

Her brother picked up the explanation. "Her thinks make them do it."
"She thinks for them to say silly stuff, and then they do it. That's kind of like a joke," Alaina says, her
little face scrunched up in thought. "Is that a joke, Izzy?"
"No, Allie, a joke is 'knock-knock, who's there," her brother said with absolute confidence.
I loved them so much it almost hurt. I checked to see if Stella was still in her room. The door remained
shut.
"Can you give me an example?" I asked the twins.
"What's a zample?" Alaina asked with a frown.
Again, her brother had an answer. "It's that red fruit from a tree, duh."
"That's an apple," I told him and caught Alaina's hand before she could use it to smack him. "No hittin
I had to cover my mouth against a laugh, not wanting them to think I was making fun of them. They wer
both so adorable I wanted to squeeze them, but at the same time, I really needed them to tell me what
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they
meant.

"I want you to tell me something Stella thought to a teacher and made the teacher say," I told them.
"Her sayI mean she say, to me and Izzy, do we want Stella to make the teacher say a funny," Alaina
promptly replied.
"I say for her to make the teacher say" Isaac doubled over in laughter at the memory. "She make her
say
one thing I was learning about motherhood, it was that it would never be boring.
"He said for the teacher to say she was full of far ts!" Alaina crowed, also bursting into a flood of
giggles.
fortssss, Mumma!"
I pressed my lips together to hold back my laughter. And the teacher said that?"
"Stella made her," Isaac said, still giggling.
It was better than making the teacher pass wind, but still unsettling to think that Stella was able to exert
that kind of mind control. Yes, obviously it was the sort of prank any child would think to pull on a
teacher, but how many kids were able to get a teacher to do something like that?"

And what would happen if my daughter decided not to play a prank but instead made a teacher do or
say something much more harmful than a joke about fa rts?
I blinked, thinking of how I'd ordered Greyson to set Charlotte on fire. It had taken a lot of my strength
to make that happen, and it was, of course, a much bigger ask than simply compelling a teacher to say
a few words. Not to mention that my grandfather had needed to step in to stop Greyson from
completing my command, because I'd been so caught up in compelling him that I'd been struggling to
control myself.
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If it was hard for me as an adult, how much harder would it be for a child to properly control herself?
The thought of Stella forcing someone to cause harm pushed a rush of frigid fear straight to the pit of
my
stomach.
"Eat your ice cream," I told the twins. I went to Stella's bedroom door and knocked. "Stella. Come out
here
please."

My tension didn't ease very much at the sight of her suspicious face peeking out from the doorway.

Quickly, I shielded my emotions, but too late. My sensitive, special daughter had already figured out I was upset about something that had to do with her.

"Your brother and sister told me something, and I'd like to talk to you about it. Come over here." I to to the couch and we both settled onto it.

"Yes, Mother? What is it?"

"They told me about what you've been doing at school. With the teachers," I added when her brow furrowed in confusion. She still looked like she didn't understand. "That you think something to them to make them say funny stuff. Is that true?"

Stella looked relieved. "Oh, yes. It makes Allie and Izzy laugh, that's why I do it. The teachers don't get mad about it, Mother."

Likely because they weren't even aware that she was compelling them, or mind controlling, or whatever it was. She might even be making them forget.

"How do you do it, Stella?"

"I don't know, Mother. I just...do it." Stella shrugged, looking totally unconcerned.

Can you do it to me? Right now?"