

## 80: Paperwork and teachings

As was becoming common, Scarlett was spending her afternoon in the office, looking over some documents Evelyne had sent over. Most of them were regarding the business that Scarlett had talked with her about acquiring back in Elystead. The younger woman had been in talks with the owner for a while now and, apparently, come to an agreement. Most of the equipment and preparations of the locale were already in place, so things were moving along fast. According to Evelyne's reports, they were currently scrounging for some employees, as most of the people who'd been working there had left for other ventures, leaving only the current owner.

All of this had required Scarlett's sign off on things, as the head of the Hartford house, and while Scarlett couldn't say that she *enjoyed* going through these things, she did want to stay somewhat informed of the happenings. There had been some surprising news she'd learned while appraising herself of the situation like this. An example was the fact that Evelyne had somehow managed to rope in another investor for this first business, to lower the cost to their family. Scarlett had given Evelyne full authority on this matter, so she wasn't going to complain about how Evelyne went about things.

Including documents relating to the business side of things, it was also looking like they were starting to get some returns on all the loot Scarlett had sent over to the woman over the past month. Right now, it was only a small margin that had been sold off—Scarlett had probably sent upwards of thirty low-level items—but it was just a matter of time. The day before she had also sent over the [Bow of Ends] and [Spear of Ends], and she was hoping the two epic-tier weapons would give them a good influx of money.

In the end, she hadn't figured out the exact effects of those two items before she sent them off. She had considered getting them to an appraiser here in Freybrook, but she really had no need for either a bow *or* a spear, so there hadn't been much point to keeping them any longer. Evelyne would ensure they were better appraised in the capital before being sold off, and that was all that was needed. It was almost easier on Scarlett, not learning exactly what the two items did. She felt like she had to sell at least *some* of the loot from the Howling Gale's Haunt, considering how much it would be worth, but all the other items were too good to sell.

Fynn had ended up getting [Clasps of the Storm], for example, which boosted aeromancy magic. And Scarlett had taken [Mark of the Staunch] for herself. The added stamina boost from the item was amazing; she'd felt like a kid with how she had been brimming with energy the last couple of days. With it and [Lifeblood's Eternal Circuit] on, she was probably wearing the equivalent of several houses just on her right hand. Both an amusing and a scary thought.

The [Ring of Umbral Defiance] that she had been using up till recently had been permanently given to Rosa, after what had happened in the dungeon. Scarlett wasn't sure how much use the bard would have of it, but she'd grown to realize there wasn't much point to her keeping it. It gave resistance to all dark-type damage, most of which was mental. And by now, it had been made abundantly clear that Scarlett's resistance against mental attacks was far above average. A fact she was very thankful for, though she didn't quite know the reason for it.

The remaining two items taken from the dungeon were [Garment of Form] and [Fang of Remembrance]. The latter would not be of any use until she got the other half, so for now, it was just going to be hidden away somewhere. [Garment of Form] though, Scarlett was still considering what to do with.

She knew that, in the game, it was a decent item for Fynn. Most of the items in the Howling Gale's Haunt were. But she was also pretty sure that, with a few simple adjustments that likely wouldn't affect the enchantment on it, she herself could use it. Considering how much stronger than her Fynn was, she would prefer to get some good equipment for herself first. The things found around Freybrook wouldn't cut it in any mid-level area or higher.

She would have to decide after having the piece appraised. She knew it increased agility, and if that was all, it might not be the best fit for her after all.

**[Name:** Scarlett Hartford]

**[Skills:**

[Mana Control]

[Pyromancy]

[Greater Pyrokinesis]

[Minor Hydromancy]

[Greater Hydrokinesis]]

**[Traits:**

[Dignified August]

[Supercilious]

[Cavalier]

[Callous]

[Overbearing]

[Conceited]

[Third-rate Mana Veins]]

**[Mana:** 487/4516]

**[Points:** 20]

**[Skills Menu:**

**Upgrades**

[Greater Pyromancy] (10 points)

[Superior Pyrokinesis] (25 points)

[Hydromancy] (5 points)

[Superior Hydrokinesis] (25 points)

[Greater Mana Control] (10 points)

**New skills**

[LOCKED]]

She would also have to decide how to spend her skill points soon. She'd been saving them up for some time now, clearing dungeons here in Freybrook. With the addition of points from clearing the Howling Gale's Haunt, she almost had enough to upgrade either her pyrokinesis or hydrokinesis to the 'Superior' tier. Those two skills were her chief priorities. Of them, she would probably upgrade pyrokinesis first, as it fit best with her current plans and with what she was being taught by Garside.

But she didn't need those upgraded *immediately*. Instead, she was thinking about finally upgrading her [Minor Hydromancy] and [Pyromancy] skills. Up till now, she'd been heavily focused on increasing her damage capabilities as quickly as possible. But now she'd been in this world for two months, and things were currently in somewhat of a lull. If any time was best for upgrading her supporting skills, it was now.

She had already established that the pyromancy and hydromancy skills themselves didn't let her use spells, and she doubted upgrading them would change that. She was also pretty sure they wouldn't change the strength of her pyrokinesis and hydrokinesis skills. Or at least not to the same level that upgrading the skills themselves did. But they *would* probably lower her mana costs for the corresponding element—as they did in the game—which had always been her second priority. Upgrading [Mana Control] did much the same thing. Although that skill also made controlling her magic easier in general, as she had learned the last time she upgraded it.

Honestly, even though she'd been disappointed about not being able to cast spells when she first came to this world, she'd grown to realize that hydrokinesis and pyrokinesis were far more flexible than one would think. Unlike spells, which would take ages to learn, they were relatively easy to use and could be upgraded through a point system that was essentially designed to make her stronger. In a lot of ways, she felt like the two skills gave her more freedom than being able to cast spells would have done.

Garside's new instructing also seemed helpful in that regard. Even though his teaching methods were somewhat...unique. He had told her he had little he could teach her when it came to magic itself—while his skills in pyrokinesis seemed very good, he had never used it the same way Scarlett was—so instead they had been focusing more on the strategic side of things. Their first session had been over in the training grounds—which were in a state of half-repair and missing a good number of dummies—a couple of days before, and they'd had another this morning. The old man had appeared surprisingly excited over the prospect of teaching Scarlett, but the problem was in the manner he described topics.

One of the first things he'd told Scarlett was that, when working as a battlemage, she needed to “open her mind's eye to the field before her”. To her, that was nothing more but clichéd, esoteric nonsense. For a moment she'd wondered whether he was talking about a literal “mind's eye”, trying to recall if there were any similar skills in the game. He'd eventually told her that wasn't it, and that one had to get a feel for the flow of the battlefield.

Scarlett didn't consider herself stupid. She understood what he was getting at. But there was a difference between using flowery language to describe abstract concepts, and experiencing themself yourself. She had always preferred learning things through experience. And after listening to him go off about these things for maybe a little too long, she'd simply told him as much.

It was the first time she had seen him show any hint of embarrassment. After that, he had instead tried to simulate a battle for her, so that she could learn what he was saying through practice. Though that hadn't stopped him from occasionally presenting some odd advice here and there in the process.

Scarlett looked up as a knock sounded out from the door, and the man in question entered the room. “My Lady,” Garside said. “Madame Livvi has arrived. She is waiting in the parlor.”

“Livvi?” Scarlett glanced at the clock on her desk. More time had passed by than she thought.

“I will be there soon,” she said.

“She appeared with another guest. A Master Abraham.”

Scarlett’s eyebrows rose. “Abraham?”

As in Raimond Abram? What was he doing here?

Livvi had sent word the previous day asking if she could pay a visit, but Scarlett had heard nothing of the sort when it came to Raimond. And apparently, he was still going under his alias. It did make her curious, though. Was he here on Follower business, or was this something else?

“I will be there shortly. Arrange some refreshments for them while they wait.”

Garside bowed. “As you wish, my Lady,” he said and left the room.

Scarlett looked down at the documents she had left on the desk. She still wanted to read through the rest, even if she didn’t always understand all the details. It would take a while though, so she would have to do it later. This world had a surprising amount of paperwork in it. Having Evelyne around to handle much of it was a godsend.

She hurriedly signed her name on the last few papers she’d read through—the original’s signature was easy to recreate with the body’s instincts—and placed them in one of the drawers. Then she stood up to leave. When she crossed the room and opened the door, however, she found Rosa standing there, an uncertain expression on the woman’s face.

“Oh, hi there.” Rosa’s expression quickly changed into that of a smile as she raised her hand and fluttered her fingers in a greeting.

“Miss Hale? Was there something you wanted?”

“Nothing in particular, no,” Rosa said. “Just thought I’d come by and say hello. Maybe read some more of that book I left off.”

Scarlett knitted her forehead. Rosa had spent a lot more time than usual hanging around her lately. At first, she thought nothing of it, writing it off as the woman’s usual antics. But there was definitely something off about it. Scarlett didn’t know what, though.

From what she knew from the game, Rosa shouldn’t be at risk of possession anytime in the immediate future, nor should she know about Scarlett’s deal with the being hidden inside her. But Rosa had always been the character whose real thoughts were the hardest to discern, and there were still details about her that Scarlett never learned.

These details stood out a lot more now that she knew her in real life, rather than just in the game. For example, Scarlett was relatively certain that possession wasn’t the only thing that plagued Rosa, as she had originally thought in the game. Sometimes Rosa acted off in a way that probably couldn’t be explained only by trauma and the occasional possession.

Scarlett didn't terribly mind the woman's increased presence, though. It was distracting, at times, and some of Rosa's antics irked the Scarlett part of her, but having a laid-back person like that close by was also relaxing in its own way. Perhaps that was part of why she enjoyed spending time with Kat as well.

Though the Shielder definitely came with less baggage.

Scarlett glanced over Rosa. "I am afraid that will have to wait for another time. There are guests I must attend to."

She paused, eyes passing over the woman's attire. It was a green dress that looked presentable enough. Not to say that Rosa usually didn't wear fashionable clothes.

"...If you wish, you may join me," she said. "One of the guests is an individual we might work with in the future, so it would not be bad for you to be introduced to them."

Rosa's eyebrows rose. "You sure? I wouldn't want to intrude on your little meet and greet."

"They brought another guest without my knowledge. I see no reason I cannot do the same."

Rosa smirked. "Catty. I like it."

Scarlett gave her a look. "Do not describe me in such terms."

"As you wish, my Ladyship!"

Scarlett shook her head. No, perhaps she had been too hasty. There was nothing relaxing about this.

"Come. Let us not keep the guests any longer," she said as the two of them began moving down the hallway.