

Planning-29

Don grumbled something angrily, and Tibs cracked an eye open and watched as the sorcerer scratched something he'd written. Tibs had been hoping to rest before running the roofs, but that was proving difficult to do with Don getting frustrated by his work on the diagrams.

"You should give that a rest," Tibs said.

"I will figure them out," the sorcerer snapped.

"Not if you're so angry you rip them up."

Don glared at him.

"Why do you want to understand them so badly?"

Don turned in the chair, waving the pages at Tibs. "These are power. They're spells the guild isn't going to teach us for a long time. If I can figure out the language, I'll be ahead of where they want me, and that's only going to help."

"Is one of them for corruption?"

Don frowned. "No."

"Then how is it going to help?"

The sorcerer took a page from those he held. "This one is Water. You'll be able to use it."

Tibs sat. "I thought only sorcerers did spells."

"I shouldn't call these spells. They're etchings. Spells need multiple elements. But it's all diagrams too so, that's how I think of these."

"But only sorcerers can work with those. You need to think the right way to use them."

"No, anyone with the right element can learn from one."

"Alistair said that who we think affects how we use our essence. Which is why I can't learn how to do what an archer does."

"He's only partially right." Don placed the pages back on the table. "But he misses a detail. You don't think differently from me because I'm a sorcerer and you're a rogue. You think differently because you're you, and I'm me. Our upbringing will play a part in that, and yes, you'll think more like another rogue than one of the townsfolk, but that's because you'll have done a lot of the same kind of things, which need you to think in similar ways."

"So, how can I use them?"

"The same way you learned from your teacher. You learn to think in a different way. We can all do that. It'll be easier for some than others, but by working at it, everyone can change how they think. That is what the diagrams are for. To help you think the way you have to execute them."

"So, it's possible for me to stop my essence from fraying at the edges?"

Don frowned. "Your etching frays?"

"No, when I mold essence to do stuff, like when I coat the floor with water, or..." he searched for an alternative to his attempt at Carina's whirlwind. "Make a funnel with it. The edges aren't defined the way Naila uses her water essence."

Don nodded. "She's a sorcerer, so she is used to thinking in precise ways."

"I have to be precise too; locks and traps need precision to open."

"But it's going to have to be a different kind of precision, or not as important in the overall way you learned to think. I can't tell you why you think you way you do, Mind isn't my element, and I doubt even one of them could. But an etching isn't the same as what you did. How much fraying is there when you do an etching?"

"The good ones don't have any."

Don smiled. "So you're able to think in such a way that the fraying goes away if you need to."

Tibs thought about it. And now that he considered it, not all his essence of use was frayed to the same level. His air platform barely had any. He'd worked on it so hard when he barely had any essence, trying to get it to support his weight, that it had been a nearly perfect concentration of essence.

"Then why can't I recreate what another Runner does when they're doing that?" he was thinking of Carina's whirlwind. It was simply her pulling and pushing the essence, manipulating it, the way he manipulated water.

"I guess it'll depend. How important is it to you to succeed? How different the thinking to make it happen is. If all you have to work with is how their essence feels to you as they work, you're missing a lot of

important information. It's why Etchings exist. They are a representation of the steps needed to get effect to happen."

"But they don't feel the same as when I manipulate Water."

"That's because that's just you pushing your will on it." Don considered something. "Okay. You've made waves of water, right?"

Tibs nodded.

"Do you think you could take that and turn it into something resembling your water jet?"

Tibs formed a ball of water over his palm. Shaped it into a rod and willed it across the room.

"How much effort did that take?"

"Not a lot."

"Can you make something that would cause the kind of damage your attack does?"

Tibs formed another cylinder, then made it larger. He realized his first problem, well, second. The first one was the damage he'd cause the room if he let the water go. He'd have to keep adding water to the jet the way his attack kept pulling from his reserve until he forced it to stop. He could do it, but he also had to project the water with enough force to do damage.

Essence slipped his mental control as he searched for a way to have both things happen.

He absorbed the water after he couldn't keep more from dripping to the floor. "I'm going to have to work on it."

Don nodded. "But why would you want to, when you have an etching that lets you do that easily, and when you've worked out how to make an etching without having to trace it with a point?"

"You noticed."

The sorcerer shrugged. "Hard to miss a jet of water saving your life when the Runner making is his also busy holding off his attackers. Don't worry," he added as Tibs kept his gaze fixed on him. "I doubt the others realized it. If I hadn't read about it being possible, I'd have figured I just missed you make the quick etching."

"When do you think the guild will teach that?"

"I don't know. I won't be surprised if it turns out it is something else they expect us to work out on our own eventually since it's not as useful for everyone. As a researcher, I'm not sure when etching without tracing it will be something I need to do, not to say I'm not sure how it'll work when dealing with multiple essences."