

WALKING IN THE FRONT DOOR, JUST AS HEAVY AND reinforced as you would expect from the exterior, I found myself in a comfortable and modern reception room, padded chairs, a TV in the corner, and a front desk. Walking up to the desk, I noticed there was actually a woman manning it, oddly hidden from the entrance.

“Hello, the bus ride wasn’t as long as I thought it might be. I’m Kathrine, I was supposed to have a tour at four?”

“Hello, Kathrine! We talked on the phone, I’m Sandy. Nice to meet you,” Sandy said, shaking my hand.

“Really all I need is your stats page. No other way of verifying job order,” Sandy said apologetically.

After shuffling a few pages around, she pulled out a piece of paper. Along the top was a legalese paragraph basically stating that the status page added to this piece of paper was done so for internal purposes and that it might be used by the Sanctified Devils Divers Guild internally for several things. However, they would never sell said information to others.

I figured I could trust them not to sell the information so long as I joined them. Though there really wasn’t anything problematic on the status page. Not like knowing a magic user has a pitiful stamina pool is all that surprising or unexpected.

Placing my hand on a blank spot under the legal paragraph, I brought my stats up in my mind then pushed them out through my hand. As I did the pigments in the page changed, spelling out my stats page on the paper without need for ink or anything else.

People believed there was no way to fake this method of sharing information, so if you saw someone do it you

could be completely certain they were showing you the truth. It was also difficult to perfectly replicate the appearance, but far from impossible. So eyewitness accounts were most useful. At least until someone found a way to dupe the system and people realized that said duping happened.

After that I was told to wait until someone named Mai came by to show me around. Given I was early I figured I would have to wait for quite a while, but it turns out it was only for five minutes or so.

Mai was huge. She gave off this feeling of durability that made me think she was probably a high level Bulwark or some other defensive job. Just from the impression the muscled woman gave off I would rather hide behind her than the walls outside. Not really, rationality took precedent there, but it did feel that way. A sure sign that her job level was over 40. I'd never heard of anyone with a level higher than 45, so that was actually an impressive feat.

"Hello, name's Mai, you're Kathrine, right?" Mai asked with a surprisingly soprano voice.

"Yup. Nice to meet you," I said, stomping on the impulse to ask her about her job.

"So, Necromancer? Can't say I've ever worked with one." Mai gestured and I followed her into the building.

"Yeah. Wasn't exactly deliberate, but it's an interesting job regardless. The idea of being one of the ones to shape a job is also quite exciting."

Mai let out a musical laugh. "It would be exciting, but from what I understand the story of Necromancers is complete."

I grinned. “Nope. I don’t know why no one talks about it, but there’s a path for Necromancy called ‘Bone Walker.’ It uses skeleton undead.”

“If no one uses it?” Mai trailed off.

“Yeah, no one actually knows how good it is. The only reason I can imagine for people avoiding it is that they assume it’s a lot like other forms of summoning and you have to have massive command spells. But that doesn’t make any sense, zombies don’t work that way, and skeletons shouldn’t either.

“I actually think the first Necromancers used zombies for cultural reasons. Zombie apocalypse movies were super common before the system, and later generations justified with ‘they have to have a reason, right.’ Or something like that.”

Mai raised an eyebrow but then gestured to the room we were in, starting her tour. It was a bit of a lounge, though it had tables for eating and even a decent-sized kitchen area. The first floor also had the small shop, a storage area, and a small game room with system consoles and a ping-pong table.

The basement had weapon and magic ranges, allowing guild members to practice in a safe environment. The spell ranges included good air circulation to prevent dust, smoke, and poison from spreading around and getting someone accidentally. Which was amazing for me, as I had no idea how I would test my spells otherwise.

The second floor had the computer room, which had the guild’s database of spells and feats. Feats were, to someone like me, the non-magical version of spells. They

burned stamina and gave fighters the ability to shoot faster or snipers the ability to amplify a single shot. Or whatever. I could already see myself spending a lot of time here, inventing new spells and, hopefully, bouncing ideas off of others. The second floor also had the various offices of the people running the guild. Including Mai's.

The third floor was mostly open space in the form of conference rooms and storage. The storage was "in case of a dungeon break" types of things. And this floor was designed to convert for heavy weapons and snipers to shoot over the wall if they needed it.

Mai brought me back down to her office and sat behind her desk. "To be completely honest, I'm not very enthused that you chose a path that appears to be universally unused. That will slow the time it takes for you to get up to the point where we feel you're ready to take on unique missions."

"I don't see why, we have basically no knowledge of how the Necromancer job works anyways. And those with the job have no reason to share," I answered back.

"True, but the fact is that your capabilities are now unknown, and you would be unable to use videos of other Necromancers as inspiration," Mai said. "Plus, we would have no way outside of your level to judge your progress. While that's fine, in some ways, it does make being certain you have gained the experience expected for each level difficult."

I frowned. "We have the ability to track someone's progress through a level. But any other type of 'experience' is almost impossible to quantify. One trip into the dungeon you're distracted, so you learn a lot less even if

the experiences you rank up should be very informative. The next day you deal with the distraction and watch a movie. The actor pulls off an absolutely impossible stunt, but it inspires you and you spend time thinking of how you would actually solve the situation, allowing you to learn a lot more without ever needing to enter the dungeon.

“You simply have no metric by which to make those determinations anyways.”

Mai shakes her head. “True, technically. But we like to have some other metric as well. This isn’t a deal breaker by any means, but you have to be aware that we’re going to be more cautious because of this. No reason to overestimate someone’s abilities and get them killed.”

I frowned. “Underestimate those abilities and you can do the same in time.”

“I know,” Mai said, smiling. “But we prefer to err on the side of caution.”

I nodded. Honestly, it was kind of relieving. Just because I wanted this didn’t mean I wasn’t aware of the dangers. So it was nice to know they weren’t encouraging us to run into the dungeon half-arsed. “That’s nice. I just fear I’ll run out of funds before I get to the self-sustaining point.”

“Understandable, but that’s why we always encourage our new recruits to get a part-time job,” Mai explained.

“Do you know how we create spells?” I asked.

“Yeah. You take known runes and string them together to create a spell, right?”

“Where do the runes come from?”

“Your Knowledge skills, I guess?”

“Nope. While new levels in a magic skill does grant knowledge, it’s more like it fills in holes. In order to raise the skill you need to learn and use new, more powerful runes. It doesn’t matter where you get them, so you can learn them from other mages or discover the runes themselves.

“The discovery of runes is a major process. It involves hours of work for even the most basic runes and doesn’t tell you *what* the rune does. If I needed to discover enough runes for the creation of even the most basic minion right now, without outside help, it would take me a week or three. Depending on luck most likely. And that assumes eight hours a day of work. To do it with a part-time job? At least double it.” I shook my head.

Seeing Mai wasn’t completely convinced, I continued. “You need 10 levels at minimum to support yourself on a Diver’s salary. That should only take about a month, maybe one and a half. If I have to self-teach all my own spells and can only use half or less of my time on spell research, it will be longer. You’re talking about a year or more to level 10.”

Mai sighed, clearly she understood what I was saying now. Yet she didn’t seem to budge. “I don’t understand why that would be a problem?”

“I’ve done the numbers, a part-time job won’t support me in this city for a year. It’s more like seven months. With slow growth in the dungeon and slow development of my spells. That works out to be more like eight or nine months. And I don’t know that level 10 will be the sweet spot for me. It could be higher, for a decent fraction of people it’s more like level 15.”

Mai nodded, looking off to the side. "We can probably fast-track you. But it might be a problem with the rest of our Divers. After all, you will be receiving special treatment as far as they're concerned."

She turned back to me and grinned. "I can see it being just fine if you're getting and doing special-request dives. You do have a rare job, and that gives you a bit of an advantage there. And we're actually offering a couple thousand, 2.5K to be exact, as a sign-on bonus."

I smiled. "Sounds great. I bet you make that back in a single special request contract. What do you expect those special jobs to be?"

"Not really, they pay well, but not that well. And mainly escort jobs. Necromancers are far more efficient at protecting an individual than any other job. Plus you have an advantage when it comes to fighting groups of monsters. Once you're strong enough, trips into the Asylum will likely become common, given you can better sweep a room than the average Diver," Mai explained.

I thought about it and nodded. "Makes sense."

Mai took some notes. "We knew from the beginning we would have to alter your employment contract a little. This is just one alteration we hadn't considered.

"One we have considered is getting you access to IAS's runic database. They're understandably worried about the information being stolen but have offered a deal. They will give you access to all their runes from the languages that are Necromancer in origin, Flesh, Bone, and Poisons, right?"

“That, and Golem Creation.”

“Right, forgot that one.” Mai took a second to note down “Golem Creation.” “In return, they want any runes you develop that are a part of those families. Largely because they see this as a way to expand their item list.”

I wasn’t certain how smart that was. On the one hand, if they were just enchanting things I doubted it mattered at all. But if they offered the runes to someone else who created spells specifically to counter mine, that could be dangerous.

However, spell countering was a rather dubious ability unless you had the Nullifier job, which was almost as rare as the Necromancer one. Because it was a combat job focused almost exclusively on countering attacks rather than doing damage, it wasn’t very good. I heard they tended to get jobs with police departments, but I wasn’t really sure.

“I can work with that, as long as it’s just the runes. I have no idea how to test for enchanting abilities. Which means I have no idea how to convert the enchanting effects of a rune to a spell effect.”

Mai smiled. “That was in my notes. And yeah, I doubt anyone really knows a good way to convert those two. At



least that's what I got from the notes they sent us."

I nodded, and Mai continued over the various parts of the contract and what was expected of me as a Diver. It wasn't bad at all, a few negative components, but mostly okay. The guild took a massive chunk of any contract's total payout, but that was pretty normal; I'd seen that complaint about every guild, and losing 40% of the contract wasn't bad at all compared to some guilds.

The anti-poaching clause was a bit annoying. Basically, if I signed up with the Sanctified Devils then I agreed not to work for any other Diver's guild for at least three years. If my contract was terminated with cause; for example, if I did something that justified firing me, then I still couldn't join another guild. On the other hand, being fired for anything else released me from that clause.

I already knew about the anti-poaching clause. There were several very famous cases two years ago while I was saving up for college that caused this issue. So of course it wasn't surprising.

Mai was understanding of my desire to duck out and think about it, especially as I had other tours on the books. Even still, the Devils had what looked like a good offer on the table. I was happy about that.