

I am going to wizard college.

I mean, I might be. I might also have just had some kind of LSD flashback and am actually dying in a puddle of my own drool on the floor of a Plaid Pantry sometime just after midnight. This would be remarkable only in that I've never actually gotten to try LSD, only less seventies flavored hallucinogens, that I do not *think* cause weird months-later-aftershocks?

Look, if I'm dying in a drug induced coma, then I don't really feel like it's my job to give a shit anymore. If I'm not, then I'm going to wizard college. And while one of those things has been a secret childhood want for as long as I've been literate, the other one is dying in a drug induced coma. Though as a great philosopher and shitty partner once said, you can't always get what you want, but if you try some time, you might find, you get what you need.

I don't really know where I was going with the Beatles line. I mean, maybe I'm going to wizard college. Maybe that's what I need.

I'm sweeping the floor of a twenty four seven convenience store, throwing shredded bags of chips in the trash in the wake of the wizard's passing, and remembering that no effort I ever make will cause these floors to be clean. In four hours, I will go home to a shitty apartment I grudgingly share with two other people who don't like me, so I can sleep, then get up and do it all over again.

Wizard school isn't just what I need, it's... I dunno, what's the term for when literally any change, no matter how terrifying, looks like a good one? Like, that thing that asshole end-of-days preppers have, where they're actually totally looking forward to everyone dying off in a zombie apocalypse. That thing where, as the days mount up, and the idea that your life has value recedes farther and farther into the distance, as you feel yourself being ground away into nothing, and your problems only get harder to solve, you start to come to the realization that it doesn't matter what changes, so long as *anything* changes.

This is why alcohol is so popular in the US. I don't drink, though. I just get high and watch nature documentaries and cute animal compilations on youtube.

I can't stop my hands from shaking. Holy fuck, that was real. That happened. I've been invited to wizard college. By... I mean, by an asshole, if we're being honest. What kind of clownfucker only gives a girl two minutes to make a life changing decision like that? You'd think being able to teleport would make people more chill, not less.

No, wait, that's bullshit and I know it. The history of scheduling and speed of business has only ever accelerated when we start building faster cars or boats that don't sink. I've taken enough elective there hundred level history classes to know this much.

I sit behind the counter of a white-lit snack food hell, pretending not to notice the kid stealing energy drinks, trying to figure out what I'm going to do.

I mean, I'm going to wizard college. I don't think that's in question, if we're being honest. If it's real - and why the hell would it not be? - then I'm going. I've already said yes. The hard part, making the decision, is done. Forced out of me in a moment of panic, but it's over. And now I have to decide... uh...

Well it's not like I've got a fucking course guide. So I guess most of what I need to decide is what to do with my last week here. Oh Christ, they have on site dorms, and I bet money they smell better than the entire neighborhood I live in. I bet they smell like magic, and not the shitty cheap human knock off magic-flavored Febreze scent.

What does someone bring to wizard college?

I have a two hundred pound weight limit.

Wait, does that include me?

I ignore the girl in too-baggy clothes who came in and wants to buy beer without an ID. She is screaming at me, because I won't sell her beer without an ID. I don't care. I've almost completely checked out of this day. I'm thinking about wizards.

She steals the beer. I pretend to call the cops on my cell phone so the cameras constantly pointed at my counter will at least show the boss that I did something.

Then I realize I don't need to do this anymore. Hopefully ever again. Though... I mean, fuck it, I bet I could find a way to squander a degree in sorcery. That sounds like a thing I'd be good at.

I put my phone away, flip off the camera, and go back to thinking about luggage. Until I am actually fired, I'm getting paid for this, and I'm gonna take my last paycheck and turn it into...

Here's that mental roadblock again. What, exactly, am I supposed to take to wizard college?

I'm not clear on if Magus VonAsshole was clear on this or not, but there isn't, like, a shop around here that I can buy a wand at? I live in a crumbling suburb, not a wizard... wizard city? Magopolis? Magiopolis, I guess, if we're going off of that linguistic root, but also I don't live in one, and there *isn't a wizard supply store* anywhere around here.

Christ, this situation is making me think like I actually have a degree again. I must be stressed.

Okay. So, I weigh about one seventy. That means I have either two hundred pounds, or thirty pounds. So I need to make one small pile, and one larger pile, and we'll adapt when my ride gets here.

Work continues. Work ends. I leave the building having done the bare minimum, and with three voice mails from my boss that I haven't listened to. I'm probably fired. I can't care. It's four in the morning and I feel... light. I feel, for the first time in almost a decade, kind of free. Like I can do anything.

Well, anything but take a deep breath, or walk home in peace. It smells like shitty car exhaust and acrid cigarette smoke, and it sounds like shitty smokers revving the engines of their shitty cars the whole way home. So I'm not exactly doing *great*. But it's starting to really sink in, in a way that twists my stomach, and leaves me a little dizzy.

I don't have to keep doing this anymore.

Now, if I really want to commit to this, I could just overdraw my bank account and order a fuckload of useful stuff off Amazon. Destroying the planet and slowly plunging humanity toward a crisis of both environment and society is *bad*, yes, but free two day shipping is hard to argue with when you've got a finite time to prepare for college.

Home is a three bedroom apartment shared by five people. It's... fine. No soundproofing, flimsy thin carpet, a tiny kitchen, and no AC which has become more of a problem as summers have started hitting 110f with regularity around here. But it's cheap enough, especially with five people, that I can put a lot of my paychecks into paying down medical debts and student loans, and still have enough left over to get the *good* ramen.

I share a bedroom with my ex, because we both realize we made poor choices, and aren't holding that against each other. We're still pretty good friends. Like, it's not like we broke up because I started transitioning or anything that would make me actually hate the guy. We just didn't know what we were doing, so we backed off. And still hang out and play video games when we're at home. And sleep in the same bed. And fuck in the same bed. Sometimes each other.

Okay, maybe we still don't know what we're doing.

The tiny kitchen is currently occupied by a mountain of dishes, and I feel a spike of dull anger at it. One of our other roommates, Lindsey, has literally one job here. And it is to do the dishes. I get it, dishes aren't fun, but like...

The weird feeling comes back. The feeling of bonds snapping, ties cutting. I do not, if this is real, have to keep living with this. Things are going to change. And it's scary, but also, no more dishes that get left until someone gets fed up and scowls their way through half-assedly cleaning the kitchen.

My other roommate, Nathan, is on the tiny enclosed concrete rectangle that is our back patio, smoking my weed. I briefly consider murder, before deciding I'm too tired, and have other things to get to.

Also... man, I dunno, for all that I constantly act like my personal motto is 'do crimes', I'm really bad at actually getting to the doing part of the criminal endeavors.

The apartment smells like mildew and cat piss. My shared room smells slightly better, but I'm not gonna lie and say that I pour my heart into keeping the attached bathroom cleaned. My luggage smells dramatically worse, because one of my roommate's cats has pissed in it.

I get that roller coaster of emotion in my chest again as I go from dull and exhausted anger, to the reminder that I am a creature in the process of liberation. It's not worth making a big deal out of this, I guess. And it's not like confrontation is actually going to push anyone I live with to get better, anyway.

The suitcase that's exactly large enough to still count as a carry-on for a flight gets lobbed off our balcony and against the side of the dumpster in the parking lot. Nathan gives me a worried look, possibly wondering if he's next, but all I'm interested in now is washing my hands.

A lot.

And then, I'm interested in assembling what I want to take.

You know what's phenomenally depressing? Taking stock of your worldly possessions and realizing that you barely have enough stuff to make packing for a two day vacation a challenge of choice, much less packing to go on a potentially years long journey to a secret wizard... castle?

Wizard VonDickhead said it was an acadamy, but that doesn't preclude a castle, does it? I didn't actually get a chance to ask. I didn't get a chance to ask a *lot* of questions. I have so many questions, and instead of answers, I have to basically relearn how to be excited for something over the next week and change.

Where on Earth do you hide a wizard school? Is it in the tropics? I bet it's in the tropics. I should pack shorts. Aaaaand all my shorts are over five years old and full of holes, right. I forgot about this. I stopped buying shorts because I hated people seeing my legs.

Other option; it's in the Alps somewhere, and I should dress warm. I already own all the scarves I'll need. And they're all black, too, which I'm sure will make a good impression in terms of getting people to think I'm a very comfortable witch.

My absolutely-still-an-ex comes home while I'm in the middle of turning out my dresser onto the bed, and sorting through clothes I should have gotten rid of years ago. "You... uh... need some help?" Horn asks. His name is Horn, because he hated his legal name, and so just picked something else to go by. He still gets shitty jokes from people he meets, but he says at least the jokes are ones he invited, not ones his parents saddled him with without asking.

"I'm good." I reply, dumping an overloaded armful of laundry into the pile. At least these clothes I know I actually wear sometimes. God damn, are literally all of my pants black? Did I just go into a fugue state and forget to buy anything with color for a half decade? "Thanks though."

"Sure." He shrugs and presses past me to get through the small gap in our room between the bed and the far wall so he can get to his desk. The brief contact is an electric reminder of the fact that I am starved for actual human contact, and I hate it. I focus on pants. "So, what're you doing, anyway?" He asks.

"I... uh..." I mean, it sounds stupid, but whatever, right? "I got a scholarship to wizard college, I guess." I say. "Like, actually. I leave in ten days. Oh shit, rent. I didn't think about rent! I'll... I dunno, empty my account and just leave the cash with you?"

Horn goes still for a second, his face going through a riot of emotion that he tries his best to play off as nothing. Because, you know, we're not dating or anything. It's not like me leaving is important. "Oh." He says, instead of saying anything else. "Cool?" Horn turns to his computer, and starts to put his headphones on. Before he does, he turns slightly sideways to look at me, and I tense up at what he might say, until he opens his mouth, "Hey, if you're serious, maybe get a big external battery for your laptop?"

Oh fuck, wizards aren't going to have internet, are they? God dammit. I add a *few* backup batteries to my Amazon cart, along with a new suitcase. I'll place the order when I wake up and cheat my bank out of some cash. Because fuck 'em.

I spend the next couple hours sorting out which of my favorite books and sex toys I can't live without, weighing everything I'm considering taking on the wobbly bathroom scale we have for some reason, trying to talk to Horn about the ranked grind like we both don't know things are changing, and trying not to think about the upheaval happening to my life. The spreadsheet on my laptop starts to add up, and I start really hoping that the wizard meant two hundred pounds not counting me, because I plan to purchase a *lot* of weight in batteries, and I'm already leaving behind my Switch.

I crawl into bed well after it starts getting light out. After lightly asking with some tentative motions, Horn follows me, and we have sex like we're drowning under the sunrise. He holds me while I fall asleep.

I have nightmares about being late for class.