

# THE PEARLSONG CODEX: MAGIC SYSTEMS IN THE PEARLSONG REFOUNDING



**SPOILER WARNING:** The following contains key spoilers for the story that unfolds through all four books of the Pearlsong Refounding tetralogy. To avoid these, you might prefer to hold off reading this until after you have finished reading the series.

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*Dei'lo* and *Sa'lei* are Languages containing intrinsic power that can be released through their writing and speaking, with specific capacities and limitations, governed in general by these three founding laws:

**1. The Law of Source Authority:** The power of each Tongue is directly proportional to the power and will of the source it invokes. For *Dei'lo*, the source is the Giver (via the Pearl)—more specifically, it is the Giver's love, expressed through her desire for the good of others and the world itself. *Dei'lo* is fueled by that loving purpose. The power it wields is for the sake of, and in service of, that singular intent. For *Sa'lei*, the source is Avaddon—more specifically, it is Avaddon's lust for power, fueled by greed and selfish ambition. The Source for *Dei'lo* is more powerful, as Avaddon's power is ultimately self-destructive. But in any given situation, much is dependent on the level of faith or selfish ambition (respectively) of the speaker (see the Law of Deep Alignment).

**2. The Law of Conditional Impact:** The effect of each Language is contingent upon several factors, such as the proximity of the target, the visibility of the target, the singularity of the target (the effect decreases exponentially the more targets are addressed at once), the amount of interference hindering the sound waves from reaching the target, the clarity and accuracy of the speaker's grammar and pronunciation of the language, and the

degree to which the speaker's soul is aligned with the Language's fundamental drive (see the Law of Deep Alignment).

**3. The Law of Deep Alignment:** The power of each Language is fully contingent on the speaker's deep alignment with the Tongue's founding drive. For *Dei'lo*, this founding drive is love acting through faith—that is, you must not only believe the Words from the depths of your soul, but also align with the loving intention from which they spring, for their power to flow through your voice. For *Sa'lei*, the founding drive is selfish ambition—that is, you must crave power for the sake of your own survival, success, and satisfaction above all other motivations for the power of *Sa'lei* to work for you.

### On General Attributes

While the forms and structures of both Tongues are similar, the Words used within them are not, since they each flow from wholly different and unique sources. Also, while the syntax, structures, and forms of *Dei'lo* are original, those of *Sa'lei* are fully derivative, having been copied from *Dei'lo* and corrupted to destructive ends. Avaddon has no capacity for generative creativity; therefore, the best he can do is take what the Giver has created (*Dei'lo*) and warp it to serve as a conduit for his own power and will.

Because it is derivative, spoken *Sa'lei* cannot destroy or influence written *Dei'lo* in any way. Thus, the tattoos on the Cal'eeb's bodies serve as an effective shield against the effects of *Sa'lei*, whether spoken in direct attack or via contact with objects infected with a *Sa'lei* curse. The reverse, however, is not true. Spoken *Dei'lo* can unmake written *Sa'lei*—though written *Sa'lei* is not common, as the Words quickly rot any material upon which they are recorded—and can purify any object infected by a *Sa'lei* curse. If the object is fully corrupted (as with some riftmen), purification by *Dei'lo* results in death, but the corpse will be cleansed of impurity, with no stain of *Sa'lei* within it.

While in both languages the power resides in the Words themselves—not in the speaker—a spiritual symbiosis with the speaker is essential for the Words to have their intended effect in the material realm. In written form, however, the active power resident in the text is self-contained and obvious to all, even those who are unfamiliar with the Tongue. The presence of written *Dei'lo* has the general effect of peace and grace—which is to say, agency and power—on those who stand near. (Here, the Law of Conditional Impact also applies.) However, if a soul is infected with *Sa'lei*, the effect of written *Dei'lo* nearby is generally traumatic. Beyond emotional agitation and fear, the body grows weak, shaky, and is often nauseated to the point of incapacity. Extended exposure increases physical frailty and reduced resistance to disease. Direct contact can produce boils and

other debilitating symptoms. If exposed long enough, death will result. Conversely, the presence of written *Sa'lei* evokes a general effect of anger, suspicion, and selfish desire. For those who speak *Dei'lo*, the presence of written *Sa'lei* has little effect beyond a persistent but light nausea, and a tendency toward irritation.

Both languages are equally subject to the Law of Conditional Impact. The Words work best when spoken to only one target at a time, within earshot of the speaker (line of sight is best for focus, though not explicitly required), and absent any obstacles hindering the sound waves from reaching their target; for example, Worded spheres of various kinds, physical obstacles such as thick walls, and so on. It is important to note that the target does not need to hear the Words spoken to him or her, only that the sound waves reach the target, as the power of the Tongue is carried by that means. That is why the Words work with things that cannot hear—trees, rocks, buildings, dirt, water, and so on. This is also why someone standing near a target can hear the Words plainly without them having any direct effect on him or her, since they are not the target.

To that end, in both Tongues, the Words must have a specific target in mind when they are spoken. Speaking any Word without this is somewhat akin to shooting a rifle off into the air. It may or may not hit something, but if it does, it won't be what you intended. This is why the Remnant use *joas* to help them focus on one target at a time in the confusing heat of battle, and as a backup weapon to use should the Words fail—which, for early users of *Dei'lo*, was often the case.

However, a speaker with enough fluency and a potent alignment with the foundational drive of the Tongue may speak to a cluster of things at once as if it is one thing, and have tremendous effect—for example, setting a dozen trees on fire at once, or collapsing several buildings at one Word, or transforming an entire flock of birds into stinging wasps. This takes great strength of faith, more so the larger and more complex the target becomes. Even a Word spoken to an entire mountain can theoretically work. Indeed, the most powerful speakers have had phenomenal effects through their Words: the Scolding Wind Hills, the Dunerun Hope, Silence Sound, Strivenwood Forest, and, of course, the Deathland Barrens were all accomplished by the Words of a single speaker of either *Sa'lei* or *Dei'lo*. But this is very rare, because Deep Alignment is so difficult.

In fact, the third law is often the reason Words fail, especially in *Dei'lo*. Consider the moment when Ajel's defensive sphere is under relentless assault by a line of Council Lords. While the power of all those Words of *Sa'lei* could corrosively dissolve Ajel's sphere, he could have simply continued to speak the Words to restore it to full strength, theoretically indefinitely. The ultimate failure of *Dei'lo* in this instance came not from the

Language itself, but from Ajel's growing doubt. Languishing under the relentless assault, it was an easy thing for Ajel to begin to doubt his Words would hold up. As soon as this happened, the power of the Words weakened in an immediate form of self-fulfilling prophecy.

This effect is less likely to happen in *Sa'lei*, as the motivating principle driving the symbiosis between speaker and Tongue is selfish ambition fueled by self-interest. Under tremendous assault from a negating Word of *Dei'lo*, the drive for self-preservation will almost certainly go up, which would only strengthen the link between the speaker and the power of her Words.

It's important to remember that the Words of each Tongue are rooted in the power of the Source from which they come: *Dei'lo*, coming from the Giver and the Pearl, is always speaking from a place of love. Even when it attacks. Even when it destroys. Without this essential motivation, it ceases to be *Dei'lo*. No Word of *Dei'lo* can be spoken in hatred and have any effect at all. Thus when Ajel is under attack in the mines beneath Phallenar, he must resist not only the Council Lords' Words, but also his own darker impulses to hate and despise his attackers, knowing that giving in to these darker urges would cripple his ability to wield *Dei'lo* effectively.

Naturally, the opposite is true for *Sa'lei*. Thus when Balaam is forced to battle Stevron with *Sa'lei* after his conversion, the effort rips him apart inside, as hate is no longer the core of his nature. His new belief weakens his ability to use *Sa'lei* effectively, so while he was fluent, his heart was no longer deeply aligned with the Tongue. This weakness made it easier for Stevron to defeat him. Had he still been at his full strength in *Sa'lei*, their battle would have been far longer and more intense and its outcome far less certain.

### **On Secondary Effects**

It is possible for the spoken Word to have significant unintended consequences. This results in most cases from the speaker's lack of foresight regarding the longer-term effects of a given Wording, or a more general lack of understanding of the impact of the Tongues of power as a whole.

With *Sa'lei*, these secondary effects are particularly pronounced, and are often dire. The dark Tongue is fundamentally corrosive and destructive. Its very nature is to destroy. Therefore, regardless of the specific Wording used on an object, place, or person, the general effect of any *Sa'lei* Wording over time will be decay and destruction. This is why the Council Lords generally steer clear of speaking Words of any kind over themselves—for example, Words to grant them artificial youth or increased physical strength—because

the long-term effect of these Words is sickness, decay, and (in some cases) madness. Thus, Lysteria envies Varia's abundant bosom, but doesn't use the Words to enhance her own figure. This is also why compelling a juron to obedience will drive the creature mad within a few days or weeks, eventually making it uncontrollable.

Similarly, a *Sa'lei* Word spoken to one person, object, or location may have a corrosive effect on the surrounding environment—again, because of its inherent destructive nature. For example, placing a defensive ward over a door will over time weaken the structure itself, so that if not reinforced it will eventually collapse. Even the Word of Teleportation, so essential for governance in the Lands, erodes the health of the body over time, causing premature aging and increasing susceptibility to illness. Cancer has long been common among the lords, and as *Sa'lei* has no capacity to heal, has decimated the bloodlines over the centuries. The barrenness of the lords is, of course, mostly due to the inbreeding the lords are famous for. But it would be foolish to suggest the presence of *Sa'lei* has not also played its role in their struggle with infertility.

*Dei'lo*, too, can sometimes have unintended consequences, but these are more rare, and always turn to the benefit of either the speaker or the thing spoken to, or both. These graces are eagerly watched for by the Remnant, and bring them great delight when they happen. For example, the healing of a single injured fawn may lead to a mighty herd of deer a few years later. Or a *Dei'lo* blessing on a single fruit tree may spawn from it the fruit of a dozen trees at the next harvest.

Likewise, objects imbued with either tongue have similar effects, either more or less intense relative to the power of the Wording in the item or location. This is why the Dunerun Hope makes the Remnant feel somewhat uncomfortable (quite apart from its obvious physical challenges), while the sickness imposed on the Council Lords at Wordhaven is so intense they have to sleep in tents as far from the Stand as possible. It is also why the nausea of the Barrens is comparatively more intense for the *Dei'lo* speakers than for Gideon or Telus.

Generally speaking, the presence of either tongue imbued in an object or place (or both) shapes the ambient life energy of that place to align with its Wording. This is why some Wording “spreads” over time—the Barrens, Strivenwood, and Dunerun Hope are all examples of this effect—because the essence of a Worded place or object tends to infect the space immediately around it. If the area is strong in the opposite essence—for example, a *Sa'lei*-Worded sword in Wordhaven's vaults—the poison of *Sa'lei* will not spread at all. In fact, the sword will be weakened over time and exposure to Wordhaven's presence in the same way a human speaker of *Sa'lei* would. However, that same sword placed in a neutral

location, such as in the home of an ordinary farmer in Chara sounden, would gradually infect both the home and the people in it. Without intentional intervention, both the farmer and his home will slowly fall under shadow.

### **On Similarities and Differences in the Limitations of Each Tongue**

The limitations of each language are in some cases identical, in others similar, while in a few they completely diverge. For example, the Word of Teleportation in either Tongue can instantaneous transport any one soul anywhere in the world (really, anywhere in the universe) provided that the speaker has physically been to the desired location before, and has spent sufficient time there to know the place well—that is, to be able to accurately picture the location in his or her mind and imagine themselves there in a realistic way.

Failure to create a sufficiently clear image of the destination in a speaker's mind produces different effects in each Tongue. In *Sa'lei*, this failure can either result in nothing happening at all (you simply remain where you are), or death by dismemberment (you are literally ripped apart by the forces holding you in place and those pulling you toward a location that is not fully formed in your mind). The outcome depends on how clearly the desired location is formed in the mind. If it is formed poorly enough, the Words will have no effect. If it the image is partially formed but still imprecise or incomplete, the Words will tear the speaker's body apart.

It is on account of this danger that newly raised lords learn this Word by standing on a platform with four simple icons placed around their feet. They stand there for three days, staring at the icons to learn the place and make it their own. On the fourth day, they move six paces away, and, with the platform in plain sight, use the Words to teleport to it. This process continues, with locations and distances growing more distant and more complex, until the lord is released to teleport at their own discretion.

By contrast, the Word of Teleportation spoken in *Dei'lo* is never dangerous to the speaker. If the intended destination is pictured with insufficient clarity as the Words are spoken, this will sometimes result in the speaker going nowhere, as is also at times the case with *Sa'lei*. But most often, the Wording will instead teleport the person to the location they subconsciously most want to go; for example, their home, or some other favorite place they know well.

Both languages include capacities for flight, but with *Dei'lo* these are more varied and powerful. For example, while both Tongues allow a speaker to fly by levitating a sphere while he or she is inside it, these Words in *Dei'lo* can be sustained more easily and for much longer periods than is possible with *Sa'lei*. This is due to the entropic effects of

the dark Tongue. *Sa'lei* Wordings are always prone to devolve from states of order to disorder. Using *Sa'lei* to cause something to fly that is not naturally made for the act requires enormous energy that must be repeatedly reinforced with the Words to be maintained. By contrast, *Dei'lo* Wordings create new forms of order that then become normalized as reality. When Ajel takes to the air in a Worded sphere, he will remain in the air for as long as his belief in that Word remains strong. He does not have to keep speaking it. Thus, while a Remnant fighter and a *mon'jalen* can both float in the air within a shielded sphere, it requires more focus and energy for the *mon'jalen* to maintain and control his flight than it does for the Remnant fighter.

Likewise, a Word can empower the human body to flight on its own. *Sa'lei* speakers avoid this, of course, because of the corrosive side effects the Words have when spoken directly to the human body. The Remnant do use such Words in limited ways in hand-to-hand combat, but tend to prefer the safety of a Worded sphere to “unshielded flight” when they take to the skies.

With *Dei'lo*, one can also fly by merging one's spirit with a bird or other flying creature. This is done through a particular Wording called the Sharing of Spirits, in which a speaker may transfer some or all of his or her spirit into another living creature (or even a plant) and travel with it, united as one with its spirit, wherever it goes. This is in no way compulsion in the sense of *Sa'lei*; however, often the speaker is able to persuade an animal it is inhabiting to go where he or she wants or to do something he or she wants them to do. *Sa'lei* has no such capacity.

Also, while not technically a form of flight, *Dei'lo* has the ability to transport a person's spirit, or essence, to any place they dream of going. This is the Word of Dreaming, which we see both Ajel and Seer use in the Chamber of the Pearl. In this dreaming state, speakers can use additional Words to impact places, people, or things in distant locations. These Words have no parallel in *Sa'lei*.

Flight is also possible on the backs of juron or on dragons, though in *Dei'lo* this can only happen with the creatures' permission, as *Dei'lo* has no capacity to compel. While *Sa'lei* can compel a juron or other lesser beast to carry a rider on its back, its Wordings do not work on mountain dragons. Their minds are too powerful.

The Word of Compulsion, used by Stevron to subsume the will of other people, is exclusive to *Sa'lei*. *Dei'lo* can temporarily restrain a person's body, or seal up their mouth from speaking, but it can never overrun their free will in the way *Sa'lei* does.

Weaker versions of this *Sa'lei* Wording fall along a spectrum of domination—from merely controlling a portion of a person's body (such as a hand, or two legs) to controlling

a person's body entirely (as Fayerna and Bentel do to Gideon in Morguen sounden). The more powerful versions of this Wording are known only to Stevron, which is to say Avaddon, which he employs in varying degrees with different people—sometimes imposing his will solely on their behavior, while at other times robbing them even of the freedom of their own thoughts. In general, the more complete the compulsion, the faster the corrosive effects will degrade the sanity of the one being controlled.

Fundamentally, the power of *Dei'lo* is creative and restorative, while the power of *Sa'lei* is destructive and corruptive. As such, *Dei'lo* can heal and restore anything broken to its original pristine state. *Sa'lei* can do none of this. The best *Sa'lei* can do in this arena is to give the appearance of health and vitality, but without the substance. Maalern looks strong and youthful, and indeed, he is stronger than he ever was in his youth, thanks to what Stevron has done to him. But stealing the strength of others comes at a heavy cost. Before too long, Maalern's body and his mind will begin rejecting the foreign strength within him, in the same way a body may reject a transplanted organ. He will get sick and a painful death will quickly follow, if madness does not take him first. Such is the effect of *Sa'lei*. It always leads to decay, for that is its essence.

Along a similar line, *Sa'lei* can only destroy or corrupt something that already exists. It cannot create *ex nihilo*, and cannot repair or restore anything that has been broken. The best it can do is force a thing to function in spite of its broken state. For example, while it cannot heal a soldier with a broken leg, it can give him artificial strength to fight and use his leg with no pain until at last it completely shatters.

Conversely, *Dei'lo* can create from nothing, as well as create something new out of something that already exists; for example, transform the side of a mountain into a dragon. The latter is generally easier to accomplish for most, but the reasons are purely due to weakness in faith and imagination. The Remnant typically have less trouble trusting the power of *Dei'lo* to transform something into something else than to create something out of nothing at all.

Along similar lines, the Remnant believe that *Dei'lo* can restore anything that has been broken, but that it cannot replace what has been lost. Thus, it can heal the body from the effects of dehydration but cannot replenish the missing water in the body directly. This, they believe, must be done by normal means. Yet, the Ring of Bright Water in the center of the Chamber of the Pearl can apparently do this. On repeated occasions, Seer swims in the waters and finds that she had no need to eat or drink for many days afterward. So perhaps the Remnant do not yet fully understand the full capacities of this restorative aspect of *Dei'lo*.

## On the Languages' Structure and Application

While it is theoretically possible to say anything you wish using a Tongue of Power, one must be mindful of the fact that it is in fact a Tongue *of power*—that is, it is designed to impact in a very real and often permanent way the physical world around it. So while it may be possible to say in *Dei'lo* or in *Sa'lei* something simple like, “I am going to the sounden,” without the proper sentence structure this can sound within either Tongue like nonsense, something akin to saying “sounden going I am to” in English. The words are clear but the statement makes no sense. Alternatively, some things you could say might have enough structure to actually *do* something, although it may not be anything you actually want to have done. For example, if you convey the idea of “I am going to the sounden” just right in either Tongue, you may in the next instant find yourself there, or find yourself being pulled there against your will, or something even worse (what if you became an actual part of the sounden, for instance?). For all these reasons, neither Tongue of power is typically used by the Remnant for common communication—although it was and is used in this way by the Pearl, who, because of its extraordinary fluency, is able to convey even the most nuanced thoughts in *Dei'lo*. Still, the purpose of these languages is to make something change by actively engaging the world through their speaking. Thus, they are best suited for specific uses, such as blessing, cursing, strengthening, weakening, creating, destroying, moving, transforming, or altering in some essential way the actual world. The structure of the Language is designed with these ends in mind.

Whereas the sentences in common tongues typically follow a directed-arrow pattern, such as Subject-Verb-Object, with modifiers added as needed for emphasis or to focus and refine the action, the Languages of power follow a form that is more like a branching tree rising from the earth, where a sentence always begins with the root and trunk.

ROOT: The Word invoking the Source Authority

There are only a handful of these Root Words in either Tongue. They vary in power and emphasis, but each invokes the Source Authority, much in the way one might begin a prayer.

In *Dei'lo*, there are seven Root Words. In order of power from weakest to strongest, they are: *El, Elo, Jeo, Adon, Adoni, Yeshu, Skandolos*.

In *Sa'lei*, there are six Root Words. In order of power from weakest to strongest, they are: *Demoi, Damonoi, Sitani, Lusiven, Avad, Avaddo*.

Every invocation in either Tongue must begin with one of these Words. Without them, no Source Authority is invoked, and therefore, no specific effect is likely to be unleashed. However, it must be noted that this rule is quite elementary. For more fluent speakers, Source Authority may be implied by context or by implication or meaning conveyed by other Words used. It is this nuance that makes the speaking of either Tongue especially dangerous for beginners. They may often literally “not know what they’re saying.”

Beyond the Root Word, the structure of the sentence is more loose and can be thought of as the adding of branches and twigs to the tree. However, two major branches must be included for the Word to have a specific, intended effect. These are generally (but not always) placed toward the beginning of the sentence:

**ACTION:** The Word specifying the creative action or actions you want to take.

For example: destroy, create, transform, give, take, and so on. These are generally Words of direct action or force rather than insight or information, although there are exceptions. For example, when Bentel invades Gideon’s mind at Morguen, he uses a Word that is something like, “take me into his thoughts and reveal his mind to me.” This allowed Bentel to enter Gideon’s mind in much the same way a thief enters a house. Bentel still had to go searching for the information he wanted; it wasn’t just revealed to him by the Word, because *Sa’lei* cannot reveal the private thoughts of another in that way. This is similar to the Facing Gideon experienced with Seer, though the effects were far less painful and left no lingering damage.

**OBJECT:** The Word identifying the target you want the power to act upon.

For example: him, her, cup, sword, building, this ground, that (patch of) water, those birds, and so on. You can also use a proper name. What matters is that the object is clear in both your Wording and your mind. The only time this Word is not needed is when directly addressing a singular object that is close by and in clear line of sight. For example, with the Wording “*Jeo di*,” the object is implied: “*Giver, [cause this one to] sleep.*”

In addition to these three core elements, a Wording may include any number of modifiers that serve to either enhance or in some way qualify the action as the speaker wishes. For example, “*Jeo di*” may be modified to say, “*Jeo di sera seth’o admun miso revelis.*” (Giver, cause this one to sleep until I return). This could also be phrased “*Jeo di*

*admun miso revelis sera seth'o*"; literally, "Giver, cause to sleep until I return, this person here." Variance in structure has no effect so long as the intended meaning is clear. But even here you can see care must be taken, for a Word poorly phrased may have unintended effects, such as (in this case) causing you or someone else nearby to fall asleep until you return the person to some undisclosed location. Commas exist within the written language to help with this, but with the spoken Word in either Tongue the meaning must be unambiguous for it to have its full, intended effect.

## **On Worded Objects and Places**

As stated earlier, both tongues can be used to infuse a specific power or effect within an object or location. These effects can be very nuanced and specific, as is evidenced by some of the ancient Worded objects and places that have survived to the present day. For example, the arched gateway at the ruins of Sacred Heart causes anyone who passes beneath it to experience the deep truth of what they must face if they hope to become a full lord of *Dei'lo*. The nuance and effectiveness of an object's function is directly connected to the fluency and faith of the one who Worded it. This is true in both Languages of Power; although, while *Dei'lo* Worded objects can remain vital for thousands of years (or longer, even, if the speaker has faith enough), *Sa'lei*-Worded objects tend not to last long, as the Wording has its inevitably corrosive effect. This is why *Sa'lei* guardians tend not to Word their swords or other weapons until or unless the need is urgent, and when they do, they understand the weapon will not be viable for long. However, *Sa'lei* lords have learned by trial and error over time that some Wordings are less corrosive than others. For example, Wording a sword to remain sharp has less of a corrosive effect than Wording a sword to blaze with fire. This is because the first Wording is more in alignment with the object's natural function than the second Wording is. A sharp edge is a more natural state for a sword than being perpetually ablaze with fire. The same principle applies to anything Worded with *Sa'lei*: the more aligned the Wording is with the object's natural qualities or functions, the less corrosive the Wording's effects will be over time. The reverse of course is also true. Regardless, all *Sa'lei*-Worded objects will eventually corrode and be destroyed, regardless of how aligned the Wording is.

In *Dei'lo*-Worded objects, there are no corrosive effects. Quite the opposite, in fact, as a *Dei'lo*-Worded object will typically be preserved beyond its natural lifespan. But there are still limitations to what a Wording can or cannot accomplish. The foundational rule here is: The Wording must align, at least in a basic way, with the object's natural capacities. For example, you cannot Word a non-transparent stone to let you "see" through it from a

remote location. Why? Because you cannot see through such a stone if you were holding it in person. But you can Word a transparent stone (such as quartz or diamond) in this way, because “seeing through it” is aligned with its natural quality of transparency. Similarly, you cannot Word a door to “speak” when someone approaches, because it has no natural means to produce language. But you can Word a door to open when someone approaches, and you can Word the air around the door to “speak” words (or Words) you have wrapped up in a circle of air that circulate around the door until they are activated by someone’s approach. Thus, the Wording of objects is a nuanced art, and requires a fair bit of forethought to work properly, or to work at all. This is particularly true in *Dei’lo*, where a fundamental cooperation with the object is required. This cooperation is not required in *Sa’lei*, allowing a *Sa’lei* speaker to Word objects with less precision or care...but of course, if they do, then the Wording will be more corrosive, and thus, not last as long.

### **On the Challenge of Fluency**

Learning either Tongue is difficult and costly, requiring a complete commitment and surrender of the soul to the process. It is this essential deep resonance, required by the Law of Deep Alignment, that makes it impossible for one person to speak both languages, for the simple fact that you cannot be aligned with the foundational drive of both Tongues at the same time. *Sa’lei* requires a complete giving over of the soul to selfish ambition and the lust for power, while the love and faith required in *Dei’lo* is fundamentally selfless in nature—focused wholly on the will and purpose of the Giver’s greater good, and not on the self. This makes it impossible for one person to speak both effectively.

This deep division between the tongues is demonstrated through Donovan, who by the time of Gideon’s arrival had only recently begun to master the first Words of *Dei’lo* after speaking *Sa’lei* for most of his life as fluently as any soldier is allowed (him being the Firstsworn). He had been of course forbidden to speak *Sa’lei* for all the years he has spent with the Remnant, though his capacity to speak the foul Tongue remained with him for the majority of that time. When he finally did master his first Words in *Dei’lo*, every time he spoke one, he vomited up something black and awful from his gut, as if his body were purging little by little the taint of the Dark Tongue. From the time Gideon arrives, and through his entire journey to Wordhaven, we never see Donovan speak *Dei’lo* precisely because he is weak at it, and doing so makes him ill, which he knows is not a good condition for a soldier to be in. It is only when we get to Wordhaven that we see him speaking *Dei’lo*—first, in training, and later, in battle—and while the effort makes him deathly ill, he does all he can to hide this fact. Through the rest of the story, we’re able

to observe how his power in *Dei'lo* improves, how the sickness lessens, and how, eventually, his body is fully restored.

Fluency in either Language is not just a matter of the speaker's deep alignment with the Third Law. There's also the matter of using correct grammar and pronunciation, and, beyond that, the speaker's creativity and quickness of thought in the application of the Tongue. The Words of both Languages are immensely powerful, with a wide range of effects and transformative impacts on anything or anyone within the speaker's vicinity. Knowing the mechanics of the Language is essential, but elementary. Knowing what to say is fundamental to competency in the Languages of Power. Knowing how to say it in the most powerful and nuanced way to accomplish your intent is what separates the truly fluent speaker from a mere beginner.



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— Michael