

# Ewald and the Land of Unknown

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Those who don't believe in magic will never find it.

Roald Dahl

*Titles In The Ewald Series:*

*Book 1: Ewald and the Gems of Time*

*Book 2: Ewald and the Land of Unknown*

Dedicated to  
My Peculiar Siblings  
Nagam, Adam, Rakan, and Marya



# Chapter 1

## A New Journey Has Begun



A quick gust of wind blew towards Ewald and his mother, as they climbed the aging beige steps that led to their house. They hadn't been home for quite some time, having taken part in a number of adventures during Ewald's break from school.

"Look here," pointed Mrs. Ellington. The two plants left under their neighbours' watch looked as if they hadn't been watered for months; this was in fact the case. "I knew I shouldn't have trusted the Brookers," she chuckled.

A smile grew on Ewald's face as he laid his eyes on his

front porch. With its grand comfy chairs, the two had spent many hours there, simply enjoying what good life had to offer. He loved travelling. Yet nothing beat the wonder and awe of travel like the warm return home.

Mrs. Ellington glanced towards her son, “Want to see something electrifying? I learned it a few days ago.”

Ewald hadn’t a clue what his mother meant in the slightest, but he was about to find out.

She reached for the doorknob, her thin hands grasping it firmly, her eyes shutting. She inhaled sharply. Orange sparks ran from her fingers and onto the iron handle, dissipating. There was a click. The door swung open softly.

Ewald watched in complete shock. “When did you... How did you...” But he never finished either of those questions.

“Just a little something I picked up. You’re not the only one who can pull this kind of stuff off,” she remarked with a soothingly delicate grin. The two entered their home, now tired of all the adventuring that they had done. They were home and glad to be. “That was quite the fun ride,” his mother commented, putting away her jacket.

He didn’t respond. He wasn’t the kind to ignore anyone, yet something had occupied his mind – something that had occupied it for the past couple of months, more or less. He rushed up the steps of the staircase, running away from his thoughts, but this did not work. He didn’t want to worry. He didn’t need to worry.

Ewald entered his room, slamming the door shut behind him in a loud bash that shook his very eardrums. The same thoughts continued to torture him. He thought of it again, sending his heart even deeper into his chest. He

paced back and forth, thinking, thinking, thinking. He fell onto his bed restlessly, staring up at the ceiling.

Ewald thought of the months leading up to the summer break, his time at Tralbon School, and the horrific ending to it all. He remembered hearing of his mother's assumed death. He remembered the horror of entering his demolished home – the very one he was now in that had been reconstructed. He remembered walking into his mother's room to find her on the ground motionless, breathless. His entire life has collapsed. The thoughts continued to burn him. The scars could not heal. The thirteen year old remembered how Gethin – a man only by name, whose evil had no bounds – had captured him and held him for ransom in order to lay his hands on the final of the Gems of Time.

A soft voice called from below. “Ewald, come grab your luggage whenever, dear.”

He sat up, wiping his tears with the sleeves of his sweater. Taking in a deep breath, he stood and walked out of his room and down the stairs. The lights of the hallway brightened his brown hair and made his hazel eyes seem to glow.

He scanned the kitchen for his mother. Ewald expected her to appear any moment now to demand an explanation. He quickly but quietly slid nearer to his suitcase – a brown one of the antique kind once owned by his great grandfather and adorned by stamps of all of the places it had been. He picked it up and returned just as he had come – silently.

Ewald plopped it onto his bed. He unlatched the old bag only to find the items in a lot of untidiness. He rummaged through his clothes, searching for it. His hand fell over it – his most prized possession, but unlike what

most would assume, it was simply a single photo. He picked it up. He saw the faces on his two best friends. Ewald forgot his worries. For a brief second, he forgot and so he continued unpacking. Yet the calm was not to stand much longer, this time disrupted by a much more serious problem.

The house shook violently, as a shockwave bounced its way through it. Ewald stumbled onto his feet. Within a mere heartbeat, the door to his room erupted. His once peaceful mother entered with a look of pure terror across her face. "They're here! Leave!" she shouted joltingly.

Without another word said or another thought thought, he shook the suitcase shut and slid it beneath his bed. Yet he hadn't any idea how to do what his mother commanded. "How do we?"

Her finger shot ahead of her, pointing to the large windows. She hadn't really even given it a second thought. There wasn't any time for such a thing.

Rather than pause and contemplate the ordeal, Ewald acted. He pulled his bag back out, retrieving his beloved photograph. He knew that this would be the last he would see of that old, dusty suitcase. Through all of the adventures it had survived, this would surely be its last.

Ewald motioned for his mother to step back, jerked the bag backwards, before chucking it towards the windows. They shattered in a grand manner, large pieces of glass raining down onto their driveway. The bag fell to the ground below.

Yet they had not escaped. The house continued rumbling ferociously. Memories of the previous year ran through his mind. "Anything would do," he hummed to himself. It came to him! Ewald dashed for his shelf, knocking over his collection of books, revealing a

compartment. He tapped rhythmically on the back of the shelf. He heard the grinding of the gears followed by a loud click. A drawer opened inside of which lay a golden tube.

Grabbing it, Ewald scampered over to his mother. He pulled the cork from the tube. An unbearable stench darted into their noses. It was absolutely horrid and by far the worst thing they had ever smelled.

Ewald's face churned. He took a sip – really it was only a few drops, as it was truly sickening – all while attempting to hold back his vomit. He handed the tube over to his mother – who looked at it with disgust. But by now the very structure of their home had been compromised. Something had infiltrated their humble abode. Mrs. Ellington drank out of fear (and because she had dusted that shelf numerous times, each time passing the opportunity of trying the mysterious liquid).

The drink worked much quicker than Ewald remembered it to have. This one was of extra strength and so it acted more hurriedly (luckily for them). They felt a strange tingle on their backs, which turned to an itching, and followed by a slow aching burn. Suddenly, out of their backs, sprung a set of white feathery wings, ripping the back of their shirts. Mrs. Ellington beamed with excitement – something unexpected from a woman whose home was to be demolished for the second time in the span of a couple of months. They now had a plan. They were going to fly!

The door flew into motion. A towering, masked creature appeared, bringing with it the smell of death – a scent that replaced that of the liquid to be the worst they had ever smelled. The room grew darker, colder, lonelier. A dark feeling surrounded them, digging into them. It felt as though the room itself was dying.

However, the Ellingtons, being intelligent enough people, decided to flee the ensuing mess, rather than stay to watch it all. They jumped, only to be caught by the wind.

The swirling of the wind appeared to be fighting against them, wrapping them within its layers. Their visions blurred, tears beginning to form. They pushed onwards, away from their home. The blazing sun glared down onto them. They could barely see where they were heading; yet something about the expression on Mrs. Ellington's face reassured Ewald that she knew exactly where to go.

He watched below, as they soared high above the landscape. Ewald thought he might have spotted a river between the magnificent trees of the autumn forest, but there was one thing that he unquestionably saw – his daring, strong mother. She hadn't been like this, at least not around him. Mrs. Ellington was never one to go out seeking adventure. She was much more the type to crawl into bed with a warm cup of camomile tea and a good novel. Yet as of late, she was drifting from being the bookworm-y type. She (as evident by her new interest in all things magic) had found herself a new hobby.

Ewald, having grown out of his state of shock, decided on asking a single question. But rather than ask about the strange event that had literally shaken their world, or the odd creature that had entered their home, Ewald simply said, "Where are we going?"

His mother didn't dare look back at him, as she had heard it to be very silly to lose focus while flying (or using magic at all really). However, she did reply with a swift, "School," before returning her focus to their flight.

"School," he hummed. "School would be safe," Ewald muttered beneath his breath. This sadly was not the case,

not at all.

Nearly ten minutes had passed by and Ewald was beginning to worry that his mother thought it possible to fly all the way to his far off school. He was quickly growing tired, as was his mother – although she did not look it.

At first, Ewald didn't know whether this was as a result of his mother falling asleep or whether she meant to land, but slowly she began to lower closer to the ground. He naturally followed. They relaxed as the soles of their shoes touched the freshly dewed grass. Their wings shrunk away, only leaving behind the tears that they had caused.

“Now what?” he wondered aloud, looking around them. There was no sight of anything interesting at all. They had merely landed in another part of suburbia.

“It's time to enter,” she explained vaguely.

“Enter... where?”

Mrs. Ellington pointed her finger downwards. He followed its path, gulping at the sight.

“The sewer?” he exclaimed, horrified. “I'm not going in there,” he whined as anyone would.

“Just get in. You'll understand once we get this thing open,” she reasoned. This appeared to work. As both knelt down, their pants rubbed against the dirty asphalt of Rednow Road. They slid their fingers around the iron cover, heaving it off.

The two stared down into the hole. Nothing was visible, only darkness. The putrid scent of rotting infected their nostrils. This too became the worst odour that either of them had ever smelt, now replacing that of the creature that smelt of death and the horrid potion that they drank.

For some reason, the thought of entering a dark,

inhumanely repulsive world did not seem to satisfy Ewald.

“I’ll go down first,” his mother volunteered. She slid her legs in first, spun her head around to ensure that no one had seen them, and fell inside. A thud sounded as she landed. “Your turn, dear,” she encouraged. With a quick sigh, he did the same, landing on the dirt ground.

The scent had disappeared. In fact, it now appeared to be coming from the outside. This was not what Ewald had expected.

## Chapter 2

# The Underground Road



It was surprisingly much brighter than it had appeared to be at first, but that wasn't the most notable revelation. One would typically think of a concrete collection system for waste and rainwater when thinking of the sewers, but this was not that. They had now found themselves in a grand tunnel with walls of soil with a dirt road running through. Ewald wasn't sure what to think, but soon enough he would understand.

There was a whirling sound. Something was getting closer. A breeze approached from behind, as a floating platform came rushing towards them, stopping by their side.

It was only a few centimetres thick – a blue glass platform in the shape of a square surrounded by a lining of metal. It hovered above the ground, as if waiting for them. Then a voice sounded from all around them. It was of a woman, calm and collected. “Hello, unidentified strangers. Please say the name of the location which you would like to be transported to,” she told.

Both Ewald and his mother had come in contact with transporters and both were quite fond of them. Mrs. Ellington cleared her throat. “Tralbon School,” she declared.

The blue of the transporter lit up, as it activated. Ewald held his mother’s hand. Jumping onto the device, they vanished. There was a bright flash of blue, blinding them momentarily.

Their vision returned, yet it seemed that nothing had happened. “Why’re we still in the same place?” Ewald asked in a frightened tone. He remembered the last time that a transporter had done the unexpected. It had taken him right into Gethin’s trap.

However, Mrs. Ellington had a much more soothing answer. “Why we have moved,” she said. A second glance showed this to be the case. There was now a root – perhaps that of a hackberry tree – hanging down from the soil above. Wherever they now were, it was somewhere further into the tunnel system.

“Where do we go now?” wondered Ewald.

His mother spun around once again. “There’s a light coming from over there,” she pointed deeper into the tunnel. “I suppose it’s our way out.” Indeed there was a light. It appeared almost angelic in all of its golden perfection. Ewald’s mother took him by the hand, tugging

on it ever so slightly. “So how are you feeling about returning to school?”

He thought, unsure of how exactly to answer her question. “Good,” he replied, having decided on giving her the less worrisome response. Truth be told, Ewald had heard much talk of Gethin’s return from his friends. The people of the Magic Section were quite tense at the moment, the Magic Section being the country in which those with magical abilities chose to live; the Ellingtons were not among these people.

“Well that’s good, Ewald,” she returned with a smile. They continued towards the glowing beacon, skipping over numerous roots that had grown upwards onto the road.

It’s a well-known fact that mothers know when their children are happy or sad, confident or anxious, calm or worried, and she knew that her son, no matter how hard he tried to hide it, was the last of these. “Ewald, anything on your mind?”

He paused. “I guess it’s just that I can’t stop thinking about the gems,” he told her.

Mrs. Ellington let out a long sigh of contemplation. She wasn’t so sure about the gems either, worrying herself, and didn’t know how to respond. “Has there been any more news about them?”

The truth of the matter is that no one truly knew the state of either the Gems of Time or Gethin except perhaps the minister of the Magic Section – Ewald, along with many others, didn’t trust him much. Three months earlier, a two-page article had appeared in ‘The Hetron Herald’, detailing the awful events concerning Gethin, the gems, and the Ellingtons. This had not been a particularly pleasant time.

“News?” Ewald repeated. “Not much,” he replied. “I did hear a few people talking about it near the end of the school year, but nothing since.”

She let out another smile. “Good. That’s good,” she comforted. “No news is good.”

They continued their trek until meeting with a wooden sign skewered into the earth. The wood was dark and seemed at least a hundred years old. It had been scrawled all over, ‘Tralbon School’ handwritten onto it in a bloody red, which oozed unnaturally as if not yet dry. A ladder stood next to it and so they climbed.

Mrs. Ellington went first, sticking her head out through the hole. The warm light of the setting sun caressed her face. “It’s beautiful!” she sung. She found herself at the center of a grassy meadow, a grand forest next to her. Ewald followed. His eyes landed on the enchanting forest. He could recognize that forest anywhere – the Forest of Charms. They stood there, admiring the landscape.

“Is that Tralbon?” she pointed to a tower far off in the distance.

“Yes.”

“Oh it looks wondrous. The brochure really doesn’t do it justice, you know?” she marvelled.

Both mother and son made their way towards it, but the two were still much more occupied with the scenery. This was the perfect day. The songs of birds echoed around them, filling the tranquil quiet with a soft melody. Something about being in the Magic Section made Ewald feel... better somehow.

At first, looking at the Forest of Charms brought back sickening memories of the time he had been plunged into

the depths of the forest and brought face-to-face with the man who had destroyed him, the memories of needing the rescue by the minister and his guards. The entire story was quite horrific. But as they progressed closer to the school, it became less eerie, more charming and so he forgot.



There was once a boy – a very, very lonely boy. He wasn't only lonely in the sense that he lacked the friends to play with or the siblings to fight with, but also he lacked the parents to look after him. This does not mean that he was an orphan. Oh no, his parents were quite well and alive, but they were always far too busy. They had jobs – jobs of infinite greed. “If I'm not working, I'm losing money. You wouldn't want that, now would you?” his father always asked him.

This boy grew up, never experiencing childhood, rather going through a dull, dull life. But by the time of adulthood, all of this dreariness and jealousy turned to pain, which turned to anger, which turned to revenge. He had had it. He wanted revenge. His black soul wanted revenge.

He gathered an army of the most despicable people. They broke into the homes of those whom he had grown up with, those who had cast him aside, leaving him to himself in the darkness. They barged in, broke, bashed, burgled, blew up, burned, butchered and moved onto the next of their victims.

He had created this – an army that he could barely contain. It wasn't long before they had infiltrated the government. The Magic Section was crumbling. Then came

a long period of gloom. Not a single light was kept lit in their presence. Not a single life was kept unscathed under their occupation. It was dark, to say the least.

At last, a force had risen. The Three Elders – two warlocks and a witch – came to face Gethin and his army. There were thousands of his soldiers and a measly three to fight against them. But as the fighting went on, they decided to change their plan. The Three Elders centered all of their power and vanquished the army, turning them into a single oak tree, each soldier a leaf. To do this, they sacrificed themselves, draining their lives. They had died in the hopes of saving the world from an age of darkness. Naturally, as all with magic blood do, they transformed into an item created in their memory. Each became a gem. The Three Elders had become the Gems of Time.

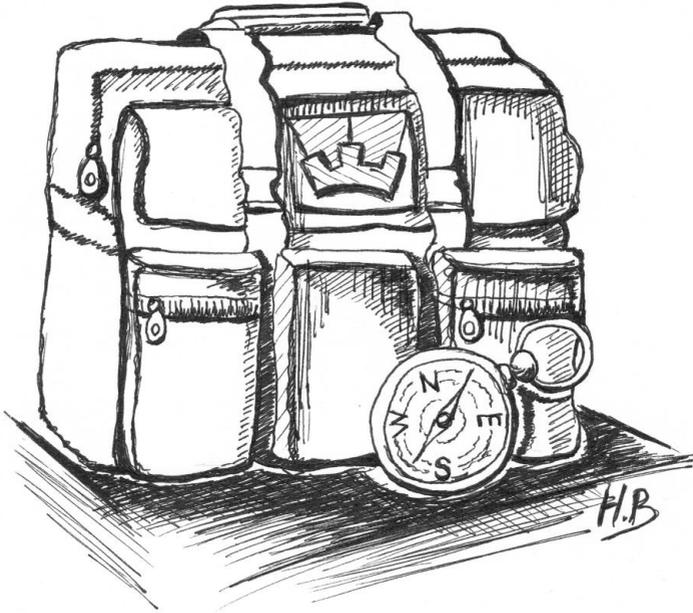
Gethin did what he did best, what he had grown up doing. He hid, staying in the shadows. But he was watching. Gethin is always watching, waiting, hoping to lay his hands on the gems so that he can awaken his army.



Together, they approached Tralbon and memories returned.

## Chapter 3

# The Start of Two Adventures



The Ellingtons reached the legendary gate, well known as 'The Silver Entrance'. It had been majestically crafted. The metal had been twisted into glorious silver swirls, creating an intricate masterpiece. At times, it would appear to be moving, dancing. Ewald remembered coming here with his now best friend Alexander around the same time the year prior.

His mother stopped in her tracks. Her head was held high, her eyes fixed. Next to the gate, on both sides, were tall hedge walls at least twenty metres high. Past the Silver Entrance was a garden, in which stood smaller hedges

(carved into fantastical things), flowers (lined in the most beautiful patterns), and an old fountain of two lions standing with their backs to each other, water running from their mouths. Slick layers of fog slithered across the ground, concealing it in white clouds of mist. The things that made viewing the grand garden possible were levitating lanterns, which slowly swayed back and forth above it, casting calm shadows over the scene.

However, it was not calm. There was a low mumble of voices, many sounded quite concerned even from afar. They continued walking towards it, as they noticed a crowd gathering between the hedges. Suddenly, a loud trumpet sung a deep note and the entrance opened slowly. This had caught Ewald off guard.

“I must say,” his mother began. “It really is beautiful, but is it always this hectic, Ewald?”

“No,” he responded. “It’s not usually like this.” Ewald thought nothing of it, comforting himself by assuming that it was simply Alexander playing some tricks or perhaps it was Dhiman (another of his friends) going off about some obscure subject (perhaps it was the great space race perpetuated by the growing divide during the Cold War) while the crowd simply muttered in agony.

As they entered and as the Silver Entrance closed behind them, the random mumblings of nonsense came together.

“I’m not letting him stay here like this!” one woman complained to her husband.

“I’m sure everything will fine. It’s probably nothing,” concluded an old man, convincing his grandson.

“You know who I blame? The minister!” barked a short

woman, foaming at the mouth.

“Everyone blames the minister,” Ewald thought. “She could’ve at least tried to be a bit more original.”

This was as it was for the moment. Simply a sea of mouths – some angry, some worried, and some simply happy that they’ll be getting a couple of months of peace away from their children.

Mrs. Ellington was one of the worried mouths, “Ewald, any clue what’s going on here? Is there anyone I can talk to?” It seemed that even without knowing what any of these people were rambling, ranting, and raging about, Mrs. Ellington too had joined in the confusion. They were all trapped in a fog, both literally and metaphorically.

Ewald hadn’t a clue what to do. For a moment, he didn’t even know up from down, but then he remembered his teacher. Professor Hegnorf was by far the best teacher at Tralbon School. The words ‘best teacher’ here meaning ‘the loudest, most whimsical, most chaotically brilliant teacher around’. He knew that, wherever the commotion was, Hegnorf would be at the front, somehow trying to tame the roaring beast. Grabbing his mother’s hand, Ewald burrowed his way to the front of the crowd, right up to the large tower doors.

There he was. The professor, no matter how archaic the term may sound, wasn’t an old man, although his lack of hair certainly didn’t help. Ewald had never asked him his age, but he assumed that fifty was most likely a safe bet. Then again, Ewald was still quite confused on the subject of the aging of magic folk; many grew to be a hundred fifty and so it threw his math off a bit.

Hegnorf appeared quite occupied, answering question after question.

“Everyone, give me two minutes of your time and I’ll explain,” he declared. It took quite a bit of effort, but at last the chatter had seized. “Thank you all. I’ll make this short. After careful consideration and consultation with the teacher body, we have come to the conclusion that closing down Tralbon School is our best chance at keeping your children safe.”

There was an uproar, as the hushed voices returned to their original volume. At this point, one may think that the students would be cheering, but, in fact, it was quite the opposite. Tralbon was no ordinary school and its students no ordinary students. They enjoyed it there very much and so frowns popped up like golden dandelions midsummer.

Ewald gave a perplexed look. “Sir!” he called out.

Hegnorf spun around in search of the calling voice. “Yes? Where are you, boy?”

“Over here, sir!” Ewald motioned.

“Ah yes, hello,” he sighed. This sigh must not be misunderstood. It was not a sigh meaning ‘Oh please, get off my lawn’ nor did it mean ‘You again? You’re the worst of my students’. It rather meant ‘Oh Ewald, it’s good to see you, but I’m afraid there’s some bad news’.

Ewald returned this sighed hello with a smile. “What’s happened?” he questioned, skipping the formalities and small talk.

“I can’t say much, but there’s been a security threat that we’re hoping to get under control,” he replied in a whisper.

As per usual when things like this happen, Ewald quickly came to a conclusion. “Gethin,” he mumbled. He watched the eyes of his professor, hoping that they would deny or dismiss the very idea.

“I really can’t say much...” he began.

“Sir, I think I have a right to know,” Ewald pleaded.

Mrs. Ellington stood off to the side. Her brain had drifted off into its own realm of thought. Her eyes were blank with reflection. She didn’t really know what to say or do, but simply stand and watch.

However before Hegnorf could say another word, another professor had trotted into the area between the hedges. “Everybody, can I have your attention?” he howled. He walked towards the front, closer to the door, nearly pushing Hegnorf out of the way. “Change of plans! Tralbon will not be closed!” he announced.

Fists flew into the air, as celebrations ensued. The parents were still on edge, but the students seemed perfectly happy with this turn of events.

“Change of plans?” Hegnorf rebuked. “Change of plans? Who decided this?” The professor was not hiding his disapproval.

Henderson grinned a wide sneer. “We’ll be quite fine handling this. As to who decided this, it was I. Of course, I did speak to the others and they saw no problem in the idea.” The sneer transformed into a much more sinister one. “Plus, you wouldn’t want to take school away from them, now would you?” He pointed towards the crowd of now content students.

Hegnorf let out a deep breath of air. This time, his sigh meant something different, closer along the lines of ‘Perfect! He’s just put them all in danger. He’s either sadistic or a complete moron’. “Mrs. Ellington, would you mind if I borrow your son for a moment?” he requested.

She gave a concerned look, having heard everything

that she had, but reluctantly agreed.

“Mom, I’m alright now. You can go back home and I’ll call you later,” Ewald reassured her with a hug. However, ‘alright’ was far from the truth.

With that, Hegnorf guided him through the large wooden doors and into the tower. He made sure to shut it firmly behind them, as a way of showing his dislike for Henderson. The cylindrical tower was of bright brick as was the gentle, glossy staircase that spun itself around the inside of the wall all the way to the top.

Ewald saw that there was no time to waste and so quickly began, “Sir, what’s Gethin doing here? My mother doesn’t have the gem anymore. Wouldn’t he know that?”

Hegnorf’s eyes shifted quickly around the room, avoiding Ewald’s. “Well... you see... it turns out that...”

But once again the professor was interrupted, this time by shouting from above.

“You idiot!” snarled a familiar voice.

The professor looked up with a disgusted expression.

Another voice replied snappily, “So you don’t find the fact that the golden clock has started up again related to what’s going on?”

Ewald, unlike Hegnorf, smirked. He could recognize that bickering pair just about anywhere. They were his friends – Alex and Dhiman. The boys peered downwards from the top and ran down the steps at the first sight of Ewald.

“I thought the school was closed,” Ewald said to the professor. The thought of his friends freely roaming a restricted, under-security-threat school was quite horrific.

“Why it is. I just let Alexander in and Dhiman insisted

that he follow along,” he replied.

Alex leapt from the last step, wrapping his arms around his friend. “Good to see ya!” he greeted.

“I missed you, you know?” Ewald returned, their hug lingering. Alexander had been his first and best friend. Up until last year, he hadn’t talked much to others his age. “You two are still fighting, huh?”

Alex pulled away. “Yeah,” he whispered, apologetically.

Dhiman smiled. “I’d call it ‘having a civilized discussion’,” he remarked with a chuckle.

Hegnorf was still on the topic of the school and so he continued, “Anyway, this problem that we have – it’s not going to be easy to get rid of it. Alex, you are right. The golden clock does have a part to play within the scheme of things, but we’ll get there soon enough. What do we already know?” he asked them.

“The school’s under threat,” Dhiman told.

“Students were going to be turned away, but then we heard them cheering and so... we’re staying?” Alex added.

“And it’s Gethin,” Ewald asserted.

“Sadly, very sadly... you are all correct,” he informed them. “And those three things make a very horrible combination.” The trembling of his voice echoed throughout the tower, landing to ring in their ears. He was not at ease, not in the slightest, and that could not mean that anything good was to come.

“But why is he here? Isn’t he after the gems?” Alex wondered, as did Ewald.

“He is.”

“But the gems aren’t here... Right?”

“Wrong.”

Who would have thought that a single word of only five letters could send anyone into such disarray? A simple negation had done this to Ewald. He was unsure of what to even say. His mind only partially understood the professor’s answer. “What do you... What do you mean, sir?”

Hegnorf looked to the ground. “The gems were taken from the descendant families of the Three Elders and placed under the control of the minister. He decided it be best to place them here – at Tralbon.”

A smile sprouted on Alexander’s face. “Very funny,” he snickered. “Where did he actually put them?” But the expression mounted on Hegnorf’s face affirmed, reaffirmed, and then rereaffirmed that this, in fact, was true.

“But this is a school,” countered Ewald. “Why would he put them in such a vulnerable, public place? Why not secured in the parliament at Hetron or inside a safe within a safe within a safe? But a school?” he objected completely to the action, as did most sane people.

“I agree with you completely, Ewald. However, no matter how much I protested it, the minister would not back down, thinking that he could ‘outsmart him by putting it in a place it shouldn’t be.’” By the sound of it, the professor disliked this man quite vehemently.

Dhiman raised his hand awkwardly, but then proceeded anyway, “So... Gethin’s trying to find them?”

“He already has. He knows exactly where they are. It’s just a matter of breaking in now. The minister isn’t a complete fool. He placed some security measures, but they aren’t much.” Hegnorf explained to them.

“So what’s going to happen to us – the students? And

how is Gethin going to be stopped?” Alex implored urgently.

Hegnorf let out another one of his long sighs – this one needing no translation. “We were going to send all the students back, but now Henderson – Professor Henderson, I mean – has reversed that decision and so if I go ahead and reverse his reversal... Well, I think we all know what will happen then.”

“Mass protests most likely,” Dhiman interjected.

The professor continued, “So I suppose we’ll be needing some tents to set up in the field. The inside of the school is far too close to everything. Truth is, even the field is too close, but we’ll have to do what we’ll have to do.”

Ewald had no interest to go on listening to the plans for the student’s sleeping arrangements, whilst Gethin – the greatest villain of their time – was within the same building as them. “But sir,” he murmured. “Any ideas on how to stop him?”

“Stopping Henderson? Well...”

“No, I meant Gethin. How’s he going to be stopped?” queried Ewald optimistically. “There’s got to be a way,” he pressed.

Hegnorf paused in deep thought, wanting to approach the next bit with a more subtle touch. “Boys, Gethin has gotten into the government’s system. Nearly everything is down. He’s trying to knock down our defences. He wants communication to be difficult. It’s the very reason why we couldn’t tell everyone the school’s condition before they arrived. Everything is down, including the main network of transporters and that’s our dilemma.”

“What’s so important about the transporters?” rushed

Dhiman. He had always been quite fond of technology and so any insight into how it all worked was quite interesting to him.

“There’s really only one practical way to stop him from getting the gems. We can’t stop the player so we’ll just need to move the goal post,” Hegnorf explained. However, this did not go over well for Ewald and Dhiman.

Ewald cleared his throat. “And that means...?”

Alexander, on the other hand, was an avid fan of sport and so interpreted it for them. “What the professor means is that we can’t stop Gethin so we’ll need to move the Gems of Time before he gets to them.”

Hegnorf shot a wink towards him. He hummed, “Exactly and the only way to move the gems is to open the room that they are in. The minister never thought that he would need to retrieve the gems himself and so didn’t bother make any key, passcode, or anything of that type in case of emergency.”

Alex frowned, “‘The minister never thought.’ That’s the problem.”

“The only way in is to go to the Land of Unknown and since the location is... well... unknown, we’d need the sole transporter set to there.”

Ewald saw this all slowly come together, but quickly noticed a flaw. “But the network of transporters don’t work,” he said.

“It doesn’t work for registered citizens of the Magic Section,” the professor elaborated, as the eyes of the three boys widened. They realized what he was asking for. “And as you know, registered citizens must be adults living within the borders of the Magic Section.”

Alex was ecstatic. “An adventure!” he shrieked, jumping up to punch the air.

Ewald stood with a blank face. The Ellingtons weren’t ones to get excited in the face of adventure. They much rather do something less reckless and daredevil-y – read a book, go on a walk, perhaps sips some mildly warm tea while sitting in their well-kept garden. So the prospect of any adventure terrified him.

“Of course!” exclaimed Dhiman. “Of course, we’ll go!”

Hegnorf grew a slight frown, “Actually... you were never going, Dhiman. I can only afford to send two trusted and outgoing students who I believe can accomplish the task at hand.”

Hearing this put him into quite the unbearable mood. Frankly, he was offended. “Must I remind you that I am the most astute pupil that you enlighten?” This was Dhiman’s way of saying ‘Let me use some big words to hide what I truly mean. I’m smarter than both Ewald and Alex and think that I should go with them’.

Hegnorf, having had the day he’d had, decided on allowing it. “Fine, but only if the two of you have also decided on going,” he told.

Ewald hesitated, but his friend had no difficulty in replying with a loud ‘Yes!’.

The professor gave off another one of his smiles. This one was weaker. It quickly died within the span of two seconds. Something about the professor’s reaction made Ewald feel uneasy. Then again, everything seemed to.

“No time to waste, I suppose,” Hegnorf said, as he directed them out of the tower’s doors.

Stepping through the door carved into the hedge wall to

their left, they were faced with the same roaring crowd, which was now helping to construct the tents in the wide meadow in front of the forest. Ewald glanced around for his mother, but it appeared as though she had left. He only imagined what she would think about this ‘adventure’ of theirs, but he felt much better simply not. He didn’t want to fall victim to guilt.

“Only one person has survived and lived in the Land of Unknown. Her name is Aleena Estrand,” the professor said. “The picture at the top of the tower – that’s her.” There was a flicker in Hegnorf’s voice.

Alex raised an inquisitive eyebrow. “Did you know Aleena, sir?”

“Did I know her?” he repeated. “Why yes, I did.”

“What about the golden clock in front of her portrait?” Dhiman queried.

“Ah right, the clock warns of an impending attack. It’s really quite clever actually. It counts backwards the time to the exact moment that the attack would succeed if we don’t intervene. Aleena thought of it. She had it made after the rebuilding of Tralbon School, after the time that Gethin and his army had demolished most of it. This, of course, was before the fight with the Three Elders.” Hegnorf connected the dots for them. Now they saw the urgency.

Dhiman held his jaw low. “But... the clock had six cycles marked on it. That’s only three days.” His voice was alert and full of panic.

‘Panic’ and ‘alert’ are not typical words that would spring to the minds of those in the Magic Section when thinking of Tralbon. It was calm for the most part. Many said that it was the scenery around them that relaxed any

who took a moment to admire it. The fantastical Forest of Charms, the lusciously green grass, and the far-off mountains that looked as if they had been painted onto the inside of the firmament of sky – these were the scenes that they were greeted with each day.

Hegnorf stopped in his tracks along with the three youngsters. He paused to think. His eyes drifted off into deep thought, but quickly jumped back. “It should be down here,” he whispered to himself. With swift action, he bent downwards to an old wooden doorway that had been dug into the ground and opened it. It was very bunker-like.

“This is what remains of the old Tralbon, pre-rebuilding. Well, this and my classroom.” These words echoed around them, reverberating over the low chatter of students. There was a silence between the four – a silence only similar to that which arises at the memory of a dear dead friend. The professor’s teeth clanked together, as a stronger gust of wind blew by. Hegnorf lifted his hand to his face, wiping away the single tear that rolled down his chin. “Anyway,” he coughed.

“Sir, is the transporter down there?” Alex asked.

“Uhh... Yes, it’s in the tunnel system beneath the school grounds,” he answered. “Everybody, hop in. We don’t have much time and this really will be the most important thing.”

Dhiman raised an eyebrow, feeling as though perhaps his exams would be more crucial.

One at a time, they slid down, following their wise professor, into the tunnels of Tralbon. The pathways were narrow, yet spacious enough for them to walk in partners. Dhiman went to the front with Hegnorf, meaning to soften up the professor in the hope of even kinder marking.

Ewald and Alexander followed closely behind with wide eyes, seeking to catch anything slightly interesting. Ewald was amazed. Having thought that he had seen every bit of the school, he would have never guessed that there was more. Alex daydreamt of all of the brilliantly interesting contents of the other rooms that they strolled past and the adventures that would come with each.

They passed by numerous intersections of tunnels and made several turns at diverging paths. Hegnorf had not been down here for quite some time – eighteen years, six months, and twelve days to be exact – and yet still knew where they had kept it.

They turned a few more corners, walked a bit more, and at last reached a door. It was very anti-climactic. The door was of dark wood, as all the other doors were, and had nothing particularly special about it. The professor grabbed at the extensive keyring within his pocket and began to search for the one that would fit properly. At last, it budged and so the door swung open. They directed their attention to the items sitting on the ground of the diminutive closet-sized room.

The objects captured the minds of all four, including Hegnorf who hadn't seen them for the longest time. The largest of the items was a brown bag leaning against the wall. It was interestingly decorated with stamps of foreign lands, stickers in languages unknown to them, ink splashes from presumed quill writing mishaps, and the flag of the Magic Section in the center. The boys only knew one thing about the travel bag: the owner must have visited every corner of the world... if the world had corners of course.

Next to the bag was a compass, which shined bronze and gold.

The third of the items was the one of greatest importance. The transporter appeared to be like any other – a blue platform with a lining of silver that runs around its perimeter. The only difference was that this looked much older and had been obviously very poorly handled. It had scratches and overall appeared to be a much more unreliable variant of the modern transporter model.

“So what’s the plan?” Ewald requested. He now had somehow convinced his not-so-adventurous self that this would be good, not just for the safety of the school or the world, but that it would also be good for him.

Professor Hegnorf reviewed it with them once again, going over it detail-by-detail. The boys said their goodbyes and stepped onto the transporter, vanishing together. It would be nice to say that Hegnorf had spared no nugget of information untouched. However, this would be a lie. The professor had kept a few secrets to himself. He had kept a few surprises to come.



Julie Sanders, a bright student, met with the professor – who was just heading on his way out of the tunnels. She had been asked to speak with him and happened to follow them. She glanced around. “Are Ewald and Alex gone already?” she inquired.

“Yes, and I’ve sent their friend, Dhiman, too. He basically threatened me with a tantrum,” Hegnorf chuckled back his response.

Julie laughed. She had spoken with Dhiman many times and although she understood why some found him to be annoying, he had always been nothing but nice to her. There

was a short-lived silence between them. “Professor Selvia told me that you wanted to have a word,” she reminded, as she tied back her golden hair.

“Ahh yes, I have another so-called adventure for you. I would tell you that it will be less dangerous than the one that they boys are on, but I wouldn’t take my word on it,” Hegnorf’s gentle voice echoed. “This is of course if you choose to accept it.”

Her eyes twinkled with excitement. “I’d love to.”

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