

# Ewald and the Gems of Time

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A little magic can take you a long way.

Roald Dahl



Dedicated to  
My Loving Parents  
Majdi and Hanadi



# Chapter 1

## Farewell



There was a light breeze. It was a warm summer day and everyone was outside. Nearly everyone had bought ice cream from the truck standing by – everyone except for Ewald. In fact, he wasn't doing anything. He was simply sitting on the cream-coloured bench and gazing at the old oak tree. This was quite typical of him, as for some bizarre reason he was mystified by it and could spend whole hours looking at the tall piece of timber. He spent his days by the tree, writing, drawing, and playing alone, as no one else bothered to talk to him; but he did not care. He was quite happy with it all.

As the other kids passed by the bench, they would glance at him with muddled expressions. He had no friends and, to put it simply, Ewald was a very lonely twelve-year-old.

The sun, which was shining down rather brightly that day, made his brown hair look lighter than it was and his hazel eyes seemed to glow. The air around the meadow was fresh and Ewald could almost smell the beginning of the crispy autumn.

Only one tree stood in the entire meadow – the one Ewald felt so fascinated by, the one everybody else disregarded, the old oak tree with dark green leaves, swaying in the wind.

All of a sudden, there was a loud, piercing screech – a sound so shrill that it caused ice cream to hit the ground. Gloomy clouds filled the sky and the wind started to blow faster with every second. People began running to their houses. Adults dragged kids from the park. Ewald jumped to his feet and ran as fast as he could in the direction of his home. His mother had warned him that this would happen someday and that he was to return as soon as possible. He never asked why she thought this would happen; he just nodded his head to her command.

Ewald felt tiny drops of water spraying on his arms as he ran out of the field and down a narrow and grey sidewalk. He made a turn and there he saw his family's modest home. The golden house number, 27, was shining, as if it had just been polished. The outside of his house was covered in red bricks and only had a few windows. The shutters were painted an aqua blue, same as its rusty front door.

Ewald knocked rapidly on the door, as if he had seen a

ghoul behind him. He hadn't a clue why he was so flustered, only remembering the way in which his mother had warned him of this. An anxious six seconds later, the front door opened slowly. An old lady with grey hair and wrinkled skin popped her head through the small opening. She had an umbrella in her hand, as if expecting a robber to beat him with it. She stared at the boy blankly for a couple of seconds and then finally opened her mouth, but no words came out. She signalled him, a gentle expression on her face. Although he had never seen her before, he somehow recognized her from somewhere.

“Ewald is that you?” he heard his mother say from the upper level of their home.

“Yes, I'm back!” he replied to her, looking up the stairs that stood following the front door.

Then, the elderly woman pointed at the dining room table. In the middle of the wooden structure was a golden turkey, with three plates circling around it. It seemed as though the senior stranger was going to stay for dinner. Ewald set his black and white shoes near the small brown mat and headed towards the table uneasily.

Just as he was about to sit on his usual chair, a roaring thud boomed through the house. It shook the front and then flew to the back, like a wave of energy coming off of a nuclear blast. To Ewald at least, it seemed like the sound was coming from the front door.

Rapidly, his mother came dashing down the stairs. She was wearing her reading glasses, which sat at the tip of her nose. “Ewald, come with me now,” his mother commanded, taking off the pair of glasses nervously.

He quickly got up and followed her down the stairs to the basement, keeping his eye steady on the front door out

of the fear that whatever was outside would soon erupt into his own home. The elderly woman ran behind them. As they reached the bottom, his mother turned around and hugged him fiercely. Her warmth spread around him, covering his wet, cold body. As she stepped back slowly, Ewald noticed the rolling tears falling down her cheeks.

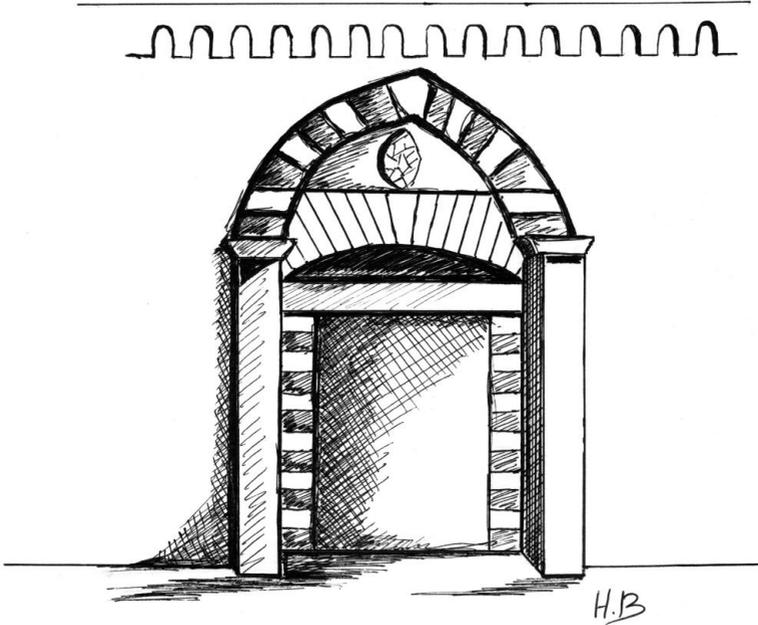
His mother could cry about the simplest of things, but Ewald knew by the look in her eyes that this was different. This was so much more important.

Her beautiful brown hair, shining in the lighting, made her tears almost disappear. “Goodbye, Ewald!” she muttered.

There was a blue flash and then everything went dark.

## Chapter 2

# Transported



A blurry face came into focus; a man with a short black beard and black hair was staring straight at Ewald, whose vision got clearer as he opened his eyes wider to find himself in a hospital bed.

“Samantha, he’s waking up,” called the bearded man, as the sound of footsteps hurriedly approached. The same old lady from the house came around to the opposite side of the bed.

Ewald looked around the room; the walls were made of white marble bricks with cursive writing engraved on every

inch. On top of this, a magnificent pearly chandelier hung from the twenty-metre-high ceiling.

“Who are you? Where am I?” Ewald asked worriedly, looking at the woman, as if expecting her to answer.

But instead the man replied. “I’m Dr. Hudson and this is Professor Drolers...” he paused for a moment. “You’re at a... a special hospital.”

“Special? What do you mean ‘special’?”

“I’m sorry Ewald! No time to explain, it’s quite complicated and I’m afraid I’m not the right one to clarify!” the man said, truly sorry.

Together, both Dr. Hudson and Professor Drolers stepped away from the bed, which turned around and began to wander off with Ewald in it. It rolled past all of the other beds – some of them bearing unconscious kids – and went through the large white archway, which had a giant blue stone at the pointed crown.

The hospital bed dodged tables, chairs, and even other moving beds, as it zipped through the buzzing clinic. It even passed by patients and doctors, nearly hitting them. The bed went through another doorway and quickly swerved to the side. The wheels screeched, before coming to a halt and Ewald would have gone flying through the air if he hadn’t hung on to the metal sidebars of the strange contraption.

Ewald was completely petrified from his peculiar encounter. It was certainly more than enough danger for one evening. In fact, it was more danger than he had experienced in his entire life, but it was nothing that could ever compare to the adventures that awaited him.

“What kind of place is this?” he asked himself, as he sat up from the sheets that smelled of anti-bacterial sprays. His

eyes caught a green exit sign to his left, which meant that luckily an escape was possible.

Ewald hopped down from the once moving bed and onto the eggshell tile floor. He was justifiably panicking and ran to the end of the long hallway, looking for the exit. Only one thought bounced within the walls of his mind, “The sooner I get out, the better!”

But as he approached the end, the exit sign faded as if it had never existed. Ewald stopped and rested on the cold floor, confident now that he was in another one of his wild dreams.

“Ewald Ellington?” uttered a soft voice from behind.

He stood up to meet a tall blonde girl. “Yeah?” he replied, still afraid of what was to happen next.

“Ewald Ellington, could you follow me?” she asked, but before getting an answer from him, she scurried off to the end of the hall.

Reaching the wall, she slipped her hand into a small pocket on her golden belt. She glanced back to make sure Ewald was watching. “Look at this!” she said, blowing the powder out of her hand and onto the wall. The pink particles danced in the air. The wall murmured and thundered as the center split and opened. “Welcome to Drolers – hospital and host to the annual School Selection Program!” the girl said. “I’m Julie Sanders, by the way.”

Ewald stepped back in surprise, “The bed... the exit sign... the powder... the wall... What are they? Magic?”

Julie smirked. “You’re either a lunatic or exactly spot on,” she joked.

Ewald peered through the large opening that the wall had left. Inside the room were hundreds of beds – beds so

worn out that the blue dye of the covers had dissolved and faded. About a hundred people were there, some of them asleep, but most were awake and fairly chatty.

“This is where you’ll be sleeping,” she informed.

“In here?” Ewald replied with a slight tone of disgust.

“Well, only until all the students are here. Then we find the proper schools for everyone and you’ll be off,” she answered. A small piece of parchment she had tucked into her pocket glowed neon green. Julie looked down at it. “I’ve got to go welcome someone else. Make yourself at home,” she told as she walked away.

He entered slowly; the hardwood creaked with every step. His eyes scanned, looking for an empty bed and finally he sat down. To his left was a boy about his age, sleeping peacefully. Ewald looked closer at the black-haired boy, practically inspecting him. From all that he could see, there was nothing unusual about him, nothing to define him as ‘magical’.

It was getting late and Ewald hoped that he would soon wake up from his eccentric dream. So he got under the covers and fell fast asleep, as if he was still at home, dreaming in his bedroom.



Ewald found himself back in his basement – his mother still crying and Professor Drolers looked just as upset. Ewald thought it was clear that he was dreaming within a dream, reliving what had already happened.

That was when he heard something that he hadn’t heard before. Ewald remembered his mother saying goodbye to him just before the blue flash went off, but now he heard

something else. It seemed as though his memory had changed. This time he recalled hearing his mother telling the elderly woman, “I didn’t get to explain this to him.”

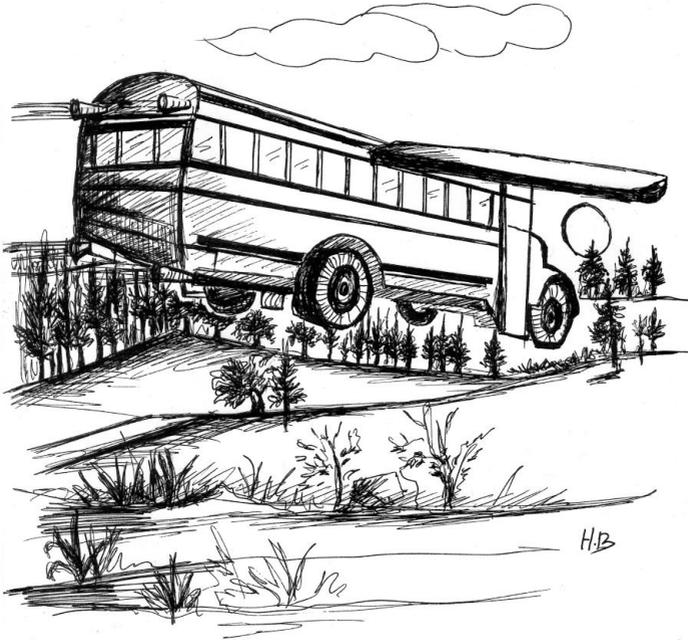
Even though he didn’t remember it, he felt like it was real – that she really said that sentence with her soft, motherly voice.

Then the thought disappeared and he found himself lying in the crazy hospital bed again; the two adults stared at him once more. This time he focused on the hospital and began to read the writing on the walls, ‘Magic can only be seen by the eyes that look for it!’

What does that all mean? Is that what this whole thing is about? Magic?

## Chapter 3

# Dragon Eggs



“Ewald, wake up!” said Julie as she shook him from side to side.

He opened his eyes lazily and got out of bed. Remembering where he was, he wasn’t all too happy, but for some reason Ewald didn’t really seem to mind it. Maybe, just maybe, he was getting used to the unusual.

“Where is everyone?” he asked, before giving out a roaring yawn. Ewald hadn’t gotten much sleep that night with all the dreams that had been playing and thumping in his head.

“They’re downstairs eating breakfast and I suggest we go eat before it’s all gone!” she replied.

The two strolled out of the giant entrance; just as it had opened the day before, it gradually closed shut. Julie and Ewald walked down the polished white stairs to their left, finding themselves in the cafeteria.

“Enjoy your breakfast,” Julie said with a smile as she began to walk away.

“Where do I get it from?” he inquired curiously.

She chuckled, “Just sit at a table.” And so she returned up the stairs.

Ewald couldn’t be any more confused than he was at that very moment. As he sat down at the closest seat, all of a sudden, a green tray appeared a few centimetres in the air and dropped onto the table – orange juice flying out of the cup. The tray held a plate of blue eggs, a piece of crispy toast, and a once full cup of orange juice.

He was about to get started on breakfast, grabbing at the toast. Without warning, a boy came crashing into Ewald, nearly scaring the life out of him. Ewald feared to turn around. For all he knew, it could have been a strange ghoul or even a human-eating cat. Nothing was too outlandish for this place!

The boy gave an amused glance at Ewald – who at this point was covering his eyes. “Hello?” greeted the boy in a tone of bewilderment. “You’re not from around here, are you?”

Ewald chuckled with relief as he withdrew his hands, “That obvious, is it?”

The black-haired boy smiled. “I’m Alexander Egond... Alex for short,” he introduced, taking a seat next to Ewald

and having another tray appear and hit the table.

“Hello Alex. I’m Ewald Ellington,” he replied.

“I saw you sleep in and thought I would come and say hello,” Alex told. “Sorry about scaring you just there!”

“Don’t worry about it. It’s just that I’m so lost!”

“Lost?” he interrogated. “Why?”

Ewald held back, but then decided to explain. “I don’t know how I got here, why I am here, or where I am in the first place. Not to mention all of these little magic tricks that everyone seems to be able to pull off...”

“Magic tricks?” Alexander asked. “You mean this?” he said, as he tapped his finger on the table three times, making it slowly rise like a wooden helium balloon.

Ewald gasped. Quickly he slammed his elbows onto the table, trying to keep it down. But soon they found their feet off of the ground and now everyone in the room had their eyes fixed on the two. The truly odd thing to Ewald, other than the floating cafeteria table, was how calm Alex was; he even began eating his burnt piece of toast. Rapidly they approached the ceiling.

“Alex!” Ewald shrieked. “Stop this now!”

Alexander smirked, “Ewald, tap it three times!”

“Are you crazy? I don’t know the trick?”

“It’s not a trick. It’s magic!” he attempted to convince.

“But I don’t know magic!” he shouted back, as his head pressed against the ceiling. With all the doubt in the world, Ewald did as told and those three taps were the first time he had ever done magic and they were just in time too. Slowly the table returned to its previous position and the entire room erupted in applause.

Ewald didn't know what to think; he was still confounded by what he had just done. He never knew that any of this was possible... That he so simply could do something as great as this.

Alex finished the last bite of the toast. "Good job, Ewald Ellington! I think you're getting the hang of this!" he congratulated. Steadily the room returned to its calmer self.

Ewald looked back down at his plate of blue eggs, with nothing important to say. "These are chicken eggs, right?" he muttered.

"Well no, they're dragon eggs, but they taste just the same," Alex informed, aware that his new acquaintance was unfamiliar with the mysterious magical food.

Suddenly, Ewald felt nauseated, but Alex didn't seem to mind; he was stuffing his mouth with each bite. Ewald picked up the glass of orange juice and drank the remains of what hadn't spilled during all of the wizardly shenanigans.

A deafening bell rang, making them all jump. Ewald thought of how horrible it must be to be a patient at Drolers Hospital, from the moving beds to the ear-tormenting bell.

"Come on, Ewald. Let's go!" Alex instructed, pulling at his hand.

"Go where?" he asked quite fearfully.

"We're going back to the big room," he informed and so they ran back up the stairs along with everyone else and into the room with the opening wall. Each sat on the bed that they had slept on the previous night and so they waited.

The wall split open half an hour later, as the same loud moans echoed throughout the hospital. The students went silent and stared ahead. Julie Sanders came in; she appeared

worn out, most likely from all of the work she had been doing for the School Selection Program. Every few minutes she could be seen escorting, carrying, running, cleaning, helping; it was a miracle she was still capable of walking.

She picked up the red megaphone that had been left sitting beside the entrance and began. "Hello everyone and welcome to this year's annual School Selection Program! But don't get too comfortable because soon enough, you'll all be off to your first year in one of the Magic Section's second-level schools!"

Julie paused for a breath of air. "There are four main schools, along with four minor schools. I will be coming around and placing each of you into one," Julie let them know. As she went around to each person, she looked down at the same small wrinkled piece of parchment and from there she would place them into a school.

"Alex? How could that paper have so much written on it?" he queried.

"The writing on the parchment keeps changing!" Alex said.

"How?" Ewald marvelled.

"They'll teach that at school," he returned, not really answering his question at all.

Luckily, they hadn't chosen beds too far from the front and so they did not need to wait very long. "Are you nervous?" asked Alexander.

"Yes... Is that normal?"

"It would be weird if you weren't," he replied with a chuckled.

Julie walked over to Ewald. The parchment flashed fluorescent green. She glanced down and read out, "Ewald,

you will be going to Tralbon. Looks like we might be classmates,” she said with a smile. Ewald was thrilled; Tralbon sounded great, whatever it was.

She then walked over to Alex and looked at the paper. “You too, Alex... Tralbon!” she announced and continued on to the next student. Alex smirked; he was glad he was going to school with someone he knew, even if he only really knew his name.

After Julie had finished with all of the students, she went back to the front. “You’ll all need to pack up by midnight to be ready to leave, except for a few whose luggage will be transferred to their school tomorrow morning. Those exceptions apply for Suzy Buluvio, Freya Botterill, Ewald Ellington, and Owen Jillson,” she told the whole group.



The large clock that hung in the cafeteria struck midnight. Most had their bags by their sides, but some were now floating away from their owners just as the table had done.

“That’s not very smart,” Ewald remarked. “How’ll they get them down?”

Alexander stared above him, as he counted them. “There are twenty-four flying bags in here and there are twenty-four idiots!” he jeered humorously.

Julie peered at her watch, awaiting the time of their departure. “Would everyone who is attending Tralbon School, please follow me!” she called. The group of about seventy students stood up and stopped at the wall across from the cafeteria entrance. She reached her hand into a

compartment on her belt. Bringing it to the air, a couple specks of pink powder were pinched between her fingers. Julie splashed it on the solid brick wall and a path emerged, leading to the dark outside world.

A yellow school bus stood in the middle of the dusty road ahead of them. “Hop on everyone!” Julie commanded gently.

“Can we all fit in that?” a short ginger-haired student asked, with a worried expression painted on his face.

“Don’t worry, just get on,” Julie said.

Ewald raised an eyebrow. “It’s not bigger on the inside, is it?” he whispered to Alex.

“Bigger on the inside? You watch too much TV!” he replied. “But I’ve got no idea how we’ll all fit either!”

As everyone crammed onto the forty-person bus, the engine roared to life. The bus expanded in all directions, making more room for the students who were packed four-to-a-seat. From the outside of the bus, a ten-metre-long set of wings appeared.

Then they drove for a few metres and flew off, blowing dust into the darkness.

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