

Legal Preparation
Wednesday – 09.29.62

“YES, MOM. I’M FINE.” I ROLLED MY EYES, WELL AWARE THAT I would never convince her.

“Are you sure? The injury sounded really bad.”

“I’ll just be limping for a few days. My armor wasn’t even damaged,” I said, which was true enough.

“You got grabbed by one of those rock crabs!”

“And I got it checked out. No broken bones, just a badly twisted knee as I tried to get away and a lot of bruising.”

“How did that get through the armor then?”

“My armor is already a bit on the heavy side for something you have to wear every day. So it’s flexible so it won’t tire me out too fast. In other words, it didn’t get through the armor, I simply twisted my knee trying to get free,” I explained yet again. “Look, Mom, I need to go, I’m being waved in by the secretary.”

“One last thing, honey. Do try to avoid that girl, Dot is it? It’s clear that the two of you will never get along.”

“My bosses are convinced that if they force us together enough they can make that happen,” I agreed. “But that’s why I’m here, seeing what I can do to get the job done.”

I got up as we exchanged goodbyes and followed the secretary to the office of the lawyer who I had talked to about the guild trouble. Unfortunately, even if this came back negative I was still stuck paying them for a decent number of hours. Which would burn up all the money I’d made in the dungeon and then some. Fortunately, the firm had already agreed to a reduced price. Apparently they liked my chances for some reason.

After greetings were out of the way, I jumped right in.

"So, Mr. Witt, what's the prognosis?"

"Not good, Ms. Baulcom. While you are technically correct that they've been in violation of the terms of their contract, if they want to push the issue they can delay the lawsuit long enough to drive you into bankruptcy with decent, though inadequate, arguments.

"If that happens, you might find yourself still working for them with a crappy settlement. Or with enough debt to cause a real problem for most of your future," Mr. Witt said as he leaned back.

"Anything we can do?"

"Yes. Wait, let the offenses stack up. Enough and they will either not contest the claim, or go for a settlement. Preferably a very good one for you."

I sighed audibly.

"Now, I understand that this isn't the perfect solution for you, but if you're willing we can do some things to help. To start with, you can sign a retainer contract with us for this issue. This basically says that if you decide to leave the Sanctified Devils before the non-compete component of the contract finishes, you will contact us about legal aid.

"I do have a suggestion for you. Continue your online videos. We watched them and they are really good for garnering support. Don't directly attack this Dot. Simply allow her actions to speak for themselves. And remind your audience every so often, and in more subtle ways, that you don't have a choice working with her."

I sighed, "One last question that came up after I called you. Can I go into the dungeon alone? Not associated with the guild?"

"Technically yes. But if you take any contract through the guild itself, then no. Why?"

"I was contacted through my Dungeon Mapper account by someone wanting to go into the Rat Way but who

doesn't want to deal with Dot."

"I would be very careful about that. But nothing is stopping you from going into the dungeon that way. You can even bring friends or whatever, but remember that your guildmates have been given specific orders surrounding how to work with you."

"Yeah. I get it. I'm not taking randoms on the web into the dungeon without backup anyways. It just got me thinking about if I could actually do that."

After that I paid them, wincing as my flagging money was drained. Fortunately I was making money going into the dungeon. But Dot was a pain in the ass to drag into the dungeon more than once a week. And I really wanted to get into the dungeon more often.

Rat Way

Wednesday – 10.06.62

< Blessings >

< Toohr's Blessing of Exploration: As you travel through the world and the dungeon, you will find the things you need more abundantly than would otherwise be likely.

Lasts two days.

Syaos' Blessing of Discovery: Inspiration comes from the most unlikely of places, and this blessing helps highlight those connections. This does not guarantee you will find what you're looking for, but the unexpected discoveries are often the most important. Lasts two days.

Zilena's Blessing of Exposure: You have gained resistance to poisons. This reduces the effects of poison, as well as the duration. Sadly, only literal poisons counts, not that Dot lady. Lasts two days. >

With the injury last week, it didn't matter whether or not I wanted to hunt alone. But now that I'd healed up, I was hunting on my own. Mr. Witt agreed with me, I had every right to hunt in the dungeons alone, regardless of the guild's policies.

Unfortunately, this probably wasn't the smartest move. It would complicate any claim that I was trying to be a part of the guild, but I didn't really care at all. There were things I had to avoid, like accepting contracts through the guild and then fulfilling them on my own. I didn't think I could get my own contracts yet at all.

And to complicate matters, Dot was becoming increasingly unwilling to go into the dungeon. No idea why, but because I was so close to level 6, and my next perk, that I could taste it, I couldn't really allow things to stay as they were. Hopefully whatever was keeping Dot out would end. But this was it.

I hadn't been standing still, however, and had crossed a few milestones. I'd figured out how to advance my Minion Control skill, or at least one way to advance the minion control attribute. Increase your Mental Fortitude. MNT was now 18, and I could use eleven minions. It kind of made sense, I had noticed myself getting mentally tired in the dungeons, but I had no idea if it was because of my minions or my "partner." We actually had difficulty finding anyone to travel with us into the dungeons. They didn't want to deal with the now-constant bickering. I'd tried to hold my peace, but it was getting ridiculous by anyone's standards.

I'd also made some minor adjustments to my skeleton creation that I hoped would improve things nicely. It was hard to tell how much better, or worse, a spell was even with testing, as you couldn't really get explicit numbers.

Hence me coming to the Rat Way by myself. The advantage of this was that the dungeon was inside the city, so no one would see me getting on the bus out of town. It also had a number of entrances, so I headed to one of the unpopular ones, further reducing the likelihood of people seeing me.

And the dungeon itself was unpopular, so the Guard offered a bounty to return specific monster parts from the dungeon. Ratiger tails, Way Fisher tongues, Lurker tentacles, and Crawler skulls. Hopefully I didn't see any Crawlers, as they were supposed to be fairly dangerous.

It was 7pm, and the Guard had just sent someone in to check the air quality. Unlike Balltown, this dungeon was closed during the day and opened throughout the night. And instead of rain you had to deal with poison gas. Kind of hoped I could find a way to protect myself from that eventually, but so far no luck. No surprise really.

The soldier checking the air stepped back out and gave me a thumbs up, allowing me to head inside. This entrance into the Rat Way was a drainage pipe under a roadway overpass. Walking into the drainage pipe, I hit the mid-point and turned right, where the true entrance was, a square door that looked like it connected to the city's service tunnels. Only it didn't, and the liquid in the pipes had an unknown concentration.

Once inside, I did three things. First I cast a brand-new spell and a light orb appeared over my shoulder, just behind my head. It cast light nearly fifteen feet down the corridor easily, though everything beyond that was still dark. I could also launch the orbs of light to stick to anything they managed to hit, which would give me a wider range on the light. Sadly, it wasn't an important enough spell to get moved onto any of the important lists.

I then cast my command spell. Prepping this early was a simple precaution. From what I knew of this dungeon's nature I might want to attempt to create a skeleton mid combat, so I didn't want to waste any time in that case.

"Right, once more into the breach, dear necro-philes." I didn't really like the term that had been applied to my audience online, but apparently they found it funny and weren't offended. So who was I to argue? I was just the idiot who supposedly ran the channel.

The square walkway went forward for a while, and I counted the number of righthand break-offs. According to the maps I had, the first four exits right led to larger tunnels. The fourth one was supposed to head toward something small enough that my eleven minions should be able to control the entire walkway.

The first warning I had of incoming monsters was the echo of tinny claws on hard cement, followed almost instantly by three massive Ratigers that came most of the way up to my hips. The rats had bulging muscles and barely came above my knees, with claws that looked vaguely cat-like and long rat tails.

I got off a Miasma Bomb almost immediately, which easily filled the five-foot-wide corridor. A second and third Miasma Bomb followed as quickly as possible, along with a newly modified Poison Bomb. This one had taken some modifications to make its effects on muscles stronger. It still wasn't lethal, but it slowed creatures by making their limbs feel stiff.

The slowing affect wasn't as pronounced as my self experiments suggested it would be. But these creatures probably had their own poison resistance. Still, a further barrage of poison made the gas cloud actually start to grow dense enough to be visible in the light.