

INT - CHILD'S BEDROOM - EVENING

A boy of around 10 sits in his room, surrounded by enormous books that each weigh as much as he does. Papers with formulae are thrown over every surface that can hold them, and tucked into corners where they can't. Drawings accompany the formulae, elaborate sketches of wild beasts beyond imagining, surrounded by arcane sigils. A constant, muffled noise drones from a distance. Among all the chaos sits the boy in the one clear space, sitting in a lotus pose and trying desperately to concentrate.

BOY

AUUURRGH!! WHY CAN'T I GET THIS?!

The boy waves his hands in a complicated pattern trying to bring out the sigils, fingers streaming light that hangs in the air for a brief moment before collapsing into a puff of smoke.

BOY

AAAAARRRRRGHH!!

The boy punches the ground as hard as he can.

A moment later a knock comes from the door

DAD

Everything ok in there?

The door creaks open and an older man stands in it, looking in at the chaos.

BOY

I just can't get this!

DAD

Well just keep it down, please. I'm trying to watch TV.

BOY

Sorry, dad!

The door closes, leaving the boy to his works. The volume from the TV goes up and we start to hear military gunfire through the walls. The boy tries to focus his mind on what he's doing but each time he does, another explosion bursts loudly through the door frame, breaking his concentration. This continues over and over again as time passes and evening turns to night and still the boy has not manifested anything despite his continued work.

The boy focuses all of his will into a new casting, very nearly creating a small creature out of thin air when suddenly a round of gunfire cuts through the air, shattering his concentration.

The boy tentatively pokes his head out of the door to see his father sitting in front of a TV, surrounded by action movies just as the boy is surrounded by books and formulas.

BOY

Dad? Could you turn the TV down a little, please?

DAD

Oh, sorry, are low-brow action movies interrupting your brilliant research?

BOY

No, I just can't concentrate. Some of the explosions are kinda loud.

DAD

I don't know why you're wasting your time with that stuff anyway.

It's not like we can afford a magic school, you know? Just learn to be a mechanic, like me! We've always got jobs at the shop!

BOY

I know dad. I just-

DAD

You'll be happier there anyway. Mages don't get paid enough. Always starving for their work cause they're so convinced They should be worth more than anyone's willing to pay

DAD (CONT'D)

It's just not a very practical career path. You should go into something with more consistent-

The boy closes his door slowly and quietly as another round of gunfire drowns out his father's ranting about how insecure and feminine magic makes young men, and how they all just wind up face down in the gutter eventually, depressed and drugged out because of their poor choices.

The boy grabs a book out of frustration, throwing it across his room, pages flying in every direction and landing among all the rest. He sits down again in his little circle of clear space, pushing aside the new pages that drifted there. He begins to draw more sigils in the air. He fails once again.

He almost screams, but keeps it in, looking at the door. He boils inside instead, quietly. His arms wave furiously and silently through the air as he kicks pages wantonly. He grabs a page and draws a sigil on it, setting it on fire. He draws other random sigils in the air, blasting pages around his room with air magic or turning pages to stone. His rage builds as he throws symbols in every direction he can, unthinkingly, until he accidentally combines one last sigil and lightning arcs in a circle, forming a portal in the air.

He stops, staring at the window cut in the air. On the other side is a beautiful green landscape of rolling hills with a glorious, bejeweled tower glinting in the sunlight. The boy looks at the portal in awe, studying the sigils he had combined and writing them into a notebook. As he writes the last of them down, the portal flickers and winks out of existence.

He looks at his notebook and begins copying the sigils again, drawing them in the air where the portal was just a moment ago. As he finishes the last one, a new portal opens, the same landscape appears as a breeze blows over the glade. He sticks a hand through as another knock rings out on his room's door.

DAD

Hey! It's 9 o'clock, time for The Late Show.

BOY

But dad I just got this working finally

The door to his room opens and his dad sticks his head in again.

DAD

Hey, I know it seems silly to you now

But this is our time for each other

You'll look back on this one day and realize

Just how important it is to spend time with family

The boy looks at his portal, which his dad still hasn't bothered to so much as glance at, and waves an arm to dispel the sigils from the air, closing it once again. The boy walks into the living room and sits dutifully on the couch, pretending to watch TV while looking over his shoulder back at his room.

TV ANNOUNCER

Today we're speaking with Xel'Tath The Wizeded

Headmaster of the Cal'Arr Wizards Coven

Xel'Tath, tell our viewers a bit about your school

The boy looks up at the TV to see a photograph taken of the tower he'd just seen through his portal. The boy's eyes open wide and his attention focuses raptly onto the screen.

XEL'TATH

Well, Mary, thanks for speaking with me today.

Cal'Arr represents the finest magic academy in the world

Accepting students from all walks of life

The only entry requirement is that you find the tower yourself

MARY (TV ANNOUNCER)

And what do you say to concerned parents about

The allegation that your school steals children from their homes

DAD

Filthy mages always breaking into peoples' homes

See, son? These degenerates kidnap children

Probably force them to work in labor camps, ya know?

DAD (CONT'D)

It's all just a racket to turn people into communists!

BOY

But dad, Mrs Johnson used to be a wizard

DAD

And she quit! Like any sensible person does.
She gave up on that nonsense and accepted light into her heart!
You just need to live life by the light
And all your problems will be solved
I promise. I've been there and done that.
You'll come to understand it all when you're older.

XEL'TATH

Categorically untrue, once again
Just completely baseless

BOY

I don't really think-

His dad presses a button and the TV switches back to an action movie instead

DAD

Sick of hearing that bearded idiot
Guess we'll just have to bond over an action movie!
This'll be good for your brain anyway
Teach you how a man is supposed to act!

The boy looks at the TV with a disgusted expression, and then back at his room with longing, but then settles in with resignation to watch this generic action movie.

The boy sits, mindlessly staring at the TV while some muscle-bound meathead with fifty six guns strapped across his body drives an enormous monster truck across the bodies of hundreds of robed wizards.

The boy's eyes glaze over and he falls asleep.

DAD

Oh man! I love that movie!

Alright kid, it's bed time, let's get you ready!

The boy gets himself ready for bed and goes into his room once again. The door closes with a perfunctory goodnight from dad, and the boy is left finally in silence.

He looks over at the cleared off space on his floor, and pulls the notebook page from his pocket. He straightens it and holds it up in the dim light.

He glances towards the door, and then back to the blank space in his room. He stares at the notebook page and finally comes to a decision. He walks across the chaos strewn across every inch of his room, and begins to draw sigils in the air. The portal opens up once again, as the boy sees the tower in the distance.

The boy looks around his room briefly and steps through.

Screen fades to black

CUT TO (or maybe as a credits scene)

INT - CAL'ARR WIZARD'S TOWER - DAY

The boy sits on a clean bed with an organized shelf of books beside it. His work desk holds a single page on it, covered in a complex magical formula far beyond anything we saw on his floor. The boy lays across his bed, smiling, and his room is completely, totally silent.