

Shelby startled awake in the middle of the night. She couldn't remember any detail or event from the dream she'd woken from, but she thought she understood the meaning. She often dreamt of work. Dreamt about some project or task that was causing her stress. In many of those dreams she never measured up, was always behind schedule, was always in a mad scramble and still falling behind. This had felt much like those dreams only, different. In this one she felt more than capable.

In this dream, the dream that was beginning to come back to her, she had already proven herself. Looking around disoriented she thought she'd been woken by something, some sound or noise outside the house. With her mind seeking the cause of her waking she saw the now familiar sight of a faint glow that drifted across everything. She came fully awake when she realized there was something different about the misty light.

Instead of seeing movement, the ripples waves and even the glittering shimmer, was gone. The faint fog was motionless, as if frozen into a solid thin veil of mist. Shelby would have normally thought that the misty essence of perhaps magic becoming still was a good development, but she was tense, more alert than ever. She was getting the feeling this was the calm before the storm, the silent pause between the flash and thunder, the stilled tense pause felt at the top of one's breath just before letting out the shout at the top of your voice. The hairs on her arm stood at attention. Then she knew, the new ability to sense magic had left her open to the impending drama that she somehow knew was about to happen.

And like in a dream she felt she was given understanding without actually seeking. It was more than a whisper in the ear. It was almost like a direct download into her mind. She had the momentary idea that if she could just gather enough desire she could roll her eyes to the back of her head and see the connection. Could mentally grope her way inside her own mind, not blindly but with knowledge and expertise she hadn't yet earned, probe almost to the center of her own being and find understanding. The next moment she knew this was nothing like in dreams. This was lasting, true and powerful. Then it was over, complete and full leaving her fully conscious and clearheaded.

She got up and went to the window but saw only darkness. The fat full moon had rotated into view and hung in the sky and cast a faint muddy orange light. She had the thought that it should be frosty white at the height it was. The fires were still burning, she remembered, adding more haze to the upper atmosphere. Down on the street nothing moved. She stood for several minutes, knowing she was waiting for the break, the shift or rupture that was she knew it was about to happen. There was no longer a word in any human language for what she knew was about to happen.

Shelby just happened to be facing in the right direction to see it. She'd seen videos of explosions and powerful bombs detonating. What she saw coming at her, racing through the atmosphere looked just like the shockwaves of an explosion. It raced through so fast she only had time to make the association before it was racing over the houses and treetops.

She flinched at its passing but that was the only movement. There was not the slightest hint of wind or tremble, the leaves in the trees and bushes swayed only as much as the slight breeze was already moving them. The mystical pressure wave was confined to the mist that existed only in her extra sensory vision. There, in her vision it was as if it went from zero to hurricane force in an instant. It confused her. It also excited her.

As she faced the soundless non-physical shockwave of magic as all indications implied she was breathless. It was as if the air in her windpipe had backed up as if she'd just stuck her head out a car window doing over a hundred miles per hour. Then she had another association.

If the event that brought about the hiccup in everything electronic could be compared to a massive earthquake then they were getting an aftershock. If that comparison were true, and she knew it to be so, and that first shock had brought magic back into the world, this was bringing more. She had to see more.

Walking to the door she opened it and raced out to the front yard, fearless in her sudden confident excitement. Looking all around her in the front yard Shelby saw nothing had changed. With the magical wind whipping past her she had the impression that there should be something. Seconds after taking to the front yard of a stranger's house she thought that perhaps she should be experimenting.

After a moment's thought Shelby ran back inside the house. It took almost a minute to find a flashlight in the the unfamiliar house and the strange method of organization left by the owners. Clicking the on off button she got the same results that everyone had been getting since the morning before. Focusing her intent she said "Light" and pushed the on button again.

The hope, the expectation, the desire and the fantasy of Shelby wanting the little flashlight bulb under the thin circle of clear plastic to come on was both satisfied and in a way disappointed in the next instant. The entire end of the flashlight began to glow in a warm yellow light. Pushing aside the sense of disappointment that it wasn't working as expected she ordered the light brighter. At the success she lifted the torch and looked around the room.

It was more than bright enough to see with, and the window blinds were still open. Clicking the button did not turn the light off. She clicked it several more times to the same effect. Glancing at the window and still futilely clicking the button she growled "Turn off, damnit."

She blinked at the faint afterimage of the glowing end of the flashlight. The room was back in darkness. Her special eyesight told her the magical winds were still blowing about the same speed. She believed that meant more magic was flowing into the world. She also got the sense that whatever had forced it in was now just stirring it around, as if to get an even flavor throughout the entire drink, or evenly mixing the batter before baking. Either way, Shelby Rostcourt was now a magician, and had been given a path to a new future. A possible future she corrected, as long as she didn't blow it.

With that thought there were things to do. After drawing the blinds and setting the flashlight end to glowing again she started searching through the house. In one of the bedroom closets she found a walking stick leaning unused in a corner. She recognized an REI product when she saw it. About five feet long and comfortable in her grip it was stained a little darker than the natural color of the wood and looked functional as well as sturdy. It also had a leather cord wrapped tightly at the top for about eight inches and an identical wrap in the middle covering about six inches of the staff with enough of a loop hanging free to slip her hand into. There was a pointed brass cap on the bottom. Shelby smiled. It would work as a start, a beginning.

She spent a few more vital minutes thinking her intentions and the details of desire through. Ready, she held the rod out in front of her and spoke. "Collect power into yourself and store it for later use. Collect power into yourself and store it for later use. Collect power into yourself and collect it for later use." Shelby stopped there because she had the feeling, no, the certainty that the spell she'd cast was complete.

She smiled at the simplicity. She watched with her magical vision and laughed at the sight of the simple walking stick sucking some of the misty magical essence from the otherwise unseen gale into itself. The wood under her fingers felt no different. There was no sense of warmth, no vibrations, no indications that it was becoming a battery for magic.

"You are unbreakable, nothing can mar your surface, no power can affect you." Shelby said and repeated it two more times. Again she felt the completeness of the spell come over her. She took the quarterstaff in both hands and tried to bend it. She felt more than just physical resistance pushing back and laughed.

Yes, she thought to herself, she was a magician now. Life for Shelby Rostcourt was certainly looking up. Knowing she'd be unable to sleep for some hours she sat in the dark living room and watched her new staff collect magical essence and began to plan her future.