

# The Light Flickers Pt. 1

By Kalru

Sweet sunlight illuminated the sky. As many others have, I awoke in a field; nothing belonging to me other than my name. The field was crowded, an odd sight but the explanation for why it was odd eluded me. Much did, and much still does.

“What happened?” was the first thought racing through my mind.

Stumbling to my feet, I remember dusting myself off. A man in dazzling armor assisted me to my feet. Thankfully, he stood in the shade of a nearby tree, or I might have been blinded by his armor's gleam. He clearly took care of it. The Knight smiled and gestured for me to come forward. I was more than happy to oblige, he explained the location I was in, and its purpose to me. He also called me an Aisling, before gesturing towards the fields and smiling “It is my belief that an Aislings journey begins with themselves, however if you do need help you may ask me, of course. Good luck friend.”

After that everything was something of a blur! I talked to someone who told me of the ways of the world and implored me to stay safe. I saw many colorful people swarming the fields, and strange furry creatures milling about. Eventually I arrived at the end of a path, I could feel that this was the end of this place, stepping onto it everything went dark. Then, the warm sting of light left my skin.

Once again I awoke in a strange place. Though, this place was much easier to warm up to; it was my room. I felt different. I hardly remembered the past, but I could see the future. Not literally, of course, but metaphorically. I saw a bright light, a warmth. I did not know what this warmth was just yet, but I would soon come to meet it.

Leaving my room in the inn I greeted Miss Riona. From my understanding she ran the inn. She was kind. She called me an Aisling as well, a term that was strange to me at the time, but I quickly came to be acquainted with it. It seems that Aislings are a sort of ascended class. It is plausible that they started as Mundanes, which is the class that Riona informed me she belonged to. It is a sad sort of luck based system, or at least I have come to think of it as such since then. I wished that all could be Aislings, but there was nothing I could do about it at the time, perhaps ever.

In my haste to acquaint myself with my new found fate, and find a way to help these mundanes, I hurried to the place my dream had mentioned. There was supposedly a temple that infused a person with magic and bound them down a path. A path that would one day become a road to greatness. Though in my hurry it took me a time to actually find this path. I eventually found the temple, an older piece. A mundane awaited inside, she introduced herself as Aiofe. I asked her about the training, she smiled before snapping. I appeared in a room, one that had multiple paths going through it. I went through the temple once, the circles in the middle brought pain

and thus I avoided them. Eventually I arrived at the end of the temple and was told that I had not walked the path. I was confused at first, but after giving it some thought I figured that "the path" must have been the circles. Turning, I repeated the process, almost falling. Searing pain shot through my body at every step upon the stones, shuddering at the prospect of whatever lay beneath, eventually I reached the end. I was to be a wizard on oath of Logan, an interesting prospect! I had never dreamed that I would use magic before. I took on this path alone, pledging to only use the power I got from it for good. Going alone was a choice that still saddens me sometimes. If ever someone writes about me will they write that I was alone?

Exiting the temple, I made my way down the path, I met many people, or I suppose "saw" is a more apt description. I had a feeling, an anxiety about talking to these Aislings. Not because of anything that they had done, simply because of the confidence they had displayed about themselves. These Aislings had been here for quite some time, and knew much about this place.

Eventually I reached a stone monolith, an entrance! Into where? Well I was soon to find out. I went down into the darkness, and found an assortment of creatures. Rats, centipedes, all rather hostile. I took down a few, but it was a timely effort. They nearly took me down as well, if not for a person, ArcaneFalco was their name, they saw me, and in the midst of my struggle offered their assistance. With Falco, I went down further into the depths. It was scary at first, but somehow I was conquering creatures I couldn't beat before. The moon had risen, and after a time we returned to the inn to settle in for some sleep. I felt much stronger than I had the night before. I knew more about the world, and about the creatures that wished to harm it. Before laying down, however, I was dragged to the side by Falco. They gave me a multitude of items, a Magus Diana being one of them; a beautiful staff. With that, I went off to sleep.

I awoke the next day, and at first, I simply wandered without any real rhyme or reason. That is until a rhino appeared in front me, a tiny one, it was if it simply materialized right there, before me. It wasn't hostile - if it was I would not be standing here currently. I stood there in shock for a few moments before the little thing opened its mouth and imparted a message

"Hello, please meet me at Abel," ArcaneFalco's voice came out of the creature.

Then as quickly as it arrived it disappeared. I was dumbfounded to say the least, but I found my feet moving towards Abel. A sort of curiosity, I suppose. One of the things I can remember from before I became an Aisling is how much trouble that could get me into.

I arrived in Abel, and almost immediately Falco took me to the bank. They were pulling a big tarped cage behind them, and I could swear that I heard squealing from within. They wheeled the cage in front of me, and without saying a word, they opened it. Out came an adorable pig! He had a big blue bow and a name tag reading "Rain". You may ask why I keep this as an entry in my journal. It doesn't seem all that important, but Rain was the first gift from falco that really meant this much to me. This first friend to truly join me on my journeys. He means the world to me.

Falco proceeded to send me on a quest. He told me to uncover a secret in the prison of Loures. I was very happy to oblige. After all, I owed a lot to Falco, and trusted their judgement. I went to Loures, not knowing what to expect at first, and started on the path to Loures castle. On the way there I met a curious mundane. He introduced himself as Simon Marcielle. He had lived in Loures for the entirety of his life and was growing to be older; He asked me to take a journal, one that his father had written, and introduce it to the world. Interestingly he almost seemed to spit out 'father' as if it were a curse. It seemed as if their relationship was a subject best left unspoken, at least for the moment. I thanked him for this priceless treasure before continuing on my way. Why he had trusted this journal to me and not an Aisling of more renown is a subject that still intrigues me.

Arriving at the cells, my first thought was of the sadness of it all, all of the prisoners seemed so lonely and the cells were so dark. At the time I arrived the cells were quiet, it was only me and a few mundane's, I talked to each of the mundane before stumbling upon a man in the prisons. An older man who eventually asked me if there was someone else here with me, I told him no of course I had arrived alone; With a thoughtful glance he thought for a minute, before asking me to come back with another Aisling. I nodded before leaving the cells. It had seemed like a simple task, but after hours of wandering, I still had no luck. Eventually, defeated, I slumped down on some crates for a rest. feeling a poke in my side I was reminded of the journal Simon had given me. I suppose that that was as good a time as any to read it, so taking the journal from my bag I flipped to the first page.

\*Deoch 120 winter 7

Dear future,

My name is William Marcielle, a mundane in the service of the royal family of Loures. I say 'in the service of, but in reality I am just another guard, I simply wish for a nicer sounding title. My friend, Nathaniel Primrose asked me to take up journaling and gifted me this old pad. Why he did so? Beats me, it's supposed to be a way to keep track of what is going on, but the idea of conversing with myself through it is quite, for lack of a better word, amusing. Though I suppose I should at least log the current events, as a thank you to Nathaniel if nothing else. The population of Aislings is supposedly on the decline, panic is widespread. I do not see why, however. The population dip has been small to say the least, and I'm certain it is simply a matter of time before it resumes its rise, but suppose the population is falling, though I do not see why it is a big deal. It simply means more opportunities for us. Everyone is so worried about the Aislings, but we do not need them. Of course I'd never tell the other guards my thoughts on Aislings, but that is what this silly thing is for. I must be going now, duty calls! I just said that to sound cool... If I am being honest, it did not sound cool.

-William Marcielle \*

While reading this entry, one thing was racing through my mind. their age. They were written many deochs before my spark even lit, what secrets lay in these notes? I had to find out- "Hey!" an interruption, it looked as if my contemplations would have to wait for another day. A man approached, he appeared to be a wizard, much like myself. He wore blue robes and had a beautiful staff, a Magus Diana like my own. He was a little loud, but seemed kind, he introduced himself to me as Depreciative. A strange name, of course I didn't mention my thoughts in fear of being impolite. I talked to him for a time, not wanting to be rude, and it turns out he was here with a similar goal to myself. He also wished to find out the secret of Loures castle dungeons. I thought back to the old man's words and figured this was my chance! Unfortunately the journal would have to wait until another day. I followed Depreciative further into the prison, and eventually we reached the man. He told us of a girl named Bella, who I surmised was once close to him. Eventually we were directed to Jean, but not before promising the man, who had given his name as Marlin at this point, that we would deliver a message to Bella. The path to Jean was not a hard one, but it was long and confusing. We got lost multiple times before meeting a more experienced Aisling who led the way. I have forgotten their name, but they were kind.

Jean is the counselor of Loures, and he was located on the third floor of Loures Castle. Entering his room, I immediately felt a sense of envy. It was beautiful and full. I'd love to live somewhere like this someday. He looked up from what he was working on and I initiated conversation with him. He seemed more predisposed towards me than Depreciative strangely. He told us much, and I learned a most curious secret. He was also close to Bella. Towards the end of our talk he whispered to me something, the location of Bella. Before asking me to leave, he wished to talk with Depreciative in private. I exited the room as asked, though I may have listened in just a bit. He talked with Dep for a moment, growing more irritated with each question. Eventually, Depreciative asked a certain question "Even if it would damn others?" It was silent for a moment, before the man all but exploded.

Dep was surprised, and with a swift movement, came tumbling through the door, nearly crushing me in the process. but i was fast, or lucky enough to jump aside depending on how you want to see it. Depreciative was quick to his feet, seemingly not discouraged in the least "So! Where to next!" he quickly asked. I directed us towards the enchanted garden in the East Woodlands. On our way there I became separated from Depreciative. It was curious. Likely he had just gotten turned around, but still I felt a little bit of worry for my new friend.

Before I could turn to go and look for him, however, a red blur caught my eye. I moved closer and saw a beautiful scarlet scarf. I sat there for a moment, a little surprised by how it almost seemed to glow, before shaking myself out of my stupor and producing 3 Beothaich Deum from my bag. I set them on the ground in front of me and waited. It didn't take long before a flutter could be heard in the wind. I had decided to move back a little but as soon as i heard the wings, i jumped up to my feet and moved forward as silently as my legs could take me, a difficult task with all of the foliage around to say the least, but nonetheless i manage to be quiet enough as to not advert any unwanted attention my way.

The fairy landed on the Beothaich Deum and began fiddling with the caps. That's when I made my move! Springing from the foliage, I grabbed the fairy as gently as I could. Holding her in my hands, I came to one conclusion; she was theatrical! She acted as if I was some monster who wished to harm her. It took some time, but after a multitude of attempts to assuage her fears, she finally calmed enough to answer my questions. The first of which being "Have you seen Bella?" she answered eagerly, telling me of Bella. But before she could go on a tangent, I interceded, asking simply of her whereabouts. Just then I heard a rustle in the foliage, momentarily diverting my attention before everything went dark.

Well, some light shone through, but my eyes became clouded by sand. As I went to rub the sand from my eyes, the fairy used this as a moment to escape and squirmed away, her laughs following behind her. She had glitter in the palms of her hands, I noted after rubbing the same substance away from my eyes. With a sigh, I stumbled back towards the path and decided to regroup with Depreciative back at the castle. I gave Rain a missive and sent him to Depreciative, asking him to meet at the castle. With which he reappeared after only a few seconds and relayed Depreciative's affirmative response to me.

I headed back to the castle and met up with Dep at the gates, recounting what had happened. We both agreed that Jean's help would be of paramount importance here. Thus we headed back towards the counselor's room. We arrived with no further trouble. Luckily, we remembered the route this time. Going through the door, I immediately noted the man's glare towards Dep. I was quick to move and attempted to mend the situation. After much back and forth, I got him to at least hear Dep out. The only stipulation? It would have to be in private! Exiting the room, this time Jean made sure to keep an eye on the door. And so I was forced to wait for a time.

Dep came back, smiling. When I asked what had happened, he simply responded with "We'll get what we need." We headed back to the East Woods, and decided to hide in the foliage until that night. I was unsure of the plan, if you could call it one - I could not think of a way that we could attract the fairy. I no longer had any Deothaich Deum, and even if I did, I was uncertain if the fairy would fall for the same trick twice. But Dep assured me that it was fine and that he had a plan.

The moon arose over the trees and shone over the enchanted garden in an almost ethereal light. That is when Dep arose and made his way to the clearing. He produced 3 Deothaich Deum, and I let out an almost audible sigh before quickly covering my mouth. He set them in place and waited, then waited some more. I was beginning to grow impatient when a chuckling sound arose from the forest.

"Hm, hm. First there was that human earlier, and now another one comes bringing me an offering! Humans are too dumb." I must admit my pride was a tad bit hurt, and I was contemplating my next move when Dep took one of the bottles and tossed its contents towards the voice. There was a grunt as its wings were soaked through, and then it came tumbling through right into Dep's arms.

“Told you!” he yelled back towards me before looking back towards the fairy to begin his line of questioning, which consisted of a simple, “Where is Bella?” which the fairy, with her escape disrupted, was more than happy to oblige with an answer this time. “Dark beating wings clutched her and carried her off!” Dep let her go afterwards. She turned back towards us with a sour glare before walking dejectedly into the forest.

Dep looked thoughtful for a moment before suggesting that we head back to Marlin. I agreed that this was likely our best course of action. Marlin was still sitting within his cramped cell. He had a much more contented face compared to the last time we had met with him. I did not want to tell him the news for fear of taking away the hope that had brought about this change, but I also knew that we had done all we could. We told him of the fairy's words. He thought for a moment before setting upon a new idea, he pointed us towards the Loures bedroom, and asked us to deliver a letter once more. We headed to the rooms and started looking around Dep started to ask “so what now-” and then a scream came, I ran over to where he had been, finding a hole in the floor. I contemplated walking away before slipping and falling in after him, I landed in what appeared to be a maze, but Dep was nowhere to be found.

I wondered for a moment trying to find him, but I had no luck. I eventually stumbled upon a man, he was dark and it was hard to make out what he was, as I approached him I muttered “Dep?” when suddenly he turned slashing me everything immediately went dark, i opened my eyes a moment later and was being dragged away by Dep, who also appeared to be injured, I had lost my staff in the process, eventually we stumbled out of the dark and into the world again, falling to the ground we both lost consciousness.

light flooded my eyelids, a dull throb ringing out from my chest, i felt some water enter my mouth “ah! You're ok!” Riona's familiar voice, I could tell it was meant to be soft and calming, yet it still produced a ringing sound in my head, which caused me to jump. I blinked once, twice slowly feeling myself regain a bit of control “what happened? Is Dep ok?” I managed to ask, mostly as a way to feel myself and make sure I could still talk. The words came out a bit of a jumbled mess but she understood “Everyone is ok! We saw you stumble out of the forest near Loures and brought you here, to help you back to your feet! Get some rest, we can try walking tomorrow.” I tried to ask more, but the dull thud made the task near impossible. I closed my eyes for just a moment to try to regather myself. I felt the dark close around me once more, and then nothing.

When next I awoke Riona was nowhere in sight. I tried to rise from the bed, but the aching in my chest quickly thwarted that plan. To my side was a strange pear shaped thing, it was red and had almost orange spikes “a rambutan,” I turned towards the new voice. It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the brightness illuminating from the figure standing by the window, but soon enough the familiar visage of Falco came into view “they'll help you heal, I have a few more of them for you.” They said producing much more than a few from their bag. After they had set all of these mysterious items upon the table a total of 30 were accounted for. I was shocked for a moment, if these really had healing properties then they were likely fairly valuable, but Falco seemed to have hardly any concern of handing them off to me “rest up little one,” they threw a



quick smile my way before they started towards the door, all i could manage was a quick thank you before they were away.

I laid back down and laughed a little, Falco always was a mysterious person, there's so many questions i still have about everything. I found my head turning to the window, the light illuminating the room was beautiful. A statue in the distance caught my eye, what was that on the plaque? Glioca, what a pretty name. I'd have to ask Falco about it further once I managed to come across him again. Another sight caught my eye, on the floor was the journal Simon had given me, it must have slid from my pack. With more than a little effort I reached over and pulled the heavy tome onto the bed, I supposed this was as good a time as any to resume my read.

\*Deoch 120 winter 8

Dear future,

Dear future, I suppose that's the phrase I've taken to saying. A silly one to be certain but I digress, I do not have too much to write today but I suppose a silly thing did happen in the market today. A woman bumped into me half spilling her crate, she was strong though. I tried to help her but she hardly needed it, she started yelling up a storm at me but after she saw me she made a quick apology and handed me an apple and introduced herself as melony fora. A pretty name I must admit. I however am not smitten as my good friend Nathaniel took to pointing out, I simply thought she had a nice look about her I suppose. I am much too polished for a simple street vendor, and my ambitions reserve my hand for a lady of much higher standing. I simply thought her eyes were nice, yes. I hope that Nathaniel does not go trying anything, that man has always been something of a romantic. He's had feelings for his wife for a good 10 years, and it took him half as long to admit them. I must admit his thoughts of romance are charming, but I would never submit myself to that. Yes simple infatuation is all this is, and all it ever will be. I suppose I should also give an account of more political matters, the Aisling population is still in decline, but hardly noticeable. It has invoked a bit of a fuss from the king; however, I still remain indifferent to this 'plight' ; the matter of Aislings matters little. I must get going, my watch is soon. Absence gives way to hope.

-William Marcielle\*

I do wonder where his obvious disdain of Aislings comes from, I had thought they were a respected class by all. Yet this man obviously has some sort of hate towards them, or at least complete indifference. I looked up from the journal and noted that the room was unchanged. I probably still had time for another page or two, I smiled, it felt as if this was the first time in days I had some quiet, and I was filling it with a rather excellent pastime indeed. My greedy fingers gently flipped the page of the delicate book and continued reading.

\*Deoch 120 winter 8

Dear future,

I am writing again for the second time in one day. It has been a busy last couple of hours but I finally have some time to rest, and for some reason I fill it with this. The human mind is so strange, I am a soldier, I have no need for writing but still I fill my free time with entries into a journal that no one else will ever see, and with what free time i am not spending on this I am

spending on that woman. I am so tired, her eyes have been in my thoughts for the entirety of the day. Perhaps it is time I get them checked, her eyes were like honey light and soft, and they have held me trapped within them! Is this the fate of me? To be smitten, gods I am starting to sound like Nathaniel, a rather terrifying thought indeed. I am not that lovestruck, no i have ambitions and I must follow them, I cannot set them to the side for some random woman. I will not. Yes this is simply infatuation, let me change the subject this simply stands to put stress on my already tired mind. Where to, of course I should actually log my shifts. My posts have been getting longer, with less Aisling around a prospect that would likely irritate a less astute man as myself; however just as I had anticipated this simply allows for more chance of advancements in my career, no harm has come of it, the courts concern is as ever curious. I should probably get some sleep, it's time for me to rest

-William Marcielle

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I've been lying here for around 2 hours. Sleep is not coming easy, I will be honest that I have some concern, or perhaps that is merely an excuse to hide myself from her eyes. But now I do fear for Nathaniel, he is one of my only friends. My mouth has a tendency to make plenty more enemies, the longer hours have been taxing on him. He has never been particularly fit, I'd even go so far as to call him a tad sickly. the extra drills, and watches are not good for his health, I shall try once again to find sleep

-William Marcielle.\*

The fact that this william fellow was so comfortable as to call one of his friends sickly is curious to me, I could never do that for fear of being far too rude. Not that there aren't a few people in my adventures that I wouldn't mind having a bit more bravery towards, but that is besides the point. Something about looking at the hopes of a man long since passed, well it's a sobering feeling. I was growing tired at the time regardless, so setting the journal down on the night stand I lay my head to the pillow, and closed my eyes to try to put all of the information I had gathered up until this point together; before I could do so I felt the darkness enclose over me, as i faded into a sleep.

That night I remember dreams, strange ones. At first I was in the body of a woman from an age past, an age of heroes. I felt brave and strong, and a new knowledge enveloped my body, then a bright light enveloped all, and I was in my body again, standing before a woman. She looked kindly, and produced a warmth that put my mind at ease. "I am Glioca, it is nice to meet you child." she said in a soft soothing voice, she did not say much else, aside from telling me to keep myself safe. And in another flash the light left as quickly as it had entered, and I woke upon my bed in the inn once again. The statue just outside seemed taller. I reached down and felt where my injury had been, however it was no longer there. A figure was sitting on a chair in the corner of the room, standing they approached me, they wore a soft outfit and had a softer smile "hello, i am a priest of Glioca, she has relieved you of your scar." a miraculous power, i wanted to be able to use it as well. It seemed like it was one that could help a lot more people "thank you," that reply made their smile a bit fuller "hmm, would you like to join the flock? Glioca is always accepting new followers," I thought for a moment before nodding, the priest seemed



happy and they instructed me to meet them at the temple of Glioca on the outskirts of Mileth, before exiting the room.

I was prepared to spend another day resting, but with my injury completely gone I decided to go for a walk. As I left the room I saw Dep in the waiting room, looking as excitable as ever “Kalru!” he yelled rather loudly rushing over “im so glad you are ok!” I smiled and thanked him for the worry, but before I could continue he immediately went about our next plan to attempt the maze. I was skeptical at first but decided that it would be for the best to at least give it one more try. After setting a plan consisting of, jump in and hope! We made our back to the secret passage, I gently pried it open and sighed before sliding down, I had hoped to exit into the same room as Dep but once again I was alone in this dark maze, I shuddered at the thought before steeling myself and moving forward I was still unarmed, likely a bad idea but I was hoping that I could sneak past any threats that I came across.

I began walking through the maze, each step slow and measured- snap! a twig, I heard a growl from within the maze, and there went my attempt at stealth. I turned around and began running through the darkness, all pretense of a quiet trek through the maze gone. I stumbled a few times, it was dark before I saw a light in the distance. A shining staff, my magus! I grabbed it as I ran past further into the darkness tossing and swerving through the maze, doing my best not to trip, as I turned a corner the ghouls quick on my trail, I slammed into something, this is it! “Ahhhhh!” I hear Deps scream as he falls through a hole in the ground...A quick look behind me and I decide that it is within my best interest to jump in as well, I leap in after him.

We swerved through the darkness before being deposited on the ground, Dep’s back caught my fall though, so I was quite alright. Stumbling to my feet I looked around the room, a few croaks came from beneath me as I shifted my weight before remembering who I was standing on, I jumped off and helped the man to his feet. Which he barely needed as he was as energetic as always jumping to his feet barely taking my hand. He surveyed the stony cavern, eyes alighting on a large sigil of light in the center of the room “whats this?” a voice interrupted my thoughts, knocking me from my contemplations. I looked to Dep who was standing next to the sigils, obviously quite curious.

I stepped forward seeking to examine the sigil on the ground, but as my feet hit the ground a crack in the stone caught them and I tumbled forward, luckily I managed to catch myself before slamming into the ground however as I breathed a sigh of relief blue light filled the room, and a voice appeared. Soft and light. Like fire, it enveloped my mind and asked me a series of questions 10 in total, the answers seemed to spring to my mind as if on instinct. A dull pain started to develop in the back of my head, and it grew as the moments went on, more questions, more light, more pain; Before it all went white.

I blinked once, twice, I was back in the cells beneath Loures, the old man stood in front of me staring wistfully into the distance. As we appeared he hardly seemed to notice, he was mumbling something to himself, all I could make out was Bella before he went quiet. I stood there shocked before the pain in the back of my head returned. Dep and I stumbled out of the

prison and agreed to meet again before going our separate ways. I decided to use my time away to rest and him to do whatever his ambitions brought about. Waking up the next day I came to a conclusion, there was so much I still didn't know about this world, and so I decided to take a journey.

I went around quite a bit, eventually my travels brought me to Undine, a beautiful little town with a large lake in the middle, strange mushrooms dotted the landscape. Their coloring caught my attention. They were pretty yet almost sinister looking, so I decided to pick a few for further study in the future, grabbing one from the ground as I examined it. This mushroom was a bit smaller than the others, it seemed like it was rotting as well so I attempted to put it back from where I had taken it. Setting the mushroom down I turned to walk away before feeling a sudden weight in my bag. Opening it I saw a tiny mushroom sitting there, I must have accidentally picked another, I shrugged before continuing on my way picking two more of the mushrooms in total. I left thinking nothing of it.

I did not know where else to go so I turned around and began the long journey back to Mileth. I arrived at the entrance of the town and thought of stopping at the temple first, before a loud horn blew across the land, carrying with it a voice "Be careful about the mushrooms in Undine! Once you pick them you cannot let go of them," ...silence, i mean it was to be expected as i was alone, but still it seemed a louder silence than usual. Surely the voice was simply jesting, I took the mushrooms out of my bag and set them down on the ground. Yes you could drop them quite easily, with a small sigh I turned away before a similar weight appeared in my bag. I stood for a moment before opening my bag and seeing the mushrooms back in place, panic began to spread through my chest, what had I done? I stood there, not knowing what to do.

"Are you ok?" I turned towards the new voice, standing there was a girl with green hair. I recognized her voice, she was the same person who had shouted about the mushrooms earlier. I introduced myself and then explained to her that I had picked some of the mushrooms up earlier. She must have heard the slight edge in my voice because she chuckled before saying "it is still possible to get rid of them! Don't worry, the dark mage in Undine can help you!" I deflated quite visibly before thanking her, and hurrying back to Undine. The journey seemed longer this time, though for why that is I could not tell you. Arriving at the entrance of Undine, my thoughts wandered back to the girl who had helped me, oh I had never gotten her name. I felt a little bad for leaving in such a hurry "Kalru!" a familiar voice called Dep was here as well.

That was strange, did he have business in Undine as well? I greeted him and told him of my purpose in coming here, he nodded and told me he would help me find the dark wizard. We hurried off into Undine looking for this mysterious mage, after quite a few hours of searching we stumbled across a large bridge, we crossed it hoping the mage would be on the other side but found nothing but rocks and a small entrance to a cave, retracing our steps we collapsed at the fountain in the center of Undine, fatigue from the day of searching finally catching up to us "That could have gone better," I managed to sputter out in between heavy breathing, i was really out of shape it seemed.

We sat there for a moment before seeing another Aisling passing by us on the roadside, they eyed us curiously and slowed for a moment allowing us to ask them where the dark mages shop was. They pointed to an area behind us, turning we realized we had already been through there multiple times. I thanked them and started heading towards the mages shop, feeling a little more embarrassed. Looking behind I noticed Dep wasn't moving, he told me to go on ahead and that he would stay here.

I moved forward to the shop, the path was a long one but I had been down it just this morning. Entering the shop, the first thing that struck me was the size. It was obviously quite a large space, however the mess of books and tables seemed to take up almost half of the building, if not more. A single man stood behind a lectern placed near the back wall in the center of the room. He hardly noticed, or he just didn't care about my entry. I watched as he meticulously poured over his scrolls, I came to stand in front of him, without looking up from his work the man said a quick greeting, followed with a simple "what's in front is what's in stock." He was clearly not one for a conversation. I would have to find a different approach to this then. I pulled out the mushrooms "I heard that you could do something with these?" he looked at them, and simply nodded, I asked for him to elaborate "I can make potions that alter height, but unless you have a reason to need such potions I do not see a reason that I would waste waste my time," the words came out in a sigh, before he turned back to his scrolls.

I thought for a minute, what would I need potions that can alter my height for? My mind raced over the time I had spent in temuair, and then I thought back over today. This morning I stumbled across a "tiny cave," the man looked up at me. "tiny cave?" I nodded and then told him about the bridge, and what had been at the end of it, his eyes lit as a new spark seemed to take blaze "the tiny cave!" he exclaimed, a new enthusiasm alighting his voice. He quickly took the mushrooms I had, and examined them "hmm, i will need 5! And then I can get to work huhuhuhu," he turned away and began filling a cauldron, he seemed a completely new person.

I made my way out, quickly gathering the mushrooms that lay everywhere in Undine. I may have gone a bit overboard, I had gathered over 25 by the time I made my way back to the man. His eyes lay on the mushrooms practically spilling from my arms, snatching them from my hands he threw them into the cauldron, mixing them up in a seemingly random fashion. It was a tad concerning considering that for the potions to take effect I had to drink them.

After a few moments of mixing he produced this gold glittery fluid from the cauldron and put it into a bottle, before handing them to me. I thanked him before heading for the door, as I was ready to leave. Undine had been beautiful but I still had other things that I wanted to do, plus the potions slightly concerned me "where are you going?" I turned back to see him standing up, a glint in his eye "you still need to make sure the potion works!" oh dear, it looked as if there was no escaping that. Gulping I took the potion out of my bag, looking at its viscous contents I held back a gag. Closing my eyes I unhooked the stopper before downing it all, if I was going to explode it was going to be fast at least.

A second passed, then two. I didn't feel any different, opening my eyes I could only see the man's feet, I was small. The man alighted, turning back to his studies, forgetting about me. Not wanting to bother him any more, I simply left the shop concerned for how long this would last. I began moving, everything passed me by so slowly. I eventually found Dep, he however did not recognize me at first.

I offered him a potion as well, so that someone might share in my suffering but he declined before making an excuse as to why he had to leave, and I was left alone in Undine, smaller than a hand. I eventually made my way to the exit, deciding that I would take the boats. The journey was rather uneventful. The potions effects wore off relatively quickly, but it gave me more time to read Williams journal.

\*Deoch 120 winter 11

Dear future,

The forest is still, for the first time in days I have been handed a respite. Creatures have been attacking almost non-stop, wolves mostly. Nathaniel was injured, he is currently in the medbay, i have not had time to visit. I have not had time to do much, I am currently on watch, this is beginning to be tiring i shall admit. One thing Aislings did was keep trouble away from our walls, but all rewards require sacrifice. I saw the girl again, not for long, I saw her in the market stalls briefly. With all of the excitement you'd think my mind would focus on more important matters, one thing my mind can tell you is how much I yearn for a warm bath, i smell of pine and blood. And a warm bed! That is the first thing I will buy once I hit it big, with the Aisling's on decline someday it will be us mundane's in charge, I can already imagine the glory! And the money, it shall be wondrous. All i have to do is get over these hurdles, and then ill buy a mansion for me, and one for Nathaniel as well. And then we can sleep and read and eat good food, only a tad bit longer now. I grow weary now, I believe I see something in the forest moving but perhaps that is simply my own paranoia, it may be an unfounded one perhaps. This has been a good way to relieve my thoughts, but I must get going now. I shudder to think what my captain would think if they saw me with a journal.

-William Marcielle\*

William had ambitions it seems, that is strange. I haven't really thought about the mundane's minds, and what they want. Do they want anything? This one did, but was he simply an exception? I do not know, I cannot know but I can certainly wonder. We will be at sea for some time yet. I should read a bit more while I still have the chance.

\*Deoch 120 winter 11

Dear future,

I know I should be sleeping while I still have the chance to, but for some reason my thoughts race. I am going to regret taking to my journal in the morning. However I do enough thinking of the future, I might as well think of the present for just a little bit. Something has been on my mind, Nathaniel's injuries reminded me of my own mortality. Will I one day perish? Will I be alone? Ah these are stupid thoughts, I shouldn't let my ambitions aside for one woman, should I? No stop this william, you need to think about the future! I always have, sorry, I do not know

who I am apologizing to. Gramail! William, you do need sleep. But first a plan, what are we going to do. I need to stand out somehow, do something to catch the attention of my captain, or the royal family even. But what would that something be? I could perhaps try at tailoring. Get a few wolves to stitch a nice coat, that is a ridiculous idea. I will make a better plan tomorrow. Clearly I am in an unstable state of mind at the moment.

-William Marcielle\*

I could not imagine what being a guard would be like, the constant strain on a mind. This man had a clear disdain for us, but I still couldn't help but be worried. I have a slight hope that he got his dream and became some sort of noble. I looked up to the water passing us by, warm light from the rays of the sun illuminating it. The journal reminds of the water, much does. William is on a journey of letting go, at least that is how it struck me. Water is constantly passing by, perhaps that is what will happen, the opportunities will pass him by, or perhaps I was simply over thinking it. I had grown quite tired myself, and so I shifted myself into a more comfortable position.

I had meant to think more about what I had read but under the gentle rays of the sun, and the rocking of the ship on the waves I quickly faded into a blissful slumber. I woke up to shouts, not of dismay or violence, simply curiosity, and a bit of excitement. It seems as though whatever news they are discussing passed quite a bit ago, because the topic does not last, but it did manage to spark my curiosity. Approaching a sailor I asked them about the commotion, and what had caused it, explaining in the process that I had been asleep and had not had the chance to hear it myself "oh! Law has returned, he's gathering with him an army in the grasslands! I hear Aislings from all over are gathering." Law? I had not heard of him, but from the slight concern in the sailors voice I could discern that he was likely bad news, I would have to ask Falco about him further.

I thanked the young sailor before making my way off the ship, stretching. I took in the beautiful sights of Abel, from here it was a simple trek through the city and then I could walk the rest of the way to Mileth, perhaps I could visit the temple? I hadn't been a follower of Glioca for long, but I still felt bad for not paying my proper respects. I passed through Abel and went straight to Mileth. In the front of the town lay the beautiful temple dedicated to lady Glioca, entering I made my way to the gathering area. In the center was a woman. She greeted me kindly, I talked with and learned about the hierarchy of the church. I realized that I was likely eligible to become an acolyte, and after asking her the way for me to proceed down such a wonderful path, she told me that she could help. She presented a geas to me, a trial that one had to complete to be let further into the faith.

My trial was a simple and fun one, I simply had to compliment 5 people. She came with me and we went around temuair, looking for people who had helped me, or I had met in my journeys in an effort to complement someone based on more than just how they looked or dressed. One of the people I complimented was a friend I had met earlier in my journeys named Ezair, he is a monk, and a rather good one at that. I complimented his perseverance and determination,

because he kept on going and always seemed to be wanting to improve. Even when he had trouble finding people to help him, we held a conversation for a while.

I felt bad for the priestess that was helping me in geas, the conversation however was enjoyable. A few of our other friends joined in, Divinerose and Snortdope. This also gave me the chance to compliment Rose, after all she was quite a kind person! After a few more moments of conversation we moved on, heading to the grassy plains where I met with bruiser, Falco's brother. He had been helping me in training and gathering supplies, I thanked him for all he had done and asked him to thank Falco for me as well, we talked a moment longer, he however had prior plans and had to leave. After his departure, I turned to the priestess and thanked her for this opportunity and for just being kind.

We still had a bit longer to go, and looking for another person to compliment we went back to pravat cave. There we saw Moogle, the person who had not only since then inspired me to write this, but has also been kind to me since the beginning. My first introduction into academics held her as a teacher, where she gifted me an outfit. She had also assisted in a quest along with one of her friends, NotIdentify who has also helped quite a lot. I have decided to leave the quest out of this, as it would add quite a bit more words to this, and it also didn't bore any fruit for myself. I was not able to defeat karlopos in the end, and I dropped the items that allowed me to get there in the process.

Approaching Moogle I thanked her for her assistance in that matter and for just being kind to me and new ainslings, as well as complimented her and Fy's determination in helping me with the quest. After that we decided to head back to the temple, there we met someone who had been injured in combat, and though still new to the faith I called upon Gliocas compassion and assisted in healing the scar of this young Aisling. The priestess was satisfied with my service and officially approved of my climbing to acolyte, and thus my geas had been completed. I thanked her and stood in the temple for some time. It was rewarding to help the people, and the conversations were nice. However, out of boredom of the monotonous motions, and of just standing there for hours on end, I eventually folded. Making sure I was alone I slid the heavy journal that once belonged to William Marcielle from my bag, and with eager fingers I flipped the pages to the one I had left off on before beginning reading the journal once again.

\*Deoch 120 winter 15

Dear future,

It has been quite a few days since i could sit down like this, non stop guard duty and then sleep. I have been given leave to rest, to which I obliged. I woke up and for the first time in what feels like centuries, I bathed. Things are looking up, just a few more years and I'll have a palace of my own. I have begun receiving proposals, I have denied all of them, I do not know why. The eyes of that woman in the market have not left me, perhaps she has laid a curse on me. I have heard of people who use magic to charm others, I do not know the actuality of these claims, oh who am I kidding, I told Nathaniel of my problems, I tried rationalizing myself to him in the same way I have to myself. I had never thought myself a hypocrite, however here I am making excuses for as to why I am refusing myself a chance to advance. I need to move past these thoughts, but



how am I to do that? Maybe just maybe I'll give in, follow what I want. But no, that is a ridiculous notion to even entertain. I am going to go throw my sword around in the training grounds, perhaps that will help me to regain my composure.

-William Marcielle\*

Ambition and love, it is often said that one must come before others. I do not see why he doesn't choose both, surely he can get to a higher position based on merit. I have always believed that a person could do anything they set their heart to. Perhaps I am naive, but I think William is a funny man. I looked around the temple, it was still empty aside from me, I decided to risk just one more page. Surely that couldn't hurt, mouthing an apology to Glioca I flipped the page once more.

\*Deoch 120 winter 17

Dear future,

2 days, it has been 2 days since Nathaniel was sent into the forest on an expedition, he has yet to return. Worry eats at me. I know that he is capable, but with the Aislings gone, the amount of monsters has increased. No, the Aislings being gone is a purely beneficial matter, my mind is simply going to extremes. I have always been a very anxious man. I shall put in a request to my captain, to lead a detachment for Nathaniel, yes that is a fine idea indeed.

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No! How can they be so selfish? The captain has denied me leave, they said that if Nathaniel's detachment has been lost, then sending another in after him would simply risk the lives of more soldiers, cowards all of them is what I say. This is exactly why there needs to be new leadership, the people in charge now are reliant on Aislings, they're cowards all of them. What am I to do, Nathaniel is strong, he will make it back. But what if he does not, what then. I cannot lose him, not now. What do I do, what do I do? I know, I do not need permission, I will ride out into the forest tonight. I am on watch, and Nathaniel and I shall get back before the sun rises.

-William Marcielle\*

Mind racing, I did not even think to try to make analysis of that page when I had first read it, I went to turn it to the next page, hoping to find out what had happened to Nathaniel, hoping that he would be alright, despite the fact that he would have passed many years ago, even if he had survived the woods. Before I could begin reading the page, I heard voices. Quickly stuffing the journal into my pack, I turned to greet the visitors as kindly as I could, and two new Aislings approached. One walked with a slight limp and appeared to have an injury. I called upon Gliocas powers to heal the wound, before asking them where they had gotten such a scar. They explained they had been hunting in the crypts and had gone too far, as they looked at me they seemed to think for a moment, before asking me if I could help them. They had dropped their weapons in the escape, I agreed, sighing ever so slightly, luckily they had not heard.

I headed to the crypts with these adventurers, doing my best to clear a path. I had gathered a bit of knowledge in my journeys, and could put it into practice well enough. However I was still far from being as strong as some of the Aisling's in Temuair, keeping the adventurers alive was a difficult challenge, and as we went deeper it only became more challenging. They explained to

me that they had been with a stronger Aisling, however he was afflicted with a sudden faintness, before falling unconscious. Without him to help them, they were stricken down as they tried to escape the crypts.

We eventually rounded a corner of the crypts when a spider jumped out at one of the new sparks, however the spider was quickly dealt with from a swift hit, standing there was a relatively unremarkable man, he nodded before saying "welcome to my shop! My name is Zerioagain. If you need anything you may talk to my brother Zerioheal!" The plain man then simply stepped past us and exited the crypts with not a second glance, I guided the new Aislings through the simple set up, items lining the floors. They didn't pick out anything, but I did note that the shopkeeper seemed to be interested in healing and helping passing Aislings. An admirable Aisling despite his appearance, I made sure to make a mental note of this place, before continuing on the journey through the crypts. It didn't take long before finding the weapons the two new Aislings had dropped, and aside from the shop the journey back was uneventful.

The Aislings thanked me before continuing on their journey. It was funny to think of all the sparks we would meet, and where they would go and disappear. I might not see these two again, but the joy that helping them brought at the time would be a worthwhile sight for anyone to see. However the journey of these new sparks would have to wait, as I was still trying to find out just where to go. I thought for a moment, and then decided that even if I did not have Falco, I could still hunt on my own and headed to the crypts.

I went quite far before I started learning anything of significant value, the creatures had become quite monotonous, after having analyzed and fought them so much. However as I went lower, I realized that I would probably need people to help me. The creatures were growing strong, and I had more than a few close calls. But eventually, a few floors in I found a group of Aislings hunting, they extended an invitation to join them, and together it went much smoother. I learned a lot from them. Feeling the magic flowing through my blood, the smoothness of my moves. I knew I was reaching a point, I felt strong.

Training was simpler, monsters fell easier. I felt for the first time like I knew what I was doing, Falco whispered me "would you like to join me on a hunt?" it felt as if they had whispered at the perfect time, just when I had reached a point where the crypts were starting to feel lackluster. I met Falco in the east woodlands, an idyllic spot where he liked to stay. I sometimes questioned if this was where his home was set up. It was quiet, and felt like the perfect spot to spend time with friends. Smiling, he brought me to a new place, one I had not explored before.

House macabre was a dark place, not the sunny area I thought an Aisling of Falco's caliber would hunt, there is still so much I did not know, even at this point where I had thought I'd reached the end. We entered a house, like any other. Run down and unused, I noticed a basement lowering below into the depths of macabre, I thought that this was where we would hunt. But we kept going further down, deeper and deeper, until it seemed nary a soul could stand the darkness.

Creatures swam through the dense unlighted caves of wherever this was, sometimes they approached but Falco was ready for any creatures that exited the shadows. I studied how they fought, what they did and their behaviors. I was learning a lot more here than I had in the crypts. We reached the thirtieth floor, a monster awaited us at the toe of those stairs, one I had not seen before. Its head reached high into the sky, at first glance you would have suspected it to be a giant. Ghoulish by all accounts the creature raised a hand and brought it down, Falco and I jumped out of the way flying in two separate directions. I looked up at Falco expecting him to deal with the creature as he had the other but he simply smiled "think of this as a test of sorts, good luck."

great a practical, one that I definitely did not have the experience for as the creature brought down another hand narrowly missing me, thinking back to what I had been told when it came to attacking creatures I closed my eyes and muttered *mor fas nadur*, a spell that all wizards would know at some point. It amplified the elements of a creature, causing them to be more susceptible to injuries from specific sources, and I then proceeded to cast every spell I knew, fire and electricity ran rampant in the room, more creatures were attracted but Falco dealt with them easily enough.

The creatures began to pant, blood spilling from its wounds. Turning to face me, I rose my hand sparks appearing on my fingers, I smiled as my final spell began to wound its way through my fingers, and then a sizzling sound came from my hand as the magic evaporated into the air, exhaustion filling my bones, the creatures ghoulish eyes almost seemed to smile, as it slammed into me! I stumbled backwards, I was not yet down, but that had hurt quite a lot. A flower appeared around me, I felt my energy restore. Raising my shaky hand I began to encant the spell once again, one more hit from this creature and I would likely meet Sgrios.

His hand began to come down, my spell spilling from my lips, one wrong move and it was over "ard athar!" as magic slammed into the creature it shook, before simply slumping back unceremoniously, i nearly collapsed, that fight had taken nearly all of my energy! Falco walked over smiling "congrats! You have defeated a Fomorian horror. Not a particularly strong creature but still a good accomplishment indeed!" I stood there, that thing wasn't strong?! I breathed in and out, I felt as if I had reached a peak, I felt stronger after that fight. I told Falco expecting a bit more, but he simply looked at me before saying he needed to show me something. He gave me a scroll one that would lead me to Mileth before teleporting out.

I followed Falco to an all so familiar location, the east woodlands, but instead of going to his usual spot we went forward, further and further into the winding paths of the woods. Eventually we arrived at a clearing, where a woman waited for us, she smiled up at Falco as if he had come here before. Before directing her attention towards me, Falco gave me talgonite, a beautiful ore I had seen very rarely before saying "forge your armor, young one," I stepped forward towards the woman I didn't quite know what to say, but I eventually asked her about the armor.

She smiled and said that this was a matter of importance, and asked if I was sure that I was ready. Falco nodded at me, taking a deep breath, I looked at her "I am." She nodded, smiling as she assisted in forging these beautiful robes. But they were not where my focus was on, I was now an Aisling of talgonite.

I had come so far, but looking out over the trees, I realized something. I may have come far, but I still had so much more to do. So many more who would need help, I thought over the encounters and challenges I had faced. The fights looked less appealing, my magic was meant for destruction. I wanted to help people, I have decided that this is not the end, but a beginning. I will become a priest, and I will continue my journey. I still had so much to do after all, and the secrets of William Marseille's journals still lay unanswered. It is time for my actual journey to begin.

-Kalru

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