

IN THE END I HAD FIVE SKELETONS MADE FROM THREE different spells, the best three I had access to. I wasn't that surprised, but figuring out how to get the three different spells to work together was another issue all together.

"Jeez. You have working minions! Don't dump perfectly good minions," Dot yelled as I said I was ready to go.

"I didn't. Those spells didn't work right, so the skeletons were kind of pointless."

"Just like our feats," Frank explained. "She has to figure out the best way to use her spells. Or at least that's what I think is happening."

"Yup. Plus, anything I can learn about the runes is useful, even when they don't work right."

"Bullshit!" Dot yelled. "You only get experience from successes."

I opened my notifications and grinned.

*< Runic Magic (Bone) VI has become Runic Magic (Bone)
VII >*

"Knowledge skills are a little more complicated. They increase as you successfully gain more knowledge, it doesn't matter how that knowledge is gained," I answered.

When both Steven and Frank nodded with me, Dot huffed and stomped ahead. I used the hike to practice with my command spell. I ended up switching to one of the ones that had a longer delay because it seemed to have more flexibility in what orders I could issue. I would need

to tweak this spell as well. Honestly not the most surprising thing ever.

But just another checkmark on the list of things I needed to do. At some point it needed to get shorter.

I noticed my mana regeneration felt lower, so I pulled up my status. I was expecting this, but I didn't really expect the change to be so noticeable.

*< Kathrine Baulcom | Human(Female) | Age: 20
Necromancer Lvl 2.93 | Bone Walker
STR: 10 | END: 13 | DEX: 15 | SPD: 12 | WIS: 15 | INT:
18 | CHA: 11 | MNT: 17
Minion Control: 10
Skeleton (Shield/Mace) x 5 | 5.5 mana/min
Stamina: 125/125 | Mana: 723/775 | +2.1 stm/min |
+20.3 mana/min
Mana Conversion: 75% >*

So at a full load of ten minions I would be at 11 mana/min maintenance, so 14.8 passive regen. That wasn't great, but most of my combat was supposed to be handled by my minions so I didn't necessarily need to use lots of spells. I'd been judicious in my spell use up till now, mostly because I was working with others and one of them had always rushed in.

A minute or two into the hike, I decided to ask about feat creation. Frank was willing to give me an answer, and feats were quite interesting to me. My comment that they sounded like spells with stamina earned me horrified looks from Frank and Steven but didn't change much. For

stamina-based classes they were the method for creating active abilities.

Unfortunately, I didn't learn anything that would help me create my own feat. I'd attempted to do so years ago, but it seemed impossible once you'd unlocked your mana, as I couldn't sense my stamina at all because it was overwhelmed by my mana reserves.

The next group was eight strong and was first spotted by Frank, and I was able to get off a single volley of Miasma Bombs as I sent my minions forward. Dot outpaced my slow skeletons and nearly ran head first into my Poison Bombs.

This had her cursing as my slower skeletons started fighting the Styires about the same time as her. It was a bit of a mess. Six Styires survived the initial ranged attacks. They charged right at my skeletons, lowering their heads for charging headbutts. The impact was much louder than I expected, and I even noticed one or two skeletons with damaged shields.

Dot focused first on the free Styire, which went down in about five seconds as she kept out of the way of its attacks. My skeletons didn't do as well fighting the Styires; being slower they were forced to into a more defensive position, but this was fine and pretty much the point of the minions. A pair of the Styires backed off, looking like they were going to attempt a charge again, but Steven and Frank focused fired into the Styires the moment they had a free shot, killing them quickly. My skeletons' maces weren't the best weapon against unarmed enemies, but they were still able to split open two skulls before Dot got behind the fighting line and killed the survivors with shots to the back.

I grinned as I felt the level 3 notification hit my mind as the second-to-last Styire fell. Once the fighting was done I pulled up the perks for my class but had to sigh; honestly it wasn't that surprising, but I had none that affected my minions. Yet. I guess one battle wasn't enough to earn those perks. On the other hand, I did get a lot of useful information about the effectiveness of the skeletons' fighting.

"Grr. You almost hit me with your magic!" Dot yelled at me while I was looking at my choices.

"You rushed forward knowing I was going to open with poison," I said.

"I wasn't going to let you steal all the experience!"

"I wasn't going to steal anything. Not only is that not how job progress works, but you clearly had plenty of time to play your part," I said slowly.

"Don't talk down to me," Dot gritted her teeth.

"I'm not. But you clearly weren't listening when we talked about tactics yesterday," I said. "Because I mentioned that my skeletons were designed for defensive fighting. So once they're working perfectly they'll be fully able to hold up against multiple attacks, giving them time to destroy the enemy. Or giving you time to get behind them and get the kills."

Dot spun to the other two, who shrugged.

"We can't really risk shooting close to you when you're in melee," Frank explained simply.

"We were able to kill a few who backed away. This seems a much safer and easier way to fight," Steven answered.

"Fine. Everyone's against me." Dot stomped off.

Steven looked guilty before heading off to talk to her, and I rolled my eyes.

After a careful inspection of my skeletons I learned two things, first, I was fairly certain I could make a good case for a solid Create Skeleton spell. Not complete, but as I created a new set of skeletons it was clear I'd made even more progress. The damage to the shields was significant, over all. I was going to need a spell to create the weapons separate from the skeletons so I could replace the shields without replacing entire skeletons.

This final set of modifications to the Create Skeleton spell triggered the new spell alert, so I decided to use the extra corpses to replace the damaged skeletons. But apparently I also drew attention from Frank.

"Why did you replace all your skeletons?" Frank asked.

"Two reasons, they all took damage, and I finally know what parts of the spell work best for which parts of the skeleton. So I combined everything that works and dumped everything else. Second, they all took some kind of damage and I don't have a repair spell or a way of making the weapons and shields without the full skeleton. Something to work on for next time I think."

Dot glared at me but didn't say anything, still talking in a low tone to Steven. I knew that she would attack again at some point, but I held on to the hope it would last until lunch, or even until we left the dungeon. On the other hand, this was the first time I was able to pay a lot of attention to what was going on as I finished harvesting my cut of the horns, and to my dismay I learned that Steven was giving some of what he harvested to Dot.

I forced myself to stay quiet. I would never work with Dot again if I had any choice in the matter. We then continued with our task. The next couple of fights went a little better, even when we went up against a group of

twelve Styires. After each one I checked my perks, and it was about an hour after I got level 3 that minion-specific perks appeared.

< *Poisoner*

Requirements: *Necromancer Lvl 3, Runic Magic (Poison)*

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Description: *While there are many ways to deliver poisons, the Poisoner seeks to deliver their poisons through their undead.*

Effects: *Gain specialized Golem Creation knowledge, Decreases maintenance cost of poison enhancements to undead. >*

< *Organizer*

Requirements: *Necromancer Lvl 3, positive mana regeneration when maintaining at least 10 minions.*

Description: *The undead don't have to be an uncoordinated hoard, they can be made to cooperate.*

Effects: *Gain specialized Golem Creation knowledge, undead golems are created with slightly more intelligence.*

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While I had a lot of choices these two stood out, though some of the others were tempting. Minion-enhancing perks would leverage the strongest part of the Necromancer job, and both of these looked like they would work well with my methods.