

**Revelations**  
**Friday – 09.09.62**

I STARED AT MY MOM'S CONTACT ON THE PHONE. I DIDN'T have the best relationship with my dad. Simply far too different world views. Which meant that calling him about my joining a guild was a really bad idea.

So, I called my mom. The wait for her to pick up was killer. I've never liked talking to people over the phone. Or really in general. Dear god. What the fuck was I doing.

"Hello, honey. What's wrong?" Mom asked.

"Why does something have to be wrong?"

"You never call me."

"Oh. Yeah." I hesitated. "Well, nothing is wrong. I'm just calling to let you know I've gotten a job here. Income isn't perfectly steady, but I've done the research and have no doubt I'll be able to support myself."

"Kathrine Ann Baulcom. You promised you wouldn't join a guild!" Mom said, sounding more resigned than angry.

"Once things are steady I'm still going for the Healer job. I've actually found some hints to how to make the Healer job as well," I quickly added. "But the medical community's denial of magic means I could probably be sued for something if I healed anyone. Without being a part of the community, it's a bad idea to attempt to gain renown with it or anything."

“Oh, and no. I never promised not to join. I promised that I would try for the Healer job first.”

“So what, ‘I can’t do the Healer thing so might as well jump into the arena and have a go with things far worse than lions’?”

“Not exactly. I was working on a spell. It turned out to be something completely different than what I had originally expected,” I told her. “Some of the runes I was using weren’t identified. I could have stopped. But honestly I was just tired of trying for something I never succeeded in achieving. So I completed the spell, rolled the dice, and hoped it would work, or I that I would at least get an interesting job. Which I did.”

“Ugh. I remember that list of runic magic jobs you put together. Funny, you seemed to skip over the jobs that didn’t go into the dungeon,” Mom complained. “Which one did you end up with?”

“Necromancer.”

“Well at least it isn’t the worst one you could have gotten.”

“What’s the worst one?” I tried to remember back to that list. “I don’t remember any of them being innately bad.”

“Light Bender,” was the prompt response.

“The surveillance specialist?” Now I was just really confused. “How is that a bad job? I could have gotten a job with the military, FBI, Secret Service, and probably any number of security companies. Seems like a pretty sweet, if boring, gig.”

“Exactly. Add in your desire to know things, and it was likely you’d end up seeing something you shouldn’t and end up on the run.” Mom sighed on the other end of the line. “We were worried you would end up abusing the spells you’d learn.”

I didn’t need to think to know what Mom was talking about. “I was a kid then and hadn’t learned yet that you never truly have all the knowledge in the world.”

“Maybe.”

We continued to converse. Mom was happy I had chosen a national guild but a little wary of them nonetheless. I guess years of worry that I would join any guild left her suspicious. But at least she didn’t try to drag me back to Charleston. That was a plus. She did warn me that Dad might call me before he had time to think about it.

That wouldn’t be a fun conversation.

### **Frustrations** **Monday – 09.12.62**

“Hello Mai,” I said as I knocked on her door frame. Mai was planning the orientation weekend now that they had a finalized name list. At least that’s what I’d heard her complain about yesterday. Gossip wasn’t really my thing, but the Divers in this guild did it a fucking lot.

Mai looked up and raised an eyebrow. “Hello, Kathrine. What can I do for you?”

“Any word on that database? I’m feeling kind of restless. I’ve been hunting for the runes I need to make skeletons but it’s slow going.”

Mai shook her head. “Not in charge of it, you need to speak with Jack.”

“Ok, but I won’t be able to fight at full strength unless I get the ability to create undead done soon,” I countered. “Just thought you should know.”

Mai nodded and went back to her work. I went looking for Jack’s office, only to find out he wouldn’t be in today. Leaving a message with the front desk, I then went down into the basement.

I was okay with elemental knots at this point, maybe.

Instead, today I updated the Poison Bomb spell, looking to be more powerful, and I created two more “potential” spells I thought would be useful in the dungeon. One advantage of being me was the rather large stack of incomplete spells and partial knowledge in a tome of runic language families I had. Years of avoiding developing jobs left me with a lot of inspiration for the creation of new spells. So much of last night had been spent going through old things I could now update or complete safely, given that I had a job.

The first thing I did was fire the old Poison Bomb spell downrange. It flew the thirty feet to the end of the range fairly well and burst open in a massive burst of smoke. The smoke quickly fell to the ground and was sucked out by the fans. But it was clear it would work okay in a light wind. The issue was that most of the smoke was stuck too

close to the ground to be breathed in, making it meaningless further than a few feet from the bursting point for human-sized enemies.

The new spell was more useful and a little creepy. Instead of being encased in a shell-like thing, it was encased in what looked like a ball of flesh—even though there were very few flesh runes in the spell—which burst on impact. This new gas was thinner, lingering in the air better before being sucked up by the air vents. It didn't cover quite the same area, barely making five feet in diameter, but it was at breathing height for humans for nearly the entire affected area.

A quick check showed this to be called "Miasma Bomb," and the poison caused minor damage to the lungs, loss of balance, difficulty breathing, and in larger quantities the damage was potentially lethal. It was about twice as expensive as the Poison Bomb spell but worth it. I was happy to finally have a potentially damaging spell. Now I could kill, even if it wouldn't be easy.

The down side was that Miasma Bomb still took too long to cast, needing optimization for speed now. However, I had more work to do before optimizing anything.

The next spell I created was also a poison one; however, I wasn't really certain what else to do with my magic for offense right now. Given that I didn't know and kind of doubted that I would be able to get a minion spell ready for the orientation dive, I decided I needed a close-range spell just in case something got to me. The big

question was how to avoid breathing my own poison. The experience with my first cast of Poison Bomb had really pointed that problem out.

So I settled on a somewhat counterintuitive spell. I found a way to prevent myself from breathing in a magic poison, but only so long as my magic knew *exactly* which magic poison I was trying to keep out. Right now the only way I had to do that was to create the poison at the same time. Then I breathed out a cloud of poison smoke. So yes, I now had a breath attack. It was kind of awesome, if you ask me.

“Toxic Breath” was a special close-range magic attack using runes I found in the witchcraft database in the Sanctified Devils’ runic database. The runes came from the runic family “Runic Magic (Contact),” one I’d never heard of before. I could have missed it, but I noticed some runes I recognized as having big question marks next to them. I guessed they were a magic type used by most spellcasters at some point and were therefore partially ignored as “obvious” or something.

The Toxic Breath poison was effectively bear spray, which doesn’t do damage. But every species of monster in Balltown and the Rat Way needed to breathe and see, so fucking up their lungs and sight seemed like a good choice. This one required a couple of runes swapped out, because the cloud of smoke sometimes turned out to be lopsided for some reason.

The last spell was my attempt to make use of bone magic. However, I didn’t think the Runes were meant to

work this way, because no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't quite get the spell to work. It was supposed to be a shotgun blast of bone pieces, intended to be a stand-off weapon between Toxic Breath and Miasma Bomb.

Instead it was mostly wasted mana. A couple times it resulted in some bursts of bone pieces, but they were lucky to make it a dozen feet, let alone do any damage, before returning to the mana that spawned them.

Giving it up as a bad idea, I got some practice in with Miasma Bomb and Toxic Breath, helped largely by the fact that I was alone in the magic range. No idea why, maybe people were worried about the poison? I knew that the Sanctified Devils had mages in the guild, but I'd only seen two in the computer lab and they didn't look like they were interested in talking. Maybe like myself they felt like outsiders and didn't spend much time in the building. I half-expected this to be true.

With more knowledge in hand, I headed out to hang with Eric and crew. I knew I'd made some progress working down here.

*< You have learned the spell Miasma Bomb!  
Runic Magic (Poison) III has become Runic Magic  
(Poison) IV  
You have learned the spell Toxic Breath!  
Runic Magic (Contact) I has been created!  
Magic Accuracy II has become Magic Accuracy III >*