

## Day 192 - Blue

Just like with Taelah, my honeymoon with Shayma was three full days of my focused attention. We'd been together for some time, though, so it wasn't like it was just debauchery; she actually spent a lot of time smithing things and we talked about possible project and plans. Sometimes it was just about little alterations to the beach house or the beach itself. Just things that were hers and mine, like raising the question of whether she wanted children as well, now that the immediate danger was passed. She brought it first, though, before I could figure out the best way to ask.

"I think I want to wait until I see Taelah's," Shayma told me. "Not that I doubt your abilities or anything," she added with a grin. "For now, maybe another dungeon seed. I don't think I need any new Affinities." That seemed entirely reasonable to me.

At night I worked on experiments. I had a number of things I needed to do: find some way to deal with Annit and Keri's depletion, start on Artifacts for Iniri and Taelah, consider some sort of weapon for Shayma, see if I could replace or upgrade some of my Dungeon mechanics by substituting in supermaterials, and generally check to make sure I hadn't missed things. Which I probably had.

One of the most useful things would be to get better storage crystals if I could convince the dungeon system to, say, use [Hyperthaumic Phase-Condensed Aurum] and [Firmament] instead of just plain gold and steel. Unfortunately, it seemed I couldn't integrate materials into my existing crystals without breaking them, and while I tried putting a matrix of Aurum and [Firmament] into a chunk of quartz and shoving mana at it, I didn't get an additional type of storage crystal.

Frankly that didn't surprise me. Tor Kot had mentioned that the storage crystals were a standard part of a dungeon setup, so they were probably less prone to alteration or creation than some of the fabrication stuff I'd gotten the system to accept. Blindly fumbling at things early on seemed to have worked, but after all the low-hanging fruit was plucked it seemed I needed to have some specific idea of what I was doing.

To that end I tried to be more deliberate with my experiments regarding Annit's problem. I couldn't just crudely shove dungeon stuff at materials and hoped it worked. Instead, I considered the problem from the perspective of dealing with souls. Since [Purification] fixed the soul, it had to address the fundamental soul structure, and that was something I could actually see. It was insanely complex, yes, but I had all the hours when Annit and Keri were sleeping to study and copy out their soul structures.

I was making models, tiny ones, out of [Hyperthaumic Phase-Condensed Argentum]. Fortunately, they weren't gaining much experience with Shayma taking a break from adventuring, so there weren't many changes. The fundamental shape didn't change much anyway, only the fine tips of the complicated structure where new growth happened. Tier changes were where real changes happened and those were far away as yet.

I couldn't guess at the structure which had been torn off from Annit's soul by Depletion, even if I could see the raw wounds of it, and I had to hope that the Skill would fill in some of those details if it had a starting point. It was a lot of exacting work, and even with the extra ease of using Anvils it took a good chunk of supermaterial output. I wasn't sure exactly how I would use those models to deal with things,

but it felt like I was on a right enough track to spend the time on them, even if it would take days and days. It'd never be something I could mass-produce, but it was better than nothing.

Mass production was something that had been on my mind, too. I wasn't sure it even *applied* in a place where intent and Skills were a think, or if it did, that it would be particularly worthwhile. I knew that there wasn't an actual lack of technology, despite how little I'd seen in Tarnil, but since it was magical technology I didn't know quite how to read it.

The monorail I'd seen in Invernir was inspirational, but I shouldn't just wholesale put something like that up across Tarnil, even if I could. Major economic disruption wasn't my call to make or my task to perform. Even if I just restricted myself to the Caldera, I could just put in portals wherever I wanted so stuff like that was not as useful as it might be. I really wanted to do some sort of magitek infrastructure, but I wanted it to be *useful*, not just a vanity project. Considering that the Village already had heating, cooling, and plumbing in even the remote farmhouses, I didn't have much I could easily work on. Except I did have the ability to make [Adamant Stone], which was the base material for Status Sigils, and those seemed to be very important and useful.

I glanced at the ones that existed and shaped a few pieces of [Adamant Stone] to the proper size. Considering that it needed magic to run, I added in a little bit of [Core Lattice Anecrux], but I couldn't do the finishing touches myself. I just had chunks of [Energized Adamant Stone] ready for carving. It was really irritating that I couldn't even do runes, since from what I understood they were actually standardized, to get around some of the issues with intent-based magic.

Shayma was happy to turn them into fully-functional [Energized Status Sigils] in between playing around with metal. I handed four of them off to Taelah, since there was no reason not to, and four more to Iniri to make sure she had extra. At least one for the Palace and one to replace the Sigil that had been taken from Meil. They were easy enough for me to make, so I might as well.

For those three days Shayma wasn't the only one crafting. Taelah was focused on her own pursuits, including the task I'd set her and nearly forgotten about. I wasn't expecting Taelah to suddenly laugh and hold up a plant and shout my name.

"Blue, husband! I did it!" The overlay agreed with her exclamation.

*Taelah Marn has gained [Phantasmal Druid] experience.*

*Dungeon gains 44,831 experience from Companion Taelah Marn.*

"Did what now?" I peered at the plant, which had a single flower with a deep grey bowl. The overlay labeled it [Gravity Chrystenium]. "Oh! Awesome!" It was interesting that I hadn't gotten it in my system yet, but I probably needed to actually have it planted so my dungeon biology could interface with it.

"It was very odd. I had to change the actual physical look of the flower before the Affinity would catch," Taelah mused.

"I guess that makes sense. They've all done something to look at least vaguely like their Affinity."

"But why a bowl for gravity?"

*"Because gravity pulls down, I suppose?"* The distortion of space and time due to gravity was far more complex than that, but the idea of a gravity well physically looking like a bowl was a handy enough metaphor and probably good enough to start when it came to magic.

"Hm." Taelah pursed her lips. "It doesn't seem to be doing anything either."

*"I think you have to plant it. I'm pretty sure they don't do anything unless they're connected to me."*

Taelah immediately stepped outside and placed the plant into the dirt of her garden, her Skills meaning she didn't need more than her bare hands to plant it properly.

*[Gravity Chrysthenium] discovered. Aligns local gravity.*

The various Climates placed the [Gravity Chrysthenium] only sparsely, mostly concentrated on steep slopes. That meant the vast majority of them were spaced around the Caldera walls, resulting in areas where, in theory at least, people could walk up a near-vertical slope. It wasn't the whole perimeter, just a few places here and there. It would be a few days yet until I could get gravity Sources and thus start properly producing gravity Affinity materials, but I was absolutely looking forward to that when it happened.

*"You are amazing, Taelah,"* I told her, and got a smug smile with a hint of a blush.

"Thank you, husband," she replied.

I wasn't sure how I was going to get space or time or mind Chrystheniums, not yet, but if Taelah could create a new one then it was probably just a matter of time. The Scalemind used mind magic Affinity all the time, so there was surely some way they could help. That, plus maybe asking Ansaе about it. I couldn't imagine where in the world mind magic collected naturally.

The Scalemind were actually first on my list for the meeting once the honeymoon was over. They had been monstrously helpful so far and good enough guests, so I owed it to them to give them some useful guidance. So far I hadn't given them that guidance, and while I had some thoughts I figured it wouldn't hurt to solicit some extra opinions.

"It seems it's more like something *they* need to do," Shayma pointed out, lounging back in her chair and looking around at the rest of the council.

"The demihumans I saw come out of the Great Dungeons some, oh, several thousand years ago seemed to have done so all on their own." Ansaе rumbled.

*"Ansaе, did you notice, when they came out, were they tribalistic or had they started to specialize?"*

"Tribalistic? I'm not certain I know what you mean by that. They were certainly more organized than monsters."

*"That's what I thought. It sounds like when they're in the Dungeon they're put under pressure to start the tool cycle. Not the way I would have done it, especially since they can't be properly sedentary until they leave the dungeon, but I can see the logic. If the iterative mindset is how they get connected to the Akasha, we need to start from first principles. Of course the Scalemind are pretty well fucked in that regard since neither of their adult forms are really capable of advanced tool manipulation."* I had been musing aloud in hopes that someone had input, but apparently I'd lost them somewhere along the way.

"You sound like you've done this before," Ansaë pointed out.

*"Well, I mean. I've been involved."*

"I'm really curious how you could have been involved in that but not know how it works with dungeons," Iniri said, raising her eyebrows. "If it's something you can share, of course."

"Yes," said Ansaë, grinning wide. "Do tell."

"Um," I said. Most of the time it didn't come up, even to me. It wasn't like it mattered if I told them, but actually couching it in something that didn't require hours and hours of explanation was a tricky thing. There was a surprising amount of technological and societal development on Orn, but they didn't really have the referents. Though when I thought about it, that wasn't quite true, and it made my presence in the first place slightly more understandable.

*"Where I'm from, my purpose was actually to create an Akasha,"* I said, which was effectively true, if phrased differently than my operating parameters. *"There were many versions of me that lived out various sorts of lives, then came back together and sort of put it all together. I'm probably one of those shards, since I don't have access to that Akasha I made."* Gestalt seeds, synthetic intelligences, designer habitats, none of those would really mean much to the people here.

The truth was I was *obviously* not the prime, since I was both in standard life mindset and didn't have any of the databases or the full gestalt. The prime version probably wouldn't have worked anyway, given the relationship between dungeon and akasha and the general system of magic so far as I understood it. On the other hand, the lack of database access meant that I only had a human mind's worth of memories — working as intended, for a shard, but slightly annoying in the position I found myself.

Generally it was not in my nature to dwell on things like that, since a gestalt that did nothing more than consider itself was kind of useless, but at this point I was pretty sure I had been stuck into a dungeon because it *sort of* matched what I was meant to do. Aside from being nominally designed for humanoid bodies, which this wasn't, but in the end I was probably better at coping with that than most would be.

"Wait, so you're some sort of spirit thing?" Shayma asked curiously.

*"I guess? Kind of? I don't know what I am here. Where I came from didn't have magic."*

"That explains your knowledge," Ansaë said thoughtfully. "Everything you learned had to be learned in an entirely different perspective."

"Where *did* you come from then?" Taelah said, frowning.

*"I'm not even really sure at this point. It could be nearby, or it could be another dimension or something. I'm guessing, though I have no proof, that the gods snagged me for this — but it's possible that the general world magic just pulled me out of a transmission and put me inside a core since that's what I matched up with anyway."*

"If it weren't for the timing, I would suspect the latter over the former," Ansaë tapped her claws against the table. "Even brief contact with the gods would likely have been unforgettable. Perhaps not even

survivable, from what I know. But getting Depletion immunity now..." She didn't have to voice the obvious implication.

*"To be fair, I'm not sure that was requisite. I had the Purification option early on, so I don't think I started with the Depletion immunity, but if there's meddling from higher up it's easy to just go in circles questioning what was planned and what was coincidence."* For all I knew, the exploded core from the first cave was a less fortunate version of myself.

"I did use a fate-based Skill to find you," Shayma said thoughtfully. "I wonder if it was something to do with fate Affinity instead of the gods?"

*"Honestly we could speculate all day,"* I said, not entirely comfortable with reflecting on it myself. *"I'll let you know if I find something else out though. For now, well, I'll probably need to talk to One-Eye-Green, Dreams-Ahead, and Cuts-Like-Cold about how they need to start. Taelah, if you could track down any crafters who have gone through the process of iterating tools and can speak about what they were thinking."*

Apparently, my attempt to change the subject was good enough, because both Shayma and Taelah nodded, the latter actually making notes on some paper. Actual paper, not parchment, though I wasn't certain where it came from. Maybe someone in the Village was starting to make the stuff.

*"Next, I have several crafting projects that I can't do on my own. Well, not easily anyway. I have a defensive artifact to make for Iniri, some gloves to make for Taelah, and then there's the entire floating fortress. We need to figure out something that will let both me and Shayma control it, as well as giving the thing weapons. I'm thinking Iniri's [Starlance] primarily, and then my big [Starlance] as the main gun. Power the whole fortress with a star too, plenty of mana there. Oh! I also need to make a weapon for Shayma, and given the whole shapeshifting-illusion thing I have no idea how to work it so it's something to think on in the background."*

"I assume that both Iniri's and Taelah's items will be using stellar mana." Ansaë didn't exactly ask it. "I have been working on the rune vocabulary for stellar Affinity, and I'll finish it up once I'm sure my idiots won't do anything rash if I sent them off to find lairs. A few days."

"What sort of item did you have in mind for me, Blue?" Iniri asked. "Not that I'm objecting, certainly."

*"After that assassin almost got you, I wanted to make sure you were safe, so I was thinking some sort of [Shield of Tarnil] armor initially."* Iniri blinked at that, looking both surprised and pleased. *"Of course, [Guardian Constellation] seems to be way better at what I was intending. So we'll probably stuff that into it, power it with the neutron star. Neutronium, the stuff inside those stars, is the densest and toughest stuff in the universe so I'm sure you or Ansaë can use that to make the defense even better. Plus, now that I have gravity Affinity, there might be a way to add flight into it."*

"That sounds involved, but also amazing." Iniri shook her head. "But I'm certainly willing to do my part." She shot a glance across the table at my human wife. "What about for Taelah?"

*"I'm wondering if I can somehow make a bracelet that acts like a glove, protection-wise, so you can effectively be wearing it all the time, but either way right now I think I'll be bundling a bunch of Fields and of course appropriate Sources into it."* It was harder to think of something that would be useful for Taelah, simply because so much of what she did was careful and methodical more than powerful. The

best thing I could add would be [Customization], though it remained to be seen whether that was possible.

"I'm not certain how much of that I can aid with, but I can certainly inscribe or create runes. Though I doubt I have anywhere near the skill of the Great Lady," Iniri said. Honestly, it bugged me a bit how she was so deferential to Ansaë, but I wasn't quite in the position to tell her to treat The Silver Woe as casually as Taelah and Shayma did.

"Oh, I certainly won't be doing all the runework," Ansaë said dismissively. "I'm more interested in delving into the esoterica, but I'll pass on everything I invent."

"That would be much appreciated," Iniri said.

"I think we're all going to be busy. I haven't heard anything about alchemical treatment in there but I'm sure there's room for it," Shayma observed.

*"Oh, absolutely. I just don't know enough about it to have a really good imagination for what it can do. When we actually start work on things, I want all of us to get down to details, since we'll all be contributing."* I figured it'd actually be rather fun to all go through a project together. I could do the materials and the weird dungeon stuff, Shayma the smithing, Iniri the runecrafting, and Ansaë would contribute some of her immense knowledge.

"That's a lot of projects," Iniri remarked. "I'll definitely have to think on some of them, especially Shayma's weapon. I'm sure there's some records of shapeshifter weaponry somewhere. Oh, and Blue, I'm thinking we might want to put a warehouse underneath the Palace for the trade goods of yours we're exporting. I expect we'll see some merchants arriving very soon."

*"Oh right, absolutely. Just get me the list and I'll fill it up."* Fortunately for me, Iniri had some people go through the display samples and do conversions between the units on my interface and the weights and measures they used. It was nice having people who did stuff; it saved me so much work.

Following Iniri's suggestion I carved out a sub-basement below the palace, filling it with shelves, tubs, and bins, and mentally checking things off from the list that Iniri produced from somewhere. I wasn't surprised she had it with her, since I'd given her forewarning of the council meeting.

*"Okay, done. What's next?"* Iniri blinked at my response and then looked around at her fellow Companions. They all sort of collectively rolled their eyes back at her, and she just laughed before moving on.

"Blue says he has some metal veins and crystal deposits in his various climates already. Ansaë, could you send one of your dragons – Huran, perhaps – to guide some of us from the Village to the nearest ones?" Taelah said, looking to the resident dragon.

"That will be an excellent first task for him. In fact, I'll have them all bring surveys of their own specialties to you over the next week or two."

"Hmm. We'll need a map of the Caldera, and a good one." Taelah considered. "I suspect you might be able to make one, Blue, but there are a few people who might be able to lean toward cartography and divination that I should try first."

*"If the divination doesn't work, you can always just bring them up to the summit site. I could add extra vantages at the cardinal points, too. That should give you enough height, for sure."*

"Yes, yes it would."

"I would like to verify you're fine with my pairs creating lairs around the Caldera, so long as it's not by the Village of course."

*"Yeah that's fine, especially since they're supposed to modify things to make them better anyway. Though I kinda thought they'd want to stay in your fancy tower."*

"Not young couples," Ansae snorted. "Perhaps if some older, more mature dragons who don't need the room to explore their Affinities appear they can stay."

"Fair enough," I said, amused by the idea of Ansae running a dragon retirement home. Though I could imagine the young dragons weren't sleeping too comfortably with The Silver Woe upstairs from them.

"One last thing," Shayma said, before I wrapped up the meeting. "I do have those dungeon-wives to interview, if you could set that up for later today, Iniri?"

"Certainly," she said.

I wasn't much looking forward to that, but it was something that had to be done and there was always the possibility there'd be someone worth considering. With nothing else on the docket, they all went back to their own things, because everyone was busy. Even Ansae wasn't lazing around now that she had pupils.

Shayma went straight down to the Scalemind. I wasn't exactly an expert in civilization and uplifting, but I had gone through the process which meant I actually knew what the cornerstone was. Which was to say, not housing or agriculture or the wheel, but the concept of making tools to make tools. It was not as easy a concept as it seemed, especially if the species had all of its immediate needs satisfied.

Fortunately, the Scalemind were pretty bright. It might have been because they were based on mind magic, which probably had certain benefits. If kinetic Affinity people were more robust physically, surely mind magic people were more robust mentally. One-Eye-Green, Dreams-Ahead, and Cuts-Like-Cold met with Shayma by One-Eye-Green's pseudo-shack, and while the other Scalemind didn't crowd in, I was certain they were listening through telepathy.

*"While I can't give you Status directly, I can give you the tools you need to achieve it. I believe I understand how it works now, and why just having you build houses wasn't going anywhere,"* I told them through Shayma. The next hour or so was spent on a philosophical discussion of how civilization worked. Specifically, why toolmaking was important and how it applied to concepts and ideologies and not just physical items, and how iterating on it could get them into unique paths. How passing those techniques on honed and polished them. There were a lot of moving parts to a civilization, but I was sure I could get them started.

"We understand, we think, but in what direction do we go?" Dreams-Ahead asked through One-Eye-Green. "We have food, we don't need shelter, we have the ability to fight. Where do we start when everything aside from the lack of Status seems fine?"

*“Hands. Scalemind don’t have hands in your adult forms, but there’s no reason you should let it stay that way. With your mind magic you could keep some sort of animal that has hands you can borrow. Or you could go the route of creating magical artifacts that operate through mental commands, like the circlet One-Eye-Green wears. Or both. Just start thinking about how to do that, and you’ll find you need to invent a thousand things to get even the simplest attempt done.”*

“Also, your mind magic is really rare,” Shayma added of her own accord. “What Blue has you do to fix people is something that would be really useful for other people, and maybe a technique that you should think about honing and writing down. Or otherwise recording it. Even though we have Skills, some people record their techniques so other people can get those Skills easier. Organizing things, just by itself, is incredibly helpful.”

*“It might be worth your while to think about what direction you want your people to take as a whole,”* I added. *“Most civilizations sort of blindly grope ahead but you have some knowledge of what a possible future might look like. Especially with so few of you. You’ll want to get your philosophical tools in order.”*

“We thank you for your wisdom, great Blue,” One-Eye-Green said for Cuts-Like-Cold, apparently meaning it. “We have much to think on and much to do.” They absolutely did. I had a few ideas if they were stuck, but the more they did on their own the better.

Shayma left them to their work and headed back up to the Palace, in order to interview the dungeon-wives. I wasn’t sure how much I wanted to watch, but Shayma’s approach was enough to make me stare a while. Even before the first one was ushered in, she shifted to her Scalemind Scythe-Sister form and stood, invisible, in the corner while creating an illusion of her normal self, sitting in the chair.

It made sense once I thought about it. With the telepathy of her Scalemind form she could root through people’s thoughts while she asked them questions and find out how they actually felt. Or if they were some kind of crazy.

The first applicant was dressed for the job, or rather, undressed for it. I wasn’t sure who had prepared her but if they thought that revealing clothing was going to help they didn’t really understand the point and purpose of a Companion. True, Shayma had turned my nonexistent head early on but I had better control of myself now and I was well aware of how damn lucky I was Shayma had turned out to be a good person.

I almost felt sorry for the woman because in very short order it was clear that she really only wanted the luxuries. She was willing to be loyal, but it was obvious it was a purchased loyalty and came with no willingness to contribute anything meaningful. I could tell that without telepathy, so I could only imagine what Shayma was finding beneath the surface. Unless there wasn’t anything beneath the surface; sadly, not everyone had more to them than it appeared.

Then I felt sorry for Shayma because the woman did not take rejection well. Things did not quite escalate to the point where Shayma had to call the Queensguard outside the door to drag her away, but it was a close thing. Once she was out the door, Shayma released her illusions and her shapeshift and rubbed at her temples.

*“I’m sorry you had to deal with that.”*

“Oh, it’s no trouble.” Shayma shook her head. “Really, it’s a shame. There’s no way they’re ever going to have normal lives, but it’s not like we can fix that. Even if you accepted one of them, you aren’t going to pamper her with candies and cloud beds between sessions.”

*“I can’t even make candies and cloud beds. Otherwise you’d already have ‘em.”*

“Here I thought you were holding out on me.” Shayma grinned. “There are two more here in Meil that are waiting, hopefully they won’t be as bad.”

*“Hopefully!”* The first one seemed somewhat more sane, but after Shayma sent her away she shook her head.

“All she was thinking about was her family status,” Shayma said. “Not that I blame her, but she certainly doesn’t care about you.” Of course, none of my current Companions had fallen in love at first sight either, but they’d been serious about it and circumstances were different now. My standards *should* be different, and I was to let Shayma figure out which ones I should actually pay attention to.

The third one, though, made Shayma banish her illusions and shapeshift to grab the bewildered woman’s arm after asking only a few questions. She hauled the poor thing through her [Wake of the Phantasmal] to the teleport point and jumped down to the Scalemind enclave. I glanced over what the overlay had to say about Shayma’s captive, and thought that *Glaci Naran, Level 26 [Inspiring Bard]* didn’t seem very fearsome.

*“What’s the problem?”*

“It’s like there’s a complete fracture in her mind, it’s really disturbing,” Shayma said, and considering that Glaci was completely unbothered by being surrounded by giant scythe-armed telepaths, I had to admit it did seem that there was something wrong with her. She was just looking around, a little bit confused, and that was it.

Dreams-Ahead came up to them, and Glaci crumpled with no forewarning whatsoever. None to me, at least, though Shayma caught her and eased her onto a divan that Shayma conjured up with her Domain. The Scalemind made a noise like a sigh and looked over at Shayma, and it really was annoying that I couldn’t peek in on telepathic communication.

“She damaged her own mind,” Shayma relayed to me. “Dreams-Ahead isn’t completely certain he can fix it. He might have to even wipe some memories for that to work.”

*“Ah.”* I turned my attention to Iniri. *“You should probably send someone for whatever family the applicant Glaci Naran has, because it seems like she’s pretty messed up. She might need transport home or something.”*

“I will send someone,” Iniri said immediately, turning from her desk to scribble a message for one of her pages to take. Since that was the extent of what I could do there I watched nothing much happen down with Shayma. All the work was invisible to me, though since Shayma had assumed her Scythe-Sister form again I assumed she was watching. Which made me wonder, if she got some sort of mind magic Skill, would I be able to get mind magic through transcription?

To be honest, that was something Shayma was probably thinking of too. Whether any of these people had any Skills that would be worth transcribing, in addition to being not creating any friction within my

existing circle of Companions. However, Glaci was definitely not an option if what had happened to her was enough to cause some sort of mental breakdown.

While Dreams-Ahead worked, Iniri's guards escorted an older man and woman, and three younger men closer to Glaci's age into Shayma's tower. The overlay confirmed they bore the surname Naran, Glaci's family, and the fact that they were all there for this made me think they knew something was wrong. Times like these it was kind of irritating I couldn't talk on my own, but Iniri was far too busy and I wasn't about to interrupt Shayma in the middle of a delicate task to tell them exactly what was going on. Instead I just quietly informed Shayma they were waiting and let her work.

It took a few hours, during which time Cuts-Like-Cold came by to help for a short time, which probably didn't imply very good things about Glaci's mental health. Or at least what was needed to address it. Eventually though, her eyes fluttered open. While her expression was still confused, it was a far different look of confusion than before, something more vulnerable and genuine than the bright and blank face she'd shown before. Shayma was pretty obviously blocking out Dreams-Ahead's bulk, because Glaci didn't even seem to notice him, fixing her eyes on Shayma instead.

"What...?" She said, her words coming out slightly blurry. "Where...?" She blinked slowly. "You look familiar," she told Shayma.

"I'm sure I do," Shayma told her, helping her up off the illusionary divan. "I've been trying to help you. You've been ill, but I think you're better now. I'm just going to bring you to your family, alright?"

"That sounds good," Glaci said, leaning on Shayma's arm as they walked the short distance to the teleport point and popped into existence at the bottom of the tower. Their sudden appearance made the rest of the Naran family stand up, looking anxiously at Glaci where she gripped Shayma's arm.

"Papa?" Glaci said, and that seemed to be the trigger for everyone to come and crowd around her. It took a little bit, but eventually her mother and brothers steered her back toward the outside while Horace Naran stayed back to talk with Shayma.

"We thought..." He swallowed. "We thought that since a dungeon had done this to her, made her this other person, another dungeon would fix it? I just, I owe you and Blue for this. Glaci actually seems more like her old self."

*"I will accept that debt."* It didn't feel right to just brush that off, though I wasn't sure what the Naran family could actually supply. I'd have to put it to Iniri later. *"Shayma, if she has a relapse or something can we just bring her back to Dreams-Ahead?"*

"Blue accepts your debt," Shayma told Horace. "As part of that agreement, if Glaci needs further help, bring her here. When Blue is ready to call in your debt, I will find you."

"Thank you," Horace said, and meant it.