

The afternoon light streamed through the cursed stained glass, a taunting reminder of Linda's failures. The remaining pages fluttered past her fingers as she skimmed this book for the hundredth time. The dark heavy cover slammed closed and she placed the book back on the pile. Book after book, scroll after scroll. Nothing has the answer. There was a cure for every ailment, fix every crack, grow any plant, but there is no spell that can bring her back. Linda's hand shakily reached for the dark green bottle that would soothe the ache in her bones, and took a long swig straight from the bottle. The rug felt damp from spilt wine, she didn't know how long ago she spilt it.

"What a waste," she muttered as her now stained red fingers reached for the next book in the pile. 'Unmaking spells volume 4' Unmaking spells are hard and risky. If anything went wrong she could lose her forever. But it's not like it matters anyways, nothing has worked so far. Illegible scribbles filled the margins as well as torn out pages that were probably stuck up on the wall made it basically unreadable or maybe it was that last swig of wine, either way she kept reading until something new caught her eye. Linda couldn't remember a lot from that cursed night, both from the alcohol and blocking out as much as she could, but that bastard differently said something about a 'seal' in their spell, and this spell mentions unsealing. Linda has deduced by now that they must have made their own spell to pull off such a feat. People have been turned to stone and bound to objects before, but to create a living echo trapped in an object was unheard of. Linda tore out the spell and with only a slight sway and a small trip in her step made her way to the wall and found a new thumb tack to pin it up. She loosely organised it with the other sealing/unsealing spells but she would fix it up when she was sober.

Looking down at the floor she could see the light waving at her. She slowly stepped over to curl up on the window seat. It held the damned window. A giant arch of orange and pinks though it seems to change over time. Still waving as she finally looked Amelia in the eye. I wasn't really her, not anymore. Linda's fingers trailed over the cold moving waves and Amelia stopped waving. Linda was pretty sure she couldn't see anything, but could sense if you were touching the glass. Amelia shifted in the window so her hand was under Linda almost like they were holding hands. She thinks Amelia gets lonely so that's why she waves Linda over so they can touch, but maybe if just the last thought she had that got trapped in the echo. Linda's other hand moves over to trace the crack forming in glass. It was from a drunken rage and a thrown bottle. Amelia went so looking scared, angry, sad and content, to just this. Sitting blankly until she decided she wants to feel Linda again. It scared her at first but every account of someone being brought back from stone that were chipped or broken were restored to how they were before transformation. Heavy eyelids began to take over and while still resting her palm on the window, Linda drifted off to sleep.

A pounding headache woke Linda up, but that wasn't unusual. She reached over for her diary and flipped to the back where she kept her short list of useful spells. Magic is more of an art than a science. It works as a trade. You give up something to gain something. Some spells need specific things to give up and some need specific enchantations, though for a simple healing spell, Linda only has to give up some of her pride. It's embarrassing enough being this hungover in front of Amelia so she just places her hands on her temples and slowly the pain rolls back and she feels fine again.

As the sunlight streamed through the window once more, she found herself staring at the pinned spell on the wall. The words seemed to jump out at her with renewed significance. "Unmaking spells is hard and risky..."

The realisation hit her like a lightning bolt. If Amelia's capture was the result of a custom-made spell, then Linda would have to create her own spell to set her free.

Linda spent the day pouring over her notes, researching obscure magical texts, and experimenting with different combinations of incantations. Her vices left forgotten around the room. She pulled out all her old textbooks from university and anything else in their collection on creating spells.

As the final rays of sunlight gave way to the embrace of twilight, Linda felt a strange sensation—a tingling in her fingers that seemed to resonate with the energy of her magic. The pieces were coming together. She carefully reviewed her notes and the unsealing spell she had found the previous night. Comparing it with the captured spell, she began to notice patterns, connections she hadn't seen before.

Hours passed, and Linda's heart raced as she whispered the incantation she had painstakingly crafted. The room filled with an ethereal glow as the words hung in the air like suspended stardust. The air itself seemed to quiver, and Linda's palms grew sweaty. Doubts tried to claw their way into her mind, but she pushed them aside. She had to believe that this was the answer.

Linda's heart raced as she realised the cost of her endeavour. Magic always demanded a trade, a balance. She had to give up something of immense worth to break the spell that held Amelia captive. She glanced at the memories pinned to her wall—the fragments of her journey, the emotions she had poured into finding a solution.

Tears welled up in Linda's eyes as she took a deep breath, her decision made, she couldn't keep going after this. With a trembling voice, she whispered, "I give up my deepest regret, my sorrow for the past, and the pain of my failures."

As the words left her lips, the room seemed to shudder, and the apparition dissolved into a swirling mist. The incantation grew stronger, the energy flowing from Linda's very being. The wind howled outside, and the windows rattled as if acknowledging the immense sacrifice she had offered.

Then, a sudden gust of wind swept through the room, blowing out the candles and extinguishing the glow. Linda's heart sank, and a tear trickled down her cheek. Had she failed again? Was this just another dead end? But just as despair threatened to consume her, a soft, melodic voice echoed in the air—a voice she hadn't heard in what felt like an eternity.

The room filled with a brilliant light, and Linda shielded her eyes. As the radiance dimmed, she blinked away the brightness and gasped. There, standing before her, was Amelia, no longer bound to the stained glass. Her appearance was slightly translucent, an echo of the vibrant woman she once was, but undeniably alive.

Tears flowed freely down Linda's cheeks as she rushed forward to embrace her long-lost friend. Amelia's arms wrapped around her in a warm, spectral hug. "Linda, it's really you," Amelia's voice trembled with emotion.

Linda nodded, her voice choked with happiness. "I found a way, Amelia. I found a way to bring you back."

Amelia's eyes glowed with gratitude. "Thank you, Linda. You never gave up on me, but I can't stay here."

"What? Why? I brought you back, you can't leave!" Linda cried out.

"My love, I have to move on, and so do you." Amelia softly spoke as she drifted towards Linda.

"No," Desperation filled Linda's voice, tears welled up in her eyes.

"Yes, Linda, you must uphold your bargain, you must let me go and forgive yourself." Amelia's translucent skin came closer until her thumb touched her tears she did realise were falling. Finally Amelia bent down and pecked her on the cheek.

"I love you," both said in unison.

Linda watched as Amelia faded away. Shell shocked for a moment, Linda eventually gathered herself and picked up her diary and walked to the Foyer. She put on her coat, dropped her keys into the bowl, and walked out the front door with a soft click of the lock behind her.