

It was one of those rare occasions when the true story is even more strange and exciting than the wild rumors. Harry told them everything: Quirrell; the mirror; the Stone; and Voldemort. Ron and Hermione were a very good audience; they gasped in all the right places, and when Harry told them what was under Quirrell's turban, Hermione screamed out loud.

"So the Stone's gone?" said Ron finally. "Flamel's just going to die?"

"That's what I said, but Dumbledore thinks that — what was it? — to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure."

"I always said he was off his rocker," said Ron, looking quite impressed at how crazy his hero was.

"So what happened to you two?" said Harry.

"Well, I got back all right," said Hermione. "I brought Ron round — that took a while — and we were dashing up to the owlery to contact Dumbledore when we met him in the entrance hall — he already knew — he just said, 'Harry's gone after him, hasn't he?' and hurtled off to the third floor."

"Do you think he meant you to do it?" said Ron. "Sending you your father's cloak and everything?"

"Well," Hermione exploded, "if he did — I mean to say — that's terrible — you could have been killed."

"No, it isn't," said Harry thoughtfully. "He's a funny man, Dumbledore. I think he sort of wanted to give me a chance. I think he knows more or less everything that goes on here, you know. I reckon he had a pretty good idea we were going to try, and instead of stopping us, he just taught us enough to help. I don't think it was an accident he let me find out how the mirror worked. It's almost like he thought I had the right to face Voldemort if I could. ..."