bothered with the Slytherin boys and girls, who were

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celebrating 'the next party', as they actually had nothing worthwhile to celebrate, except for being defeated at any Quidditch game.

The fourth day, was planned for some more Quidditch games and the ten-mile test. Because of the length of the route, it was more or less folded around the Institute, five parts and each of them one mile with a slight turn to the right and again a turning point half way. After a quick simple breakfast he presented himself at the starting point. One of the officials seemed to be glad to see him, the one that had warmly congratulated him the day before. But the others quickly looked away, or even looked scornfully.

“It seems they didn't expect some real competition...” he thought by himself. “Well, that's their problem!”

Like yesterday, he was told to start at head position. “So they acknowledge that the others fly like mud.”

Just before taking off, he thought he thought someone softly calling his name. He looked around, but saw no familiar face, although the voice had sound familiar. “It seems that they still trying to distract me.”

Moments later, he concentrated and waited for the whistle. He knew from the previous race that he had to preserve his strength, but after the second turn he did not see any of the other students anymore.

Halfway he had to reduce speed to about a standstill, in order to make the hairpin. At that moment he heard it again, a familiar voice saying:

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“Sirius, Padfoot, dearest! If you believe in me and trust me, fly back as high as possible, way above the trees, slowly and watch! Let your competitor go first! They sat a nasty trap.”

It was the voice of someone that logically could not be here, but he responded immediately. Normally he would have flown at a height of three or four feet, being shielded away by the trees from the strong and cold wind. But obeying to his girls voice, he climbed to three hundred feet and watched. He could clearly see the small corridor between the trees, but at one side the dense line of trees were not a separation of the forest, but something else! It looked like enormous cages. With something moving in it.

Sirius hovered in midst air and tried to see what was happening below.

Minutes later the first one of the Durmstrang contenders arrived at the turning point, but instead of a sharp turn and racing back, he halted and waited in mid air. Shortly after that the second student arrived.

“Did you see him, the guy from Hogwarts?”

“No, did you?”

The student waved with his wand. “I detect he has been here and started his pass back. So that can only mean one thing...”

“I thought we would find some remains, at least his broom-stick!”

“I was told that our monster was more that willing to do what she was told to do. Even though she is half the height of male versions, she ten times as quick and ferocious. Her child was taken away and send to, of all places, Hogwarts, and she won't see it ever again unless she obeys. It seems the beast was more

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hungry than we thought he would be. A pity though. About his broom-stick I mean, it seemed something quite special, Italian or so. Let's get back and report.”

“Why was the young monster send to Hogwarts, while its mother has to kill one of their students?”

“Some of the old hags ware nagging about 'making the circle round', I think they are all superstitious. But it seems she did a good job, gone without a trace!”

“Is it safe to pass that point?”

“Yes, it was instructed to get only the first one.”

“OK, one of you looks for the remains of the broom, while we pretend to be racing near the finish!”

And with these words he took off. Half way the first part he waved with his hand, indicating where the beast was supposed to be waiting for Sirius. The waving of his hand was the last thing he ever did. Out of nowhere, camouflaged by the trees a huge beast appeared, over fifteen feet tall, his head just below the top of the trees. With one movement the beast lashed out to the first one on a broomstick. As the two flew less then a yard apart, it grabbed them both in one hand and quickly moved back, out of sight and devoured them instantly, leaving no evidence of what had happened, exactly as it was instructed.

Slowly flying, the third student appeared, looking at the ground for pieces of evidence to clean up, but found none. When Sirius, still high in the air, shaken on him broom, noticed that the other boy passed the location of the trap, and could fly without anything happening, he had the nerve to reduce altitude and continue his race. Seconds later he passed the fourth student at full speed, who failed to understand what just had happened.

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For Sirius it was almost impossible to concentrate on the race. They anticipated on him being the fastest and first. What a dreadful thing to do! How unsporting. Tragic accidents happen while sporting, but this? This was no accident! This was a pre-meditated attack. But why? This wasn't winning or loosing, this was just loosing. Could anybody go that far at a sporting event? He just could not grasp it. Just like something else. That warning! Those voices. They belonged to friends that could not be here. He just couldn't grasp it, so he stared ahead and flew, he just flew with an empty mind. Not thinking, not feeling anything. Just the wind through his hair and ears.

And that was how he finished. He didn't notice the strange look on some students face. Angry, surprised.

But Sirius did neither see, nor care. Not even his finishing time. He felt sickened, cheated out of a fair game. He wanted to get away from it all. He flew on his broom to another stone, away from the others, dismounted, and sat with his back to it, staring into nothingness. Slowly he got his enchanted piece of parchment from below his Gryffindor robe, and it transformed back into a simple Muggle photograph.

“Oh, how I wish you just could be here...” he thought.

He remembered Samantha's sneer, “So where is your girl? Do you think she is waiting all alone for you?” and what Samantha had offered him and what all of those girls had been doing.

Would Alexandra been waiting for him? He thought so, he hoped so. They had exchanged quite a good number of kisses lately, but what did she really feel for him? Would she trade him in for someone else? What could he offer her? He had

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nothing, and he knew close to nothing about girls, compared with Slytherin boys.

“If I only could tell her, what she means to me. She's my entire world. Oh, how I could wrap my arms around her. Just hold her and never let her go. I swear to myself, that is all I need.”

But then he remembered something, It was Alexandra who had given him her photo and a kiss. And didn't she have a bra with the printing of his arms? If she wanted his arms around her, he did mean something to her.

One of the things he would have liked to do, was a summer-holiday to Granada, but before his eyes appeared a head from a newspaper, shouting: “*Sirius Black arrested and transferred to Azkaban, the descendant of the notorious multi-million-mass-murderer.*” A lonely teardrop fell on the photo. He knew there were hundreds, if not thousands students watching the games and celebrating. But he had never in his life felt so lonely before. No-one to talk to, to share his thoughts, his feelings. No-one he could trust.

But minutes ago, he thought he had heard the voice of Alexandra, saying 'If you trust me...'. Impossible, but still... Her face on the photo, and the memory of her voice made his solitude even worse.

Staring at those unmovable blue eyes, his heart ached like it had never done before. His arms and legs felt limp, while his head nearly exploded. But still those eyes that looked at him from the photo. Those familiar blue eyes. Happily smiling, even though he knew Alexandra understood the meaning of the word 'loneliness' all too well.



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While many teardrops had joined the first one, he made up his mind. Whatever it would take, whatever it would cost, whatever he had to sacrifice, he would be there at her side. Never should she feel so horrible like he felt right now. Like doing in incantation Sirius draw his wand, holding the other end against his heart. 'Alexandra, dearest, you'll always be there.' People his age are normally much too young for such commitments, he knew. So he realized that he had to be patience, considered, understanding. Supporting, while still letting her enough space to breathe, live grow and develop her own life. Difficult, but worth living for...

He imagined Alexandra's fingers running through his hair. That felt so good, so soothing, so comforting, so he just kept his eyes closed. It felt so real, he just sat there. He could have sworn he really felt her fingers. He could have sworn he felt her lips, touching his. When he opened his eyes, he understood he wasn't daydreaming. Alexandra was really here! And so was his friend James, sheepishly laughing a bit further away.

"How...?"

All James said, was "Hush! We are not supposed to be here."

Bewildered Sirius stood up, still staring at a smiling Alexandra.

"May I ask yo one thing, Alexandra? Will you please let me hold you close, even if it is just for one second, one minute, one eh lifetime?"

With a glimmering in her eyes, she go up, but instead of answering, she wrapped her arms around him and held him tight.

Despite all layers of clothing, their hearts found each other, beating simultaneously, starting a silent conversation.

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Then James interrupted. "Where is Lily's broom, at you sleeping lot?"

Sirius just nodded, still disbelievingly. And with an "accio", the summoning spell, James got the broom back.

Finally he managed to utter, "How did you get here?"

James ticked with his wand to the stone, Sirius was sitting against. "You've found a good place to rest against."

Alexandra asked, "We have to leave the way we came, how about you?"

But there was no known spell or potion in the world that could make Sirius go back by bus.

"That means you will miss the closing ceremony. I believe you have won something?"

"I've got all that I need! Take me home, James."

"That is something, your mistress will take care off!"

Moments later, Alexandra concentrated on the stone, turned an invisible, imaginary ring, made a small step and they were gone.

For many months, the Durmstrang officials were trying to find out, how one of the visiting students had left their school without being detected.

Before they ran into trouble, they reported at Dumbledore.

At first he looked disbelievingly at Sirius being here.

But when he started explaining what had happened their, while racing, the professor understood. He also told what Samantha had told him about what happens at Durmstrang, although he

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left of some parts that Sirius considered not relevant and offending to Alexandra.

“Thank you for coming straight to me, boy.” Albus said.

“They must be looking for you. I'll contact them and inform them you have returned by other means, without disclosing how.” with a smile at Alexandra.

But then he looked serious. “What is happening there is beyond our control. Every country, every region has their own laws and traditions. Some I utterly disagree about, but we can only try to change their point of view through official channels, like our ministry, and set an example of what we see as proper.

Here, at my Hogwarts, all people that enter, are considered equal, male or female, Muggle or magic, poor or rich, no matter what color of your skin, your believe or other preferences, your family background (and with these words he specifically looked at Sirius). The way we treat others is based on what they do and what they decide. Nothing else!”

Again looking at Sirius, “Sorry, boy. That you had to learn that part of your family history this way. We all thought you would know that.”

For a moment he studied Alexandra and James, “At one hand I am dying to find out more how you do this travelling, but at the other hand, this could have grave implications if this knowledge falls in the wrong hands. So for the very first time in my life I would ask you, please keep it to yourselves, don't write anything down. At Durmstrang they will be furious if they find out how their security has been breached. Leaving their premises unseen is bad enough, but students entering their in-

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stitute could cause quite some mahem. No need to make them any wiser, I should say.”

Turning back to Sirius, “And as you are not supposed to be here until next weekend, I think you stay away this week to avoid any questioning here.”

“James, I don't think your parents we object much if all of you would do some studying at your parents home? If I am correct Lily is there now, for her study, don't distract her too much and also still recovering from that haunted corridor.”

And while speaking he pointed to his fireplace, silently inviting them to use the floo-grid.

## Hog's head

Neither Edward, nor Margaret could understand and had difficulty to accept what was going on at Durmstrang. Time after time Sirius had to tell the tale of his adventures again or answer questions about his adventure. Except Alexandra, who remain silently and looked with admiration at Sirius, who looked with fondness and admiration back at her.

This got noticed by James, who observed the two of them for some considerable time, but said nothing about it. When his father went to fetch some drinks, he followed quickly.

“Dad, can we talk shortly. I mean somewhere else, not here?”

“Sure son, next week I'll be in Hogsmeade, we can meet there if you want, and are able to get away from school. Is it important?”

“No, not exactly, but something haunts my thoughts and I like to talk it over with you.”

“Well, Hogshead in that case.”

So the next week, James was trying to find a good excuse, for leaving school. Of course he could have used the invisibility cloak and the secret tunnels on his new map, but he very well knew that the inn-keeper reported all students back at Filch. So he needed to get their officially and in the open. Finally he knew how.

“Hello professor Dumbledore.”

“Hello James. I sense you want to ask me something?”

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“Just wondering, are you perhaps in need of some extra lemon-sorbet-sweets?”

“Why would you ask me such a thing? If so I could ask anyone, or hold my patience until I can but them myself.”

“My father is now in Hogsmeade...”

“Well, in that case, it just happen to be so that I ran out of my favourite sweets several days ago. I know I shouldn't ask any of the students to do such a trivial errand, so if if you promise not to disclose your absence to everybody....”

Rather pleased with himself, James Left the castle and reached Hogsmeade a little later. After he fulfilled Dumbledore's errand, he went straight to Hogshead, the pub where he found his father already waiting on him.

“This is something I longed to do for a long time, James. Just the two of us, in a pub! If your mother should know!”

After a modest sip, James asked, “Dad, can you tell me about girls, women?”

Slightly surprised, “I thought we've had that talk before, long ago, before you went to Hogwarts the first time. Anything forgotten? Or is perhaps anything changed, and you need to 'tell' me something?”

James grinned a bit, “No, no, no dad! I meant in general!”

“Ouch! One specific is already difficult enough. Women in general you can not discuss, that's absolutely impossible.”

“No, no joking dad. Seriously. I was thinking about what happened at Durmstrang, Sirius and Alexandra. I couldn't believe what I heard. What they did there. What he didn't do. I just

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don't get it. He told me that girl sat on his bed, asking him, inviting him. Sirius simply declined, while the other boys...”

“Let me first express that, hearing this, it makes me appreciate your friend Sirius much more. He has matured since your first beers in 'The Leaky Cauldron'.”

After he finished his beer and ordered another two, he continued, “Let me tell you a longer story of what I told you before. I can only tell you one side of the story, and as a man, I'm probably biased. You should ask exactly the same question when you are alone with your mother, she will probably tell you something differently, the truth is somewhere in between.

Just imagine a group of people trying to achieve something, something for themselves, something in common. As you are also a Quidditch player, like I was, that shouldn't be too difficult.”

“What has that to do with girls?”

“I said it would be a long story – When playing, you have to give and take, yes? Every player wants to be the one that makes the winning goal, but only one does it. But he needs -besides luck- the help of the other players. Sometimes it is player-A, another time it is player-B. They are all players in the same team, but no friends. You know the difference?”

“Sort of, I think so.”

“With players, when there an opportunity with equal chances, there is nothing wrong taking the chance yourself. Why play your self down?”

“Nothing wrong with that, as long as the team benefits.” James replied, still wondering what this had to do with his question.

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“With ordinary friends, you share a common base of liking and disliking, school-subjects, food, plays, sports, music. Easy come, easy go, no pain, just some fun and laughs.

With closer friends, and I mean real true friends, it already lies different. You also consider the others feelings, prospects, chances. When friendship grows longer and deeper, other aspects start to become important, knowing you can trust the other, knowing the other can trust you, mutual respect, that you can depend and rely on each other, when needed. And you are willing to invest in that friendship, even sacrifice something for your friend. Sometimes such close friendship can turn into a longtime relationship or something romantic. You long to be near someone, and parting sometimes even hurts.”

Edward took a long sip, looked at James and continued,

“What that girl offered Sirius, had absolutely nothing to do with love, trust or respect. Only with physical attraction and simply wasting some time.”

“But what is wrong with being attracted to someone, liking someone?”

“Nothing, as long as you know why! Why do you like someone? Is it because the other person is smart and might help you later on in life? Because the other person is wealthy? Because the other person looks nice, is beautiful?”

Looking into James' eyes he saw he understood.

“Name me old-fashioned, but I consider those wrong reasons, excuses used by cheap exploiters, opportunist. The only people I disdain more than the people accepting for those traps, are the ones that willingly offer them as bait.”

“And Sirius?”



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“So far I was just generally speaking. I'm glad to see that your friend declined any offering, how tempting that perhaps may have been. I can only tell that Alexandra is important for him and to him. But I can't say anything about his other feelings for Alexandra. Does he 'like her *and* she is beautiful', or does he “like her *because* she is beautiful', that is one question, but much more important is what does she think. From the photo in the newspaper, we know that she does like Sirius, but why? Because he's funny, gets away with mischief, because he happens to be a world champion, because he is handsome? Or is there more, something deeper going on? You tell me, son!”

“I don't know, just that they kiss each other a lot.”

“That doesn't say much, except they are attracted to each other and that they have the opportunity to communicate with and without words.”

Sadly James shook his head, “Dad, you said a lot, and it does make sense to me, I understand that much, but it does not help at all. I remember you and mom told me to be aware of girls, but I do get a lot of attention. Some are really good looking.”

“You won't know until you got the chance to learn about them, what is important to them, try to get to know them; get involved.”

“How far can you go in 'get involved', dad?”

“That's a hard question, son. If one wants or expects more than the other is willing to give or accepts, either one will be disappointed and get hurt. It could be you have to look elsewhere or have to wait, for the other to learn and grow.”

And after another sip, “When things don't work out, and you have to split and look further, you feel horrible, you get blisters on

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your soul, but you have to go on. Be sure that both *can* go-on. Don't do or say things that make it impossible for either one to continue. Loneliness is something different than being alone. For girls it is even harder than for boys, when they are stuck with children, not being able to find a job, or sometimes not being allowed to work, locked away in an unhappy marriage.

Your friend Sirius is free as a bird, he had made no commitments, but still he treasures Alexandra's feelings more than anything else. For whatever reasons. That is important.”

After another sip, Edward concluded, “That Slytherin girl had said that no-one had to know, perhaps truth, perhaps not, a trap. Point is, that if Sirius would have give in to that girls' charms, there would always be in his mind the possibility of Alexandra finding out. The memory of Alexandra's smile was stronger than that other girls' charm. How about that?”

For a moment, James wanted to say to his father, “Dad I think I like Lily, a lot. She is beautiful, she makes me laugh but scares me also, she is smart and understand what I'm saying.” but he didn't. Instead he said, “How difficult is it, relationships?”

If Edward was surprised by his son question, he didn't show it, “You probably realize that it is an impossible question. I could easily say that it is nearly impossible -for some- at least. But it is also the most fulfilling thing in life, if it works out. What do you really want to know?”

“I've been talking a lot with Gwili, the Hufflepuf Quidditch captain. She said her parent are always arguing, fighting. She is glad when she can leave for school and hates it when she has to return for the summer-holidays. How can parents do that to each other, they must have loved each other, ones?”

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Edward thought long and deep before he answered, thinking about all the people he knew, and their marriages.

“Son, you really got me two tough questions, I have to give you that. I'll try to say something about it, but these are my idea's only, I'm not expert. Everyone is different, but just as valuable. When you have much in common, it is easier to understand what the other might be thinking, though you can never be sure about that. Sometimes you see in a relationship that they are totally different. I think the phrase is: 'opposites attracts', then they extend each other. That is perhaps more adventurous but probably more difficult. But what ever, true love helps polishing the rough edges.”

He noticed his son listened with full attention. “People change, grow with the ages. Sometimes they grow closer, but sometimes they grow apart. That is natural and you shouldn't avoid, restrain that. Doing so would only backfire. When love and affections rules in your heart, you can overcome anything. But when it starts with resentment, envy, distrust, you'll end up loathing, disrespecting, distrusting, and hating the other. I think that is what happened to Gwili's parents. But again, I'm no expert.”

For a long time James thought about what he had heard.

“Dad,” James asked, “Have you ever been unfaithful to mom?”

“You mean cheating, with other women?” he asked disbeliev-  
ingly.

“Eh yes. One of the boys was telling tales about his parents.”

“I'm glad I can be more concise about that. No. I don't say I was never tempted or had the opportunity. When I started in the oil business, and came to shore, some of the others thought

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they had quite some catching-up to do. With girls I mean. Later on, after many people found out I was rather successful in stocks, some women tried quite hard to impose them on me. But I wasn't interested, they meant nothing to me. I knew you mother trusted me, like I trusted her, and that meant more to me than anything else. You don't want to hurt each other feelings. One time it was hard though. You know your mother cannot have babies anymore? At one point she would like you to have a little brother or sister. She even asked one of her friends if she would be a stand-in mother, like the old biblical story about Abraham and Hagar. Mom asked me to go to our bedroom, where her friend was waiting, but I couldn't do that. Perhaps mom was disappointed but I couldn't cross that line. Perhaps you'd call me nowadays old fashioned, but that is something I never did and never will. Point is James, when you cheat, you can do it as elaborate as you can, you can hide it as long as you like for your girl or your wife, but there is always one who know and never forgets. The one you see every morning in the mirror!"

Edward knew his son believed him, and he hoped he would remember it forever. "Your mother and I had a rough start, but she means everything to me!"

James asked quizzically, "what do you mean by that?"

But his father replied, "That is a nice story for your mom to tell, if she dares."

"Thanks dad, for the beer and wise words. I'll sleep on it. Say hello to mom."

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Edward looked at him, seeing there was more than his son dared to say. “We should do this again, when possible. Is there anything else you want to ask, or need to know? I cannot promise I have all the answers to everything, but if I can help you, or your friend, let me know. Remember to ask you mom the same question. I think she'll respond totally differently. Will you remind Sirius that he is still more than welcome to stay, as long as he wants!”

“He knows dad. I'm grateful for what you and mom did for him.”

## Grexit

All of the students had regular lessons given by professor Minerva McGonagall, while some of them saw the seasoned teacher quite more often. Most of them, were students who had to stay longer, after classes for disturbing the peace during the class, not having finished their homework or not paying enough attention. A very small group of specially selected senior students however was allowed to participated in some of the special classes. Lily was one of those students, though she participated since her first week at Hogwarts. This, and the fact that her best friend was the teacher's niece, made that she had a special relation ship with this teacher.

So, an informal invitation for tea, did not raise any eyebrows anymore at Lily or Alexandra. At a next tea-session, Lily felt a slight unease with Minerva.

Hence she inquired, “Minerva, is there anything you would like to say or ask, but are reluctant to do so?”

Slightly worried and troubled she nodded, “Yes there is indeed something, bit is is nothing related to you or something you can do about.”

Silently Lily waited for her to continue.

“Do you remember Peter & Mary? The couple that also participated in our dream-class several years ago?”

“But of course, they were married here, on Hogwarts premises. That caused quite some discussions at that time. Initially I

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didn't want to go to the happening, as it also was part of a tragic dream. You and professor Dumbledore convinced me that I could not change the future by simply staying away. The subject of altering the future is something Peter had quite some clear idea's about, enough to drive one mad.” She grinned.

“And in the end, you did something for them, with albatrosses, do you remember?”

Lily smiled wide out “How could I forget! They were struggling to make ends meet, and could not afford a honeymoon. So I 'dreamed them away' and gave them a preview.”

She dropped the smile and became concerned, “Anything wrong with them?”

“No, not with themselves, but recently their house burned down. They escaped unharmed, just, but they have nothing left anymore save the close they wore at the moment. In our magical world insurance is not possible. Everything they had, including all of their savings, were gone in that night. None of the protecting spells worked apparently. Very strange indeed. To make things worse, they are both out of a job. So their future is rather gloomy. Neither of them has any living parents to help.”

“That is a real tragedy! What can we do, Minerva?”

“While I'm here at school, I let them use my old home, so they have at least a roof over their head. But their dream has an abrupt ending, I fear. And that delayed holiday? That never became reality. Just looking for a day's work, for making a living.”

“So you want me to take them on another holiday? If they can come to school, or if we can meet at another safe place, sure!”

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“Thank you Lily. Perhaps later, but I think that would have the opposite effect. Dreaming away would only remind them off unfulfillable futures. Right now they have to postpone everything, even about starting a family.”

“I understand, it might be salt into a fresh wound.”

“You are right, but it is hard to come up with any proper help, I wish I could give them another fresh start.”

With a vision of two struggling young people, Lily left, and walked slowly through Hogwarts corridors towards Gryffindor's common-room.

Quickly she told the others about the tragedy, but although they sympathized, few knew or remembered Peter or Mary anymore. They just remembered the party on Hogwarts two years ago.

Sirius commented cynically, “When you have nothing left anymore, you can't lose anything. You can start whatever and wherever they want. Here or even abroad.”

For a moment there was a remark on Lily's tongue that his remark was quite insensitive, but instead of speaking out, she turned towards Alexandra, “Perhaps strange, but for a moment the name of Corstophine popped up.”

“What does that vanished teacher has to do with Peter and Mary?”

“Absolute nothing at all as far as I know. I don't understand myself. There must be something however. What do you remember about him?”

“Well, he helped me the first two years through the accelerated class ancient languages, just like Slughorn did for you with 'Bi-



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ology'. And several times he tried to persuade me into teaching. Come to think about it, he managed to get his way, but probably not the way he hoped it."

"That's too obvious. We all know that. I remember you told me once that he mentioned something about himself, his background."

Alexandra frowned and dug deep into her memories.

"He, or his family originate from one of the Greek islands, Crete I think he said. He had some property there, an estate or so, probably an olive farm. Why?"

"Anything else?"

"That his family wasn't please at all when he left for England, as he was their only son."

"I don't remember him mentioning ever a wife or children, do you?"

"No. Never. But I still don't understand what it has to do with Peter and Mary."

"I'm not sure, but somehow there is a connection."

"And as he is gone, you can not not ask him about it anymore."

"No, you are wrong. We know that Peatery is really gone and where he was going to, but Corstophine just disappeared. He might be still here, somewhere."

James looked under the table, "Nah, he is not here!" he joked. "Hogwarts has many places to hide if you don't want to be found. The place is rather large you know. Of all the students around, we can say something about it, and know what we are talking about." And with his finger he tapped on his map.

With large eyes Lily jumped from her chair, "That's it!"

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She pointed at the map. “Wasn't that map able to show you where certain people are, at any moment?”

“Eh yes! Shall I show you?”

Lily nodded, “yes, please.”

Theatrically James spread his map, “*I solemnly swear that I'm up to no good!*”

And instead of some silly notes, the map of the castle appeared, with hundreds if not more, tiny moving dots. Huge amounts of them were located in or around the for common-rooms of each of the houses and in the main hall. Considerably less around the room reserved for the teacher, and here-and-there an individual dot, with miniscule letters, revealing the name of the person. Intrigued Lily looked at it.

“Now what? It's a haystack!” asked James.

“Can you just look for one person?” Lily asked.

Now Sirius responded. “Yes you can, I've added that later on! I'll show you.”

Sirius draw his wand, tapped at the map and instructed, “Hide all, show Lily Evans.”

All dots save one were gone.

Alexandra asked, “Does this only works for human beings?”

“Never tried, be my guest!”

Alexandra reached for her wand, did like James had showed before and said, “Hide all, show Duncan, Lily's cat.”

One dot disappeared, and another showed up, near the owl-wing.

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“Well, you don't have to spend your time looking for Duncan anymore.”

Lily smiled understandingly, “May I try?”

After a nod, she tapped with her wand at the map and spoke, “Hide all, show professor Corstophine.”

Understandably, the dot representing the cat was gone, but much to anyone's surprise, another one appeared, near the kitchen. They noticed it moving through corridors ascending staircases.”

“That professor is indeed somewhere in the castle. It looks like he obtained material for a private dinner-party or so.”

They watched the dot entering Corstophine's study, leaving it, walking through some other corridor's at higher floors and suddenly it was gone. No dots were visible anymore.

Lily looked at the others, “What's wrong with the map. A person can not vanish into thin air!”

Several times they instructed the map to show the whereabouts of Corstophine, but the map remained dot-less. James tried with other persons, Vilchers cat and even ghosts, that were promptly shown on the map, but Corstophine remained gone.

Next couple of days, their luck varied. Some days Corstophine's dot stayed away, while on other days they say it coming from the kitchen and vanishing little later, and even appearing from nowhere, going to his study, making his usual stop at the kitchen and disappearing into nothing. This intrigued the girls enormously, but irritated the boys. “Where can

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he go to? Perhaps another secret tunnel or so that I don't know about!”

A week later Sirius solved that riddle. Early at breakfast he explained. “Yesterday evening I stayed on watch near the kitchen. I almost dozed away, when I noticed your teacher, leaving with a tray full of things to eat. I made sure he didn't see or hear me when I followed him. But on the seventh floor he was gone. I was sure he didn't hide in one of the rooms or studies there. I checked them all. Out of frustration I walked all the way back to the kitchen. One of the house- asked if I wanted a late bite, but instead I asked if they knew about their previous customer. They confirmed that it was professor Corstophine, and that he preferred to eat alone, undisturbed. He even asked if they would bring breakfast, lunch and dinner to him, but although they didn't refused, they informed him that they were simply not able to go there.”

The others looked puzzled “Not able to go there? Where? To his study? That should not be any problem to them!”

Sirius continued. “No, not there. They were mentioning the room-of-requirements, the room-of-need.”

James' jaw dropped considerably, causing a piece of sandwich to fall out of his mouth, that he just bitten of.

“So that is where he is hiding all the time. No wonder the map can not show it, as the map has no proper need of knowing its location!”

That evening after homework finished, having dinner, while James and Sirius were practicing Quidditch, Lily asked her friend, “Are you coming along, to the seventh floor?”

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Soon they were walking through the empty corridor, no windows or doors to be seen. Just thinking “We need to find the hide-out of professor Corstophine. We need to find the hide-out of professor Corstophine. We need to find the hide-out of professor Corstophine.”

Suddenly, where an blind wall used to be, a door appeared. As a formality they knocked on it, but without waiting even a slightest moment, they opened it. Behind the door they found a mirror of Corstophine's living and study. And a lonely figure that just had completed his meal.

“So, someone finally figured it out.” A bitter voice said. The professor got up and turned around. Obviously he had expected to see someone else, as he looked surprised, even pleased, to see the two girls. “You two?” he said.

“Do the others also know?” he asked, but Alexandra replied, “Just us, and James Potter and Sirius Black.”

When he turned from Alexandra to Lily, he froze again. As he was remembered of one other dreaming-class member, Nimue, and her boyfriend Timothy. It looked like he felt the pain of a fresh wound again.

“I should have seen it. Noticed it I'm responsible. Poor Tim!”

“No professor! No-one knew what he was thinking, what he was planning and doing. How could you have known?”

“Now I know and understand what he was trying to say to me, the last couple of weeks. How can a professor be so blind and stupid.”

Corstophine walked towards a bottle. “I know I shouldn't ask, but will you join me? I don't mind eating alone, but drinking alone is ultimately sad.”

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Alexandra looked amazed, when her friend accepted a glass of burgundy with little hesitation. “Just one, neither of us is used to it, you understand?”

Corstophine nodded, he swallowed something away, and started...

“When Minerva and one of the other students, Robin I believe, first came to me, I didn't know what to think about what they asked of me. Finding a boy for one of their experiments, all secretly and with detailed requirements. No high flyer, no troll, not one with a reputation among girls and in the fifth or sixth year. The first two were not interested at all, but when I asked Timothy, he didn't turn me down straight away. Probably because he was helping me with some other chores and had little or no friends. After weeks of subtle persuasion, by Minerva and me, he finally agreed if we helped him along. With lot of collaboration of other teachers, he finally won that girls trust and more. At that time I just wondered that he grew so much in months. From a tiny timid boy no-one hardly noticed, to a young man full of initiative, full of life. Enjoying life.”

Lily took a little sip. It was strong and gave a strange sensation on her tongue. Not entirely unpleasant.

“Beginning of the year he appeared to have grown again, but differently, quiet, silently again, and sad. Quickly I learned what had happened. But I thought he could cope with it.

I still remember telling him that the most beautiful poems, plays and books were written by people facing sad aspects in their lives. And Timothy agreed totally, although at that time I felt he was slightly exaggerating. He said that he felt like being inside some sort of Greek tragedy. That he had been playing

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with feelings and powers far above his level. That he felt the year before ending up like on a “holy mount Olympus banquet” with the gods, too good to be true for a simple human mortal being. And then, after that girl ditched him, he landed with his feet back on the ground, he felt he got rightly punished for his transgression.

He said 'Why should I complain? I have felt like I've never felt before. This was obviously never intended for me. Too good to be true.'

That poor little boy just fell in love for the first time in his life. Perhaps he felt like sitting on a cloud... Didn't anyone warn him, that dropping off from a cloud, that cloud, is rather painful?"

Lily noticed that Alexandra had difficulty swallowing a next sip, and realized it had nothing to do with the wine. She knew that she just imagined, being alone again, if she broke off with Sirius.

“I was so blind, just hoping and imagining that Timothy could capture these feelings and translate them into words. He managed to write such beautiful love poems, he could have become a major writer. I had too high hopes, I was too blind. How can I face other teachers and other students ever again? I failed miserably. I've lost my home here. If I could, I would leave and go back home.” And with tears, he emptied his glass.

Lily responded after a while, “Please, don't take my words for hollow phrases, but it is also a heavy burden for others, like Robin, professor McGonagall, Dumbledore and Dippet. It is ultimately sad but true, that there is nothing anyone can do any-

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more for Timothy, except not blaming himself what he have chosen to do. He was not looking for an easy way out, just for the pain in his heart to stop.”

“You are a kind girl, Lily. But why did you come looking for me? I heard they have found a very young but also very talented and motivated replacement...”

Proudly she looked at her friend, surprised with his compliment. Alexandra had reluctantly given Greek and Latin to students in first and second year. Initially some students had some objections when they heard about it, specially those from Slytherin. But after the second lesson, when she had proved she could stand above any of the houses, they all welcomed that those dead languages were given by such a young girl that seemed to have all qualifications except experience.

“Well professor,” she started, “somehow I think you might help me with helping two other students, former students actually, as they finished and left school two years ago. Perhaps you can remember them Peter and Mary! They had their bridal ceremony here at school at the end of the year?”

Corstophine turned back to Lily, “Yes I do remember that, Highly unusual. Mary did her NEWT for my subject, while her friend dropped it as soon as possible. What is wrong with them?”

“They lost everything they had when their home was burned down. And with no money or job it is hard to start again.”

“I fear you came to the wrong person. It is more a sort of privilege to work here, the payment you receive is only symbolically. I don't even have the means to go back where I came from.”



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Alexandra took a deep breath. “Now you mention it, where did you come from? Wasn't that one of the Greek islands Rhodos or Corfu? Is it there you want to go back to?”

Corstophine closed his eyes for a while.

“Yes, my roots lie there, but it is a long time ago I left my parents against their will. After graduating I wanted to see and learn about the rest of the world. Visit your famous school here in Scotland. I've been thinking regularly about returning home, when my mother died there remained an obstacle based by the bitter words spoken to me. And when my father passed away, it all seemed to late. Now I just long to a simple life of tending the place.”

“What kind of place do you have there?”

“My family have, like many people there, an olive farm. Although it is huge in dimensions, the yield is low, because of the poor grounds. It is on Crete, the center of the island, near Agios Ioannis.”

“Who is looking after it now then?” Lily asked.

“As I don't have any other family, the neighbors will do that, and they may keep whatever they harvest. I presume they'll keep on doing this, as it is much too large to look after it on my own. Why?”

Lily thought for a while, but then decided to take a chance. “I was wondering, if we could somehow get you back to your place home, would you be so kind to offer Peter and Mary a home? I do know they long to go to Greece. I presume you need several helping hands. Perhaps they can start a new life over there. Away from it all.”

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Corstophine looked at her, “How would you do that? Or do you happen to be the sole owner on Lilyan airways? And what do they think about it? I do remember them, but would like to see them before I agree, people sometimes change, and not always for the better, you know.”

The two girls looked at each other, and Alexandra said, “But of course! We'll try to bring them here without much attention. But no, she isn't the sole owner of an airfreight company, but I think I have a pretty good idea how Lily thinks she can get you there.”

“Just one question, do you mind if we tell Minerva about you?”

He first frown hearing this girl using his college christian name, but then he remembered she was talking about her aunt.

“Well I rather not, but I presume you need her help in this.

Only if she can keep it to herself. I presume I can count on your discretion?”

“Absolutely!”

And with this promises, they left and headed straight to professor McGonagall.

“Aunt, you told Lily and me about Peter and Mary some time ago. I presume nothing has changed?”

“No, not really. I'm trying to form some new jobs here at school, but that is easier said then done. Why?”

“Lily has some idea's, but before we can do something about it, we need to talk about it with them.”

“I'll send them an owl straight away.”

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The whole class was surprised, when during their double hour of mathematics, Dumbledore and McGonagall entered the classroom, and asked if Lily and Alexandra would come along. They knew they participated in extra activities, but they seldom interfered with regular classes.

Moments later the four of them were heading for Dumbledore's study, which was slightly larger than Minerva's.

Before he opened the door, he warned, “Be prepared that the last couple of years Peter and Mary faced quite some hardships. It has left its traces.”

Lily was grateful for Dumbledore's warning. Otherwise their had been a fair chance that she would not have recognized the two people sitting there. Despite that there was probably enough food in Minerva's own home, years of deprivation were obviously. Their clothes were clearly repaired too many times. But their eyes shown brightly and in anticipation.

Peter got up. “Hi Lily, it's been quite a while. How are you?”

Alexandra silently moved to Mary, and just hugged her.

Dumbledore started, “Dear Peter, Mary. As soon as we heard what had happened to you, we started to find ways of helping you, but had no success yet. If Minerva had not offered here place as accommodation, you could have stayed here. And that offer still stands. I understand that the girls have some bright idea. But wanted your opinion first before even telling us about it. If it is suitable, perhaps we can help you with it. I do hope you can tell me more about it later on.”

With a thinking glaze he looked for a moment at Lily, but remained silently, left and closed the door behind him.

Lily sighed and started, “So, all was lost?”

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Mary held up a small bundle, and Peter explained. “This is currently the total of all our possessions. Nothing else. Too bad, but we still have each other. That's what counts. Nothing else.”

Mary cast a thankful glance at her husband.

“And willing and capable to start anywhere else, no constraints?”

“Absolutely! Even if it is on some of the remote islands in the top of Scotland, though we would welcome some more warmth. Just a bit.”

“By the way, did you ever managed to check if our dream resembled reality? I mean before the fire?” Lily knew the answer in advance, but still wanted to ask.

Happy memories returned for a while, a short while. “No, sorry. We never had the chance. Perhaps, one day...”

“So, you still like to do that, going over there?”

“You mean another dream-holiday?, Mary asked.”

“No, I meant in real life, in the wakening world.”

“Who could afford such holiday, I don't think that even you couldn't.”

“I was not talking about a holiday, I meant staying there, at least several years to settle down for a while or even permanently. Would that be something, or is Greece too far away?”

Peter and Mary stared silently at her. But not just them, even Minerva was speechless for once.

Hesitatingly Mary asked, “You appear to be seriously. Are you suddenly wealthy or so, met important people?”

Peter confirmed, “I, we, never ever thought about that, but yes, why not. Do you mean housing, work?”

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Lily nodded, “Yes, no, yes, yes and eh yes. Yes I'm completely seriously. No, I'm not wealthy: I'm just the same girl you used to know. Yes, I met someone who might be willing to help you, but that is someone you probably also know, one of our teachers. Or actually, a former teacher.”

Minerva was taken back, “Who?”

Alexandra smiled, knowing what would come.

“Did you heard about what happened here, after the holidays?”

“Do you refer to the resignation and departure of the two teachers? That was in all of the papers.”

“Yes I do. Only a handful of people know about the tragic and sad story behind it. We all do, and as it is related to one of the teachers, you need to know it too. Better hear it from us, than in a distorted and fragmented way from others.”

Briefly Lily told Peter and Mary the most important parts of the story of 'Nim and Tim', and its tragic end.”

While Minerva stood silently, Mary shivered. “That poor lad. Compared to him, we are still rich, having each other!”

“So that is the reason by both profs didn't want to be confronted with other teachers and students. They thought, unjustly, that they were responsible, and should have done something to prevent this outcome.”

Peter commented, “That is ridiculous! It initially worked so well. They were not to blame. No-one was. So that is why the teachers are gone!”

“Point is, one of them never left, but is still here at Hogwarts.”

Moments later, Alexandra softly closed her aunts mouth.

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“Corstophine is too embarrassed to confront anybody. He is hiding here. Thinking about a way to go back home, to his parents olive farm on Crete.”

“And you think we could come along with him?”

“It seems that his farm, his estate is rather large, workers had their own homes there. Of course he would like to meet you first. Though I think he would welcome some friendly faces from a happier time.”

“So, what next, will you ask him to meet us here, shall we go to him?”

“We more or less expected this. So I asked the house-elves to prepare our lunch-meal outside. Here up in the hills is a nice spot overseeing the lake and the castle. It is near the memorial stone we erected for professor Binns. I don't think you have ever visited the place, professor?”

“No, girl, but I would like to do so now.”

Slowly some understanding grew in Minerva's eyes.

“In that case, you must fetch Corstophine before the students finish their lessons. Tell him to bring it all along.”

While having an extended lunch, more a banquet as the house elves had done their very best, they all met.

Corstophine apologised at McGonagall, “Sorry Minerva, I just can not cope anymore. All of those questioning accusing eyes. It is just too much for me.”

“I understand Dimitrios. You're not responsible. There is no-one who ever thought something like this could happen.”

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There the old Greek professor met again with two of his former students. And Lily observed that they could still get along very well.

When lunch was done, Lily asked “So, any second thoughts or questions?”

“But certainly,” Corstophine asked, “How do we get there and when?”

Lily asked “Peter, Mary, you were ready to go, I believe. Professor, do you have anything else to tend for, unfinished business here?”

“No, I've packed all my personal belongings and my favourite books in this trunk. No need for any further delays. But still, how do we get there?”

“You'll see!” With a lifting spell she moved the trunk towards a stone not far away. From her pocket Lily got some 50 pound bank-notes. She gave them to Peter and Mary.

“These are for hiring a taxi or a car for the final part of your journey. I believe that's more than enough. Consider it my investment in the olive-farm.”

“You mean, we leave shortly?”

“Yes! Alexandra, would you and your aunt escort them during the first part, I'll do the work here, and wait until you two return.”

Alexandra invited them to stay close together, near a round stone. When they were in position, Lily closed her eyes, and concentrated her thoughts on the old Knossos palace. A moment later she placed both hands on the circular stone, and turned an imaginary ring to the left.

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When she opened her eyes again, they were all alone. Silently she wiped some tears away. Her friend had sensed many partings before at this place. She didn't expect to see Peter, Mary or the old teacher ever again.

Minerva and Alexandra returned long after the sun had set.

“All well, found the place?”

“Yes we did, we couldn't miss. It seemed that it was more 'than just a farm'.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Most of the houses of the village were build on his property.”

“I see, and how about travelling with your aunt?”

“I think she rather go by bus!”



## A price to be paid

The whole school had mourned about Eoin's departure. But as no-one was further informed about the circumstances, most of them believed that he had died by the hands of his insane brother, who was shortly afterward captured and admitted again to St-Mungo hospital. Some however, specially some of the staff and those participating in the dream class, who had known Eoin slightly better, and also the real story behind his death, needed much more time to get along. They put up a brave face, when attending classes, but noticing the empty place where he used to sit, chilled most of his classmates. Most of the staff noticed, and decided to re-organize the class, so everyone sit at a different spot, but still, once in a while when handing out reviewed test-papers, exercises, one single paper remain lying and without reading everybody knew who's name was on it.

Perhaps of this fact that Eoin was part of a small but select group for 18 months, the dream-class was canceled several times.

One time, they were all, save one, present and sitting in a circle.

Suddenly, Lily got up, and with red eyes, said, “Sorry I still am not able to go on with this. I fear I'll meet him, or end up in that horrible corridor again.”

Robin, still feeling responsible for Timothy Mascal's death, got up and hugged Lily. “Yes, it feels horrible and even I wonder when the feeling of pain and guild will diminish. What ever

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others told me, I should have listened to you and now I'll have to face the results. So I think that I know what you're feeling.”

Martin agreed, “I constantly see independently moving shadows every where in this castle and stay inside after dark.”

Lily softly said “Eoin final cry will be in my ears for the rest of my life. I'm sorry to let you down.”

After Minerva dismissed the class, Martin asked, “Lily, care to come to my study at about nine?”

Silently she nodded and went back to the Gryffindor room for doing some home-work, dinner and preparations for the next day.

With gloomy thoughts she walked, a bit early, to Martin's study. For a moment she sat down on one of the benches opposite the area of the teachers. Although running was not allowed in Hogwarts' corridors, Lily saw Martin running. Catching his breath, he said, “Just back from the gym... Come on, in.”

Pointing to a couch, some chairs around a table and fireplace, “Please make yourself comfortable. I'll take a quick shower if you don't mind.”

Lily looked around. The place wasn't luxurious, probably standard room for any teacher. A working desk, place to sit with some chairs, a door with probably a bedroom behind it. When she sat down near the fireplace looked at the table. There were some glasses, an opened bottle of wine and a carafe. She expected it to hold water, or pumking-juice, but when she poured herself a glass, it reminder her of something from home, grapefruit-juice. Pleasantly surprised she finished her glass, still looking around she noticed that Martin had left the door to the shower wide open. Quickly she looked somewhere else, to his

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books, to the flames, but almost she found that her attention was drawn to that open door, and the person behind it. She had to look. Suddenly she blushed when she realized that she had been staring at him. Had he noticed? Lily hoped that he didn't had. When he got out, he was properly dressed. "Sorry for keeping you waiting."

"No problem, if you don't need a shower after a work-out, it wasn't a proper work-out."

Martin grinned, "You're absolutely right. I see you found the juice, good." and he sat down on the couch.

"Exercising and showers are good for clearing your mind. I remember the time of the examinations. I almost stayed the entire day under the shower." He laughed recollecting happy memories.

"Oh, life was so simple by then..."

Lily looked at him, asking without any words.

"At that time all of us had little to worry about. Simple things, like passing evaluations, exams with as little as possible learning. Training for upcoming Quidditch match. Team captain. Not getting caught by Vilcher. Trying to tempt Slytherin boys to do stupid things and letting them pay points for the house cup. Being proud of participating in Minerva's project. Represented by all Gryffindor students. That was my entire life, from all of our class. How little did we know what was ahead."

He paused and poured himself a glass of wine.

"You?"

Lily shook her head. "No, thanks."

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But Martin noticed a slight hesitation. 'Perhaps later....' he thought.

"I remember that you told us at the beginning of my first year, that you already knew that you could get a job at the Ministry."

"Ah, my dream! You remembered well. I was so proud of the prospect! With such great results I thought I would be welcomed with open arms there. But the result was quite the opposite. They have jobs there for every silly sod capable of holding a wand. And if not, they create any insignificant sort of job. I can wager any price that you are not able to guess what I had to do. For the last fifty years, they are considering replacing the internal owl-messaging-system, by something else. My job was to investigate the current quality of internal-owl-post-delivery. But only for messages arriving at the second floor, as they had different 'investigators' for each individual floor. If I worked hard and long enough there was a small chance that I could get promoted, overseeing the investigators. However, that promise was also made to each investigator.

How did I long for even doing detention in Filch office. Even that was more rewarding and useful than my whole year at the ministry. After three months my colleague from the first floor was fired, because of drinking while at work. I never noticed it and thought it was an utter absence of motivation and prospects. Not much later other colleagues disappeared, either sacked, or they quitted themselves. At the end of the year I got an automatically promotion. All others were gone. I became supervisor of all internal-mail-investigators. However, as I was the only one left, it meant I had to supervise myself. With every investigator leaving, I started to drink more and more.

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Impressed, Lily inquired, “I see”, was that really all you had to do?”

“Officially, yes. One from another department asked me to help with the MAMA-regulations. No don't ask. It's only known within the Ministry. You know that the Muggle population is exploding everywhere, while the number of wizards and witches dwindle. Some are trying to do something about it...”

“I heard what they are doing at Durmstrang. But that is there.”

“Yes I know about what they do there. Slavery and disgusting. Our ministry decided to handle it differently. If a witch gets pregnant, she gets a full year payed leave, hence the name: 'Ministerial Approved Motherly Absence'. If the father is also a wizard, they double it, and the father can transfer his months of leave to the mother, effectively giving her three years paid leave. My college and I helped some women filling in...not just the form.”

Martin looked away, and filled his glass and Lily's with wine.

“As I said, I started to drink more and more.

At some point, I started sending messaging-reports from one floor to the other by owl, effectively sending messages and replies to myself.

I even had to send me myself a howler, to remind me of Peter and Mary's wedding-day. And even then I hardly made it.”

“I know”, Lily remembered that scene all to well.

“By then Dumbledore said that Dibbet was trying to revive the post-graduate system here at Hogwarts, but I had to be patient. After another six months I resigned. They never found any alcoholic drinks in my office, as I send myself a special package

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every hour with my next drink. I have to say that I made countless good friends this way over there. At one point a stupid owl delivered my drink at the Minister's desk. That was the end. I couldn't stand another day, wasting my life away. I did all sorts of simple jobs on the 'Diagon Alley' for some months, until I received Dibbet's message.”

“That must have been quite a happy moment?”

“Absolutely! I felt I got that chance of a new life again. So I tried to sober up, got myself into shape, and reported here. Of course they could not afford to pay me anything, but I had purpose and meaning in life again.”

“I was glad that I had the opportunity to join Minerva's project again, assisting her, although I was afraid that you might think I was taking over.”

“For a moment the thought had crossed my mind, but I was too busy with other aspects of the program.”

“Then, at Dibbet's opening speech, when he mentioned the haunted third floor, it slipped into my mind, and became obsessed with it. I started reading all I could find about it, and about haunted houses in general. I simply had to solve that riddle. Just to prove myself. Such vanity.”

Silently he poured himself another one.

“Yes, I solved it, or actually we did. But at what price? If not for you, we all would be trapped there until times ends. One boy dead, and we hardly escaped.”

“And now?”

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“Well, it is not difficult to imagine what Dibbet will say at the end of the year. Another student died, because of me. I can hardly expect that my contract will be renewed.”

When he bowed his head, Lily got up and sat beside him. Her hand on his arm.

“You don't know that. Dibbet is much too eager to put the blame on Eoin's brother. Otherwise there would have been inquiry teams of the ministry, don't you think. And remember what you have done for our dream-team. What we have discovered this year.”

With a different look in his eyes he put his hand on hers, and he continued. “I found, I noticed also something else. The potion your group made, for entering the dream world, don't ever combine that with alcohol. I used it once after a Christmas party the evening before. Oh my God. When I woke up, I just had to take again and more. Luckily I just took the potion, no drinks. If I had I would not be sitting here anymore. A lethal addictive combination. Not actually something to go public with, would you say?”

“No, not really, Martin. Though we could add a warning label to our bottles: 'Not to be used in combination with...’”

They laughed.

Then he said, “It must have been hard for you too.” and he poured her another glass of wine.

She nodded, “Yes. With our study we fall from one thing into another. Some think that I'm fully in control, but I'm not. It is as much as a surprise for me as it is for them, but they don't realize that. Perhaps I'm slightly more gifted at one single area in the realm of magic, but I'm discovering uncharted areas. Did I

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tell you we've traveled to Hell? Not just proverbially but really!”

And she gave Martin a full report of being haunted by wolves and the journey downwards.

“I really think I caused her and the other death-eater's death somehow. At first I didn't understand, and thought their death was coincidental. A little later I understood when I found her there. In Hell.”

To soothe her, he said “But you never intended to kill her. You were angry or afraid and wanted to stop them.”

“Next Timothy died, and now Eoin. Never mind his brother, you saw that I held the dagger he plunged into.”

When she started to cry, Martin's shoulder was near.

Little later, he asked, “Isn't there anyone else you can talk to?”

“No, and that makes it even worse. We are all bound by Minerva's vow. I am allowed to talk it over with my friend, McGonagall's niece, but still, she is not part of the team, she can not understand it all. The pressure others put on me. So I'm glad you are back and part of the team.”

She looked at Martin, a friendly face, strong young man with huge shoulders. Listening to her. Understanding her. All of her doubts and also sharing the same fears.

When a clock struck eleven, she said “This late? I better be going.”

But Martin held her back, “You know you don't have to leave. I've promised to keep an eye on you. I can look at you all night.”

Lily got confused. What did he said, what did he mean?



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“I noticed you staring at me, having my shower. I appreciate your attention, there nothing wrong with that. You are a young and beautiful woman, you know that. Wanting. Needing.”

Totally confused, she put her hand on her heart.

She wanted so much someone she could talk too, someone who appreciated her, someone who did understand her, that she could refer too, what she thought, how she felt. Almost thoughtless, automatically she undone a first button.

Lily thought about her friend Alexandra. More and more time she spent time with Sirius. Lily wanted that so much. Someone to hold. To be hold. Someone to be there when she needed one.

A second and a third button became undone.

Her mind drifted to the beginning of the evening, what she saw through the open door, under the shower.

All other buttons became undone.

She noticed Martin going to the other room. Again she found herself staring at him.

He said, “I'm not to shy to admit, but I long for you, I can't deny that.”

“I have never...”

“I've had many young women and girls. There is a first time for everything. You know the longing too, Why postpone any longer?”

Lily realized that for whatever you do, or what ever you don't do, there is a price to be paid. Was she up to it? Martin would not stop at simply holding hands. When her hand moved down-

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wards, she felt her key, and got reminded of the dagger, slicing illusions. Illusions!

“No, I'm just a student, it's not proper!”

“By teaching, you also became one of the staff.”

“You are much older, six years.”

“Age is but a number.”

Then it flashed through her mind: “If age is just a number, why don't you go to madam Pomfrey or professor McGonagall!”

But she turned and said, “I don't think this is a good idea!”

The moment she touched her key, Martin seemed to have shrunk, to just an average student, while Lily had grown considerably, not in size, but in personality.

Quickly she got into her robe again, grabbed her other clothes and went for the door.

Obviously disappointed, Martin said, “OK, have it your way.” and he waited until the door closed behind her and remained shut.

As a consequence Lily had to walk through the dark corridors of Hogwarts castle, all alone. None of the grim shadows frightened her anymore. She just cried as she remembered her previous walk in the dark castle, but by then hand-in-hand with James.

When she finally reached that fat-lady, and entered the Gryffindor common room, she found her friend waiting for her.

“Where have you been, all evening?”

“I was with Martin.”

She observed her clothes, tears and red-eyes. “Did he....”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

Lily shook her head, “No, but he certainly wanted to, even asked. And for a moment, even I wanted it. But it didn't feel right. I don't feel anything for him, I just felt so very alone, and loved to be loved. When I realized I meant nothing to him, just another girl, I ran away. I couldn't stay. I couldn't do it.”

“I think you made the right choice, Lily.”

“Sometimes I envy you, Alexandra so much, for having someone like Sirius.”

“O dear, o dear... How about James then? I thought you liked him?”

“But he's never ever there. He cares only about Quidditch, his marauder-friends, pestering Slytherin, and a tiny bit of school. I'm not on the second, third or fourth place. I'm nowhere. Out of sight, out of mind.”

“You are wrong Lily. Very wrong in this respect. James cares for you. Not just a bit, but a lot.”

Desperately Lily raised her arms, “But why doesn't he ever show it.”

“I think he is uncertain, afraid?”

“James 'stag' Potter, head of the marauders, feared by almost whole Slytherin and half of Hogwarts-staff. He afraid? Come on now! Afraid I'll turn him into a werewolf?”

Slightly sarcastically Alexandra confirmed, “Perhaps afraid of turning him into a house-pet. Boys are different type of creatures. Also homo-sapience, apparently also equipped with heart, brains, feelings, but they hardly use them. When they communicate, they seems to use a different kind of language, or understanding.”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

Lily smiled vaguely again.

“No joking. James really cares deeply about you. He just needs a push in the right direction, someone to open his eyes and ears. And for his self-esteem, he must believe that it was all his idea. Please, give him some time to grow and get on terms with his feelings.”

“Thank you Dr. Alexandra Freud, for this priceless advice.”

“You are welcome, dear friend.”

## **An extraordinary divination class**

The talk with his father lingered continuously on James' mind, just like the eventful trip of his friend to Scandinavia. He realized that, specially among others, some boys exaggerate things but he knew Sirius better than that, he would rather play things down. After another sleepless night he wrote his mother a letter, and went to the owl-tower the first thing in the morning.

Much sooner than expected, the same afternoon, he got a return message, saying:

“I also visit Hogsmeade regularly...”

Knowing that he could not keep asking Dumbledore for extra leave, he informed his Quidditch team that he had a sore head, and they should practice this time without him.

As soon as he got back in the castle, he headed for one of the secret passageways, and went straight to 'The Hogshead'.

Although James was glad to see his mother already there, he was surprised to find what she was doing. Much of the table was covered with cards. Directly after the first glance he recognized them from one of the classes. No ordinary playing cards.

“Hi mom, glad to see you, I didn't know you were into that!” and he pointed to the deck of Tarot-cards.

After a quick hug, “Hello James! No, I don't use them for such superstitious things as fortune-telling. I plot my own route and destination. But all of these pictures contain long stories to contemplate about. Consider them as an almanac and a psychology textbook combined together.”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

With a quick move she swept all cards onto a single pile,  
“Though you thought dropping the divination subject at school,  
you didn't want to talk about that, I'd guess. But wait a moment.”

She looked at the bar-tender and asked, “Abe! Twice the usual thing!”

With big eyes James looked at his mother. “I didn't...”

With a smile, his mother explained, “You wouldn't know how many hours I've spent here. With and without your father. But tell me, what is on your mind?” she asked friendly.

“Mom lately I've been talking with dad, same place, different table, over there, as a matter of facts. I asked him some questions and we talked about it over some beers. We both enjoyed doing that, but he also explained that he probably had a one-sided view, and I should ask your opinion. You would see thing probably totally different.”

“About what?” She tried carefully, but knowing what to come.

“Girls, women...”

They waited when the waiter brought two glasses, a pint of beer for James, and a small glass.

“What do you have, mom?”

“That's what they call Irish mist, whiskey heather, honey and herbs. But you remember our conversation, long, long time ago?”

“You mean being careful with friends, even distrustful, not knowing ones motives? Yes, I do.”

Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“Remember, it was to protect you against others as well as against yourself, not to scare you. Unlike your grandparents or your parents, you will probably not have to work a single day in your life, for making a living. The obviously good side of that is that you grew up, without being in need of anything. Plenty of anything. Not everything is positive. One modest aspect is, that you'll probably never have the fulfillment of a hard day honest working. Another is, what we told you, that there are lots of people who envy your position, either want -what they think- an easy living, a slice of the cake, or even take it all away.”

“Yes, mom, I am very much aware of that, but...”

“But what?”

“But I too have longings, desires, strange urges. Dad told me to explore, but to be careful not to go too far.”

“That sounds fair enough to me, not?”

“True, but do you know about what happens at Durmstrang? It surprised and appalled me.”

“Yes, some people there, still live in the dark ages, and treat women like slaves or cattle.”

“And have you heard about Sirius?”

“I think so, yes. Pretty determined fellow, that friend of yours. Why do you ask?”

“Don't despise me mom, but I'm not so sure if I would have made the same decision. I don't have someone like Alexandra waiting for me. To pull me through.”

“Aren't there any other girls at school?”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“Sure, and as Quidditch-seeker I get a lot of attention from all houses. I like a lot of them, they are nice. Some are pretty, some are smart, some are funny.”

James had told himself, not to mention Lily explicitly.

Margaret thought deep, what to say and how to say it, without revealing too much of her own idea's, without giving him immediately the idea of being pushed into one direction.

“Girls are students, just like any other students. They have feelings and can be hurt. They have hormones rushing through their veins, just like you, although with them it started at an earlier age, I think that is the most important thing to keep in mind.”

“Yes mom, I'm neither an idiot from Slytherin, nor from Durmstrang!”

“Sorry, I didn't want to offend you, I was just to emphasize to treat girls with respect, as equals!”

“Yes, I am aware. Gwili, she is the captain of Hufflepuffs' Quidditch team, knows just as much, and perhaps even more about the game than I do. She is a nice girl, by the way.”

“Good to hear that. But Quidditch is quite something else than what we are talking about, not? I'm not saying you shouldn't date with girls from other houses, of course not! Your own grandparents were from Ravenclaw and Gryffindor. The fact that we are sitting here and talking proves that it perfectly can work out. I was only hinting that the sorting hat, even though it values your own preferences, is capable of sifting through your mind, your personality. All students are unique, but what make Hufflepuf students so unique, what separates the Gryffindor's from the Hufflepuf's or the Slytherin's? Your ambitions, likings,



## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

dis-likings, and so-on makes the distinction, that's the reason why you should feel more at home, at ease at one house than another. Perhaps you should look more within Gryffindor?"

"It is not so much about finding just A girl, mom. It's about THE ONE for me."

"I see. You want to succeed in a single try? You make it hard for yourself. And to make it worse, the fear of being left over, is for girls much stronger than with boys, so that can cause some erratic behaviour. Right now it is ridiculous, you all have a long life ahead of you all, but the fear of being singled-out, left over, not part of a group or community runs strong in most living beings. Among girls they can be pretty mean to each other, even at this age."

Suddenly, James let some of his private thoughts slip away.

"Sometimes, when I look at Sirius and Alexandra, I envy him. Not regarding her, but in general. Sometimes before I fall asleep I wonder what it feels to hold a girl so tight. And to be absolutely sure that she is the one. How can you be sure?"

"Son, there are no absolute guarantees in life. Just like preparing for an examination or a test-paper. Only if you cheat and know the answers in advance, you can be absolute sure. Otherwise you can only do your best, and have faith in yourself, have trust. With girls it is all about trust, you trusting them, and they trusting you."

"But mom, I have even been dreaming about it. Mostly vague, but once, it was so vivid, so real, I really touched her heart, but when I woke up, the next morning I was wet -not urine- and felt horrible, embarrassed about it."

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“Oh James, that is nothing to be ashamed of. It is just your own body, telling you that everything is properly functioning.”

James still looked troubled.

“And James, whatever anybody says to you, you never have to prove anything, to anyone. Not even yourself. Don't get tricked into something that you later regret.”

Finally James nodded, “I think I see what you mean mamma. But sometimes it is so hard.”

“Yes son, I know it is. But both your father and I thought it worthwhile waiting until we found each other. Even then some considered us old fashioned and prudish, but we didn't mind.”

“So you and dad waited until you were married?”

“Eh, no. Not exactly.”

Cautiously James tried, “Dare to tell me, mom?”

Slightly surprised and embarrassed, “What exactly?”

“When did you know that dad was the one for you, and you the one for dad?”

Feeling relieved that her son did not ask about something else, she answered, “One way is simply telling how you feel, asking how the other feels, observing the response when you ask. And when you learned and discovered about each other, that might take years, and you are still sure, then it's time for the final question. Between Muggles it's proposal, engagement and marriage. In the magical world we have also our own promises and vows. We express publicly your feelings and intentions, if they are answered likewise, both involved and all around them, knows. Those vows are already officially recognized by our

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ministry, but sometimes, often when important families are involved, the exchange unbreakable vows.”

For a moment she smiled as memories came up.

“But before that, lots of conversations take place, with and without words. You must really like her, know her, really know her, trust each other, feel attracted to each other. Do you hear me saying: both. If it is only one-directional, it is a recipe for disillusion, disaster and unhappiness.”

After looking at her watch, she added “I think you should be back at school, before they miss you.”

Looking at the pile of cards, he asked, “Would you mind?”

“I presume about relationships?”

“Remember what I just said about the cards...” but nonetheless she offered if the pile of card, spread them up-side-down on the table.

“You just shuffle them, and concentrate one one particular person. And say when you think you are finished...”

Looking at the rear of the card he constantly move them over the table, thinking about Lily, her smile, her eyes, her laugh, the way she made him feel. “Done!”

“Sure?”

His mother placed seven cards in a diamond shaped figure.

His mother looked intense at him. “Don't be disappointed with the outcome. You are in control of your life, not the cards.”

“I understand!”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

She touched the first card and before she turned it around she explained, “This indicated if she 'might' be 'the one' for you.”

“The star!”

“Is that good?”

“For that position, it is as bright as can be.”

She pointed at the second one “Possibility of a commitment”

His mother turned the card, “Well, well, the sun. She could be your horizon.”

His mother looked at him, “Shall I continue?”

James nodded and his mother looked at the next card, “Obstacles: Nine of wands. James looked concerned

”Looks scary? You are not in a hurry, so don't do anything that others might put you in a position to hurry. You should prepare for conflicts. I should indicate that here, at school is the best place there is to learn.”

“Fourth card, positive influences, the magician”

“Is that a good card, mom?”

“There are neither good nor bad cards. It is something very powerful, needing knowledge, strength and inspiration for your challenge, but also indicating a right time to start.”

“Fifth one, 'what can you do?’”

Quickly she turned the card, 'Page of Wands'

“If she is available, take a chance! Should I say more?”

“Sixth, what does that girls needs to do before...”

“What does the four of pentacles mean, in this context?”

“This card indicates fear and anxiety. It could mean a lot of things. Like I said, fear of left over, or fear of being hurt.”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“Final, will you be happy? Two of cups”

James looked doubting, “shouldn't that be preferably ten of cups, or 'the lovers', 'the world'?”

But his mother smiled broadly, “No James, this is much much better. It represents true love, balanced and stable relationship, for better and worse.”

She looked at him, “Satisfied, with your outcome?”

He shrug his shoulders, “The more answers, the more questions!”

“That sounds like one of Rowena Ravenclaws favourite quotations! What else did you expect, a clear 'YES' or 'NO', to me it reads very positively, but in the end, it is your life, your call, your decision. Don't blame the Cards!”

“Eh mom? Dad told me you two started off rather bumpy, but told me to ask you about it...”

When the words left his lips, he noticed his mother turned scarlet. “That is eh rather private and intimate. Perhaps later.”

After finishing his glass, he got up, gave his mother a hug, “Thanks mom, for your time, for understanding, for it all. And eh eh thank you for not asking, but there is one specific girl on my mind. I never told her, because I was afraid that my parents would object against her.” he said with a faint smile.

Intrigued his mother responded, “In that case you should introduce 'that girl' to your parents!”

“They have already met...”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

After James left, Margaret remained there for quite a while, with quite a lot of things on her mind to think about. Obviously about all that her son had told her, and wondered what he had not told her.

But also that she wasn't really honest towards her son. Those cards meant much more to her than she had admitted to him. The hours before James had arrived, she had spread those cards over and over again, while thinking about Sirius, Alexandra and those two together. What she had seen didn't comfort her. The chance of the 78 cards repeating themselves was astronomically small. But the resulting pattern remained the same or got worse. Pain, impossible decisions, solitude, sacrifices, unfulfilled aspirations, though never regrets. The cards could be wrong, mistaken. They should be.

In order to get rid of gloomy thoughts she remembered the last lines of her conversation with James.

When Edward picked her up, he asked, “And dear?”

After a warm kiss, she said, “You horrible man, coward! Instructing your son to ask me about our bumpy begin! We both hoped nothing like that ever happens again, not like that! The worst introduction ever for any girl...”

Amused he played with one of her buttons, “Did you tell him?”  
“NO! And by the way, It seems that there is indeed one particular person on his mind. James said that his parents already met the girl he likes...”

“And now he wonders what we think?”

“Of course!”

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“Did you tell him?”

“Again, no! Not yet.”

“You are right, he is too young!”

“Perhaps you might do that!”

“That depends how badly he wants to know. That should indicate how serious he is about her.”

“But isn't that something for mothers to decide, when the time is there?”

“We never asked our parents.”

“Different times, other situation.”

“And what do you think or feel?”

“They too will face difficult times, but will be happy together.”

## Making up

The next Friday, at the sleeping class was a disaster.

When finally all participants were gathered, they all realized something was changed. Even Minerva noticed.

All of those years there was an atmosphere of eagerness, openness, friendliness, and trust. All were gone.

“What is the matter? What has happened? Can anyone tell me!”

She looked intense at each student one-by-one.

Lily started “I think that I should no longer...”

But Martin cut her short. “No! Minerva, it's me, I'm to blame, I tried to...”

The friendly professor suddenly became very strict and stern.

“Martin! You first, my room, NOW!”

And to the others, “Wait here, until I returned.”

After he confessed that he tried to seduce her, Minerva became furious. “You loathing imbecile, idiot! Have you thought about the consequences?”

“In what aspect, nothing happened!”

“That is not relevant. Don't you see? She will never trust you anymore. Actually none of us ever can. You have jeopardized past four years of our work! Just imagine where Lily's subconscious could send you to! Or do to you? Or what you might do to one of the other students?”



## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

He nodded.

But Minerva wasn't finished, “More over, you have lost my confidence and trust. I presume you understand what that means, Martin?”

He nodded silently again.

“I'll go back to the others. You wait her!”

And with brisk steps she first went to Dumbledore to inform him and next went back to the classroom with the students waiting on her.

Without a single word she went in, closed the door behind her and sat down on one of the chairs.

After she sighed deep several times, she looked at the other boys and girls, without giving Lily more attention than any of the others.

“Well then. It seems that Martin almost crossed a line he should have stayed far, far away from. From what I understand no really harm is done, but the big question remains if broken trust can be repaired. Normally I am in favour of a second chance. But here, where trust is a vital essence... I don't know. Before I make any description, your view is essential. And as it is about trust, the final view has to be unanimously. If there is even one single person who has his or her doubts, we can not continue. Is that clear!”

Minerva looked at the students that participated for the first year, “I presume that most of you have no idea yet!”

But Damian Garraghan answered, “Did Martin approached, offended, threatened one of the girls, either in this class or any other on Hogwarts? My sister at the ministry recognized his

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

name. She told me stories I won't repeat them here. If that is indeed the case, he has lost my confidence.”

All the girls turned to each other, “And I thought it was a descent guy, good looking and so-on. I wonder...”

But Minerva cut the rumors short. “He has indeed approached a girl at Hogwarts. Whoever she might be, whatever house, rumors like that are disastrous on our project here, where trust is absolute essential.”

She looked at them, “Thank you Damian. I think all of the girls here are grateful for making up your mind so quickly and clearly. For them it would have been a much more difficult decision.”

Robin sighed deeply, “I agree with Damian. I too would have said 'no', but that is now not relevant anymore.”

Minerva looked relieved, that someone had taken the burden of a painful outcome of her shoulder. “I'll take care of the rest. Dumbledore already knows about it. Right now, I don't think it is a good thing to let our mind drift away to far. So no dreaming today. How are you all progressing with occlumency?”

Quickly Minerva had changed the subject to something else.

Robin answered “Most of them master the technique pretty well. That is when they are aware and awake. I find that some can still be caught when they are 'off-guard'. There might also be some other situations that...”

And she nodded Minerva, “Do you have a second?”

She walked to one of the corners and waited to Minerva to join her.

“Yes, Robin? We were talking about trust.”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“Yes, I know. I want to test them and trick them. We all know that the use of drinks are strictly forbidden at school, but what happens when they do drink, is their resistance still firm?”

Minerva looked initially shocked, but she thought about it and slowly changed her mind. She picked up several pieces of parchment and started writing.

“You are right Robin. Say that we will celebrate a new start or something like that. I'll take this note to the kitchen, they will be able to supply you with everything, wine, beer and even stronger. None of them like tomato-juice, so I suggest that you stay with that. The other notes are for for Dibbet and Dumbledore, they should also know about what will be happening here, otherwise Filch might be interfering. I'll leave you in charge for this unscheduled test as it was your idea in the first place. I have other things to look after and I need Lily's help with that. Report at my office when ready and done.”

When Robin announced that their class was replaced by a long-planned party, all other students welcomed it without even suspecting that they were being tested.

After a quick word Minerva and Lily left the classroom. When she closed the door behind them, Minerva said “We still have a problem unfortunately. Martin.”

Walking through the corridors towards her office, she explained. “Clearly he has to go. Even away from Hogwarts, I know a place very well suited for him. I am sure he'll like it very much.”

When they entered Minerva's office, Martin was still there, and not particularly surprised that Lily had come along.

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

But before he could open his mouth, Minerva started. “Martin, you understand that this breach of trust has implications. No-one still knows what has happened beyond the walls of this office and that should remain so. But some students heard about what has happened on the ministry. Because of that, some of the participants have said that they lost confidence. I'll only say that I had not asked Lily about her vote. You'll have to go.”

Martin let his head hang down. “I know. My fault. Back to Diagon Alley.”

But Minerva continued, “No! Not unless you really want to. I know that at one of the other schools, they are also looking for post-graduate students. You might feel more comfortable at BeauxBatons.”

Both Martin and Lily looked relieved, but Minerva still looked worried. “Though, we still have a problem, Martin. Your sessions with Dumbledore! Who do you think is capable of taking over from you?”

And she explained it to Lily, “Remember that Dumbledore explained that with analyzing-spell, you could only detect familiar spells? Last couple of weeks, Dumbledore have been training Martin with spells that he would never teach anyone else. Spells so dark and awful that few in the wizardry world know about them. Spells that cause heart, liver, kidney and all other sorts of failures. The ones we need to detect and block.”

“Yes professor, I understand,” Martin replied timidly, “Thank you for your suggestion. When do I have to leave?”

“When you are ready. Dumbledore know in general terms about the situation and would inform Dippet. Don't postpone too long I should say.”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“You know that Dumbledore insisted that he would erase those spells from my memory when I leave Hogwarts...”

“Yes, that was part of the agreement. Why?”

Martin remained silently for a while, looked briefly at Lily, and then explained, “I feel these is only one way to make it up. If you and Dumbledore agree, I would like to share my knowledge about those dark-spells with Lily.”

“Why she, except for making amends?”

“She is studying medicine, so she knows much more about the impact of those spells...”

And Martin explained to Lily, “For instance the stomach spells, you can obstruct entrance or exit, or even block blood-circulation for a part or entire organ. Same for kidney, liver, bladder.”

“That makes sense, but Dumbledore has the final say it this.

Wait here just a moment and I'll ask... No, you two better come with me. I'll ask straight away. That seems the best solution I think.”

Dumbledore didn't look surprised when he looked up to his visitors. Instead, he look very grave. “So you came to a conclusion, Minerva. And I understand the outcome.”

“Albus, we think that she is the best possible alternative for knowledge of those ultra dark spells. I realize she hasn't even passed her OWL's, but she has deep medical knowledge, and already part of the team for quite a while. What do you think about it, should I any look further?”

Dumbledore looked at Lily, “Dear girl, you already have more than enough on your mind, and I really am not pleased with the idea of putting another load on your shoulders. No, I'm abso-

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lute not happy with this idea. What do you think yourself, you know what it is about, who else in your dream-team is capable for this. I can also seek within Ravenclaw for their best student regarding spells and defense.”

Both Dumbledore and McGonagall looked intense at her.

After considering all of her dream-mates, she said, “Professor, the biggest problem we have with the team, and advanced spells, is that only those in their final year are enough qualified.”

“Indeed, therefore we were initially so pleased that Martin came along to provide a more stable factor. Alas!” Albus remarked sourly.

“Other issue is that none of them have chosen Biology as subject.”

“Yes, that complicates things.” Minerva confirmed.

Another long pause passed by.

“Perhaps if I slowdown on my other study, with Miranda, I could do this, but I do have an important condition however...” professor Dumbledore looked surprised but also slightly worried. “ Very few students dare to raise their own preconditions to him.”

“Such as?”

“That you will not erase my knowledge about those spells after I leave Hogwarts.”

Now he looked seriously worried. “I seriously don't think that is a good idea. Absolutely not! Why do you want them? Those are only intended for making people ill, let them suffer and die!

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These are spells are only truly black magic, you can not do anything good with them. Out of the question!”

But Lily was persevering in her condition, “No professor, you are wrong. Anything, any tool, any spell, any potion, any technique can be used for either good or bad.”

“Not these!”

“Still! I could use these spells therapeutic, test the working of medications, stop bleeding around wounds, increase or decrease absorption by intestines.”

Despite the awkward position Martin had placed himself in, he smiled. “Well phrased, Doctor Evans!”

But neither of the professors looked very pleased, “I don't think any of us had asked your opinion, Mr. Steward!” Miverva commented stiffly. “I don't know these spells, but heard about them. They are part of the darkest known to the wizardry world.”

As the flames in the fireplace almost had died away, Albus used a lifting spell to move some logs lying nearby. When he dropped them on the still hot glowing ashes, the final flames vanished, but something else appeared! A face hovered in the fireplace.

At first Lily and Martin could not believe their eyes, and even Dumbledore and McGonagall looked surprised, although they had seen this way of communicating before.

Dumbledore asked Minerva, “Do you know who she is?” As it was the face of an elderly lady.

Before she replied however, she looked at Lily. “Yes, Albus! Lily and I met her before. But this is not possible. This is Lily grand-grand-mother, who passed away several years ago.”

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Before Dumbledore could ask anything, the face in the fireplace started to speak. “I'm glad you do recognize me, professor. That makes it slightly simpler. Yes, I am, or was Diana Veritiakis, former head of the Greek Ministry of Magic, and previous keeper of the key.”

Now the fiery face looked at Dumbledore. “You should not be troubled. My niece just passed another important test. She could resist temptations. She has my complete trust, she also deserves yours! She will need this knowledge. She is ready for this. Of all the people, you know who has to be stopped!”

After these final words, the face disappeared and the flames returned. Something all of them welcomed as even Dumbledore shivered.

Martin asked timidly “Was this... Was she...”

As always, Dumbledore spoke slowly and carefully, but obviously even he was touched. “Yes Martin, this was a message from beyond the grave. I've read about this before, but never seen it myself. A message directly for us. A clear instruction for me, though I'm not glad.”

“Why? Don't you think she is ready for it?” Martin asked.

“Of all the students or staff around here, she probably is. But the fact that a dead witch has to tell me this, troubles me even much more. It implies that it is a matter of life-or-death, not just for Lily, but for many others also. This is indeed grave.”

“Who was she talking about. Someone you know?”

But Dumbledore replied, “You don't have to be troubled with that. I would suggest that you set your mind of transferring your knowledge to this young lady, and stick to that. I expect the both of you later today after dinner, let say around eight?”



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“Yes, professor. I will be here.” Lily answered.

Since a long time she felt excited, relieved. It seemed that the awkward scene was intended to have taken place, and that she had passed an important test, and was granted access to new and more secluded magical wisdom.

While walking back to the Gryffindor common-room, Martin asked, “Can you forgive me, Lily? I didn't know what came over me.”

“I think so yes, but don't expect much trust from my side.”

“Alright. I see. I understand. You are probably right. I'll try to make it up with you.”

“How?”

“The spells Dumbledore was talking about are indeed darker than dark. And if he presents them in the same way he instructed me, it will be very cumbersome, but I think I can be of assistance. I can make them easier for you.”

“Again, how?”

“Dumbledore has piles of books, each describing how to inflict horrible ailments and diseases. Perhaps they are alphabetically ordered, or by effectiveness in torturing and killing people, but while awake, it became clear to me that some spells are related, similar. I think that I even know some spells that Dumbledore doesn't have in his books.”

“That sounds very presumptuous, Martin!”

“Let me explain, and after seeing Dumbledore this evening, be your own judge about it. With your knowledge of Biology you should be able to grasp what I expect. Many organs work in the same way. For instance, the stomach. It has an entrance, an

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exit, veins coming to it and veins leaving it. Also with nerves. With these spell you can alter any condition: you can enlarge or shrink entrance or exit. You can even block it altogether. And I mean any part of the body, eyes, ears, nose, heart, brains, lungs, specific veins, or muscles. A dozen or so spells, that can be applied at thousands different places.”

Lily thought about that, “If you are correct, it could make sense.”

“It would save you months ploughing through those books!”

When they returned after dinner, they were greeted by Dumbledore in his study. He pointed at a vast number of books. “Sorry to say, but these are never to leave my study, there is a protecting spell keeping them here. And these are just for this evening. I have enough for the next month or so.”

But half an hour later, and many spells regarding the pink, Lily understood what Martin had told her, with regards to similarity. “Professor, can we stop for a moment?”

“But of course, they are horrible not?”

“Yes, but let me try something!” She increased and decreased the sensitivity of her pink.

“Very well, Lily!”

“No! That is not what I mean.”

And next Lily did the same with her thumb, noose and ear.

Dumbledore nodded enthusiastically and approvingly.

“Very, very well done, young girl!

Dumbledore suddenly looked very worried, “These spells were not described, if I'm correct!”

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“You are right professor. Martin and I have been doing some variations on the spells-descriptions you gave us.”

“Merlins beard! You did what?”

For a moment the old professor look in total disbelieve at the two youngsters. Then she noticed a small tear in his eye.

“When I was much much younger and less burdens to cary, I felt pure ecstasy when discovering the twelve uses of dragon blood. You probably do not realize it now, but I think you made again an important discovery for the magical world.”

Martin replied “What do you mean by that?”

But Lily said, “All I could think of, was finding a way of finding out if a person's symptoms are related to a know cause. And perhaps avoid the need of guinea pigs for testing medications.”

Albus nodded in approval and slight admiration. “Putting others welfare in the first place. I'm proud of you!”

## Lip service

James and Sirius got detention after their class English for messing up....

While cleaning up the classroom, James asked his friend, “Tell me honestly, this thing going on with you and Alexandra, is this as good as it looks like? I've seen couples breaking up shortly after they became 'an item'.”

Sirius replied surprised, “You really want to know?”

“Yes, I'm curious. All that talking about romance I've always considered cheapish girl talk, but it seems that even my best friend is hooked, pardon me the expression. So I think that of all people you can give me an honest unbiased opinion, not?”

As they were almost finished cleaning up, and professor Undertow just had left, he looked straight at James.

“If you really want honest answers, you'll get two of them.” And with these words he walked to the door, where his girlfriend Alexandra was waiting for him to finish. Quickly he looked if the professor was really gone. After a quick kiss he said, “Please come in. James want to know something, and he wants real honest answers, not something you think he might just like to hear.” And he repeated James' question.

While Alexandra, a bit surprised, was looking for the proper words James added, “When I look at you it all seems perfectly blue sky, everyday sunshine. But you know from here at school, life isn't always plain sailing, And books and songs aren't always so positive.”

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Even while holding Alexandra's hand in his, he admitted, much to his girl alarm, “Yes and no, to be honest.”

“What on earth???” Alexandra exclaimed.

“Sssh dear! Let me try to explain it in a way James understand, though the comparison falls serious short. Try to remember how it feels when you win a Quidditch game? Can you remember your first game? Seeing and holding the golden-snitch the very first time? Being selected for the team? Add that all together and multiply that a thousand times. And that won't even comes near to it.”

Alexandra smiled a bit, as James said, “But?”

Her smile immediately was gone and she listen tensely.

“Yes, there is indeed 'a but', I won't lie about it, James.” and with these words he held Alexandra tight.

“Perhaps it sounds idiotic from the mouth of a fifteen year old boy, but to me she is an unbelievable stunning beauty...”

She tried to reward the compliment with a kiss, but Sirius continued. “When I look at her, every time, I can not understand why she likes me. And I fear that one day she dumps me and find someone else... But when she is near, and I look in her eyes, when she holds me, all fear is gone!”

While Sirius and Alexandra rehearsed non-verbal communication, James Asked again, “And you Alexandra, obviously not now, but never a moody thought while alone, honestly?”

Alexandra's face became serious. “Yes, Last year I confessed up to Lily that I dreaded the summer holiday, just for missing him. And I had moments I felt terrible. Like I never felt before. A couple of times when Sirius ended up in the hospital-wing,

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after some silly accident, or this spring when he caught a bad stroke of flu, decided to bravely ignore it and ended up with a pneumonia. I felt so bad, so terrible, like I never felt before. The idea of missing him for weeks, for months, or even for ever, that's is an indescribable torture.”

“But still...”

“When going to our common-room, a shared class, the first thing I do, is looking for Sirius. I feel assured, at rest, the moment I see him. And his kisses...”

“Yes what about them? It seems you cant get enough of them!”

“From your words, I understand you've never kissed Lily, or another girl. Just some 'happy birthday, James' kisses from aunts or so? Don't blush! For everybody there has to be a first time for everything. It isn't a subject they teach you in classes like broomstick flying. Mentioning flying, one day you will admit that that will not even come close. You know I'll get one every morning? I look forward to it every day, It makes a perfect start. And every extra one feels like eh... like the first ray of sunshine after a thunderstorm. Like an affirmation of my feelings.”

Sirius said, “I know a good nick-name for you, how about 'sun-ray'?”

But James replied, “You're mistaken Alexandra. I did kiss Lily before and it did feel good. You remember, after that horrible tragedy with one of the girls that died? But that was totally different from what you are doing. Firstly, you never stop, and secondly it looks like artificial respiration, what I learned at first-aid classes.”

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Alexandra laughed loudly, but surprisingly Sirius replied earnestly.

“Now you mention it. You hit the nail precisely on the head. When I look into her eyes it gives the sensational feeling of drowning. Rather pleasantly, and subsequently she needs to rescue me, which feels even better!”

Totally flabbergasted Alexandra looked at her boyfriend. “That is a wonderful way of describing your emotions, Sirius...”

With a warm and grateful look in her eyes she rose and walked to the door. “Please wait! The proof of the pudding is in the eating! With an innocent experiment I think I can let you feel what we feel. I'll try to find someone very good in transfiguration.”

Instead of 'someone' she returned a moment later with Lily. While walking she explained. “Can you imagine? James started to ask all sorts of questions to Sirius about me and Sirius. About relations and feelings. And also about kissing. If you want, I like to do a simple experiment with him. He thinks I am trying to find another student, good at transfiguration. If you come along, promise me you do not say a single word, yes?”

Lily nodded silently when she returned to the classroom where James and Sirius were waiting for her to return.

“Please wait here!”

When Alexandra entered the room again, she started to explain.

“I hope you have a good remembrance and imagination, James. I've found one willing to help with an experiment. But you

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must be guided by your inner feelings, not be distracted by what you see. Also I'm not sure how good my spells are and how long they last. Actually, I would rather not take the risk of transfiguration. Others might use a spell to close your eyes, but I rather use a shawl, just to cover them. All you must do is sit still here, put your hands behind your back and fold your hands, just like in the Yoga-class. Can you do that?"

James replied, "Sure, and then what?"

"I'll ask the student, it is a girl, to sit on your lap. After I asked you to concentrate on one particular person. When you managed to do so, just nod. She will kiss you and you should imagine being kissed by the person you concentrate on. We'll observe your heart-rate and your response. It only works if you are really honest to yourself!"

After his confirmation, Sirius put a shawl over James's eyes and Alexandra let her friend in.

"Remember, not a single word!" she reminded her whispering. And repeated, to inform Lily, "When we are all ready, try to sit on his lap. Don't be scared, no-one knows about this, not even my own friends. His hands are and remain behind his back. I mention a name of a person you might or not know. James tries to concentrate on that person and while doing so, you simply kiss him."

Sirius asked "all ready?" And after confirmation Lily climbed on James lap. Alexandra put Lily's hand on James heart, which almost reacted in a response of her, but Alexandra reminded her to keep quiet.



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“All right. First one for controlling. Your mother James, Margaret Potter. Everybody should be able to remeber his own mother.”

After he nodded, he received two small kisses on both cheeks. It produced only a soft smile and his heart-rate dropped at the vision and remembrance of a safe and homely environment.

“OK, I think this will be working. Second person, my aunt, professor McGonagall! You following her classes for four years.”

It wasn't difficult to picture the professor in front of his eyes, but knowing what would come next made James hesitate to nod. But after breathing a couple of times deeply, he did and again received two kisses. His heart rate rose by his appalling imagination being kissed by such an old hag, so James complained, “Horrible!”

Smiling, Alexandra said, “I fully understand James, just one step worse before it gets better. This one we have to do. Oh and by the way, you are free to return the service. Think of your friend Sirius!”

“What! I don't fancy boys!”

“I know, just be glad we didn't put Filch on the list!”

This time it took even much longer to concentrate, but when he finally managed to get hold of himself, he concentrate on his best-friend, on a broom-stick nearby, and he nodded.

This time, Lily still on his lap, kissed his lips. With a moan he quickly turned his head away.

Sirius immediately said, “I hope we can still be friends after this ordeal!”

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“That is very clear. OK, you remember Molly Wilson from Hufflepuf. A nice girl, she is seeing Robert Sheldrake a lot. And I wonder if you would you dare to...”

He concentrated and nodded. A quick kiss, and an even smaller returned.

“What did you feel?”

“Nothing, it might have been my niece, if I had one.”

“Fair enough. Now a difficult one: Alexandra McGonagall.”

James scared, was this a trick? No, he couldn't believe she was so mean. He nodded. He received a kiss, and replied equally.

“And?”

“O no! My best-friends girlfriend. Not in a lifetime!”

“Thank you, James. Now try to visualize this notorious girl, Silvia McCunningham. One year ahead and the subject of many boy's dream here at Hogwarts. She has quite a bosom and know how to use it for her own means. She has quite a reputation among the head-boys of all the houses, I heard.”

For a moment James heart-rate accelerated, which was quite understandable as Alexandra moved Lily closer to James, causing her bosom to touch James' chests.

“Ah, I wonder.”

But while picturing the, rather attractive, girl in his mind, James thought of a pile of snakes, and nodded.

A slow sloppy kiss caused James to move quickly backwards, almost causing Lily to fall of his lap.

Alexandra grinned, “That poor girl doesn't stand a chance.”

“What else did you thought. That I would ever sank so low?”

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Alexandra looked long at Lily. If he wouldn't respond now, this would fail, it could have serious consequences.

“How about ... Lily Evans? You two know each other for quite a while. Do you remember the first year in the Leaky cauldron? First year sorting? Definitely the broom-stick crash! Holiday in Greece, the first time she wore a bikini? Should I continue...”

While he nodded, Alexandra continued, “and the party at the winter-holiday in Grindelwald?”

While she talked, all of those events flashed through his mind. But the last one wasn't that party, but the event a couple of days before it. Sitting on a sofa, waiting for their parents to return, he had fallen asleep in dreams. Not just the one he had admitted, but something else he was even much more ashamed of, in which Lily played the main role. James thought he had buried that deep away, never to think about Lily in that way.

But on that moment he was kissed. Just a small kiss, not a long and sloppy one. But James knew he had to return it. He wanted to do it. He couldn't think of anything else. So he did and forgot about everything else, but moments later he had forgotten if he really had done so, or only had made up his mind to do so.

It seemed several minutes later when Alexandra stopped James. While she noted Lily to stand-up and to move to the shadow of one of the corners, she said to him, “Well, I would say that this is absolutely the answer you wanted to know, not?”

But when she removed the shawl, he looked wiser but not much happier, on the contrary.

“Yes, I got an answer to my question, and I have to admit, you did a good job. And whoever you helped you, she is good in

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transfiguration. For a moment I really thought it was Lily. I hope she wasn't offended.”

“Absolutely not. I think she should be quite flattered by how you responded. But now, James?”

“How can I ever tell her about my feelings for her? How I long to hold her and to kiss her?”

“Perhaps she knows, James. Perhaps she already knows!”

But he shook his head, “How do I tell her, what if she scares, rejects? I'll lose her friendship too. She's dear to me. I won't venture that.”

Looking concerned and sad, he added, “And my parents might object. One moment they say that their sole concern is my happiness and I should decide, the next moment they say something else. I don't want to raise false hope, expectations of a future that might be unreachable. Lately I have been talking with my father about this in general terms, and he made quite clear about it. That I had to walk between clear boundaries, that my 'playing field' was much more limited, compared to others. He specifically mentioned you two, Sirius, Alexandra!

So despite all of our effort in charting all forgotten and secret corridors of Hogwarts and drawing them on our Marauders-map, there remains places and corridors in real-life, that are 'no-go' for me, at least at this moment. I guess I should ask my parents more, and specifically about Lily, but I fear their response. The most likely will be probably that I have to wait several years, you know, me being too young and I should concentrate on school. But what if they would utterly reject her, her background or other reasons I can not think of right now? What then? Now I still have a dream to live in, to believe in.

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I know that in the end it is my decision, but their opinion matters to me. And I would hate to have to choose between a girl and my parents. Choosing is loosing. That is why I keep her at a safe distance. To be safe and to protect her heart, and mine as well.”

Without saying anything more, James left, not noticing the girl in the shadows who could not believe her own ears.

“You can leave too, I'll have to wait for Underhil to return for inspection.” Sirius simply said.

After peeking around the edge of the corner, to see if the coast was clear, both girls also left.

“I'm sorry Lily. I expected and hoped for another outcome.”

Lily looked numb, distant, “Thank you anyway, the first moments, when our lips met, well, that felt heavenly. But his comment brought me back to earth.”

After a deep sigh, she added “Thinking about it, I actually start to understand him. He is scared and torn between what he wants, his parents expectation and what is achievable and what a girls like I thinks and want. A boy in his position should never have to choose his parents and friends.”

It was on the tip of Alexandra's tongue, to say that she did not need to worry about James' parents, but just in time she remembered her promise to Margaret, not to say anything.

“Perhaps you consider me a monster, but at moments like this, I'm glad that neither Sirius, nor I have others to consider.”

Lily returned an understanding smile. “You are sure?”

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“I might be short sighted, and perhaps it is just physical attraction, but when Sirius is near, I feel happy and I want it to stay that way.”

“But did you ever think about, that in some years time, when you are stuck at home with some children, he might take his broom and fly off with an other, younger and also attractive woman?”

Alexandra froze, like someone put a bunch of vipers around her neck.

“He says that he loves me.” Alexandra managed to say.

“O, if you only knew how I long to hear those three words. But does he really mean it, or are those just words. Is he just paying lip-service? Men can be so deceitful.”

When they walked through the corridors, towards the main hall for lunch, their mood resembled the whether outside, moments ago the sun shone, but now fierce rain battered the windows.

Brooding like this, Alexandra almost bumped into her aunt, coming from the other direction. She looked at the girls.

“Come on girls, whats wrong? I have never seen such a frown on your faces. Disappointing result of a test-paper?”

“No. Much worse!” she replied shortly

“Come, come girls. Every cloud has a silver lining!”

Outside the sun was hidden by a thick raincloud, but its round-shine shone sharply.

“Those lining reminds me of glass, sharp!”

And Lily added “When you're not careful, they'll cut you, and you'll get hurt!”

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Professor McGonagall looked at both girls, “This sound for something not appropriate for the corridor, please come along to my office.”

Without any further words they walked silently to the professor's study. The girls with lots of dark thoughts on their mind, and Minerva with a box in her hands.

After they were seated, and Minerva had put on a cattle for tea, she asked again, “What is troubling you so deeply, school matters?”

“No problems with school results, or our extra lessons from Miranda or Margaret. Those are demanding, but we cope.”

“Anything related to teachers, or others from the staff?”

“No, that neither.”

“Something at home, Lily?”

“No...”

The short replies of her student, made the professor already frown.

“That leaves only some other students. Unless you have been arguing with each other. I presume an encounter with one of the other houses, Slytherin?”

“No aunt, it is something that I fear you can not help us with, boys.”

For a moment Minerva looked surprised and slightly hurt.

“Yes, I know that I look old, and I am. But I've been young, *some* time ago. I too have a heart, and I know about those feelings to.”

The girls never had noticed how old and sad the professor looked.

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She stood up, poured the tea and opened the box. “A college makes this one every year, to cheer me up. I think I'll share it with you two today.”

And with these words she reached for a knife and cut three pieces from a pie, and gave both girls a piece and a story no-one had ever heard or even imagined.

“Long time ago, I just had left school here and was looking for a job or something else worthwhile to do with my life. Soon I found a job at the local library in the town where I lived. There I met Malcolm, a nice young man, and he returned for new books more often then he could he read them. I noticed it and we started talking more and more, and seeing each other. When I thought he was more than a friend and thought I could really trust him, I told him about my gift, and he didn't had any problem with that, just as I hoped for. Just like everybody else, parts of our social life happened in the local pub, where we came often. My only concern was that if had slightly more than enough too drink, he would disclose to others that I was a witch, but he laughed it away and promised he would never do that. But he started to go there also without me, and one day I found out that he had lost his job and went each morning straight to the pub. Rent was low and we could managed from my wages, but he could not keep his hands to himself. My friends, both Muggle and Magic, warned me time after time, but Malcolm promised to change, that it would never happen again, he was sorry, he loved me and needed me. Then, one time, he had told everyone that he was married to a witch. When he came home, he was furious that no-one believed him and he turned on me. Later that night the neighbors brought me to the hospital. I had



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told them that I tripped from the staircase. I had to stay for over a week, with my wand I could have healed my self, but that was not possible. When I had recovered enough, they didn't let me go home. There was no home anymore to return to. It was burned down to the ground. They first suspected some friends and my neighbors, as all doors were barricaded from outside, but nothing could be proven. After a three month marriage I had nothing, nothing at all left, so I returned to Hogwarts and stayed ever since. My first day at Hogwarts I sort of celebrate.”

After some silence, Lily said “Now I understand why you are so fiercely against drinks.”

Minerva nodded, “Alcohol ruins so much. When you are drunk, you can not remember what you had promised when you are sober. Some say that they need some drinks, to loosen you up, to bring down some barriers. Sometimes that's so, but if you are after that, a sober oyster, what good does it do?”

“Some people hardly speak, and when they speak, they don't say anything. And when they say 'I love you', they only pay lip service.”

“So when do you know it is sincere?”

“When they speak with their heart, instead of their lips.”

Alexandra looked astonished, this was an aspect of her aunt she had never known about. “How can you tell the difference?”

“Only if you listen with your heart, but most of us listen with our ears, and only hear what we like to hear.”

“Thank you for this lesson Minerva, you are perhaps the most wise professor here at Hogwarts.”

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“No, I am thanking you, Lily and you Alexandra. It is young people like you, that gives us our strength.”

## Regular divination class

Most students had mixed feelings with their class 'divination', some never knew what to expect when they tended, what should have been a clear indication that this mystique and fine art was out of their league. Most students had dropped the subject as soon as they could and considered it as too vague, too irrelevant to spend their time on, though a majority of the students thought this class was a welcome diversion from other 'heavy' and 'dry' subjects like 'herbology', 'Arithmancy', and Muggle subjects like Physics or Economics. Hence the class was populated with all sorts of students. However, there was one student, regularly attending the class, who actually did not need there to be at all, as she had passed her NEWT-exams for this subject, the very first day she attended this class. But that was a secret shared only between the teacher and Alexandra.

One of the most popular fields of divination, was the reading of tea-leaves or coffee-grounds, as that implied some drinks during the class. Of course the teacher knew all about that. After their refreshment, Sirius raised his arm.

“Young Mr. Black has a well thought of question that is relevant to all of us..”

“Eh, yes. In the text book, I read that the scope of what is visible is often limited, and exclude the practicing magician itself. Can you explain that to us?”

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“Yes, I'll try. You all know by now that divination is very subtle. Some of us do it very well, some very poor. That not only depends of the practitioner, but also the intended target. Like for all subjects, there are those with natural borne talents for divination...”

He quickly cast a glance at Alexandra.

“But also for occlumency. Natural ones can shield themselves completely of from the rest of the world. -As a side step, in the Muggle world they consider this as a mental disorder.- In our magical world we learn that craft in the fifth year. There the natural borne occlumense learn how to open them selves, to lower down their natural fence in an orderly manner.

That is one reason. Another one is that some people have a shorter lifespan then others, so the scope of what you can see is also limited. Finally because of protecting measures, you can not clearly see your own future, which is quite a relief I should say. The more closer it gets, the more foggier.

For instance with respect to Hogwarts I saw, or feel, that there will be a new teacher coming. But all I know is that it is a woman with the name 'Sybill Traw-something'. I could not see what she will be teaching, so that probably mean she is a strong occlumence. Perhaps a new teacher for protecting against the dark arts"? I don't know. It's getting closer, thus cloudier.

On the other hand, movements, changes further away ar much clearer. Some of us -I'll say no names- have embarked on a new phase in their lives, one that will work out well for them. That might be a description to put their heart into their schoolwork, regular cleaning up, healthier eating or something totally differ-

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ent. I am not gonna say who or what, but those involved know it themselves.”

Shortly he looked at Lily.

“With regards to short-sightless, there are always some ways to come by. For instance, I could ask a student, any student, to pick up the crystal ball and have a look what she sees about me. Alexandra, would you be so kind to have a look?”

Alexandra walked towards the teachers desk, sat down, looked at McVail's face and looked intense inside the crystal ball. A couple of times she looked up to the teacher and back to the ball, but finally gave up.

“Sorry Sir, but it seems all too vague for me...”

“Thank you, Alexandra! That brings me to another point, sometimes it just doesn't work at all. Nothing you can do about that.”

He looked again at Sirius, “Now, does that answer your question?”

“It certainly is a clear answer, Sir. But it isn't clearer to me, and I dare say I might speak for most of the class.”

McVail replied, “That was to be expected, by some, at least.”

That evening James was using his invisibility cloak to visit the restricted section of the library, in order to return some of the books he borrowed without explicit permission.

After he put the final book on the self, James got startled.

“Well, well, well. We were wondering who and when would be coming to return those manuscripts.”

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James turned around, and found professor Dumbledore not standing far away from him.

“We got alarmed that some of those were not returned within the appropriate time. And even more that it were some items that normally were never lent to any student. May I invite you to my study, Mr Potter?”

Much too quickly to his comfort, James found himself sitting at the other side of Gryffindor's head and the deputy head of Hogwarts.

“The moment we learned about the nature of those books and manuscripts, we could make a fair assumption in which house we could find the trespassers, but had no conclusive evidence. The moment your friend asked questions about the subject of 'changing' we were rather sure. Thankfully, professor McGonagall made certain that all required information is not located inside the library, so despite several months intensive studying on rather dark, but advanced material, it will have done you no good, except for training on obscure spells. Which is by the way a very good exercise if you ever want to become an auror.”

James didn't feel at all the urge to tell him that he had also borrowed Minerva's own notes, and were pretty successful in changing into almost any animal.

“Our professor did tell you, that even for learned and seasoned wizards, the Animagus spell is so difficult and dangerous, that all who is able to perform it must be registered?”

“Yes Sir, professor McGonagall explained all about it, she was rather proud to be one of the few official witches capable of doing the Animagus spell.”

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“In that case, I don't have to repeat that sermon. However I'm interested in how you achieved to remain undetectable.”

James lay his cloak on the table.

Dumbledore examined it.

“Indeed, an invisibility cloak, as I already expected, and a very good one I might say. How did this come into your possession?”

“I got it from my father, it is in our family for countless generations.”

At that moment on, the headmaster had lost all his interest in the offense, but was totally focused on the cloak and asked James thousands of questions about its origin.

Relieved that it seems he got away with it, he asked the professor, “What is so special about this one? I've seen cloaks like this in shops selling magical objects and in magazines claiming to sell those and extraordinary prices.”

“I don't know if I must be glad that you are reading such material, those mostly concentrate on sorts of magic that we don't practice, but only defend against. There are several kinds of those cloaks, some that melt you inside the background, those are actually camouflage cloaks. A grade better are real invisibility cloaks these are rare and very costly. But it seems that this one is even better, a cloak that makes you undetectable. All my life I have only heard of one. Many wizards have searched for it their entire life. Perhaps I should ask you a different question, did you ever see this sign?” And he draw, seemingly very much excited, a strange symbol.



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He looked very intense at James, “And did you?”

“No, what is it, what does it mean?”

Disappointed Dumbledore fell back in his chair. Could it be true, that the Potters, indeed one of the oldest magical families had also been looking for the Deathly Hollows?

“This symbol is known throughout the entire wizardry world. It stands for three very powerful magical objects. Like many wizards or witches, I spent several years looking for them, when I was young and just graduated. Did your parents read for you the stories of 'Beedle the Bard' he asked.”

James grinned, “that was quite some time ago.”

“Do you remember the tale of the three brothers?”

“That silly fable? That never gave me any freight at all.”

Dumbledore got up, “Fable? Young man, in old stories you can find more wisdom than in some of the textbooks of your teachers! Mr. Potter, what you have here isn't just an expensive cloak, but the genuine one from Ignottus Peverell. The very one item from the tale!”

With one hand, Dumbledore held his wand and in the other James' cloak. “Are you really very sure that you have never seen that symbol?”

“No, but I can ask my father. He got from his father and so on.”

Dumbledore thought for a while, would his father tell his son the truth, if he knew it himself? He closed his eyes. Right now he held two of the deathly hollows in his hands. What would



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happen if he could obtain the third one? Could he really beat death itself? Would he be able you use the missing one, the stone of recurrence, wisely? For a moment he thought about his sister, Ariana. If he could only bring her back....

“Sir?”

James voice brought him back, and he realized there is no place for the dead among the living, as was told in the tale of the three brothers. He put the cloak back in James hands.

“It is yours rightfully and so it should remain, perhaps there will come a day, that I want to borrow it from you, James.”

The fact that this symbol crossed his path, that this boy was friends with another student who had the capability to access the realms of the dead and the sleeping, could not be accidental. But what was the meaning or purpose behind it? He didn't know, but it had to be something important.

“Take it, James. And be careful with it.”

Later that week they heard that a tragically accident had happened on the staircases of the astronomy tower. A teacher slipped over papers lying on the stoney staircase. Fortunately for the students, they found Sybill Tralawny available to take over the vacant position of teacher divination. However as McVail also did the defense against the dark arts, Hogwarts was again missing out one teacher.

Some students made rude jokes about this, a divination teacher so short-sighted, that he could not even see papers lying on a staircase. But other Gryffindor students were sad and grieved, as they considered McVail as an honest and friendly teacher and a warm human being with sincere interest in students.

## Unprecedented revelations

The daily routine of most students remained through the whole year nearly the same. The only parts that changed were the time tables for the different subject that were altered each trimester. Not all subjects were given throughout the whole year. And also, after the first trimester the Quidditch season started, where a small group of students of each house competed against each other, though basic training started from the first or second week at school. As this was not allowed to interfere with regular lessons, practicing took place before or after school. Because most students were late risers, most of them arguing who was allowed to use the training field in the evening, except for Hufflepuf, whose players mostly practiced in the morning.

Lily and Alexandra, with their extra package of learning material, always turned in early, between nine thirty or ten at the most. They made a habit of rising early, many hours before the rest of the students woke up, enjoying the abundant amount of tranquility to study. All students, particularly those from Gryffindor knew, that if you had problems with some of the subjects, the best moment to asked the girls assistance was early in the morning, sometime they could help straight away, and sometimes they made an appointment for later that day or the next one.

So it was no surprise that Lily found one of the Gryffindor boys waiting when she came from her dormitory and entered their common-room. The surprise came when she noticed who

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it was: James! She secretly had to admit to herself that of all the boys at Hogwarts, he was in the center of her focus.

James looked tense. Like he had something difficult to do. Something unpleasant or dangerous, but didn't want to postpone it any longer.

“Morning James! Of all the students here in Hogwarts I never ever thought I would see you here, at this time of day. Or are going to bed just now, after a long night, exploring things?”

“Hi Lil. No I think I really need you help...”

“How come? Every one knows that you compete with 'a certain Sly student' for the best marks, when doing test-papers. Or did someone 'borrow' one of the essays we had to write, without saying... You can not expect Malfoy and Snape not responding to your... how did you name them.. your jokes?”

Although she didn't like Snape much anymore, some of the Marauders jokes had been extremely silly and even humiliating.

“No, it isn't about Hogwarts, or at least not about the subjects they teach here.”

Now Lily's attention was completely on James. Would he... her heart started beating much faster. Did he choose this early moment to be alone with HER?

“We all know about the help you offered Robert and Molly previous year, getting them together.”

Lily didn't know what to say. This sounded promising and it felt good, so very good. For a moment she remembered walking hand-in-hand with James through a dark and desolated Hogwarts castle, the year she had found the other half of her

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key. The holiday in Greece, the remarks he had made, when she baked pizza... Would he finally ask her to be his girlfriend?

“Those two already knew each other, sort of, and Robert just needed some encouragement, I believe. This is much, much harder.”

Innocently, she asked, “Who are we talking about?”

Hesitatingly, he admitted, “Me, myself.”

Immediately Lily felt some discomfort creeping up, would he?

“Please tell me.”

James took a deep breath, “Point is, there is a certain girl I think I like a lot, but I never told her.”

“Why not? That won't hurt!”

“Perhaps, perhaps not. Before I got to Hogwarts, my parents gave me quite some sermon, about distrusting friends and girls. I presume you heard about my fathers fortune. I'm afraid when liking someone turns into a bit more, and my parents object, that one or more people will get hurt.”

“Then you should talk about that again with your parents, James. What you say implies you can hardly see anyone!”

“Last month I did. First I spoke with my father, last week with my mother.”

She couldn't believe her ears. “So what did they say?”

“They said they understood, but again being careful and not go too far, don't go breaking hearts. And that they would like to meet her.”

More and more Lily got nervous. Less than a month ago she was for exams at his parents' place. She definitely had the feeling this conversation went into a direction she had dreaded.

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Clearly James was interested in another girl, and she had to help him, making first contact or so

“So, sounds reasonable.” Lily responses became shorter and shorter, as the lump in her throat returned each time.

“Point is, as I said, I never told that girl about my feelings for her, and I fear if I do, I might raise false hopes or so.”

“What do you want?”

“Could you find out what she thinks about and feels for me?”

Although she felt like her life had ended, she managed to say, “Who is that girl, who are me talking about? Do I know her, did I ever see her?”

“I should think so, yes. Even in a crowd, like our main hall you can pick her up immediately. She is bright and beautiful. Come tho think about it, I think she can light up your darkest day. She is smart and funny.”

Each word he spoke came as a huge blow and Lily got more depressed. How could he! How could this insensitive clod do this to her! And how could she have let this happening under her very nose?

“Which house is she from?”

James thought for a while, “Really she could be from any of our houses. She thrives for knowledge and wisdom, so she could have been Ravenclaw. I happen to know she works really hard, so she might have well been selected into Hufflepuf. Slytherin? Perhaps, her parents were much in favour of wizard having much more influence in the Muggle world...”

“What! You have already met her parents?”

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Now Lily felt like her entire world collapsed under her feet. Had she been so totally blind? She had mostly focused on her study, the dreaming-class, travelling-stones, her friend Alexandra. She had never noticed James looking at other girls. She had always hoped that one of the days....

And not so long ago, Alexandra's experiment, when he finally had kissed her, it felt like heaven on earth. Was she really so short-sighted and only saw and felt what she wanted to see and feel? From what she was hearing now, it had only opened his eyes. How could he have been so mean! To lead her on for so long. But then she realized that James for all these four years never have given any hope or indication of what to expect. She had to be honest to herself. James was just a boy trying to find out very, very carefully what a girl might be feeling for him. And she had to admit, he did it in a very gentle way, unlike many others.

With some difficulty she manage to say, “But why do you ask me, and not Sirius, or Alexandra?”

“I thought it would be appropriate that you should be the first to know. It had to be you...”

“How considerate of you, James.”

Slowly but surely all sorts of vague dreams and hopes started to vaporize. She felt pain, real physical pain in that bottomless pit where her heart used to be, some thousands years ago. She felt so cold, empty, so lonely.

Realizing she had lost, she decided that the only thing left to her, was helping this friend.

“But who is she, what's her name?” she finally struggled to ask.

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“What's wrong Lily? Did you have a sore throat? I could hardly hear you.”

Fighting to hold tears inside, she repeated, “What is the name of the girl you want me to talk with, James?”

“I thought you knew, or at least had a rough idea, suspecting. That is what Sirius told me.”

“Who James? Who is the one that I lost you to?”

James looked perplexed, “Lost? What are you talking about, Lily?”

“Isn't that obvious to you, you stupid!” Tears were now burning.

“Well, clearly not! And why do you talk about losing?”

Lily didn't understand how James could still be so blind. Had he never noticed how she had looked at him. She slowly shook her head. “I'm sorry James. I've had so much silly ideas in my head. All those years I've been thinking, or more just hoping, that you and I.... Please forgive me, for being so childish.” And she could no longer hold back her tears.

She expected James to become angry, forgiving, appalled, surprised, but he reacted totally different.

With both hands he held her head tenderly.

“No Lily, you completely misunderstood me. All this time I'm trying very, very carefully trying to make clear, that it is you I was referring to. Of all the girls around me here at school, it's you that always catch my eye. Perhaps I'm fooling my self, but lately I just keep on thinking about you. And I would like you to ask the girl in the mirror, if there is a slightest chance that I could win your affection and trust, knowingly that my parents

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can cause all sorts of problems and obstacles. Please, Lily? Will you think about it? Don't reject me straight away.”

Never in history before, and probably never since that moment, someone's mood had changed several times so completely upside-down. Like a foul drizzling autumn afternoon had changed into a beautiful spring morning in a split second.

The same instance her lips responded, although no single word came across them.

Finally James pointed out, “For us, it won't be as easy as it is for Sirius and Alexandra. My parents...”

“What did you tell them, what did you ask them, I don't understand about that invitation!”

“I told my mother that a certain girl was constantly on my mind, and she responded by telling me to invite her.”

“What did you say?”

“I simply said that my parents and this girl already met each other.”

“Did she reply?”

“No, but if they can add one and one together, the mathematics should not be too difficult for them.”

“Lily?”

“Yes, James?”

“Can we keep this between the two of us? At least for now.”

“I won't tell anyone, not even our friends, but Alexandra can look right through me, I'll ask her not to tell anyone, OK?”



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“Perhaps we, or I, should still talk with my parents. I hope they don't object. But we both are in the picture from lots of students, and I like to avoid awkward situations, just 'in case', you see.”

“Come to think about it, it is no-one else business, except ours!”

“You are totally right, dear.”

“You know, shortly we have a ball, for the Beltane fest, and I heard there are several bets going on, about who I am going to ask.”

“So? How do I fit in! I'm not going to ask a girl if she want to got to the ball with you. Out of the question. That is for boys to do.”

“No no no! It is just for the days ahead and the opening dance. I was thinking, if you and Sirius could go together, then I could ask Alexandra. The whole world knows that nothing can come between those two.”

“Alright, under one condition.”

“That is?”

“You save the last dance for me!”

“The last, and many before them.”

“Just this last dance?”

“We'll see...”

“Coming along with my daily running exercise?”

“Why not? I hardly slept a wink, I might as well stay up anyway now!”

## Wrapping up

The next day, all students were off, there were no lessons or tests that day. However Dibbet was holding a long speech about celebrating Litha (summer solstice) “The optimists among us, enjoy the longest day, the pessimists will complain the days grow shorter day-by-day.” And so on.

As James was practicing Quidditch, again, Sirius sat opposite to Lily and Alexandra.

“Litha!” he said, “just imagine, six months ago it was Yule. Do you ever think back about there, in Grindelwald?”

Lily and Alexandra looked to each other with big eyes. Then turning to Sirius again, “Eh, yes, sort of or so, why?”

“Well I was thinking about that final party. I surely hope you do remember that part of our holiday?”

Slightly relieved that he didn't mention anything regarding the dreaming on the couch, she confirmed, “But of course! Why?”

With a devious gleam smile he said, “I was just wondering if you two might be willing to help Gryffindor tomorrow at the Quidditch game against Slytherin?”

“Sure, what do you want us to do?”

“I would like you, to sit as high as possible, near the goal-poles.”

“That's it?”

“Not exactly. If possible dressed-up up in your Slytherin-dress.”

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“IN MY WHAT?”

“Oh sorry. I meant those dresses you wore at that new-years-eve-party. I am pretty confident that none of the Slytherin players can keep their eyes off you. Either of you.”

Grinning Alexandra said, “And another point for Gryffindor!”

But Lily inquired, “Why did you refer to those party-dresses as 'Slytherin', because on the color of my dress?”

Sirius apologized, “Sorry, no, it is about the effect they got. They turns others green of jealousy, until they see the price-tag, then the turn pale.”

Lily looked surprised, but Alexandra burst out laughing. “Alright, but under one condition!”

“Being what?”

“You sitting in between!”

“No objection against that!”

“So I thought! You wouldn't dare to admit any other plans!”

Just before the match, both girls transformed themselves into young ladies, and went to the players entrance, to wish them luck. Sirius, already waiting there, just instructed the players. “Just have a good look once, so you can keep your eyes and mind on the Quidditch game. We trust the other players will have some concentrating issues. No fancy thoughts or you'll run into trouble with James or me. He knows how to find you, and no matter how fast you run or fly, I'm faster.”

And like a lord and lady, Alexandra and Sirius followed her highness Lady Lily.

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Sirius' plan worked as he had hoped for. None of the Slytherin players was able to score even a single point. Strangely though, none of the spectators complained. Most part of the game they didn't even see any of of the Slytherin players, they were looking elsewhere. Luckily for them, even the Gryffindor seeker had a strong urge to finish the game as soon as possible. Although the game went into the history books as a 'dream-match' because of the final score, neither any of the players nor any of the spectators could remember much of it.

Next Monday however, both girls were politely invited at Dumbledore office. If they ever thought that there been complaints about a dress-code, they were mistaken. Only Alexandra's aunt made a small remark. "I presume you have been visiting "The Proper Needle" at the Diagon-Alley?"

"Yes professor McGonagall, James' mother have treated us. She and her friend Miranda invited us to go shopping there."

"James' mother? Well well well!" Whatever she had in mind, she didn't speak it out.

"Speaking about Margaret and Miranda, We received some owl's with final test results. What were your own expectations, if I may inquire?"

Alexandra replied to her aunt, "Lily and I hope you are not too much disappointed with us. I remember that both the first and the second year at Hogwarts, we were able the squeeze three years of standard Hogwarts lessons bio for her, and ancient languages for me into a single year. But that was just one single subject. This was much broader and deeper."

"And you Lily?"

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She shrug her shoulders. “I agree, but as I said before, it still feels so very much familiar, like we just need to refresh our memory, not like other students who see and learn material for the first time.” With a smile she added, “Though I have to admit, that we always try our best to surprise our teachers, in a positive way, I mean.”

“We are glad so, that Margaret and Miranda see it likewise. Although it had some unexpected side effects. I already warned both profs, that we use learning stimulating spells, and you are rather shielded against the outside world. Although in Lily's case there had been quite some nerve wracking events. All of us were expecting you would be ahead of the other distant learning pupils on, what was the name, their Open University'. But you even got ahead of regular students. Both of you earned enough study-points, that is required for the 'bachelor' or 'candidate' status. Miranda and Margaret will explain it all to you and give you the proper certificates.”

“Can you tell them to send it to my home? My parents will be proud.” For a moment she looked at Alexandra.

“May they send yours there also? Then we can celebrate together!”

Lily knew that besides Hogwarts, there was no home anymore for Alexandra where she really felt 'at-home'.

A thankful smile said enough.

Dumbledore continued, “two things remained. I presume you rather not have Dibbet talking about these achievements, but I know for sure, that he and both the teachers for biology and ancient language will ask you again the beginning of next year, to help with, or even take over some of the classes. With your

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BSc-status, you are indeed enough qualified to teach at that level, you know. So think about that.”

“Not for now, but we'll let you know before the beginning of our 5<sup>th</sup> year, so if we do first-year, professor Dibbet can announce us as such.” And Lily added, “Actually, but I know I am not enough qualified for that, I would rather help at the hospital ward...”

Alexandra replied, “If Lily learns that fast, how long would she need for a nurse-study? If she wants to become a doctor, she'll probably need to do that anyway. Can't Miranda take care of the theory and Madam Pomfrey of the clinical tests?”

“Clever thinking indeed, Alexandra! I'll look into this. Anything else?”

“Can we do something for Eoin parents? I don't want to confront them again with a painful memory, but on the other hand, they should know we still think about them and their son.”

“Very considerate. I'll take care of that!”

Because neither of the girls had to study for their off-school-studies anymore, the need for very early studying was also gone. Instead of that, Alexandra joined Lily in her early morning exercises outside. Lily adjusted her daily cours, she shrunk it into under a mile, and adjusted it bit by bit. Though Alexandra liked the exercise a lot, and Lily welcomed the extra company, but not everybody was pleased with the changed daily routine.

Finally Sirius decided to do something about it. Next morning when all were gathered for breakfast, he waited until all students were sitting. As always, James was sitting opposite to

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Lily and Alexandra while his friend had kept one seat free for him. But instead of walking to his side of the table, he decided to opt for the other side. He walked until he was behind the two girls, talking about the latest gossips. Silently he put his hand beneath Alexandra's arms and lifted her up, turned her around. After he said '*Good morning Alexandra*', he kissed her and put her gently back on her seat. The Quidditch commentator, also a Gryffindor boy, smirked, "And another point for Gryffindor!", what provoked a broad round of applause. With a satisfied grin, Sirius walked back to his own place, leaving two astonished girls behind.

## **A Slytherin Party to remember**

“James?”

“Yes, Sirius, what's up?”

“While practicing at shape-shifting, as a hound I heard something that was not intended for my ears.”

“What?”

“Some from Slytherin are trying to get even with us in a filthy way.”

“How?”

“You know they have each year their own party, and this time the four of us will be invited.”

“You, me, Wormtail and Mooney?”

“No, you me and the girls.”

“From what I understood, there was a lot of laughing and giggling involved, you and me will get a private invitation from Silvia, who organizes the party. Either we got drugged, drunk, bewitched or seduced, we are gonna be totally stripped and photographed together with Silvia. And while undressed they are going to “arrange” an accidental bump-in with the girls, who will get a separate invitation.”

“That is really the attitude of Slytherin, We can not ignore it, they might try something else.”

“What is this?”

Sirius picked up an envelope, with curly letters on it it read:



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***“Invitation for James and Sirius”***

***INVITATION!***

*Every year, we from the noble house of Slytherin, have our own exclusive party.*

*Due to the success of the group breeding almost extinct magical animals, we want to give it an extra dimension.*

*As it coincides with the final meeting of the Professors, there is little or no chance that they will find out about the fact that we will serve beer, wine and stronger stuff.*

*I understand that we had some misunderstandings, and I really want to move them to the past. As you might not want to be seen by the Slytherin students, we can have our own party in the monitoring room upstairs from the bio-lab. I will have some welcome drinks, modestly alcoholic, ready for you all.*

*It will be a night you will remember your entire life!*

*Gathering: Friday, eight 'O clock, experimental BIO-lab.*

*Dress Code: Traditional Hogwarts festivity robe'*

James picked it up. 'What are we going to do with it?'

Sirius replied, “I've heard rumors about those parties. They are nothing short or orgies. And Sylvia being friendly to anyone outside Slytherin is unheard off. Actually, I don't trust this invitation, specially after what I heard.”

“Shall we just forget about it?”

“No, I just have a much better idea. We go, but not as ourselves.”

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“But who would like to go there?”

“How about those two creepy companions of Lucius Malfoy?”

“But they will be invited anyway!”

“So? I would say no harm done. Perhaps they get an extra free drink. As long as they do not anything that would embarrass us.”

“That would mean that we have to nick the changing-potion.”

“With my cloak, that is a piece of cake. But you did forget a itsy-pitsy miny detail.”

“Such as?”

“The girls. I still think she is after Lily.”

For quite a while both boys were staring in the fire. Than Sirius started grinning demoniacally.

“Care to share with me, or just a private joke?”

“Isn't the lab assistant the mother of Silvia?”

“Could very well be so, yeah, I think you are wright.”

“And the prof that wields the lab, isn't she also Slytherin born and raised?”

“If we change them also into our girls...”

“Bingo! Two rats with one stone! No harm done, and she and a witness can see what her nice daughter is up to.”

“Just another thing!”

'What?'

“First, we must take care that the girls don't receive their invitation, and secondly we must get some hair from Lily and Alexandra for the changing potion!”

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Sirius: “Hi Goyle, hi Crabbe, can I have a word with you?”

“What's up Black?”

“You know we were also invited to your party, Do you already have a date, Or will you just remain gazing at a distance at Sylvia?”

“What is it up to you?”

“Well, to be honest, neither James nor I am looking much to it, but we have a special invitation from Sylvia.”

“So what?”

“Well, we were wondering if you two would not go in our place.”

“We are not really twin brothers, not?”

“I've got two bottles of polymorphic-transfiguration potion. Even your mother would not recognize you anymore.”

“And what do you want in return?”

“Mostly your secrecy, and I fear that Sylvia will have some odd jobs or phantasies I rather don't know about.”

“OK, but not a word of you either, promised.”

“Promised. No-one would believe anyway.”

“Have fun, but try to act a bit of us!”

“Phase one done, up to the Slytherin breeding lab.”

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They silently sneaked through the corridors under James invisibility cloak.

“Are you sure Sylvia's mother and the prof got and read the girls' invitation?”

“I sneaked in using the invisibility cloak. I threw both invitation under their nose, much to their surprise. But you should have seen their face while reading. They do suspect something, but not what.”

“Any second thoughts?”

“No, attacking a professors isn't my favourite way of pastime, but it is the only way of protecting the girls permanently against Sylvia.”

“OK then.”

Twice the spell 'Patrificus Totalis' hit the completely unaware professors.

James took the bottle with the changing-potion with Lily's hair.

While carefully remaining out of sight for both professors, he squeezed the nose of one of them tight. When she opened her mouth, and put the rest of the potion into the bottle with the welcomes drink for Lily.

James carefully made her swallow a mouth full of the potion.

At the same time, Sirius did the same with the other one, but he used the bottle with Alexandra's hair.

“Now what?”

“We must get these two into student robes.”

“Do we really?”

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“It is not decent towards the girls, but there is no turning back now anymore. And we must hurry, before Sylvia get here!”

They were just finished and hid underneath the cloak, when the evil hearted girl came in with some boys. As soon as she entered the room she pointed with her wand and shouted: “Petrificus Totalis” to the already petrified persons.

“I did not hear any objections from them, good but they are so still, I've got something better for them. Otherwise they can not enjoy the surprise party.”

“What is it?”

“When Muggles perform surgery, the patients get a cocktail of three ingredients: one is against feeling pain, second one is to sleep so they are not aware of anything, and the third one is a muscle relaxing one, so they can not move or speak.

This potion contains only the last one. They will experience it all, but can not say or move. We don't have to bind them or use any spells as I have promised. Perfectly. Now pick them up gently and carry them to the entrance.”

Before she left, she picked up a bottle with strong moon-tea.

“For myself, it is stronger than my own and I intend to have a ball tonight.”

She almost left the room when she returned and picked the other bottle with sun-draught. “Knocking them up will teach them another lesson,” she said with a sarcastic grim.

And with these thoughts she hurried to the party room.

All Slytherin students were waiting there.

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Sylvia addressed them all:

“Dear all, This is a special feast. Normally we have special prize for the best student of our house, but this time we have a treat for all. The female students can directly go in and find a nice spot. The boys however have to wait a moment for further instructions.”

After all the girls left, she said.

“Alright studs, this is the moment you have been waiting all year for it. For those with a date, *the entrance fee* is your prove that you are up to it.

And those without a date, don't worry. I have two guests that needs a good and proper lesson, they will collect your entrance-fee, and after that you can practice on them as long as you like.”

“Nancy, you see those two bottles? Each fee-collector has her own bottle. It will keep them quiet.” And she pointed to the bottle that did not only contain Sylvia's muscle-relaxer, but also the changing potion.

“But first, lets make a photo and leave the robes here. Nancy, can you take care of that? I have to fetch our other two guests!”

Sometime later, Silvia met Goyle and Crabbe, transformed into James and Sirius, in the main hall.

“Hi boys! Are you ready for it? Lil and Alex are already there and enjoying themselves.” Sylvia took the precaution of making a long detour through Hogwarts. When they finally were near the lab-entrance, she halted and said.

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“Before we go any further I have to explain something. Your girls complained that you were not giving them enough attention, so the boys from Slytherin were eager to fulfill all of their needs.”

“We can either go on, or we three can go to a private spot and have our own party.”

Goyle looked around the corner, and said,

“Disgusting! I lost my appetite for them forever. Where is that private party of yours?”

“I am glad I could chance your mind so quickly.”

“We all fancied you, Sylvia!”

“In that case you won't mind making a photograph of the three of us.”

Crabbe hesitated, “Would WE mind? I mean we as eh we?”

But when Sylvia dropped her robe, all second thoughts were gone.

Some hours earlier Minerva ordered James, Lily, Sirius and Alexandra to her study.

When they arrived they found Dumbledore and McGonagall sitting near the fire place.

They just heard Albus saying to her, “Still I think this is not the best option, Minerva.”

Minerva noticed the students arrival and invited them to sit down.

“I know very well, that the four of you, and I mean each of you can handle a fair amount of danger, fear and uncertainty. De-

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

spite some well grounded opposition I think you should be told. In my opinion you have the right to know, even if we are still not certain if this concerns either of you. If not, I have wasted some of your hours and probably caused some sleepless nights.”

From one of the cupboards behind her she fetched some bottles. “Wine or beer?” she asked.

Completely overwhelmed by the fact that they were offered an alcoholic drink, while at school, they hesitatingly said 'Beer, please.'

After all the glasses were filled, Minerva started, “You should know that we found a copy of an official prophecy. You are aware that they vague, to put it mildly and can be interpreted many ways. Only afterward you can clearly explain what was really the true meaning of it. But then it is always too late. Again, let me tell you we think this is about you, but I we could also be mistaken.”

She gave a little piece of parchment to James who read it and passed it on.

*Prophecy #34569848966*

*Four friends against one, are responsible for the future of millions for coming centuries.*

*The combined effort of she, walking in dreams and he who searches the heavens, will prevent the reign of the one.*

*The assistance of she, living and knowing past and present is essential.*



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*He, who dares to change, should be prepared to face solitude and death with a brave heart.*

*The box of Pandora will be opened again by him, unless they are willing and able to pay the price. None of them will know the outcome. And death shall have no dominion, for some.*

James started, “By the mere fact that we are drinking beer at school in the presence of two professors, one deputy head of Hogwarts, one deputy head of Gryffindor tells me that this is not part of some Halloween party.”

Sirius replied cynically, “Well, not all is black, I see multiple sides!”

Lily, “Do you? Which then.”

“It speaks about four friends and brave hearts. Thanks for he compliment!”

“That's all to it?” Alexandra said.

“No,” Sirius continued, “We are responsible for the well-being of millions of people during hundreds of years. There for we must do something, but we don't know what, or when. That's all! Oh I forgot to mention the best part: we are all going to die, without even knowing why! Any beer left?”

“I will drink to that!”

“Indeed, to: Life!”

“And more beer!”

## Party aftermath

Early in the morning Argus Filch could not believe his eyes when he found a departed party area, except for two undressed persons on beds near the entrance. neither of them could still not move or speak, but the transformation potion had worked out. So he saw two elderly women, with pure hate bursting out of their eyes.

He covered them with a blanket and rushed to get madam Pomfrey from the hospital ward. Next he alerted Professor Dibbet.

“I've got Potter, Black, Evans and young miss McGonagall.”

“Yes Albus, sent them in.”

A moment later the four students were confronting a desk with three very serious looking professors behind it.

“Something utterly disgusting has happened yesterday evening, that effects our entire school. Some students have already a well-known reputations for disrespect for any rules. At least one of them is now in our presence.”

“What do you know about the party Slytherin had last night?”

“Nothing!” he got back four times.

“Is that so? From the invitation for the Slytherin-students I learn something else, you see.”

He picked up a green painted parchment with black drawings and silvery letters on it:

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

### *INVITATION!*

*Last couple of years, the top student from our beloved house was granted to perform our house ritual with a specially invited guest.*

*Due to the success of the group breeding almost extinct magical animals, we want to share this with all our students.*

*As a token of our compassion with other houses, we invited this year the two happy couples from Gryffindor and granted them the honor of opening the festivity.*

*It will be a night you will remember your entire life!*

*Gathering: Friday eight 'O clock Slytherin Common room*

*Dress Code: Traditional Hogwarts festivity robe, nothing underneath it.'*

“Any comment?”

“Professor, we are all Gryffindor. We can not enter their common room. Even when invited. You know: all sorts of passwords and spells. Just like they can not enter ours.”

“That is true. Yes, what do you want to say, Albus?”

He picked up a small bottle. “It is not much and I would rather spent it on the other persons involved, but there is, I am afraid, only one way of getting absolute sure if people tell the truth.”

He placed a glass on the desk, poured some water in it and added some drops from the little bottle.

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“This is veritisarum, a truth potion. After some drops you can not tell lies, knowingly. However one has to be careful in phrasing the questions. Luckily I have some experience with it.”

He pointed to the glass and instructed, “Just a small sip and I want to see you swallowing it!”

After four very timid students took a sip, Dumbledore asked carefully,

“Did you go to the Slytherin party yesterday evening?”, “Were you yesterday evening in or near the Slytherin common room?” and “Did you go to that Slytherin ... gathering?”

To all questions, all replied with a firm: “No, I did not, professor!”

“That is all, you are excused!”

But then he added, “As a precaution, do not take your wands at home when you leave Hogwarts for the summer-holiday. Please leave them with McGonagall.”

“We are not allowed to do magic at home!”

After they left, McGonagall said “Why is that, keeping their wands here?”

“If Potter or Black has anything to do this, we can analyse the girl's wands with 'priori incantatum'. I think they are too smart to try anything with their own wand.”

“Very well, but I already knew they could not have been there.”

“How so?”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“Because there were at my study. But now you have a fully objective proof. You might not have believed me as Alexandra is my niece.”

“Minerva! Were those four youngsters with you, in your study and no-one left the whole evening?”

“Absolutely, and with very good reasons. And Albus was there also and all the time.”

“Why?”

“Because of this!”

She laid a parchment of his desk.

“You know, all prophecies are kept at the ministry, waiting for the intended subject. However, we found this transcript in Slytherin common room. It reads:”

*Prophecy #34569848966*

*Four friends against one, are responsible for the future of millions for coming centuries.*

*The combined effort of she, walking in dreams and he who searches the heavens, will prevent the reign of the one.*

*The assistance of she living and knowing past and present is essential.*

*He, who dares to change, should be prepared to face solitude and death with a brave heart.*

*The box of Pandora will be opened again by him, unless they are willing and able to pay the price. None of them will know the outcome. And death shall have no dominion, for some.*

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

Albus and I totally disagree whether or not you should be told. It could mean something totally different, but my interpretation is, that this is nothing less than a death warrant for the four of those students.

“she walking in dreams” can be no other than Lily.

“He who searches the heavens” must point towards a Quidditch seeker seeker, thus James.

“Knowing the past, living in the present” clearly is Alexandra.

“He who dares to change”, it could be Sirius, From Slytherin background going to Gryffindor? As it explicitly mentions “four friends” I suppose it must be Sirius.'

Dibbet read it over and over again.

“This is horrible!”

“Did you ever see a nice prophecy telling you going to win the lottery?”

“They are always dark and open for more than one interpretations, thus you have to treat them very carefully.”

“I agree with you that the referenced persons can very well be these four students. However...”

“What do you mean?”

“What was the point of telling them?”

“Isn't that obvious?”

“No! From what I read, these four have a task to do. And if they all, or one of them fails, the consequence will be grave. For all of us.”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“Therefor I decided they should be informed.”

“Yes Minerva, I appreciated that. But I also read that they will all die attempting it. They will fail!”

“So you think Albus was right, keeping it from them?”

“Yes, at least for now. But It is too late now. You should have come to me first. How did the youngsters take it?”

“Blown of their feet, at first.”

“Who wouldn't be.”

“But in the end they were all very determined.”

And with a touch of pride in her voice, she added, “They are Gryffindors, you know!”

In the mean while, Lily, Alexandra, James and Sirius walked slowly downstairs. Suddenly Alexandra stood still.

“What is wrong?” Lily asked.

“I was wondering, how long does that potion that Dumbledore gave us, would work?”

“Not sure, he gave us little, but I do not know how strong it is, why?”

“I Just want to find out something at last. Something every girl, every woman wants to know. Not just a feeling, a hunch, and be sure about it.”

Inquisitive but determined she turned towards Sirius.

“Sirius, you just told us that you and James were not near that party. But do you know more about it? And did something?”

“Yes, we changed some labels on their bottles.”

“James!”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

“We also nicked the entire stock of polyjuice-transform potion. Half of it, we gave to Goyle & Crabbe, to impersonate us. But they knew very much what would be the effect. They swallowed it knowingly, willingly and very eagerly.”

“And the other half?”

“Also for Slytherin, but you do not want to know that, Lily! trust me!”

Although she felt something unpleasantly, she also felt that she could and should trust him, and remained silently.

Alexandra smiled to Lily and said,

“This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for any girl, Lily.”

She turned back to Sirius and asked, “While on the subject of trust, Sirius, What are your true feelings for me?”

Sirius looked dumbstruck by the sudden change of subject, but then smiled.

“I have been thinking for quite a while how to tell you. As I have quite a reputation of being dishonest, I feared you might not take me seriously and get rejected.”

He sighed deep and continued,

“Alexandra, from the moment I wake up until the moment I go to bed, I just think off you. When I see you, I feel happy inside, and when you are away, I miss you. Now I know it is not just a temporarily infatuation, or just physical attraction. Will you be my girl?”

Before she could answer, James added, “And I can tell you, he still thinks of you also after he goes to bed.”

While Sirius' turned all shades of red, Alexandra grabbed and hugged him, saying, “Of course you silly!”



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Lily turned to James, “And what about you, what are your feelings?”

“I think she is a beautiful girl, and that my best friend is a lucky guy!”

“Can't you ever be serious?”

“No! He is Sirius, I am James. You do not need a truth potion for that.”

“James!!!!”

“Honestly, That prophecy is quite a shock, but if you will allow, I will stand by your side through thick-and-thin, from this day forward and so on. You should know, that the first week of our first year during flying lessons, when I crashed in you, I've got a crush on you. By now you know why I kept my feelings to myself. So, to cut a long story short, would you be mine?”

A small kiss was enough as an answer.

“Despite everything, I feel like celebrating. Any suggestions?”

“Getting away from them all. How about a pick-nick? Just the four of us!”

“To avoid being caught, we can fly to the other side of the lake.”

“And *avoid* some class cleaning!”

Sylvia woke up with a complacent feeling.

Not only did she breakup the tight friendship among those four Gryffindors, But she utterly humiliated those two girls, who

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

were probably on the train back home. And she also had a more than usually satisfying night with those two boys. She didn't care or either one but the fact she had taken them away from those girls was an extra satisfying aspect of her utter revenge.

And the idea of the photo's of them while doing it in the Slytherin-newspaper made her gloat.

“Life is good, as long as you are in control. And I am for 100% in control. Even in Slytherin I am now respected and feared after yesterdays stunt.”

She wanted to turn around, but someone shouted: “Sylvia! Headmaster, at once. You can dress up later when you come back. IF you come back at all!”

Still in her nightgown, when walking through Slytherin common-room, she noticed everyone was looking extremely foul at here.

“I will get you for this, I swear, bitch!”

While she got escorted to the headmaster, she heard a Homeric laughter coming from the Gryffindor tower.

Much to her horror, four familiar faces looked at her, the infamous four from Gryffindor. And apparently they were still friends, and it looked like even more than just friends.

Sirius asked with a sarcastic smile on his face “Hard but fulfilling night Sylvia? Goyle said he was exhausted”

And Lily had his arm around James. Why didn't they hate each other? Sylvia totally lost it. What had gone wrong?

The answer came with a devastating blow.

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

Behind the principles' desk were not only the head master, but the heads of all the houses and a representative from the ministry. And the expressions on their face varied from disbelief to utter disgust.

Silvia felt slightly uncomfortable when she noticed the Lily's invitation and a copy of the Slytherin-news paper. That should have only circulated among their own students.

Dumbledore pointed to the photo and the article, and simply said: “Any comment, miss McCunningham?”

“Eh, every year we organize our own party, I just organized everything and left short after the opening. Did something go wrong?”

“So it was indeed you, who organized it all!”

“Yes I did, as far as I know, it was a great success and all were satisfied!”

“Below the first photo, it reads:”

*A feast for all of Slytherin,*

*As announced, it was certainly a party that no-one will ever forget. Specially, donating the entrance fee, was something many students have done repeatedly. Accordingly to Sylvia McCunningham, who claims to have contrived and organized it all, it would not have been possible with the over enthusiastic support of our guests. She would like to emphasize that neither spells nor persuasion were needed for anyone involved all of them are looking forward to a repetition.*

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

Sylvia knew she had to come up with a very good explanation if they all had seen the photo.

“Can you elaborate on, what you call, the guests?”

“As you can see from the invitation, I am not narrow minded and I invited those four from Gryffindor to make up with them.”

“Two things. We discovered several very different invitations. Two of your *guests* were expecting quite something else. And secondly, what are you talking about Gryffindor?”

“Did Potter, Evans, McGonagall and Black have second thoughts?”

“Miss McCunningham, those four you mention, were nowhere near your party! All the time they were in the presence of two professors discussing grave matters.”

And with these words he turned the paper around, so Silvia could see the photograph. As expected she saw all the boys from Slytherin in their Adam's t unique around two women. But as the polymorphic-potion had worn out, the photo showed the original persons: professor MacIlzegowie and the lab assistant, her own mother, Mrs. McCunningham.

Underneath it, was the second photo, that should never have been included in the paper.

The text below it, was exactly how she wanted to humiliate Potter and Black.

*For my private two guests. I was glad to be able to fulfill all of lingering dreams. As a reminder for a very long but satisfying night.*

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

But instead of the Gryffindor boys, she recognized Goyle & Crabbe.

“Normally this means expulsion from school, and immediately sending back to home. But we have good enough grounds to believe if you face either of your parents in the near future, you would not survive. You will be send with a portal directly to Durmstrang, where you will face the heaviest punishment possible for witches. I have instructed Mr. Filch to collect some of your belongings, as you have certainly no friends left at all, definitely not at Slytherin. Out with you!”

Same afternoon, Sirius and James were summoned to Professor McGonagall 's study. Dumbledore was sitting there also.

“We know that beyond any doubt, neither of you went to that, that horrible gathering. But I think you two suspected or knew more about it, not?”

“Eh..”

“You can be honest with me, this remains off the records, but I must know more about it. Did you, for instance *borrow* the transformation-potion?”

“Yes, we did. But we thought it rather harmless. Goyle and Crabbe were invited anyway, I asked them, so they knew and they were eager enough.’

“No problems with those two, but the other two?”

“We honestly did not know what she was up to. We wanted her mother and a reliable witness to see what Sylvia was up to.”

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

Professor McGonagall waited to rethink about what she heard.

“I am inclined to believe you. Having to watch people having sex is already disgusting. I've heard the rumors about Sylvia and her mother's activities, and consider them both perfectly capable of such disgusting conduct.”

“Do you have any idea what really has happened?”

“After seeing the photo, I can imagine something horrible.”

“Even for a person like Sylvia's mother, without any moral standard what so ever, has it been a hellish ordeal. The idea of doing such thing to another person makes me fell outraged and disgusting.” said Dumbledore.

“There is however one aspect that is a big relieve to me. That is the idea that you saved Lily and Alexandra from such torture. Neither would have survived it. They might appear strong, but they are vulnerable in their own way. Do they know about it, have you told them?”

“No. They have already too much to digests with the prophecy. And there wasn't time for it.”

“Please leave it that way, at least for the time being. Until they are ready for it, but that might take years. If ever.”

“Alright. You all stay here. I have send for Lily and Alexandra to come here, to discuss about the prophecy. Mean while I will address the rest of the students in the main hall.”

A moment later the headmaster faced all of the students.

“Before we let you return home for the holiday, I have some grave announcements to make.”

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All students and staff sat down.

“As I always tell the first years students, our gift comes along with an extra responsibility. We may NEVER use it against a helpless person, Muggle or Magic. Accidents may happen but deliberate infringements will not be tolerated. Everyone should realize that.”

“Students from Hufflepuf, Ravenclaw and Gryffindor should leave now. We'll meet this evening at the closing ceremony.”

After some considerable time, only the staff and the Slytherin students were still sitting.

“We know what had happened during your party, and who is responsible. Her hate-driven plans back-fired on herself. She is banished for life from this school, her wand I broke myself and on another location she will be forcibly squibified. She will sense the power of magic but never be able to use it for entire life. According to the ministry she has admitted and thus proven that she is not worthy and to be trusted with our gift. The only reason she will not be send to Azkaban, is that she is still under-aged. This morning the court has unanimously found her guilty.”

Much whispering among the Slytherin table on the harsh treatment.

“However, miss McCunningham is not the only one responsible. All of you who went to that orgy, are to blame as well. You all knew and did nothing to rescue the guests”

Never before was the great hall that silent.

“All the girls should know this. Some potions were changed. This means that neither of you were drinking moon-tea, but a drought with the opposite effect. You have two options, either

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

go to madam Pomfrey at the hospital-ward, or explain your upcoming pregnancy to your parents.”

None of the students said a word.

“Another word of caution. You were exposed to an experimental potion intended for breeding animals. There is a fair chance, actually more than a fair chance, that your pregnancies can not be interrupted.”

Cries of dismay.

“All the boys should know this. Regardless of what has been said to you, neither of the two women were there of their own free will. You are all guilty of assaulting two of our staff, an elderly professor and her assistant. For the protection of you, who actually do not deserve any protections as far as I am concerned, neither of them can, will or even want to return to Hogwarts. At this moment letters are sent to all of your parents and to the ministry. By now, you are all registered offenders. This out of my hands and control.”

Then he hesitated, lost control over his temper, drew his wand, and shouted '*Nolens reduction secundo crimen!*'”

“I had to get that of my chest. That is all!”

One professor said softly to another, “What did Dibbet do? I never heard that spell before.”

Madam Pomfrey explained, “If either of these boys assault a girl again, their manhood will shrink forever, irreversibly. I'm not sure if that is also in accordance with the ministry, but somehow I don't think there will be any complaints.”



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For the rest of the day, students were preparing for the voyage home. For some, packing was done almost instantly, but for some 'untidy types' it took quite some additional time.

Finally it was time for the closing ceremony. Students noticed there were empty seats. On the master table, for teachers and other parts of the staff, but also it seemed that some students were not attending the banquet. Specially the table of one of the houses were lacking students. When it was clear that no-one else would come, they saw one of the professors standing up.

But it was Dumbledore, not Dibbet.

“Dear students and staff,

You noticed that as vice head, I got the privilege of heading this ceremony. Our official head, professor Dibbet has asked me to do, as he is indisposed. Recent events made that he left for the ministry last evening.”

This remark caused some buzzing among the tables. But it all died down when he spread his arms.

“Traditionally Dibbet reviewed some of the highlights of the passed year, or when it happened, he reminded us of less favourable events. I won't change that.

The ending of the year the implicit parting of some of us. Like each year a fair number of students have passed their NEWT-exams, yesterday we celebrated that with the entire staff, them and their parents. All those who passed the OWL-exams or Muggle exams decided to prolong their presence here, something we all rejoice.

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However also some less enjoyable things have happened. We will be missing two students and three members of our staff. McVail, our professor divination is no longer among the living. Since the accident, Filch has taken care that repetition is no longer possible, no papers or other object were allowed to be put on staircases ever since, and he looks forward being very strict on it. Eoin, a Gryffindor student died under mysterious circumstances some months ago. Officially this was because of 'family events'. Rumors has it that his own brother had a hand in it. Of the house of Hufflepuf, Timothy has made a tragical decision to end it all. We commemorate them all, and understand the indescribable loss for their family and friends. Although they were in no way responsible for what have happened, two of our staff, professors Peatery and Corstophine felt that they could no longer continue teaching with this loss on their shoulders. They too will be missed dearly.

Since they left, we had found two of our students to step-in for the moment. We were and are still grateful for their effort, perhaps that might lead to a career opportunity after they finally graduated. I'm pretty confident about such possibility. That proves to all of us, what Dibbet used to say for all those years during his opening speech: *'The more one put's into his school-work, the more you can get out of it'*. Hence we would give you, Alexandra McGonagall and Lily Evans, this medal as for your services to the school, students and staff in a difficult situation.”

While Dumbledore walked towards the girls, they were given a warmly round of applause by all teachers. “Thank you, girls.” He looked sideways, to the staff-table.

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“That is also true for our first international post-grad student, Mikey Transgressia. Some of his paintings got so much attention, that he is offered a position and a display of his collection in France.

That brings me to sport. This year our local Quidditch cup has been won by Gryffindor, with only one point ahead from Hufflepuf. Honesty demands that the Slytherin team paid most of their attention to the international contest at Durmstrang. Unfortunately it didn't pay-off, I was told. We received a number of unfriendly messages from Durmstrang officials. Mr Black left not only some unforgettable impressions, but he also left mysteriously earlier, without checking out. Consequently they won't award him the prizes he rightfully should have been given, but they can not deny the fact that he has sliced off some seconds of his own world-record. The fact he came back home empty-handed should have cost him some points for the house cup, but the fact that he fooled their ultra tight security people caused so much fun and laughter here, I could only award this achievement ten points to Gryffindor. I also understood that Beaux-Battons is also interested in organizing a sporting event in the near future. More about that probably next year.

For countless times the house of Gryffindor get's punished for having broken most rules, however current year this notorious title goes to Slytherin. As Dibbet told us yesterday, some behaviour is inexcusable and as a result they pay a 250 point fine, which effectively take them out of the race for the house cup.

As both Ravenclaw and Gryffindor contributed in McGonagall's dreaming-class, they both earned 100 points for restoring

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some proper night rest for some of us at least. As I mentioned before, the effort of the two Gryffindor girls helping with Biology and Latin & Greek, earned both of them 100 points.

So, unless anyone give me a good cause for adding or removing points, it seems that for the first time we have an awkward situation. It very rarely happens that two houses come out with an equal score, but it never happened in history that two houses ended up at the top.”

Dumbledore looked at the students and the staff.

“No, nothing, no-one has anything that would rightly awards some point??

Than I declare this officially a draw, or to quote a Wimbledon referee, as a 'love-game'. Now lets enjoy the fruit of the house-elves labor.”

Even though it demonstrated Dumbledore total lack of knowledge of tennis, as he probably had meant to say 'deuce', to neither of those two points had anyone any objections.

## After burn

Because of some of the recent events, some staff member considered it more appropriate that both girls should travel home in a different way. So instead of a tiring train journey, she was granted to return home through the grid of connected fire-places.

This time she was not only escorted by Alexandra, but also by Professor McGonagall and Dumbledore.

While Lily and Alexandra were busy in the kitchen, McGonagall said, “Mrs. Evans, your daughter recovered completely physically. But emotionally it has been hard for her last months. Serious illnesses and death were often shielded away from youngsters by some parents. We however think they are an essential part of life. But for your daughter it became very close. Not only because of this, but recently some students entered a restricted area, where a boy was captured by ghosts. We know think that he was already dead at that time, but your daughter helped him to take the final step.”

“What? Did she kill someone?”

“No, no, no! We don't see it this way. He was already dead, but his soul was chained to a room, a floor. Lily released him, set his soul free. She did nothing wrong, on the contrary.”

After both girls returned, she said again to Henry, “Quite a place you got there! I thought it was safe at school?”

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Now Dumbledore spoke up, “Hogwarts is still the most safe place you can imagine. These things happen everywhere, but are never recognized as such. People getting mysteriously ill, and ghost-stories are never taken seriously by anyone. We do.”

After a pause, Henry admitted, “Yes, you are right, things like that do happen, and we assume they have been ill for years without knowing it. And with regards to ghosts....”

But before he could finish his sentence he stopped abruptly. The wooden logs in fireplace suddenly started burning differently. As no warmth came from them anymore, everyone experienced a chill. Almost instantly McGonagall and Dumbledore got up, draw their wand, pointing to the fireplace waiting on what would happen, and ready for any defending spells.

But no-one came out of the flames, but they formed the shape of a persons' head.

“Lily, Lily!” a woman's voice called.

Both parents looked bewildered, but Lily pointed to an old photograph, still standing onto of the fireplace.

Both professors understood that there was no cause for alarm and but their wands away, sat down but still looked concerned.

“Yes, Grandma. I'm here.”

“Good! You have passed another test. Some difficult ones. You stood firm and kept your head clear while facing death and eternal perils. You should now understand the severity of the road that lies ahead. Life is fragile and precious. Not just yours. Everybody's life. Never gamble. Regain your balance and strength and be prepared for a next step.”

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And with these final words, the face was gone and normal flames returned.

Margareth stuttered, “Was that a gh...?”

And Lily explained, “Yes mum, that was the ghost of grand-grand-ma Diana, who passed away some time ago.”

“You live a life full of excitement...” said Henry.

“I never met your grand-grand-mother, but I fully agree with her. All life is fragile and precious.” He looked questioningly to the professors.

Dumbledore explained, “Yes, by now you understand that most of our students become something more than just a grocer. Most of them end up at positions where they matter, make a difference, some for some people others for many people. We guard and guide them in every possible way we can. Your daughter is considered strong enough to do this.”

“Don't worry dad, this is what I want. I can do this. And I have enough help and support to grow stronger and wiser.”

Henry and Margareth decided not to reply. When they looked at Lily, neither of them had realized that their daughter had grown that much and so quickly. Soon she would out-grow them, if she not already had.

## End year four

## **Sneak preview chapter: humiliating Snape**

As part of the test-week, they not only had to do writing test-papers, but also several practical exercises, that would lead up to their OWL's. All students had reviewed the recipe's and general procedures of the portions they had made for the last couple of months, but they soon found out that these were of no use for the next exercise. Their potions-teacher explained.

“Good morning, students! Last week I received a suggestion, request or you might have said a complaint that you all were making potions that were only for academical use, and the quality only testable by school-staff. One from Hufflepuf suggested to make something every one could test, something for daily use. I heard that the very first potion-lesson, in the first year, my college Peatery had done something similar. According to Madam Pomfrey with astonishing results.”

Some Slytherin students behind them moaned, “Oh, not again!”, but Slughorn replied, “As the kitchen is 'Terra Incognita' for me, -actually I'm not really sure if my own house has a kitchen at all- I had to reside to something else. When I scratched my head to come up with something, it dawned to me. Something you all need -and use I hope- Shampoo! It also guarantees that you will do your best, unless you don't mind risking your own hair. General recipe is here on my desk, enough copies for each and everyone of you.”

After everyone fetched their own sheet Slughorn continued. “As you can see, it starts with the general production of soap. That will yield an 'acceptable', you should present it to me, and



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I'll test if it is safe. In case so, I challenge you to use it and wash your own hair with it. In order to prove you did, come to me tomorrow before the first hour. Those daring to get higher marks, the next paragraph describes what kind of colors, odors or other additives you can apply. All required ingredients can be obtained at the regular desk. Good luck!"

James said with a wide grin, "We certainly have luck. I planned to do something entirely different with that bottle that we brought along, but this is better, so much better!"

As to be expected, one of the best potions-students, Snape, was highly upset, "What a humiliation! I wouldn't even lower my self too buying things like that myself, servant business, let alone making it. That's even worse."

And with a pestering tone Sirius added "You wouldn't even lower your self to USE it, even that is far below your dignity!"

And James added, "No, the least thing are respected co-students wants to make, is snake-oil, eh, I mean Snape-oil!"

The whole class roared with laughter.

"Very funny, Potter! Playing with one's name."

"Yeah, it is just too bad my friends name is Sirius, instead of kettle."

"Why so?"

"In that case, I, Pot-ter could calling kettle Black!"

Much of the class laughed again. "You can't beat that, Severus."

Angrily Snape started to draw up a list of the chosen ingredients and started while all others were already weighing mixing, dissolving or filtering. Finally even Snape produced

## Lily Evans' Diary – year four

about a pint of a clear sirup. As instructed he put some of it into a test-tube, put a cork on it and approached Slughorn for test-evaluation. There he had to wait for his turn, and got a sour remark that his sample wasn't labeled. When Snape did add a label to his tube, he wasn't able to see that James threw away the content of the bottle he left on his desk, and replaced it with the content of a bottle from one of his pockets.

Next morning, when all the students gathered for the next potion-class, most unexpected results were to be observed. Some students complained about the lack of fresh air, as a couple of girls clearly put way too much smelly ingredients in their shampoo. None of the boys or girls had turn bold or felt victim to an irresistible rash. But Robbert Sheldrake had a very trendy, but daring coupe that would make an easy camouflage while laying in the grass, that green! Alexandra had painted her hair black, but most of the others looked unchanged. Except for Severus, he was raging with anger.

All of the students had to line up, and Slughorn tested a bit of everybody's hair, with the content of the sample they handed over the day before. No mismatch was discovered, all students had dare to tryout on themselves what they had brewed. Except one: Severus.

Slughorn tried again and again.

“You did wash your hair this morning as we all agreed to do so?”

“Yes I did, professor!” he hissed.

“And with the substance you produced yourself?”

“Yes, professor!”

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“Very strange, Snape. The sample you gave me yesterday was a basic shampoo, nothing more, nothing less. Safe but nothing special. But on your hair I find something different, something completely different!”

“That's not possible!”

“Do you brought your bottle along, Snape?”

“Yes, professor.” And Severus handed over his bottle.

Slughorn looked serious. “If there is one thing I hate, is lying students who are trying to cheat on me!”

The professor started to compare the content of the bottle with the previous given sample.

“These are totally different! You washed your hair with... this?”

“Yes professor!”

“Trying to be funny, Snape?”

And Slughorn started to write a note, put it into an envelope, sealed it, and gave it to Snape.

“You were warned in advance, for trying to cheat you get detention. Report to our school head with this letter and now out of my sight!”

By the end of the day, the secret information had leaked out through the entire school. When students heard that Severus had washed his hair with frying-oil, some students looked surprised. “Ah! He was using is regular shampoo” or “That explains his greasy look!”

James only said, “Well, honestly, I'm not surprised at all!”, and he didn't even had to lie for that statement, as he very well knew what was in the bottle from his pocket. “Highly suitable for him!”

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