HARRY POTTER

AND THE
METHODS OF RATIONALITY



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OMAKE FILES

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HOURS TO VICTORY

(A.k.a. "What Happens If You Change Harry But Leave All Other Characters Constant")

Dumbledore peered over his desk at young Harry, twinkling in a kindly sort of way. The boy had come to him with a terribly intense look on his childish face—Dumbledore hoped that whatever this matter was, it wasn't too serious. Harry was far too young for his life trials to be starting already. "What was it you wished to speak to me about, Harry?"

Harry James Potter-Evans-Verres leaned forward in his chair, smiling grimly. "Headmaster, I got a sharp pain in my scar during the Sorting Feast. Considering how and where I got this scar, it didn't seem like the sort of thing I should just ignore. I thought at first it was because of Professor Snape, but I followed the Baconian experimental method which is to find the conditions for both the presence and the absence of the phenomenon, and I've determined that my scar hurts if and only if I'm facing the back of Professor Quirrell's head, whatever's under his turban. While it *could* be something more innocuous, I think we should provisionally assume the worst, that it's You-Know-Who—wait, don't look so horrified, this is actually a priceless opportunity—"

OMAKE FILE II

I AIN'T AFRAID OF DARK LORDS

This was the original version of Chapter 9. It was replaced because — while many readers did enjoy it — many other readers had *massive* allergies to songs in fanfics, for reasons that should not much need belaboring. I didn't want to drive readers away before they got to Ch. 10.

Lee Jordan is the fellow prankster of Fred and George (in canon). "Lee Jordan" had sounded like a Muggleborn name to me, implying that he would be capable of instructing Fred and George on a tune that Harry would know. This was not as obvious to some readers as it was to your author.

* * *

Draco went to Slytherin, and Harry breathed a small sigh of relief. It had *seemed* like a sure thing, but you never did know what tiny event might upset the course of your master plan.

They were approaching the Ps now ...

And over at the Gryffindor table, there was a whispered conversation.

- "What if he doesn't like it?"
- "He's got no right to not like it—"
- "— not after the prank he played on—"
- "— Neville Longbottom, his name was—"
- "— he's as fair a fair target now as fair can be."
- "All right. Just make sure you don't forget your parts."
- "We've rehearsed it often enough—"
- "- over the last three hours."

And Minerva McGonagall, from where she stood at the speaker's podium of the Head Table, looked down at the next name on her list. *Please don't let him be a Gryffindor please don't let him be a Gryffindor OH PLEASE don't let him be a Gryffindor...* She took a deep breath, and called:

"Potter, Harry!"

**

There was a sudden silence in the hall as all whispered conversation stopped.

A silence broken by a horrible buzzing noise that modulated and changed in hideous mockery of musical melody.

Minerva's head jerked around, shocked, and identified the buzzing noise as coming from the Gryffindor direction, where They were *standing on top of the table* blowing into some kind of tiny devices held against Their lips. Her hand started to drop to her wand, to *Silencio* the lot of Them, but another sound stopped her.

Dumbledore was chuckling.

Minerva's eyes went back to Harry Potter, who had only just started to step out of line before he'd stumbled and halted.

Then the young boy began to walk again, moving his legs in odd sweeping motions, and waving his arms back and forth and snapping his fingers, in synchrony with Their music.

To the tune of "Ghostbusters" (As performed on the kazoo by Fred and George Weasley, and sung by Lee Jordan.)

> There's a Dark Lord near? Got no need to fear Who you gonna call?

"HARRY POTTER!" shouted Lee Jordan, and the Weasley twins performed a triumphant chorus.

With a Killing Curse? Well it could be worse. Who you gonna call?

"HARRY POTTER!" There were a lot more voices shouting it this time.

The Weasley Horrors went off into an extended wailing, now accompanied by some of the older Muggleborns, who had produced their own tiny devices, Transfigured out of the school silverware no doubt. As their music reached its anticlimax, Harry Potter shouted:

I ain't afraid of Dark Lords!

* 4 *

There was cheering then, especially from the Gryffindor table, and more students produced their own antimusical instruments. The hideous buzzings redoubled in volume and built to another awful crescendo:

I ain't afraid of Dark Lords!

Minerva glanced to both sides of the Head Table, afraid to look but with all too good a notion of what she would see.

Trelawney frantically fanning herself, Flitwick looking on with curiosity, Hagrid clapping along to the music, Sprout looking severe, and Quirrell gazing at the boy with sardonic amusement. Directly to her left, Dumbledore humming along; and directly to her right, Snape gripping his empty wine goblet, white-knuckled, so hard that the thick silver was slowly deforming.

Dark robes and a mask?
Impossible task?
Who you gonna call?
HARRY POTTER!
Giant Fire-Ape?
Old bat in a cape?
Who you gonna call?
HARRY POTTER!

Minerva's lips set in a white line. She would have words with Them about that last verse, if They thought she was powerless because it was the first day of school and Gryffindor had no points to take away. If They didn't care about detentions then she would find something else.

Then, with a sudden gasp of horror, she looked in Snape's direction, *surely* he realized the Potter boy must have no idea who that was talking about —

Snape's face had gone beyond rage into a kind of pleasant indifference. A faint smile played about his lips. He was looking in the direction of Harry Potter, not the Gryffindor table, and his hands held the crumpled remains of a former wine goblet . . .

And Harry walked forwards, sweeping his arms and legs through the motions of the Ghostbusters dance, keeping a smile on his face. It was a great setup, had caught him completely by surprise. The least he could do was play along and not ruin it all.

Everyone was cheering him. It made him feel all warm inside and sort of awful at the same time.

They were cheering him for a job he'd done when he was one year old. A job he hadn't really finished. Somewhere, somehow, the Dark Lord was still alive. Would they have been cheering quite so hard, if they knew that?

But the Dark Lord's power had been broken once.

And Harry would protect them again. If there was in fact a prophecy and that was what it said. Well, actually regardless of what any darn prophecy said.

All those people believing in him and cheering him—Harry couldn't stand to let that be false. To flash and fade like so many other child prodigies. To be a disappointment. To fail to live up to his reputation as a symbol of the Light, never mind *how* he'd gotten it. He would absolutely, positively, no matter how long it took and even if it killed him, fulfill their expectations. And then go on to *exceed* those expectations, so that people wondered, looking back, that they had once asked so little of him.

And he shouted out the lie that he'd invented because it scanned well and the song called for it:

I ain't afraid of Dark Lords! I ain't afraid of Dark Lords!

Harry took his last steps toward the Sorting Hat as the music ended. He swept a bow to the Order of Chaos at the Gryffindor table, and then turned and swept another bow to the other side of the hall, and waited for the applause and giggling to die away...

* 6 *

OMAKE FILE III

ALTERNATE ENDINGS OF "SELF-AWARENESS"

When chapter 9 was first posted, Eliezer said that if anyone guessed what the last sentence was talking about before the next update, he would tell them the entire rest of the plot.

The offer spurred a *lot* of interesting attempts. The first omake below is taken directly from my personal favorite answer, by Meteoricshipyards. The second is based on Kazuma's suggestion for what "has never happened before", the third on a combination of yoyoente and dougal74, the fourth on wolf550e's review of chapter 10. The one that starts with 'K', and the one just above that, are from DarkHeart81. The others are my own. Anyone who wants to pick up one of my own ideas and run with them, particularly the last one, is welcome to do so. And before I get 100 indignant complaints, yes, I am well aware that the legislative body of the UK is the House of Commons in Parliament.

* * *

...In the back of his mind, he wondered if the Sorting Hat was genuinely *conscious* in the sense of being aware of its own awareness, and if so, whether it was satisfied with only getting to talk to eleven-year-olds once per year. Its song had implied so: *Oh, I'm the Sorting Hat and I'm okay, I sleep all year and I work one day...*

When there was once more silence in the room, Harry sat on the stool and *carefully* placed onto his head the 800-year-old telepathic artifact of forgotten magic.

Thinking, just as hard as he could: Don't Sort me yet! I have questions I need to ask you! Have I ever been Obliviated? Did you Sort the Dark Lord when he was a child and can you tell me about his weaknesses? Can you tell me why

I got the brother wand to the Dark Lord's? Is the Dark Lord's ghost bound to my scar and is that why I get so angry sometimes? Those are the most important questions, but if you've got another moment can you tell me anything about how to rediscover the lost magics that created you?

And the Sorting Hat answered, "No. Yes. No. No. Yes and no, next time don't ask double questions. No." and out loud, "RAVENCLAW!"

"Oh, dear. This has never happened before..."

What?

"I'm allergic to your hair shampoo—"

And then the Sorting Hat sneezed, with a mighty "A-CHOO!" that echoed around the Great Hall.

"Well!" Dumbledore cried jovially. "It seems Harry Potter has been sorted into the new House of Achoo! McGonagall, you can serve as the Head of House Achoo. You'd better hurry up on making arrangements for Achoo's curriculum and classes, tomorrow is the first day!"

"But, but," stammered McGonagall, her mind in nearly complete disarray, "who will be Head of House Gryffindor?" It was all she could think of, she *had* to stop this somehow...

Dumbledore put a finger to his cheek, looking thoughtful. "Snape."

Snape's screech of protest nearly drowned out McGonagall's, "Then who will be Head of *Slytherin?*"

"Hagrid."

* * *

Don't Sort me yet! I have questions I need to ask you! Have I ever been Obliviated? Did you Sort the Dark Lord when he was a child and can you tell me about his weaknesses? Can you tell me why I got the brother wand to the Dark Lord's? Is the Dark Lord's ghost bound to my scar and is that why I get so angry sometimes? Those are the most important questions, but if you've got another moment can you tell me anything about how to rediscover the lost magics that created you?

There was a brief pause.

Hello? Do I need to repeat the questions?

The Sorting Hat screamed, an awful high-pitched sound that echoed through the Great Hall and caused most of the students to clap their hands over their ears. With a desperate yowl, it leapt off Harry Potter's head and bounded across the floor, pushing itself along with its brim, and made it halfway to the Head Table before it exploded.

* 8 *

"SLYTHERIN!"

Seeing the look of horror on Harry Potter's face, Fred Weasley thought faster than he ever had in his life. In a single motion he whipped out his wand, whispered "Silencio!" and then "Changemyvoiceio!" and finally "Ventriliquo!"

"Just kidding!" said Fred Weasley. "GRYFFINDOR!"

"Oh, dear. This has never happened before..."

What?

"Ordinarily I would refer such questions to the Headmaster, who could ask me in turn, if he wished. But some of the information you've asked for is not only beyond your own user level, but beyond the Headmaster's."

How can I raise my user level?

"I'm afraid I am not allowed to answer that question at your current user level."

What options are available at my user level?

After that it didn't take long —

"ROOT!"

"Oh, dear. This has never happened before..."

What?

"I've had to tell students before that they were mothers — it would break your heart to know what I saw in their minds — but this is the first time I've ever had to tell someone they were a father."

WHAT?

"Draco Malfoy is carrying your baby."

WHAAAAAAAT?

"To repeat: Draco Malfoy is carrying your baby."

But we're only eleven —

"Actually, Draco is secretly thirteen years old."

B-b-but men can't get pregnant —

"And a girl under those clothes."

BUT WE'VE NEVER HAD SEX, YOU IDIOT!

"SHE OBLIVIATED YOU AFTER THE RAPE, MORON!"

Harry Potter fainted. His unconscious body fell off the stool with a dull thud.

"RAVENCLAW!" called out the Hat from where it lay on top of his head. That had been even funnier than its first idea.

* * *

"ELF!"

Huh? Harry remembered Draco mentioning a 'House Elf', but what was that exactly?

Judging by the appalled looks dawning on the faces around him, it wasn't anything good —

"PANCAKES!"

"REPRESENTATIVES!"

"Oh, dear. This has never happened before..."

What?

"I've never Sorted someone who was a reincarnation of Godric Gryffindor AND Salazar Slytherin AND Naruto."

"ATREIDES!"

"Fooled you again! HUFFLEPUFF! SLYTHERIN! HUFFLEPUFF!"

"PICKLED STEWBERRIES!"

* 10 *

"KHAAANNNN!"

* * *

At the Head Table, Dumbledore went on smiling benignly; small metallic sounds occasionally came from Snape's direction as he idly compacted the twisted remains of what had once been a heavy silver wine goblet; and Minerva McGonagall clenched the podium in a white-knuckled grip, knowing that Harry Potter's contagious chaos had infected the Sorting Hat itself.

Scenario after scenario played out through Minerva's head, each worse than the last. The Hat would say that Harry was too evenly balanced between Houses to Sort, and decide that he belonged to all of them. The Hat would proclaim that Harry's mind was too strange to be Sorted. The Hat would demand that Harry be expelled from Hogwarts. The Hat had gone into a coma. The Hat would insist that a whole new House of Doom be created just to accomodate Harry Potter, and *Dumbledore would make her do it...*

Minerva remembered what Harry had told her in that disastrous trip to Diagon Alley, about the ... planning fallacy, she thought it had been ... and how people were usually too optimistic, even when they thought they were being pessimistic. It was the sort of information that preyed on your mind, dwelling in it and spinning off nightmares ...

But what was the worst that could happen?

Well... in the worst-case scenario, the Hat would assign Harry to a whole new House. Dumbledore would insist that she do it—create a whole new House just for him—and she'd have to rearrange all the class schedules on the first day of term. And Dumbledore would remove her as Head of House Gryffindor, and give her beloved House over to... Professor Binns, the History ghost; and she would be assigned as Head of Harry's House of Doom; and she would futilely try to give the child orders, deducting point after point without effect, while disaster after disaster was blamed on her.

Was that the worst-case scenario?

Minerva honestly didn't see how it could be any worse than that.

And even in the very worst case—no matter *what* happened with Harry—it would all be over in seven years.

Minerva felt her knuckles slowly relax their white-knuckled grip on the podium. Harry had been right, there was a kind of comfort in staring directly into the furthest depths of the darkness, knowing that you had confronted your worst fears and were now prepared.



The frightened silence was broken by a single word.

"Headmaster!" called the Sorting Hat.

**

At the Head Table, Dumbledore rose, his face puzzled. "Yes?" he addressed the Hat. "What is it?"

"I wasn't talking to you," said the Hat. "I was Sorting Harry Potter into the place in Hogwarts where he most belongs, namely the Headmaster's office—"

OMAKE FILE IV

THE OTHER FANFICTIONS YOU COULD HAVE BEEN READING

ORD THE RATIONALITY

Frodo glanced at all the faces, but they were not turned to him. All the Council sat with downcast eyes, as if in deep thought. A great dread fell on him, as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken. An overwhelming longing to rest and remain at peace by Bilbo's side in Rivendell filled all his heart. At last with an effort he spoke, and wondered to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice.

"We cannot," said Frodo. "We must not. Do you not see? It is exactly what the Enemy desires. All of this he has foreseen."

The faces turned to him, puzzled the Dwarves and grave the Elves; sternness in the eyes of the Men; and so keen the gazes of Elrond and of Gandalf that Frodo almost could not withstand it. It was very hard, then, not to grasp the Ring in his hand, and harder still not to put it on, to face them as only Frodo.

"Do you not question it?" Frodo said, thin like the wind his voice, and wavering like a breeze. "You have chosen, of all things, to send the Ring into Mordor; should you not wonder? How did it come to this? That we might, of all our choices, do that single thing our Enemy most desires? Perhaps the Cracks of Doom are already guarded, strongly enough to hold off Gandalf and Elrond and Glorfindel all together; or perhaps the Master of that place has cooled the lava there, set it to trap the Ring so that he may simply bring it out after it is thrown in ..." A memory of awful clarity came over Frodo then, and a flash of black laughter, and the thought came to him that it was

just what the Enemy would do. Only the thought came to him so: *thus it* would amuse me to do, if I meant to rule...

There were doubtful glances exchanged within the council; Glóin and Gimli and Boromir were now looking at the Elves more skeptically than before, like they had awoken out of a dream of words.

"The Enemy is very wise," said Gandalf, "and weighs all things to a nicety in the scales of his malice. But the only measure that he knows is desire, desire for power; and so he judges all hearts. Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it—"

"He will think of it!" cried Frodo. He struggled for words, trying to convey things that had once seemed perfect in his comprehension, and then faded like melting snow. "If the Enemy thought that all his foes were moved by desire for power alone — he would guess wrongly, over and over, and the Maker of this Ring would see that, he would know that somewhere he had made a mistake!" Frodo's hands stretched forth pleadingly.

Boromir stirred, and his voice was doubtful. "You speak fair of the Enemy," said Boromir, "for one of his foes."

Frodo's mouth opened and shut in desperate bewilderment; for Frodo knew, he knew the Man was mad, but he could think of nothing to say.

Then Bilbo spoke, and his withered voice silenced the whole room, even Elrond who had been about to speak. "Frodo is right, I fear," whispered the old hobbit. "I remember, I remember what it was like. To see with the Black Sight. I remember. The Enemy will think that we might not trust one another, that the weaker among us will propose to destroy the Ring so that the stronger may not have it. He knows that even one not truly good might still cry to destroy the Ring, to make a show of pretended goodness. And the Enemy will *not* think it impossible that such a decision be made by this council, for you see, he does not trust us to be wise." A whispering chuckle rose from the ancient hobbit's throat. "And if he did — why, he would *still* guard the Cracks of Doom. It would cost him little."

Now foreboding was on the faces even of the Elves, and the Wise; Elrond had frowned, and the sharp eyebrows of Gandalf furrowed.

Frodo gazed at them all, feeling a wildness come over him, a despair; and as his heart weakened a shadow came over his vision, a darkness and a wavering. From within the shadow Frodo saw Gandalf, and the wizard's strength was revealed as weakness, and his wisdom folly. For Frodo knew, as the Ring seemed to drag and weigh on his breast, that Gandalf had not thought at all of history and lore, when the wizard spoke of how the Enemy would not

understand any desire save power; that Gandalf had not remembered how Sauron had cast down and corrupted the Men of Númenor in the days of their glory. Just as it had not occurred to Gandalf that the Enemy might learn to comprehend foes of goodwill by *looking*...

Frodo's gaze swung to Elrond, but there was no hope there, no answer and no rescue in the shadowy vision; for Elrond had let Isildur go, carrying the Ring from the Cracks of Doom where it should have been destroyed, to the cost of all this war. Not for Isildur's own sake, not for friendship had it been done, for the Ring had killed Isildur in the end, and far worse fates could have followed him. But the Doom that had stemmed from Isildur's deed would have seemed unsure to Elrond then, unsure and distant in time; and yet the cost to Elrond himself of taking his sword's pommel to the back of Isildur's head would have been surer, and nearer...

As though in desperation, Frodo turned to look at Aragorn, the weathered man who had donned his travel-worn clothes for this council, the heir of kings who spoke softly to hobbits. But Frodo's vision seemed to double, and in the shadowy second image Frodo saw a Man who had spent too much of his youth among Elves, who had learned to wear humble and stained clothes amid the gold and jewels, knowing he could not match them wisdom for wisdom, and hoping to outplay them in a fashion they would not emulate...

In the sight of the Ring, which was the sight of the Ring's own Maker, all noble things faded into stratagems and lies, a world of grey and darkness without any light. They had not made their choices knowingly, Gandalf or Elrond or Aragorn; the impulses had come from the dark hidden parts of themselves, the black secret depths which the Ring had rendered plain in Frodo's vision. Would they outthink the Shadow, when they could not comprehend even their own selves, or the forces that moved them?

"Frodo!" came the sharp whisper of Bilbo's voice, and Frodo came to himself, and halted his hand reaching up toward where the Ring lay on his breast, on its chain, dragging like a vast stone around his neck.

Reaching up to grasp the Ring wherein all answers lay.

"How did you bear this thing?" Frodo whispered to Bilbo, as if the two of them were the only souls in the room, though all the Council watched them. "For years? I cannot imagine it."

"I kept it locked in a room to which only Gandalf had the key," said his uncle, "and when I began to imagine ways to open it, I remembered Gollum."

A shudder went through Frodo, remembering the tales. The horror of the Misty Mountains, thinking, always thinking in the dark; ruling the goblins

from the shadows and filling the tunnels with traps; but for Bilbo wearing the ring that first time not a single dwarf would have lived. And now, Legolas the Elf had told them, Gollum had given up on sending his agents against the Shire, had at last found the courage to leave his mountains and seek the Ring himself. That was Gollum, the fate which Frodo would share himself, if the Ring were not destroyed.

Only they had no way to destroy the Ring.

The Shadow had foreseen every move they could make. Had *almost*—Frodo still could not imagine how it had been done, how the Shadow had arranged such a thing—had *almost* maneuvered the Council into sending the Ring straight into Mordor with only a tiny guard set on it, as they would have done if Frodo and Bilbo had not been there.

And having foregone that swiftest of all possible defeats, the only question remaining was how long it would take to lose. Gandalf had delayed too long, delayed far too long to set this march in motion. It could have been so easy, if only Bilbo had set out eighty years earlier, if only Bilbo had been told what Gandalf had already suspected, if only Gandalf's heart had not silently flinched away from the prospect of being embarrassingly wrong...

Frodo's hand spasmed on his breast; without thought, his fingers began to rise again toward the vast weight of the chain on which the Ring hung.

All he had to do was put on the Ring.

Just that, and all would become clear to him, once more the slowness and mud would leave his thoughts, all possibilities and futures transparent to him, he would see through the Shadow's plans and devise an irresistible counterstroke—

—and he would never be able to take off the Ring, not again, not by any will that would be left to him. All Frodo had of those moments were fading memories, but he knew that it had felt like dying, to let all his towers of thought collapse and become only Frodo once more. It had felt like dying, he remembered that much of Weathertop even if he remembered little else. And if he did wear the Ring again, it would be better to die with it on his finger, to end his life while he was still himself; for Frodo knew that he could not withstand the effects of wearing the Ring a second time, not afterward when the limitless clarity was lost to him...

Frodo looked around the Council, at the poor lost leaderless Wise, and he knew they could not defeat the Shadow by their own strength.

"I will wear it one last time," Frodo said, his voice broken and failing, as

he had known from the beginning that he would say in the end, "one last time to find the answer for this Council, and then there will be other hobbits."

"No!" screamed the voice of Sam, as the other hobbit began to rush forward from where he had hidden; even as Frodo, with movement as swift and precise as a Nazgûl, took out the Ring from beneath his shirt; and somehow Bilbo was already standing there and had already thrust his finger through.

It all happened before even Gandalf's staff could point, before Aragorn could level the hilt-shard of his sword; the Dwarves shouted in shock, and the Elves were dismayed.

"Of course," said Bilbo's voice, as Frodo began to weep, "I see it now, I understand everything at last. Listen, listen and swiftly, here is what you must do—"

THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

With a critical eye, Peter looked over the encamped Centaurs with their bows, Beavers with their long daggers, and talking Bears with their chainmail draped over them. He was in charge, because he was one of the mythical Sons of Adam and had declared himself High King of Narnia; but the truth was he didn't really know much about encampments, weapons, and guard patrols. In the end all he could see was that they all looked proud and confident, and Peter had to hope they were right about that; because if you couldn't believe in your own people, you couldn't believe in anyone.

"They'd scare me, if I had to fight 'em," Peter said finally, "but I don't know if it's enough to beat... her."

"You don't suppose this mysterious lion will actually show up and help us, d'you?" said Lucy. Her voice was very quiet, so that none of the creatures around them would hear. "Only it'd be nice to really have him, don't you think, instead of just letting people think that he put us in charge?"

Susan shook her head, shaking the magical arrows in the quiver on her back. "If there was really someone like that," Susan said, "he wouldn't have let the White Witch cover the land in winter for a hundred years, would he?"

"I had the strangest dream," Lucy said, her voice even quieter, "where we didn't have to organize any creatures or convince them to fight, we just



walked into this place and the lion was already here, with all the armies already mustered, and he went and rescued Edmund, and then we rode alongside him into this tremendous battle where he killed the White Witch..."

"Did the dream have a moral?" said Peter.

"I don't know," said Lucy, blinking and looking a little puzzled. "In the dream it all seemed pointless somehow."

"I think maybe the land of Narnia was trying to tell you," said Susan, "or maybe it was just your own dreams trying to tell you, that if there was really such a person as that lion, there'd be no use for *us*."

MY LITTLE PONY: FRIENDSHIP IS SCIENCE

"Applejack, who told me outright that I was mistaken, represents the spirit of ... honesty!" Twilight Sparkle raised her head even higher, mane blowing like a wind about the dusky sky of her neck. "Fluttershy, who approached the manticore to find out about the thorn in its paw, represents the spirit of ... investigation! Pinkie Pie, who realized that the awful faces were just trees, represents the spirit of ... formulating alternative hypotheses! Rarity, who solved the serpent's problem represents the spirit of ... creativity! Rainbow Dash, who saw through the false offer of her heart's desire, represents the spirit of ... analysis! Marie-Susan, who made us convince her that we were right before she agreed to come on our expedition, represents the spirit of ... peer review! And when those Elements are ignited by the spark of curiosity that resides in the heart of all of us, it creates the seventh element — the Element of Sci-"

The blast of power that came forth was like a wind of moonless night, it caught Marie-Susan before the pony could even flinch, and she was gone without a trace before any of them had the chance to rear in shock.

From the dark thing that stood in the center of the dais where the Elements had shattered, from the scarce-recognizable void-black outline of a horse, came a voice that seemed to bypass all ears and burn like cold fire, sounding directly in the brain of everypony who heard:

Did you expect me to just stand there and let you finish?

Twilight Sparkle stared at the space where Marie-Susan had been, where not a trace of the unicorn remained. *She – she just – she –* In the back of her mind, unheard, she was aware that Rarity was screaming.

That wasn't a disintegration, said the voice of Nightmare. I sent her somewhere else.

Rarity's scream stopped abruptly.

Twilight Sparkle felt like her own scream was only beginning. Seven. It took seven ponies to use the Elements of Inquiry. Everyone knew that no matter how honest, investigating, skeptical, creative, analytic, or curious you were, what really made your work Science was when you published your results in a prestigious journal. Everyone knew that. Could there be more than one Element of Peer Review at a time — how long would it take to find another one — and the Nightmare wouldn't just stand there and let them do it —

"Where?" yelled Rainbow Dash. "Where'd you put her?"

I put the little pony in the same place I bound my pathetic sister, in the heart of her pathetic Sun.

"She'll die!" cried Fluttershy, staring at the Nightmare in horror. "It's too hot, she'll burn!"

Oh, don't worry. The power of the Nightmare surrounds your little friend, keeping her safe and cool, sustaining her without food or drink. She will suffer nothing more than boredom...

The void-black outline stepped off the dais, walking slowly, deliberately, past the remaining six ponies.

...so long as the Nightmare's power is not broken. By any backup plans my sister may have set in motion, for example, and which may be known to you. In that case she will vaporize instantly. Such a lovely thing, friendship. It makes such a wonderful instrument of blackmail. Be sure to keep safe the Elements of Inquiry. You wouldn't want anyone else using them on me, now would you?

"No," whispered Twilight Sparkle, as the horror began to dawn on her.

Then a crawling sensation all over her skin, as the Nightmare walked past her, and the deadly power brushed her with its cold caress.

Now if you'll pardon me, my little ponies, I have an eternal night to rule over.

THE VILLAGE HIDDEN IN THE CLARITY

"Consider the computational power required to manifest over a hundred shadow clones," the Uchiha genius said in his dispassionate tones. "It is an

error of rationality, Sakura, to say 'fluke' and think you have explained anything. 'Fluke' is simply the name one gives to data that one is ignoring."

"But it *has* to be a fluke!" Sakura yelled. With effort, she calmed her voice into the careful precision expected of a rationality ninja; it wouldn't do to have her crush think she was stupid. "Like you said, the computational power required to use over a hundred Kage Bunshin is simply absurd. We're talking the level of a major superintelligence. Naruto's the dead last of our class. He's not even jounin-level smart, let alone a superintelligence!"

The Uchiha's eyes gleamed, almost as though he had activated his Smartingan. "Naruto can manifest a hundred independently acting clones. He *must* have the raw brainpower. But, under ordinary circumstances, something prevents him from using this computational power efficiently... like a mind at war within itself, perhaps? We now have cause to believe that Naruto is in some way connected to a superintelligence, and as a recently graduated genin, he, like us, is fifteen years old. What happened fifteen years ago, Sakura?"

It took a moment for Sakura to comprehend, to remember, and then she understood.

The attack of the Nine-Brains Demon Fox.

Just a small bone-white creature with big ears and bigger tail and beady red eyes. It was no stronger than an ordinary fox, it didn't breathe fire or flash laser eyes, it possessed no chakra and no magic of any kind, but its intelligence was over nine thousand times that of a human being.

Hundreds had been killed, half the buildings wrecked, almost the whole village of Beisugakure had been destroyed.

"You think the Kyubey is hiding inside Naruto?" Sakura said. A moment later, her brain automatically went on to fill in the obvious implications of the theory. "And the software conflict between their existences is why he acts like a gibbering idiot half the time, but can control a hundred Kage Bunshin. Huh. That makes... a lot of sense... actually..."

Sasuke gave her the brief, contemptuous nod of someone who had figured all this out on his own, without anyone else needing to prompt *him*.

"Ano..." said Sakura. Only years of sanity exercises channeled her complete screaming panic into pragmatically useful policy options. "Shouldn't we... tell someone about this? Like, sometime in the next five seconds?"

"The adults already know," Sasuke said emotionlessly. "It is the obvious explanation for their treatment of Naruto. No, the real question is how this fits into the outwitting of the Uchiha..."

"I don't see how it fits at all —" began Sakura.

"It *must* fit!" A tinge of frantic emotion flickered in Sasuke's voice. "I asked that man *why* he did it, and he told me that when I knew the answer to that, it would explain *everything!* Surely *this* must also be part of what is to be explained!"

Sakura sighed to herself. Her personal hypothesis was that Itachi had just been trying to drive his brother into clinical paranoia.

"Yo, kids," said the voice of their rationality sensei from their radio earpieces. "There's a village in Wave trying to build a bridge, and it keeps falling down for no reason anyone can figure out. Meet up at the gates at noon. It's time for your first C-ranked analysis mission."

Erdős in Chains

"How could you do it, Anita?" said Richard, his voice very tight. "How could you coauthor a paper with Jean-Claude? You *study* the undead, you don't collaborate with them on papers!"

"And what about you?" I spat. "You coauthored a paper with Sylvie! It's all right for *you* to be prolific but not *me?*"

"I'm the *head of her institute*," Richard growled. I could feel the waves of science radiating off him; he was angry. "I *have* to work with Sylvie, it doesn't mean anything! I thought our own research was special, Anita!"

"It is," I said, feeling helpless about my inability to explain things to Richard. He didn't understand the thrill of being a polymath, the new worlds that were opening up to me. "I didn't share our research with anyone—"

"But you wanted to," said Richard.

I didn't say anything, but I knew that the look on my face said it all.

"God, Anita, you've changed," said Richard. He seemed to slump in on himself. "Do you realize that the monsters are joking about Blake numbers, now? I used to be your partner in everything, and now—I'm just another werewolf with a Blake number of 1."

* * *

THUNDER SMARTS

"I am *sick* of this!" shouted Liono. "Sick of doing this *every single week!* Our species was capable of *interstellar travel*, Panthro, I *know* the quantities of energy involved! There is no *way* you can't build a nuke or steer an asteroid or *somehow* blow up that ever-living idiot's pyramid!"

* * *





"Fabulous secret knowledge was revealed to me on the day I held aloft my magic book and said: *By the power of Bayes's Theorem!*"

Hate same night

I am the core of my thoughts

Belief is my body

And choice is my blood

I have revised over a thousand judgments

Unafraid of loss

Nor aware of gain

Have withstood pain to update many times

Waiting for truth's arrival.
This is the one uncertain path.
My whole life has been...
Unlimited Bayes Works!

THE NAME O

The eleven-year-old boy who would someday become legend—slayer of dragons, killer of kings—had but one thought upon his mind, as he approached the Sorting Hat to enter into the study of mysteries.

Anywhere but Ravenclaw anywhere but Ravenclaw oh please anywhere but Ravenclaw...

But no sooner the brim of the ancient felted device slipped over his fore-head—

"RAVENCLAW!"

As the table decked in blue began to applaud him, as he approached the dread table where he would spend the next seven years, Kvothe was already wincing inside, waiting for the inevitable; and the inevitable happened almost at once, exactly as he had feared it, before he'd even had a chance to sit down properly.

"So!" an older boy said with the happy expression of someone who's thought of something terribly clever. "Kvothe the Raven, huh?"

TENGEN TOPPA RATIONAL

I have a truly marvelous story for this crossover which this margin is too narrow to contain.

Utilitarian Twilight

"Edward," said Isabella tenderly. She reached up a hand and stroked his cold, sparkling cheek. "You don't have to protect me from anything. I've listed out all the upsides and all the downsides, assigned them consistent relative weights, and it's just really obvious that the benefits of becoming a vampire outweigh the drawbacks."

"Bella," Edward said, and swallowed desperately. "Bella—"

"Immortality. Perfect health. Awakening psychic powers. Easy enough to survive on animal blood once you do it. Even the beauty, Edward, there are people who would give their lives to be pretty, and don't you dare call them shallow until you've tried being ugly. Do you think I'm scared of the word 'vampire'? I'm tired of your arbitrary deontological constraints, Edward. The whole human species ought to be in on your fun, and people are dying by the thousands even as you hesitate."

The gun in his lover's hand was cold against his forehead. It wouldn't kill him, but it would disable him for long enough —

Aladdin Jasmine

Aladdin's face was wistful, but determined, as the newly minted street urchin addressed the blue being of cosmic power for one last time, prepared to leave behind the wealth and hope he had so briefly tasted for the sake of his friend. "Genie, I make my third wish. I wish for you to be—"

Princess Jasmine, who had been staring at this with her mouth open, not quite believing what she was seeing, just barely managed to overcome her paralysis and yank the lamp out of the boy's hand before he could finish the fatal sentence.

"Excuse me," said Jasmine. "Aladdin, my darling, you're cute but you're an idiot, do you know that? Did you not notice how once Jafar got his hands on this lamp, he got his own three wishes—oh, never mind. Genie, I wish for everyone to always be young and healthy, I wish nobody ever had to die if they didn't want to, and I wish for everyone's intelligence to gradually increase at a rate of 1 IQ point per year." She tossed the lamp back to Aladdin. "Go back to what you were doing."

Rationalist Hamlet

HAMLET

Interloper, abandon this strange prank, which makes cruel use of the blindness of my grief, and the good heart of my good friend Horatio. Or else, if thou hast true title to this belov'd form, tell me:

What drawing did I present to Hamlet King, when six years old and scarce out of my sling?

GHOST

'twas a unicorn clad all in mail.

HAMLET

What.



GHOST

Mark me.

HAMLET

Father, I will.

GHOST

My hour is almost come, When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames Must render up myself.

HAMLET

Thou art in torment?

GHOST

Ay, as are all who die unshriven.

HAMLET

Like every Dane this is what I've been taught. Yet I did figure such caprice ill-suited to almighty God. For all who suffer unlook'd for deaths, unattended by God's chosen priests, to be then punish'd for the ill-ordering of the world...

GHOST

'twas not the world that killed me, nor accident of any kind.

HAMLET

What?

GHOST

If thou didst ever thy dear father love, Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET

Oh God.

GHOST

** THE OTHER FANFICTIONS YOU COULD HAVE * BEEN READING

My time grows ever shorter. Wilt thou hear the tale?

HAMLET

No.

GHOST

What?

HAMLET

My love for you does call me to avenge your death, but greater crimes have I heard told this night. If all those murdered go to Hell, and others as well, who would have confess'd had they the time, If people who are, in balance, good, suffer grisly at the hands of God, then I defy God's plan.

Good Ghost, as one who dwells beyond the veil, you know things that we mortals scarce conceive. Tell me: is there some philter or device, outside nature's ken but not outside her means, by which death itself may be escap'd?

GHOST

You seek to evade Hell?

HAMLET

I seek to deny Hell to everyone! and Heaven too, for I suspect the Heaven of our mad God might be a paltry thing, next to the Heaven I will make of Earth, when I am its immortal king.

GHOST

I care not for these things. Death and hell have stripp'd away all of my desires, save for revenge upon my murderer.

HAMLET

Thou shalt not be avenged, save that thou swear:

an I slay thine killer, so wilt thou vouchsafe to me the means by which I might slay death.

He who killed you will join you in the Pit, and then that's it. No further swelling of Hell's ranks will I permit.

GHOST

**

Done. When my brother is slain, he who poured the poison in my ear, then will I pour in yours the precious truth: the making of the Philosopher's Stone. With this Stone, thou may'st procure a philter to render any man immune to death, and more transmute base metal to gold, to fund the provision of this philter to all mankind.

HAMLET

Truly there is nothing beyond the dreaming of philosophy. Wait.

The man whom I must kill-my uncle the king?

GHOST

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts —

HAMLET

Indeed, he has such gifts I near despair, of killing him and yet succeeding to his throne. 'twill be an awesome fight for awesome stakes. Hast thou advice?

A cock crows. Exit Ghost.

HonoreDB has now extended this to a complete ebook entitled A Will Most Incorrect to Heaven: The Tragedy of Prince Hamlet and the Philosopher's Stone
available for \$3 at http://makefoil.com
yes, really

* 30 *

MOBY AND THE METHOD:

"Revenge?" said the peg-legged man. "On a whale? No, I decided I'd just get on with my life."

Alice In The Land Where Things Are Even Crazier Than Here

Alice was sitting by her sister on the bank, reading a book. She had several friends who were older, and if she just asked nicely, they were often happy to lend her books without *quite* so many pictures and conversations as was thought appropriate for a girl her age.

Hot days often made her feel sleepy and stupid, so Alice had thoughtfully wet a handkerchief and placed it at the back of her neck. Still her mind had gone off wandering (just as if it was some little kitten whose owner had taken off her eyes for just a moment), and she had just decided that the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth around 4/3 of the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, which was nonetheless not equal to the opportunity cost of putting down her book, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so *very* remarkable in that; nor, in fact, did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!" But when the Rabbit actually *took a watch out of its waistcoat — pocket*, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice froze in sudden clarity and fear, for she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it. "Oh bother," she said to herself (though not aloud; she had long since cured herself of that habit, as it made people take her even less seriously than they already did). "If I did not immediately recognize how much curiouser that was than the average rabbit, then something is interfering with my curiosity, and that is most curious of



all." So, burning with questions, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD

MORPHEUS: For the longest time, I wouldn't believe it. But then I saw the fields with my own eyes, watched them liquefy the dead so they could be fed intravenously to the living —

NEO (politely): Excuse me, please.

MORPHEUS: Yes, Neo?

NEO: I've kept quiet for as long as I could, but I feel a certain need to speak up at this point. The human body is the most inefficient source of energy you could possibly imagine. The efficiency of a power plant at converting thermal energy into electricity *decreases* as you run the turbines at lower temperatures. If you had any sort of food humans could eat, it would be more efficient to burn it in a furnace than feed it to humans. And now you're telling me that their food is *the bodies of the dead, fed to the living?* Haven't you ever heard of the laws of thermodynamics?

MORPHEUS: Where did *you* hear about the laws of thermodynamics, Neo?

NEO: Anyone who's made it past one science class in high school ought to know about the laws of thermodynamics!

MORPHEUS: Where did you go to high school, Neo?

(Pause.)

NEO: ...in the Matrix.

MORPHEUS: The machines tell elegant lies.

(Pause.)

NEO (in a small voice): Could I please have a real physics textbook?

MORPHEUS: There is no such thing, Neo. The universe doesn't run on math.

OMAKE FILE V

FINAL EXAM

The following was posted at the end of Chapter 113:

This is your final exam.

You have 60 hours.

Your solution must at least allow Harry to evade immediate death, despite being naked, holding only his wand, facing 36 Death Eaters plus the fully resurrected Lord Voldemort.

If a viable solution is posted before *12:01AM Pacific Time* (8:01AM UTC) on Tuesday, March 3rd, 2015, the story will continue to Ch. 121.

Otherwise you will get a shorter and sadder ending.

Keep in mind the following:

- 1. Harry must succeed via his own efforts. The cavalry is not coming. Everyone who might want to help Harry thinks he is at a Quidditch game.
- 2. Harry may only use capabilities the story has already shown him to have; he cannot develop wordless wandless Legilimency in the next 60 seconds.
- 3. Voldemort is evil and cannot be persuaded to be good; the Dark Lord's utility function cannot be changed by talking to him.
- 4. If Harry raises his wand or speaks in anything except Parseltongue, the Death Eaters will fire on him immediately.
- 5. If the simplest timeline is otherwise one where Harry dies-if Harry

cannot reach his Time-Turner without Time-Turned help—then the Time-Turner will not come into play.

6. It is impossible to tell lies in Parseltongue.

**

Within these constraints, Harry is allowed to attain his full potential as a rationalist, now in this moment or never, regardless of his previous flaws.

Of course 'the rational solution', if you are using the word 'rational' correctly, is just a needlessly fancy way of saying 'the best solution' or 'the solution I like' or 'the solution I think we should use', and you should usually say one of the latter instead. (We only need the word 'rational' to talk about ways of thinking, considered apart from any particular solutions.)

And by Vinge's Principle, if you know exactly what a smart mind would do, you must be at least that smart yourself. Asking someone "What would an optimal player think is the best move?" should produce answers no better than "What do you think is best?"

So what I mean in practice, when I say Harry is allowed to attain his full potential as a rationalist, is that Harry is allowed to solve this problem the way YOU would solve it. If you can tell me exactly how to do something, Harry is allowed to think of it.

But it does not serve as a solution to say, for example, "Harry should persuade Voldemort to let him out of the box" if you can't yourself figure out how.

The rules on Fanfiction dot Net allow at most one review per chapter. Please submit *ONLY ONE* review of Ch. 113, to submit one suggested solution.

For the best experience, if you have not already been following Internet conversations about recent chapters, I suggest **not** doing so, trying to complete this exam on your own, not looking at other reviews, and waiting for Ch. 114 to see how you did.

I wish you all the best of luck, or rather the best of skill.

Ch. 114 will post at 10AM Pacific (6PM UTC) on Tuesday, March 3rd, 2015.

ADDED:

If you have pending exams, then even though the bystander effect is a thing,

I expect that the collective effect of 'everyone with more urgent life issues stays out of the effort' shifts the probabilities very little (because diminishing marginal returns on more eyes and an already-huge population that is participating).

So if you can't take the time, then please don't. Like any author, I enjoy the delicious taste of my readers' suffering, finer than any chocolate; but I don't want to "hurt" you.

Likewise, if you hate hate this sort of thing, then don't participate! Other people ARE enjoying it. Just come back in a few days. I shouldn't even need to point this out.

I remind you again that you have hours to think. Use the Hold Off On Proposing Solutions, Luke.

And really truly, I do mean it, Harry cannot develop any new magical powers or transcend previously stated constraints on them in the next sixty seconds.

* * *

Unsurprisingly, this led to a lot of reader submissions. An awful lot.

You can see the fallout on the /r/HPMOR subreddit. If you're reading this somewhere that the previous text isn't a link, you can go to http://www.reddit.com/r/HPMOR and search for "Help! My evil plan has worked all too well!"

OMAKEFILEVI

DISCLAIMERS AND EPIGRAPHS

Included here are the disclaimers and epigraphs from the first thirty or so chapters. NB: Chapter 11 in the original (Omake Files) is Appendix B in this PDF.

* * *

-1-

Disclaimer: J. K. Rowling owns Harry Potter, and no one owns the methods of rationality.

-2-

#include "stddisclaimer.h"

"Of course it was my fault. There's no one else here who could be responsible for anything."

-3-

If J. K. Rowling asks you about this story, you know nothing.

"But then the question is—who?"

-4-

**

Disclaimer: J. K. Rowling is watching you from where she waits, eternally in the void between worlds.

"World domination is such an ugly phrase. I prefer to call it world optimisation."

-5-

J. K. Rowling is staring at you. Can you feel her eyes on you? She's reading your mind using her Rowling Rays.

"It would've required a supernatural intervention for him to have your morality given his environment."

-6-

Blah blah disclaimer blah blah Rowling blah blah ownership.

You think your day was surreal? Try mine.

—7 —

Whoa. A spokesman for Rowling's literary agent said that Rowling is okay with the existence of fanfiction as long as no one charges for it and everyone's clear that the original copyrights belong to her? That's really cool of her. So thank you, JKR, and thine is the kingdom!

"Your dad is almost as awesome as my dad."

— 8 **—**

All these worlds are J. K. Rowling's, except Europa. Attempt no fanfics there.

"Allow me to warn you that challenging my ingenuity is a dangerous sort of project, and may tend to make your life a lot more surreal."

-9-

All your base are belong to J. K. Rowling.

You never did know what tiny event might upset the course of your master plan.

— 10 **—**

**

All your base are still belong to Rowling.

And now you will sit through the Sorting Hat singing its version of Evanescence's "My Immortal", which has never happened before.

just kidding

-11-

Hail the Dark Lord Rowling.

-12-

ph'nglui mglw'nafh J. K. Rowling wgah'nagl fhtagn

"Wonder what's wrong with him."

-13-

Elen sila J. K. Rowling omentielvo.

"That's one of the most obvious riddles I've ever heard."

— 14 —

Melenkurion abatha! Duroc minas mill J. K. Rowling!

There were mysterious questions, but a mysterious answer was a contradiction in terms.

-15-

Love as thou Rowling.

"I'm sure I'll find the time somewhere."

-16-

The enemy's gate is Rowling.

I'm not a psychopath, I'm just very creative.

$$-17-$$

You have always been J. K. Rowling.

"You start to see the pattern, hear the rhythm of the world."

-18-

Any sufficiently advanced J. K. Rowling is indistinguishable from magic.

"That does sound like the sort of thing I would do, doesn't it?"

-19-

Blood for the blood god! Skulls for J. K. Rowling!

-20 -

That which can be destroyed by the Rowling should be.

-21-

Rowling is whoever does Rowling's job.

-22-

The key to strategy is not to choose *a* path to J. K. Rowling, but to choose so that *all* paths lead to a J. K. Rowling.

-23-

Everybody wants a rock to wind a piece of string around J. K. Rowling.

-24 -

J. K. Rowling coils and strikes, unseen; Orca circles, hard and lean.

-25-

To seek out new life, and J. K. Rowling!

-26-

**

Yakka foob mog. Grug pubbawup zink wattoom gazork. Chumble spuzz J. K. Rowling.

-27 -

J. K. Rowling is 87% confident you will burst into flames.

-28 -

Whatever can go Rowling will go Rowling.

-29-

Unfortunately, no one can be told who J. K. Rowling is. You have to see her for yourself.

-30 -

J. K. Rowling if a man tries to bother you, you can think blue, count two, and look for a red shoe.

-33-

I just recite to myself, over and over, until I can choose sleep: It all adds up to J. K. Rowling.

GRATITUDES AND SOURCES

Find the original text by Eliezer Yudkowsky at http://hpmor.com

The LATEX source for this book can be found at https://github.com/ TheAllSeeing/hpmor-xetex

This book owes its life to many, many passionate fans; The content are derived from the works of Blaise Whiteshell, itself based on the work of Josh Larios.

The cover art is a composition and modification of many fans' work, as well. The colorscheme and style is mostly taken from art by Ian Storm Taylor. The art and form of the back covers is mostly taken from cover art by Lily Yao Lu. Front art is mostly taken from a version by the user phaedrus2000 on reddit. Additional changes to the cover art, as well as the final style and most of the form used in the book were presented on reddit also by user ForeChin99.



Book 1: Harry James Potter-Evans-Verres and the Letter from Hogwarts

Book 2: Harry James Potter-Evans-Verres and the Legion of Chaos

Book 3: Harry James Potter-Evans-Verres and the Shadows of Death

Book 4: Harry James Potter-Evans-Verres and the Call of the Phoenix

Book 5: Harry James Potter-Evans-Verres and the Last Enemy

Book 6: Harry James Potter-Evans-Verres and the Philosopher's Stone