

Casual Experimentation

Sloane was standing at a large work table in a small room with Reanny in her shop. They had come here after leaving the tavern but had realized that it may have been too late in the evening at that point. So, she had gone back to the inn and after grabbing a quick bite to eat, went to bed. Sloane had woken up extra early because she had wanted to meet Reanny and get as much time as possible to work on things.

She had seen Sers Gisele and Ismeld on the way and let them know where she would be. While Sloane and the dwarven woman were inside discussing what to make first, Murinn was outside trying to sell the two siblings' wares.

“So, whatcha wanna make first?” Reanny inquired.

Sloane considered, “I’m thinking a ring. One that enhances the ability to use or connect to the mana around us. I think that will be the easiest for a first item. I have ideas for other things, but those will require me to shape some metal, find some cores of other mana types, et cetera.”

Sloane looked down at the supplies, she grabbed one of the iron rings and looked it over. She placed it back on the table and picked up another, noticing the groove in the center of the band, she nodded. “I think this one will work for a test.”

Grabbing the band, Reanny examined the choice. Looking up at Sloane, she asked, “Sounds good lass, would you like me to work on it and show you how I do it for this one? Then you can do the second?”

“That sounds good. Let’s do this.”

Sloane grabbed a stool and set it up so she could watch and take notes as Reanny got everything she needed. Once the dwarf was fully prepared, she started working on the band. First, she grabbed a long premade wire of silver and placed it in the groove. Once aligned, she started slowly hammering it into place all the way around.

As she worked, Sloane noticed something and looked down at her Watch Series M—smirking to herself as yet another name didn't vibe—she saw a small swirling of blue pointed toward Reanny.

Sloane gasped, looking up and watching Reanny, who was oblivious to her attention as she finished up with the inlay.

“We'll add a prong setting to this, it will allow us to add the gem you want,” Reanny explained as she held the setting to the band and reached over to grab her tools to solder it.

Sloane noticed the setting and ring started heating up before Reanny turned her head back. “Reanny, wait. Look at the setting, what are you doing?”

The woman looked, her eyes went wide, “Oh! I don't know, what—” with a gasp, the setting stopped melding with the ring and Reanny stared at it.

The surprised jeweler turned toward her, “What was that?”

Excited, Sloane looked back to her watch, which had settled back to normal, “You used mana! Blue mana!”

Reanny sputtered, “B-but I d-don't know magic!”

“Grab the ring and the setting, focus. You want to focus your thoughts on attaching the setting to the ring. Feel for the rush from inside you, push it into the ring.” Sloane recited the process Maud had explained for when she healed someone.

Hesitantly, Reanny picked up the ring—which still had the setting barely attached—and looked intently at it. Sloane looked down at the *Manasense*—that was good—function of the watch, and observed the blue mana mist return. It converged on the side toward the woman, or blue crafter, as Sloane figured she could be called.

The setting slowly melded with the ring, creating a solid connection and point where a gem could be placed. Once finished, Reanny looked over to Sloane, “I did it! This is amazing, Sloane! Thank you.”

Sloane looked at the crafter, pleased. “Of course! It's so fascinating! You're using your mana for something much different than I had considered...”

Reanny realized Sloane had drifted into her thoughts and gave her time. Sloane mentally reached inside, feeling her core out. Trying to figure out why she hadn't been able to use her magic. The core was there, churning with mana, she *knew* it, but why couldn't she use it. What did Reanny do differently? *Wait, she used her mana to combine metals, she altered the metal.*

It suddenly clicked, and she *felt* it settle in. "Holy shit, there are different types of magic. Maud manipulates energy. You alter materials. Mana has different colors, which means it probably has different functions within each type. Shit, Reanny, do you know what this means?"

Reanny looked positively confused, "Uhm. I dunna think that I do."

She was too excited about this revelation, so Sloane simply continued unabashed, "I need my journal. Grab every different type of gem that you have. We need to experiment. This is just what I needed!"

"Lass, your journal is in your hand." The Blue *Alterer* pointed out helpfully.

"Right. Yes. Of course—heh, heh—Okay, so. Yeah. One sec'." Sloane flipped to an empty page, "Alright, ready! You have the gems?"

"Sloane, breathe, slow down. Gimme a moment." Reanny chuckled as she got up and grabbed the requested stones. Each of the gems was about the same size and had a circular cut. She placed them all next to each other, "Alright, now what do ye want me ta do?"

"One moment, let me write these out, you have a—" Sloane looked over the gems, "um, I think I see... a diamond, that's an emerald, a ruby, sapphire, uhh... is that... Okay, can you just tell me what each is, please?" Chuckling to herself in embarrassment.

Reanny sighed slightly, "Look, I'll point to each as I name them." She started going down the line, a finger tapping the table in front of them, "Diamond. Then we have a black diamond, amethyst, sapphire, opal, emerald, ruby, topaz, and lastly, onyx."

Sloane wrote each name down, looking to Reanny, she explained her idea, "Okay, now. We need to figure out what the gems do. First, give me a moment to take apart my watch so we can use it as a reference."

Reanny watched with fascination as Sloane slowly and carefully disassembled her watch. When the mana device was fully in pieces, she explained the functionality as she knew it. "So, I

believe this crystal here, is providing power, or at least additional power. I don't *feel* like the watch is drawing power from me, but I can't be certain. It seems far beyond anything we could make at this point."

Pointing to the gems, Reanny asked, "So, these gems here provide the function you described? Allowing it to sense mana that is used?"

With a nod, Sloane replied, "Yes, however, I'm unsure of what each gem does. This bigger gem here is where the processor—the brain of the device—goes, at least where I'm from."

Reanny got a bit closer, looking down at the gems. Helpfully, she identified them for Sloane. "The bigger one is an onyx. There are four diamonds." Pointing to each, she continued, "you also have two sapphires and two topazes. Hmm, there's one of each of the gems we had set aside, so it looks like we're on the right track as far as selection goes—actually..."

She grabbed a loupe and investigated a pink gem off to the right on its own. "You have a small pink sapphire here—that wasn't on our list. Unfortunately, I don't have one available. While not especially rare—you could definitely find one in Thirdghyll—we're not fully established here yet."

Sloane nodded, "Now we just need to experiment with the ring you set up. Should we do the obvious? Put an onyx into it?"

The Alterer considered, "Either an onyx or a sapphire. If you look at the silver pathways, there are five connected to the onyx and five also connected to the sapphire on the left. The diamonds are placed in what seem like prominent places. Each is connected to at least two gems.

"Yeah, let's see what an onyx does. We can always remove it and try a sapphire. Or actually, let's just do one of each and see what happens," she ended with a chuckle.

"Alright, let's do this. I'll put my watch back together while you start on the first one. What do you need me to do after that?" Sloane asked.

"For the first few, stand across from me and look pretty, lass. Watch what I do, and then you can do a couple when you're comfortable."

Agreeing, Sloane set up and started putting the watch back together. She had gotten much quicker at the process, but even with her practiced movements, Reanny was nearly

finished setting the onyx. As Sloane fastened the watch back to her wrist, lifting her head just as Reanny completed examining the results of her work.

“I think it’s ready, here lass.”

Sloane grabbed the ring, took a deep breath and held it, then slid it on. After a moment, she released her breath and blinked. There wasn’t any big noticeable change. She couldn’t really feel anything at all. Reanny seemed to catch this, “Nothing?”

Sloane shook her head, “Nope. I don’t feel anything. Maybe you try?” She took off the ring and handed it to Reanny who put it on.

“Nay, I dunnae feel anything either.” With a shrug, she took the ring off. “Next?”

“Yeah, let’s try it. Sapphire?”

“Aye, give me a moment.” Reanny went to work removing the onyx which was made much easier by her using her magic to manipulate the metal setting. In no time at all, she had the sapphire in place and ready. “My turn this time?”

“Go for it.”

Sloane smiled as Reanny took three exaggerated breaths and held the last one with slightly puffed cheeks. She quickly slid the ring on and settled her shoulders. After a few blinks, she exhaled and sucked in more air.

“Nay, nothing here. Your turn?” Reanny said with slight disappointment in her voice.

“No, that’s alright! We just have to keep testing. We know *something* will work. My watch works, clearly. We’ve got all day! Don’t get down. This is part of the process.” Sloane reassured her, trying to keep Reanny thinking positive.

“Alright, you’re right. Watch close this time, you can do the next one, I’ll do it the normal way.” She said as she grabbed her tools.

Sloane watched as Reanny used her tools to carefully pry the prongs back and extract the gem. The Alterer then prepared the setting to accept another gem of the same size.

Reanny explained the process as she worked, “So, what we’re going to do is carefully insert the gem into the setting and check the fit. You want to make sure the gem is sitting nice and straight. It needs to fit well within the prongs. No rocking. Get just the right depth so that we can carefully close the prongs over the top.”

When Reanny was done, she handed Sloane the ring back with a ruby set inside it. Keeping her expectations low, Sloane slid the ring onto her finger. As soon as she got it on,

Sloane felt something, but she wasn’t quite sure what it was. It was almost as if the room got a tiny bit stuffier. She tried feeling out her core, it seemed she could *feel* the mana a bit more now. It wasn’t much, but it gave her hope they were on the right track.

Sloane took the ring off and handed it back to Reanny, “Give it a shot, I think I felt something. It was a bit strange, almost like it got extra humid in here all of a sudden.”

Reanny placed the ring on and furrowed her brow in concentration. “Aye, I think I feel it too. Oh, actually...” She turned and grabbed some scrap metal she had on a shelf.

The Alterer held the bits of metal in her hand and stared at them. Slowly, the metal started to slowly move to the center of her hand and clump together. With a bead of sweat on her temple, Sloane watched as Reanny’s hand seemed to shake with effort. The clump of metal vibrated and then with eyes wide, Sloane observed as it all combined into a single solid ball.

With an exhale, Reanny placed the ball down on the workbench and leaned over it. “Whew, lass. That took a bit outta me, but I was able to control my magic, or mana rather, a bit better.” With a few deep breaths, the woman held out the orb. “What do ye think?”

Grabbing the ball, Sloane rolled it around in her hand. She took note of the imperfections and rough nature of it, but the dwarf had indeed managed to fuse the bits of metal together.

“This is impressive, Reanny.” She said, and she meant it, it was a definite improvement over just the little bit of time they had been working.

“You know, I think I have an idea before we start on the next one. Can you hold this?” Sloane asked as she handed back the ball.

Reanny nodded, “Sure, lass. What do you want me to do?”

“Can you push your mana into it? Tell me what you feel?”

With a shrug, the Alterer tried. She took on what Sloane realized was her go-to look of concentration, a furrowed brow, and slightly biting her bottom lip.

Sloane observed the mana use through her watch and knew when the woman was done before she said anything. Reanny looked up to her and reported her findings. “It feels like I can figure out how to use the metal in the best way possible, to get the most out of it.”

“Perfect! That’s exactly what I was hoping for. Now,” Sloane started sliding the gems toward Reanny. “I want you to pick each gem type up and concentrate your mana on it. Try to feel what it can be *used* for. Its *purpose* with mana.”