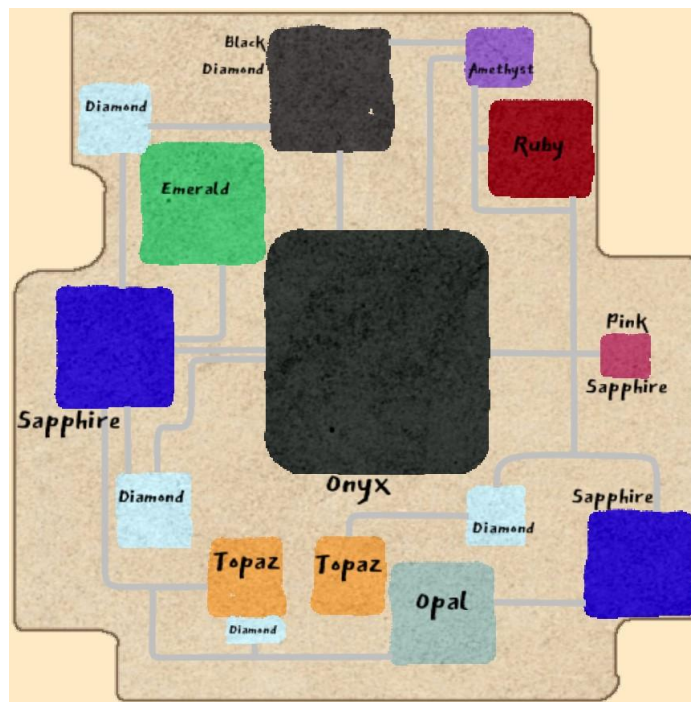# The Logic of Mana

It had been a few days since the incident with the thugs. Gisele had come by and talked to her about what had happened but Sloane did not want to think about it. She was unhappy about how she handled the situation, but she couldn't argue with the results. Sloane remained free to continue her search, which now included people within the city. She needed to find out if Gwyn had been here in Thirdghyll and more about the humans that currently were.

In the meantime, Sloane had delved into her crafting. She had drawn the overall schematic of the watch itself and was going over it again. Looking at the sketch of the board, she considered the various functions again.

Sloane had purchased some paints just for this purpose. *Plus, who didn't like to paint?*

Looking over the table of gems she had made with Reanny, she remembered the various purposes they had. Sapphire was the logic gem, the opal connected to the user of the watch, topaz displayed things to the user, the pink sapphire would draw and distribute power from the

mana crystal, the amethyst targeted the use of mana that the ruby manipulates, the emerald connected to the user's core, the various diamonds connected to mana and amplify its use, and finally, the onyx was a massive sensor. There were multiple runes on it that she suspected determined the type of things it would detect.

Sloane looked at the runes she had scribbled into the journal and tried to figure out their purpose. So far, she had managed to glean the Intent of a few from pushing her mana into them like Reanny did the gems. The more she did it, the more convinced she was gaining the ability to learn it easier. Many of the other runes or groupings were a bit difficult to figure out. The individual ones she was sure of were **[Detect]**, **[Intent]**, **[Display]**, **[Use]**, **[User]**, **[Spell]**, and **[Amplify]**. She could tell there was a simpler naming scheme associated with each rune within the Intent itself, but she hadn't gotten that far. Sloane simply decided to ascribe her own description to each character.

She noticed how some runes combined with others for a more specific purpose. There were symbols that she worked out as operators for those groupings. The two sapphires were an example of this, the one on the left had a combined rune she was calling **[Intent: User]** while the one on the right had **[Intent: Spell]**. Which Sloane took as one handled the processing of user-focused intent and the other spell-focused.

Finally, some runework had a lengthy structure that seemed to follow a certain logic. The black diamond had a complicated runework that she had started to decode. Its structure was **[*something*]-[Spell:Intent]›[Use:(User:*something*)].** Based on what she had learned of the gem functions, Sloane theorized the runework had something to do with storage and the use of a spell. She wasn't sure how that corresponded to Intent, however. On the Onyx, there was a runework chain—a group of runes that worked together—that she *thought* translated to **[Detect:(Mana: Use)]–[Display]** or if written out: detect mana use then display the results. She figured it was how the screen showed mana use in the surroundings. There were also a few runes on the topazes that likely dictated *how* to display the previous "data" gathered. That rune was the most complicated one Sloane could figure out at the moment. Some were far more complex, and deciphering those would come in time.

Looking through the journal, she had some ideas about how to use runes. Sloane didn't think she would need gems for everything. She would need to test it, but she figured she could etch runes directly into an object. Silver or a similar metal was likely key in this regard. Some

type of engraving ink. She had scribbled some ideas of a silver-based ink and an engraving pen that could utilize it.

Sloane would need to try and build one soon. For now, she put down her notebook and went back to her flashbang design. She had originally kept it hollow, thinking she would put some type of explosive inside. Now Sloane considered a different design. One that would make full use of runic chains. She would place an orb inside that she would engrave with runes. She just had to figure out how to imbue her **Flashbang** spell into the object.
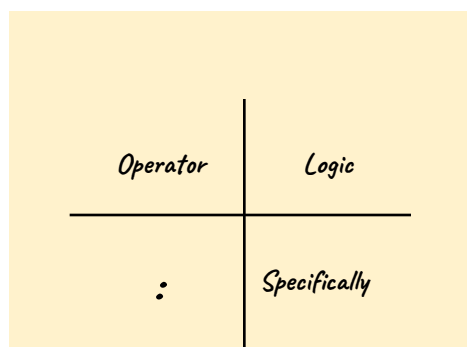
Wait... That one runic chain.

Sloane quickly scanned back to the black diamond runework that she had been trying to puzzle out. It was obvious now that she thought about it. The gem's function was to store a spell and then use it.

So, if the second rune focused on an action or requirement for use that left a rune to determine what to store...

With that thought, she wrote out what she suspected it did. The translation for the gem's runework worked out as **[Store]-[Spell: Intent]▸[Use:(User: Trigger)]** in which she figured the little triangle represented the logic '*wait for*'. So, that meant the final runework indicated that it would store a spell and then wait until the user triggered the rune to cast it. The Intent portion of the runework probably referred to the user pushing the *Intent* of which spell they should store into it. With that thought, she wondered if the black diamond could do more than just store spells. *Could it also store data?* It was something she would need to test.

Going back to her working table of operators, she updated the list and scribbled in the logic.

Operator	Logic
:	Specifically

–	*And or As?*
– –	*Then*
▶	*~~??~~ Wait For*
•	*Or??*
/	*Separate?*

Sloane added the two new runes to her running list and nodded. Everything was looking good. She just needed to make the engraving pen and she'd be golden.

Or silver, since that's what she would need. She thought with a wry smile.

Based on the runes she knew now, Sloane believed she nearly had enough to test her grenade. Her only issue was figuring out a way to delay the use of the **Flashbang** spell. She would also need to add a button to the grenade with a pin so that it wouldn't inadvertently go off. The button would trigger the runework and the spell. So, she needed to delay the cast. Which the handy ▸ operator could be used for. Yet, then she had to figure out a way to add a timer after the operator. Thinking about it, with the plethora of runes she had seen just on the watch, there *had* to be a rune for *time*. Sloane would just need to figure it out.

She also needed to figure out if engraving the runework on an orb or something inside the hollowed ball would cast the spell inside or outside. If it cast inside, she had to figure out a way to make a spell that separated the ball at the seam *before* casting **Flashbang**.

Or simply engrave the runework on the outside temporarily.

Sloane sighed. There was so much to do and test, but that was enough 'artificing' for the day. *Definitely, a word.*

Actually, speaking of tests... maybe one *last thing.*

Sloane looked down at her watch. It clearly had a way to store and use spells if her runic deciphering was correct. While she *wanted* to go hard in the paint and try to add a **Mana Bolt** to the storage, she figured the safest option would be to add the only spell she had made.

With a deep breath, she placed her hand over her watch and channeled her spell through her hand into the device. She kept her mind focused on the spell and the Intent of what she wanted. The screen glowed white before it did a quick flash and her spell channel ended. She looked down at the watch face and noticed a tiny rune that hadn't been there along the side of the screen glowing white.

Her eyes widened as she saw that. The rune slowly pulsed, and she could feel a slight difference in the connection between the watch and herself. It was as if the spell was sitting there queued up and ready.

Since she chose the spell that wouldn't cause damage, Sloane knew it wouldn't cause any harm. She turned away and aimed her wrist at the back door of the wagon. Focusing on the watch, she thought **Flashbang**.

As soon as she finished the thought, she watched the spell launch out from her wrist and burst against the back door in a flash and a loud crack of sound.

Sloane instantly felt a rush of excitement. *Yes!*

She jumped up and pumped her fist. "Woo hoo!"

This adds so much versatility!

Sloane was thrilled and knew she had to show the knights. *They will get a kick out of this! There are so many things we could do with this.*

She instantly froze. *Shit. I said I'd test my spells in the proper place.*

"Ugh! Damn it, Sloane!"

Hopefully, no one noticed.

Sloane sighed. *I really need runes to dampen the sound in the wagon.*

She looked down at the watch and saw that the rune was subdued. *Almost, like it's recharging or on cooldown.*

I definitely need to test everything else I can do with this watch. I should have considered it before. There are so many available gems that the watch has *to have additional capabilities.*

Feeling both satisfied and embarrassed by her test, Sloane decided to go find the knights.

* * *

Sloane emerged from the wagon where she and the knights had set up a crafting workbench for her to use. She stretched and squinted her eyes in the bright light of the midday sun. Before stepping down the ladder, she looked to the left and the right, trying to find any clue that anyone had heard her spell work.

Satisfied that she hadn't seen anyone, Sloane stepped down... Right into Cristole.

Sloane jumped in surprise. "What the? Where'd you come from?"

Cristole had a very unamused look on his face, and Sloane could feel the judgment just wafting off of him as if it were a physical thing.

"Sloane..." He started.

"Oh! Hi, Cristole. Nice to see you here!" Sloane knew she had to take control of the interaction or she'd never hear the end of it. *Distract and redirect!*

"Sloane–"

"So, what do you say we head to the bar? I'll buy you a drink." She distracted.

Cristole sighed. "Sloane, what–"

"I have so many great things to tell you about! Something new and exciting and will be a huge benefit to the group."

"Wait. Sloane–"

"I also figured out how to make the flashbang!" She redirected.

Cristole did not look impressed. *Time to go for the kill shot.*

Sloane leaned close, placed her hand on the high elf's shoulder, and gently patted it. "Cristole, buddy. Let's not speak my shame into existence. Come. Join me. Together we shall rule the galaxy as Artificer and... uh... knight. Yeah." *Confusion!*

Cristole raised a brow and tilted his head in confusion. "What the... Sloane, what in Relena's name are you talking about?"

"Exactly. Come along!" Sloane said as she started walking back to the inn.

She smiled as she heard the groan and footsteps coming from behind her. *Success.*

* * *

Sloane and Cristole sat at the bar inside the inn. She had bought him *two* ales. One as a bribe from talking about it to her, and the other to stop him from telling the others. Now that she actually *had* her own money.

Speaking of.

"So, Cristole. Before I speak on the new wondrous things I have discovered. Let's discuss the Banking Guild."

"Sloane... Don't think I'm letting you off the hook."

She pointedly looked at each beer and then back at him.

"Sure. Whatever you say, my friend." She agreed with a smile.

Cristole groaned again. "Fine! Okay, so. Banking Guild. Sure. Let's discuss it. What do you want to know?"

"One, can we go? Two, what do I need to do to obtain an account? Three, how does the Guild track my money wherever we go?" She ticked off.

Cristole nodded along as she listed her questions. "Alright. Yes, we can go. It's only midday so we can actually go after this. We will bring your patents of nobility that establish you as a baroness of House Reinhart. That will ensure you get a higher-tier account due to such status. Lastly, every month, the Guild will send out the updated ledgers in armed caravans from each regional headquarters. Thirdghyll is one of these. These travel a route that passes through each major branch, which in turn sends out updates to the smaller branches.

"It's a proven and secure system, but always make sure you track your own purchases and balance so that you do not over allot your account. The Guild enforces harsh penalties upon anyone who does. You should never test them. They're a *very* powerful entity."

Sloane's eyes went wide, an idea slammed into her head like a sledgehammer. An idea that could be *very* profitable and right up her runic alley.

 "Cristole. Where is the main headquarters of the Banking Guild for West Ikios?"

"It's in Marketbol. A Sovereign City that the Guild itself funded and founded as a neutral location."

"Marketbol." Sloane deadpanned. "That name couldn't be blander for a *Banking* Guild if they tried…"

Cristole chuckled. "You're not wrong. Marketbol is only about one hundred and thirty kilometers from here."

Sloane considered her idea. "What is the likelihood the group could go there first? I think I can pitch a revolutionary idea to the Guild that will save them hundreds of gold and ensure their ledgers are one-hundred percent accurate."

Cristole tilted his head. "What is your idea, exactly?"

Sloane smiled. "I want to create a membership card for the Guild that will allow you to synchronize your account balance no matter where you are. In the first version, you will simply go to the nearest branch when you go somewhere new and register your card for that branch. Once you leave, you update it. Or even if you forget to do that, when you get to the next branch and register it, your balance will update automatically. So instead of forcing the bank to constantly send out caravans to update ledgers everywhere, the new system will ensure the people do it for them. Each regional headquarters can maintain a runic system that creates a backup of the database for security purposes.

"What do you think?"

"That's... that's a lot. However, I certainly see the benefit. Why don't we meet with the Guildmaster of the branch here in Thirdghyll? Instead of going today, let's go tomorrow. I'll set up a meeting with him. You can describe your idea and maybe show him an example of what you're envisioning. Let's see his response and we can go from there. If there is enough money in the venture, I'm sure we can convince Ser Gisele of a detour."

"A prototype? By tomorrow?" Sloane asked hesitantly.

"Yes, is that doable?" Cristole asked with a raised brow.

"Yeah. Sure. No problem. Easy peasy." She replied while internally cursing.

It's going to be a long night.