



A bundle of walking sticks was floating in midair ahead of them, and as Percy took a step toward them they started throwing themselves at him.

"Peeves," Percy whispered to the first years. "A poltergeist." He raised his voice, "Peeves — show yourself."

A loud, rude sound, like the air being let out of a balloon, answered.

"Do you want me to go to the Bloody Baron?"

There was a pop, and a little man with wicked, dark eyes and a wide mouth appeared, floating cross-legged in the air, clutching the walking sticks.

"Oooooooh!" he said, with an evil cackle. "Ickle Firsties! What fun!"

He swooped suddenly at them. They all ducked.

"Go away, Peeves, or the Baron'll hear about this, I mean it!" barked Percy.

Peeves stuck out his tongue and vanished, dropping the walking sticks on Neville's head. They heard him zooming away, rattling coats of armor as he passed.

"You want to watch out for Peeves," said Percy, as they set off again. "The Bloody Baron's the only one who can control him, he won't even listen to us prefects. Here we are."

At the very end of the corridor hung a portrait of a very fat woman in a pink silk dress.

"Password?" she said.

"Caput Draconis," said Percy, and the portrait swung forward to reveal a round hole in the wall. They all scrambled through it — Neville needed a leg up — and found themselves in the Gryffindor common room, a cozy, round room full of squashy armchairs.