

Electricity

The man sighed and ran his hand across his beard. How to explain this? He leaned back, looking up, and it came to him. He turned to the teenager sitting across from him. "It's like electricity. You understand how it works right? How it flows from one place to another?"

The boy nodded, "Like currents?"

"Exactly. Electricity flows through currents, channeled through wires, and by flipping a switch we choose where that electricity goes: turning on our light, turning off a fan, you get the picture. That's how our magic works. It flows through currents in the air and we are able to channel it through our bodies, ultimately directing it into the shape we want."

"So how come you and me can channel the magic but not everyone else can?"

The man leaned forward in his chair, squinting at the boy sitting before him. It felt like yesterday he had been in this exact situation himself, a newly-minted apprentice about to finally get some answers. It was confusing, and nothing had made sense. Yet here he was now, some forty years later, about to christen his own successor. He took in the boy's hair, windswept and unruly, the face flushed with excitement, and regretted how years of this work would change him into something more cynical, less carefree. He felt pity for the boy's future, what had yet to come, but knew there was no stopping it. This boy had already been chosen.

"I don't know," the man finally said after a minute of silence. "According to the records, long ago everyone could wield magic, to some degree. But that is clearly

not the case any more; perhaps most people lost their connection and the skill was no longer passed along. Perhaps there is another reason.”

“Will I ever lose the skill?”

“If you keep using it, no. And since you are the one who will take over when my time is up, you will be forced to use it. The pull to magic is much stronger now that there are few of us than it once was.”

“Like the magic was diluted among so many people, and now it’s stronger ‘cause there’s only a couple?” The boy cracked his knuckles habitually, looking hopefully at the older man.

“That is certainly the most likely theory,” the older man said, raising an eyebrow. “Close your eyes.”

The boy did as he was told, his leg bouncing up and down, unable to keep still.

“Imagine me sitting across from you. Form a clear picture in your mind.” This was the same test he’d had to take, years ago, when he’d sat in this very room across from his own mentor. The man knew he was being harsh on the boy. It was an impossible test, designed to teach that magic isn’t fun, or easy, but requires a much more disciplined mindset to master. “Now in your mind, pull my chair closer to yours. Bring it around the table so I am sitting next to you. Concentrate on that buzzing you feel in the air. Try to single out each individual current. Find the current surrounding my chair, find the individual strings, and pull them.”

The boy's brow furrowed as he tried to concentrate, tried to hear the invisible magic that had been calling to him for over a year, tried to hone in on it as he had done earlier that day, when he had been led to this place.

The man watched him closely, waiting for the boy to open his eyes.

But the boy kept his eyes closed, beads of sweat gathering at his brow as he tried to single out the correct strand of magic. The bouncing of his leg slowed, then stopped entirely.

The man felt his chair move, just an inch. The boy's magic pulled against the chair hesitantly. But that was all it took. The man's chair started moving, slowly at first, then faster, across the floor as if an invisible hand was pushing it. In less than a minute, his chair was next to the boy's and the boy was opening his eyes slowly, blinking hard as he returned to reality.

"Did I do it right?" He asked, panting heavily.

The man sat speechless for a minute, and then for the first time in weeks, smiled. "You did it perfectly." This was the boy who would change everything. And he was lucky enough to have this boy as his apprentice.