

Positive

The patrol comes to a rest; you to try and note down and catalogue all of the temporal effects you've seen. A task made harder by an unusual wind that has picked up, disturbing your notes. When large orange petals - lily petals - start blowing over in the wind, carrying with them the scent of the flower, you decide to give up. You turn around to admonish your eldest, Lilith, for performing her wind experiments in the garden, but she's so keen to start that you don't have the heart to do so. Flowers will grow back but the seeds of enthusiasm are easily stamped out.

You walk over and begin to discuss with her her hypothesis. Listening to Lilith and the way she shares the same direct slightly wide-boy way of speaking as her father - a father she adores and often tries to emulate - makes you smile. You let her chat to you enthusiastically about all the things she's trying to prove. Determined to do it all herself, of course; she also shares her father's difficulties when it comes to asking for help. You interject here and there with hints and suggestions, and silently give thanks to your daughter's namesake that Lilith gets to lead the sort of life you could have only dreamed of as a child.

While she chats you pick up all the fallen petals and leaves and place them into a basket, ready to help your little boy Thomas with his very first experiment. Where his sister tends to be loud and forthright, Thomas takes more after you; softer spoken and more thoughtful, often lost in personal daydreams. You'd think today was the Winter Solstice the way you'd struggled to get him to sleep last night, but getting to perform his first experiment, and with one of Mum's pets too! You really can't blame him for it.

You wander over to the enclosure where Thomas is currently leaning over the fence and giggling. You keep telling him not to touch, but he listens as much as you did at his age; at least the permanent Freedom miracle woven into the bracelet he wears keeps him safe from most of the ill effects. You stroke his hair to get his attention and hand him the basket.

"So Thomas, what are we trying to learn today?" you ask.

"How Gelalitinous Cubes hunt for food?" he burbles out excitedly.

"Ge-LAT-in-ous", you correct with a fond smile, "But yes, that's correct. You scatter those leaves and petals throughout the maze with the space in-between like I told you, then we'll open the gate together".

He clambers over to scatter the leaves and petals - mostly as directed - and you stare down at the foot wide cube that sits statically in its pen. To think of all the problems these things caused you until you discovered the simple trick to taming them! They've been particularly handy when it's come to getting rid of household waste, though you have to be careful not to overfeed them lest they grow too big. Thomas runs back with the empty basket and you help him to lift the gate. At first the cube doesn't move and you can see Thomas begin to get upset. You nudge a petal slightly closer with a stick and slowly the cube slides towards it. You get Thomas to draw a chalk line on the wall, marking the new location of the petal and get him to keep doing the same, keeping well ahead, as the cube works its way from petal to leaf around the maze. Once the cube has run the full course you'll measure all the distances with Thomas and help him work out the range of their senses. For now though he just laughs and shouts encouragement as the cube slowly travels forward.

A cough behind you grabs your attention, and you turn to see your butler standing there, holding a large bunch of flowers. "Lady Knight Seeker Liliium, you've received these as a gift from the Prince...shall I put them in water for you?" You smile; you keep trying to get him to not use the full title, but he seems so proud of working for you that there's no way you could make yourself force him to do so. "There's also a note from you with the gift. It reads that while he understands how important your work is, he requests that you try not to be late to the next Council meeting."

You walk over and collect the flowers, mostly enormous, exotic lilies. You close your eyes and breathe in their heady scent. Thomas' laughter suddenly stops in the background and you open your eyes concerned, to see the patrol, with your arms still holding a bunch of flowers that's no longer there.

Neutral

As you walk along, the trees around you have apparently decided it's spring again; the air starts to sparkle with motes of tree pollen, tinting the air with green and...flowers? You breathe in deeply, trying to work out exactly what the smell is... The lily powder that you use to keep your winter blankets fresh delicately scents the air with a promise of spring; a welcome thought, given the way the cold stiffens your joints these days. It's a long time since you were on active patrol but the scarring of all those fights still takes its toll on the bad days. It could be a lot worse, though - 'little' Jasmine visits every afternoon for tea, company, and to renew the network of spells on your house that keeps the place comfortably warm. One day you might even stop thinking of her as 'little'...although as her having her own children hasn't been enough to do so yet, you never know.

Almost as though thinking about Jasmine was some kind of summoning, you hear a knock on your front door. As you walk from your bedroom to open it you hear barely-repressed childish giggles and grin to yourself - at the very least Jasmine has brought Charlie and David with her. To your delight it's not just Jasmine and her boys - Seth twinkles at you, having become a very dapper gentleman in his old age, and Archibald brings up the rear.

While life didn't go as planned, you're still happy with how things have turned out. No great loves - not much in the way of long-term partners, in truth - but then no great losses either. Had it not been for Jasmine you would have been distraught after finding out that that patrol to Lewin's Cove with all of the strangeness around it had left you barren; you don't know how she found out why you were upset, but she marched up to you and declared that as she had two daddies then she was claiming you as her mummy because other people had them, and you'd smiled for the first time since the accident. Seth and Archibald had been happy to go along with this, not least because it saved them from some of the fun of bringing up a daughter with no experience of being female to fall back on, so...you'd had a daughter, of sorts.

And then there had been the other children - there had been days when "Aunty Liliium" had almost been overrun as your friends had produced or acquired sons and daughters of their own, and 'play dates' became an excuse to talk war stories over tea - or on the quieter days others had come to get away from the flood of other people's offspring underfoot. You've certainly never lacked for company, that's for sure! Some of Archibald's reminiscences today bring to mind the friends no longer around - Barel, killed years ago on a patrol gone sour, Mistral, returned to Cathay to avoid a potential diplomatic incident, Gonzo...well, he'll be out of prison again in a few years, as cheerfully unrepentant as the last two times.

Charlie and David start squabbling, as siblings are wont to do; Jasmine sighs the sigh of a mother who knows that it's time to start getting ready to go home. She apologetically gets up to reinforce the warming spells, leaving you to finish the conversation with Seth and Archibald while keeping an eye on the children. Archibald finally switches back from the past to the present, and it's gratifying to hear how many of the next generation - and the one after that, especially in the cases of the various half-orcs and half-ogres you've gotten to know over the years - have decided to take up the patrolling mantle.

With the spells back to full power Jasmine comes to give you - still 'Mama Liliium' for all that she's in her thirties - a hug goodbye, and to collect the boys. Seth and Archibald give you a joint hug as well for good measure before helping to usher Charlie and David out of the door. You go back to putting out your winter blankets on the bed, just to help the warming spells along; as you pat them down a cloud of lily powder erupts and makes the air sparkle for a moment. The air clears - your room is gone, your joints no longer stiff, and the patrol is still moving along...

Traumatic

As the patrol walk along, you see something strange off to one side of the path - a small patch of flowers that don't seem to be able to decide what they are. While you watch you see them slowly shift from tulip to daffodile to iris; leaning closer, you are caught by them suddenly jumping to lillies, the thick, heavy scent momentarily blotting out the world and making you sneeze. You pick yourself up off the floor from where you've fallen, glumly noting that just like every other space in this...cave? Tomb? Temple? All of the above? Anyway, nothing makes sense. This far underground, it shouldn't be possible for all of these plants to be growing, but here they are, and while you're glad that they cushioned your fall something about them makes your brain itch.

Looking up you can barely see the outline of the trapdoor that dropped you down here; you can just about hear muffled shouting from the other side that implies that the rest of the patrol are trying - and failing - to reach you. You think you can make out Gerrard calling, "We'll find another route, just hold on!" before the thumping and shouting give way to silence. To keep your spirits up you decide to explore the space, hoping to find a way to rescue yourself before the rest of the patrol arrive. The main door is large and imposing and from this side completely impossible to open, and everything else is largely hidden under the implausible vegetation. There are carvings under the green though, and brushing the plants away reveals what looks to be a narrative, although it's hard to follow. You slowly work your way around the space to the back, building up the impression that whatever caused all the strangeness down here was shut down here on purpose... Feeling through a dense clump of greenery your fingers touch metal rather than stone, earning you a nasty little spark of static, and you decide that perhaps it might be a good idea to go and sit quietly near the door instead.

Time passes, and eventually you hear the rest of the patrol in the corridor outside; you move well out of the way of the door, just in case. The door finally swings inwards and they troop in, completely unconcerned...and walk straight past you. Your welcome and explanation of what you've found out so far dies on your lips. "Guys?" They continue to take no notice of your presence - but there's no concern either, no talk of finding you. It's almost like they've forgotten you exist... In mild panic, you decide to take direct action; you step in front of Gerrard, blocking his way, and almost get knocked over as he tries to walk through you.

He blinks in confusion and just about manages to focus on you. "Hello?"

"Gerrard, it's me, Liliium!" only elicits further confusion on his part, but he's trying so hard to be nice about it, trying to find out how you ended up down here and if you're okay. It's as if without constant reminders that you exist his mind is struggling with the twin concepts of you being present and you ever existing at all. Your attempts to trigger memories by talking about your shared experiences only serve to start upsetting him for all that he's clearly trying to be kind to the madwoman ranting at him, something you can see from both his eyes and the way he tightens his hand around the grip of his mace.

Frustrated (and getting quite scared now) you're seriously considering shaking him by the collar when a low, blood-curdling growl from the doorway grabs your attention. The...creature...a thing of fangs and claws and sullen rage...can very clearly see you, and you are just as clearly the sole focus of its attention. The hand that received the static shock earlier suddenly starts tingling like the onset of pins and needles - and with mounting horror you realise that no one in the patrol is reacting to the creature's presence, and that Gerrard has already walked off seemingly forgetting you again.

As the creature pads towards you you scream for help but no one so much as twitches; the closest you get to any response at all is when you trip over the end of Rose's staff as you back away and she looks just as confused as Gerrard had when she fails to see what caused it to move. The fall is your undoing; you land heavily in the plants, and at that moment the creature pounces, its bulk pinning you down amongst the flowers. You throw up your only free arm to try and fend it off as it goes for your throat, the rankness of its foetid breath

mixing poorly with the funeral reek of the lilies; suddenly the weight on you is gone along with the scents, and you look up to see the trees and sky above and the Mad Ox patrol standing nearby waiting for you.

Ridiculous

As the party travels along you catch sight of an old grave stone - it looks abandoned, but the grave itself is covered in fresh lilies. You walk over to investigate and on a sudden impulse pick up the lilies. Carefully looking closer you note they have begun to wilt - but their intense fragrance is undiminished. You place the lilies in their vase, quickly and loosely arranging them, then look around admiringly at the rest of the bar.

The room is clean and tidy but still with that familiar sense of disorder that comes with everything here in the Temple of Freedom, and before long the room will be full of the usual chaotic mix of people. Mostly Seekers of every leaning and bent, some loudly discussing theories, others continuing their personal quest of tasting, trying or smoking everything the bar serves and several things it doesn't. Scattered among them and adding spice to the situation will be their assorted friends, hangers on, distinguished guests and a few random citizens eager to spend their time and their groats in such a famous place.

The bar has always been busy, but it's got a lot busier ever since you took over as the Grand Master of Cocktails - a title carefully chosen to wind up the Temple of Might, much like the names of so many of the classic drinks. You'd never been entirely sure what you wanted to do with yourself but you've come to love working here, especially given how supportive the Temple have been following the accident. They even give you a cut of the extra money the bar now takes to help pay into your ongoing research into what went wrong...admittedly with the rest going to pay off your debt to them for all the specialised modifications they've had to make around the Temple building to accommodate the new you, but it's only fair.

You look at the clock on the wall; it's a marvel of engineering by a different Seeker, though no one has ever worked out exactly where it's showing the time for. Right on time there's a knock on the door and in walks Archibald. He's been coming to have a drink with you every day since the accident, always asking about how your cure is progressing, occasionally offering to show you a new ritual idea he's devised that might help. You haven't got the heart to tell him that you've grown to quite like your new form - you're never cold these days, it's not really affected your manual dexterity or your miracles, and the flying! Oh, the flying - how could you get him to understand the freedom of soaring through the air? Of course you have to check with the Defenders before going anywhere, can't risk scaring the citizens of the Kingdom. Gerrard's always been so kind in that regard...even if he does struggle to look you in the eye these days.

"Anything new for me to try today?" asks Archibald.

"Something I call the Flaming Bison." You flash a grin full of teeth; the one thing it's hard to do is smile and not look like you're about to eat someone, but Archibald grins back in return. You slide your long reptilian bulk through the staff entrance to the bar, tucking your wings in close to avoid catching the doorframe. A casual flick of your tail opens a window to let the air in while you pick up two steel demijohns in your huge clawed paws and carefully pour measures of the contents into the shaker. A dash of this, a shot of that, a good couple of shakes and you pour the drink out into an obsidian glass. As a last gesture you delicately use a single claw to draw out the syrup on top, shaping it into the word friend in water runes, and carefully carry the glass out.

Placing it in front of Archibald you give him a moment to appreciate the artistry then gesture at him to step back. You draw forth the fire, feeling it gather in your belly, and breathe it out as a tiny careful stream of flame; the syrup caramelises and the alcohol burns a series of interesting colours. You pass it to Archibald, who blows out the last flickers and, after giving you a small salute with the glass, takes an appreciative sip. You lean down on the granite counter as he slowly drinks his drink, chatting away about some new area of magical research.

Finally Archibald stands to leave, but he asks the question he's asked you so many times before. "Any idea yet what exactly it was you did that turned you into a dragon?"

You shake your head, not really minding.

“Ah well, I’m sure you’ll get the bottom of it soon.” He turns to leave, stopping by the lilies as he has done every day since he started visiting you. With a couple of words and a gesture the flowers look as fresh as they did when they were first cut. As he opens the door and waves goodbye, a breeze picks up the scent of the flowers, and you shut eyes to better appreciate the smell.

You suddenly feel much smaller again, the sudden loss of your tail and wings shocking your eyes open as you look once more out on the patrol.