

Chapter 35: Year 2 Day 25 – Blue

“Well, Tor Kot’s on his way.” He’d put all his affairs in order, it seemed, because he was piling into a flying ship in the dead of night with about fifty of his mantises. That seemed to be about the staff of his manor, and was a tiny percentage of the total he had to have under his command. Considering the tens of thousands he’d fielded in Tarnil, he was giving up a lot.

Not that I had any sympathy. It was merely that it showed he was genuinely committed to bailing on the rest of the mage-kings. From the glimpses I got it seemed he was meeting Yit Niv en route, so I was expecting a call from him at any time. It was fairly late where we were, so Shayma would have to wait up for it.

“He took his time about it,” Shayma said, lounging on the beach while she played with her Domain, shifting sand to creatures and back again. “I thought he was never going to commit.”

“Yeah I dunno what took so long, maybe just cementing his retirement plans. He’s probably got a nice little estate set up somewhere.”

“Ugh.” Shayma sighed. “If we didn’t need those cores so much...”

“Yeah,” I agreed. *“Can’t always get what you want, I guess.”* Without ANATHEMA grinding away at the back of my head, my dislike was more rational than emotional, and easier to deal with. I wouldn’t really be tempted to nuke Tor Kot the moment he arrived.

Despite seeing him head off thanks to a few remarks to Miriam, several hours passed without any idea of what he was up to before Shayma took out the scrying link. She held it between her hands and Tor Kot’s face appeared above it, along with Yit Niv’s. It was the first time Shayma had seen the female mage-king, or rather, mage-queen, but it was pretty obvious who it was. I hadn’t seen any other women in the ranks of the mage-kings, though there were probably some of them somewhere.

“We’re on our way, Voice Shayma,” Tor Kot said unnecessarily. “Unfortunately we can’t use our fastest ships, so it’s going to take us the better part of a day. I think we got away clean but if we didn’t, we would appreciate your aid in removing any pursuers. We’re both down to a minimal connection with our cores so we’re not at our best.”

“I kinda hope they are followed. More cores for me! Or at least fewer mage-kings. Yes we can help them.”

“We will aid you if it’s necessary,” Shayma agreed for me. “Otherwise, we will be waiting to receive you tomorrow.”

“Ask them to wait after they cross the wall of [Hungering Dark]. I’ll set up a portal at their location so they aren’t flying over Tarnil,” I suggested. Shayma relayed my instructions and I brought Iniri up to speed.

“Do you think you’ll need me?” Iniri asked doubtfully. “I know this is partly my idea but I’d rather not deal with him directly if I don’t have to. Especially since it sounds like you’re making it so Tarnil is *not* involved.”

"Yeah I think some separation is a good thing here. It would be just wrong to host him in the Palace he forced us to build 'cause he destroyed the first one. Demeaning. No, I'll just park him and his boats in a bare cavern until they're done."

"Thank you," Iniri said, letting out a long breath. "I was just starting to get my feet back under me and then Orrelin happened. I'm awful glad for your habitation bonuses because, between that mess and Marin, sleep is a fairly scarce commodity these days."

"You know if you need me to do something for you all you ever need do is ask."

"Unfortunately, I don't think even your considerable talents can help with screening administrators and governors," Iniri said dryly. "I'm not sure you can even name any member of my inner council."

"Well, there's Cheya..." I could have gone and looked, probably, but that seemed like cheating.

"So, one." Iniri laughed. "I don't blame you, but for now the most important thing is continuing to expand your control over Orrelin. Being able to shut down people who are causing trouble is amazing."

"Sure, no trouble. You know, though, I wish Orrelin was actually interesting. The only thing that's at all unusual is the walls, and the way they corral mana, but there's just a lot of them. They're all the same."

"Don't tell them that," Iniri said with amusement. "When I talked with Cayleb the other day his tutor was actually quizzing him on the names of the famous walls."

"Poor kid."

"Reminds me of my youth."

We didn't chat that much longer because it *was* so late, and while she had nurses to take care of Marin so her sleep wasn't so interrupted, she was still a mother and still got up to check more often than not. Since she'd mentioned it, I spent the next few hours on Orrelin, slowly [Assimilating] another two cells adjacent to the ones I already had, claiming farmland and towns and of course the walls. It was mostly just killing time while I kept an eye out for Tor Kot.

"Last chance to change your mind before we go meet Blue," said Tor Kot, sitting with Yit Niv in the cabin of his ship. "I'm not going to insist, even if I do think it's the best chance we have."

"No, I'm committed now," Yit Niv said heavily. "I'm not looking forward to going back to being second-tier but it's better than being vaporized."

"I'd probably be more bothered if tier and power actually affected aging. Now that I'm old I'd rather not have to run around looking over my shoulder."

"You're not that old," Yit Niv said, almost amused. "But I take your point. Things won't end in our favor even if somehow Blue and the other Controllers reach a peaceful resolution. We'd be the first ones they'd throw to the wolves."

"Assuming Blue doesn't, himself," Tor Kot sighed.

"Doubts, at this late date?" Yit Niv raised an eyebrow.

"I'm just venting my spleen, really." Tor Kot shook his head. "Ironically, I trust Blue more than most of our former compatriots. A Power has a reputation to uphold, but for a bureaucracy, betrayal and infighting is just business as usual."

I was pleased by the compliment, but also glad that Tor Kot's jitters didn't get the best of him. He was, sadly, correct that I couldn't just do what I pleased. Well, I *could*, but the consequences were not ones I wanted to deal with. I was confident enough that I was personally unassailable, but just having a reputation for being a nasty untrustable Power would be untenable in the long term.

The next I heard from Tor Kot was early in the morning, and not through my far sight, but from the scrying link. I could tell Shayma was getting a little irritated by having it signal her at odd hours but it wouldn't be for much longer. She grumbled to herself and pulled the sphere out of her pocket space, pulling up Tor Kot's image.

"Yes?"

"We're going to need that help, I think," Tor Kot reported. "There are I think two, maybe three mage-kings after us. One of my subjects – former subjects – set off an alert for me but I don't have much information. They'll be by themselves, if they want to catch us, since I don't think anyone else has needle ships like mine."

"Mage-kings out and about on their own?" Shayma smiled widely. "That will be easy. What's more, I'll enjoy it. Hold the link open and I'll come find you."

"Even if they're by themselves, they might have dungeonbane weapons with them. Just snipe 'em," I admonished Shayma. *"No playing with your food."* The last got a laugh from her as she stowed the scrying ball and stood, using [Wake of the Phantasmal] and vanishing.

Iniri had added a compass to the scrying link that pointed in the right direction, though I had a reasonable idea of where Tor Kot and Yit Niv were thanks to my own abilities. That said, a reasonable idea was not something I'd be able to translate into any kind of precision, especially when it came to Phantasmal Space, so it was good to have a backup. I suspected that her general qualities of being a [Hero] would fill in any gaps, but I didn't want to even voice that suspicion for fear of ruining it.

It took Shayma maybe half an hour to make it to Tor Kot's ships, popping out of Phantasmal space every so often to check the scry ball, and when she made it there, it was to a battle in progress. Actually she came out of Phantasmal Space more like twenty kilometers away, but the flare of magic and the dazzle of fire washing out from someone floating in the air was visible at that distance. I thought for a moment that Shayma was too late, but it seemed that Tor Kot and Yit Niv were holding their own.

I was a little surprised, considering that Tor Kot and Yit Niv were down to one core each, but then, Tor Kot *was* more competent than most of the mage-kings I'd seen. He relied on more than just brute power, and Yit Niv was of a kind, so it made sense that the two of them could hold out against three technically more powerful mage-kings.

Some sort of glimmering shield deflected beams of green fire and chunks of molten lava, somehow sucking energy out of the latter and letting solid rock fall into the ocean. The third mage-king was below, pulling up streamers of water to do something awful, no doubt. It would have been hilarious if a

Leviathan had been around to swat that one, but of course they'd all cleared out of the ocean between the mage-kings and Orn.

"Sungun on my mark," Shayma said, switching to dragon form and pumping her wings to dart in their direction.

"Ready," I told her, preparing my inventory to give her a mid-air sniper post. It only took her moments to close in on the four or five kilometer mark, and she backwinged to hover for a moment before shifting back to her normal form.

"Sungun!"

I pushed it through my inventory, a process that took almost half my mana pool, along with a [Reified Manastone] platform so she could properly brace it on her shoulder to aim. The magical assault the mage-kings levied against the ships was nothing compared to the blue-white beam of the Sungun, the power of the weapon something I marveled at every time it was used. Shayma swept the stellar lance over the pair of attackers, annihilating their assault in an instant.

She tagged the first one right off. There was absolutely nothing left of him *or* his magic, all of it simply destroyed by ravaging stellar mana. The second one had the presence of mind to bolt, since the fringes of the beam exploded a few of his in-flight magma chunks, but it didn't do much good. The Sungun didn't fire bullets, it was *hitscan*, so Shayma merely waved it across his fleeing form. The beam struck the ocean behind her target, a massive plume of expanding steam rising into the air as the crack of an explosion slapped against Tor Kot's shields.

The third mage-king vanished under the water. Which was admittedly a really smart move, or it would have been if it he were up against anything less potent than Shayma with a Sungun.

"Pull back the [Manastone] platform," she told me, and when I did she plummeted into the water below with all the force that the [Chimaeric Neutronium] could give her, sending out a shock wave. Then she showed me something new; I wasn't sure how she'd hidden it from me, but Shayma shifted into *Leviathan* form. Admittedly it was not as large as a full-grown Leviathan, and in fact was not much larger than her dragon form, but it sliced through water as fast as her dragon form sliced through air, speeding after the mage-king.

"You can't use the Sungun underwater. Or shouldn't, anyway," I observed. "I hope you aren't intending on grappling him. He might have a dungeon-bane weapon somewhere." Shayma had to use her Domain to reply, since for obvious reasons I couldn't understand Leviathans without magic.

"I don't plan to," she said. "I'm just tracking him long enough that I can go up and get a good shot. I doubt he'll go too deep."

"Yeah okay but be careful!"

"It's just— aha!" Shayma powered to the surface, launching herself into the air as a dragon and gripping the Sungun with her claws. She fired it once again and the ocean surface heaved around the path of the beam, an enormous steam explosion that thundered past the [Chimaeric Neutronium] armor.

"Did you get him?"

"I think so, but I'm going to go get Tor Kot and Yit Niv now, just in case. Maybe put them through a [Reified Manastone] anchored portal?"

"Yeah, sure, I can do that." Probably a good idea since the mage-king ships were no doubt powered by a core, and things could go very south very quickly if I ate it at this juncture. I took back the Sungun and Shayma flew off toward the pair of airships, big blimp-looking things made out of floatstone, with huge sails radiating outward in every direction.

She shifted from dragon to Chiuxatli, flitting down to where Tor Kot was visible, still holding up a shield against any potential attacks or any fallout from the Sungun. Judging by the massive clouds of water vapor there was probably going to be a deluge any moment. He blinked at her and opened a visible hole in the shield, a neat trick, and Shayma darted through before resuming her normal form.

"Thank you—" he began, but Shayma held up her hand.

"Just in case, it will be faster to portal you to Blue's area. I will open a portal ahead, you fly through it."

"Yes, of course," Tor Kot said with aplomb. "I will inform Yit Niv." He cast a glance to the side, where his companion's airship was hovering a few dozen meters to the side of his.

"I'll be just up ahead. You won't be able to miss it," Shayma told him, and flitted back out to put actions to words. I gave her an anchor of [Reified Manastone] and built out from there, making a big round portal frame from metal. Normally I didn't actually make portals round, since they fit better into doors as squares, but given the profiles of the ships it made sense.

In a minute or two I had a fifty meter diameter portal set up, going directly to the big cavern I'd made for the occasion. It had started out as a bare, square room, but I felt that not providing any amenities at all was rather churlish. Sure, I didn't like them, but I didn't have to be actually rude when it barely cost me anything to add some Climate touches and make it nice. Besides, the Scalemind would have to work there too.

Tor Kot was first, wind mana guiding air into the sails and pushing it along into the cavern, with Yit Niv close behind. Shayma kept a close eye on the surroundings in case one of the other mage-kings was still around, but her liberal use of Sungun seemed to have done the trick, and the only thing she had to worry about was the chaotic weather the gun itself had made. Stellar infused water vapor created some very strange effects as glowing rain and colored lightning swept over the portal area.

When they were through, I reclaimed everything and pulled Shayma back to my core. She navigated to the Scalemind while I watched the mage-kings disembark. They flung rope ladders over the sides for the mantises and spiders, but Tor Kot and Yit Niv both could fly by themselves and simply levitated out and onto the ground.

"This is..." Yit Niv was genuinely impressed, looking around at the large cavern and breathing in the mana. "I always believed you, but it's still different seeing and feeling this mana."

"This is actually rather low-key for him, from what I understand." Tor Kot was amused. "He has an entire pocket country stashed away somewhere, according to what I've heard."

"I can believe it, seeing this." Yit Niv crossed her arms, glancing at the walls and then frowning. "No way out, I see."

“Blue tends to use portals,” Shayma said, appearing just in time for the last remark. “It’s easier than putting passages everywhere, especially when things are spatially manipulated.” Yit Niv spun to look at Shayma, then offered her a bow.

“Voice Shayma, we meet at last. Tor Kot has kept me informed of your feats, but I found it difficult to credit it all until today.”

“A lot of people don’t believe Blue can do what he does. Mostly our enemies. So far, it hasn’t ended well for them.” Shayma walked forward toward them. “Cuts-Like-Cold and two of her sisters can sever your monsters, but only one at a time and you brought over a hundred. That’s going to take a couple days.”

“Certainly,” Tor Kot said. “At this point, it’s not like we’re pressed for time. The estates we set up should keep for a few months yet.”

“You’ll have to tell me where the estates are if you want me to set up transport there,” Shayma said.

“Of course,” Tor Kot said, and glanced at Yit Niv, who nodded reluctantly.

“We purchased and cleared some area on the coast of Torschol,” Yit Niv said. I was casting about for a world map when Shayma simply asked.

“And where is Torschol?” Shayma raised her brows.

“It’s a small country on the continent of Korlen,” Tor Kot answered. “Fairly low mana density, since it’s far away from any springs or Great Dungeons, but an excellent climate.”

“Ah, *found it.*” The continent was literally on the other side of the planet, both below the equator and in the other hemisphere. The country itself was small, along the lines of Kinul, but a map didn’t tell me anything about what it was *like*. Still, for a retirement plan, it didn’t sound half bad. Hopefully after they were gone we’d never hear from them again. “*Here you go.*” I pushed the map through Inventory and Shayma took a glance at it before stowing it away .

“I see,” she said. “I assume you have a detailed map? That can wait until later,” she said, as Yit Niv cast a glance back toward her hovering ship. “First I want to introduce One-Eye-Green, who represents the Scalemind.” She waved a hand, and vanished for a moment before coming back with One-Eye-Green in tow.

“Hello!” One-Eye-Green said brightly. “Do you want to make your monsters people, too?”

Since One-Eye-Green could charm the birds out of trees, I wasn’t really worried that the mage-kings would react poorly. Especially since they knew they were here on my sufferance. Technically I *had* the power to just seize their cores but I wasn’t that kind of person. Plus it would just be stupid.

“*I should do something extra for the Scalemind for this,*” I mused aloud to Shayma. “*Sometimes I feel like they’re my best tenants. They do all kinds of things and I never have to intervene with anything.*”

“That might be a little difficult, since you also want them to learn to do things for themselves,” Shayma pointed out.

"Yeah but learning that hard work means good stuff happens is important too. I mean, they're not slaves even if our relationship is a little weird. Why don't you talk to One-Eye-Green, find out what they could use? I mean, I guess once Taelah makes mind Affinity stuff we can actually make them useful items."

"True," Shayma said thoughtfully. "Though I'm not sure much they can use magic items as it is. I'll have to craft some and see how they work."

While we brainstormed I opened a portal, as the introductions were finished, and Cuts-Like-Cold led three of her sisters through. The bigger, older Scalemind were the only ones capable of the feat, so One-Eye-Green's generation had to leave it to their older siblings. Although I still didn't know the precise blood relations between the various Scalemind.

They got to work immediately, but as I'd been warned, it wasn't something that they could do en masse. It was apparently exhausting, not just in terms of mana or stamina but mental energy, so the four of them could process about twenty monsters a day between them. Which meant, assuming they kept up the pace, that Tor Kot was going to be my guest for another four to five days.

It was odd to be hosting him for so long, with no climactic battle or anything, just Tor Kot deciding to bow out of the fight entirely. It was kind of unfair. Iniri laughed at the sentiment.

"It's the best result. You don't have to spend any time or resources on taking out your opponent. It may be more *satisfying* to crush them with overwhelming force, but it's a waste of time if you don't have to." She shrugged, looking down at Marin. "I'm somewhat less wrathful these days, I suppose."

"I can understand that. I guess having a thousand things to do tends to distract you from the past."

"It does at that," Iniri agreed. "There's too much going on to hold onto grudges, so I'm just hoping after this we never hear from Tor Kot ever again."

"I suppose, but you're still going to be dealing with the other mage-kings."

"No, you are," Iniri said wryly. "I'm just dealing with their leftovers."

"Okay, point."

Despite my intentions to ignore them, I found myself watching Tor Kot and Yit Niv more often than I would have liked to admit. They were depressingly ordinary. Tor Kot read a lot, and Yit Niv worked on *embroidery*, of all things. It was actually a little weird to see them being so domestic.

That wasn't to say they were a couple. Friends, certainly, but aside from the obvious age gap there just wasn't any chemistry between them. They both seemed to get along better with their monsters, though to my great relief I didn't catch them in any licentious acts. I didn't know if either of them *did* have monster lovers, and I was perfectly content to remain in ignorance.

Part of me was waiting for the other shoe to drop, for something terrible to happen or for something to explode or for Tor Kot to whip out a dungeonbane weapon and try to kill me, but nothing did. The world spun, day followed night, and the monsters slowly got freed. Or whatever severing did. Since I didn't have any monsters but the burrowing wyrms I wasn't precisely sure what the connection was, or if I would even be able to know if I *did* have monsters.

None of them went crazy. I didn't know if that was because all the monsters were hand-picked, old and mature and intelligent specimens, or if because the severing process was fundamentally different than losing a core. All the monsters were third tier or higher, and all of them had names. Since I knew for a fact that not all the monsters Tor Kot had under his command were named, the fact that he'd only brought ones that were niggled at me until I asked about it.

"So why exactly are some monsters named? How does that even happen?"

"It's an odd question for a dungeon, but I suppose I already knew that Blue was unusual," Tor Kot said to Shayma. "It's a direct upgrade you, or well, a Controller has to purchase for a monster. It costs a significant amount of dungeon experience, and doesn't take effect until the monster evolves, but it does mean their evolution is easier and the resulting level is higher. Plus, they're actually more aware of themselves."

"So that's why you only brought named monsters?"

"Yes. Pragmatically, they're the ones I invested the most into I suppose, but the real reason is that all the ones that *aren't* named are..." He pursed his lips. "They're not stupid, but they have some strict limits."

"Sort of odd. The Scalemind don't seem to have those limits. Then again, the limits thing might apply to monsters created directly from dungeons. After a few generations separate from the dungeon they might be more like normal beings." The creatures created by [Climate Flourishing] always seemed a little odd to me, so I figured freshly decanted monsters, or worse, dungeon-inbred ones, were a little bit like philosophical zombies.

"Possibly," Tor Kot allowed. "Though there's also the issue that the monsters we control don't have *time* to diverge like that. They're mostly used to contain the rift."

"Yeah, speaking of which, how does the containment work? I'm getting stuff from the Underneath and I don't think you have dungeons stretching all the way down there, do you? In a solid ring all the way around it?"

"No, we don't," Tor Kot agreed when Shayma relayed my musings. "The containment is really in two parts. There are dungeons on the actual central island that we transfer monsters to, so they can fight the things that come out from the rift. That's actually the weaker part of the containment; the main part is the actual dungeon mana fields themselves. They suppress and compete with the expansion of the rift."

"Huh, that's a little bit weird. So you do have a solid ring of dungeon mana on the central island?"

"We do. The problem is that if too many monsters get through it can create a channel for things to spill out." Tor Kot made an equivocal hand. "What comes out of the rift is unpredictable, so our war cores let us concentrate force where we need it. Losing four of them meant that we couldn't respond fast enough and, well, you saw the results."

"I'm not going to apologize for it."

"We're hardly going to apologize for defending ourselves," Shayma said. "Besides, considering how those mage-kings acted I doubt they were really that much help with the defense."

“Hundreds of thousands of monsters are still a considerable force even when wielded by a blunt instrument,” Tor Kot said dryly. “Though you are right, I did not consider him or his allies to be particularly useful to the containment effort. Most Controllers aren’t.”

“Yeah, I’d gotten that impression myself.”

“We used to be more dedicated,” Tor Kot sighed. “Centuries ago. Not so much nowadays.”

“I suppose it doesn’t matter if Blue is going to be taking care of all of it soon enough,” Shayma remarked.

“And he has my thanks for it. Truly. To be honest, even if I had personally found a way to close the rift, it would be difficult to convince some of my fellows to actually *do* it.”

There were more questions I had, and Shayma had, and Iniri had that Tor Kot was willing enough to answer while we processed the monsters, but those could take up only so much time. The effort seemed to drag afterward, since it kept distracting me from the work that I needed to do, but then suddenly everything was done and Tor Kot and Yit Niv were ready to disconnect themselves from their core crystals. A process I was curious about.

I’d seen that the mage-kings had magic items that affected dungeons, like Tor Kot’s bells and the dungeonbane weaponry, so I figured it was more of that, but I was wrong. It was something to do with the cores themselves, where Tor Kot basically sat in communion with it for an hour. Yit Niv took a little bit longer.

Tor Kot

Level 33 [Warcaster Adept]

Yit Niv

Level 31 [Hurricane Scion]

It was bizarre seeing them with actual, real statuses for the first time. Especially since both of them had relatively little depletion, only approximately one-third total. I would have thought that being in constant contact with depletion and being powered by the stuff would have resulted in being almost completely depleted when he disconnected, but no. It seemed it was the exact same state as when he had become Controller, as if his soul structure had been put in stasis by the dungeon core.

“Hokay, time for me to get those cores then.”

“Done with the cores?” Shayma asked politely, as Tor Kot rubbed his eyes and Yit Niv wrapped a heavier shawl around herself. They both looked like they’d been up all night even if it hadn’t been that long.

“I am,” Tor Kot said. “The airship will be useless without it, though. You can keep it but I don’t know if it’ll be worth it.” The two of them had taken all their luggage out over the course of the past few days, so the ships themselves were completely bare, both of monsters and of items.

“Eh, I can always show it to the Chiuxatli and have them figure it out. Some quick ships that aren’t the Fortress would be nice.” Since it was *still* parked in Chiuxatlan, it was not exactly as mobile as I’d conceived it to be originally.

"That's fine," Shayma assured him, and teleported into the heart of the airship where the core was embedded into the stone. She reached out to touch it with armor-clad hands and I poured mana down the link. Without having it as a specific ANATHEMA it was less stressful, but a *lot* harder, requiring more mana and a sort of focused push to force it *into* the core.

Level 40 core converted

3 trait points awarded

Dungeon gains additional Core.

Depletion source removed. Requirements for level advancement reduced.

As soon as the core was mine the mana cascaded out into all the mana circuits the core was attached to, and basically ruined them all. Since it was less energetic, I could see it was less an issue of overloading them, and more that there was depletion bound up in all the core mana constructs. Since my mana destroyed depletion, it all collapsed. It was a bit of a shame, but it was also a preview of what would happen when I took over the mage-king areas. *All* their magitek would collapse.

Yit Niv's core was next. One of her spiders helped support her as she sat down in a chair, looking over at the boat while Shayma teleported inside. The process went much the same way, down to the destruction of all the enchantments in the ship that made it move and steer.

Level 35 core converted

3 trait points awarded

Dungeon gains additional Core.

Depletion source removed. Requirements for level advancement reduced.

I [Relocated] the cores elsewhere, then grabbed both boats and [Relocated] them to another holding cavern. I wasn't sure what to do with them, especially since the magic structures were ruined, but I'd have someone look at them. Then I asked Shayma to check how close I was to leveling,

"Ninety-one percent," she reported. "Almost there."

Shayma took a jaunt to Torschol, which seemed to be mostly grassland, but of surprising orange and red shades, making it look a bit like a sunset. The estates were a pair of adjacent plantations, protected by a range somewhere between hills and mountains, that I suspected were recently created. They had fields and a sheltered bay and by the look of the magic scattered about a bunch of magic items purchased to improve their quality of life. I had to admit it looked like a nice retirement setup.

I opened a portal and let Tor Kot and Yit Niv, mage-kings no longer, and their loyal monsters spill out onto the orange grass. A little surprisingly, none of the monsters decided to abandon their masters, now that they were free of the dungeon cores. I had Shayma prompt One-Eye-Green to make the offer, but they seemed fine with the idea of a farming life. Seeing the properties, it was a little more understandable.

"Goodbye and good luck," Tor Kot told Shayma. He didn't offer his hand, since he understood Shayma wouldn't take it. "Hopefully we'll never see each other again."

“Hopefully,” she agreed, and I recalled her.