

Patterns
Tuesday – 09.13.62

SHIT, JACK WAS IN TODAY. OKAY, I KNEW THAT I NEEDED TO talk to him, but I'd never met the man and had no idea how bad this was going to be. Probably would be my fault and I was about to feel like an idiot. Deep breath. I knew I'd done everything I needed to. If something fell through it was either through not communicating that I needed to do something or because someone else was making a mistake.

Deep breaths. I knocked on the door frame as I walked into the open doorway. Jack seemed to be in the middle of a home remedy for a hangover. Though he wasn't acting like the pain was all that bad.

"My name's Kathrine Baulcom. I'm supposed to have gotten access to an extra database and I was told to speak to Jack about how the database was coming along," I said as neutrally as I could.

"Well, Cat, we can't really get started on the database, as you haven't even signed the NDA," Jack answered.

"Please, I hate that nickname. Just Kathrine," I said. "I haven't seen the NDA, I was given the impression it would come with the database. Do you have it to sign?"

"I sent you an email but it bounced back."

"I've been in the building at least every other day. Almost always in the computer lab." I frowned.

"Not my problem if you entered your email incorrectly," Jack said with a shrug.

"I didn't," I said, giving him my email.

Jack did something on his computer and asked for the email again. I spelled my last name, because I figured he'd gotten it wrong. And sure enough, for some reason the email in the system was for Kathrine Ballcome. Not Baulcom.

I got the email with the NDA. A quick glance through it had me simply shrugging. I wasn't to share the database, or anything containing runes from within the database. Nothing special over all, so I signed it and was told that it might be a day or two before it showed up. Jack seemed like he really didn't care about his job, which made me wonder what he was even doing. And who I should complain to over the unprofessional behavior. Although, I could have checked in earlier. But who expected these kinds of things to be on time?

I doubted I'd be able to test my minions on the orientation dive, though I might be able to test the spells themselves if I tried really hard. I had no other idea what to do beyond perfecting the spells I did have. One hole in my ability set was flying monsters, but I didn't really know how to change that. Some kind of air bomb that could be triggered remote? A secondary spell that detonated existing spells early? That could have defensive uses as well, but I had no idea where to even start. That was a long-term investigation and would likely require a good bit of time before being usable. Definitely not for this weekend.

Except, how much do you want to bet the bosses here would be hoping to see me create a minion? I had considered it, but none of the runes I knew suggested a way to create a detached bone, like for a weapon, or a bone

that wasn't the exact shape and size of those in the human body. Couldn't even do dinosaur bones at this point. Which meant no bone clubs. And no other types of weapons.

Skeletons with no weapons, armor, or enhanced durability, that was my limit right now, assuming everything went perfectly. Oh, and I couldn't even test this before going into the dungeon. Yeah, this was going to go over well. So maybe I needed to do as much theory work as possible first. That would be helpful if I did get access to the database on Thursday or Friday.

Slumping my shoulders, I headed out of the Devil's building. I kind of hated this, because I knew that the spells I developed today wouldn't be used much at all. I mean, they might help me once I got more access to a bunch of runes from the database, or they might not. For all I knew, adding weapons to a minion-creation spell changed every single rune in the spell. And I couldn't be sure until I had a wider selection of runes to work with, or the ability to test the ones I have.

Then there were the command and control spells that required elemental knots. These knots would likely be different for different weapons. That would require experimentation. Actually, all of this would require some kind of experimentation, but one trip into the dungeon wouldn't be enough with the information I had.

Heading back to the restaurant I first ate lunch in, simply called "The Tavern" apparently, I grabbed a drink and a snack and settled in to work out a rudimentary minion type. This was the best place to work on this

because the guild had nothing helpful, or at least nothing I'd been able to find.

Eric: Sup, Kathrine. Did you find out what was going on?

Kathrine: Yeah. Had to sign NDA, idiot sent the email to Ballcome, then didn't bother to do anything to check what went wrong.

Eric: Told you, simple misunderstanding.

Alice: I should take your advice and avoid the medical program. I can see why you called it a shame-o-thon.

Kathrine: Just don't stop eating. It doesn't do any good.

Alice: I'm worried I'm going to start stress eating far too much. Then stress out even more. Prof Corigan is a witch, with a b...

Eric: So, we still on for the movie tonight?

Kathrine: I'm game.

Eric: err, wrong text convo.

Alice: Aahahaha

Alice: Yes, I'm still game.

Kathrine: Oh god, you two are so 'cute' together.

Eric: please don't tell anyone just yet, we don't know if it will be more than this one time.

Alice: Like we can tell that much from one trip to the movies.

Kathrine: Eric's first date is never *just* a trip to the movies. I have been told it's an excellent first date.

Alice: Do tell.

Eric: IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET!

Kathrine: ha ha. It's probably best to not know what's coming.

Alice: You could have teased him more.

Kathrine: I wouldn't do that to him.

As I was talking to Eric and Alice—John was probably on duty—I was approached by one of the patrons. She seemed fairly normal to me, but the “Free Hunters” shirt she was wearing set her apart from most people. It was a kind of obscure band I only knew about because it was founded by one of the most famous anti-guild hunters from back before they became a necessary part of the economy.

“Hi, I'm Ashley. I heard you're a Necromancer.” There was a pause as I stared at Ashley, a bit surprised that she'd introduced herself that way. “Wait, that sounded like a fangirl thing, didn't it.”

I forced a chuckle and tried to relax. “Kathrine. And yes, it sounded a bit much.”

Ashley smiled apologetically. “I've always found magic fascinating, even if I can't use it myself. I've never had the chance to pick the brains of a Necromancer.”

“Well, I'm level 1 and haven't even been inside of a dungeon just yet.”

“So I take it you haven't created a minion yet?”

“Nope.” I said with a shrug. “Actually, that's what I'm doing right now, working on my minion creation. Unfortunately, I don't seem to know enough runes to do anything interesting.”

Ashley smiled. “So Necromancy is a runic magic job then?”

“Kind of. It’s more of a hybrid, the control spell needs the flexibility of an elemental knot to allow you to take control of your created minions,” I answered.

“That means your minions are golems?” Ashley asked.

“Yes. How did you know?”

“I’ve talked to others who use golems.” Ashley shrugged. “I’ve heard them complain about the runes that are a part of that.”

“I don’t know why. The runes are relatively easy. It’s the knot that’s a pain in the ass,” I grouched.

Ashley just laughed. “I guess it depends on what you’re used to. So, what are you trying to do with your minions?”

I smiled and relaxed. Once she got talking Ashley was just interested. And having someone new to bounce ideas off of was nice. I kind of wished she was in the Sanctified Devils, but she wasn’t. Don’t know what guild she was a part of, but she would have known me if she was a part of the Devils. And I probably would have seen her around as well.

Ashley was a higher level than me. No idea how much, it felt rude to ask. But she did have good advice for dealing with the dungeon. Including thinking about some kind of spell that didn’t have to be inhaled. Apparently there were a few golems in the Balltown dungeon if you knew where to go looking. Or if you didn’t and stumbled on it anyways.

The conversation was fun. And definitely informative. I must have relaxed at some point, but it wasn’t that hard to believe. Ashley was just one of those people who were easy to talk to. I even picked up a couple of tricks and tips regarding minion management from her stories. So that was a great thing.