

Chapter 6

23th of August, 1991

London

"So, life force is just another type of energy," Dumbledore mused aloud, adjusting his safety goggles and leaning closer to a bubbling cauldron. "Common forms of energy include kinetic, potential, elastic, chemical, radiant, and internal energy. All living organisms constantly take in and release energy." Beside him, the bound and gagged Edward Haversham let out a muffled scream.

During the last 25 days, Dumbledore had refrained from acting on his knowledge of the plot and do stupid things like hunting Horcruxes without having mastered all of Deadbuldore's skills, choosing instead to bide his time until he had fully assimilated memories and had mastered his magical abilities. This period had been dedicated to rigorous training in charms, exhaustive practice in transfiguration, and delving into the intricacies of soul magic—especially the mechanics of Horcruxes. His efforts had culminated in a breakthrough (well, he just remembered something and made a retrospectively obvious link) on the 21st day, when he had unearthed crucial insights into soul magic (he remembered something from an undergrad lesson), laying the groundwork for his ambitious alchemical experiments (he mixed stuff with other stuff).

"Shh," Dumbledore admonished, placing a gloved hand over Edward's mouth to stifle the noise. "Alchemy requires concentration, and your incessant wailing is quite the distraction." He shook his head in exasperation before turning back to his intricate setup.

The once-dignified office had metamorphosed into a chaotic marvel of science and sorcery. Intricate glass tubing snaked across the room, connecting beakers and flasks filled with liquids that shimmered in every imaginable color. The walls, lined with dusty tomes on magical theory, were interrupted by incongruous ecchi posters featuring scantily clad anime characters. Above it all, a disco ball spun lazily from the ceiling, casting rainbow-colored specks of light across the cluttered space. Next to it, Dumbledore's socks continually attempted to escape from a wooden chest labeled "Socks: DO NOT OPEN," causing the lid to rattle intermittently.

Edward, bound to a sturdy chair with ropes that seemed to tighten whenever he struggled, looked around the room with wide, terrified eyes. His muffled pleas were ignored as Dumbledore continued his monologue.

"You see, Edward," Dumbledore said, adjusting the flame under a particularly volatile-looking flask, "Muggles and Wizards are not different in nature. It's a continuum. This continuum explains both Squibs and Muggle-born wizards. Magic is not magic at all; it is merely another form of energy—Negentropic Life Force, or NLF for short."

Edward's eyes darted around the room, desperate for any sign of escape, but there was none. The professor's eccentricities were terrifyingly unpredictable. And to say he even thought it was Santa Claus...

"All living beings possess this energy," Dumbledore continued, pacing back and forth with a manic gleam in his eye. "But beings differ in their ability to replenish it. Wizards, for reasons yet unknown, can replenish their NLF, which allows them to manipulate it externally—ordering the world and changing it. This also explains why wizards tend to live longer than Muggles, and why stronger wizards live even longer."

He paused to tap his chin thoughtfully, then did a pirouette, his robes swirling dramatically around him. "Ah, yes, and let's not forget Horcruxes," he said, clapping his hands together in excitement. "My dear phoenix, Fawkes, always thrilled by this topic."

Edward moaned in terror, his muffled voice barely audible over the bubbling potions and humming plant. Dumbledore leaned in closer, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. "You see, Edward, people do not have souls—there is no such thing as a spirit, soul, or mind. These are merely emergent properties of cellular interactions. What we believe to be the soul is, in fact, the output of the NLF module."

Edward's eyes widened in horror as Dumbledore continued. "Horcruxes are not about splitting the soul. They are about splitting the module that produces NLF and placing a part of it elsewhere. If a person is killed, their NLF production organ is destroyed, and they simply become food for plants—no heaven, no hell, no metaphysical places."

Dumbledore straightened up, a look of triumph on his face. "But if someone splits their NLF production module, then even in death, NLF is produced elsewhere, which slowly starts to reconstitute them. Horcruxes are not evil at all. After all, the proof—" he paused for dramatic effect, "—I made one myself!"

Edward's muffled protests grew more frantic, his eyes pleading for mercy. Dumbledore chuckled softly, shaking his head. "Oh, Edward, you don't seem to agree that I am not evil. But think about it—if I were truly evil, would I have shared this groundbreaking knowledge with you?"

Edward's eyes rolled back in his head as he fainted, the overwhelming terror and absurdity of the situation finally taking its toll. Dumbledore sighed and patted Edward's cheek lightly. "There, there. You'll come around. Science always prevails in the end."

Dumbledore spun around, his enthusiasm an electric force as he dove back into his work. "So, you ask, what's the link with the Philosopher's Stone?" he muttered to himself, excitement bubbling up like a potion at full boil.

In a burst of manic joy, he attempted a celebratory flip. His robes fanned out dramatically, only to land him flat on his back, hat askew and dignity bruised. Without missing a beat, he bounced up, dusted himself off, and carried on as if nothing had happened.

"Flamel was truly brilliant. The Stone is not a Horcrux... It's an artificial NLF producing module! One made physical! What a genius!" Dumbledore's eyes gleamed with the fervor of a man possessed. "The Life Elixir is just liquid NLF—liquid magic, if you prefer, but that sounds less impressive than it truly is. And thus, I don't technically need a stone to produce lab-made elixir."

Edward, regaining consciousness, found Dumbledore's giddy excitement more terrifying than comforting. The professor's enthusiasm crackled in the air, making the room itself seem to vibrate with barely contained energy. Dumbledore cleared his throat and summoned a floating quill with a flick of his wand, the feathered instrument scribbling furiously on parchment. "Experiment Protocol 1. Subject: Random bad guy n°1," he dictated, flashing Edward a smile that could curdle milk. "I technically

don't need a stone to produce lab elixir as I can directly create it from your own NLF—your life force."

Cables and serpentine tubes slithered across the floor, inching toward Edward with a sinister grace. Edward's renewed screams were muffled by the gag, his eyes bulging with terror.

"Of course, I will not kill you—only take about, let's say, twenty years off your lifespan. It's less than you would have spent in prison had you been caught for your crimes."

From a chest in the corner, the muffled voice of the Sorting Hat could be heard, its fabric rustling in protest. "It's not exactly moral!"

The machine roared to life, an orchestra of whirring gears and humming energy. Cables latched onto Edward, who visibly withered with each passing second. His hair turned to silver threads, wrinkles carved deep canyons into his skin, and his body shrank under the weight of stolen years. The flasks and tubes glowed as they filled with a shimmering, golden liquid. The elixir of life gathered drop by drop in a small vial. Edward's eyes, now dulled and sunken, stared vacantly at the ceiling, his spirit crushed beneath the weight of his forcibly extracted life force. Dumbledore, his face a mask of triumph, carefully retrieved the nearly full vial, marveling at the concentrated essence within. "Perfect," he murmured, his smile wide and wild. "A breakthrough of monumental proportions. And I will be able to bang chicks that do not look like they have a foot in the tomb ! Technically, I'm only 26 years old in mind, so if the body follows...Aha! I'm such a genius!"

The quill continued its furious note-taking as Dumbledore held the vial up to the light, the golden liquid swirling with an inner luminescence. Edward's faint, ragged breaths punctuated the room's eerie silence, a stark contrast to the frenetic energy that had just consumed the space. The machine's hum gradually subsided, leaving an unsettling calm in its wake.

With a final, satisfied nod, Dumbledore set the vial down and turned his gaze back to Edward. "See, Edward? Science always prevails," he said softly, his voice carrying the weight of his unhinged brilliance. "And now, thanks to you, we are one step closer to unlocking the true nature of life and magic. Now, I just have to find what's the fucking link with Gold

Producing...Fuck ! What a fucking fucked-up genius ! It does not make gold at all - he just needed to find something to lure fresh flesh to replenish his stone ! It's not a NLF producer - it's an NLF battery!"

24th of August, 1991

Rome

Giorgio “Il Leone” Lombardi sat like a king in his ornate armchair, the grandeur of his living room reflecting the empire he had built through blood and drugs. The crystal chandelier above cast a warm, deceptive glow, masking the shadows that lurked in every corner of his life. Surrounded by his most loyal men, Giorgio felt untouchable. He sipped his Chianti with a smug satisfaction, surveying his personal fortress.

But as the night grew older, an uneasy silence settled over the villa. The usual murmurs of conversation and the distant hum of the city outside faded, leaving a void that pressed against Giorgio’s senses. He frowned and looked at Antonio, his trusted right-hand man, who stood guard nearby.

“Antonio, go check on the boys outside. It’s too damn quiet,” Giorgio commanded, his voice a low growl.

Antonio nodded and exited the room. Minutes ticked by, and the silence stretched on, unnerving in its persistence. No footsteps, no voices—just an oppressive stillness.

“Antonio?” Giorgio called out, his irritation giving way to a creeping sense of dread. Still, there was no response.

A faint, eerie laugh echoed from somewhere within the house, sending a shiver down Giorgio’s spine. It was a high-pitched, almost childlike giggle, but laced with something far more sinister. Giorgio’s eyes narrowed as he reached for his gun, feeling the cold metal reassuring in his hand.

“Luigi, go see what’s going on,” he barked at another guard, who nodded and hurried off. The silence that followed was even more unsettling.

Giorgio's heart began to pound. Something was very wrong. He stood up, his grip tightening on the gun. "Marco, you stay with me," he ordered his last remaining guard.

Together, they moved through the corridors, their footsteps soft against the marble floors. As they rounded a corner, a shadow flickered at the edge of their vision, disappearing just as quickly. Giorgio's breath quickened, his nerves on edge.

The laugh came again, closer this time. Giorgio's eyes darted around, searching for the source. The hallway stretched before them, each door a potential threat. The silence was deafening, pressing in on him from all sides.

"Who's there?" Giorgio demanded, his voice echoing off the walls. "Show yourself!"

A door at the end of the hall creaked open, and Giorgio's blood ran cold. The laugh erupted once more, louder and more distorted. Marco moved forward cautiously, peeking through the doorway, his face pale with fear.

"There's... there's nothing here," Marco stammered, his voice shaking.

Giorgio pushed past him, stepping into the room. It was empty, but the sensation of being watched was overwhelming. The air felt thick, charged with unseen menace.

Suddenly, a figure leapt from the shadows, landing with a thud before Giorgio. He staggered back, raising his gun, but froze at the sight. An old man stood before him, dressed in a grotesque parody of an Easter Bunny costume. The pink fur was matted and filthy, the outfit clinging awkwardly to his frail, sagging frame. His face was partially obscured by a tattered bunny mask, but his eyes burned with a disturbing intensity.

"Happy Easter, Giorgio! Taste my eggs!" the man cackled, his voice a twisted mockery of cheerfulness. He took a step forward, the absurdity of his costume only amplifying the menace.

Giorgio's finger tightened on the trigger, but the old man was faster. With a swift, fluid motion, he knocked the gun from Giorgio's hand. It clattered to the floor, sliding out of reach.

Marco lunged at the intruder, but the old man moved with surprising agility. He sidestepped Marco's attack, grabbing him by the throat and slamming him into the wall. Marco's eyes bulged as he struggled for breath, his feet kicking futilely against the floor.

Giorgio backed away, his mind racing. *This can't be happening*, he thought, a sense of dread settling over him. He turned to run, but the old man's laughter followed him, echoing in his ears.

As Giorgio reached the main hallway, the lights flickered and went out, plunging the house into darkness. He stumbled, his heart pounding, and the laughter grew louder, filling the air with its eerie, mocking tone.

Then, out of the darkness, the old man appeared again, his grotesque bunny costume illuminated by the moonlight streaming through the windows. He moved closer, his eyes gleaming with malevolent glee.

"Did you think you could escape, Giorgio?" the old man hissed, his voice dripping with malice. "No one escapes the Easter Bunny."

Giorgio's back hit the wall, and he realized with a sinking feeling that there was nowhere left to run. The old man's grin widened, and he reached out, his gnarled fingers closing around Giorgio's throat.

The last thing Giorgio heard was the old man's laughter, echoing in his mind as the darkness closed in.

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24th of August, 1991
Rome

"Fuck, that's a lot of drug money", said Dumbledore, still in his bunny outfit, as the effects of the strength potions started to wear off.