

Artifice

Sloane had picked up her journal and scribe as Reanny scrutinized the gems in front of her.

The Alterer nodded, “Sure, figure out the intent of a gem. You say like that’s easy.” She picked up the onyx and focused on it.

Sloane glanced at her wrist, taking note of the mana use.

After a moment, Reanny glanced up from the gemstone, “Huh, that was actually pretty easy. I get tha feeling of being able ta divine out me surroundings.” Sloane took note that when Reanny was speaking off the cuff, she slipped back into an accent.

“Divine out your surroundings... hmm... so, it senses what’s around? That’s probably how my watch senses mana use.” Sloane nodded as she talked through it and wrote it down.

Grabbing the next gem—a topaz—Reanny focused once again, “Oh, this one is a wee strange. I—I am not sure how ta explain it. It wants to... show me what it sees—knows?”

Sloane’s brow raised as she thought, tapping her scribe, she realized what it was. “Oh! It wants to project information. Like my screen. It’s a GPU!”

Reanny’s head tilted, “Gee pee you?”

Sloane chuckled, “Sorry, something from my world. It likely takes mana and allows you to see it in some way.”

“Like an illusion?”

“Yeah, that’s probably the magical way of putting it. Good thought.”

When they got to the sapphire, Reanny got confused. “I don’t understand this one, I feel... I feel like it wants to talk to the... mind—I’m not sure—of the mana around us? I don’t know Sloane. I don’t know how to explain what I’m feeling.” She struggled to explain her thoughts.

“Okay, let me think. You’re saying it wants to interact with mana?” Sloane clarified.

“No, not like diamond did. This wants to *talk* to mana. Not allow it to be used.” Reanny elucidated.

“What? Wait... does that mean mana has a governing intelligence? No, that can’t be it. Maybe, mana has instructions or some sort of information that dictates its use? A mana... system?” She worked through the possibilities. Each sounded more and more fantastical as she said them aloud.

Reanny rolled the sapphire around in her hand as she focused on it. “It feels like it’s searching for some sort of intent.”

“That... actually makes sense. Mana has an *intent* and maybe that’s how it works with the cores and allows magic? So, the sapphire is searching for the intent so that it can tell the mana what the item wants to do. Huh, mana is starting to sound more and more like a backend of an operating system.”

With that, they went through each gemstone. Sloane took notes of everything, and she realized that each had a specific function, which made sense to her. One gem couldn’t do everything, just like one chip in a device couldn’t. It needed others to work together and create a coherent whole to provide the functionality desired.

She suspected the gems worked with the magic types in some way. Perhaps, the types—No, there had to be a better way to classify the magic—dictated what the gems provided. Each represented each... school? No, that name didn’t work either.

She looked at Reanny, “I think the gems work with the magic, and there are different types of magic. However, that doesn’t really explain what it’s doing too well. There’s clearly a connection in function, something that is overarching. What do you think?”

Reanny considered, “Well, yer saying that magic has different ways of being used? You mentioned it also has different forms. Ta me, it reminds me of tha gods. Each has their own form, and each is responsible for their own Domain.”

Sloane’s eyes widened, “Yes! That makes sense. Your core is... *Attuned*... to a mana color, maybe more, and you as a person can utilize magic within specific Domains. That may be based on your core as well. I haven’t gotten that far.

“So, let’s figure out the gems and their Domains based on what they do, that probably matches up decently with the magic one could cast.”

“Aye, like the sapphire, it’s about knowledge and using that knowledge. I want ta say Crafting, but that’s a wee bit small.” Reanny considered as she posited a suggestion.

Snapping her finger, Sloane considered, thinking through her fantasy knowledge—chuckling at the connection. Her eyes widened, knowing exactly what to call it. “I got it. We’ll call the Domain, Artifice.”

Reanny smiled, “You obviously have a connection with that meaning, I can’t argue wit ya there. Artifice it is, lass.”

They continued discussing the gems’ domain connections as Sloane took notes. Occasionally, they went back and forth on how to name the Domain that would associate with the function.

There were likely variations of the functions found in gems other than the ones they have checked, however, she was confident they had actually found the main functions that would be in use. Being that the gems Reanny selected were the most common, it was likely the case.

When they finished up with the last stone, Sloane looked down at the table she made in her journal.

<i>Gem</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Domain</i>
<i>Diamond</i>	<i>Connects to and Amplifies Mana Use</i>	<i>Evocation</i>
<i>Black Diamond</i>	<i>Allows for Spell Storage / Use</i>	<i>Conjuration</i>

<i>Amethyst</i>	<i>Allows Spell Targeting / Shaping</i>	<i>Alteration</i>
<i>Ruby</i>	<i>Allows Mana Manipulation</i>	<i>Alteration</i>
<i>Sapphire</i>	<i>Connects to and Exchanges Mana Intent</i>	<i>Artifice</i>
<i>Opal</i>	<i>Connects to User</i>	<i>Mind</i>
<i>Emerald</i>	<i>Connects to User's Core. Mana biology?</i>	<i>Abjuration</i>
<i>Topaz</i>	<i>Projects Mana Information</i>	<i>Illusion</i>
<i>Onyx</i>	<i>Allows Sensing (Manasense?)</i>	<i>Divination</i>

They had pinned down what they thought were eight Domains: Evocation, Conjunction, Alteration, Artifice, Mind, Abjuration, Illusion, and Divination. She believed that each person's core could only allow them to cast spells that were within any particular Domain. Which is likely why she could not cast spells like Maud. Theirs had to be different, and Sloane figured Maud's was likely Evocation or maybe even Abjuration since her spell heals and connects to the biology of her target. She wasn't sure what hers was, but she at least had an idea of where to start.

"Reanny, I think I know what we need to do," Sloane said as she finished reviewing the notes.

"What's that lass? This has ta do with tha ring you want to make?"

"Yes, and with your magic, this is going to be a ton easier. So, I think we need to use multiple gems. I'm not sure what makes a core different when channeling magic, but I suspect it works similarly, but may just be less efficient.

“So, I want to try and have small gems that provide the function we need to set into the ring. I think we should set them straight into the band on the underside, and I think we should use a silver band. So the gems will be hidden up against the wearer, but they will be able to connect easier to the user—at least I suspect that may help. For what I want to do with this first ring, I think we will need a sapphire, opal, and ruby set on the inside. The opal should be a bit bigger I believe, with the sapphire and ruby on either side. Then, we need to have a diamond on the top. It should be the largest gem, it will be doing the most work I think.

“I don’t know the runic language of mana yet, I’m sure I can sus out some of it after studying my watch more later. For now, I *think* the opal will allow the ring to read my core’s Mana Intent as I try and cast magic.”

Sloane looked at Reanny, who was already drawing out a design. “What do you think? Can we do it?”

Reanny nodded, “Aye, I don’t flush set often, especially not on the inside of a ring, but I can do it. Let’s get to it!”

Sloane watched Reanny as she went through her shop’s stock to grab a new solid silver band and small gems of the types and cut that they would need. “I’ll make you a deal. Lass, if this ring works like you think it will—and for helping me with me own magic—you can keep the ring you make.”

Smiling, Sloane thanked the woman, “I appreciate that Reanny.”

The Blue Alterer started working on the ring, Sloane watching as her mana flared at various times. She got closer and observed intently as Reanny started to use a hand drill to start a hole for the flush sets. After getting the hole started, the woman paused, seemingly coming up with a plan. She then put the drill down and grabbed the ring, Sloane’s eyes widened as Reanny used her magic to literally manipulate the silver into opening up just enough for the gems.

“That’s amazingly useful. I dinnae think it would work, but it did.” Looking to Sloane, Reanny added, “You’ve just made us a lot of coin Sloane. I’ll talk to Murinn, but we’re definitely going to owe you for this.”

Reanny kept working at the ring, and finally, with the setting of the larger circle cut diamond set flush into the ring, it was done. The ring was simple yet beautiful, and Sloane was starting to feel antsy about whether it would work.

After examining the ring and her work, Reanny looked at Sloane, seeing the anxiety she was exhibiting. “Heh, you ready to give it a shot?”

“Very much so! May I?” She asked while reaching for the ring.

Reanny handed it to her with a smile. “Of course lass, good luck!”

Taking a deep breath and closing her eyes, Sloane slid the ring onto her middle finger.

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The first thing she noticed was a huge rush of force flowing from her core to the ring, then outwards around her. It settled back into her, and it was like she didn’t even need to channel through the ring to work her magic. She felt at the mana in her core like she’d done for weeks and instantly could tell a difference. It was like her ability to channel mana had increased dramatically. She knew exactly what she had been doing wrong. It was like her connection to mana made everything clearer.

She was correct before, she had been trying to think like what she at first thought was an Evoker—but it wasn’t it was *Abjuration*. She laughed, she hadn’t even been trying to use magic like an Evoker—she’d been trying to cast like someone who wanted to protect or shield people.

Sloane wasn’t an Abjurer, however, Sloane was now certain Maud was one. She was also sure that Domains weren’t associated with the core *per se*, but with the person. Their very being. She was Artifice. She was Alteration. She felt further and, *ah, there it was. She did have evocation, but it was small*. She didn’t have much Affinity—yes, that felt right—with the Domain yet. She would need to learn how to increase that. It was too useful otherwise. That said, she knew exactly how to manipulate the mana to do what she wanted in an object.

It only took a few moments, but it had seemed so much longer. Opening her eyes, she looked at Reanny who was carefully observing her. Sloane smiled and then addressed how she felt, “This works. It works extremely well. I figured out what was wrong before, I was trying to use my mana incorrectly, and this ring is amplifying how much mana I can access. I also know my Domains.”

Reanny raised an eyebrow, “Domains?” She asked with an emphasis on the plural.

“Yes, I was wrong when I posited that the Domains were connected to the core and that we could only do one. They’re connected to something else, something about our inner self. I’m an Artificer, Alterer, and to a lesser extent, Evoker,” She explained.

She added, “I think I’d like to try to make another ring if that’s okay?”

“Of course! You watched me, here is everything you’ll need, do you need anything else?”

Sloane considered, “May I have an amethyst as well? I think it may be beneficial.”

“Aye, give it a shot.” Reanny grabbed an amethyst and placed it next to the gems for the inside of the ring. Stepping aside, she set up to get a good angle to observe Sloane’s work.

Sloane grabbed the ring and tried pushing mana into it. Finding she could, she instantly felt like she knew more about the ring. She knew its flaws, how strong it was, and where it would be best to place the gems. She even thought she had an idea of how to make it magically stronger, but figured that would need runes that she didn’t know yet.

She probed the ring with mana until she knew exactly where to put the opal. Sloane held it to the inside of the ring and channeled her mana into it. She felt the ring widen ever so slightly as the silver was distributed to create a perfect hole that she set the opal into. Sloane then carefully manipulated the metal just over the edge of the gem to hold it snugly in place.

Sloane repeated the process four more times, the final orientation was to have the amethyst and ruby on either side of the diamond but inside whereas the latter was on the upper center. She placed the opal and the sapphire on the bottom so that they would lay against the inside of her finger.

It took her thirty minutes of focus and manipulation, but with a nod, she felt satisfied. Not having to use tools to do the process made it so much easier, that said, she could certainly feel how drained she was getting. She didn't expect using mana to make her that tired.

Sloane handed the ring to Reanny, who shifted it around in her fingers while examining it. Her eyebrow raised and she smirked, "This is amazing. If I hadn't watched ye use magic ta do it, I woulda thought ye were a master jeweler. Shall we trade? I'm excited to experience it myself."

"Thank you, Reanny, and of course, this one is yours."

Sliding the other ring off of her finger and handing it to Reanny, Sloane instantly felt the rush from before fade away. At the same time, her tiredness seemed to increase. *These are absolutely augmenting my magic, and the mana I'm capable of working with seems to affect how I feel.*

She slipped the new ring onto her finger and the rush came back, in fact, it was a bit better than the other. *Almost as if my core knows I made this ring.*

At the same time, Reanny also put the ring on her finger. She impressed Sloane by using a bit of her magic to allow it to fit better.

Sloane watched her reaction, "Well?"

Reanny smiled, "Lass? So. Much. Coin."

Sloane couldn't help but laugh at the merchant woman's infectious optimism.