

The Investigation of a Wizard

written by

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INT. WIZARD TOWER - NIGHT

Open on a party inside a wizard's tower. Fairies, elves, gnomes, warlocks and bards alike dance and laugh, holding glasses of shimmering liquid. All attendees appear dressed for a LARP, a rave, a disco, or the event of a unicorn puking their guts out. In the center, an old man with a long white beard and a glittering green robe holds court.

This is UZODARIM, the greatest wizard in the world and the host of the party. He does not yet realize it, but these are his last moments.

UZODARIM

I was cornered, seven demons
surrounding me at the edge of a
cliff. But you see, my dear
friends, these beasts were unaware
that they had wandered right into
my trap!

The partygoers listen with rapt attention as he tells a story from the War of 1000 Bells, which has just concluded. At the end of his tale, they erupt into applause and toast in his name. Pleased, the wizard raises his glass.

Uzodarim pauses mid sip and frowns, looking down. A blood stain blooms at the center of his chest. Without a word, he falls to the ground. The wizard dies right there, and the music stops.

EXT. CRIME SCENE - DAY

An eclectic crowd stands outside of the tower. All manner of fantastical beings clamor for a peek through the windows. Their dour expressions contrast their beglittered appearances. An elf with pink hair and platform boots shoves a gnome out of the way to get a better look. A man in a dark cape argues in hushed tones with the talking crow on his shoulder.

In the midst of this hullabaloo, a sober woman in her late thirties, carrying a clipboard, pushes past the crowd. With her charcoal suit and short cropped hair, she is a dull grey dot in a sparkling rainbow sea. This is HAL: investigator, bureaucrat, and the only person present without a lick of magic.

HAL

Alright, alright, move over.
Scooch. I'll take statements in a
minute, but for now I need to get a
look at the guy.

She shuts the door behind her, abandoning the bewildered, squabbling masses.

INT. WIZARD TOWER - DAY

Hal enters the aftermath of both a murder and a rager. In the middle of the party the tower was a sight to behold, but with the sun streaming through the windows, illuminating the dust on the bookshelves, it's a sorry sight. HAL whips out a pen and begins taking notes on her surroundings.

Cups are strewn about on a myriad of surfaces. Rugs, couches and chairs alike bear stains of every shade under the sun. A disco ball sits abandoned on the rug, a pile of fairy dust is left in a line on one of the tables, and the wizard Uzodarim lies dead on the floor.

HAL

First things first: environmental conditions.

Hal procures a pair of gloves to wear as she checks the perimeter of the room. Her expression is composed when she lifts a pillow from the couch and a trio of butterflies fly out from under it. She mutters to herself as she studies the locks on the windows, checks the disco ball for blood stains and collects a bit of the fairy dust in a bag.

HAL (CONT'D)

No signs of forced entry, illicit substances present... Okay, thanks for waiting. Let's take a look at you.

The Great Wizard Uzodarim stares blankly at the ceiling--none had seen fit to close his eyes upon his death, evidently. Standing next to him is a gangly teenager, shifting awkwardly. He wears ill-fitting robes, with his ankles peeking out beneath his pants, and a little hat that might have been cute on a younger child.

HAL (CONT'D)

I told you, I'll take statements in a bit. You're not supposed to be in here.

TEENAGER

Sorry. I just--I didn't know where else to go?

HAL

Out of the tower. Wherever you were before the party.

TEENAGER

But.. I was here. I live here.

Hal sighs, removing her gloves. She runs her fingers through her hair.

HAL

What's your name, kid?

TEENAGER

Berry. Apprentice to the Wizard Uzodarim.

He looks down at the corpse.

BERRY

Well, I was. I don't know whose apprentice I am now.

HAL

Okay, Berry. I need you to step outside. You being in here means I have to fill out three additional forms.

Hal brushes past him and begins examining the wizard.

HAL (CONT'D)

Singular stab wound. No bruising, no signs of a struggle. Murder weapon missing. Blood--

BERRY

Can't I help, or something? I could clean up!

HAL

You can't mess with anything until I've documented all of this.

BERRY

I just don't know what to do anymore. I made breakfast this morning, for the Wizard, because I forgot, and so I had to give it to a bird.

HAL

Well, you can be quiet. Blood stain conspicuously absent--

Berry points upward, at a pool of blood on the ceiling.

HAL (CONT'D)

Blood stain on the ceiling. Was he stabbed up there, before he fell down? I don't know how things work for you mages.

BERRY

No, I don't think so. Gravity is kind of weird here.

Berry picks up a cup from the nearby table and pours. The liquid, instead of spilling on the floor, drips onto a bookshelf on the wall.

HAL (EXASPERATED)

I told you not to mess with anything.

BERRY

Sorry. You said you didn't know, so I thought I'd show you! I can clean it up.

HAL

Don't bother, I already have to record this now. Did the wizard have you do a lot of cleaning?

BERRY

The wizard had me do a lot of everything. Cooking, cleaning, sewing, studying. I'm really good at making potions, if you need one!

Hal hums thoughtfully, continuing to prod at the dead wizard.

HAL

No murder weapon present. Interesting.

EXT. CRIME SCENE - DAY

The crowd outside is still present when Hal finally exits the tower, Berry in tow. They begin pushing and shoving, shouting over one another.

ELF

Do you know who did it? Was it--

MAN WITH CROW

Did you find what they used to--

FAIRY

Berry, what are you doing here?
Aren't you supposed to be--

Hal whistles.

HAL

Alright, folks. I've made some preliminary notes, and now I'm ready to get some statements. Let's get a single file line right here so I can speak with everyone who was present last night.

Groans echo from the attendees.

HAL (CONT'D)

Yeah, yeah. I don't like this situation any more than you do.

This is a lie: Hal thrives in these situations. The corner of her mouth twitches as the crowd shifts from a disordered mass into one beautiful line. The elf with the pink hair from earlier, having pushed her way to the front of the line, steps forward.

ELF

I saw it.

HAL

Your name, please.

ELF

Glimmerdyke.

HAL

What?

GLIMMERDYKE (LOUDER)

Glimmerdyke.

HAL

That's what I thought you said, yeah. Okay, Glimmerdyke. What did you see?

GLIMMERDYKE

I saw the moment the life left his eyes! The Great Wizard Uzodarim, brought low by a man-made instrument. Unsophisticated. Bestial!

HAL

What's wrong with man-made instruments? If you don't mind my unsophisticated question.

The crowd titters, bemused.

GLIMMERDYKE

Mages don't carry weapons. Everyone knows that. Not unless they're amateurs who can't cast, like Silazar over there.

SILAZAR

I would never!

GLIMMERDYKE

Anyway, stabbing is so... pedestrian. So unimaginative. Real mages conjure water in people's lungs, or raise the temperature of their skulls to cook their brains, or turn their hearts into--

HAL

Did you see the actual weapon?

GLIMMERDYKE

Nope!

HAL

That's all I needed to know. Next, please.

The next person steps forward to be interviewed. Hal takes furious notes on her clipboard. As the line inches forth, the sun sets. Finally, the last person speaks with Hal.

GNOME

...And that's when I noticed that Silazar was lurking around the slime buffet.

HAL

Fascinating, thank you for this valuable information. You can go now.

Hal nods and writes this down, but as she does notices Berry sneaking off into the tower out of the corner of her eye. Instead of following him, she turns to enter the woods.

INT. WIZARD TOWER - EVENING

The tower is bathed in shades of gold under the setting sun. Hal enters to find Berry creeping up the stairs to the second floor.

HAL

Not so fast, Berry. Where are you going?

BERRY

You finished taking statements, so I thought I'd go to bed? I live here, remember?

HAL

You're right, Berry. I got everyone's statements. Except for yours.

Berry laughs nervously. He tries to continue up the stairs, but Hal follows him step for step.

BERRY

My statement? Why would you want that? I wasn't even at the party. I wasn't invited--I'm just an apprentice. You saw how they think about mages who can't cast.

They near the landing of the stairs and we see the second floor of the tower. Unlike the bottom floor, which was lushly decorated, even in its messy state, the second floor is tragic.

There is a little bunk bed, with the top bunk brushing the ceiling and the bottom being occupied by a desk covered in books, that appears too short for Berry's limbs. There is a separate table set up for alchemy with a little cauldron and alembic, and an ironing board positioned low to the floor, and a little kitchenette in the corner with a few dishes in the sink. Magic glowing stars cover the ceiling. The second floor is a bedroom/library/kitchen/laboratory, and all of the furniture appears to have been made for someone much smaller than Berry.

HAL

You were young when you came to this tower, weren't you? You've been doing the wizard's errands since you were a little boy.

Berry hesitates, but nods. Hal waves him over to sit across from her at the dining table in the kitchen. Her knees are beside her shoulders as she sits in one of the tiny chairs.

HAL (CONT'D)

Alright, Berry. I can tell that you haven't seen much of the world outside of magic, so I'll fill you in. I'm part of The Bureau of Non-magical Citizens, or BONC, for short. We're a bureaucratic institution that seeks to catalogue as much of the magical world as we can, despite not being part of it. That means that I'm not here to punish anyone. Frankly, it wouldn't be my place to do so, and even if it was there's no way that I could enforce any sort of punishment upon people who can turn themselves into swarms of bees at will. I just want to get the clearest picture of the situation that I possibly can, and for that I need your help.

BERRY

Mine?

HAL

Yes, Berry. Yours. You may not have been at the party, but I know you saw what happened.

She rises and walks across the room to the alchemy table, which has a curtain on the wall behind it. She pulls at the curtain to reveal a window, aimed not at the outdoors but at the innards of the tower. From where Hal stands in front of this window, she has a clear view of the first floor of the tower, with its weird stains and abandoned disco ball and dead wizard.

BERRY

That's not proof that I saw anything. I was studying during the party.

HAL

You're right, it's not. But this is.

She reaches into the pocket of her jacket and retrieves a bag. Her gloved hands pull from this bag a knife, smeared in wizard blood.

HAL (CONT'D)

I went looking in the woods. You
gave this to a bird, with
breakfast. Start talking, Berry.