

Beva of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ring of the Rose rested in their habitations beyond the Lands of Life. There, surrounded by the wordless whispers and obsessive thought-spirals of man that made up their abode, they thought to themselves.

“No, that doesn't make sense. I fell at Jiri, so it can't be due to paranoia over the individual volition and cause-and-effect. Though, I did bring the matter up with Mili 437 years, 2 months, 3 days, 17 hours, 12 minutes, and 3 seconds ago.”

The wither paused. Their stray thoughts bled into the minds of a few magicians and madmen scattered throughout the Earth.

“No, that can't be it.”

Beva went on considering the problem for some length of time. Their Illiae automatically performed the task of organizing these new developments into the annals of their memory-palace. In this past hour alone a whole new wing had been added.

“Damnit.” Beva thought, a surge of emotion not seen for 427 archdeliberations suddenly flaring. For a moment, the Power's valen-aka took on visible form to perform a snarl of fire that no-one would witness. Their mind went still for a precious few moments before activity began again.

“No. I will not go on sabbatical again. I don't care if this seems pointless. I've thought that many times before and it has gotten me nowhere.”

Before Beva could fully digest the thought they had just spun, a new one shot up out of nowhere.

“Why do you think you'd need to come back to it?”

Beva didn't find the time to feel relief as all of their problems disappeared.

Meanwhile, on Earth, much was the same as it ever was. The humming mass of civilization supported billions more beings, billions more minds, albeit ones running on chemicals and reliant on the ever-present ambrosia of fusion power to maintain their present state of existence. It was amidst the kerneled shells of divinity known as matter that one such mind found something new.

“The hell?” Telo mumbled to himself. Standing not two feet away from his face was a most disturbing set of numbers.

“Shit. Should have stuck with Illiae inflation. Damn...” Telo sighed, stowing away the returned test and walking to his next class at University. It was after the rigmarole of fluid dynamics classes and hypersynthetics engineering courses that the enterprising technician and magician was able to return home to get a better handle on his work.

“Okay, maybe I just botched this...”

Fiddling with his datapad from the comfort of his dormroom's bed, the young man searched online for information on the evocation of demons.

As he expected, a wide assortment of posts regarding Jovano's 17<sup>th</sup> century rendition of the Rose of Fell Powers lit up on his screen. Feeling a bit embarrassed at his choice of such a mainstream text for his first attempt at infernal conjuration, Telo quickly tapped on the first link to escape the slew of reminders. There at the top of the forum was a new post.

“Beva Summoning Not Working??? *Entiei* workings, [Jovano]”

Telo's eyes widened and he entered the thread while reclining further into his pillow.

It was after a nice, lazy afternoon that Telo was able to get a clearer picture. He had performed the operation last week at sunset, in preparation for his formerly upcoming biology exam, and that was when discussions online had started regarding various people's talismans and longstanding magical effects relating to Beva ceasing functioning. Even more posts started to be made later, as people wrote of how traditional memory spells and various homebrewed workings utilizing Beva's influence had found their efficacy noticeably reduced. Nodding along at the memory of his own failure to correctly describe the pseudophotosynthetic receptors of the exterior dermis on the quiz, Telo found his interest piqued. He found this tentative conclusion to his working's failure all but confirmed by a flurry of other posts that had sprang up across various other occult messageboards and forums. Of course, the student did care a lot less about the fact that he had decently screwed up his biology GPA, now, for he was now more engrossed in the *reason* why these failures had all occurred so suddenly. Such interest was easily satiated, as many people had already been offering their own speculations regarding the matter. From the mundane (magic doesn't work) to the obtuse (according to Vilian astrology, the influence of Beva's Kithringo would be blocked for a century due to...) to the excitingly ridiculous (Beva wanted to take a break), the responses covered the whole gamut. Yet one stood out from all the others, one supported by Telo's own faint recollections from the few times his family had visited the shrines. The whole idea of a demon providing aid was predicated on the fact that they yet remained in the Wending, after all. Beyond that, and they would certainly have the power, but not the motivation. Yet Beva had always helped to power magician's spells when asked and only now were they withholding assistance. Cosmologically speaking, this could only mean one thing.

“HOLY SHIT BEVA IS FUCKING OUT DUDE”

“can you bring me too dude???”

“how the hell did a wither do better than me at life”

“NAMELESS TRANSCENDENCE 2450 OR BUST”

“I mean I'm glad for them but I bombed my final”

“You aren't going to make it to the higher attainments if you complain about a person's ascension for how it materially inconveniences you.”

Sprouting up on all of his favorite online magical haunts were swathes of memes regarding Beva's ascension. Occasionally a post or two would doubt it and say to wait a month or so before making pronouncements, but no one really paid them any mind. Apart from the general social and amusement aspect of the posts, a genuine thread of joy for the prospect of Beva's liberation made its way into every comment. Telo himself found a small smile plastering its way onto his face. Even if it was exceedingly

annoying that he'd have to haul ass in biology now, at least Beva had passed every last class.

Walking over to the refrigerator and pulling out a small bottle of champagne, Telo poured two measures; one for himself and the other for the spirit. He poured the latter out onto the "house" planter of his dormroom in toast to Beva, and engaged in underage drinking with the former.

For a moment, Telo felt his problems slip away.

For Beva, that was true.