***Bhaal Son Remodel Chapter 1: Magic Goes Blort, or, Idle Hands Do The Devil’s Work***

There were only so many times a person could stare at a ceiling without going utterly barmy, Harry reflected, and he felt that he had finally reached that point. *Having gotten my own room is nice, but I wish they’d let me in my old cupboard now. At least the spiders in there were always weaving different webs and other such things for me to look at*.

The Dursleys had given him Dudley’s second room, though honestly the reasons for it escaped Harry. On the one hand they told Harry it was because they felt he was getting too large for his cupboard. On the other hand, he knew, because he’d overheard them, say it was because they were afraid of what other magicals might do if they discovered they were mistreating him.

*But if they were really trying to convince people they treated me good, then why the heck do they think they cold get away with locking me in here!? I mean, come on, they even installed a cat flap!* Harry groused, looking over at the item, before his lips quirked into a wry smile. *On the other hand, watching Fatso cut away at the door and then add that lock was actually kind of funny. All that flesh wobbling and the way his face turned so purple with the effort. Puce I think that color’s called?*

Sighing Harry shook his head and went back to contemplate the rest of the room. *Merlin, Morgana and Maeve but I am BORED!!!!*

When he had been forced to return to the Dursleys after his first year at Hogwarts, Harry had gone through a period where he had blamed himself for what had happened to Quirell when he was possessed by Voldemort and had subsequently been turned to ash by Harry’s touch thanks to the magical protections of his mother. But eventually his reading of comics that Dudley had tossed into this room, his second room, had helped him get over it.

Thinking about it, Harry did not really want to be a Batman, bloody amazing belt and super martial arts aside, who always tried to take in Joker despite whatever murder he’d just committed. Quirell had been trying to kill him, and Harry was no hero, willing to take that and just try to capture him in return whatever it cost him. No, while Harry regretted it, he wasn’t going to beat himself up over having finished Quirell off. He was only sad that Voldemort, his real arch-nemesis hadn’t been killed either.

That probably was not a very health way to think of it, but alone and, for the most part, locked within this room for more than a month now, it was the best Harry could do. He had reread every comic in here several times, then gone on to read the old tabletop game books from when Dudley had gone through a phase of thinking the little models were cool. Warhammer was bizarre to put it mildly, though Dudley had always liked the Space marines and Orcs. *Heh, for obvious reasons on that last one, why paint him green and let him grow a bit more he’d make perfect gobber.*

On the other hand, Magic the Gathering was actually kind of funny to read after his time in the magical world. *Although, how Dudley had been able to even have a Gathering book for a day without his parents going crazy is still a mystery.* Finding his mind going down the same old rutted road, Harry threw his Transfiguration textbook to the side, scowling angrily. Harry had gotten so bored he’d read all his textbooks again, back to front, and while educational, it was not something anyone but a Ravenclaw or Hermione could call fun.

“Right, that’s it Hedwig, time for desperate measures!” he said to his friend, who perched nearby. She precked back at him, before going back to ruffling her feathers. The snowy owl could get out of the one window the room had easily enough, but Harry couldn’t fit out of it himself thanks to a few bars barring his path while letting enough room for Hedwig to pass. That had actually been a concession Harry had convinced Vernon of. After all, Hedwig was a gift from Hagrid, and the half-giant might become angry enough to come back to discuss things with them if they didn’t let Hedwig out to hunt for enough food to live on.

Of course, the bars they had left were enough to keep Harry inside. *I don’t know what’s worse, my only being able to leave this blasted room* for chores, or none of my friends trying to contact me. “Are you certain you can’t get a message to them Hedwig? Ron and Hermione I mean. Although, you’d think that Hermione would try muggle mail after a month of us not hearing from one another. What if somethings wrong?”

“PREK,” Hedwig precked back at him, her tone emphatic before she twisted and looked away.

Harry had always been able to tell what Hedwig was trying to communicate at moments like this, and that didn’t fail him now. He reached forward, running a finger through her feathers. “I know girl, you can’t find them, but it’s just weird you know I wish I could figure out if the problem is on their end, or on ours with the wards Headmaster Dumbledore said was supposed to protect me from being found by Voldemort or his followers.”

Harry had questioned Dumbledore on that point, having asked about the possibility of living at Hogwarts year round, or even moving in with one of his friends. He hadn’t broached the subject with them, but he’d hoped that one of them might take him in, if he was willing to pay rent or something similar. But the headmaster had told him it was impossible. He had to go back to the Dursleys for his own safety. *Although I note the old man with the questionable taste in clothing didn’t say anything about my sanity or level of living.*

 Hedwig nipped at his fingers, making her opinion about the matter plain, then flicking her nose towards the piles of junk in the far corner. Perhaps, her movements implied, Harry could find something in there to alleviate his life-threatening level of boredom.

 “Well, it’s a possibility I suppose.” With that bit of encouragement, Harry began to work his way through the mounds of junk. The books and graphic novels had, by comparison been relatively well-treated, placed in neat piles by the door. But the rest of the refuse of years of Dudley breaking toys and being given new ones had been pushed to one side of the room to let room for Harry’s own books, not his wand or anything magic-looking, all of that remained in his confiscated trunk, and a tiny cot and blanket pressed into the far wall.

 Now with his owl’s gentle remonstrance, Harry looked at that pile of junk not as actual junk, but as a target to alleviate his boredom. With that in mind, he began to sort through it, creating numerous smaller piles. Most of what he found was broken and useless, board games missing their pieces, dolls missing limbs, Legos of all shapes and sizes all mixed into a giant pile in the far back, figures that had broken off heads or some other body part, stuffed animals without much stuffing, a bike of all things missing a tire and chain. *Why in the world did Vernon and Petunia try to give Dudley a bike!? He’s more likely to try and eat it than ride it!*

But the best, or most surprising find was a nearly brand new computer. “What the… why do the Dursleys have one of those?” Harry didn’t know much about computers, but he knew they could be used to play games and other things, maybe even write. He’d never interact with one before this, the computer he’d gone to school to before Hogwarts had restricted access to its four computers, and they had been more to browse through the library than anything else.

 He also found a few computer game discs and looked at the cover avidly. “Baldur’s Gate?” reading the description Harry became excited. This sounded like a lot of fun. “Now if I could get the computer to work…”

 He found and hooked up the power cord, then, after some exploration, found the way to connect the small, bulky monitor to the equally clunky looking computer. The computer had a large dent in the side, and the cord barely fit into its little socket, but putting his ear to the side Harry could make out a faint hum, so he supposed that meant the thing was getting power. “Now let’s see…”

 Pressing the power button, Harry listened intently but the hum didn’t get any louder and there didn’t seem to be any noises or anything else to say the computer was on. “Bugger.”

 Harry thought about taking the thing apart to look inside, but he discarded that thought quickly. *After all, how the heck would I know what was broken and what not? I could spot anything loose, but that’s not the same thing as knowing where it would then go. I’d be playing it but ear, and while I guess I’m good at that, what if I make it worse?*

Then he remembered the first time he and Hermione had met on the Hogwarts and the spell she had used to repair his glasses. “Occulus Reparo, wasn’t it? If that’s the spell to repair glasses, then maybe if I do the same movements, if I can remember them, and remove the first word, it’ll work on anything?”

 *I know we aren’t really allowed to fo spells over the summer, but I think that’s just because of the Statute of Secrets. So if I do it here, with no witnesses…* Harry shook his head then. “Ah, but wait, I’m missing a very important item here, my bloody wand!”

 With something to concentrate on now, Harry was feeling a lot more energetic than he had been. He did try to take the computer apart to look inside, using a piece of another toy as a makeshift screwdriver. But as he had thought, he couldn’t actually figure out what all he was looking at once inside the thing. Still, at least the reason the monitor wasn’t working was obvious, the screen had been cracked, presumably by Dudley in his temper tantrum, just like the damage to the actual computer.

 The next day, while Petunia was spying out her window on a neighbor who was apparently talking to the milkman too long (Harry had no idea what Petunia was imagining and most desperately did not want to) he snuck back into the house from the garden where he had been pulling weeds and stole the key to the cupboard, and then took his wand from his trunk. Instead of putting it in his pants or in his room, though, he carefully replaced it with a twig from the garden of similar size and then hid his wand behind the sink in the bathroom.

That night, when he was allowed to wash up after a full day out in the garden and making dinner for the Dursleys, he snuck it into his dirty clothing. As Harry feared, Vernon had, indeed checked on both the cupboard and his room when he came back, but didn’t find anything amiss. *I’m going to have to watch out for that.*

With his wand in hand however, Harry was hopeful that soon he’d have something to wile away the boredom with. That night, when the noises of the Dursleys snoring reverberated in its chorus throughout the house, Harry started to experiment. Waving the wand over the monitor, figuring that was the least complicated part, Harry intoned, “Reparo!”

Nothing happened, no flash of magic no nothing. Still keeping his voice low Harry tried another few moves with the wand, racking his brain to try and remember the movements he’d seen Hermione use. Still nothing happened, and he began to get a little angry, his hope for something, anything to do in his imprisonment after having his hope rise plummeting. Concentrating on the monitor, on the crack and what the monitor should look like he began to try to sort of thrust with his magic, forcing it out of the wand as he tried to almost impress the image into the reality. “Reparo!” he intoned, hissing the word almost.

This time it worked, and the monitor began to flash almost as he watched, the long crack healing itself in an instant. “Yes!” Harry pumped his arm in the air, whisper-shouting the word. Then, looking around fearfully he waited a few minutes to make certain he’d not been heard. Then he stared first at the monitor, then his wand in sudden, wild surmise. “There is no way that was the right movement Hedwig, but the spell still worked. If it’s not the movement, then how much magic is based upon the movement, the word, or the image!?”

Quickly he turned away and wrote those thoughts down, pausing only briefly. “Huh, this kind of makes me feel like Hermione after a particularly juicy piece of knowledge. Well whatever, it might be she’s got a point about, gah, studying more.” He paused at that thgouth, remembering what little he’d been told about his mother by his teachers, and frowned. “That… Mum was a good student. Maybe I really should try better. After all, there’s no way the Dusleys would be able to compare my tests to Dudleys and punish me for proving better than them now.”

With a newfound conviction, Harry turned back to the task at hand, gesturing again at the open side of the computer and this time trying at first to not use the verbal spell. It didn’t take, but he could feel something at the same time, like his magic was trying, but couldn’t quite work without the spoken word. “Huh, so, is this something I can practice with, get better at?”

With that in mind Harry moved over to the broken junk pile and took out a few of the more intact pieces, and began to practice. Eventually he did make a silent Raparo spell work on a Dudley’s Action Man action figure.

Once he was certain he had the spell working well enough, Harry turned back to the computer. Here though his magic’s ability to repair the damage was impeded by Harry’s not knowing exactly what it should look like. The spell repaired some things, a crack in one of the odd circuit things, made one other broken little red thing match another in size, and so forth. But when Harry tried again to turn the computer on, it still didn’t work: there was obviously something still wrong with it.

”Still that’s okay Hedwig,” Harry said to his avian friend. “Since even that failure’s told me something. It’s the image that matters with a spell like this. The word is harder to do away with than the wand movement, but you can do it!” Writing that down too, he smiled. “Well, computer or not, I’ve got something else to concentrate on now.”

From there, Harry practiced for about an hour, trying to use a few spells he had taken from his books. The ones he was most familiar with, Immobulous and Stupefy, a spell he’d taken to practicing every day at Hogwarts after his meeting with Quirell started to work after about another hour of study. This was big, this was so big it wasn’t even funny! *If Hermione and I are still friends after this summer and she learns about all I’ve found out she’s going to flip!*

However in his excitement Harry had forgotten one thing: the fact students weren’t supposed to be doing magic over the summer. It was a somewhat ridiculous rule, but it was in place, and, despite Harry figuring that no one would care if he did magic while alone in a locked room at night, he was being monitored all the same.

As Harry was ready to close his notebook for the day and turn in, there came a rapping noise on the window. Quickly racing over so as to not let any of the Dursleys hear, Harry found an unfamiliar owl waiting outside on the windowsill. Hedwig too locked over, and as Harry opened the window quietly, she precked irritably at the other owl, her large eyes locked on the other owl as if it had offended her.

The owl, a large tawny owl, looked away after a second and shifted uncomfortably, but stayed put enough for Harry to remove the note on it. “Um, as you can see, if I am supposed to reply Hedwig will take the message. Erm, thanks, I suppose. Am I supposed to pay…”

That was as far as Harry got before Hedwig precked harshly and flared her wings. The other owl instantly took off, not a second before Hedwig flew forward to land on the windowsill herself, her claws outstretched.

Chuckling at his friend’s territorial nature, Harry looked down at the large, gold and black envelope, marked with the name, and the phrase Department of Magical Law Enforcement. *Hmmm, wonder what this is about?*

Opening it, Harry read the contents, his brows furrowing in anger. *‘Dear Sir, we have detected the use of magic at your location. As this location is not in the magical world you are being issued a citation. Be warned that continued illegal use of magic will result in your wand being snapped and time in Azkaban. Wishing you a good day Mafilda Marchbanks, director Misuse of Magic, Department of Magical Law Enforcement.’*

Harry slowly put the missive down, then bit his lip until it nearly bled as he stopped himself from cursing with the reminder that he was in enemy territory so to speak, and that there was no way he would let Vernon find him using his wand on him. After a few minutes of simply getting control of himself, Harry moved over to the window and looked past Hedwig, scowling. *Am I being watched somehow?*

 But after a few minutes, Harry pulled back, looking around. *Fine, so I’m not being watched by a person, but a magical method of being watched.* At that point, Harry remembered the letters to him from last year.  *Ughhh I should have remembered that. So magic can tell someone, both at Hogwarts and in this DMLE. Think I remember Hagrid mentioning them, and the Ministry, called them all useless I think...*

For a moment the worry about being observed was all he could think of, but then a thought occurred to him. *But, wait, if even the teachers at Hogwarts know I was living under stairs, they must have some idea* about what my life is like, and the headmaster forced me back here. And it’s obvious the DMLE doesn’t care about my life, just so long as I don’t use magic. A dark smirk came to his eyes at that idea, and he tossed the missive into the pile of junk along the far wall. “Well in that case, I think I’m going to start my teenage rebellion a few years early. And if I can’t get away entirely, that computer, and the games I could play, become even more important. Still how to go about fixing it, if I can’t use magic here?”

That took him a few days to think a solution to, by the end of which Harry Potter was ready to go absolutely spare for boredom. His days were spent doing chores, then being bunged up back into his room with nothing new to do now that he couldn’t practice magic and had no new books or comics to see.

Finally however, he thought up a solution of sorts. After a morning of weeding and other garden work, he approached Petunia while she was watching some kind of TV show about women in London. “Aunt Petunia, um, can I speak to you for a second?” She glared up at him but since it was a commercial at the moment he hurried on. “It um, well, it occurred to me that, um, in the interest of keeping my sort from coming around, or sending mail to me, like they did last year, I should, um, go downtown and look for my kind’s equivalent of a mail box.”

Petunia sneered. “Hah! Speaking of mail, I note after saying you had made friends this past year at that freak school of yours that none of your so-called friends have deigned to try and contact you. What’s the matter Potter,” she made his last name a curse, “Your freakish friends not so friendly?”

“I, I think you might be right about that Aunt Petunia, but that doesn’t mean my own concerns about mail coming in by owl is wrong. Surely you don’t want the neighbors to notice that kind of thing?” He asked. Giving Petunia a minor win like that was best way with her. She would smile and go away happy with that victory. In many ways she was the easiest of the three Dursleys to deal with. Dudley would push and torment making fun of Harry at the drop if a hat while the older fat walrus would never listen he’d just smack Harry upside the head.

“Ugh, fine!” Petunia groused. “You won’t need to be driven anywhere would you? You’d have to pay for the gasoline used if so, prices are outrageous these days I swear!”

Harry bit back a retort at that along the lines of *Well if you didn’t waste so much on toys Dudders broke within a week maybe you’d not have to worry about that kind of thing.* Instead hejust shook his head. “No ma’am, I can make my way down well enough, I just wanted your permission to leave, and money for the bus, that should be cheaper than the gas right?” *And for you to not wonder where I am.*

The idea of using this excuse to get on the Dursleys good side had crossed his mind at one point, but he had rejected it. When it came to Harry, the Dursleys didn’t have a good side.

 “Fine, but I’ll expect you to do all your chores for the day, and get back here in time to start dinner! I won’t have you shirking your chores, not when we’re good enough to put a roof over your head,” Petunia said, pointing out the backdoor. “Now get back to work!”

 It was another few days of mindless, mind-numbing drudgery before Harry had finished enough work in the garden and the rest of the house to get an afternoon off. He walked down the street then took a public bus into London, where he walked around for a time until he found the Leaky Cauldron, the eyes of the people around him skirting over it automatically. Entering quickly he moved through the thankfully busy bar to the back alley, a hat pulled down to hide his scar.

 With the knowledge that he was being watched, Harry figured that he couldn’t just entirely escape the Dursleys as he would like, nor could he keep using his magic there. He didn’t think they’d snap his wand like Hopkirk or whatever the name had been warned, but he also wasn’t willing to risk it. So the idea of repairing the computer and using the games within as an escape was really the only thing that interested him. This visit to Diagon Alley was to discover two things: one, if kids could get away with using magic in the magical world, and books, as many books on magical theory and repair charms as he could find.

 With his hat on, Harry thankfully was able to move through the alley without being mobbed like he had that first time, thankfully. He first went to Gringotts, getting some gold from the goblins, near to the same amount he remembered having used to buy his books before school with Hagrid. From there, he went to the book store, but Harry found it wasn’t very helpful on repair charm.

In the bookstore Harry nearly had a heart attack, leaping back out of the way of a tall, dumpy-looking redhead, whose face reminded him far too much of the trio of Weasley boys, Ron, Fred and George. “Oh, sorry youngster, I say, that cap! Are you a muggle-born!?” the man said, sounding almost effusive now. “I don’t suppose you’d be able to explain what ekeltricity is, would you?”

“Erm, yes sir, I am, and sorry, no, we don’t start learning about electricity for another year.” Harry said, making certain quickly that the hat he had taken from the Dursleys was in place. “Um, I’m just looking for, um books on magical theory, and well, maybe repair? Er, one of my accidental magic moments broke me mum’s favorite vases.”

“Ah, well I’m afraid that is something the teacher who introduced the magical world should have seen too. Still, I suppose that it must have been a busy day for her or him. Unless, oh dear, you didn’t get Professor Snape did you?” Mr. Weasley asked solicitously.

“Erm, I got short, kind of bouncy elderly guy with a face like, um well like those goblins really.” Harry said, now truly out of his depth and just coming up with stuff on the fly, finding it far easier than it should have been really. “He only was there for a few minutes though, then me parents had to go to work, and he left.”

The man nodded. “Ah yes, these days they give muggleborns a single day near the end of August together, to meet and greet and walk the Alley together. I would wager he had a number of other muggleborns to get to. Pity, with your question about magical theory books you’d be a shoe in for Ravenclaw. Still, I can help you find the books at least. My names Mr. Weasley, I’ve got three boys going to Hogwarts already, and a young girl, the only one in the family, going this year. She’ll be your classmate then.”

“That sounds great, I’m an only kid meself,” Harry said, emphasizing a bit of what he’d heard Vernon call lower-caste accent. Lying about having parents was kind of painful, but this was still a way forward to get what he wanted here, and he’d do it. “I’m Connor, Connor Rooney. Pleased ta meetcha.”

Mr. Weasley shook his head with a grin then showed him where the books on magical theory was, then warned him jokingly, “Now, I don’t suppose you have a wand yet?” When Harry nee Connor shook his head, Mr. Weasley nodded. “Well good, once you get one, don’t try to experiment. The Obliviators will be no kinder to your family than they would be otherwise, remember that.” Mr. Weasley jolted like he’d just been kicked, and pulled out a watch, a miniature clock complete with a cuckoo poking out. “Good lord, is that the time, well, I have to go now Connor, have a good day and all that. Hope you and my Ginny get along if you’re not in Ravenclaw but end up in Gryffindor.”

With that he rushed out the bookstore, leaving Harry behind, breathing a sigh of relief. He bought his books, then exited, and then headed to an ice cream shop he’d seen before. As he sat there, Harry patted himself on the back for the close shave he’d had with Mr. Weasley, as well as thanking Ron for not having described him well enough to the man to make him recognize him.

 But after he got over that, and the taste of cherry chocolate and pistachio ice cream, Harry frowned. *The books are okay, they might help me eventually, but not right away, and not to help repair that computer. Hmm… what to do?*

As he looked around the alley he saw a few kids walk by, older students from Hogwarts that might have been able to recognize him, and he ducked down pulling his cap down over his eyes. But he was still watching the quartet as they used magic to carry a large series of boxes and bags behind them. *Huh, then is it just the younger years who can’t use magic? We’re told it’s the Statute, but then my using magic alone, in my room and where no one could see me, should have passed muster. It didn’t, all it cared about was… was that I was in a nonmagical location maybe? If so, I bet I could get away with using spells here!*

*Then the only thing left to think about is how to get the computer here, and then how to repair it… hey, what’s that over there?* Harry frowned as he saw several people going down another small alleyway that he hadn’t noticed before. Finishing his ice cream, he hurried in that direction, looking down the new alleyway before looking up at the sign. *Knockturn? I, I thought that there was only the one…* Harry nearly smacked his forehead, and would have if not for remembering the hat blocking his scar from being seen. *Damn it, how stupid was I to think that!? How big is the magical world anyway?*

*Still…* He looked down at the alley, comparing its small, very dirty and dank looking appearance to Diagon, and then backed away. *Not going there, not yet. That place looks like those dank alleyways shown in those murder mysteries Vernon likes to make fun of. Best to not go there unless I have to, and with some preparation if I do.*

Unfortunately for Harry, it turned out that he did have to. The books Mr. Weasley had pointed him to were kind of interesting, but they didn’t really help Harry figure out how to either use magic without being spotted back in the land of the Fat meanies and their horse-like companion, or how to repair the computer. So Harry once more went back to the Alley.

Petunia didn’t care. His work on the garden was done, and the local wives had begun to make appreciative coos about it, which was all she cared about. He had told her that he he’d been forced to make an appointment at the bank, which could handle the issue of mail directed to him, which she bought hook line and sinker, though why the heck a bank would deal with mail Harry didn’t know. It was another bit of bull-shite but it worked.

Now with a new destination in mind, Harry dressed as rattily as he figured he could get away with in public, more Dudley castoffs and a hat made even dirtier than it had been before, the better to blend in with the rest of this new alleyway. *Although, given cleaning charms why the heck is Knockturn so dirty? Personal preference, like Ron maybe?*

Harry made his way down this seedy-by-preference alleyway keeping to the main street, looking from side to side for another bookstore or a knickknack store, anything that might be able to give him some idea as to how to either do magic without being traced or repair his computer, preferably both. That, and just generally finding out more about the wizarding world away from Hogwarts. *And getting me away from the Durlseys, that’s a major bonus right there,* Harry reflected almost cheerfully despite the dangerous environs around him. Considering that it was bright daylight and only around two in the afternoon he figured that no one was going to try to abduct a kdi who looked like he fit right in here.

Unfortunately, once more, Harry was proven wrong. He had gone about a block down the alleyway when he was grabbed from one side and dragged between buildings to his left side. “Mm, what do we have here dearie, some nice young tender meat for old Mab, hAAAK!”

Harry might not have his wand, but he had a homemade cosh made of several dozen pebbles in a large sock. It now whirled around in his hand in a desperate attack, cracking the old crone-like being who had attempted to accost him in the face and she stumbled back. Another smack to the side of the head sent her reeling and a third laid her out.

Gasping in air, Harry quickly looked around, but other than some wry smirks and grins in his direction from a few truly dirty-looking wizards, the action hadn’t seemingly drawn any negative attention his way. *Okay, so, rule number one when dealing with an enemy, when you put ‘em down, put ‘em down good and hard! Bloody hell, I’m learning all sorts of stuff these days.*

Feeling a bit full of himself despite his still pounding heart, Harry looked down the street and spotted a store sign that said Borgin and Burkes books and antiquities, which might be just the thing he was looking for. He entered quickly, not noticing that his hat had been shifted just a bit during the tussle.

Inside the shop was incredibly filled with a disorganized clutter of various odd looking furniture, knickknacks, and rows of old looking, dark-leather embossed books lining both walls. The shelves in the aisles were overflowing, but despite that, Harry couldn’t spot a single duplicate item anywhere. At the far end of the store was a long table laid out with further odd looking magical devices, including a large glowing globe, a hand that looked carved from obsidian, and several long staffs made of various types of material.

There was an old man with wide shoulders and a grim twist to his mouth standing there. “What’s a brat like you doing in here?” He barked, glaring at Harry, his eyes narrowing as he took in Harry’s appearance. “Or did you just come in here before your father or mother arrived? Ya don’t look like any pureblood I’ve ever seen…”

“That mighta be because you haven’t been overseas often,” Harry improvised once more, trying to sound like he had heard Blaise Zabini speak. “I’ma from Italy, and my parents decided I should go to Hogwarts.” Putting his newfound gift of gab to good use, he moved further into the store, looking around conspiratorially.

As he did so however, he didn’t notice the man’s eyes flying wide as he noticed Harry’s scar. A nearly gleeful look came into the man’s eyes, but he banished it as Harry looked back at him.

“I’m looking for ways to enchant muggle items,” Harry whispered, then placed a large bag of gold on the table in front of the man. “I’ma willing to pay.”

“Ahh, well then, we have a lot of things that could be enchanted muggle items, though of course that’s illegal here in Britain,” the old man said, one hand moving down below the table. Then he seemed to pause, considering. “How much are you willing to pay brat?”

“Up to a hundred galleons,” Harry replied promptly. It wasn’t as if the money was worth much to him, he had a pile taller than he was of the things, and a hundred was all he’d been able to stuff into what the goblins had called ‘a slightly expanded pouch’ but which he just thought of as a limited bag of holding. “And I’ma more interested ina doing the enchantment myself.”

“Hah, well if you have a house warded against the trace that’s all to the good then, and for a hundred galleons, I figure I can do ya something proper.” The man said, changing his tone somewhat.

The reasons for this was not what Harry thought. *Damn it, this might well be the Potter brat, but if so, I can’t just kill him here, no matter how much money that might gain me from Malfoy and others like him. Not with the Aurors already investigating me thanks to that bit of fencing I’ve been doing this past year. No, best to be subtle about this. Still, who would have thought, Dumbledore’s golden Boy Who Lived would be interested in enchanting muggle objects. And that interest makes him all the easier to trap.*

“Now, if the object you’re interested in has electricity running through it…” He waited until Harry nodded, looking a little surprised that Borgin had said the word correctly. “Well, that will mess the flow of magic through the object up. But you **can** brute force it, and maybe power it through magic instead of that muggle junk. Wait right there. I’ll be back in a moment.”

As the man left, Harry saw his reflection in the crystal and hissed, pulling his hat down over his scar again. *Crud, I hope he didn’t notice it!* With that seen to, Harry started to look at some of the books set on a small stand nearby.

 A moment later, Borgin came back with two items. One was a square that looked something like black quartz, which seemed to drink in the light. The other was a simple white strip of paper with a lot of writing on it that looked Asian.

He handed both to Harry. The first one was a magical item that created lightning on command, which could be anything. The other was a talisman which would shield whatever it was placed on from other electrical things around it. “Now be sure you use ‘em right. The first has to be part of the muggle thing, the other has to be tacked on the interior, and they can’t be on the same surface either. Got it?”

 Harry nodded, looking and feeling rather suspicious, but that turned around when Borgin put his hand out and said firmly, that’ll be a hundred galleons each, boy. If you don’t have the money I’ll give you one, not the other. These are expensive items, and it’ll be a wrench to get rid of them.”

 Scowling Harry retorted, “And if they don’t work, if the item I’m trying toa enchanta, what then? Will you give me my money back if I return them?”

 Borgin bit back a snort, but haggled back with the boy, eventually letting him talk him down to eighty galleons for one and seventy galleons for the other, with a money back agreement of only half that, plus five galleons for an Advanced Defense using the Dark Arts book. The boy left, feeling he had gotten what he wanted, without ever realizing that Borgin had been playing him too.

 “Hah, if the boy can get either of those to work he’ll be dead in seconds. Either the Soul Trap and Apparator will see to that, together they’ll kill him and erase the evidence. And just as good, both of them come from the Malfoy collection. I’ll have to Obliviate my mind of the sale, but after that, and after I get rid of any evidence around the place, I won’t ever even be a suspect!” Borgin chortled, turning to enter the back of his shop. This called for a celebration.

**OOOOOOO**

 Heading home Harry immediately found himself accosted by his aunt. “There you are boy, where’ve you been all this time, and why in the world are you dressed like that!? You look like a hobo, I knew you freaks were worthless if that kind of clothing is normal! gah, go around the back, I won’t have you treading dirt into my clean house. The instant you are clean, get started on dinner, Dudders and Vernon are going to be home any minute, and if their meals late you’ll answer for it.”

 Harry hissed in pain as his aunt’s hand found the back of his head, but nodded docilely leaving his dirty hat and work clothes outside the door. Knowing however that Petunia would be the least of his worries if their meal was late he cleaned himself quickly and raced into the kitchen to start a meal of fried chicken and chips. Petunia huffed at that, but subsided when he prepared a simply chicken salad for her. “You’ve been leaving off your chores early twice now boy, I trust that you’ll be able to not need to do that again?”

 Wincing slightly Harry thought about how to get out of this and said, “Well, I’ve done pretty much everything I need to Aunt Petunia except order next years books. If I can’t get that done in a week they’ll assume I haven’t gotten the list yet and start sending letters until I do. I’ve ordered them, but I need to go back there with my old ones to exchange them in. I didn’t know that I needed to do that.”

 Petunia scowled, seeming about to say something, but subsided as Harry turned back to preparing the meal. Within minutes it was done, and Harry was allowed to go back to his room without earning another smack, although the smell of the food he’d just made wafting after him was torture in itself. Yet Vernon and Dudley had both come in as he finished, and he knew if he even tried to take some of Vernon’s favorite meal from him the fat walrus would smack him a good one.

 *Still, I’ve figured out the spells, and I’ve got an item that will work to power the computer, that seems a good days work. I’ve even been able to come up with a way to return in a few days to try my new repair spells in an area where they won’t be able to detect me. At least, that’s what I think the trace means.*

 For the next few days Harry did as good a job as possible on his various tasks to butter up his aunt, hoping to get a full day off in order to head to Diagon. After watching the older students and all the other people using magic in Diagon Alley, he knew he could get away with using magic there. This meant he could hopefully both practice magical theory to figure out some answers to a few of the questions that he had been wrestling with ever since the Reparo incident, and repair the computer.

It worked too. His aunt was so happy with the work he did done on the back yard, and cleaning the house, that she allowed him to “go exchange his freakish books for more freakish nonsense.”

With that lie in place, and with Petunia once more watching her soaps, Harry was able to put the bulky computer into his backpack, with some difficulty, and lug it to the bus. Carrying it into the Leaky Cauldron was equally hard, but once there, he was able to pay for a room for a day with relative ease. It appeared as if Tom was more than used to people of all ages needing rooms for what-have-you.

Harry stayed there the rest of the day, trying out various spells. He was able to make the Stupefy work without any wand movements, but couldn’t quite get it to work without verbalization. The Immobulous spell worked without even the verbalization after several dozen tries. For some reason though Harry couldn’t get any transfiguration spell to work without both wand movements and verbalization. And the first spell he’d read from the advanced Dark Arts book he’d bought from Borgin, Bombarda, didn’t work at all. Harry was obviously making a fundamental mistake somehow.

Harry scowled at that, then winced. “Um, heh, I suppose using a spell that sounds like you’re throwing around a bomb inside isn’t the best way to go about things anyway. Should’ve thought of that before I tried, if I’m honest.”

Feeling a little guilty about the fact that if the spell had worked he would have blown a hole in Tom’s wall, Harry moved on to less destructive spell work for a time, getting the Wingardium Leviosa to work without wand movements or visualization, and the Reparo spell too. Then he got to work on the computer.

With the books on how computers worked open, Harry tried to use the visual aid of the book to try to fix each little part inside the computer that he could with a repair spells. It worked for a few bits, but Harry quickly realized that some computers must differ internally from one another.

Deciding he had done as much as he could on his own, Harry pulled out the two items he had gotten from Borgin. He figured out where the power should go once it came into the computer, and slowly removed that part, the converter it was called, and placed the small black square with the runic array on it there. Hooking the wiring up to it was difficult, and Harry eventually had to just use tape to latch it together. It looks very flimflam when he stared at it, and he sighed. *This is never going to work, is it? Heck, I don’t even know if that will let me order the box thing to start powering up!*

Still, Harry wanted to try at least. With a sigh, he redid the side of the computer then put it back in his backpack. Harry hadn’t been able to bring both the computer and its keyboard or screen along, so he would have to return to the Dursleys to see if it worked.

*I am so not looking forward to carrying this home! But wait, that featherlight charm, couldn’t that work?*  A slightly more advanced version of the levitation spell that had, somewhat inadvertently, led to him becoming friends with Hermione this spell was designed to make things lighter. “Why didn’t I think of that before?”

With a sigh, he pulled out his wand again, and practiced the featherlight charm several times on the various pieces of furniture in the room, before using it on his backpack. When he picked it up this time, he nearly fell over backwards, because it was so light. “Wicked!”

He was about to go back to practicing more spells, when there was a knock on the door. He frowned, then asked “yes, who’s there?”

“Ah, Harry,” said the voice of Albus Dumbledore. “Might I come in?”

Cursing inwardly, Harry replied in the affirmative, and tries to muster up a smile for the headmaster, but knew it probably looked somewhat guilty at best. Given his suspicions about the headmaster and the teachers, he wasn’t certain how he felt about him now. After all, without the headmaster and the other teachers, especially Hagrid, he would never have discovered magic.

Yet at the same time it was the headmaster who had forced him to go back to the Dursleys again this past summer. And not only him but possibly all of the teachers must have known about how bad his home life was given where the Hogwarts acceptance letter had gone and Hagrid’s chasing after the Dursleys when they tried to run away with Harry. And the headmaster showing up now was also definitely a mark against him in Harry’s opinion.

“Might I ask what you are doing here, Harry?” Albus said with his twinkling eyes as he moved to sit on the bed only to frown, as he gently pushed it lightly to the side with a few fingers. “Ah, other than experimenting with your magic, I suppose?”

“That’s pretty much all I’m doing headmaster,” Harry said, rubbing at his hair and looking away. He didn’t wants to tell the headmaster about the computer. After all, Borgin had said enchanting ‘Muggle’ items was illegal. “I just needed to get away from my relatives for a bit. I had a bit of an accidental magic moment, and then I got this letter from a woman named Hopkins or something like that. I wanted to figure out what was going on with that too.”

“While I would be the last person to dissuade you from experimentation, there is a time and place for it, That time and place being at school,” Albus replied, his own wand in his hand and gently touching the items of the room that Harry had used the Featherlight charm on. “As for the missive from Young Hopkirk, leave that to me. She is rather too fanatical about her work at times. I’m certain that a going-on second year student having a bout of accidental magic will be excused, so long as it is not repeated.”

He turned back to Harry, at a that, smiling as Harry looks down at his feet. “But you my boy, needs to return to your family’s house.”

“Relatives Sir,” Harry said firmly, though he was still looking down at his feet. “They’re not my family. “There my relatives, there’s a distinction there.”

“Nonetheless, you are safer there than you are here. While Tom is a most excellent cook and a very decent innkeeper, he could in no way protect you from those who are your enemies because of who your parents were, who you are and who they once served.” Albus said with a sad shake of his head.

“You mean Voldemort still has followers out there somewhere? How is that possible, I would’ve thought they’d all be in that prison!?” Harry exclaimed blinking and now looking up at Dumbledore, before looking away, his face a bright red now trying to keep in his laughter. Albus was wearing a vivid red and blue cloak marked by yellow and bright green stars and smiley faces for some reason. *How did I miss that!?*

“Alas that is not the case. For many, the wheels of justice turn but slowly. For others, I am afraid that the phrase ‘money talks’ is true in our society even as it is in the non-magical society.” Albus sighed sadly. And in many ways, those who escaped justice are among the most dangerous of Voldemort’s followers. I’m afraid I can’t allow you to stay here Harry.”

He reached out to take Harry’s shoulder, squeezing gently. “Further, as I said even after I speak to Mafilda about removing the deficit against your name, you will have to be very careful about not performing any magic in your relative’s house. Our government is practically obsessed with the Statute of Secrecy, there is no allowance even for those muggle-born whose family understands and is interested in magic. Whereas with you that most certainly is not the case. The damage Vernon or Petunia could do if they tried to share the secret of magic is considerable, or would appear such to the government.”

“And I have to return there?” Harry asked duly, looking down once more. “I, professor you know…”

“Regardless, it is the safest place for you. Your mother’s protections are strongest there. And neither I nor the other teachers can always be around to defend you.” He gently shook Harry, causing Harry to look up at him, and for once, the old man’s eyes were not twinkling, the dark brown of his eyes adding to the impact of his words. “Now, I don’t want to hear about you coming to the alley again… not until the week leading up to the school year all right?” he ended with a wink.

Smiling and nodding as if he had accepted that carrot, if that was really what it was, Harry hurried over to his book bag, lifting it up over onto his shoulders, and then picking up the books. He looked over at the headmaster then but h simply chuckled. “I daresay you could give your friend Ms. Granger a run for her money with that number of books, Harry.”

Wincing at the mention of his friends, Harry debated questioning the headmaster about them, but decided against it. It was obvious that the headmaster at this point didn’t really care about Harry’s happiness, just his safety. And even that was kind of debatable given some of the things that the Dursleys had done to them over the years. They never really went out of their way to beat him except for Dudley, but Petunia had taken an iron skillet to his head at one point when he had messed up dinner. And Vernon had beaten him with a whip when Harry had brought home a better grade than Dudley during their first year in school.

*No, best to keep silent. If the Dursleys or my own boredom doesn’t kill me before school starts I’ll figure out what’s going on then.*

**OOOOOOO**

Needless to say, Petunia was not pleased with Harry when Dumbledore returned him home, and his ability to leave home ended instantly. Harry found that kind of funny when he thought about it. His relatives hated him and couldn’t have waited to see the back of Harry when he went to Hogwarts. But now that Dumbledore had come by with it like this, they were doing all they could to keep him on the property: out of sight, most certainly out of mind sure, but still there, and doing a lot of chores for them.

“I suppose the slave labor is kind of tempting then,” Harry reflected as he stared up at the ceiling again. “Oh look, there’s a spider over there. Please little guy, make something interesting for me to look at!”

Harry paused. “I just spoke aloud to a spider and hoped it would understand me. I am going barmy. Unless…” he frowned. “I was able to talk to that snake…” A few moments later Harry had determined that either the spiders were not very talkative, or he just didn’t have the knack, and he went back to being bored.

Three weeks had passed and Harry tried, he really **did** try to not perform any magic in the house. He tried to make some entertainment of his own, using the broken toys and the comic books. But there was only so many times Harry could play make-believe on his own at his age, and being locked back up in here whenever he wasn’t doing chores was just, just horrible!

And despite the amount of exercise he had gotten out while in the garden, the lack of proper food was also beginning to get to him too after several months back in the Dursleys. When Hedwig had gone hunting two nights before and brought back a squirrel rather than a rat, that squirrel had looked mighty tasty to Harry.

“Alright that’s it,” he muttered, getting out of bed as he heard downstairs the Dursleys wining and dining someone. Vernon was playing host to someone from America or something that his company was trying to do business with, although whoever decided that Vernon was the one to play host, should have their heads examined in Harry’s opinion. He doubted Vernon would be able to find America on a map, let alone talk to an American about anything without insulting him, his country, or something else. *On the other hand it could be worse; the guy could be from France. Vernon could possibly single-handedly start another war if that was the case.*

Still, Harry knew that trying to sneak out at this point would be a very bad idea, and doing magic would be even worse. So he decided to do something else with his time, something that could hopefully really serve as a real escape from the prison that had become his life.

Pulling out the parts of the computer from where he had hidden them, hooking them up together again. He had repaired the keyboard just the other day and put the talisman on the back of it, figuring that the keyboard was both part of the computer system and far enough way to not interfere with the Lightning Boc. The monitor had always worked since he’d first tried to fix it, and he thought that that Lightning Box would serve as a power source. “The only question is, will the magical government figure out that I’m doing magic if I turn this on?”

He paused for a moment, his hand hovering over the power key then he said, “You know what, I don’t care at this point! I need something to do. I can feel my brain dying!”

He was about to press the button when a voice from behind him shouted “Harry Potter must not go to Hogwarts!”

Harry whirled around a. He saw the speaker was a small creature of some kind that barely came up to his knee, with wide floppy ears, huge eyes, and a gangly body, wearing what looked like some kind of toga or something made from a tea cozy.

As the noise from below stilled for a moment, then came back even louder, Harry quickly held up a finger to his lips, saying “Please be quiet!”

The little creature nodded, his ears flopping as he did. Then he repeated himself in a near whisper. “Harry Potter must not return to Hogwarts!”

Harry held up his hand then moved over to the bed and away from the computer just in case, staring at the little creature. “Okay,” he said slowly. “Now that we’re all using our inside voice, can you tell me who you are, and no offense, but what you are?”

“Oh, the great Harry Potter Sir wants to know Dobby’s name!” The little creature moaned, looking like he was going to cry in joy for a moment. “Dobby knew that Harry Potter sir was a great wizard!”

“Um, so your name’s Dobby?” Harry asked, hoping to get the little creature back on task. The hero worship was really off-putting. Harry had never been happy with the Boy-Who-Lived shite, so the little guy’s fawning was well beyond what he ever wanted to see.

“Dobby is indeed called Dobby, Mr. Harry Potter Sir,” the little being said, pointing at himself. “Dobby is being a house elf. The great Mister Harry Potter Sir has never heard of us before?”

“I can’t say I have. Although, my knowledge of the magical world is kind of limited.” Harry replied with a scowl before he shook his head. “What are house elves, and what do you do? And why are you here?”

“House elves be servants Mr. Harry Potter Sir. We be serving wizards in return for magic. Our magics be different than yours, wheeze must be bonded to use it and must mostly be using it for other people. It is how wes have always been.” Dobby explained.

“And are you here on a mission from your master?” Harry asked, asking what he thought was the next logical question given what Dobby had just said. The reaction he got told him this was not the case.

“Oh no sir,” Dobby said, now shaking his head so wildly his ears actually hit him in the face, though he didn’t seem to notice. “No sir! If master knew Dobby was being here,” Dobby shuddered. “Oh he would be punishing Dobby so hard! Dobby is a bad elf!”

He went over to a wall and looked as if he was about to bang his head on it, but Harry leaped out of the bed, and quickly put his hand between Dobby’s head in the wall. “Dobby!” He hissed “Don’t do that! You’ll hurt yourself, and then you’ll get me hurt too.”

Dobby froze at that, looking up at him in shock as Harry whispered. “The people here don’t actually like me all that much, and they’ve got important guests over. If you get me in trouble, I don’t know what they’ll do to me.”

That seemed to get through to Dobby, and he backed away rapidly from wall. “Dobby is sorry Mr. Harry Potter Sir. But Mr. Harry Potter Sir must not return to Hogwarts!”

A certain manic gleam entered his eye, which Harry noticed, and quickly spoke up to stop Dobby from doing whatever he was thinking of doing.

“I was thinking about not returning anyway Dobby,” he soothed quickly, moving back over to sit on his bed. “I’ve recently discovered that the teachers and the headmaster there don’t really seem to have my best interests at heart. I mean look at this,” he said, gesturing down towards the cat flap, “that’s where they push my food in here. And look at the Windows too. The headmaster at least knows about that stuff, yet here I am still.”

Dobby did so, and saw the bars. That and the cat flap was certainly odd, even to him. “That not normal on muggle houses then?”

“No Dobby, no it isn’t,” Harry said with a sigh. “And I can’t escape either. When I tried, the headmaster found me and returned me here. Apparently I’m safe here, but safe in this case is still trapped. It’s probably better than Hogwarts,” he went on hurriedly, not wanting Dobby to overreact and think he wanted to return to Hogwarts given how Dobby had looked a second ago. “But I’d still like to escape somehow.”

“Oh, Dobby knows all about wanting to escape,” the little creature said disconsolately. “Oh yes he does, Harry Potter sir.”

The two of them looked at one another, having an odd moment of camaraderie. It didn’t last for long, but it was there for a moment before Dobby asked suspiciously, “So Master Harry Potter Sir will not return to Hogwarts?”

“I’ll try my best not to,” Harry said with a nod then an idea occurred to him. *He got here with magic, and a owl hasn’t shown up, so maybe house elf magic can’t be detected by the government*? He gestured over to the computer, moving over to sit down in front of it. “Although, I really would like to escape from here, even if only in my own mind. Do you know what this is?”

“No, Harry Potter Sir,” Dobby replied, moving over to stare at the thing, poking it with a finger. “It looks like a strange window, connected to a box. And this other odd box thing with all these letters on it. It be looking like a typeywriter, Dobby has seen one before.”

“That’s pretty much what it is Dobby, but it all works together. It will put up pictures and stuff on this window, which we call a screen. It will allow me to play various games and other stuff, and I’ll be a lot happier to stay here. Unfortunately, my cousin broke it, and I haven’t gotten it to work just yet.” he said pushing the power button. There was a loud humming noise from the back of the computer, but nothing else happened. “I’ve tried to fix it, but…”

“OH, Dobby can help with that!” With that in the elf clicked his fingers. Instantly there was several strange sounds from inside the computer of things being rearranged, somewhat violently if the sounds were any indication, and Harry winced. But thankfully the noises stopped quickly. For a moment, Harry was worried that those sounds would carry downstairs to, but the sounds of talking and eating didn’t dissipate again, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

With that worry taken care of Harry asked, “Dobby, what did you just do?”

“Dobby simply repaired it Mr. Harry Potter Sir. This muggle thing will work now.” Dobby replied authoritatively. “Dobby has used his magic on many ‘muggle’ things for the mistress at home, including what mistress calls her ‘little friend’.”

He looked aghast, clapping his hands over his mouth but Harry didn’t question that, simply looking at him in astonishment. “That’s amazing Dobby! You don’t have to know what it looks like, or how it worked or, or anything like that to repair it? I looked up repair spells and they didn’t work like that!” He exclaimed quietly

Breathing a sigh of relief, Dobby paused thinking and clicked his long fingers. “House elves magic be different, be much more about intent and wishing. We wishing to be helpful, our magic does the rest. Now, be there anything else Dobby can do to make you want to stay here rather than Hogwarts?”

*That’s interesting, even more things I don’t know*, Harry thought, while he nodded at Dobby. “All right Dobby with that, I won’t try to return to Hogwarts, but I would like to write out a message to my friends there, tell them I’m not going, and why. The problem is I don’t know if it will actually work if I send Hedwig. She hasn’t been able to find them lately,” Harry said even as he moves towards the small broken piece of chair he used as a desk.

Because his back was turned, he didn’t see Dobby’s look suddenly turning shifty. Hedwig did, and turned her head to a ninety degree angle, her eyes narrowing and her claws creaking ominously on her perch. Dobby flinched at that then held up a hand. “Dobby thinks it will get through now.”

He frowned at that, but shrugged his curiosity about that off, anticipation and eagerness going through him to finally have something to do! He quickly wrote out a message, then tied it to Hedwig and said, “Take this to Hermione, girl.”

Harry and Dobby watched Hedwig, who glared at Dobby for another second, turned and moved towards the window huffily. Hopping to the windowsill she slid between the bars and then out into the dark of night beyond.

As Hedwig flew out of sight, Harry smiled over at Dobby and held out his hand. “Well thank you for your help Dobby, and your warning. I don’t care what your master says, you’re a good house elf!”

Dobby’s big eyes watered at that, and he shook Harry’s hand with both of his up and down wildly. “Mr. Harry Potter Sir wants to shake Dobby’s hand! Mr. Harry Potter Sir cares! Mr. Harry Potter Sir really is a great wizard! Dobby hopes that Mr. Harry Potter games will go all right, and that you won’t be returning to Hogwarts. It bes much too dangerous!” Wiping away his tears, Dobby stood back. “But now Dobby must go! Remember Mr. Harry Potter Sir, Mr. Harry Potter Sir must not return to Hogwarts!”

With that, the house elves disappeared, and Harry blinked in surprise. “That was even neater than the teleportation spell the headmaster used.” He then looked over to the computer and back again to where the house elf had been standing. “And they’re supposed to be just our servants? The magical world is weird.”

Putting that aside, Harry moved over to the computer and with baited breath pressed the power button again. To his delight, whatever Dobby had done seemed to have finally repaired the computer enough for the power to flow, even with all the modifications that Harry had put in in his own efforts to make it work. He watched as the startup screen appeared, and then loaded into windows smoothly. The noise was kind of worrisome, a deep sort of thrum in the background, and there were lights appearing out of the side of the computer, but Harry could ignore those. He was just too happy that it was finally working after literally a month working on this on and off.

What Harry didn’t know was something that most magicals learned early on in their lives: Mixing magic didn’t work very well, and never as intended unless you really, really planed it out very well. Right now, in Harry’s computer there were the remnants of dozens of repair spells from Harry, the cursed Soul-Trap, and the Apparator that he had used in his attempts to power the computer, muggle technology, and Dobby’s helpful house elf magic.

There was, in fact, more magic in that small box, then in many a store in Diagon alley. A lot more. Worse was the fact that, as any of the Weasleys who had anything to do with their father’s obsession could tell you, electrical things and magic couldn’t mix very well. To top it like a cherry on a cake of utter confusion, house elf magic was a lot more about wish fulfillment that Dobby had explained. Harry had told Dobby that he wanted to use these games to escape, and that wish began to interact very… oddly with the Soul Trap and all the rest of the magic.

With the computer working, Harry was finally able to open the CD-ROM, and found that the disc inside was disc one of Baldur’s Gate. He saw also that the icon for the game was showing up on the Windows screen. “Ah, so that’s what Dudley was playing when he had his temper tantrum this! I suppose that makes some sense.” When that game had come out, Harry had heard a lot of kids who had played it at school complain about how hard it was.

But Harry was not Dudley, and had always been interested in this game, although again how Dudley of all people had gotten his hands on a game with magic in it with how anti-magic his parents were was anyone’s guess. “I bet he got it from one of his friends, on the sly. No way would they buy it for him. Just like he did with those Dungeons & Dragons books.”

As soon as he was satisfied that the computer had stopped starting up, Harry clicked on the icon, watching the introduction video avidly for a moment, snickering slightly at the overreaction of the voice actor to the guy who was hurled off the roof by the unknown giant. After that, he was able to choose a new game after which came the skull with the glowing eyes that was the sign of the loading screen.

It seemed to go on for a long time, but Harry was willing to wait. *Although, that humming is getting kind of loud…and is it just me, or is that light getting kind of brighter?* Then there was an odd sound, almost organic, a “BLORT!” that took Harry aback. Before he could do more than think it was odd, however, the skull loading screen vanished in a blast of white light so bright Harry was blinded. The he blinked his eyes rapidly, muttering “Bloody hell! Now I know why those warnings says you should play games like this in a well-lit area!”

Blinking his eyes open, he saw a vast skull and cross bones, hurtling towards ending through him. He tried to dodge, fighting himself on his feet somehow, when he had initially been sitting on the side of his bed, looking into the video screen. How he got to be standing up he didn’t know, you see is that either. That was the last thought he had before the skull and cross bones flew through him, and everything sort of disappeared for a second, before being replaced by a gray, world all around him.

At first that was all he could see, then then two doors appeared. They were utterly identical, with the same skull in the circle with glowing eyes motif as the loading screen. “**Choose your character**!” shouted a voice from on high.

Harry blinked, staring at the doors then around him. “Where the heck am I?” He looked down at himself, and scowled. “And where the bloody hell did my clothes go!?”

The voice from before boomed out “**Choose your character**!” to that, and Harry scowled.

“Look, I don’t know what this is, but if this is Dobby’s master or some other magical taking the mickey, well done, bravo and all that, you’ve had your fun, now let me out you wanker!” Harry shouted waving his arms wildly. This amounted to nothing, but another shout from the voice repeating the words from before. Scowling, Harry started to calm down and think.

“okay, so…no one’s replying, and honestly speaking I can’t see Dobby being a party to playing a trick or something like that on me. But, choose your character, and all that noise the computer was making… I am in the game? Magic and muggle tech, well I was warned that magic and muggle tech sometimes had really odd effects. Don’t think this was anywhere near what I was warned about though. And… I, I’m literally stuck in the game, can’t feel like I’m connected to my body or anything, which means I probably can’t get out. That means…”

Harry sighed. “That means I’ve got no choice but to play through the game, great.” He smiled wryly. “On the other hand, I did want to use the game to escape, although this is a lot more literal than I expected.”

At that a small square, the exterior of which was made of yellow light appeared in front of him. Inside were the words, “Congratulations, using logic and the power of your mighty mind, you have thought things through and figured out what’s happening to you! +1 point to intelligence, +1 point to Wisdom.”

The words also rang out, this time in a tinier sort of voice rather than the deeper, more theatrical voice, and oddly enough, Harry could suddenly feel his thoughts moving faster, his panic, which he had been still thinking despite his bravado, fading. He smirked then shaking his head. “Okay that, was kind of cool, although, I can earn points even now, that means that it’s a game within a game sort of thing…I can earn points in the game by playing the game itself… no wait, that isn’t the best way to put it…”

Harry closed his eyes, thinking things through once more to try to understand what he had been thinking. “I mean, that my life is one game, and Baldur’s Gate another, or perhaps a game within the game.”

This won him another “Congratulations, through a leap of logic you have spotted an oddity in the world around you and have begun to understand your new, unique circumstances! +1 to Wisdom.”

“…I’m not certain I like that, though why only wisdom instead of intelligence and wisdom this time?” Once more Harry thought about that, and what the two terms could mean. “Maybe, maybe intelligence is basic intelligence, how smart someone is. Then Wisdom could be something like experience, or actual knowledge gained of the world around you.”

“Congratulations, through thinking things through, you have understood more about your new, unique circumstances: +1 to Intelligence.”

“Interesting.” Harry laughed. Then thought it through even more. “Hmm… if it is really a game, could there be a, a user manual. Or a Stats screen?” Looking around, he saw nothing, then he thought those words hard, saying them aloud at the same time, shifting the wording as he did. Nothing happened in terms of a user manual, but he was able to see his stats, although this wasn’t as helpful as he’d hoped.

**Status Screen**:

**Name**: Harry Potter

**Gender**: Male(?)

**Race**: Human(?)

\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*

Wisdom: (\_\_) + 2

\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*

Intelligence: (\_\_) +2

\*\*\*\*

Bloodline Skills:

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*,\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Background notes**:

Trapped within a game, Harry Potter, the so-called Boy Who Lived, is now facing a life spent in a very strange land due to a mixup of magical proportions. Will he prevail, or will he find out that game over is forever?

Staring at it, Harry sighed. “Right that was singularly unhelpful, which I’d guess is the point. Although perhaps it is supposed to force me to figure things out as I go?” As he spoke that idea aloud, another status change square appeared, awarding him another point to intelligence for figuring out how to access his Status screen. “Works.”

After a few more minutes of trying to get more information to appear on his status screen or for some kind of manual to appear, Harry was flummoxed on that score and turned to the doors once more. As he did they enlarged in turn rapidly, first one then the other. Neither were marked by anything signifying what they might be though. Harry hesitantly reached out a hand toward the door on his right first.

“**You have chosen to play a female character**!”

“Wait, what!?” Harry shouted, then screamed as his body slowly shifted. His muscles creaked and groaned, and he bit off a scream, grinding his teeth and clenching his hands as the pain wound it’s way through his body, shifting and changing. When it was over, he scowled, looking down at her body for a moment, ignoring everything around him, even the voice shouting something in the background.

Harry’s body had morphed around him, becoming shorter he felt, though given he didn’t have anything around him to compare himself to that was only a feeling. His hair had become longer and changed color to red, which was interesting, and Harry rather liked the color, which he supposed came from his mother. His hands were thinner, looking like those of a girl for certain, not that he needed the hands to tell him he’d changed gender. First, he’d felt his little soldier disappearing, (and ooh boy was he not going to forget that pain anytime soon) but he was now looking down at his, or rather ‘her’ chest at present.

Given Harry was only 12 going on thirteen, he didn’t have much in the way of a chest to speak of, but Harry could feel himself blushing as he stared down at the tiny breasts there. They weren’t more than a barest curve to his chest, but even so, they were the first pair he’d ever seen, and that was enough to cause him some embarrassment.

Harry hesitantly brought his hands up to his chest, and felt at the tiny breasts shivering a little and quickly pulling his hands away. “Eep, um, okay those are, um… that was, yeah let’s not do that again.” Harry paused then, and hesitantly looked below his breasts for the first time since the change had occurred, and shivered, seeing the tiny slit there where his little soldier should be.

At only twelve, and having missed a full year of regular schooling, Harry hadn’t had anything like a biology class yet, nor any kind of discussion on the birds and bees from anyone, although later he would come to be very thankful for that, given the adults in his life before this. For now however, his knowledge of girls was very simple: one, they were girls because they had breasts and couldn’t pee standing up, two, they liked to travel in packs, three, they preferred long hair, and four, they were pretty. That was pretty much it. Oh, and an ancillary note: they could be bossy, but actually telling them they were was a very bad idea and led to lectures.

Harry also knew one other thing at this point: he was a guy! This change was not one he was happy with, and he refused to go along with it. With that thought, and after calming down, he became aware of what was going on around him in this strange between place again for the first time since the change to his body had hit. “Okay, please, oh please tell me there’s a way to undo this bullocks!”

As he looked up, Harry saw hovering in front of him above head height were several of the announcement boxes, all piled on one another. “That is something to be aware of in the future, I’ll need to be aware of the fact they pile on one another like that. I don’t want to click through them and miss an important message, if such a thing happens anyway.”

Reaching forward, Harry deleted the topmost message, which read, “Ouchie! You have grinned (rather grimaced) and bore through pain the likes of which would set most people to screaming. Does this make you brave, or just too stubborn for your own good? Only time will tell: + 4 to Constitution, +4 to Willpower.”

“Nice, or well, not really because that was ruddy awful, and I could do without the sarcasm. But I’ll take the points. And it tells me another stat I’ll need to be aware of too.” As he thought that, Harry could feel his body somehow toughening up, his muscles growing. “Wicked!”

The next box wasn’t as helpful, in fact, it was downright insulting. “Oops! You have chosen randomly and very poorly: -1 to Luck.”

“Oh, screw you! How was I supposed to know that door would do that! There was no way to choose between them! Ruddy game,” Harry groused, tapping out of that box too. “Still, that’s another Stat I know about anyway.”

Thankfully, the next box was good news, sort of. “Know Thyself! Even when dealing with a true moment of gender confusion that should have caused at worst an existential crisis you kept a mental image of yourself as a boy. Knowing yourself so well can only be good in the long run: +2 to Willpower.”

“I am seriously uncertain how to take that. I mean, yes it’s helpful, but I could have done without the moment of gender confusion in the first place,” Harry groused.

The next box was the one he had been hoping, nay, praying to see, and Harry paused, staring at it, taking in the details. This box was different than the stat boxes, which were lined in yellow light with nothing but the words inside. Instead, this box was lined with a blinking red light, and backed by something that looked like a wooden background, onto which the words “**You have chosen to play a Female Character, is this correct?**” Was emblazoned on top, while below were two buttons looking as if they stuck out of the wood, with the word ‘**No’** in red, and the word ‘**yes’** in green.

“Oh, Merlin, Morgana and Maeve thank you!” Harry muttered, and then very carefully reached for the no button. The door he had previously opened closed abruptly. Instantly the pain was of the transformation was back, but Harry bore through it, grimacing and growling to himself, eager to get the stat points and regain his real body.

After removing the stat screen that told him he had been awarded with two more points to willpower and constitution. This once more told Harry something else about the game: there would be limited rewards for going through the same thing twice. Setting that thought to one side for now for more important things, Harry resolutely turned to the other door and opened it.

Another red-lined box appeared in front of him, with the words “**You have chosen to play a Male Character, is this correct?”** This was unaccompanied by further pain, which was a blessing. Harry instantly hit the green button, and watched in something approaching excitement as the gray background of the universe around him changed, shifting into a wooden lined hallway, the way forward blocked by several glass doors, on which were words, though Harry couldn’t make out more than the words on the first at present.

Those words read “**Choose your Character’s race**!”

As soon as Harry touched that door the hallway disappeared to be replaced by several doorways cone more all around him. Each doorway had a different image on it of a different race. These included, Human, Elf, half-elf, Half-orc, gnome, and dwarf.

 “Wait, so I can choose my race, okay, that is interesting this is getting better and better,” Harry mused, grinning. The images here were pretty self-explanatory too, in Harry’s opinion, and Harry ignored them to read the information on the races.

Humans were, generally speaking, the best jacks of all trades, able to do any job or class, although their lives were of course not the longest. Elves specialized in dexterity, telling Harry another stat, archery of course, and magic, with half elves being somewhere between that and humans in that they could wear heavier armor and be stronger physically. They tended to also have a bonus to charisma another stat label, but not as much as Elves. But both elf and half-elf could not have much constitution as a human.

Harry didn’t even read the descriptions of Half-orcs after seeing the image, skimming to the bottom to see the stat bonuses and limitations. He wasn’t vain or anything like that, but he certainly would prefer to not have green skin and tusks. He also knew just enough about most fantasy games to understand orcs were one of the perennial bad guy races. A part of Harry wanted to champion them for that reason but the looks, and the minus to dexterity and wisdom he saw was enough for him to give that a miss.

Gnome and dwarf he disqualified for somewhat of a similar reason. “I might be short, but that doesn’t mean I like being short darn it. No thank you. Although that stat bonus to constitution the dwarves have is neat, and the massive bonus to working with metal. But no. And the bonus to alchemy and potions for gnomes sounds uninteresting too, plus the minus to charisma.”

Harry’s interest in potions had died after a year of dealing with Snape and his hatred for all things Potter. *I still have to wonder why, if the Headmaster was right and my father saved his life, he hated me so much?*

That left humans, elf and half-elf to choose from and eventually after thinking it through, Harry chose human. The adverse impact to constitution was something he didn’t want to deal with, as well as the inability to wear heavy armor for some reason. “I wonder what that’s about.”

Harry also remembered that most of this game was set in a human realm, so figured he could blend in better with those around him if the game was that realistic. Considering what was going on all around him, Harry wasn’t certain what the actual game would be like after he was finished with this character creation section, but wasn’t willing to act as if everything would be like a game, just in case. He could all too easily remember the ‘game over is forever’ line.

This won him yet another bonus point to Wisdom, which Harry chuckled at before making his choice. No change occurred to his body just yet, which again he was pleased about, but he found himself clothed now in a simple cloth shirt and leather pants. That threw him for a moment but Harry then smacked his forehead. “Right, Middle ages, only cloth and leather, no jeans… what are jeans made of anyway? But I suppose leather at least is hard wearing, and it isn’t tight or anything.”

 As he was saying that aloud, the glass door disappeared from in front of him and Harry found his feet moving on their own towards the next one. *That had better be just a part of the character creation bit, I don’t want my body moving on my own for me in the future.* He thought with a slight grimace before the next glass door rapidly expanded.

“**Choose your appearance!”** This time there were more doors, each of them with detailed images and various choices underneath in a series of blocks. The topmost image was that of a Human body from the waist up, the one below that a face, each of them set next to a series of choices, one of which, under the face, was hair color. “Huh.”

Harry moved around the room, noting that he could change his body type: thin, fat, strong, tall, short that sort of thing, with the choice of which door to look at. All of them looked like a Seventh year or so, a few looked older than that, but not by much. “Huh, so I won’t be starting at my own age, or level or whatever, are they equivalent? Whatever the case, that’s a little weird, although thinking back about it, I guess the game is supposed to be set after the main character’s come of age or something similar. It will sure be weird being that did all of a sudden though.”

The idea also excited him, as did the concept of being in a new, better body. Harry knew his own scrawny frame wasn’t exactly handsome or well built, whatever Wood said about it being the ideal build for a seeker. Being skinny was something to be proud of. Being malnourished and both short and skinny because of it was not.

With that in mind, and the fact this game was set in a fantasy swords and magic sort of realm, Harry chose the image that looked the most like the typical warrior image, something like Cohan the Barbarian: big, six feet four inches, with wide, muscled shoulders and a six pack that put even Oliver Woods (they all showered together after practice and the captain was the only person Harry had ever seen with a six pack) to shame, with wide, powerful arms.

Once he chose that door, the face below the body image and the choices set beside it allowed him to change a few things in his appearance, bearded, long hair, short hair, that kind of thing. He noticed that even the short hair looked messy, and tried at several doors to change that, only to fail. And his scar stayed the same in each image too.

That Harry had mixed feelings about, much like the scar itself. For a long while it had been a sign of his freakishness, of how his parents had died in a car crash. Then it had become something to be sort of proud of a sign of his mother’s love, the sign that something she had done had saved him from the killing curse, leaving him with only that mark to bear. Then it had become a sign of the Boy Who Lived nonsense, just another thing that set him apart from those around him, that made Harry famous for something he hadn’t had a part in really.

Still, on mature reflection, (which won him another bonus intelligence point) Harry decided he was fine with the scar remaining. “I honestly don’t know what I’d be like without it, after all.” Harry also decided to keep his eye and hair color, although he did make his hair long and shaggy though. “I figure I can always come back and change that with a razor or something, and I remember all the images about warriors, knights and barbarians back in the Middle Ages showed that most of them had long hair anyway. The beard though… no, that thing just looks weird.”

Once he was satisfied with his image, Harry touched the green button which once more indicated yes, in this case yes the combined image was acceptable, grimacing his teeth. As he had expected, His body once more shifted and changed and grew, expanding and morphing to match the image he had chosen. This won him more bonus points to Constitution and Willpower, but Harry shook his head groggily as it finished. “Bloody hell, I hope I don’t have to get used to that feeling, that is not fun!”

As his feet started moving forward once more against his will, Harry looked down his body, flexing and smiling. “Damn me, but this is cool! Just look at these arms! I bet I could bench press a rugby player now!” As he walked though Harry felt a little chapped in the trouser area, and frowned, reaching down to rearrange himself only to blink. “What the heck, that grew too! Bloody hell, I hope I don’t have to ride a broom, I had enough trouble sometimes with that already.”

“Congratulations? You have discovered a negative (?) impact of shifting your body to that of an 18 year-old man. Remember, learning about yourself is sometimes just as important as learning about other people. +1 to Intelligence.”

“Okay, now I know this game’s taking the mickey!” Harry groused, still shifting somewhat uncomfortably, rearranging himself with one hand, pressing his rod to lay within the pant leg to one side, while dismissing the stat bonus box with the other.

By this time Harry’s feet had Harryd him to the next glass door and again it disappeared as he did. “**Choose your character’s class**!” Again as the door disappeared, it was replaced by a series of others, eleven in all, although one of them was blacked out. Each bore both an image of a simple stick figure on the top holding different items, and words below it describing the various classes.

The images were ultra-simple in comparison to the ones Harry had been dealing with up to now, but the words made up for it in a way, describing each class in turn well enough for Harry to understand the pluses and minuses to each and Harry carefully read through each in turn starting with the image of a stick figure holding what was obviously a wizard’s staff.

MAGE:

The mage strives to be a master of magical energies, shaping them and casting them as spells. To do so, he devotes much of his time to magical research. A mage must rely on knowledge and wit to survive. Mages are rarely seen adventuring without a retinue of fighters and men-at-arms. Because there are different types (or schools) of magic, there are different types of mages. The generalist mage studies all types of magic and learns a wide variety of spells. This makes him well suited to the demands of adventuring.

Special Abilities: Spell Casting.

Restrictions: cannot wear armor, can only wield daggers, staffs, darts, and slings.

Specialization classes: Specialist Mage, Wild Mage.

*These specializations can be learned through your actions and quests throughout the game.*

“Okay, that is so much bull-shite! Restrictions, why the heck can’t a mage wear armor!? I mean, I could see a mage starting off as a weak sort of guy or woman, and not having any physical abilities because of how much time they would have to spend learning spells, but not being able to get around that?” Harry groused , shaking his head.

Thinking about it, he tried to click on the underlined word there, and got a bland **“Restrictions are limitations most classifications come with. For every positive there must be a negative.”**

Scowling, Harry backed away from that door.*While I may be able to get around that restriction somehow if this game becomes more like a real life but with stats and stuff, I can’t bet on that being the case. No, best to look at all of them, then figure out the best one to take for the long term. Besides, I have to wonder about whether or not the spells I know from my own life will really translate into the game.*

With that in mind, Harry, ignoring the fact he’d just gained another intelligence point, turned away from that door to the black one, experimentally reaching for it.His arm bounded off the door as if he had just smacked it into a stone wall, and the voice of the game intoned, “**Because of your past decisions in this character creation process, you are no longer eligible to start as a Sorcerer. You can learn this class as a secondary classification later through your actions or quests**.”

“Huh. Okay, doesn’t seem to be anything I can do about that. Next.” The next turned out to be marked by a stick figure holding a bow and with a smaller stick figure with for legs and a large fanged head beside it.

Ranger:

The ranger is a hunter and a woodsman. He is skilled with weapons and is knowledgeable in tracking and woodcraft. The ranger often protects and guides lost travelers and honest peasant-folk. A ranger needs to be strong and wise in the ways of nature to live a full life.

Special Abilities: Weapon Specialization, Racial Enemy, Stealth, charm person/mammal

Restrictions: Human, Elf or Half-Elf only

Specialization Classes: Archer, Ranger, Beast Master

*These specializations can be learned through your actions and quests throughout the game.*

This class had no restrictions in armor type and Harry really liked the idea of weapon specialization and charm person/mammal, which like the rest was rather self-explanatory. The specialization classes though sounded kind of lame in his opinion, and far too restricted to being useful in nature. *Sure most of the game might happen on the road, but what if the Ranger gets a negative bonus or something in cities?* “Still, it’s a possibility. I’m definitely not going to make a choice without examining all of these classifications closely.”

That earned him another set of bonus points to intelligence and wisdom. “Making an informed decision! Your desire to know all you can before making a choice that will change you for the rest of your life shows you are learning! +2 to Intelligence and + 2 Wisdom.”

“I don’t know if that was praise or snark really, but I’ll take it.” Harry muttered, going on to the next door.

Fighter:

The fighter is a champion, swordsman, soldier, and brawler. He lives or dies by his knowledge of weapons and tactics. Fighters can be found at the front of any battle, contesting toe-to-toe with monsters and villains. A good fighter needs to be strong and healthy if he hopes to survive.

Special Abilities: Advanced Weapon Specialization

Restrictions: None

Specialization classes: Kensai, Wizard Slayer, Berserker*.*

*These classifications can be learned through your actions and quests throughout the game.*

“Ooh okay, I really like the idea of Advanced Weapon specialization…” With that idea, Harry clicked on those words, and thankfully a smaller box popped up with more information. He learned that there was a limit to how many ‘skill slots’ most classifications could put into their skill with various weapons types. Rangers, for example, could only put three slots down, then add one more to any single weapon. Mages could only use one skill slot per the limited number of weapons they could use in the first place. How that would equate to his ‘life as a game’ thing, Harry didn’t know, but once more, he didn’t like the idea of restrictions.

“Definitely an option, especially that Wizard Slayer specialization if there are a lot of powerful mages in the game. Kensai sounds Oriental, nothing against that, I just have no idea what it could mean.” When Harry clicked on ‘specialization classes’ and thereafter the actual names however, he didn’t see any more information. With that Harry moved to the next door.

Paladin:

A paladin is a warrior bold and pure, the exemplar of everything good and true. Like the fighter, the paladin is a man of combat. However, the paladin lives for the ideals of righteousness: justice, honesty, piety and chivalry. He strives to be a living example of these virtues so that others might learn from him as well as gain by his actions.

Special Abilities: Weapon Specialization, Lay Hands, Turn Undead, +1 point to Willpower with every level after Level 4,

Automatically learns Protection from Evil, Detect Evil with every other level

Restrictions: Human only

Specialization classes: Cavalier, Undead Hunter, Inquisitor

“EEEE!!!!” Harry squealed, which was very odd coming from his now barrel-like chest, as every dream of being a hero and knight he had ever had going through his head as he read this job’s description. He almost chose it at once, especially once he saw the Detect and Protection of Evil, which were self-explanatory, as well as the Lay hands, which was obviously some kind of healing spell. But he stopped and looked at the ‘human only’ statement, and the last Specialization class. “Inquisitor? Yeah, that sounds a little… bad. And human only too, does that mean there’s racism in the game?”

This line of thinking won him a intelligence point again for, “Thinking long term: You have identified a small clue and made a logical leap to try and figure out more about the world around you. While you don’t know the answer, that doesn’t mean thinking about the question was a bad move.”

“Huh, that was helpful. Yet even so, there are undead in this game, so Paladin is definitely a choice. Still, next.” On the next door Harry read out:

BARBARIAN:

A barbarian can be an excellent warrior. While not as disciplined or as skilled as a normal fighter, the barbarian can willingly throw himself into a berserker rage, becoming a tougher and stronger opponent.

Special Abilities: Fast movement, berserker rage, high hit points.

Restrictions: Cannot wear full plate, plate mail. Can't specialize past normal specialization.

“Nope!” Harry chuckled. “I can see myself becoming many things, but a Berserker raging all over, nope. And I’ve always felt not getting hit was better than being able to take a lot of damage. Next please.”

This statement won him another intelligence point for “Spotting the obvious” And Harry growled, now knowing the game was somehow being snarky on purpose. Despite that, he moved onto the sixth door.

P R I E S T S:

The cleric is a generic priest (of any mythos) who tends to the spiritual needs of a community. He is both protector and healer. He is not purely defensive, however. When evil threatens, the cleric is well suited to seek it out on its own ground and destroy it.

Special Abilities: Turn Undead, Spell Casting

Restrictions: Cannot use bladed or piercing weapons.

Specialization classes: Specialization classes for this classification will be dependent on which god you choose to serve. This change is instant, and will have far reaching effects, choose wisely!

 “Again, no.” Harry muttered, shaking his head and moving on. “I like the idea of spellcasting, but unable to use bladed or piercing weapons is just weird, and I don’t like the idea of needing to choose a god to serve instantly. That sounds way too much like it could have long term ramifications.”

 Yet again that bit of forward thinking won him a “Spotting the obvious: + 1 to intelligence” stat bonus, which Harry just laughed at this time before going on.

DRUID:

The druid serves the cause of nature and neutrality; the wilderness is his community. He uses his special powers to protect it and to preserve balance in the world.

Special Abilities: Shape Change, Spell Casting

Restrictions: Human or Half-Elf only. Can wear leather armor and bucklers only. Can only wield clubs, darts, spears, daggers, slings, and staffs.

Specialization classes: Totemic Druid, Avenger, Shapeshifter

 “For the third time, no. Shapeshifter sounds interesting, like Animagi almost, but the restrictions in gear is a bit much. And I think most of the rest sounds too restrictive in what kind of actions I could take, if my actions can be restricted by class anyway.” Bing came another intelligence point for ‘Thinking long term’, and Harry came to the eighth door.

Monk:

Monks are warriors who pursue perfection through contemplation as well as action. They are versatile fighters, especially skilled in combat without weapons or armor.

Though monks cannot cast spells, they have a unique magic of their own based around the energy of their bodies. This ki allows them to perform amazing feats. The monk's best known feat is their ability to stun an opponent with an unarmed blow.

Special Abilities: Martial arts, magic resistance, fast movement, lay on hands, thief abilities (stealth and detect traps).

Restrictions: Cannot wear armor, cannot use two-handed weapons. Cannot raise relations past friendship.

Reading this class, Harry felt as if he was missing something. It just sounded, beyond the no armor or two-handed weapons thing, too good to be true. There had to be a downside to it, something that wasn’t being shown. No chance was it as good as it looked.

After a moment staring at the restrictions, Harry thought he had it, “Monks are, what’s the word, um, ascetic I think? They can’t drink, party or anything like that, at least from what I’ve heard about. They’re a holy order, like priests. Huh, I wonder why it doesn’t mention that and instead says that bit about raising relationships past friends. Oh, maybe they can’t marry then? Weird, and not exactly an issue, at least I hope not. But still, I just can’t see myself as a monk.”

On the next door, Harry read:

THIEF:

To accomplish his goals, for good or ill, the thief is a skilled pilferer. Cunning, nimbleness and stealth are his hallmarks. Whether he turns his talent against innocent passers-by and wealthy merchants or oppressors and monsters is a choice for the thief to make. There are seven thief abilities in Baldur's Gate II.

Special Abilities: Open locks, find traps, pick pockets, move silently, hide in shadows, detect illusions and set traps.

Restrictions: cannot wear any armor other than leather or studded leather; cannot use any shield except for bucklers; can only wield clubs, daggers, darts,

Specialization classes: Assassin, Bounty Hunter, Swashbuckler.

Here again Harry ran up against the same problems he had initially with the mage class, that of where ‘life’ ended and ‘game’ began and the, to his mind, bizarre restrictions. *After all, anyone can learn how to find traps, open locks etc, I’d assume they’d need a lot of dexterity to do it, but I’d bet they could still try it. Detect illusions and hide in shadow though is probably class-specific. But Restrictions again make no sense, I mean, only wielding clubs? Come on! The Swashbuckler specialty sounds interesting though.*

Yet it was the lack of armor that really killed this class for Harry. As much of a proponent of not getting hit as he was, he still would prefer to be able to wear heavy armor if the situation called for it. “After all, what would be the point of this new powerful body of mine if I couldn’t?”

At last Harry came to the last door. But here again, he was somewhat disappointed.

BARD:

The bard is also a rogue, but he is very different from the thief. His strength is his pleasant and charming personality. With it and his wits he makes his way through the world. A bard is a talented musician and a walking storehouse of gossip, tall tales and lore. He learns a little bit about everything that crosses his path; he is a jack-of-all- trades but master of none. While many bards are scoundrels, their stories and songs are welcome almost everywhere.

Special Abilities: Pick Pockets, Bard Songs, Spell Casting, High Lore ability.

Restrictions: Human and Half-Elf only cannot use a shield or armor heavier than chain mail.

Specialization classes: Blade, Jester

 “Okay, weaponized witticism sounds fun, and I could totally see Lavender or the Twins picking this, but I don’t fancy singing all that much, and I hate gossip. And once again, the restrictions are ruddy awful. Nope. That leaves me with the Paladin, Ranger and Fighter builds.” Harry blinked as, at those words, the doors of the classes he had eliminated disappeared, allowing him to more easily compare the builds. “That’s handy.”

 Examining the trio of base builds side by side, Harry decided rather reluctantly to remove the Ranger build from consideration. While he liked a lot of what that build offered, he just couldn’t see the specialization classes as that much of a leg up from the original, not without more information which he couldn’t access. He even chose the Ranger build to see if that would let him access more information, before backing out once more. *Plus, Rangers seem to be more about fighting at range, and if I have to fight in a building or up close suddenly I could run into trouble.*

At this point, Harry was racking his brains for everything he could remember about what other kids had said about this game, and not having much luck. He could remember that you formed parties, but that occasionally you had to fight alone, although how you formed parties and what that meant, beyond the obvious, was something he couldn’t quite bring to mind. So he was thinking long term and also about going it alone if he had to.

After a moment, that made him decide in favor of the Paladin build. The Fighter was interesting, and he wished he could find out more about the Kensai and Wizard Slayer upgrades. The advanced weapon specialization skill was nothing to sneeze at either. But Harry figured he had a fifty/fifty chance of possibly overcoming that kind of thing. And the Lay on hands skill, plus all the anti-undead skills were just too good to pass up. The only thing that would make him back off of it was if he had to choose a specific god to serve right away, and if the background story showed paladins were also racists Like Malfoy and his lot.

 When he clicked on it, Harry learned that he didn’t have to worry about the first problem at least as the voice Harry had begun to think of as the voice of the game within the game, boomed out a bit of backstory like it had earlier for the Ranger build. **“You have spent your years at Candlekeep training your mind, body and soul to battle evil wherever you find it in the land. Your skills and general abilities are such you should be ready to sit your vigil, yet there is no chantry or temple within the walls of Candlekeep to any god who has a paladin order. And, given the fact you would have to find a rare tome that the Keep, the greatest library in the world, does not already possess to get back in, you have put off the choice of which Chivalric god to pledge to. This puts you in the odd position of having many of the Paladin’s low level skills, but none of the specialized God-given abilities all Paladins possess.”**

From there, Harry could choose several starting skill slots in various weapons-craft. This was a list of weapons comprised of various pictures, like two handed swords, halberd, short swords and others, including sword and shield, and crossbow. Beside each was a series of four boxes, then a ‘specialized zone’ besides two-handed sword, shield and sword, and war-hammers.

Harry frowned, thinking about how exactly this would work out in the future. *Will it be a boost to speed and strength when I use a weapon I’m better with, will certain weapons have restrictions not just of class or strength, but affinity with that weapon type?*

 \*BING!\* “A Well-thought moment of Introspection: Thinking deeply about the meaning of your own abilities and how it could affect your future has shown you are growing in knowledge: +2 to wisdom.” The stat box stated.

 This time the status change had an immediate effect Harry could feel. Somehow he now knew that his guess was correct: certain weapons would have skill restrictions, mostly the hammers and greatswords which paladins were famous for wielding. Furthermore, after a certain skill level Harry could learn and use special attacks. “Bloody Wicked that is!” Harry crowed thrusting a well-muscled arm into the air.

 With that in mind, Harry looked closely at the weapons paladins could use. Building on his previous ideas about wanting to be as strategic in his thinking as possible, Harry figured that wielding a single handed weapon would be best, and he was pleased to see that there were no weapons restrictions here.

Weapon and shield style also gave a lot of bonuses against damage both ranged and close combat, although Harry had to wonder once more about how that would work out. *Maybe my body will move on it’s own, or, or I’ll see the attacks coming faster or something? This whole skill thing is bothering me.*

 \*BING!\* “A Well-though moment of Introspection times two: While you might find skills bothersome, you are still thinking them through and how they might play out in the future, showing great foresight: +2 to wisdom.” The stat box stated.

 Again the effect was immediate, and Harry realized he was sort of correct, but not quite. When wielding a sword and shield, his off hand, the shield, would move automatically to block any blow up to the level of his skill that Harry didn’t consciously see coming as well as long range attacks. On the attack, Harry’s strikes would be stronger, faster, but no more skilled per se. That would come with practice and the skill slots spent on that particular weapon.

 With that in mind, and Harry not wanting to have to try to find a specific weapon Harry put three of the six skill points he had into Weapon and Shield, then one in warhammer, then two in longsword, figuring that it would be the weapon most prominent in the game.

 As soon as he was done, that door disappeared, to be replaced by the old corridor again. Once more Harry found his feet moving for him, and he scowled. *If that is how it will feel when my shield moves I don’t know if that’s a good thing or a bad thing.*

When Harry reached the next glass door, it shifted, only this time it became a screen composed of two parts as the Baldur’s Gate game voice boomed out “**Roll your stats**.”

One side was a giant die withseven sides of all things, each side showing both a number and a different color. Above that were four asterisks, implying Harry would have four more to spend wherever he wanted, beyond being able to re-roll his basic stats. On the other side was the status screen fro before, but it showed more information than before, a **lot** more, and Harry read it avidly from top to bottom.

**Name:** Harry Potter.

**Gender**: Male

**Race**: Human

**Class:** Paladin level 5

Strength: (6)

Willpower: (14) +9 + 1

Dexterity: (23)

Constitution: (9) +7

Durability: (10)

Wisdom: (2) + 7

Charisma: (10) +4

Intelligence: (10) +9

Luck: (16) +/- 4

Bloodline Skills:

Potter Luck, Gamer’s mind, Parselmouth, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Background notes**:

Trapped within a game, Harry Potter, the so-called Boy Who Lived, is now facing a life spent in a very strange land due to a mixup of magical proportions. Will he prevail, or will he find out that game over is forever?

 Most of the points he had waiting to be added to his basic stats Harry remembered receiving as he created his new body/character/life (he as uncertain what to call it, and how permanent everything he was feeling was so it could be any or all of those), but the Luck and Charisma additions were new. “And the underline there makes me think that it’ll stay there when I’m past this screen too, and what’s with the plus and or minus thing? Also, my base wisdom was that low!? Ouch, just ouch.”

 Frowning, Harry first out his hand on the numbers in question but got nothing. Then he moved down to the Bloodline Skills, which he had already been interested in. *I suppose the skills I can’t see are things I’ll need to learn about myself as I go rather than already know.*

 “’Gamer’s Mind: You are trapped in a game, but not panicking or screaming for someone to save you, this level of mental control is part of a Gamer’s mind, which will never allow you to panic. Immune to fear effects, but not mind control or other mental ailments and assaults,’” Harry read aloud, frowning. “I guess it is kind of weird that I’m not panicking more than I am and am taking all this in stride.” He shrugged. “Well, I suppose that I can’t do anything about it for now.”

 After that, Harry turned to the next, which was Parselmouth. “’Parselmouth, the ability to speak to snakes. Can be useful when facing poisonous snakes, and can rather make you popular with the girls too’. Wait, what? How can talking to snakes make me popular with girls?”

 Staring at that message for a bit, it was a few seconds before Harry could let that weird note go, turning his attention to Potter Luck. “Potter Luck, is it lucky or unlucky? Regardless, thanks to your family’s blood, whenever chance is involved you can bet it will either go better or far worse than you can imagine. Also brings along a permanent charisma bonus, because Potter’s have always been popular, if you know what I mean.’ Okay, again, not certain where that came from, but I guess given my year in Hogwarts I can see where it’s coming from. Except for that Charisma bonus, but I won’t question it.”

 With those questions answered, Harry turned his attention to the actual stats, reading each description in turn.

Luck turned out to be more important than he expected, though thankfully not so much in battle. Harry had heard kids curse a lot about saving throws and suchlike, but this didn’t seem to be the case here. “I guess there is a limit to how game-like combat can be if your, well, being the actual player instead of just playing the game from the outside.”

Wisdom, Intelligence, Constitution, Strength, Dexterity also showed no surprises. Wisdom and Intelligence combined to be his basic mental acumen, his ability to retain, use and analyze knowledge. The other three were his physical stats, which combined showed how strong, tough and quick he was as well as his physical endurance. “Oy, I knew I was weak for me age before, but come on, I’ve got these massive muscles now!”

Apparently that hadn’t Harryd over just yet, and Harry fought to keep an unmanly pout off his face. These stats, Harry realized, had to be his stats from before he was caught in this game. Just as an experiment, which earned him another intelligence point, Harry tried to use the four stat points he had to add to his largest stat, that of Dexterity and he could feel himself move a bit faster, and stronger. “Hmm… I wonder… I have to think that physical skills can only be taken to a certain degree, after all there is a physical limit to how strong or fast someone can be.”

That line of thought earned him yet another point in wisdom, and this prompted Harry to look at the last few stats. “’Durability, the physical durability of your body minus your armor. Note, as a squishy human, there is marked limit to how durable you can become. That’s why god created armor.’ Funny, really funny wisearse. Still, again nothing I can do about that beyond reroll I guess, and I’m way more concerned about my strength stat. Paladin or no, there’s a limit to what I can do with such a small strength stat.”

 The description of Charisma was surprising. It wasn’t just about how good he looked, charisma effected how others reacted to him, how good he could haggle, how more likely he was to be able to talk other people to his point, how he was able to gather attention or not as he chose. It also mentioned something about being attractive to the other sex ‘or whichever team you batted for’, which Harry barely understood enough of to blush over.

 Willpower was simply immensely interesting and even without the bonus to constitution Harry would have felt the pain he’d gone through was worth it for this. Harry would have thought willpower tied into the mental aspects already covered by Intelligence and Wisdom, but it didn’t. This stat directly effected how protected a person’s mind was to domination, intimidation, demonic and undead auras, as well as direct magical mental assaults of all sorts. “Wicked…”

 With his curiosity satisfied, Harry instantly removed the extra stat points from Dexterity, and put his hand over the large die, rerolling his stat. Instantly however, he cursed the flippant way he did so as his body changed and shifted inside. “GAHH!!”

This wasn’t as painful as it had been earlier, but it still brought back to Harry the fact this was serious. A moment later as he felt the difference in his body, and looked at his new stats wonderingly. Harry quickly noticed the base starting stats was composed of a hundred points, but now how they were distributed had shifted, his body transforming as a result. *I have to assume that’s because of my new character’s age and the fact I’m starting at level five. Regardless, the additional stats don’t seem to matter to the hundred I reroll with.*

Strength: (16)

Willpower: (10) +9 + 1

Dexterity: (16)

Constitution: (12) +7

Durability: (10)

Wisdom: (7) + 7

Charisma: (12) +4

Intelligence: (1) +10

Luck: (16) +/- 4

 “Okay, wow, okay, this, this is real… wow.” Harry muttered, staring from his body up to the screen in front of him, feeling the differences in both the way his body reacted, how solid it felt, and how he had to force himself to concentrate more on what he was trying to do now than he had before.

“\*BING\*” A new screen popped into being to one side. “Master of the Obvious: for spotting something so obvious it really, **really** should have occurred to you before this, you have earned one intelligence point. Pretty soon you’ll be as about as intelligent as a teenager should be instead of a cloistered toddler. +1 to intelligence.”

“OY, just oy!!” Harry groused before shaking his head and ignoring the stat change. Still, it was obvious given how hard he was having to concentrate that this reroll just wouldn’t do. *“I might want to be a Paladin, but that doesn’t mean I don’t want to be able to think as well as I was before. And that luck stat is just wrong.* With that he hit the die again and it rerolled, while his body shifted to match his new stats.

Strength: (19)

Willpower: (10) +9 + 1

Dexterity: (16)

Constitution: (12) +7

Durability: (10)

Wisdom: (9) + 7

Charisma: (10) +4

Intelligence: (6) +11

Luck: (8) +/- 4

With that third reroll Harry was satisfied. With the additional points he’d earned, that was a damn good build. Harry thought about it, then put in two of the extra stat point into luck, the other two into Charisma, figuring that being able to make deals and such would be a good thing in the future. With that, his stats were complete, and he hit the large green ‘is this okay’ button at the bottom of the screen.

Instantly the screen and the corridor disappeared, to be replaced by the skull with glowing eyes set in the circle once more. “**Welcome to Baldur’s Gate, try not to die!”**

“Oh, now even the BG voice is a snarky arse!?” Harry shouted, before darkness took him.

**OOOOOOO**

At the same time that Harry had been creating his character, back in what could be euphemistically be called the real world, things had suddenly and quite abruptly gone awry for one elderly gentleman in a certain Scottish castle.

Albus Dumbledore had been doing paperwork. This in itself was nothing unusual. He was head of the Wizengamot, Chief Warlock of the ICW, and of course Headmaster of Hogwarts. All three jobs created paperwork like nobody’s business, even for magicals. Yet he had long since created a spell to help him with this, sifting through paperwork. The important information that he had to take note of would glow and anything unimportant would sort itself out. After that another spell to write his name or what have you and the work flowed quickly and efficiently.

*Best charm spell I ever developed*, he thought to himself cheerfully as he finished in a day what would take most people at least four or five.

This was the secret to why he could hold as many jobs as he did. Mind you, Albus often wondered if he actually did the job as well as someone else would have. After his long, rather storied career, questioning himself like that was part and parcel of the individual that was Albus Dumbledore. But he always came back to the same point: If he wasn’t the one doing it, who knows what his successor would do with this amount of power? Given how many pureblood people have been able to buy their way out of jail here in the UK, this was no small consideration, nor was it ego per se.

Albus could not control who would get either job here in Britain if he stepped down, and so he simply didn’t. Stepping away from the Chief Warlock position was a possibility, and one he was thinking of hard these days, but even there he had misgivings on a few of the people who might succeed him.

However, what was about to occur took his mind off of all three of those jobs with a suddenness that would have caused any non-magical person who looked as old as Albus did to have a heart attack.

There was a loud popping trailing whistle from one side of the headmaster’s quarters, and Albus looked up with shock as several knickknacks among the bookshelves to one side of the door imploded. He noticed Fawkes leaping away from his perch with a squawk but ignored his familiar for now, his eyes wide behind his glasses.

First to go was the Monitor Stone that he had connected to the Blood Wards around the Dursleys. The simple device simply shattered, the granite of it breaking like so much glass. The next thing that occurred was something tied directly to Harry, Albus having taken the opportunity to do so when Harry was unconscious at the end of the year. This was a much more complex device, consisting of two compass-like devices set into small 360 degree mantles to either side of one another. Currently tied into two large arrows on the two towers furthest away from one another, they would twist this way and that to point in the direction Harry was now. Instead of twirling to point where Harry was now thought, the needles began to melt in place.

“What in the world!?” Albus shouted, leaping out of his chair and over his desk in a display of agility that would’ve caused many a gasp from his students. He quickly moved towards the two knickknacks, whipping out his wand, and casting several spells over them. Then his face paled, and he realized that this wasn’t the two devices finally deciding they were incompatible as he had long worried about.

With that he turned and thrust out his hand to a bird to one side. “Fawkes, come! We need to go and discover what has happened to young Harry!”

A second later in a flash of Phoenix fire, the two of them had appeared in the backyard of the Dursleys. Striding forward, he opened the door into the house, and moved forwards, his wand flashing out instantly. All three of the Dursleys, who had been watching TV, and had turned as he entered, froze. He then magically lifted Petunia into the air, and gestured with his wand, bringing her forward towards him over the sofa. “Where is Harry!?”

“G, Gh, he, he’s up in his room, if he’s not there I don’t know where he could be, or how he got, out the freak!” the horse-faced woman spluttered, trying to regain some measure of control.

“Take me to him right this moment!” he ordered, releasing the woman to thump to the ground, then made some sparks appear in front of her when she didn’t move, cursing and moaning about magical freaks. Warily she led the way up the stairs, looking as if she was afraid he would turn her to ash in an instant.

Albus’ eyes widened as he saw the cat flap on the door, and the amount of locks on it too, the thought honestly occurred to him*. I knew they would be strict with them, and I suspected they would be neglectful, but this level of caging him, that is beyond what I had thought he would face. I knew I should’ve used Legilimency on him when we met in the Inn!*

“Out of the way,” he said, pushing Petunia to one side. A single unlocking spell shattered all of the locks on the door, causing them to fall to the floor of the corridor. He pushed the door open rapidly, and looked inside scowling as he felt the miasma of magics within, all of which centered around a part of the bed, and an odd square thing set before a small kind of typewriter and what looked like a TV screen. “What has happened here!?”

**OOOOOOO**

The black around Harry soon faded as BG voice came back, its words drilling into his head. **“Nestled atop the cliffs that rise like a wall from the Sword Coast, Candlekeep is the largest and most comprehensive repository of knowledge in all Faerun. It is also a fortress of considerable might, one that has always held itself aloof from the goings on of the nations of the Sword Coast around it, and beyond. Life within is regimented, the monastic Order Of Keepers believing the preservation of the knowledge within is their greatest calling. To enter is nigh impossible unless one has access to tomes that those within have not seen yet. All save you and others like you, taken in while young by one of the Keepers as they go about Faerun.**

**The man who took you in as a babe in arms was named Gorion. For the last twenty years you have remained here, under his care and those of the Keepers who look after other foundlings like you, training, learning, preparing for adulthood, with Gorion your father figure, his tales of his wanderings a delight every night, with each one different, each one amazing. That time is soon to end however, as the moment to choose to become a Keeper or leave Candlekeep is coming on your 19th birthday.**

**Yet though that choice should be yours, Gorion has hinted it is not so, and the two of you will soon leave on an adventure. You are prepared for it, having spent almost as much time training in weapons-craft as you have in honing your mind and soul to battle evil as a Paladin, although you have yet to sit your holy vigil on either Helm or Tyr, the gods of Justice and Righteousness. But despite those preparations and indeed Gorion’s own well known magical and physical prowess, you have detected something almost like fear a time or two in his voice. Something has spooked your father, and you feel the walls of Candlekeep no longer protecting you, but rather enclosing you within, for good or ill you cannot say.”**

At the same time those words were going through his head, so too were some images, one after another appearing faster and faster. It wasn’t as if it was an entire life flashing before his eyes. That would’ve taken far too long. No, this was as if Harry was seeing a few highlights, things they could possibly be on a test or something afterwards.

A moment later, the darkness was ended, as someone shook Harry awake. “Wake up Hadrian! Wake up! You have slept over long today.”

Harry blinked up, and saw an elderly gentleman standing over him. He had the build of a man who looked as if he knew his way around a fight, wide shoulders, with a few scars here and there on his lower face and pieces of the neck that Harry could see, but also a pair of glasses perched on his face and an intelligent look to him, a staff waiting against the wall nearby. Above his head blinked a bright green notice box, reading “Name: Gorion. Status: family figure. Level: 28 mage, level 24 bard.

Connecting this man with his new characters background story, Harry blinked, rubbing at his eyes as he thought of a simple line to reply to this man as he got his bearings. “I’m sorry Gorion, for some reason, my sleeping schedule has been all off-kilter these days.”

“Bad dreams then? Well I suppose it’s to be expected Gorion said with a sigh patting Harry on the shoulder. “Yes, dreams like that are to be expected. Still, we’ll talk about them some other time, perhaps once we’re on the road. You know now with spring fully upon us my plan going forward is to leave soon. I fear that Candlekeep is no longer as safe for you, or for me.”

“Yes you’ve mentioned that plan before,” Harry said, remembering the introduction as he smiled slightly at the odd amount of care Gorion’s voice contained. Swinging his legs to one side he stretched, staring at his forearms, chest and legs now. While creating this character he hadn’t really been able to turn his head very well except when looking at the ‘screens’ or whatever they were. Because of that he hadn’t been able to look down at himself, so the muscles on his stomach and legs especially were entirely new to him. “Have you set a date when you want to leave?”

“Looking forward to finding a temple then?” Gorion said cocking an eyebrow at Harry.

Harry paused, thinking about it. He hadn’t been able to discover anything about the gods a Paladin could swear to during the character creation phase, and he didn’t have any idea which would suit him best. Or even what criterion to use. It was the *Lay on Hands*, the idea of being his own, albeit limited, healer which had grabbed his attention. That and all the other undead buffs.

“I don’t know,” he said at last. “I think, I think that the God I should swear my sword to will, it will sort of come to me on the road you know,” he said lamely. It was the best he could think of at the time.

This actually seems to be the proper thing to say though Gorion nodded. “Good thinking. It’s never wise to force that kind of devotion. If you are truly called to the ways of a Paladin, a God will reach out for you and somehow guide your steps to one of his churches. If not, you could always fall back on being just another fighter. Although I am afraid it’s a little too late for you to become a mage.”

Gorion laughed at that, causing Harry to laugh. Gorion’s laugh was somewhat in infectious, deep and warm. And Harry honestly really liked the way Gorion was talking to him. *Is that because of the family relationship, or just because I’m an 18-year-old now rather than a 12-year-old? Whichever, it’s nice not to be treated as a child so much as a young man.*

At that point, Harry noticed that an orange box had suddenly appeared to one side, containing a message. “Optional quest: Before you can continue on the path of a Paladin, you need to decide what God to swear to. And here you stand, in Candlekeep, the world’s greatest library. Will you take this opportunity to research possible deities, or be a lazy ass! Rewards, 300 experience points,+1 to willpower.”

*Okay, so that means there are quests, that’s kind of awesome! So I can level up, change my stats maybe change my skill slots, and people here have designations determining their relationship to me, going by Gorion’s anyway. That I’ll have to research.* Standing up, Harry surreptitiously swiped a finger through the box where the accept button was, and the box disappeared.

“You’ve missed breakfast But you have just enough time to wash up, and shade for member, honestly a Paladin forgetting to shave his face, and with that long hair of yours!”,” Gorion said, smiling at Harry, and it was only now that Harry realized that besides having massive muscles and everything else, he was also tall now! He was able to look Gorion in the eye, and actually had to look down at him by a few inches. *This is going to take some getting used to.*

At his words, Harry blinked, ruffling one of his large hands through his hair. “You have a point there,” he said ruefully. *Maybe I didn’t think the long hair thing all the way through it it’s going to keep getting in my eyes like that.*

“Of course I have a point. I always have a point don’t you know?” Harry laughed at that, but Gorion went on quickly. “As I was saying, you have enough time to bathe and shave, before you have to meet the arms master for training. Although honestly at this point, I doubt the man has much to teach you.”

“There’s always something more to learn,” Harry said quickly, glancing to the side as another orange square appeared showing another Quest popped up. “Tutorial Quest: Although you have trained for much of your life, there is indeed always more to learn. Practice with the keeper of the gates, the master of arms of Candlekeep, to earn some experience points.”

This will quest didn’t have the ‘optional’ label, and there was no way for Harry to refuse. That was interesting*. So, some quests are mandatory.*

“Sound thinking,” Gorion said with a nod. “Oh, and Imoen was looking for you earlier. Something about you skirting your duties in the kitchen last night?”

Harry laughed, while inside he was panicking. *Um, unless, was that the little girl I saw a few times in those images after the introduction*? “Please, it was Imoen’s turn to help the cooks cleanup,” he said, wildly prevaricating. Since Harry actually liked to cook- considering most of the time it made the Dursleys leave him alone- he figured that would carry over. Cleaning up after the Dursleys though was a chore, and he figured his character might try to get out of that kind of thing.

“True,” Gorion said with a nod. “Imoen is much more interested in learning magical cantrips hers, and practicing with Mme. Barca rather than doing her chores. Although I remember a time when you were just as likely to shirk your chores as well.”

Harry shrugged that, not knowing the answer to that one, and Gorion laughed. “Well at any rate, come find me when you’re ready to begin our preparations to leave. We’ll need to buy supplies at that point, and make certain that our weapons are up to snuff. This is a dangerous time on the Sword Coast after all.”

*And if that isn’t a segue into a major quest later on I don’t know what is*, Harry thought to himself as he bade Gorion goodbye for the moment, and turned to look around him. He found himself in a small alcove-like room, with nothing but a slim dresser to one side consisting of only two drawers, on top of which was a few knickknacks, a knife, and a few coins. Harry picked up each thing in turn, seeing an information bar appear in midair over each.

The first told him that the coins were the local monetary denomination, and that he had five gold coins to his name. The dagger read simply as “small bronze dagger, fit to cut your meals or shave with, but you wouldn’t want to try anything more dangerous with it. Durability, two of twenty.” The other knickknacks were a small file, a wooden comb, and a bracelet. Each of these also had a durability rating, which was important to note.

He picked up the bracelet quizzically, looking at the information screen. “Common copper bracelet. Can be sold for money, or given as a gift. Girls like shiny things after all.”

Blinking Harry set it down again, shaking his head. Then he frowned in thought, looking around himself and wondering where he should go to bathe. Then a thought occurred to him. “Map?” he said aloud. At first nothing happened, then when Harry resignedly exited the room a small screen like object appeared in one corner of his eyes, showing a tiny image of the room he had just been in, and the corridor he now was standing in.

“Excellent he muttered to himself, “although obviously I’ll need to update it myself. That wasn’t entirely the case.” As Harry turned, he could look down the hallway in either direction and the map updated as he did.

Harry also saw little information screens in front of each doorway as he looked at them in turn. Looking at each one in turn caused them enlarge to the point where he could read them, adding the information therein to the map. In this manner he found out that he was in the lower dormitories, with each room on this floor being an alcove room like his own. At the far end however, was another information tag that said Communal Bath. Nodding happily, Harry moved in that direction.

Opening the door at the far end, Harry found themselves looking into a simple room with several basins set along the far wall, and flowing water coming in from another area that gently steamed. Above that was a window leading outside with small bars on it, and Harry could hear the crackle of a fire, indicating the water wasn’t naturally warm.

Regardless of that, Harry moved over to a silver bright standing mirror, to look at himself thoughtfully. This was indeed the build he’d made, but actually being in this body was going to take a lot of getting used to. He held up one of his hands, which was at least twice the size of the hand he was normally used here and clenched it, then punched out experimentally. He did this a few times, then squatted down, then stood back up. Then remembering a few exercises he had seen Oliver force Fred and George to do, he dropped to the floor of the bath area and performed 20 quick push-ups before hopping to his feet, not even winded.

*Wicked!* He thought to himself, posing in the mirror. A noise behind him caused him to turn quickly, coming out of his pose look at the doorway, but thankfully it had just been the sound of the wind. Sheepishly, Harry moved over to the heated water, and filled in the nearby bucket, moving over to one of the numerous body -sized basins, filling it with water quickly.

With that done, Harry stripped out of his shirt, taking a moment to look at his muscles again, poking at the six pack he had. *That’s cool! But I wonder, can… if I have this body definition now, this I mean I can use it?* Thinking about that, he nodded. *That makes a lot of sense.*

At that he paused, looking around, and then shrugged. *I suppose the easy time of getting bonus points to intelligence or wisdom is gone then. Well whatever, it gave me enough of a leg up already. Although the fact I had 2 for wisdom back in my original body is just wrong.*

With that, he began to strip off his pants, leather like he had been wearing during the creation process, only to blink and look down at himself. “…I mean, I knew that I was larger down there than I had been before, but what’s with all the hair? Do guys really grow that down there too? Weird.” He experimentally reached down and played with the hair there, and then measured his large hand against his penis, blinking. “Meh, I guess it’s proportionate to the rest of me now.”

Shaking off the thought as unimportant, Harry lifted a leg, then settled into the bath for a moment, sinking in quickly and dunking his head. Pulling back out, he moved his hands up his face, wiping away the water then into his hair, only to pause as he felt something on his face. He quickly patted it, wiping away the water, and then blinked. “Seriously? I do have to shave! I thought Gorion wasn’t being serious about that, or does that mean I can change my appearance? That makes sense I suppose, but how am I supposed to shave?” Harry remembered the dagger back in his room, and sighed. He hadn’t brought it with him and for a moment, he debated getting out and going to get it.

Just then though, the door to the bath house opened, and a young woman entered. She was possibly around the age of a seventh year just like Harry’s new body, with long blonde hair down to her shoulders in bouncy curls something like a Hufflepuff girl he’d seen once, though the color was closer to Lavender’s.

She also had a large chest, which for some reason Harry’s eyes gravitated towards before he could pull them away, and she was dressed in a kind of bar maid outfit or something similar. *Oh right, Middle Ages, not a lot of variety in dress at this point for most people.*

The girl looked at him, and smirked. As she did, Harry noticed an information box above her head. “Name: Cassandra, Occupation: a barmaid at the end of Candlekeep. Status towards you: very friendly.” Harry wondered about why it said occupation instead of class, but that wasn’t the oddest thing. That honor belonged to her status bar, which was pink.

“Oh sorry,” Cassandra said with something in her tone, that made Harry start blushing for some reason. “I didn’t know you were in here Harry. Do you need any… help?” she asked, saying the word in such a way that Harry’s blush became even redder and it sent a tingle down Harry’s spine, although he didn’t know why.

He coughed, looking away, and said “I, well yes,” he said, his voice thankfully not coming out in squeak as he had feared. “I seem to have left my razor in my room.”

The girls lips twitched, and she nodded. “I’ll get it for you. But then all want something from you?”

“And what would that be?” Harry asked warily, still looking away.

She shook her head with a laugh. “Just because your training to be a paladin doesn’t mean you are one yet, you don’t have to look away from me like that you know. Even Paladins can at least look at girls.”

“Yes, well, you’re a little distracting,” Harry said, which was the truth, although he honestly didn’t know why. *I’m looking at her like I’ve seen…*

Blinking, Harry would have slapped himself in the forehead if he was alone as he realized*. Oh my God, I’m older now, I am looking at her like some of the older guys look at Angelina!* Angelina, it was wildly believed, was the hottest of the three Flying Foxes and though only a third year, she had quite a lot of the older boys pining after her. Not that she gave any of them the time of day, being far more interested in flying than anything else.

Harry understood that she was pretty, and understood what pretty was. But before this, that had simply been an abstract sort of understanding. He liked to look at Angelina like someone would like to look at a painting. But looking at Cassandra now, that was causing him all sorts of new and unusual feelings. And below in the water, Harry’s penis was beginning to stir for some reason. *What the heck!?*

“That was nice,” Cassandra enthused. “Heartfelt, and unplanned. Talk like that will get you everywhere! I’ll be right back. But I’ll still want something in return.”

Two information boxes, one a status box and the other a quest box, appeared to the side as Cassandra left. Throbbing red like the information box over Cassandra it read, “Congratulations, you have earned +1 to your relationship with Cassandra the barmaid! Continue to build up your relationship point if you want to pursue more than friendship with Cassandra.”

“Wait, this game will give me points and status updates about my relationships with people around me?! Oh that is so wicked! If I ever get out of here, I have to think of a way to bring that with me! It’d make people so much easier to understand!” Harry enthused.

As Harry clicked out of that one, he read the next, which was another optional quest but this one just confused him. “The birds and the bees: Due to your **appalling** lack of knowledge before becoming the gamer, you should probably look into more things than you previously thought you should here in Candlekeep. Discover what boys and girls do together. Reward: +1000 experience, +1 to charisma, +1 to wisdom. Regular relationships with the opposite sex, (you are interested in girls aren’t you?) become available. Penalties for not accepting include -3 to charisma, -4 to wisdom. You will no longer be able to form a regular relationship with a girl.

“What, what’s more than friendship with a girl?” Harry mused aloud, one hand moving up to touch his scar on his four head thoughtfully. Still, this was an obvious choice, and he clicked accept.

The door opened at that point, and Cassandra returned. She boldly strode across the bathing room towards Harry, who quickly covered himself as best he could. *What the heck!? The girls on the Quidditch team never bathed with the guys! And why is she looking at me as if she wants to eat me?!*

A status screen popped up to one side, but Harry ignored it as Cassandra had reached him now and stood over the basin, staring down into it, and smiling beguilingly down at him. “Here’s your razor,” she said, handing him the knife while leaning over him unnecessarily. Harry blinked but couldn’t look away fast enough to not see down her blouse, to the large ripe…

Below his hand, Harry found his penis slowly stiffening, and he looked away quickly. “Thank you Cassandra, but I need to get shaving,” He said, quickly coming up with an excuse to get Cassandra out of there. “I have a meeting with the Master At arms soon.”

Cassandra laughed. “That’s a pity. I could have given you a whole new definition for the word ‘education’, Harry.” She then shrugged. “Anyway, what I want your help with, is to deliver some wood to the inn. Winthrop threw out his back this morning, and he can’t move the poor man. We’ll need some for the cooking fires.”

“Done,” Harry said with a nod, as another optional quest screen appeared then disappeared as he accepted it. *Okay, so I can also accept verbally if someone is actually giving me the quest rather than the world around me. That’s good to know*.

Then with a final look at Harry from head to toe, Cassandra smiled. “I’ll see you when you drop it off then.” With that she turned, swaying her hips in such a way that Harry could only stare like someone hypnotized by a cobra.

“That was, that was weird!” He looked down at himself, removing his hands to stare at his penis, and scowled. “And so were you! What the heck, you’re not supposed to get all stiff like that. …Are you?”

There was another ding and Harry finally looked up to see that his interaction with Cassandra had accumulated three more status change boxes. The first one was once more the same sort of throbbing red color as the first one about Cassandra. Congratulations, you have earned +1 to your relationship with Cassandra. She is now interested. A step beyond teasing, this relationship entails that the girl with this designation might be interested in you in more than a flirtatious manner, though physical or emotional is unknown at this time.

“That is… okay, I guess?” Harry said with a frown, before turning to the other two status box changes. Thick as a Brick! Because of your appalling lack of knowledge of inter-people relationships, you have lost wisdom points. -2 to wisdom. The next one read the same thing, with only -1 to wisdom.

“Ouch, alright fine! I will go research this birds and bees nonsense first,” Harry groused, then looked down at the razor in his hand. “…But how exactly am I supposed to do this again?”

Harry’s first attempt at shaving himself did not go very well, but once he was finished nicking himself, Harry learned three things. One, his health bar would appear if he was injured, two, there was actual pain in this game, and three, shaving was damn difficult.

He stared at the little screen that it popped up, thinking about the implications of it. The screen said “you have cut yourself shaving. Perhaps next time, you should think about this thing called on mirror. -1 to health.” The red health bar had appeared like one of the other games boxes above his right arm, hovering there rather unobtrusively in comparison to the other boxes. Since Harry still wasn’t certain if other people could see them or would notice him interacting with them this was a good idea. The bar showed 99 out of 100, however as he was watching, it began to slowly fill itself.

That was a good thing to now, although he doubted it would carry over to actual injuries rather than self-inflicted ones like this. *No way am I lucky. Although, it could just be the fact it’s only nicks and scratches…* With that in mind, Harry turned to the wall, his fist flashing out.

 “Crunch! You have hit the wall of castle keep, why did you do that again? -4 to health.”

“Three, really?” Harry groused, wincing and rubbing his wrist and knuckles. “Okay, so pain is real in this game, that’s as an important thing to know in the future.”

Thinking hard, Harry wondered what he should do first then decided that the impact to his wisdom was too great to ignore after talking to Cassandra so went with the plan he’d made after she had left: he went in search of the library. Since this place was called the greatest library in the world, he figured that would be easy. And it was thankfully.

Harry found the library began on the level directly above where he was his room had been. However, finding a series of books to help him about birds and bees, whatever they had to do with girls, was a little more difficult. He couldn’t just out right ask for help. Considering the snark he had been getting from the pop-ups about this topic, he figured this was the sort of thing that a person who was his physical body’s age would probably already know, and he didn’t want to bring more attention to himself than necessary. So he just wandered the halls of the library, which put the library of Hogwarts to shame.

It was **huge**! The interior of this library was at least as long as a Quidditch stadium, the main room maybe as tall as the seating for one and it also sprawled throughout the keep, spreading into wings, small alcoves and little nooks and crannies, all of them lined with books. Wherever there could be were stacks in between the walls varying in size, all of them rising straight up to the ceiling. The books all looked well cared for, put away correctly, their linings almost glowing with good health despite the fact most of them looked older than Harry could possibly guess.

*Hermine would love this place!* He thought to himself with amusement, coming out of one small alcove he’d found almost upon entering the library. *When I’m done with this whole birds and the bees nonsense, I might have to look into just reading for a time here. After all, this is tutorial portion of this game. Until I’m ready to actually leave the keep, will time even matter?* At that thought Harry paused, then clicked his fingers. It looked as if the time of easy intelligence or wisdom bonuses was indeed over and with a sigh, he moved deeper into the library.

However, just because he wasn’t earning more intelligence or wisdom points didn’t mean he wasn’t learning things. Because as he went, he saw other people within the library and he immediately noticed something different about their stats in comparison to the one he had seen over Gorion and Cassandra’s. Gorion’s had been a bright green, Cassandra’s that odd red pulsing color. The people he was seeing around him had yellow notifications, and when he clicked on them, he saw. “Keeper Tassin. No relationship possible.”

He heard them talking, quietly going about their business in the library, so he figured that these people were technically speaking real, it was just that they couldn’t have an impact on him or his life/game. Harry wondered if he should experiment with it. He walked up to one of them and said “Excuse me, but could you point me in the direction of books about the gods?” *After all* Harry reasoned*, I’m supposed to be researching them to aren’t I?*

The man looked at him for a moment from under his cowl, then shook his head wryly. “Nigh on sixteen years you’ve been here and you still don’t know where all the books are? No wonder Gorion is thinking of taking you away. You would never make a good Keeper. The books about God’s are on the 13th shell, all of it, up on the fourth floor, right wing. If you’re looking for specifics, I’m certain you can work that out on your own.”

Harry nodded, and backed away, looking around for any status screens from the conversation and found one directly behind the man*. I wonder if I can set where those things appear*. He moved to that screen, touching it with his hand and moving it to hang up higher in the air, and then moved over to another Keep, asking the same question. When he did, the same status screen popped up in the new position behind the older one. *Good! I’m learning.*

He asked that man the same question, and got something of the same response, but just enough of a difference to make it seem as if this person was in point of fact an individual rather than a cut out cuddy cutting board character. He walked away from the both, then enlarged the screen, reading it slowly. “You have talked to a Neutral civilian: These characters can have little to no direct impact on your game or your life. They are their own people, and should be treated as such. Just because they’re not important to you, does not mean they’re not important to one another. Be wary of how you treat them, and always follow the Golden rule, which as a paladin you should already know.”

Harry chuckled at that then said it aloud. “Treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.” *I wonder if that would have changed if I had chosen another type of class.* With that bit of his interest allayed at the moment, Harry closed both of those windows, then began to move through the library, always keeping in mind the number of the area where the gods could be found. *I wonder if they have children’s books.*

**OOOOOOO**

**OOOOOOO**

“Well, what do you think?” Albus asked, looking over at the other two old men who were standing across from him in Harry’s bedroom. For the moment he ignored the former student who one of them had brought along. Since the young woman’s hair was shifting in a riot of colors as she moved around the room examining things, this was not as easy as it sounded.

The old man who had brought this former student had a wildly moving magical eye, and a stump for a leg. He had been poking and prodding at literally everything in the room with his companion, his body tense and wary. He, like the girl, wore red robes, though the young woman’s was freshly pressed and marked with a yellow shoulder pad. The old man’s robes were drab, aged, dirty and patched.

 He was the one who spoke up first glaring up at Dumbledore. “Well, besides the various evidence of if not outright abuse, then certain neglect, I can’t see any kind of sign of foul play here.” He waited fro Albus to respond to that as the young woman looked in their direction, her whole face flashing red in fury for a moment.

But Albus said nothing, and after a moment the man with the wild eye sighed and went on. “There’s a lot of magical miasma in the air, so much so I can barely see through it at all, but like I said, no sign of foul play or foreign magics that I can detect. What happened here was either item related, a long term enchantment, or…”

“Or…” the old other old man supplied, scratching at his chin thoughtfully as he stared down at the computer that had been by the bed. He had recognized it for a computer but had not spoken up yet, and was interested in hearing his comrade’s opinion before he did.

“Or house-elf related. Their magic is a bugger to spot at the best of times, and whoever used it here took pains to not leave any traces. With that, and the rest of the magic that occurred here, it’s a wonder I’m able to get any hint at all.”

The second old man nodded thoughtfully. “That dovetails with what I have discovered. I am detecting a lot of magic around this computer here, so much so that I’m wondering if Harry somehow discovered an enchanted computer that someone else had created as part of a trap or some-such. I really have no idea how magic would react to a computer, a device made to, in some small fashion, think for itself. At least that is how I understand such things. I do not know enough about them.”

“Whatever it is, it ran on magic, not electricity,” the girl said speaking up for the first time. All three of the others looked at her in surprise, and she shrugged. “Look, I know I’m knew to this whole magical detection business, that’s the reason why I’m with old Mad-Eye there,” she said jerking a thumb towards the old man with the magical eye and the obvious label. “But I know a bit about Muggle technology. That computer should be connected to the wall over there,” she went on, pointing to a wall socket. “It isn’t, and I’d say that means it was running on magic right? And it’s off now.”

“That could well be true yes,” the as yet-introduced third man said with a nod. “I’m getting a lot of gobbledygook here honestly, Albus, Alastor.” He confessed. “There was so many various magics and work on this computer it’s a wonder that anything happened at all. But something did and I’d wager that what happened here was completely accidental, or simply well beyond what anyone could anticipate. There are just too many odd signatures all mixed up together for it to be anything but an accident. A horrible confused accident. Which alas will make it all the harder to figure out what did, in fact, happen.”

“Indeed, Algernon. I had not detected the house elf magic, but I was able to pull out Harry’s signature some Norse too, something well beyond what Harry would be able to perform. I believe you are correct, Harry found a magically enchanted computer and being young and ignorant, attempted to repair and use it. Something happened, and he was teleported elsewhere.” Albus said musingly. “The question then is how to find him and bring him back.

While the young girl mumbled something about the three of them being the A-team for some reason, Algernon shook his head. “There was another signal there, but as an Unspeakable, I’m afraid I can’t share the nature of it with either of you.”

Albus winced at that, knowing the number of magical vows all the Unspeakables operated under. A secret part of the magical government, the Unspeakables operated in shadows and obscurity, their job being to keep certain dangerous magics under wraps, to destroy old magics which were too dark or powerful to allow to continue to exist and making certain that other secrets, some magical, some not, never saw the light of day. Albus had worked with Alergnon Croaker on many jobs before, and new however there were levels of secrecy to his job. “Is this something you need to investigate, or destroy as soon as possible?”

“Destroy,” Croaker replied coldly. “Every example of this kind of magic is supposed to be found and destroyed by my department. I’ve dealt with only one before this in my lifetime but any Unspeakable is Oath bound to destroy it.” His teeth bared slightly. “I can put that off for a time, use the fact it is part of an ongoing missing persons investigation, but I will need to first try to trace Harry’s steps so we can find out where he found this computer. If there was one, there could be others.”

“Agreed. We need to trace Harry’s movements, question those three creatures downstairs,” Mad Eye said authoritatively. “And find out how a house elf is involved in this.”

“So that’s it, we just take the computer and question the locals, nothing else? What are we doing to find where Harry was sent?” the young woman asked looking angry.

“Why do you care Tonks?” Alastor asked. “I’ve told you, investigations like this demand some objectivity. We won’t find anything if we go harrying off.”

The girl with the odd colorful eye blinked, then seems to shrink in on herself. “He, he’s my cousin,” she muttered. “My Grand-mum Dorea married his grandfather.” Inside the young woman

“Regardless, I need to take custody of that computer now. I’ll have it down in my office, you can both come and examine it there, but I need to take command of it at once, my oaths demand it.” Croaker said commandingly. “And I’m sorry to say this Albus, but I need to be more concerned about where that specific bit of magic came from than where Harry is now. You two and young Miss Tonks will have to handle that side of the investigation without me.”

Tsking, Mad-eye nodded as did Albus. “I’d rather be involved on that end of things to meself, but finding Potter alive takes priority.”

“Indeed. I will endeavor to trace the magic of the house elf, perhaps one of the house elves at Hogwarts could help me with that. Alastor, would you and Miss Tonks question the Dursleys for us. I believe Petunia in particular would be of help in this. I understand she spends most of her time at home.” Albus said, pulling out a small vial. It looked like glass, or quartz, and he held it over the computer.

Algernon tensed, but Albus simply waved him off, muttering an incantation and waving his wand in his other hand. There was a faint ping, and the air around the computer slowly changed color to a light coppery color, flowing into the vial. The color seemed to calm Croaker down, though why Tonks couldn’t figure out, watching this avidly.

“There, that gives me enough of a sample. I believe we should meet in Algernon’s office tonight to discuss our findings. Until then.”

With that Albus disappeared, apparating out in the neatest, smoothest apparition Tonks had seen this side of a house elf. *Damn me we do tend to take them for granted, don’t we? House elves are a lot more powerful and versatile than we ever give them credit for.*

Algernon hefted the computer up one piece over the other, stuffing them into a large mokeskin pouch before nodding over at Alastor. “Until then Moody, oh, and you might want to check in with me in a few hours. If I find where this computer came from, well, I doubt you’d want to miss the fireworks.”

Mad-eye cackled at that, and led Tonks out the door. She however paused, staring around the room, her face guilty, before she shook it off and followed her mentor out the door.

**OOOOOOO**

Harry spent the rest of that day in the library, trying to discover more about birds and bees for some reason that eluded him until he actually did so. Luckily for Harry, the greatest library in the known world did indeed, have the some books designed to aid in teaching children. Despite his new body and looks, Harry was after all, mentally speaking still something of a 12-year-old. A mature 12-year-old in many ways, but also one that didn’t really get out much or had anything in the way of adult role models.

Harry finally found some books that were on the topic that he had been told to research in no uncertain terms. It was labeled *Girls, Boys, the Differences Between Them, and Why They Matter*. It came with cutouts, and that was enough to cause Harry some nightmares that night when he retreated to his room, his eyes wide and unseeing, only the skill Gamer’s Mind keeping him from going completely barmy. Or Harry thought of them as nightmares. He woke up with his penis hard, memories of the girl Cassandra in his head and his head so aflame Gorion asked if he was feeling sick.

As Harry had speculated would occur, his next morning started the same exact way, sort of. Gorion came and waking him up with a head on his shoulder, and mentioned the same thing as he had the day before. The wording was different however thanks to Harry’s flaming face, and that was enough to tell Harry that even if he was stuck in a kind of time loop during this tutorial phase, the people within it were still people, not caricatures. Harry had to respect that.

That morning, Harry practiced shaving himself again rather than simply getting into the bath, this time using a small mirror and then headed back to the library, his face as grim as someone heading to the gallows. He still had that hit to his wisdom he had to get over, no matter how embarrassing. The wisdom stat was just too damn important to his overall mental abilities to ignore.

Over the course of the next three loop days as Harry thought of them, Harry figured out exactly what the birds and the bees had to do with girls and boys, what all the mechanics were and everything else he could from that book. The cutouts still gave him issues each night, and Harry was honestly mortified in a lot of ways by them.

But that didn’t stop his body for reacting. Whenever he saw a pretty girl, and there were several here in Candlekeep, his body would react. His eyes would stray where they shouldn’t, and his mind would start to wonder and his body reacted. Controlling that reaction took several more loop days, but eventually, Harry learned enough to at least get back some of the wisdom points he had lost during that brief interaction with Cassandra. He had gone from that book to others about courtship and other things, even reading a romance from cover to cover, but most of it just didn’t make much sense to him.

From there he’d spent a few days trying different ways to greet Cassandra, ranging from smiling at her and joking around, being embarrassed (he’d done this one several times, albeit unintentionally…) and twice going even further. Feeling very daring, indeed feeling very cocky overall thanks to his new body, he had invited her to join him in the bath, and gotten his first kiss for his troubles.

After Cassandra had reluctantly left after that, Harry saw the notification that he had completed the quest. “You have discovered what every little boy entering his manhood should learn, if more from books than from people as is normal. +1000 experience, +3 to your wisdom. Bonus! You have gone beyond reading, both flirting with girls and trying to control yourself around them. Due to your ability to control your wandering eyes, You get +1 to willpower. Due to flirting successfully with the Barmaid, you get +1 to charisma. Don’t get cocky about that last one though, there are reasons why barmaids are known as easy after all.”

Harry groused to himself that the game really was a snarky SOB, but put that to one side for now. The bonus to willpower was nice after all and he guessed the charisma was also nice. “But besides kissing, and I suppose other stuff, being nice, I’m not arguing that they would be, what’s the point about relationships in this game?”

Looking around the castle figuratively, Harry frowned in thought wondering what else he should do. “So long as I’m stuck here in this tutorial I should try my best to better myself in as many ways as possible. It doesn’t seem as if I’ll be forced to leave anytime soon after all, best to use that loophole in the game right?”

With that in mind, Harry asked the nearest Keeper for a paper an ink, having gotten used to the lack of pens and pencils easily thanks to his time at Hogwarts. Indeed, besides his ongoing body issues – Harry would swear a certain part of him had a mind of its own – and his still needing to get used to being unable to slip into the background, Harry had rather gotten used to his time here in this new world. Part of that of course was his Gamer’s Mind skill. But part of it was the fact the people here were nice and Gorion was just great. He and Harry had every meal together and spent that time talking and laughing, with Gorion telling Harry of his adventures and Harry of the books he had read that day or what else he had been up to, bar his flirting and that kind of thing of course.

The only two things he actually hadn’t gotten used to was his hair, and the food. Harry had cut his hair in the mirror at one point, but it had grown back the next loop day, which irritated him. Harry figured he would have to wait until he was out of this tutorial to make any permanent change to himself. But the food was just poor, there was no other way to put it. The bread was decent, if very plain, butter was butter, but there weren’t nearly as much variety or spices, not even as much salt, as Harry was used to at Hogwarts. Even compared to the food he got from the Dursleys it was kind of poor in taste, though it made up for that with amount.

With his paper and quill Harry made a list of things he wanted to research, things he had to know, and things he wanted to do. *Hermione was right, making a list makes things a lot easier to manage. I still don’t think you need to make time on a daily schedule to visit the privy though, I’ll still side with Ron on that one,* Harry thought, with some amusement as he looked down at the list he had compiled.

1. Figure out more about the game, its controls and everything else about it I can. Experiment and see how people react to the Game bits.
2. Figure out the connection between magic from my own world and this one.
3. Continue to build up my knowledge of the world of Tyril.
4. Research the gods I am supposed to swear to, and figure out what that might mean.
5. Create a war chest or something? I don’t think the gold I have will be enough. Build up some weapons too.
6. Built up my skills and stats if at all possible, including my general level.

Looking at his list, Harry was well-satisfied. He even thought that he had gotten the priority right. The game, its controls and the abilities it gave him seemed like they could be very important in the long run. He had already learned that people like Gorion had some of the abilities his Gamer ability gave to him, but not to the degree. Gorion talked about spell levels, learned abilities and levels, but didn’t seem to know about the ability to upgrade his stats consciously, and Harry wasn’t certain that Gorion’s talk about levels were the same thing as his own. He also didn’t have the item box, something Harry had discovered the same loop day he’d found the first book on sex. Gorion wasn’t able to see the screens Harry could either, but Harry wasn’t certain that meant he couldn’t consciously interact with things pertaining to his own levels and skills.

However, Harry had also learned things about his ability to read people’s information. If the person was too high a level in comparison to his own Harry wouldn’t get any information from him, instead the information screen would just be blank save for the name and sometimes the class. There were four people like that in Candlekeep, all four of them senior Keepers, two of them the leader of the keep and his second-in-command. And Harry could see a lot of information about those who had less levels than he did, save for the citizens, who didn’t seem to have much in the way of information.

 Putting the note in his Item Box, Harry stood up and heading deeper into the library, smirking suddenly. *Huh, that could be an interesting experiment too, see if something I put in my Item box remains in there when a loop day restarts.*

With that the first time on his list in mind, Harry wandered in the library, using trying to figure out books that would help him in the long run. He found several, which fell into two categories. One was lore-based, books that taught him about the world in general, history and stuff like that, taking care of number three on his list. Through this he learned a lot about the geography of the world, the Sword Coast, Candlekeep’s neighbors, a general overview of the history of the area and the gods in general. He even learned about the Time of Troubles and how it began, and the fact it had ended while his new body must have been a toddler.

Those were interesting, but Harry actually had to physically read through, which made them very different from the other types of books he found and time consuming. Harry spent half the day with them, the other half doing other research or small tutorial quests. Those quests stopped giving him any experience quickly, but they helped in other ways.

One way he spent this time was to train with the Master of Arms, and here he learned possibly the most important things he ever learned during this loop time. First, combat was very hard, and second, it wasn’t anything he had thought it would be like.

“So Gorion says he thinks I’ve got naught more to teach you lad,” The Master of Arms, a man named Jondalar said, tossing a staff over to Harry. “Well, let’s see about that aye. Have at you!”

Harry caught the staff and fumbled with it for a second but was still able to get the staff between him and his attacker. He took a step back then was forced to defend himself again and again. His arms didn’t move on their own, as his legs had during the character creation process, but Harry was somehow able to see how Jondalar was attacking, and could then block him more easily. This was a major aid, but there didn’t seem to be anything game-related for a time, and Harry took two hard hits with the staff, causing im to grunt in pain. No stranger to pain in his old life, these hits still hurt like blazes.

Then Jondalar stepped back, signaling the end of the bout. “Hah, well your base reflexes and strength are good enough, now let’s switch to sword and shield and see what happens aye?”

Harry followed the man over to a weapon’s rack and took both a shield and a sword down, hefting effortlessly, something that still, after more than a month in this world, still surprised him. Both were practice weapons with low durability and high weight, but he could still use them easily. He turned and blocked the next attack Jondalar launched at him, even as he read off a status box above the fight.

“You have equipped a shield and weapon Combo. Since you have skill points in this ability, you will see a buff to your defense and overall speed while you have a shield and weapon equipped.” Behind that was another one. “You have equipped a sword. Since you have skill points spent on this weapon, you will see a buff to your offensive abilities while wielding it. Find magical weapons or armor to add more to your speed and striking power.”

To Harry, it seemed as if Jondalar was now moving in slow motion, and he almost negligently blocked the man’s next blow. He dodged backwards from a slash that snaked in over his shield, then somehow knew he should bash forward with the shield. This caught Jondalar in the chest, forcing him backward with a grunt of displaced air. Harry’s sword then flashed out before the other man could recovered and smashed into the older man’s chest sending him sprawling. He rolled on the ground and came back in, but it was obvious to Harry now that the skill slots were hugely important, helping him by giving him instincts he wouldn’t otherwise have as well as adding to his base strength and speed when

Then he discovered something else as he raised the blade and went on the attack once more. A red mark of some kind appeared in his vision and Harry instinctively aimed for it, where it lay on the side of

A small screen popped up then “Follow the bouncing red dot! Thanks to your two skill points with a sword when engaged in combat and using a sword you can see an aiming point and aim for it. Hitting that point will allow you to land a critical hit. Warning, your chance to hit is based on your dexterity, familiarity with your weapon, luck and of course your enemy. Remember, the enemy always gets a vote too!”

Harry attempted to hit that point but found his sword blocked. Moving his shield instinctively Harry stepped back and blocked Jondalar’s riposte, and the two continued. Harry would then come back to train like this every third loop day. He didn’t gain any experience for it beyond the first day, but the training with his new body and abilities was invaluable.

But even with what he learned from Jondalar and the other two mini-quests that taught him about combat if he hat to categorize it, that information took third place to Harry’s personal investigations and what Harry found out via the second type of book: Information Books. When Harry picked the first one of these he found up, a bright green box appeared in his line of vision over it.

He dropped the book in surprise not having seen that occur before, catching it right before could it hit the ground. *Seeker reflexes, gotta like them*! Holding the book up again, he looked at the title, reading it aloud. “Relationships and you: forming parties, forming romantic entanglements, friendships, and how they impact your abilities.”

“You have found an information book!” The information slot said. “To read, simply press accept. A certain amount of time will pass, and the information will now be available to you simply inputting itself into your brain. Note, there are six information books in all in this tutorial section. Can you find them all? Bonus 400 experience points.”

Harry grinned at that, and hit accept. The book burst into flame and Harry stared around in horror, anticipating literally everyone else in the keep attacking him for destroying one of their precious books. But nothing happened, and he breathed a sigh of relief. *Huh, I guess those kidns of books only appear for me then?*

Setting that to one side, Harry closed his eyes, and suddenly he just knew things. He knew about the levels of relationships, as well as the types. And how they tied into his intelligence and wisdom. Relationships directly impacted how people interacted with you. If you were friends with a merchant for example they would give you better deals. If you were friends with another adventurer like Gorion, you could invite them to form parties. The higher the friendship level, the better you worked together, up to and including creating group tactics, team attacks, even magically aided attacks.

All of that was interesting, but what surprised Harry the most was that forming relationships with women could also give permanent benefits or penalties. Some of them were kind of self-explanatory. The book told Harry that he would earning a slight bonus to charisma and wisdom the first time he formed a relationship with a woman. If he formed a purely physical relationship, which was what Cassandra had been hinting at, he would get a bonus point to Constitution.

But the book hinted at more: hidden abilities, skills, and bonuses to his basic stats than that if you had a relationship with another adventurer. It also warned about negative effects if such a thing occurred and the relationship failed for whatever reason. That was good, that could be really good. Harry was very pleased with his new knowledge, and what it meant in the long term.

 “So I should look for friendships at the very least, and even romantic stuff can give me bonuses both in the long and short term. Weird, but certainly helpful. Still, I’m not happy about the moral side of things there. Although, I suppose if we both go into the relationship knowing that we aren’t interested in more it would be fine, right?” Harry mused, shaking his head as he tried and succeeded in stopping his body from reacting at the memory of her kiss or the view down her dress she’d given him.

It had to be said that Harry dismissed the idea of taking a loop-day to create a relationship with someone else, like one of the young Chanters who served the keep or the visiting mage Phyldia, who he had met on a small side-quest. There were a few chanters who were the light pink of ‘interested in you*’* and Phyldia reached that point once when he took her side quest, although Harry had no idea what he’d done to get that reaction.

After all, he could enter the relationship, get the stat bonuses, and then the next day not be committed to anything since he was the only one who remembered anything after a loop day ended. But that would be wrong, toying with someone’s feelings like that, even if they would never remember it.

The next three books were not nearly as helpful They went over information he had already figured out for himself during the current character creation process; what restrictions were, weapon combos, and suchlike, the Item box, and more along those lines, although they did mention that Harry was the only person who could see most of the information he did. The next one he found though was very helpful indeed. It gave him the information to be able to change some of what the game called the ‘interaction grid’. This meant how he saw the map, what information was shown, how to control where the information boxes showed up by type, how to create a journal that he could access mentally, how to create what was called a quick slot, which was extremely helpful for his day to day movement about Candlekeep.

The last however was even more helpful. It was labeled “*Magic in the world of Faerun.*”

When Harry gleefully clicked on it, the book burst into flame, causing him to once more look around quickly. AN instant later he stopped worrying about death by lynch mob, because now Harry knew how magic worked in this world.

Mages started in something like the same way as wizards did back in his own world. They would learn spells that other people had created, writing them down in spell books and memorizing their words using words, gesture and a wand or staff to create the effect. Magic in this world were also much more versatile as it was for only the best wizards back home, allowing some wizards to create their own spells or small cantrips to create changes to the local environment. The one area though where Harry’s world was better than this one was in transfiguration and conjuration. Here both of those were incredibly difficult magical schools to learn and power intensive to boot. Back home, that was certainly not the case.

Eventually as they grew in power and skill, the only really limitation was how many spells per day they could wield, gestures and words falling by the wayside followed then by foci. But that limitation was a hard line dependent on level, and they always, **always** had to write them down in their book. They could eventually disdained a foci, though many staffs or other items existed that could help a wizard with spellcasting in various ways. A wizard could even learn how to create his own staff and add magic to it as he wished, including spells set to automatically activate under certain conditions.

All spells had a duration time, whereas powerful enchantments did not. Enchantments were the work of extremely powerful mages working alone or in groups. They could imbued into items to create long term effects such as adding to a weapon’s hitting power or durability, or imbued into an area to create a bubble of influence or some such.

It was very interesting, but none of it told Harry the one thing he wants to know above all else at this point. How the spells from his own world carried over into this one. But it did tell him to things he needed to know to start: a mage needed a focus to start, and apparently needed to write down the spells.

“All right,” he said to himself, “it’s time for some more experimentation.”

With that, Harry observed the people around him, seeing which of the keepers were mages, and how they treated their staffs. Eventually, he found one, an elderly woman of Phyldia’s acquaintance who was very forgetful about where she placed her staff. Once he spotted her leaving it in one of the alcoves, he snatched it up and hid it in his room until after the evening meal, which was a time he knew the dorms were largely empty and no one was looking for him.

Staff in hand, Harry returned to his own room, and began to go through the gestures of one of the few spells that he had memorized beyond all others: Reparo. Using his body’s strength, he bent a coin out of shape, nearly in half in fact, then pointed the staff at it, and intoned “Reparo!”

There was a moment of nothing, and then a flare of yellow light from the staff. Harry felt drained and in pain for some reason, but the coin was once more pristine.

A instant later as he was still contemplating this latest development, a massive notification square appeared in front of him. “Congratulations, you have cheated like a bitch! Because of your unique otherworldly status as a wizard where you came from, you have discovered the ability to use the spells from your own world in this one. Don’t get cocky though, because with each spell cast, your lifepoints will takes a hit! New status added, Mage of the Blood.”

Harry frowned once more wondering about the level of lip the game occasionally gave him, but decided to leave it to be for the moment. He opened his status board, and looked at it closely, clicking on the new addition noticing that the two that had been blocked out were still there. This was an entirely new ability blood-based ability. Harry clicked on it and saw the information within.

**Mage of the Blood**: Due to special circumstances you have discovered you can use the spells of your original world here in the game. However, this comes at a cost to not only your mana, but your very life.

Restrictions: you can no longer dual-class as a mage. Spells from your old world can only be used a limited number of time per day, the number of times to be determined by your level. The number of different spells you can retain per day is also dependent on your level.

“Wicked!” However, Harry knew that this was of limited utility. After all, he didn’t know that many spells, and he doubted anyone in this world would be very affected by, say a tickling charm. Although the immobilization spell was one that he definitely could see being of use, just like the Stupefy spell.

Harry didn’t need to write the spells into a spell book, but there was a certain definite limit to how many use per day. Like with his quick slots, Harry basically hung the spells to one side of his mind and then could use them a certain amount of times before they disappeared from his mind. At this point he could use a spell three times but could only retain two different spells in his head.

And like the warning had told them, they definitely hit his health. The stupefy spell, which Harry wasn’t as familiar with, took thirty health points away. The Reparo spell only five. Still the implications were so huge that Harry felt the impact to his health was worth it. It wasn’t something he was going to want to overuse though.

After several weeks of loop-days, Harry finally decided he was done with the library. He could stay there forever of course, reading different books, but he had memorized the geography of the region, a lot of the history, and read through several small time skill books, such as how to set a fire, how to hunt, and set up a tent, things that would no doubt be useful once he was satisfied and moved beyond the tutorial phase.

He had even studied up on the gods which had paladin orders, Ilmater, Tyr, Torm, Helm and Lathander. None of them leaped out as being someone he would swear to serve however. Torm was possibly the closest to his ideal. However Lathander also interested him as did Ilmater. Tyr seemed to be too distant and unemotional a deity for him, and Helm, well unthinking obedience wasn’t something Harry ever wanted to be associated with. Harry had also learned that as a paladin he couldn’t learn how to lock picks. He also couldn’t learn how to intimidate, it was apparently beneath a paladin which was kind of odd to Harry, but he wasn’t going to complain given he had experimented with Lay on Hands, and it worked even without Harry swearing himself to a specific deity.

With a newfound desire to see if he could up his level or stats, Harry took to moving around the keep even more than he already had been, taking a series of small quests, both from Gorion and from others. ,

It was an intriguing time, though none of the quests he found added to his stats. All of them did give him experience, but not enough to level up. And Harry discovered that every quest only gave him experience the first time he did it.

That didn’t stop Harry from continually finding Phyldia’s book for her, because she kept on giving him a jewel for it, which was there the next day, unlike any money earned. That rather bothered Harry, but he supposed his money pouch was a part of this world, whereas his item box was it’s own separate, and very small, dimension.

He ended up with eighty jewels separated into eight slots in his item box, having just spent those days to do that and actually get to know the older woman who became rather interested in him. He was even able to raise their relationship level to flirtatious, earning a +1 to his charisma, although only the first time alas.

At the other end of the relationship spectrum was, oddly enough, the odd woman named Imoen. She was a short girl, maybe only five feet two if that, with long brown hair to her shoulders, clean but not well cared for beyond that, a winsome smile and ready wit, at home in either leathers or the cloak everyone in the Keep habitually wore day to day. Her class was a thief, and she loved it.

But the reason why she was at the opposite end of the relationship spectrum from Phyldia was Harry couldn’t impact their relationship at all. The only time he could find her even for a few minutes was if he decided to forgo shaving and headed out to get some food in the morning from the inn instead of waiting for the refectory to serve lunch. There she was running out on her own errand, and, after only a few minutes of back and forth banter, she would rush off.

He learned from this that she was a bit of a thief in truth not just in class: she enjoyed picking locks, setting traps, and pickpocketing for fun. there was never anything malicious about what she did, it was simply a way to challenge herself. She liked pranks, dirty jokes, and was insanely jealous of Harry leaving the keep. She wanted to go, but had been refused permission thanks to her own step-mother, Mme. Barca, a senior Keeper, saying she wasn’t ready for it yet despite being only a year younger than Harry in his new body. After two weeks of trying to interact with her longer or even find her after that, Harry gave up, deciding this had to be part of the game somehow.

 Eventually, Harry got to the point where he felt he had plumbed the depths of Candlekeep the tutorial. It was time to move on and see what else the world had to offer. However, something was about to occur that would change that opinion.

**OOOOOOO**

 Tonks was angry though she would be hard pressed to decide whether or not she was more furious at herself or the world around her. The talk she had just stomped away from with her mother had not helped matters. “’Well, if Harry wasn’t going to approach you, then perhaps, you should have tried to approach him’ my ass! I was a Hufflepuff, he was a Gryffindor, I was a seventh year, he was a little firstie, how the heck was I supposed to meet him outside of mealtimes, and crossing tables at mealtimes was practically forbidden! Stupid house rivalries, stupid Snape, jumping down everyone’s throats, stupid teachers with their bloody mixed messages,” Tonks snarled as she stomped down the street from her parent’s house.

The fact of the matter was, Tonks was feeling guilty about the fact that she had never approached Harry, despite the fact that they were family. She really wasn’t happy about that, but seventh year at Hogwarts was just so dang busy! She had her prefect duties, she had her training to get up to snuff before joining the Auror corps, and she had her regular classes. She just didn’t have any free time, that was why she had never gotten back together with anyone after she and Charlie mostly broke up the year before.

At the same time, that was all an excuse. She hadn’t wanted to approach Harry, she hadn’t really known how to relate to. Walking up to him and saying “Hi, my name is Tonks, never ask about my first name, did you know that I used to change your diapers” would probably not have worked, given how shy and insular the kid had seemed to be at the time. And to be blunt, she hadn’t really thought much about him at all other than that first day when she saw him at the welcoming feast. Call it the insular mindset of a teenager, but she hadn’t.

Now the kid was gone, and there seemed to be little to know way to find him. “Not that I’m involved with the search much, if at all. Muggle expert my tight, taut arse!” she groused as she found an empty alleyway. Making certain there was no one around, she then apparated into her apartment off Diagon Alley. “If I’m such an expert why don’t they bloody actually ask me anything!?”

Tonks knew she really didn’t have anything to add to the A-team for the elderly, they had the knowledge, the power and the resources, all she had was imagination and some more knowledge about computers, which they seemed to think wasn’t enough. Not that they’re having much like either.

The Unspeakable Croaker had somehow found out where Harry had found the computer and had gone on the warpath in that direction. Borgin, despite having obliviated himself of the sale, was now in jail, and Malfoy was also in jail being questioned since Borgin hadn’t made himself forget who had sold him the item Croaker was so concerned about.

Minister Fudge had tried to stop the investigation, tried to get Malfoy freed. But Croaker was an Unspeakable, and their laws were older than the Ministry. Fudge could dismiss one of them for cause, but only if the other Unspeakables agreed. And getting in the way of their investigations was a worth a very quick ticket to a Veritaserum interrogation. After having this explained to him in very small words, Fudge had, very reluctantly and yet oh so satisfyingly (Tonks and Moody had both been there when Albus and Algernon had laid down the law) been forced to back off.

Mad Eye was now helping on that end, having already figured out Harry’s movements prior to disappearing. But while they’d figured out what Harry had done, they hadn’t figured out where he might have gone, and there was nothing hinting at that.

The headmaster’s attempts to find the house elf involved had proven fruitless. He was now trying to work out what could have happened if the Soul Trap didn’t activate appropriately thanks to all the other magic in action, and the muggle computer itself. He wasn’t having much luck, and worse, he had to prepare for the inevitable fallout when school began and Harry didn’t show up. Even Mad Eye was kind of worried about the fallout from that, but they had Malfoy and anyone else they could smear with it ready to take the fallout. Yet that wasn’t getting them any closer to finding Harry.

It all came back to the computer, Tonks groused. Something about it, the thing’s programming or the house elf’s magic has somehow sent Harry somewhere. With Croaker unable to tell anyone about the Soul Trap thanks to his Oaths, the idea Harry had been teleported somewhere was the most viable occurrence anyone could think of. But only Tonks was thinking that maybe the computer itself held the kid to finding him. But the others were blinded by their own gray hairs, and wouldn’t listen to her.

Stalking around her apartment Tonks worked herself into a frothing anger at that, then abruptly turned and stalked out of her house, making her way to the ministry building. There she made her way to Croaker’s office. There she didn’t find the man himself, he was with Moody right now going over the plunder of the Malfoy manor raid.

This, to her mind, was part of the problem. Only Albus was really trying to find Harry any longer. The other two had let their interests in getting rid of more Dark objects and wizards out of circulation blind them to the fact Harry might be out there somewhere, needing rescue. *If this doesn’t work, no harm done, if it does, the worst that can happen would be that I join Harry wherever he is.*

Determinedly, Tonks moved over to the computer sitting down in front of it. Reaching forward she turned it on. Beyond the noise and the weird light nothing seemed off to her. The operating system powered up, and nothing more happened. With a shrug and a muttered “Bloody hell, don’t know what everyone was afraid of,” she began to use the mouse to look around. She discovered there wasn’t much on the computer, only the regular Windows stuff, and a few games. *Could the games have been affected magically but not the rest?*

 With nothing more to go on since her first thought of just powering up the computer and something happening hadn’t worked, she examined the games critically. “Now if I were Harry Potter, which game would I want ta play?”

After a moment she clicked on the Baldur’s Gate icon, and finally something happened. The screen flashed white, the computer went blort, and Tonks disappeared.

**“Warning, this is only a single player game, you cannot play it at the same time! Fitting you into a contextual template, please wait.”**

“Whut?” Tonks muttered, staring around at absolute blackness. “Whut the bloody hell is going on here?”

**OOOOOOO**

This time when Gorion mentioned going to bathe he shook his head. “I think I’ll go exercise the Master of Arms first. No reason to bathe and then go sweat again is there?” Harry knew from experience that training with the man would lead into the series of quests which would let him and Gorion prepare to leave the Keep that afternoon. He had never completed those quests yet, but he was ready to move on now.

“Spoken like a true boy, whatever your height,” Gorion said with a laugh, clapping Harry on the shoulder.

 Harry smiled back, having come to greatly enjoy his time with Gorion. The two of them would meet in the morning like this then later have lunch together. Harry could then choose to spend the evening in the library, reading side-by-side with Gorion asking Gorion questions about his adventures out in the world. In this manner, and thanks to the amount of time Harry had spent here in the tutorial, Gorion had become what the game had called him, the closest thing to a father figure or at least a male role model that Harry had. It wasn’t very close admittedly, but it was the best Harry had ever had.

“I’ll tell him to expect you then,” Gorion said with a smile, “and I hope that you will be ready to leave this afternoon. I’d like us to leave if we can today.”

 Nodding at that, Harry got up and exited the room, avoiding the Cassandra encounter for the first time in several days. Of course, this way also took him outside in the keep’s training ground at the same time that Imoen was exiting the inn. He smiled and waved at her when something odd happened.

 Everything sort of shimmered for a second, like the world had paused or, or maybe skipped like a record hitting a scratch. Harry stared around him but no one else seemed to have noticed and he frowned, wondering if it had been his imagination. And then Imoen stumbled, and would have fallen if Harry hadn’t caught her. “Imoen, are you okay?”

 “Ergh, take me back home Daddy, that twirl and hurl’s livin’ up to it’s name…” Imoen groaned. “What the bloody buggering shite was that all about? and why does me chest feel so much smaller?” she looked up at Harry’s face and blinked. “And who’re you supposed ta be scruffy?”

This caused Harry to stare at Imoen in shock, almost dropping her, his shock growing deeper as her hair started to change into a light pink color. “What the heck…”

End Chapter

So there you have it. the character creation aspect sort of blindsided me by how long it took, but I think in general I am happy about how this all worked out. I think the beginning, the reasoning behind how the computer worked the way it did, could be better - Borgin’s part in it seems too pat- but still, I think it worked out very well. And I’m happy with how the rest of the chapter worked out, although I wanted to put in some more at the end. But y’know, time constrants. Anyway, hope you all enjoyed it too, and as always tell me your thoughts.