

Excerpts from Mr. Graves' Journal

This work is copyright © 2006, Luther Tychonievich. All rights reserved.

Day of my life 22,987:

Spent all day traveling with Cor. Bland trip; were crossing inlands in morning and slo in afternoon. Ad-dled a few rangers and one peasant; nothing serious, light day. Fourth tentacle growing nicely.

Met Emily Mulgrave. Serious exterior, iron-minded (perhaps more than GF?), but with a keen appreciation of fun. I think she may be a spellweaver; definitely not a nebulonic knight though. More incanter about her.

About to sleep in a bed for first time in weeks.

Day of my life 22,988:

Made effort to depart in morning, but Em asked me to remain for a few days. Asked her about food in slo; she said she knows a butcher who wouldn't mind my deminding his beasts. This raised a number of questions.

"Em," asked I, "I'm an illithid. How am I to wander over to the butcher unmolested, even were he to agree to let me rob his prey of their thoughts?"

"I think a beard would do the trick."

"A beard? Surely you jest."

"No, not at all. Here, I think Cor has one in the dress-up box."

Cor replied with excitement that she did, and procured said rag. Huge, bushy, itchy, but effective.

"What about my eyes? You hominids all have yours sort of set back into pits in your face; and you have noses. All I look like is an illithid with a mop on his face."

"You sound like one too," Cor giggled.

"Yes, you're absolutely right," said Em. "I'll fix you up in a jiff, though."

She pulled from an urn on the mantle a little metal skewer, then from a box in the kitchen she procured, by use of the skewer, a single small hardsmord. She took this up into her room, returning some minutes later positively dripping with magic and carrying the hardsmord, which glowed and jiggled and no longer looked likely to run away, as they usually do. I admit I was a bit surprised.

"Now," she said, handing me the blob, "I assume you know the basic lexicon?"

This meant nothing to me, and I sad as much.

"Have you learned the particles for cantrips?"

I replied in the affirmative, and she told me a set to say. I did, and the hardsmord immediately sunk into the flesh of my hand, right out of view. This was surprising, but not so much so as the feeling that immediately came over me. My tentacles started bifurcating over and over until they felt like limp strings; my beak twisted and morphed until it finally turned into a puffy red nose and thin lips; my eyes retreated until they hung half-observed by a brow that seemed to grow out of my head without provocation.

"Bro wag o wappago'uth skle?" I said, my voice coming out all human and garbled.

"You'll have to use a human cypher now, I'm afraid," said Em.

"What have you perpetrated now?" I repeated.

"Its called minor warp ball. The smord should be good for several months, at least, and I'll be back by then."

This was the first intimation either Cor or I had had that Em was planning on leaving. Cor (who had just come back from returning the fake beard to the dress-up box and had been about to say something to me) suddenly turned to her mother and nearly shouted with joy, "Are we going out again?"

No, as it turned out, only Em was. Cor was to stay and go to school, and I was to stay and "hold down the fort," a rather odd idea. I pointed out to Em that she didn't even know me, that maybe I didn't want to stay in the slo at all, and such, but all she said was, "Now, you can extract and re-insert the minor warp ball at will," and taught me the reverse incantation. I pointed my beard-tentacles at her for her uncouthness, but she insisted so I transformed back and forth a few times until I did it to her satisfaction.

Then she took Cor and I out to do a little shopping and introduce me to the butcher. She said I was a friend of hers researching the process of death in hopes of learning to reverse it and wondered if I could drop by once in a while and kill the meat. He agreed, and I got my first real meal in over a week.

When we finished shopping Em got out a pipod and left. I extracted the ball and Cor and I played until dark.

And now to bed.

Day of my life 22,989:

This morning I was sitting down to a good book I found in Em's library (Marto Gru, *Eating my Words*) when the door was opened by a rather peevish looking young lady with a small shock of curly black hair.

"Mrs. Mulgrave?" she said as she slammed the door behind herself.

"She's out," I replied, rising.

The woman turned as I rose and gave a look which neatly mixed horror, anger, and disbelief.

"Who are you? Take that thing off your head this instant. Don't you dare make splashing noises at me. Mrs. Mulgrave, there's a freak in you front room!"

"I told you, she's out," I said again, and then I heard Cor behind me say "Hello, Mrs. Fendbinger. Em's gone. This is Mr. Graves. He's looking after me for a while."

Mrs. Fendbinger regarded me with a most dubious expression. "Take that thing off your head this instant," she said, but less forcefully than last time.

I started to reply, but Cor cut me off. "He can't. It is his head. He's an illithid."

In response to this, the flighty woman screamed "NO!", pulled a knife from her belt and, darting across the room, tried to stab me with it. I caught her arm and deflected her attack, and then I saw Cor's lazer handle light. Fendbinger saw it too and with a single kick knocked Cor off her feet. I heard her body slam into the wall with a dull thud as our assailant made another drive to carve out my heart.

I reached out my tentacles to give her mind the tiniest nudge, trying to calm her a bit. However, the moment I touched her mind, before I had time to do anything at all to it, it leapt right out of the back of her head. I suddenly had a corpse on my hands.

My first matter of business was to determine if I actually had two corpses. To my great relief, Cor was not dead, nor even knocked all the way out. She was badly bruised and winded, and the floor boards where her lazer had fallen were in tatters, but her bones and mind were intact.

"Did you kill Mrs. Fendbinger?" Cor asked me.

"No," I replied truthfully, "she died of shock."

"Oh." There was a moment's silence, and then she said, "Where ever did she learn to kick like that?"

"Probably the same place she obtained a sacrificial dagger," I answered, for I had been inspecting the knife and found it completely covered with sets of verses about "purging" and "cleansed by blood" and such.

After a few moments discussion, Cor decided the best course was to take the corpse into the city and show it to the school board. I was dubious about this, but Cor said it was quite usual and we ought to do it. So I inserted the m.w.b. and lifted the corpse in my arms and we started off. To my surprise, no one seemed to think it odd to see a pink-skinned bald man with a bushy beard carrying a corpse and being led by a little girl. Cor was right. Slos aren't really that civilized at all.

The school board consisted of eight souls, six of them boring middle-aged folk who struck me as altogether the sort to keep away from children. There was also an old fossil of a lady named Scarlet who seemed to be in charge and one young and over-eager man.

"Pardon me for interrupting your meeting," I began.

"Why is this girl with you?" interrupted the youngster.

"She had to come along to show me where the school board—"

"You didn't know where we meet?" I was interrupted again. "Who are you?"

"My name is Mr. Graves. Mrs. Mulgrave asked me to watch her house while she—"

"Mrs. Mulgrave? You mean this little girl?"

"No," replied Cor, "I'm not a Mrs. He means my—"

"Oh, your mother. How do you know the Mulgraves?"

"Why don't we find out what brought them—" began Scarlet.

"Oh, yes, of course. Why are you here?"

"Mrs. Fendbinger," here I held out the corpse, "came by the house this morning—"

"Why did she come to the house?" asked the little man. I was strongly tempted to suppress his mind, but Cor had told me that it was really spooky when I twitched my beard so I refrained.

"I don't know why she came; when she found out that I was Cor's guardian—"

"Who is Cor?"

"I am," replied Cor. The berk seemed about to say something, but when he realized Cor had already finished he just sort of gagged. After a moment of silence, I continued.

"When she discovered who I was, she let out a scream and—"

"Who are you?" Again.

"My name is Mr. Graves. Mrs. Mulgrave asked me—"

"Yes yes, you said all that already."

"She screamed," I tried again, "and threw a little fit, then—"

"What kind of fit?"

"She seemed to lose control of herself. One of her feet flew up and hit Cor in the face—"

"Is that why you are all bruised?"

Cor was about to answer, but before she could he hurried on.

"What happened after the fit?"

"She collapsed on the floor—"

"She passed out?"

"She died." He tried to interrupt me, but was confounded to discover I was already done speaking.

"This," said Scarlet slowly, "is very bad news. School starts in a few days—"

"Tomorrow!" put in the youngster.

"—and we no longer have a teacher for the—"

"For the younger classes, you're absolutely right. We'll have to cancel school."

"We will *not* cancel school!" growled one of the middle-aged men.

"No," added the woman at his left, "if we can get a substitute, we—"

"We'll never get a substitute! Who would want to deal with a bunch of six- and seven-year-olds?"

"Mr. Graves could do it," Cor said. "He's quite a good—"

"NO! NO ONE would send their child to be taught by sickly, puffy old man with a bushy beard and a voice like a SCHNAUZER!"

I raised my beard with my hand (so as not to look conspicuous) and gave a little push; the interrupter, already in a highly volatile state of mind, collapsed on the floor, unconscious.

There was a moment of silence while the other seven members of the board looked at their fallen colleague with polite disinterest. Then Scarlet addressed me.

"Is miss Mulgrave correct? Would you teach the entry-level school's classes tomorrow?"

"It's really not my line of work," I replied.

"Just as a temporary position, until we can find a replacement?"

"Well..." Cor was jumping up and down behind me, saying "do it! do it!" It was this that gave me the impetus to ask, "How are the terms?"

I meant by this, what are the school terms like; the vacation, the course work, the tests, all that. Scarlet thought I meant the pay, and named a figure. I said it was a bit low, given the situation, but if she would give me a little leeway in the structure of the coursework I might consider it. The board wrestled this a while and finally agreed on a number, and Cor and I went home.

I spent the rest of the day working on a lesson plan and discussing with Cor what I ought to teach. I made a trip to the butcher in the evening and after Cor's dinner we were visited by Em.

I do not profess to understand Em. She apparently calls herself a hag when not in the slo; she is definitely a rather gifted and diligent magician. But she seems to forget to tell anyone anything. Her image appeared inside a soup tureen in the cabinet and began shouting for us until we found the tureen and looked inside. She didn't shout "Hey, look inside the cabinet! I've appeared in a soup tureen" or anything helpful like that. She just said "Hello? Hello? Cor? Hello? Mr. Graves? Cor? Hello?" over and over again.

Once we found her and she saw us, she asked Cor for the news. Cor related the day's events, and Em said, I quote, "Ah. End of Fenbinger." That was all.

Then she told us about her day. It went like this:

"So, I piped through the outlands to GF's ruins, but he's gone."

"You rode a pipod in the outlands?" (Cor, incredulous).

"I needed speed more than I needed safety," (Em).

"Where has GF gone?" (self).

"Hm? Oh, I don't know, but I found a description of how to get there in his recording machine. We'll see where it is tomorrow. I rather suspect he went to see Malkh."

"Malkh?" (self).

"Yeah, she's this ancient dragon he was chummy with a good long time ago."

"Not *Maliutka* Malkh?"

"You know her?"

"No, but my dad used to talk about how she was the greatest power in the world, back when it was a ball."

"Ah. Yes, that's the one. Well, have a good night!" And she disappeared.

Day of my life 22,990:

My first day of school.

I am shocked. Humans seem to do pretty well, but it's not because they teach their offspring anything. I was still meeting the kids when one chap said,

"I'm Norton Moten, and I'm going to be a blacksmith like my dad."

"Your name is 'Moten'?" I asked in surprise. Norton nodded. "Doesn't that worry you?"

"Why? What's wrong with my name?"

"Well," I said, "the motens are known to kill people for lighter offenses. They are exceedingly vain."

And that's how I discovered that almost half the class

knew nothing about motens at all! So I shelved the introductions for a moment and shared the basics of motens: original inhabitants of slodoop, ride in indestructible flying boats, sell smord for pineapples, dump hardsmord on cities in the night, more powerful than anything known to—well, anything—and very touchy about anything that can be seen as mockery or rebellion.

Once we had that out of the way, we continued. After the introductions were over, I asked,

“So, we have a lot of people who want to be blacksmiths. Is there a crystal field near here?”

There was an uncomfortable silence. Finally Cor said, “Mr. Graves, what’s a crystal field?”

“Do none of you know what a crystal field is?”

Nobody did. I told them it was a place where you could pour a special sludge water and large ferrous crystals would grow, which could be harvested and melted down to make steel. There was a profound silence after I gave this piece of information.

“Sir, how do you know all this?” asked a girl named Iora.

This question took me by complete surprise. After a moment’s thought I said it was because when I wondered something, I would ask people and if they didn’t know I would go and find out. That was the only way to learn anything.

“If we ask you questions,” ventured Iora again, “will you answer them?”

“If I know the answer I will,” I replied. “Isn’t that what teachers are for?”

“No,” said Cor, “teachers are for yelling and keeping everyone doing the same thing.” There was a nervous giggle at this.

Then came a tide of questions. “How do pipods work?” “Why do men have beards, but women don’t?” “Can you eat bugs?” “Where do babies come from?” “My mom says soap is poison. Is she right?” “What happened to Mrs. Fenbinger?” “Is there really magic?” “Where does paper come from?” and on and on and on.

Finally I said, “Woah up! I can’t answer even half these questions properly if we take all week, and even then half of you won’t care about the answers to half the questions!”

“How do you want me to run this school?”

Again there was silence.

“Ok, how about this. For the first hour I’ll teach you things you need to know, like composition and calculus; for the next hour we’ll take a vote and I’ll teach whatever subject you all agree on. Then we’ll go outside and get the wiggles out, after which we’ll have a quiet bit where you can read and learn on you own. I guess I’ll have to bring

in a library; there’s not much to choose from here. Then luncheon and some practical skills, like cooking or magic or something, and then a bit more instruction before you go home. What do you think?”

Well, there was some problems with this; Ryan couldn’t read very well, Mia thought that practical skills were for low-brows, etc. But finally we got it all straightened out and went outside, where we climbed trees.

When we came inside, since I hadn’t brought books, I taught them that yes, magic does really exist and there are two approaches to it. I talked a little about incantations but more about nebulonics, since that’s what I’m good at.

Then I gave them all an assignment out of the reading primer, which was the only book in the place, and walked around the room, brushing each of them with my beard and shoving what I knew about reading into them. Not the human way, I know, but they should have learned it long ago and I couldn’t teach them without it.

The rest of the afternoon passed uneventfully.

After dinner Em appeared again and told us that she had followed the directions all day and near sunset had come across a recently wrecked letter-12 ship. She figured that GF had used it, and that was why he had followed so closely to landmarks. I don’t confess to know what any of that means, but I’ll look it up in the morning before school.

Day of my life 22,991:

The school board brat reared his ugly head again. In fact, he got to school before I did. I would have been there earlier, but there were such a lot of books I needed to bring, it took Cor and I a while to make the trip.

When we came in, carrying stacks of books from Em’s library, we found most of the children already there, but looking a bit scared. I didn’t, immediately, see the SB member, but Iora, as soon as I walked in the door, said “Mr. Bonhome’s here!” in a sort of a scared whisper.

“Well, yes, I know. Ryan Bonhome goes to school here,” I replied, as I set down my books.

“Not him. His older brother!” she answered.

Glancing around the room, I saw him; standing in the back of the room, arms folded, scowling at me. I decided to ignore him. Moving to the front of the room I said, “Lets begin with some formal methods today, shall we?”

“What are formal methods?” came a growl from the back of the room.

“Math,” I replied.

“Mr. Graves, ‘formal methods’ are not part of the curriculum at this age.”

Ignoring this, I said to the class, "since we haven't done formal methods together, I'll just start reviewing stuff and you tell me if you've seen it before. What is five minus eight?"

"*Not* a topic for this class!" replied Bonhome, leaving the back wall to pace menacingly toward me.

"Bosh."

"Don't you 'bosh' me! The school board is not pleased with your choice of topics!"

"Oh! You mean there are specifics I am supposed to teach?"

"Yes, and 'formal methods' aren't on the list. Nor are any fantasies about magical methodology."

"Then list what the students ought to be able to do by the end of the term. I guarantee if I am given specific teaching targets, I will achieve them."

He gave said list, which was remarkably short. After he finished, I convinced him that if I could meet the objectives, my job would be stable, no matter my pedagogy. I then asked Cor to lead the students in a recitation of the listed objectives, requested Bonhome remain for a few minutes, and left the room.

After a few minutes, Cor called me back in. All the other students were standing in a cluster around the unconscious body of Bonhome. It was gently smoking.

"Cor," I said once I had appraised the situation, "did you just flash Mr. Bonhome?"

"He refused to—"

"Just answer the question."

"Yes."

"Class," I said, "this is a problem."

There was a nervous sort of chatter.

"I had not intended to do this yet, but this opportunity may not come again. I could either wake him up and we could go on with formal methods, or I could teach you enough nebulonics to try to wake him up yourselves, or teach you to defend yourselves against a lazer attack. And I don't know which one to do. What is the solution to this problem?"

"Don't wake him up, sir," said Ryan. The entire class turned to look at him. "He's my brother," he said in explanation.

"At least you have the courage to admit it," said Cor. Ryan did not take this well, and was about to slug Cor when he, too, was flashed.

"Now Cor," I said in a reproofing voice, peeling the lazer off of Ryan's body with my hand. "You've decided me. How to defend against lazer it is."

That's all we did that class. Humans are very poor at

controlling their nerves. I think I'll give up on that task for a while.

Em was waiting for us when we got home. She talked really fast, and Cor talked a lot too, and then I asked Cor to explain some stuff to me afterwards, and here is what I think happened.

GF flew off in a letter-12 ship. Its kind of like the letter-8 that Cor uses, but bigger and faster and more dangerous in some way. He stayed close to the river and eventually crashed the ship. Em found it and spent the night at the wreck.

In the morning she carefully followed the trail of GF and found, a bit after noon, a huge hollow mountain, with caves large enough to fit entire villages in the hallways. She had spent a few hours wandering around, finding absolutely nothing, and then called home to have Cor look something up in a book.

The book was an ancient tome written in a script that is unfamiliar to me; something called Boulder Runes, which Em told Cor was useful because it has no character intersections so it cannot be used to encode thought incantations directly, making it safer than ordinary script. Cor doesn't know what that means, and neither do I. Anyway, the section Cor read to Em was as follows:

Maliutka Malkh says her name means "little emperor" in her native tongue, which apparently belongs to a world that is now dead. She says that mature worlds are her favorite, so when one dies she hops out of the dead world realm back up to a middle-aged sphere. She also claims that true dragons cannot die, a claim that seems so obviously false as to shed doubt on all her trustworthiness.

After hearing this, Em said she thought it most likely that Malkh had popped, and that GF had popped after her, and that if GF could do it she should be able to find the trace. And she signed off.

Once she was gone I asked Cor if she had ever flashed humans before. She said no. I asked her why she had today. She threw a bit of a tantrum and I absorbed a LOT of lazer, and then we had dinner and now the day is over.

I just realized that I left Bonhome's unconscious body in the coat closet at the school. He's probably awake by now. We may have problems tomorrow.

Day of my life 22,992:

No sign of Mr. Bonhome.

Finally, a normal day of school! Formal methods, comparative linguistics, basic dueling, quiet time, lunch, cantrip phoneme practice, and zoology. Bright kids, but I think we may need to change the magic teaching paradigm. When we got home I started looking through Em's books and found one I think may work. I think, though, I'll start with §7; it seems rather fundamental, I have no idea why it is hidden back where it is.

No call from Em tonight.

Day of my life 22,993:

In quiet study time today Piasat was reading through a book on tempering weaponry blades (she had brought it in herself; not part of Em's library) and asked me for help with a section on tempering runework. As I was explaining the part about runes' possible power and such I noticed one particular illustration entitled "Antifreak runework needs to be tempered without the methods here described or else it will loose its ability to bypass all unnatural charms"

The picture looked almost exactly like the knife Mrs. Fenbinger pulled on me.

Not ten minutes later, the door to the classroom was knocked off its hinges (overly showy, if you ask me; it wasn't even locked) and in came a dozen men with rags tied over their faces wearing matching grey jumpsuits.

Recognizing the mind of an old acquaintance, I casually stated "Mr. Bonhome! What would the rest of the school board think about your wanton destruction of school property?" Then, recognizing a need for prompt action on another front I added "Cor! Put away that lazer at once. Drop the stick, Ryan; there will be no fighting in the classroom."

One of the uniformed men intoned in a comically impressive voice, "The impostor calling himself Mr. Graves will come with us."

"Children," I said, "do you suggest I follow this most ineptly issued command?"

"No!" shouted several voices.

"What should I do instead?" I asked.

Cries of "Kick them out!" and related ideas.

"Gentlemen," I said, "I think the children would like you to leave for the time being."

"You're coming with us," was the growled reply. They all whipped out knives with the etchings just alluded to and advanced on me.

I wish, in a pinch, I had the opportunity to reflect upon various alternatives carefully, the way I do when it comes time to pen the actions in my journal. But by this time there is nothing I can do to alter the past, and so I must

relate what I chose then, no matter what I would choose now or how embarrassed I am at what I did.

My first act was to extract the warp ball, feeling a flimsy beard and deep eye sockets were no match for tentacles and protruding eyes. I then fought like a graduate, blinking about the room, eating minds where they showed themselves, blasting others into a state of non-response or even oblivion, kicking and biting and generally making a nuisance of myself. Once no opposition was left I re-inserted the ball and surveyed the room.

It was then that I realized two or three of the problems my actions had caused. Indeed, if I had not had Cor in the room, I almost definitely would have left the schoolroom and returned to the outlands immediately. But Cor was there, and as I was starting to realize the enormity of what I had done she said,

"That was *Totally Awesome!* Can you teach us how to polymorph and teleport and knock people about like that?"

This comment effectively silenced everyone, myself included. After a reasonable pause, Cor started walking among the corpses and prattling again.

"That was so more than anything else that could be, it was too wow to even say wow! Mr. Bonhome unconcious, Mr. Flexberg actually dead, this guy (who is he?) dead too, and... Wow! Mrs. Fenbinger never did anything like this! Oh, here's Mr. Fenbinger...nope, he's dead too. Something tells me this class is going to be—well, just Wow!

"Hmm," she said, pausing to feel for a pulse on one body, "this isn't good. Major Faberwick of the guard is dead too. That means the guard will decide to send down people to watch the school and then we'll never get anything done at all! Now, let's see, how can we get around this? What do you suppose they wanted? Oh, look at this dagger, it's actually glowing a little. Wonder what is means; it says here around the pommel, 'Flayerbane; E.J.B. 72' Hm. Wonder who E.J.B. is?"

"Now, it seems pretty clear they were after Mr. Graves, here, at least that's what they said they wanted. Maybe they thought he was so amazing they wanted him to teach them instead of us? No, no, here's a note on this guy—hm, I don't recognize the face—that says "Extermination; noon, school by east gate. Don't be late." No signature. I guess they came to kill someone, that would explain all these daggers. But there's no way any of these people would want to kill anyone on their own, which can mean only one thing; they're all operating under a mind-controlling curse. I wonder who would do that? This is really spooky! Maybe its the old wizard that Em said

doesn't really live in the graveyard, even though Iora saw him there last summer and told us all about it. Oh, this is so exciting; think of it—someone mind-controlling all these men and sending them to attack *us*! This is so exciting, I need to go to the bathroom.” And she did.

I asked her later if she really needed to go to the bathroom, and she said, “doesn't everyone?” and that's all she would say. Maybe it was an act; maybe she really was that excited. I favor the former, but I'm not too sure.

Whether an act or not, Cor's monologue had the a miraculous effect. Where there had been an entire class with mingled looks of terror, shock, and emotional turmoil there was now an almost universal look of excitement barely contained by fear. Iora was the first to speak.

“It must be that wizard, Cor's right! I knew I saw him doing something in there. . .”

“Yeah, and that explains why my brother's been so strange lately,” added Ryan. His voice shook a bit, but not with fear; if I didn't know better I would almost say he sounded relieved.

“Do you think the unconscious ones will still be controlled when they wake up?” asked Iora.

“I'm afraid there's little hope a mere blackout will change them much,” I replied.

“What are we going to do?” asked Gæorg.

“Should we kill them so they don't kill us?”

“No,” I said, “Never kill unless you absolutely must kill. Death is ugly.”

At some point in the discussion someone, I can't recall who, suggested we take them to the hospital in hopes that someone could find a way to cure them. This caught on like wildfire, and so it was decided.

With six children to a body and myself carrying one, we set off through the city. As we went we attracted, sensibly, a fair amount of attention. The school is just outside the city proper (a boon—it means nobody really watches what we do) and the hospital is very close to the gate, but when thirty-five six-year-olds and a bearded old man go wandering through the city gates and down the streets carrying seven unconscious adult men, a few blocks is plenty to attract a lot of attention.

Everyone who saw us asked someone what was going on, and the children were quite happy to state that the men were under a mind-altering hex and had tried to slaughter them all but that it was OK, they had been knocked out and there were five more lying dead in the school and they had to hurry to get them to the hospital so they could get back in time for writing lessons. The people would then look at me quizzically and I would just

sort of shrug and grin sheepishly.

In the hospital the children made it extremely clear that the men were cursed and that even if they seemed fine it was very dangerous to let them out, saying this over and over again to everyone who would listen (and some who wouldn't as well) until I think they really had the staff convinced. Once things seemed settled I reminded them of their school work and we all went back to the schoolhouse.

The corpses were not there when we arrived, but a number of other people were, men who had come to investigate what the children had prattled in the streets. They seemed unwilling to let us resume class. But Cor solved that, reprimanding the largest of them with such an innocent childlike sincerity that they let us in and left us alone.

There's more to write, but I'm getting sleepy; I'll summarize the rest of it tomorrow.

Day of my life 22,994:

Let's see, where did I leave off? After school I sent Cor home and went to the school board. We argued a bit, but without Mulgrave there it wasn't too difficult to convince them school should go on. When I got home Em was in the tureen again and Cor was talking animatedly to her about the day we had had. After Em had heard her out she turned to me and said,

“What are you teaching the children?”

“Well, whatever they like, mostly,” I said.

“On the third shelf to the left of the fireplace in the library is a book named ‘Frega’; if you are smart, you will make that book your entire curriculum for the time being.”

“You mean *Frega's Charm Theory*?” I asked, that being the book I was planning on using for the magic training.

“No no, that one's just a summary. The book in question. . . well, I'll just show you.” Here she shouted in a sing-song voice, “Fre-e-e-ga-a!” and there were a few thumps in the next room, after which a massive book came sailing into the room and landed with a thud on the table.

“Frega,” said Em once it had arrived, “This is Mr. Graves. Mr. Graves, Frega.”

“A pleasure,” I murmured, bowing slightly.

“Frega, Mr. Graves needs to teach a bunch of children with absolutely no education of any kind at all how to survive on their own in the outlands in less than a month. I have advised him to follow your directions.”

The book gave a delicate shiver and then gracefully

opened itself to section 2.1, lesson 1. Looking in the margin I noticed written in pen,

Start the children with a brisk run; a quarter mile should do for the first day. Then read them the first four paragraphs and work on exercises three and eight. —Frega

Shortly after that Em signed off.

Today I followed Frega's suggestions and we had remarkable progress. I told her in the morning that I wanted time for personal study and time for student question driven instruction, and she adjusted her suggestions accordingly. It is a relief to have someone else do the lesson plans.

No call from Em tonight.

Day of my life 22,995:

Another beautiful day at school. I'm exhausted; little children have more energy than I, and Frega suggested almost entirely physical activity today.

Visited the hospital after class. Mr. Bonhome admitted to being mind controlled, and was most solicitous for my forgiveness. The strange thing is, his mind didn't feel under anyone else's control when I knocked him out, but it certainly does have that feel now.

No call from Em tonight.

Day of my life 22,996:

Today over breakfast I asked Cor what Em had said about GF's response to her letter. Cor said she hadn't read it, but apparently it contained notes about how to teach her magic. I then asked Frega why Em hadn't just used Frega's notes. The written reply was that "I'm was a group training specialist and have no knack for individual instruction."

In any case, school is going well. I occasionally have to remind Frega that the children are quite young and receive no chance for out-of-class practice and support, but after these reminders the lesson plans come out just right.

Gæorg didn't come to school today. I went to his house to see how he is, but his mother slammed the door in my face and said she wanted none of my kind in her home. I am getting the feeling that I am not well liked in the city.

Em called again tonight, but there was no audible link, just her image, and that was scratchy. Cor thinks she must have "popped" like she had said the dragon and GF had; I'm not clear on what that means, but I gather we won't be having any more calls for a while. Cor still doesn't want to put the tureen back in the pantry though.

Day of my life 22,998:

On the run. No time to write.

Day of my life 22,999:

I do hope the children are safe; such bright and worthy children they are!

I'm going to have to hide this journal and my other effects; they won't survive too well the path I have to go. Hope I get a chance to reclaim it and insert it into my larger record.