

“What other classes get taught?” Ilea asked after a little bit of silence.

“Medicine is the main one. We looked around for someone capable but it proved difficult. Some instructors in the Shadowguard as well as some retired soldiers and guards were options but none were interested after I made it clear they had to read through and understand all the literature Dagon and Elise had provided on the subject. It is rather extensive, you know? And the sources often contradict each other. Something I noticed after just a little bit of reading.”

“Of course it is. It was one of the most notoriously difficult subjects to study back in my realm. Here, where magic can just solve everything with a simple skill, the need for proper understanding and non magical treatments seem obsolete,” Ilea said.

“I understand that you generally want to focus on such knowledge to force a class emergence but do you not think the efforts are wasted beyond that?” Trian asked.

“Do you?” she asked.

“Partially. The knowledge of how to apply bandages does seem a little wasted,” he said.

“You didn’t read particularly far in those books, did you? Or the understanding of the human body and injuries is worse than I thought. I agree that once powerful healing magic is available, the need for most of what we considered treatments would become obsolete but I found that the knowledge I slowly accrued through practical experience has brought me quite far in applying my spells.”

“I only scratched the surface but knowing how to treat a blood manipulation based corruption before encountering it is surely beneficial. We should take the information we have, test and prove it and then expand on that. Anything that might help. Magic just makes it much easier to apply. Perhaps at some point we might be able to recreate something like the fountain I found within an Azarinth temple, capable of creating water with healing properties,” she said.

“Did you find someone in the end?” she added.

Trian nodded. “I did. On accident perhaps. Lyza. We met her when we went to the arena to train last time you were here. Turns out she was very much bored with the job and spent much of her time reading. She has considerable experience dealing with a wide variety of magical and non magical injuries in the arena. Contrary to the others, she only got interested once I mentioned all the books and knowledge she would have to sift through. The mention of you being the de facto leader of the organization sealed the deal.”

“Interesting. Didn’t take her to be someone that motivated but I guess there’s a passion in everyone,” Ilea said.

“Speaking of leaders, what should we call ourselves. You and me. Elders?” she suggested.

“We aren’t very old though, are we. Officers? Directors? Are you sure we should have the same rank?” Trian said.

“Decision making wise, sure. Though I agree that it makes little sense to give you the same title as I have, not being a healer. Why not just Head Administrator? I get that one too. Then we have something like Professor for the teachers and Administrator for anything else,” Ilea said.

“Head Administrator seems fine. Professor... I’m not sure we should put so much weight on a title like that. Teachers are important but not all knowing. At least in the beginning I would like to let classes as well as students develop as individual and open as possible. Until we have nailed down some practices and classes we can apply more generally,” Trian said.

Ilea nodded. “Sounds alright to me. What do you suggest?”

“Advisor sounds good. It still demands respect and could still be used after lessons become a little more defined,” the man replied.

“I like it. And for the healers themselves we can start with Apprentice, Medic, Sentinel and Veteran, each simply representing another hundred levels higher. Me being the only Veteran, so far,” Ilea said.

“Medic as well as Sentinel will lead to confusion. We should replace those or at least one of them,” he suggested.

“Hmm, alright. Instead of Sentinel, what about Executor? I hope they can do more than just heal at that point and while Medic already implies some sort of combat training, Executor does even more so. They should demand respect just as Shadows do,” she said.

“You want to keep Medic then?” Trian asked.

“I guess. We can refer to all members as Sentinels. These shouldn’t be much more than a bunch of titles either. Something to try and reach,” Ilea said.

“That sounds alright to me. So Lyza is teaching the medicine classes and I’ve been taking part of one as well. She knows what she’s doing. Very blunt but the students like her,” he said.

“Classes? There’s more than one?” Ilea asked.

“Yes. It makes little sense trying to train fifty people at the same time in combat. I believe a smaller class size is also appropriate for other subjects as it allows for more questions as well as engagement. I split them up into five groups of ten. Orthan has already planned out several group training sessions but we will wait until classes emerge,” he explained.

“They sit in on William’s lessons in Viscera that he holds for the Shadowguard as well as some of the classes available from the Shadow’s Hand directly. We left some choice there to allow some freedom. I personally teach them classes in economics, politics and geography. Claire double checked much of my material but rest assured, I have went through quite an education.”

Ilea chuckled. “I remember. When you didn’t take part in our lessons because you were such an educated soul.”

Trian closed his eyes and sighed. “A lot has happened since then.”

“It sure has,” Ilea agreed.

“No enchantment classes from Iana or Christopher?” she asked.

“I have considered her but they are rather busy with various important tasks. Perhaps in the future, when things have calmed down a little,” the man said.

Ilea nodded. “I think it would be good for me to address everyone. As well as hold some lessons as well. How do the afternoons look?”

"I would think that best as well. Experiencing healing magic and its powers will be detrimental to a class emergence. I don't see how resistance training would be possible without you there to heal the damage," Trian said. "Is this afternoon possible for you? The suns will rise in a couple hours. We can shorten some of the combat classes. It's been a stretch for Orthan and Sidney as it is. They will be glad to have some more free time."

"Mhm. Definitely. Today is fine, yes. Noon until dinner arrives I guess. At least whenever I'm here in the next couple of weeks," Ilea said.

"You plan to leave again?" Trian asked.

"During the nights. Skills and resistances level best when the enemy has an intent to kill. Plus I just need a couple more levels to reach three fifty. I don't plan on waiting too long," she said.

"You say that like it's an easy task." He shook his head.

"It should be. The question is simply how much I should focus on my other skills first. Both resistances and otherwise. A class option might only be available if I level all my skills to thirty, which honestly seems like a stretch. If I can change my other classes, I should be able to change my third one too."

*I don't want to wait another month with the potential of an Ascended hunting me down. Even if it means not getting the most optimal class option. Something good is bound to be there with what I have right now.*

"Are there any known four mark creatures around somewhere? It would be a worthy achievement if I killed one," Ilea said.

With what she had seen, Ilea doubted she could kill a level one thousand creature alone but there was the potential of something being out there that couldn't counter her very well. The Vampire had a rather efficient collection of abilities to take her down but she won in the end and that one was at seven fifty already.

"I haven't looked into it much but I'm not aware of any reports lately. Four mark creatures usually emerge from the depths or skies, destroy and kill some things and vanish again. Most of the sightings come from non credible sources but I'm sure some of them at least told the truth," Claire said. "I'll look into it but with your stories about the Elementals and the Ascended, I too suggest that you should get that third class as soon as possible."

"Rare classes are beneficial. Highly so. Yet as you said, the potential for changing to another class or reaching the next evolution is always an option. It takes time to level skills, to understand them and use them efficiently in battle," she added.

Trian shook his head. "A better class might give you more of a class bonus. No matter the skills you might get, another fifty to a hundred percent increase to your Body Enhancement or Healing magic is surely worth it."

"New skills will make much more of a difference. If Ilea could wield another element or gains synergies with her current skills it would outweigh even a two or three hundred percent increase from the class alone. They're additive, remember," Claire said.

"We don't even know how it works. I doubt it will be like the two classes we all have," Ilea said. "I can see the benefit of everything you two are saying. I'll just get the remaining levels when I feel ready. Right now, I feel like getting some more third tier resistances at the very least. As well as a bunch of levels in a variety of my skills. I won't get the maximum, not with how long it already

took for me to get where I am. I'm more inclined towards more skills than more benefits from a class bonus. It's a problem too however because better classes give better skills as well."

"Not always," Claire said. "The same skills often show up in a variety of classes. They are not always directly bound, however variations and select skills might not be there in a weaker variant of a class."

"I will work on everything I have. Starting with my Sentinel Huntress mark. I haven't really tested it so far," Ilea said, not having mentioned marking the Fae.

She quickly explained how she thought it worked.

"You can mark me. It would solve our issue of reaching you. Both for Ravenhall and your Sentinels. I haven't mentioned it but Iana and Christopher managed to work out and produce a long range communication device. It is however not particularly wieldy and doesn't work within a storage device. The range is enough for Morhill at the very least and we have sent one to Riverwatch as well," Claire explained.

"What? That is huge!" Ilea exclaimed. "Can you talk through it?"

"Only small pulses of mana can be sent and so far we have decided on three codes. One pulse for assistance request, two for an imminent catastrophe and three for imminent complete destruction," the woman explained.

"We had something like that before new technology became widely available. Can you not designate the pulses so that letters can be formed? Three short pulses and one long one for one letter for example? Or even words if that isn't feasible," Ilea said.

"We tried but even at a very short distance, the mana isn't precise, the pulses different and hard to differentiate. It becomes even more impossible when the operators switch. We are still looking for solutions but already it is a huge accomplishment. All thanks to you of course and the Taleen technology you provided," Claire said.

"The enchanters should get the credit. Not me. It's good to know however. So you accept the mark?" Ilea asked.

Claire nodded and held out her hand.

Ilea poured a little under two thousand mana into the mark that slowly became visible on the back of Claire's left hand. The rune glowed in bright blue light, three lines reminiscent of claws glowed the brightest before it faded into a more complicated design.

The mark was definitely visible but it didn't immediately stand out, even if one looked at Claire's hand directly. The color too faded from the bright blue to a much more subdued one.

"Fascinating," Claire exclaimed. "It looks similar to some of the runes I have seen on your body, before your body enhancement spell changed."

"Can you tell what it does?" Ilea asked.

"No... I have no idea. It is faded too by now, mostly dormant. I feel the magical connection to it. The only thing I can do is release it... with something attached. Should I try?" Claire asked.

Ilea felt something in her mind, knowing that there were two marks now. She could focus on them, one indicating that it was close and slightly to her right. Claire. The other one was hard to grasp but she assumed that was just the Fae's home meddling with things.

“Can I have one too?” Trian interrupted.

“Not until I gain another level in the skill. It’s one per level. Yeah, release it.” Ilea said, looking back to Claire.

The mark faded on her hand and Ilea knew immediately that it had vanished.

*Hello?*

The thought reached her mind as if the Fae had spoken to her. The feeling however was different and Ilea knew it was Claire.

“That’s fucking weird. You sent the word Hello?” she asked.

“I sent Hello? Can you hear me? But I suppose only one word is possible,” Claire replied.

*Wait, I can still feel the location of the mark. Even though I know it’s gone.*

“I can still track you...,” Ilea said.

“Interesting... there is a faint bit of your magic remaining but it isn’t much. It would be quite annoying if you couldn’t track the mark at all after someone calls for you. I doubt it will last long however,” Claire said.

“We can test it. Trian, give me your hand. I want to know if I can apply one again without losing the tracking part of the other one,” Ilea said.

Another mark later confirmed that she could still track Claire. Applying two marks obviously didn’t work. Ilea knew as much instinctively. *Three doesn’t work... one is with the Baron.*

“I will apply one again as soon as the tracking has faded entirely,” Ilea said.

“In the meantime... I’ve gotten quite an assortment of supplies from a smuggling group in Riverwatch that I mostly took out myself. Can I give you the stuff? You two can just decide on how to distribute it. Prioritize the Sentinels of course. Anything we don’t need, give to the Shadowguard or whoever else could make use of it,” Ilea said.

“Of course. Just hand me everything,” Trian said.

Ilea proceeded to summon the massive crates she had gotten from the Gray Company, watching them all vanish again as soon as Trian touched them. She added most of the magic items except for her light staff, the heavy bow and dark vision cloak.

“This might be interesting too. Got it off the Vampire I fought,” Ilea said and handed over the claw. “Just be fucking careful with it. I don’t want to come back here because a blood magic beast epidemic started.”

“Interesting. A blood manipulation artifact. I’ll have a look at it with Orthan,” Trian said.

“There’s a guy in Riverwatch that might be interested too. Kevan Isyll I think was his name,” Ilea said.

“We’ll get in touch if needed. I won’t prioritize this however, except you want that?” he asked.

Ilea shook her head. “It’s fine. Ah, also take this while we’re at it. It’s the blood manipulation agent but in its inactive state. If it gets activated and the corruption spreads here, everyone in Ravenhall will probably die.”

The two looked at her with concern apparent.

“That church didn’t manage it in however long they tried. Keep it in the laboratories in our headquarters where Iana is working. To be sure,” she said.

“I will. As long as it isn’t the corruption itself,” Trian said with a sigh.

Ilea smiled. “Ah, I have that too. I plan to make the people who want it immune. A good way to level Pain Tolerance as well, I suppose.”

“I can feel the headache coming,” Claire said. “At least Iana is good at keeping your premises blocked off against anyone that might be interested in breaking in.”

“Is she? Well that’s good,” Ilea said. *Still have to fortify my house with her enchantments.*

“Are you alright with all the work with the Sentinels by the way?” she asked, looking at Trian.

The man nodded. “The most difficult nobles left after we declared our independence from the empire. The position remains in case of emergency but I had little work in the last weeks.”

“Balduur made some prototypes of badges we could use by the way. Maybe we could include the rune you put onto Claire’s hand as well,” Trian said and summoned a handful of various steel plates.

“It’s probably related to Azarinth magic so that’s a hard no. We don’t want to spread something like that. They had enemies we are not ready for and a history we do not want to associate ourselves with,” Ilea explained and took the badges.

They weren’t enchanted yet but she liked some of the designs. *Not sure why a Drake should be the symbol. Keyla already has that... copying anything from Earth seems a little iffy too. What if a copyright lawyer gets placed in Elos?* she shuddered at the thought and chose one of the simplest designs.

“What do you think?” she asked the man.

“I mean... it’s just a wing, Balduur apparently liked yours so he included that one,” Trian said.

“It’s not trying too hard. A single wing. People can wear it as a necklace. I like the shape and it’s unique enough to stand out. At least from the boring adventurer plaques or the Shadow badges. No offense Claire,” Ilea said.

The woman looked up from the document she was reading through and smiled. “You are literally in the council of Ravenhall and a Shadow too. If you want them changed, we could talk about it.”