

James continued to stare at the Moonlight Pistol in his hand. It was a single barrel flintlock pistol, yet it somehow had a capacity for six bullets. He hadn't paid too much attention in the heat of the moment, but now that he had time to think back on the battle, he wanted to know more about his new favourite weapon. As time passed, it became obvious to James that he didn't have the required skill to inspect the weapon on a meaningful level. He would instead have to rely on the information that had already been provided to him by Dervius in the Pantheon.

Just as he was about to put the pistol away, the cool-down timer refreshed. James smiled slightly as he saw tiny glowing lights appear along the grip of the gun. Each light followed along an engraving and the Dread Pirate eventually realised that it was a diagram of a constellation. He felt like he already knew, but when he counted each star in the belt, they added up to six. At the centre of the constellation was another engraving, which James automatically assumed was going to be of a crescent moon. Surprisingly, the engraving showed a picture of the sun.

"Shots of Starlight?"

He asked aloud, wondering if the answer might come to him if he voiced his thoughts. It was a Moonlight Pistol, yet it showed a constellation with a sun at its centre. Did that mean that the stars were actually moons?

"Okay, that's going to get us nowhere. Otto, what did you find for us?"

The little yellow octopus coiled its tentacle around a shining piece of fabric that was worn by the Goblin Leader.

James reached a hand out and took the offered piece of fabric and stared at it, waiting for something to happen.

You don't have the required skill to identify this object.

"Don't suppose you can identify this?"

The Dread Pirate asked Otto jokingly.

"Tribal Armband. Offers +2 to Command if the user has the prerequisite points of Intelligence."

A feminine voice answered immediately.

James just stared at Otto in confusion.

"Otto, you're a girl?"

The tiny yellow octopus teleported itself, only to reappear a few paces away, hovering in the air.

Suddenly a woman appeared in that space and Otto was revealed to be perched on her exposed shoulder. A little tentacle raised as though he was victorious in finding the source of the voice.

James gripped the pistol as he watched the new arrival warily. He hadn't been aware of her presence at all, yet she had been standing right beside him.

"I'm Shari."

She spoke before bowing slightly in front of James.

"Ah! You're the woman that completed the quest?"

James finally realised, removing his hand from the pistol as he took a closer look at her.

Much to his surprise, he didn't even need to activate his skill this time.

Name:	Shari
Level:	3
Rank:	Standard
Class:	Rogue
Deity:	<i>In Progress...</i>
Faction:	Dread Pirate
Domain:	Rayth
Assessment:	Determined, Curious, Loyal
Aspirations:	Unlock a Specialist Class
Active Quest:	<i>In Progress...</i>
Crew Role:	N/A

"This is... just incredible. You even have aspirations?"

The Rogue didn't even hesitate before declaring her answer proudly. Bringing her hand to touch her cheek under her right eye, she held it there as though she were giving a strange salute.

"I want to be stronger, like you. I will follow your lead until a time that I'm strong enough to be helpful to you."

James looked at the Tribal Armband on the ground for a moment before looking back at Shari.

"You're able to identify objects? You have some of the intelligence attribute?"

Shari would like to share her stats with you.

James accepted the pop-up and was rewarded with a list of stats that gave him a bit of a surprise.

Stats	Base	Modifier	Actual Value
Strength	1	0	1
Intelligence	2	0	2
Charisma	1	0	1
Dexterity	5	2	7
Wisdom	0	0	0
Luck	1	0	1

"These are..."

James started awkwardly, thinking that Shari was incredibly weak compared to his own stats. Glancing up, he saw an excited expression on her face and he remembered that she had just completed her first ever quest. She was also an NPC and a new follower.

"Great stats! Well done!"

The Dread Pirate finished with a warm smile.

Shari practically beamed at the praise before she placed her arms behind her back and looked towards the forest expectantly.

James followed her eyes before catching on.

"Do I give you another quest?"

James ventured as he looked back at the stats in front of him.

He was still trying to figure out the game for himself so delegating tasks to a follower was new to him.

"Yes. I need to become stronger, so please give me a task to complete."

Shari answered resolutely.

Nodding his head, James had a thought.

"Is that how you'll unlock a Specialist Class? It says here that you're a Rogue?"

Shari tilted her head slightly as she thought about the question. After a few moments, she answered.

"If I complete quests, it will give me enough experience to evolve from my current class into something more specific. I need to find a Deity first, and a Domain to reside in."

James looked around himself at the dead Goblins. He paused quietly for a moment before looking back to the Rogue.

"I'll give you your quest soon, but first I need you to loot all of the Goblins here and separate all of the valuable items."

Without any delays or complaint, Shari started the task while James observed her movements. She was fast, but nowhere near as agile as he was. There was no hesitation in her movements as she looted each of the corpses.

In less than two minutes, the Rogue was standing in front of James with a pile of weapons and trinkets at her feet.

Shari listed each of the main items in the pile as she looked at James for further instructions.

"You have one decent spear that could probably sell for a bit of coin. Some scraps of Goblin armour, which is useless to everyone else. The Tribal Armband that only a Goblin leader can use and a Serrated Knife which causes paralysis."

When her list finished, she took a step back so he could inspect the items himself.

The Dread Pirate picked up the knife that had stabbed him earlier.

"You're a Rogue, and you use a dagger. Is the Serrated Knife useful to you?"

James' figured that investing in Shari's strength was the smartest path.

To his surprise, the Rogue shook her head with a smile.

"I have Sylvian's Knife. It represents the control I took of my own destiny."

As she unsheathed the blade at her waist, James remembered the random slaver knife that he had tossed to her earlier. The weapon in front of him was nothing like the knife he had given her. It looked like it was similar to his Moonlight Pistol with an ivory grip and black blade. Even the etchings on it were similar.

Shari looked at the blade warmly before sheathing it. She gave James a sideways glance before finally admitting something that was confusing her.

"The moment I held it, a voice called out to me. It was a gentle voice... and I was suddenly a Rogue!"

Clicking his fingers, James finally realised what she was talking about. It also explained the modifier in her stats.

"You heard Dervius, the God of Dexterity! He upgraded your blade?"

Shari's eyes widened as realisation covered her face.

James saw his notifications updating. The first was Shari's stats, which now indicated that she was a Worshipper of Dervius. The next two popped up in conjunction straight afterwards.

Dervius has gained a new Follower.

The God of Dexterity is pleased with your actions.

Shari touched the hilt of her blade and seemed to understand that both herself and the Dread Pirate were connected by a greater power.

A moment of silence passed between the two of them before Shari suddenly spoke.

"I have a God now! All I need to become stronger is experience, and he'll help me advance to a new class. Can you give me a Quest?"

The Rogue looked at the Dread Pirate with a determined expression on her face.

James grinned in response, already knowing the best course of action.

"Kill Goblins. As many as you can... and don't die. I need you alive."

You have created a Quest!

Shari laughed with genuine happiness before disappearing from view.

Shari has accepted your Quest.

A few moments later, Otto teleported and appeared on James' shoulder once again.

"I knew I was your favourite."

The Dread Pirate smiled before opening up the list of notifications he had been ignoring up until that point.

74 Hidden Notifications. Would you like to view them?

"Okay then, lets see."

After dismissing the third combat notification in a row, the system prompted James with a suggestion.

"Create a Battle Overview?"

He read aloud before agreeing to it mentally. Before his eyes, almost three quarters of the notifications dissolved away. A new notification popped up with a comprehensive breakdown of his two battles. It was a collection of highlights.

"Can we do that for the other notifications? Create a Summary!"

James said aloud wondering if it would work. As if by magic, another dozen notifications disappeared before reforming into a handful of highlight recaps.

Relief washed over the Dread Pirate as he finally saw a solution to his notification issues. If they continually spammed him with information throughout the fights, then he'd undoubtedly end up getting distracted and dying. With these new report functions, he'd be able to get a condensed report at the end of each fight, or at the end of each day depending on what he preferred.

"Right, so what do we want to keep as pop-ups?"

James asked as he scanned over the options. He decided that he'd allow notifications for new discoveries and any warnings the system wanted him to see. He removed the damage dealt for basic attacks, but allowed a basic report for when he used skills. Another option he was very happy with was the Critical Hit indicator. It was currently toggled off and James wondered to himself if it was the only notification that hadn't been active in the system.

After another few minutes of toggling the options, James was finally happy with it. Practically all of his changes were around combat notifications, he didn't want to accidentally remove prompts for skills and dialogue in the exploratory mode of Abidden.

"What do you think Otto, anything else we should change?"

When no answer came from the tiny murder octopus, James nodded in agreement.

"Yes, you're completely right. Let's check our fancy new reports!"

Battle Report 1 of 2: Dread Pirate vs. Slavers on the Dread Shore

Enemies Defeated: 9

Highest Damage: Otto

Most Kills: Shari (5)

Least Kills: Otto (1)

Experience Gained: 510 XP

- (x2) Slaver (+20%): 180 XP

- (x1) Slaver (+0%): 150 XP

Experience Granted: 500 XP

- **Created Quest:** Kill to become Stronger

Experience Total: 10 XP

Progress to Next Level: 1%

Preferred Weapon: Moonlight Pistol

- Highest Damage: 57 (Critical Hit)

- Total Kills: 2

Preferred Skill: Swift Dodge

- Skill Progress: Unknown

Charlatan's Cutlass:

- Skill Steal Progress: 3%

"What? Why do I only have ten experience?"

James re-read the information again and again until he made sense of it. The Villainous modifier made sense to him. Cutting a guy's throat after kneecapping him was pretty evil, and flanking a person before shooting them in the head was much the same. Apparently shooting a fleeing Slaver in the back wasn't as villainous.

"So when I created the Quest for Shari, I gave my own experience as a reward?"

No matter how many times he read the report, he came to the same conclusion. Creating quests for followers resulted in his own experience being forfeited.

"Well done on having the highest damage, buddy!"

James congratulated the little yellow octopus, which earned him a tiny raised tentacle of joy.

"How much damage did you actually do though, I wonder."

Battle Report 1 of 2: Individual Recap - Otto vs. Finn

Preferred Attack: Venomous Grip

- Highest Damage: 236 (Acid Damage)

"Fuck."

James muttered as he looked down at the parading little demon.

"You really are terrifying, Otto."

The void demon teleported away from James' shoulder, only to reappear on the remains of the Goblin Leader from earlier.

It didn't take James long to figure out that the little demon was prouder of his more recent fight.

"Okay, okay... I'll check your stats in a second."

James moved to the next battle report to see what the results were.

Battle Report 2 of 2: Dread Pirate vs. Goblin Ambushers

Enemies Defeated: 15

Highest Damage: Otto

Most Kills: James (14)

Least Kills: Goblin Spearman (1)

Experience Gained: 3,500 XP

- (x6) Goblin Archer (No Modifier): 250 XP
- (x1) Goblin Shaman (No Modifier): 250 XP
- (x2) Goblin Spearman (No Modifier): 250 XP
- (x5) Goblin Ambusher (No Modifier): 250 XP

Experience Granted: 3,500 XP

- Created Quest: Kill Goblins!

Experience Total: 0 XP

Progress to Next Level: 1%

Preferred Weapon: Moonlight Pistol

- Highest Damage: 174 (Bonus Stacks: 3)
- Total Kills: 12

Preferred Skill: Swift Dodge

- Skill Progress: Unknown

Charlatan's Cutlass:

- Skill Steal Progress: 6%

"Well Otto, at least we know why Shari was so excited about the quests I gave her. At this rate, I'll get to Standard Rank, Level Two... after another ninety-nine battles."

James laughed humorlessly as he looked at the abysmal stats in front of him. When he glanced up, Otto was still perched on the corpse in protest as if he was waiting on his praise.

"Oh, let me just check."

The Dread Pirate mocked as he made a show of opening up another notification.

Battle Report 2 of 2: Individual Recap - Otto vs. Grask

Preferred Attack: Death's Embrace

- Highest Damage: 372 (Acid Damage & Strangulation Damage)

"Death's Embrace? Hugs of Death? Nice."

James just shook his head at the damage report. The Moonlight Pistol, with all of the buffs against Goblins, critical hit bonus stacks and everything... only managed to get less than half of Otto's damage.

"You're the best Murder Octopus I know."

With that said, the tiny yellow void demon was sated and reappeared on James' shoulder.

The Dread Pirate dismissed all of the notifications in front of him before packing away the loot. He was pleasantly surprised to find that the items stored themselves away in invisible inventory. A small part of him had been wondering if he had to fill his pockets with the items. He tested withdrawing items from the inventory a few times, until it felt like an automatic instinct.

"I need to find a place to restore my health and safely log out. Helena's big reveal is tonight and I don't want to miss it."

James explained to Otto as he looked in the direction of the forest one last time.

The void demon teleported to a branch that was deeper into the woods which James understood clearly.

Without saying anything, James willed two status bars to appear in front of him.

Time Online: 2hrs 14mins and 39secs

Health Remaining: 38/140

Otto raised a tentacle curiously and James just grinned in response.

"Okay, we'll find another fight... but we're keeping the XP this time!"

With that said, the Void Demon reappeared on James' shoulder as the Dread Pirate drew his pistol and ran deeper into the forest.