

## Conversion

### Monday – 10.31.62

HOW DID ONE DECIDE WHICH RELIGION TO CHOOSE? MOST of the criteria I was making my decision on wouldn't apply before the system and were a bit utilitarian.

Obviously, if I was going to worship someone it would be one of the gods I already sacrificed to, given the most important, and dangerous, part of my life was affected by them. Of course, it was only Zilena who asked me to look into her teachings, but I came to the conclusion that I needed something to compare her to.

Toohr was more a god of exploration and travel than anything else. While he wouldn't be a bad deity for a dungeon Diver, I didn't feel like an extra push to find new things in the dungeon would be a good thing. However, there was an element of exploration in every trip into the dungeon, so continued sacrifices were likely to happen.

Syaos was a really good fit for me and might even be a potential candidate for worship. But not anytime soon. I found Syaos' exclusive, or nearly so, focus on research somewhat dismal. Sure, all the new gods were focused on a small subsection of life, and that was intentional. But as the primary and first god I worshiped? No, I didn't think so.

The same problem could be levied at Zilena, except that I found her realm of import more, well, important. Zilena's domain "ends where civilization begins." Technically this meant she didn't handle anything that was fully civilized, but if your job involved keeping the monsters back, both human and not, then you fell under her preview.

Anyone whose job involved life or death situations in order to protect the lives of others could be seen at least tangentially connected to Zilena. And that goal, of being one of the people who protected civilization from dungeons, was one I could get behind. In fact, it was one I liked a lot. Though I didn't really see myself in that light.

Still, I found Zilena's approach to dungeons more appropriate to others, even others that focused on the monster fighting. Not surprising, since I'd already decided to sacrifice to Zilena over them before potential worship came into the picture.

So, the end of my investigation had ended with my deciding to try this religion thing. Worshipping Zilena didn't seem like the scary/inappropriate thing I had considered it before. In a way, I think it was the personal notes passed on by Zilena that did the trick. Notes that had continued.

From a pure utilitarian point of view, worshipping someone gave you a good boost in the area of their domain.

*< Zilena's Favor: Your devotion has earned my favor. Death is further from you. All injuries will have lesser effects. Lack of oxygen or blood will be less detrimental, pain less debilitating. Lasts until no longer a faithful follower. >*

*< Danger Sense: Not all deadly things are obvious, and not everything one sees as a threat actually is. This blessing sharpens your instincts to better determine if what your*

*senses are telling you is dangerous or not. Yeah, you can get a blessing as well as a follower bonus. They can even overlap. Lasts two Days. >*

Toohr and Syaos still gave me the same bonuses as before, apparently unbothered by my choice to worship Zilena. Made sense, given that they didn't require unique service. Made one wonder if followers of a monotheistic religion gave a follower bonus like Zilena's Favor. Maybe something more generic to cover everything?

The effect, on the other hand, holy fuck. Look at that effect. Death was further from you? Yeah, that meant it was harder to kill me, but this seemed to be across the board, just harder to kill overall. I'm sure the actual magnitude of said effects wasn't overwhelming, otherwise no dungeon Diver would worship any other deity, at least for the dangerous things. And of course pain was still a thing, and just because bleeding out didn't kill you as quickly didn't mean you could fight longer, as you kind of needed blood for any activity, otherwise your body would run out of oxygen. Of course, harder to kill was harder to kill. All good in my book.

And to think that all of Zilena's followers had this same ability. I guess that explained part of the fear and uncertainty around the gods. The follower beliefs were powerful, and it wasn't surprising that people would view them as bribes. But you couldn't get it if you weren't sincere. You couldn't claim to worship a god and then trick that god or goddess into handing you a boon that just sat around for as long as you followed them. Which was the main push behind the "incentive verse bribe" debate.

Honestly, they didn't have to be "all knowing" to be able to judge sincerity.

The Danger Sense blessing was more normal for a general blessing. However, the fact that Zilena felt I needed it was odd. I didn't really know how to parse that information, though I could probably pay attention to what triggered this new sense to learn something about Zilena's intentions.

Dot and the client, one Miles Anthony, were finally ready to go. First impressions were important, and Miles seemed like a spoiled rich person who was genuinely interested in dungeons and Divers. Not really an asshole, just a guy from another point in life. Still, I worried his more careless attitude would amplify issues with Dot and leave me with an even larger burden.

I was happy to see him adjusting his pack. It was proof he wasn't completely hopeless. "I've asked Dot, but what's the beef between the two of you?"

"I don't really know what her issue is." I did wonder how he knew we had a problem. "But for myself, she's just an asshole. I have no idea what I've done to piss her off, but she attacks anyone who agrees with me about just about anything. I wouldn't work with her at all if I wasn't forced to by the guild."

"I see." Miles remained quiet and started walking toward the dungeon. "What does she mean you're only lucky you have your job?"

"Do you know about the tier theory of jobs?" I got a head shake. "Well, it argues that all jobs aren't created equal. That some are inherently better at their specific roles."

"Right. I've seen something similar in business. People with certain jobs seem to have an easier time. But a

similar job doesn't mean greater success. My primary researcher is a Scholar primary."

"Yep. This theory holds that this is why we can get secondary jobs. So that even if we start with a weak job as our primary, sufficient effort will allow us to pick up a better or more specialized job," I agreed. "But combat jobs tend to be divided between magic and martial. And we all work in the same area. Necromancer is rightly recognized as a top-tier job. So is Bullet Dancer. My guess is that Dot didn't expect to have to work with someone with a comparable job and is overcompensating for her perceived weakness."

"And magic jobs are rarer and considered more valuable because of it," Miles completed my thought.

I nodded. "Of course, I could be wrong. But that's the best explanation I've come up with. I don't know how right or wrong it is, however. For all I know she just has an abrasive personality and we've gotten off on the wrong foot."

Miles shook his head. "Well, I have to say I wish I knew more about Necromancers and Bullet Dancers. Care to fill me in?"

"Necromancers are lazy bastards who claim to have to do something to control their minions but can never prove it," Dot said.

"Bullet Dancers are stupidly good at dodging attacks, even if some of them don't fully utilize the job," I challenged.

Miles gave a clearly forced chuckle and we stayed quiet after that. I'd been getting used to this kind of thing when working with Dot. Miles was looking around, taking in the sights, despite there not really being much to see in the canyon.

But as we exited the entrance the view caught his attention. Not that I could blame him, it was about as good as it gets as far as views can go. I did blame Dot though. She should have known better.

“Gorgeous, isn’t it? Almost worth coming in here on its own,” Dot said as she stepped up next to Miles.

I rolled my eyes and turned back toward the rear cliff; we hadn’t even managed to get far enough from it for safety. And it was a good thing I did.

“Incoming!” I called out, prepping a Poison Bomb in one hand and my answer to flying monsters in the other.

Dot spun to gaze in the direction I was looking and grinned at the incoming Cliff Hugger. “Don’t worry, Cat. I’ve got it.”

Ignoring Dot’s use of the evil name, I launched my Poison Bomb and then fired off the secondary spell at the last second. This was one I’d been thinking about for a while and had finally figured out how to use. It let me detonate spells remotely. Though in practice I could only hit my own spells, the timing of hitting an opponent’s spell was something I didn’t really know how to even practice. And didn’t want to use, given the implication right now.

The detonator spell created a beam of invisible magic that lasted for a second, allowing me to aim in front of the target spell and allowing it to move into the beam. The result was a massive cloud of poison, though it fell toward the ground faster than you’d expect, making a tall column of poison. The Cliff Hugger flew right through the area, and because my Poison Bomb negatively affects muscles the flying monster crashed to the ground.

“Fucking shit fuck you bitch. Let me get some experience!” Dot continued to complain while rushing forward to finish it off.

“Shit.” I double-checked the area around us and noted another Cliff Hugger coming from the other side of the exit canyon. I used my anti-air combo behind us again, resulting in yet another crashing Hugger. Dot had apparently turned around, intending to intercept this one as well, and found herself in the path of the falling monster.

Dot sidestepped this monster, casually firing a shot into its head before it could recover. As always, the Cliff Huggers were fairly weak once the actual fighting started.

I stood up and turned to help Miles. He seemed shaken but was quickly recovering. “Thank you, both of you.”

Dot grinned. “Not a problem. I won’t drop a corpse on you deeper into the dungeon.”

“Better a corpse than a live monster,” I shot back before walking over to the corpses. “Besides, there was no chance of anyone getting hit by falling monsters.”

Cliff Huggers remained useful only for the creation of skeletons, so I quickly set about making two ax-wielding and shield-bearing minions.

“Wow,” Miles commented. “Why do you need those skeletons?”

“What?” I deadpanned.

“Well, you killed that beast quickly. Why would you need skeletons?”

“One of these skeletons cost me about the same amount as the spell combo that let me disable the Cliff Huggers, but my spell didn’t allow me to kill them,” I answered, though from Mile’s frown I figured I needed to explain. “Basically, efficiency. These skeletons can do a lot more than a simple spell.”

Miles nodded, understanding now I guess, or just accepting. I frowned as I surveyed the remaining pieces of the Cliff Huggers; there wasn't enough left for what I wanted, so I was forced to give up on it for now.

Shaking my head, I gestured for Miles to take the middle and moved my skeletons up to escort him as we headed toward the right. Not that it mattered which way we were headed, we were mostly just giving him a tour.