

The sorcerer's apprentice: her very last day

It's done now.

I have done it.

There is no going back.

It's terrible – but also wonderful – mighty waves of exhilaration washing over me -

I couldn't make it undone now even if I wanted to do that quite fervently. Which part of me

does. My heart is hammering away in my chest quite painfully.

But now I have performed the rites, chanted the spell. I've done the strictly forbidden. I

have wielded heavy magic on my own, without the Master.

He has threatened me many times thunderously: *If you do that it will be your very last day!*

From his grimly distorted face I took the message: This would be my last day as his apprentice – but also my last day alive ...

He has never spelled out this last threat. But it has hung over me darkly, oppressively through all of my days here. Scuttling mously through the cave-like magical lab, cleaning, preparing, assisting. Waiting in the shadows. Sometimes gathering herbs outside, guarded by the Master's spell lest I stray.

But I have also been watching, listening, absorbing, reflecting. Learning. Witnessing the Master performing breathtaking, awe-inspiring magic miracles, bending nature to his mysterious mind.

The magic flame has grown within my heart and soul, burning ever brighter.

And today, with the Master away, I knew I had to do it. Me. Myself.

The product of my magic is pathetically small and harmless. A tiny mouse, cowering on the rough-hewn stone floor, looking up at me anxiously from beady black eyes.

But this mouse has been conjured up by me from the magical abyss, a living being from the Huge Nothing. Violating nature's deepest laws. Mining the most mysterious core of magic.

The Master's fury looms hugely in my mind now – his black and golden robe swishing threateningly, his eyes burning darkly, his voice yelling hoarsely -

Or will he maybe not yell at all? Just quietly, menacingly unleash the darkest, most painful magical tortures upon me with a flick of his bony fingers, leaving me to rot in a living hell for eternity?

I hear footfall near the entrance.

The Master is back.

My eyes dart to the mouse on the floor, I bend to pick it up hectically, maybe I can hide it -

I straighten up again. No, that's no use. The Master will Know.

My throat tightens painfully, like something is strangling me – is that his punishing magic leashing out already – or just my wild fear -?

His shadow precedes him, looming hugely, blackly, entering -

I stare at him in disbelief.

There is this small elderly man with thinning hair, looking rather ridiculous in the garishly coloured robe ...

Something seems to burst around me, an iron cage exploding – there's heat, a blast – and then there is air, pure fresh air -

And I pick up the mouse and present it to him beaming. On my very last day.

'There, you can have *that* now instead!'