The dragon shot out of the entrance to his lair. He adjusted his flight trajectory and sped south across the rolling green hills. He was flying so fast that many of the people, hard at work in the fields, did not notice him as he rushed above the landscape. Within minutes, he could see his destination; a piece of ground not unlike the rest of the green fields around it. Most of the year, this place was no different from anywhere else. Today, however, was the summer solstice and this piece of ground was centered on the conflux of the two strongest magical currents that flowed through space around Earth.

A man was standing where the magic was centered. He was older, his white hair and beard well kept. He watched as the dragon landed on the ground in front of him, then bowed. “My lord, it is good to see you.”

The dragon nodded. “What are you doing here?”

“Preparing.”

The dragon waited for more but the old man said nothing. “What are you preparing?”

“I’m going to cast a spell.”

The dragon sighed. “We are beyond such childish games. Tell me specifically what spell you are preparing to cast.”

“Why should I tell you?” the old man said caustically. “You’ve always told me you don’t interfere.”

“Ah, I see,” the dragon said. “You’re angry with me because I didn’t come and help at Camlann.”

“Of course I’m angry,” the old man replied. “You could have turned the tide of the battle. Instead, the sword is once again with the Lady of the Lake and Arthur is in a deep, healing sleep on Avalon. Arthur’s vassals continue to fight Mordred’s forces and are beginning to turn on each other. Everything that Arthur and I worked for is crumbling before my eyes and there is nothing I can do to stop it.”

“My duty is to protect this world from the Aldri, not to force the development of civilization down a path of my choosing,” the dragon replied.

“Your very presence on this world changes the path civilization is taking,” the old man countered. “How is that not interference?”

“It is passive,” the dragon said. “I cannot change the consequences of my presence but I can control how active I am in using my power and influence to affect the development of this world.”

“Then there is no need to worry about what spell I’m casting,” the old man said. “What I am doing will in no way affect your task.”

“The only reason to cast your spell at this location at this time of year is to access the conflux of magical currents. Any spell that requires that much energy can potentially interfere with my mission,” the dragon told him.

“Believe me when I say you will not even notice what I’m going to do.”

“I will be the judge of that,” the dragon said.

The old man turned away from the dragon and walked for a moment. He then turned back to him, “From here, I will take away mankind’s ability to use magic.”

“That is not possible,” the dragon said. “You cannot take away what is born in every human. Magic is a part of your existence, as much a part as water is. Without it, mankind will die.”

The old man shook his head. “I did not say I was going to take magic away from humans, merely the ability to use it.”

“Why?”

“Because humans cannot be trusted with that much power,” the old man explained. “Every major disaster caused by humans has been because of magic. Mankind will always misuse power.”

“What about the great things that have been done with magic?” the dragon asked. “How much knowledge has been gained with the aid of magic? How many have been healed who would have died? The great buildings that have been constructed? This was all done with the aid of magic. What you and Arthur accomplished…”

“Arthur is gone!” the old man said, cutting the dragon off. “Because of a magic user! Everything that we accomplished is undone because of one magic user. I will not allow it to happen again.”

“Removing mankind’s ability to use magic will not change what is in their hearts,” the dragon told him. “You will still have great tragedies caused by men.”

“Without magic, they will not be as large,” the old man said.

“You are approaching this the wrong way. Taking away the tools people use to destroy does not change the desire. Unless you change the heart, they will find another way. You will force mankind down the road of technology, which can be just as powerful as magic.”

The old man locked eyes with the dragon. “By the time technology is as powerful as magic maybe humans will have learned self-control.”

“Do you really believe that?”

“It is my hope,” the old man said.

The dragon sighed. “You realize that you will be ripped apart by the magic before you finish casting the spell? Not even I could channel the whole of the conflux; that is what you will need to do to cast this spell.”

“I will have a harness,” the old man said, looking to the west.

The dragon turned just as the head of a giant, holding two large stones on his shoulders, came into view. More giants came into view, each carrying stones.

“Here, I will build a conductor that will allow me to control the flow of the conflux,” the old man explained. “Within the moon stone structure, I will be able to cast my spell.”

“You will still be dead when you release the spell,” the dragon said. “Even with the conductor, you will need ten to twenty wizards assisting you in order to survive.”

“I will survive long enough to cast the spell,” the old man said. “After that, I have no desire to remain alive.”

The dragon stared at the old man, not saying a word. Soon, the first giant reached them. The old man held up his hand, causing the giant to stop. “Well, my lord, are you going to allow me to cast the spell or are you going to kill me?”

The dragon walked several hundred feet away before turning and settling on the ground, watching him. The old man nodded, feeling both relief and disappointment. He turned to the giants. “Place the stones in the holes I make.” The giants nodded, waiting.

The old man began to use magic to dig holes in the ground, each large enough for one of the stones. Once all of the holes were filled, forming two concentric circles, he took the remaining stones and laid them across the standing stones.

The giants left after he was done and the old man stood in the middle of the inner ring. The dragon was still sitting where he had settled, watching.

The old man took a deep breath. *This is it,* he thought. He threw out his hands, magic streaming into the stones. They began to glow. He put his hands down, the glow of the stones beginning to dim and held his breath. I*s this not going to work?* A pulse then went through the stones as they began to draw on the magic within the conflux and they started to glow brighter than before. He closed his eyes and began to pull the magic out of the stones. As it filled him, he felt the power of the conflux surging as it tried to rush into him. He reduced the power of the stream of magic from the stone. Once he was comfortable with the flow of magic, he brought his hands up in front of him, the earth before him rising. He then rotated his hands, palms facing each other, and a ball formed at the top of the mound of earth. He stuck his hands into the ball and sent magic it into the planet, feeling the shape of the land that formed the crust of the Earth, the water that covered its surface and all the different forms of life that relied on its resources.

As he withdrew his hands from the ball, portions of it began to rise, showing each of the world’s continents. He opened his eyes, looking into the globe as water began to fill where the oceans, lakes and rivers would be. His hands hovered over the globe, allowing the magic to replicate every living thing on Earth on the surface of his model.

Once the model globe was complete, the old man began to wave his arms in opposite circles, pulling the globe in two different directions. The sweat that was merely beads moments before began to stream down his face as the exertion of controlling the flow from the conflux and casting the spell began to take its toll. He grimaced as the sweat stung his eyes but he dared not wipe it away lest he interrupt the spell, which could be disastrous. After a time, the model began to expand and stretch. As it pulled apart, new earth formed and prevented any tearing until he had two identical globes connected by a single point. Magic streamed around each globe, covering them in a light fog. Once each world was covered, he put a barrier between the fog of magic and the globe on his left. Holding the barrier in place with one hand, he began to pull life forms off the left globe and put them on the right. Once all the forms representing magical life were removed from left model, he pushed his hand forward, expanding the barrier between the two globes.

The old man stood still, his hands still maintaining the barriers. He took a deep breath and relaxed a little, preparing his body and mind for the next, most difficult step of his spell. He needed all of the power of the conflux to cover the actual world with his barrier and he might burn up before he could complete it. Whether he was successful or not, he would be dead. With one last breath, he drew deeply on the magic from the stones; the glow intensified. The glow continued to brighten as he drew more and more magic from the conflux into the stones and then into himself.

He was burning. The amount of magic he was now holding would soon destroy him. Everything blurred as he drew in more and more energy. Unable to see but able to feel everything through magic, the old man threw his hands outwards and the magic burst from the confines of the stone and covered the world.

The dragon watched as the world shuddered from the barriers being thrown in place, successfully separating humans from the world of magic. *I can’t believe he did it,* the dragon thought. He had been sure the old man would die before he was able to finish the casting. The dragon walked over to the destroyed structure. A few of the stones were still standing and intact but most of them had disintegrated as the spell was released. There was no sign of the old man or his body. Releasing the magic had torn his body apart, spreading his essence throughout the barrier he had just created.

The dragon shook his head, not knowing the consequences of this action. Maybe he should have just killed the old man but it had not felt right. The one good thing about this was that he would be able to observe the growth of a technological race from almost the beginning. It should make for some interesting research… if the spell lasted that long.