

PATH OF THE DEATHLESS (BOOK 2 COMPLETED)

13 (I) Arachnae

The Order will save you, but they will not allow everyone to be among their number.

After they save you, they will lead you to your new life, and you will be trained to live as a person again. But here is where you must show your resolve. Most of us bear the Path of a Slave. Our lot is one that services our masters, that makes us more durable against torment, stronger, to serve as mules, and emotionally deader, so there is less of our soul to kill.

We do not get the glorious skills most other Paths receive. We will not receive any grand skills for direct combat. Our Feats are always something relating to bondage or pain. But we can still gain magic, for sometimes we treat the masters' wounds or tend to their livestock. We can still heat our hovels when deepwinter comes, and cleanse the gutters with water.

And so here is where you show resolve. Stand beyond your Path and gather your skills. Strive and endure, and present yourself to a Weaveress when the day of the Hatching comes. You will serve as a guard for the young weavers, just as their mothers served as guardians of you. And when the time comes,

the young weaver you raised will decide if you are worthy and devoted enough to be a sister.

When they do—if they do, draw the first breath of your life. For then you will know you are truly free.

-Umbral: The Saved

13 (I)

Arachnae

Shiv made a mad rush for the nearest living thing he could sense the moment the cold started getting too much. It was a good thing his top sprinting speed while he was alive carried over to his Revenant form, because if he had to just drift slowly, he wouldn't have made it. For kilometers, the world was just burned. Vast expanses of greenery had vanished into ash. Even the rock wasn't spared, with much of it turning into slag and pooling upon the vitrified ground.

The only part that was safe was a hole in the ground that allowed the flames to pass over. Deep inside, Shiv sensed a lot of glowing vitality signatures. His

Biomancy field washed over the creatures below next, and he found himself dealing with what felt like a nest of strange, human-sized snakes.

Sorry about this, he offered as silent apology. These creatures probably wouldn't have died if the dragon didn't incinerate the land, but such were the dominoes of life. The dragon burned the world and Shiv in the process, and now Shiv was going to sap the life out of some snakes. His touch made one of the snakes hiss in sudden agony, and soon they were all in an uproar, trying to figure out what was wrong.

Vitality Drain > 5

He resurrected at the same time his Vitality Drain Skill advanced, and he found himself standing over the weak snake. The other snakes noticed him in an instant—and attacked without hesitation. Shiv splattered most of them with a pulse of his Biomancy—but the largest snake of the group shrugged off his spell as he struck its Magical Resistance.

It's like every other person except me has this,

Shiv snarled internally. The huge serpent slammed into him, and he caught its upper two fangs before it could clamp down over him. However, his resistance was short-lived. The snake surged forth and Shiv immediately found himself overpowered. He was ripped off his feet and slammed into wall after wall. To Shiv's surprise, it barely even hurt, and the noise his body made when crashing against the wall was closer to a solid plate of metal than human

flesh. As the last snake drove him against the wall, he briefly touched his own skin—and found that it was unnaturally smooth and hard.

The snake clamped its jaws down on his head. Its fangs pressed, cracked, and then fully broke before it could pass through his forehead. It didn't even break skin. The snake spat acid into Shiv's eyes, and he expected to be blinded at the least—but the corrosive fluid slid off his face as if he was a pane of glass. The Deathless barked a laugh, and it echoed down the snake's throat. He then drove his still white-hot kitchen knife into its neck and pulled the blade down. As the snake's guts spilled out, Shiv smashed it aside with a backhanded blow. It crashed into the far wall and didn't get back up.

It was at this point that Shiv noticed another thing: He was holding his kitchen knife by the lower edge, and he only felt a slight amount of heat. Even with his immense Toughness before, he should have been burned. Shiv turned his Biomancy in on himself and examined his body. Something had changed. Frankly, almost everything was different. There was an added layer of *something* coating all his organs—even in the small bits of his blood. It was smooth and hard, so the title of Diamond Shell was accurate, but it also didn't seem to impede his other biological functions at all.

“Well. I don't know if that completely makes up for getting blown up and having my spear and inventory absolutely destroyed too, but...” Shiv let out a breath and looked up. Ash was raining down through the cave entrance, building on the dead snakes. “What in the Broken Moon even was that? It was

like... It was like the biggest fireball in the world.” And he was the unluckiest bastard in the world. He just happened to be here when a suicidal dragon came to air his grievances—with the Composer, no less. They channeled enough fire mana to burn a hole through a mountain. *A mountain.* Their Pyromancy Skill must be insane. “Okay. I need to get back up. I need to get back to Valor. And then... I’ll figure that out then.”

Foreshadowing: The hero within the dagger calls out to you. He fears you are dead. He fears that he has been abandoned, lost to the world again. He has spent years lost before, and he doesn’t know if he can take much more time alone in the dark. As he might be your only hope in understanding this place, you are his salvation as well. Take heart to know that your actions dictate more than your own fate.

The words echoed in Shiv’s mind with a voice of thunder. He blinked as his Foreshadowing Skill activated the first time, filling him with details he didn’t know about, and a feeling—that he *needed* to get back to Valor.

With a leap, he shot out from the cave entrance—and felt like he was in a burning building. Shiv coughed from all the smoke and heat in the air, and he found himself glad his Toughness just evolved. It was so uncomfortable for him to be here right now, how bad might it have been with normal Toughness? His skin might have puddled right off his bones. For now, he was merely uncomfortable. And also strangely glossy. There was a new texture to his skin, and Shiv kind of liked it.

I feel like a precious gem, he thought.

The narrative has been taken without authorization; if you see it on Amazon, report the incident.

It took him a bit of looking to find Valor, but the dagger's constant shouting helped in finding the right spot to dig into the ash.

"Valor!" Shiv said, coughing and wheezing from the searing air. "You alright?" The stone dagger was weirdly cold. Like it couldn't be affected by heat at all. Shiv already had an excuse planned for how he survived this: He would tell a partial truth. "A wave of fire came at us. I managed to survive by diving into a giant snake nest in the ground."

"Shiv! A wave of fire? Where did a wave of fire come from?" Valor sounded incredulous, and Shiv didn't blame the dagger.

"A dragon. I think. He called himself Sir Legend Marikos Valdemar of the Descenders Union. He unleashed all that fire on a distant mountain and—well, he burned a hole through it. There's a gateway there, I think. It's made out of webs and he's yelling at the Composer to come out and kill him." The words

tumbled out of Shiv's mouth as he described what happened as best he could.
"I think that's all the details."

"Sir-Legend Marikos Valdemar? The Fortress That Soars?"

"That's his title?"

"Yes. He is a Dragon Knight who held the Lowest Path from the Court of the First Blood during the War of the Five. What—what is he doing here? Why is he here? And you said he's calling for the Composer to come out and kill him?"

"Yeah, he's crying pretty loud." And Shiv wasn't lying. He held up Valor so he could hear the deafening sobs coming from Marikos, even from afar.

"Oh, by the Great One's Embrace," Valor muttered. *"You should go and talk to him. Find out what troubles ail his spirit."*

Shiv's jaw dropped. Of all the things he expected the dagger to ask him, this wasn't it.

Foreshadowing: The Dragon Knight stares at the blood on his hands. He didn't mean to do it—they weren't supposed to be there. This wasn't supposed to be the nature of his victory. Before him, his great rival holds his dying hatchling and weeps, wailing for a Biomancer, wailing for someone to help him. But no one comes. They are all content to watch, and everyone cheers for Sir Legend Marikos Valdemar of the Descenders Union! Praise be the Fortress that Soars! Praise be the last bulwark of the Lowest Path!

But he knows the truth. He has just killed a child. He has killed a child to sate his wounded pride.

He has become a monster—the kind that his father was. He is no Knight.

This time, a dreamlike scene played out before Shiv's eyes, and he took a moment to shake it off. It was like he was there, watching the dragon sobbing in the distance, staring at the blood on their armored claws, while not far away was a smaller, blue-scaled dragon holding their child, true as Foreshadowing described.

This skill... was very strange. It felt like it should belong to a Diviner. But Shiv was definitely not that. He knew that one's Path determined what skills they gained to a major extent, but he couldn't understand why he would get this.

Mustering his courage and marching against his own better judgment, Shiv made his way across the blasted landscape toward the sorrowful Dragon Knight.

“Hey, Valor,” Shiv asked along the way, mainly to take his mind off things. “Do you know of a skill called Foreshadowing?”

“Yes, it’s an extremely rare skill of the Adept Tier. Why? Do you have it?”

“Yeah. I got it when I... dove into the cave filled with snakes.”

Valor paused. *“That sounds about right. It comes to people who suffer a great deal of misfortune during their life. Mostly through no fault of their own.”*

Shiv pressed his lips together. Never mind, this skill was practically made for him. “Well, it’s showing me things. Things about Marikos. He, uh, apparently murdered the child of a rival during some kind of duel. They were a dragon as well. That’s probably the thing he’s broken up about.”

A low huff of frustration came from Valor. *“Oh, Marikos you angry, ill-tempered fool. Why did you do this to yourself?”*

“You sound like you know him.”

“I do. But he... likely doesn't want to speak to me. In fact, do not let him know I am here—he would likely unleash all the considerable power of his Pyre of the Wounded Dawn Skill on you.”

“Pyre of the what?”

“It's something that evolves from Pyromancy. His flames are a bit more potent than most—closer to the fire of the sun than anything found on this world, if Marikos is to be believed.”

Shiv looked down and saw his reflection. His chef's outfit was burned rags, and his skin beneath shone with a polished gleam. “Yeah. I believe him. I'm walking through a giant glass crater right now.”

“When you address him, use his full title even if he is sulking. If you don't, he will take disrespect and grow very sour with you. What follows then is usually a lecture on the common etiquette and norms of Descender culture, and you will wish to kill yourself for it to end. When you go over, ask him to tell you why he's doing this, and tell him that he is still needed. Tell him everything you told

me about Sullain. This should get him to come back to his senses, if only for a while.”

“I... will keep that in mind.” Shiv was interested to learn about more of these norms, but maybe not from a depressed dragon that could obliterate entire sections of the world.

As Shiv came within a few hundred meters of the dragon, Ser-Legend Marikos Valdemar noticed him, looked away, and then did a double take. He shifted in the air and flew closer toward Shiv, and the Deathless did his best to hide how stunned he was.

Marikos was large. Not as long as Vicar Sullain’s winding form, but he truly was the size of a fortress, and the greataxe he carried might have run for a good hundred meters. The Dragon-Knight’s wingbeats nearly launched Shiv off his feet. But it was the spell patterns of fire dancing around the dragon’s body that gave him pause. Marikos’s armor was something carved from a mountain. Huge, black plates coated every part of his body aside from his lizard-like face, and as Marikos landed, the world announced his descent with a small earthquake.

Shiv tried to peek at Marikos with his Biomancy, but he found himself pressing against an iron wall. Of course the Dragon-Knight had Magical Resistance too—there was just no weakness Shiv could see.

How much does he eat? What does he eat? There can't be enough food in the world for a monster that size. No, a Dragon-Knight.

Marikos sniffed the air, and some of Shiv's smoldering rags snapped free, as if they were being vacuumed away. ***"Hm? A surfacer? And... someone from the republic, no less? How? How did you get down here? And why are you dressed like that?"***

Every word the Dragon-Knight spoke made Shiv's ears ring, but his new Diamond Shell seemed to help blunt some of the effects there as well. *Damn good Skill Evolution.*

Shiv greeted the Dragon-Knight as casually as he could. Worst came to worst, he'd get killed and have to drain from Marikos. He wondered how many times Marikos could survive being drained. Probably a lot, judging from how resilient the raven-helmed stranger was.

"I'm Shiv," he began. "And you're the Fortress That Soars: The great Sir-Legend Marikos Valdemar of the Descenders Union." Great. He nailed that. He remembered everything.

He saw the dragon's bright orange eyes widen. ***“You know me, surfer? A surprise. I heard the republic has done all it could to hide the truth about the underworld—and its neighbors—from its own people. Oh, I see. You must be an exile. Did you discover the truth of the Auroral Council? Is that what has you here, fleeing agents of the Prismatic Order?”***

Foreshadowing: The woman struggles as the agents pin her down. They gag her and declare her a mad woman to all those who are watching. The lead agent looks on quietly, silently ashamed, but determined to see this done. The Prismatic Order upholds the stability of the Yellowstone Republic. Whatever it takes.

13 (II)

Arachnae

As the scene offered by Foreshadowing faded, Shiv did his best not to growl. This was getting stupid. How did a dragon living in the Abyss know more about Shiv's homeland than he did? Well, Shiv knew why. *Taint take you, Roland Arrow...*

“Uh, not exactly. I was kind of... thrown.”

“Thrown? From all the way up there?”

Shiv winced. “Yeah. It was a rough landing.”

“And you survived?”

The Deathless smirked. “Yeah. They underestimated my Toughness. Too bad I don’t know how to fly.”

The dragon sniffled once, and then, to Shiv’s surprise, Marikos guffawed with laughter. **“You... I like you. I like your spirit—and your attention to detail. You got my title right. You won’t believe how often I have to correct people on the order between Ser and my Pathbearer Tier. It’s very tiring.”**

“Yeah. Sounds that way. Listen. I overheard you yelling earlier, and it sounded pretty bad.”

“Oh.” Marikos’s face fell. Shiv didn’t know a dragon could look so ashamed. **“I... am sorry you had to witness my indignity. I was... I have committed a grave sin, and I yearn to be punished. But even so, my warrior heart cannot accept a coward’s suicide. Hence, I have come here to challenge the Composer herself to finish me. I am a Pathbearer of Legend, if nothing else, so let my end come at the hands of a god.”**

Shiv eyed the web-rimmed portal in the distance. It was a pretty large gateway. Shiv wondered if Marikos might fit. “Right. You found the gateway leading to where she is?”

“Ah, a gate that leads to Weave, yes. Hidden within a deep maze. The Order of Arachnae do so love their little mysteries.” Marikos said that with more than a little scorn.

“Okay. But... why haven’t you just tried pushing your way in?” Shiv was genuinely curious. “You’re really powerful—I had to dive in a snake pit to avoid getting incinerated.”

Marikos's face turned to one of absolute horror. ***"No! You were caught in the throes of my tantrum! Is that why you are dressed in burned rags?"***

"Kind of."

"I... I am ashamed. Please. Forgive this unworthy, disgraced knight. It seems that every time my hand slips, I strike someone who does not deserve it..."

"It's fine—"

"No! It is not! I will not accept anything less than your forgiveness." The Dragon-Knight was glaring now, and Shiv felt a surge of grave danger. Marikos was beyond temperamental in his mood swings.

"Uh, sure. It's alright. You didn't know. You're forgiven."

Marikos nodded and smiled sadly. ***"You have a noble heart. It is more than I deserve right now."***

"So, back to that. Why do you want to die?"

"It is a dark tale. A wretched tale. A tale of dishonor. A tale of woe..." And Marikos started talking. And talking. And talking some more. Marikos, Legendary Pathbearer, Dragon-Knight of the Descenders Union, annihilator of mountains and literal horizons, was a *chatty-boy*. A chatty-boy with a lot of endurance.

Oh, this was what Valor was trying to warn me about, Shiv lamented as Marikos began talking about how he was trying to court some lady—only for

her to spurn him for his rival, Forswell. Shiv couldn't even remember who Forswell was half an hour into the story.

This went on for almost an hour. Marikos said a lot, and Shiv tuned practically all of it out. During the process, his awe of the Dragon-Knight's power was matched only by his disapproval of Marikos's character. Marikos was a chatty-boy who liked to *whine*. This was entirely unbecoming of someone who was more powerful than Roland Arrow. At least the Town Lord tried to put on a facade of dignity. Pair that with how Marikos loved going on tangents, and Shiv was doing his best not to groan from the torment.

Someone kill me... Again...

Tragically, no one came to answer Shiv's pleas. Maybe he had to do this himself—use his Biomancy to burst a vessel in his brain...

“...and that was the first time Forswell stole my tabard—but it certainly wasn't the last.”

Shiv took a chance to interject at this point. He didn't care if the dragon killed him for this interruption, he just had to do it. “That's riveting. Damn that Forsal.”

“Forswell.”

“Yeah. Him. Anyway, I hear the pain in your voice, but you shouldn't be hasty. The Union still needs you.”

A long, miserable sigh sounded from Marikos. It was like a horn going off next to Shiv's ear. The Dragon-Knight held out his trembling hands... ***“But there is no returning from what I've done. My anger, my unwillingness to listen, my damnable pride. It has plagued me all my life. And now it has led me down a dark path. A ruinous path. I swore an oath when they performed***

the Rites of the Dragon on me. Me and all the others. For some, it was just a thing of power. But for me... it was life...

“And it’s probably still life,” Shiv said quickly, wary of another tangent on the horizon. “The—Vicar Sullain. He’s gone up with his forces to the surface to attack Blackedge. The Descenders—”

“WHAT!” Marikos roared in Shiv’s face. His Diamond Shell endured, though it felt like someone smashed him in the head with a hammer. Marikos could probably kill a city of Pathless by yelling loud enough. **“THAT... THAT RADICAL FOOL DID WHAT?”**

Shiv was grinding along the floor now, the soundwaves from the dragon pushing him back. *Thank the System for this skill. My ears should be little more than bloody paste from the noise. It still really felling hurts, though.*

“Yes,” Shiv said, rubbing his right ear. “I saw him go up myself.”

Suddenly, Marikos looked about with alarm. **“This... I must return. I will come back to ensure my honorable end another day.”** Gratitude filled his eyes as he hammered his massive greataxe against his armored chest and saluted Shiv. **“You have done me and the Descenders a great deed today...”**

“Shiv.”

“Shiv! Shiv the Timely! Shiv! Hero of the Light-Cursed Surface. I must go and inform the Elector-Lords. We cannot afford another war against the surface at this time.” The dragon twisted his neck skyward and drew in a deep breath. **“Shiv! I have something to beseech you! A quest to grant!”**

“Oh, no, that’s fine,” Shiv began, but Marikos was more of a talker rather than a listener.

“You must seek out the Composer and tell her of this travesty. The Arachnae Order must emerge from the shadows in which it dwells and join the rest of us in condemnation of this... this absurdity. Was the last war against the surface not pointless enough? Have they forgotten how close Albion was to reaching the Great One’s Tomb? I say nay! I say this will not be! Now, I rise! May we meet again, Shiv! Preferably before my glorious death at the hands of the Composer herself. Away I go! Away!”

Stolen story; please report.

And Marikos shot up into the sky with such an explosive gust of momentum that Shiv finally went bouncing off his feet. Every time he landed, he cracked a bit more of the glass, and found himself thankful for the Diamond Shell he now had. In less than a second, Marikos went from a slow glide to cracking the sound barrier. A final shockwave swept over Shiv, and he found himself staring at the space where the dragon used to be.

Someday, I’m going to be strong enough to fight and beat him. Rising back to his feet, Shiv swatted off fragments of glass from himself and began walking toward the still open portal to Weave. If there was one thing that Marikos did right, it was burning that mountain. Shiv never much liked mazes. He would have hated going through one just to get where he needed to go.

“I’m surprised you managed to withstand all that yelling. My skull is ringing even inside this cage.”

“Yeah. I’m pretty tough.”

“You’re more than pretty tough, Shiv. Your Toughness skill evolved, didn’t it? You land heavier than before, and you barely reacted to Marikos. Someone who doesn’t have at least an Adept-Tier evolution of a Toughness Skill would be badly concussed and bleeding right now.”

Shiv smirked slightly. “Yeah. I, uh, went over the edge in the snake pit. I found out when one tried to bite me.”

“Congratulations,” Valor cheered. “And it came with Foreshadowing?”

“Yeah.”

“You are someone who rises above great tribulation, then. Few gain so many skills so quickly.”

“Few people are fortunate enough to be as tested by this world as I am.”

“Fortunate?”

“Iron isn’t formed in the cold, and a dish isn’t done without the flame. Pain. Suffering. It’s all just a price to me.”

Valor let out a slight hum. *“You know, you have a very remarkable indifference toward struggle, torment, and death. It’s a resilience that serves you well.”*

Shiv shrugged. “I am my own pillar. Who else was going to be?”

It took a little while before he passed through the melted landscape and arrived before the web-lined gateway. Shiv could feel the tightness in the air pressure. That was spatial magic, alright, and it supposedly led off where he needed to go. Shiv wished he still had the compass. That way, he could check if this was actually the right spot.

“No sense in regretting what’s gone,” Shiv muttered. “I think we’re here. Do I just step through the gateway? Anything else?”

“You best hold me high and declare your intentions on the other side. I suspect the Sisters of the Arachnae might try to disable you otherwise.”

After that long talk with Marikos, Shiv found that he wasn’t so against the idea of a little brawl if the Umbrals started one. “Alright. Let’s see how this goes. Maybe they’ll be able to get me back to the surface so I can help save my town. If it’s still there.”

The ugly thought of Blackedge being destroyed entered his mind properly for the first time. Roland Arrow was mighty, but against the vicar... Shiv didn’t know who would win. He didn’t know enough about either Pathbearer’s capabilities to have a good guess. Blackedge was filled with warriors and fighters, too. *It’ll be a hard battle to take the town, if nothing else.* He just hoped Georges and the other chefs were safe.

Shiv stepped into the gate and quickly found the webs weren’t for show. It took a bit of a struggle to pull his feet off the sticky threads with each step, and his frustration was quickly building. “It would be nice if they didn’t line their front door with this felling webbing.”

“It’s meant for the sisters to traverse with their enchanted boots. And you are not a sister. Also, they can see you through the web—they likely could see Marikos as well, they just didn’t want to bother with him. They knew he wasn’t actually going to go in, and closing the gate might just end with him flying to another one.”

“He’s that good at tracking these hidden gateways?”

“Marikos, for all his... eccentricities, is an extremely powerful and skilled Pathbearer. More importantly, he is experienced enough to know a great

many things. He is a known variable to the Composer. I suspect she will find greater concern with you.”

“Me?” Shiv winced as the spatial tightness grew uncomfortable. The path behind him was vanishing into a crevice. The path ahead was lined with webbing and obscured by shadow. *Dammit, my spear... That would have lit this place. Thank you, Marikos. I hope we never meet again.*

“Yes. You are an enigma from above—a surfer who witnessed the rogue vicar of the Necrotechs and survived, who managed to encounter a group of sisters transporting my cage to its destination. So many coincidences colliding together. You would be suspicious of such a person, too.”

Shiv frowned. Valor was right. Everything he experienced so far was a thing of incredible circumstance—but could also be seen as something engineered. With New Albion apparently having spies down here trying to ruin things... Well, Shiv couldn't blame them for the tense atmosphere. Just then, his Biomancy picked up something within the webbing. He brushed the biology of a weaver for a moment—a *stronger* version compared to the ferals he faced earlier. Shiv could feel how robust they were—and sensed the one near him had also undergone some biological changes compared to others of its kind.

He paused and looked at the webbing where he knew the weaver was. “You can come out.” He held up his dagger. “I can feel you. I am here to deliver the Cage of Valor Thann in place of Sister Nomos. It was her final request.”

For a few moments, the weaver hiding in the webs said nothing. Then, a soft reply came, gentle and feminine. “So you say. Proceed. We will receive you. Whether as enemy or honored guest will be discovered.”

“Honored guests,” Valor added, joining the conversation. *“I remain a person still, even as a prisoner within this cage. And do show Shiv some respect. He has undergone trials that would make many of the sisterhood quail. And he has done it all to honor your fallen—even preserved them with sacred ice.”*

“Apologies, *He Who Halts Eternity*. We will attend to you soon. And to you as well... Shiv.”

And then the weaver was beyond Shiv’s mana field and he was alone with Valor again. “He Who Halts Eternity? Is that your title?”

“One of them. I always thought it was a bit overdramatic. But when you are the foremost slayer of other soul-splitting immortals, I suppose it fits.”

“Your life sounds ridiculous. And awesome. You understand I’m going to ask you about so many things once we find someplace safe to settle and rest, right?”

“Of course. And I look forward to having this conversation in person so I can thank you properly instead of talking to you through this stone cage.”

Shiv was curious about that too. “What do you look like?”

“Depends on the body.”

The Deathless threw his head back and laughed. “Ridiculous. I’m gonna have to outmatch you someday.”

“That’s the spirit.”

Finally, Shiv emerged from the web-wrapped gate and found himself standing somewhere surprisingly familiar. He was inside a teleportation anchor not unlike the one in the Slayers Guild on Blackedge. There was also a group of

Umbrals similar to himself in height standing there waiting for him, with a truly *massive* weaver wearing a brilliant gem-crusted regalia at their back.

His field washed over them, and he realized most of the Umbrals had no Magical Resistance. The weaver he recognized—it was the one he sensed earlier. He nodded at her. He was a bit apprehensive about the spiders after his earlier experience, but still endeavored to be polite. “Good to finally meet you.”

The large weaver crossed their upper four hands and bowed. “*Tales Lost to Darkness* greets you, Pathbearer-Legend Valor Thann, and...”

“Adept Shiv,” Shiv answered, with more than a little pride. He considered his skills, and noted his Unique Revenant Skill and his Legendary Vitality Drain. Those likely counted for his Pathbearer Tier too, but he didn’t need anyone to know that.

“Pathbearer-Adept Shiv. We welcome you to the Weave, and ask that you submit yourself for inspection.”

“*Of course, Honored Weaveress. Your presence is a blessing.*” Shiv noted how polite Valor was getting, and was more than willing to have the dagger do the talking. However, he really needed to know something.

“Excuse me, but how are you going to conduct this inspection?”

“We will ask that you surrender all weapons and equipment before allowing our Psychomancer to probe your mind for ill-intent.” The Weaveress gestured toward the Umbral at the front of the group staring at Shiv. He noted the crystalline diadem she wore, and he let out a sigh. The Umbral Psychomancer narrowed her eyes.

Yeah, I don't much like you either. And you don't have Magical Resistance. See who gets who first.

“Valor. Tell them that I'll show them my knives and tattered clothes, but if they touch my mind, things will get very *ugly*.”