

DEATH OF A MAGE PROFESSOR

by

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Taela shrank back in her chair from the ravings of Mage Professor Didamedes as he paced around his cluttered office, hands waving about as if fending off a swarm of offending insects. She was not afraid for herself from Didamedes's gesticulations, though she had never seen him in such an excited state for anything less than an argument over some esoteric experiment to calculate the magical conversion coefficient to an extra significant digit or a debate over whether Wylar Darkcowl or Nylyr Longfeather was the first to formulate Magical Field Theory.

"They've decided to stop funding my research. *My* research! We have only until the end of the semester."

"Yes, mage pr—"

"But they continue to fund the work of that upstart and mediocrity Sohla. What could they possibly be thinking?"

"I th—"

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“I mean, really!” Didamedes swung his arms about at the swarm that only he could see. “My research into magical flux is going to change the way we understand magical energy, and they complain that it’s *not marketable*.”

Didamedes had started to repeat himself, and Taela’s attention began to wander about the office. As an adjunct mage professor and assistant to Didamedes, Taela was as familiar with the room as she was with her own sleep chamber. Yet she took the need for a distraction as an opportunity to reacquaint herself with the room’s contents.

Located in the basement beneath the university’s Magimetry wing, the office had no windows, its brick walls concealed by sturdy bookshelves or slate boards. Books on every branch of Magical Dynamics, from Epistemagiology to Physiomagiology, filled the shelves and sat in piles atop buried desks. The majority of the tomes, however, covered various fields and topics of Magimetry, the theoretical framework describing the measurement and quantification of magical energy. Reams of parchment, containing calculations that would wrap around the entire wing of the Mageion, lay sprawled about. Glass globes of flameless light sat, here and there, upon tripods or hung from the ceiling upon iron chains.

In its place of importance, upon a slate board at the front of the office, was the formula underpinning all their work:

$$d\mathbf{M} = \int_{t_1}^{t_2} \iint \mathbf{T} \cdot d\mathbf{A} dt$$

Didamedes’s reaction notwithstanding, Taela understood the mage professor’s outburst. To her, the work they did was a more essential calling than a holy vocation, and the collection of

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books more valuable than any holy relic. The slate board displaying the formula describing magical flux was their altar, and the smell of paper and leather, incense.