

Day of first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons for good fortune and blessings.

I begin a new journal today to mark the beginning of a new chapter in my life.

I, Senn, have taken an oath to join a coven. I

hope this journal will be able to mark a good thing to read when I look back on this moment in time to remember my studies and mark my progress. The coven is led by a man called Vuurik who I think might be a few steps away from holding the title of Warlock- he certainly seems skilled and influential enough to be one, but he was not introduced with the title. He arrived to the library with a bundle of other apprentices and magicians



in tow on some recruitment drive, looking for magicians skilled in scrying, and my capabilities seem to have been good enough. I have very little to pack, but I will pack it regardless as I have been commanded to do so. We are to be travelling further East along the shores of the Luhguren to another library to find any other mages who may want to take the oath before we go along. There's about fourteen other apprentice mages who have taken the oath already.

1 Day after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons for studious command and safety.

I can't believe it- Aasi is here! He's travelling with the caravan with a band of

warriors and other mages sworn to him specifically. I don't know if he's a member of this coven as well or if he has been assigned to defend us and Vuurik on his travels, but what luck to meet each other again after so long! I can't catch his eyes for long enough for him to recognise me, but I recognise him. He seems to suit command. I knew he would go onto great things if he survived the campaigns against the Varushkans and I'm very happy to see that he's still alive.

5 Days after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons for fair weather.

I think it's been five days at least- I've slept four times or so since I last wrote, so I've

lost count then I suppose I've lost count. The weather on the shores of the lake has been fair so far and we haven't had to shelter from any squalls blowing off the waves just yet, and we've picked up another mage. Her name is Kseth and we're sharing a tent. I'm not really sure how to feel about her yet; she seems to take things up slowly, slower than the rest of us do, but she's quite good at the practical things when she can figure them out. She's asked for some help understanding the study materials we've been assigned- teaching her may solidify my own understanding of the material.

10 Days after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons for faith and good discipline.

I already am doing poorly at keeping up with this journal, aren't I? I will endeavour to do better, but the routine is so irregular and I am unused to this kind of travel so in the time we usually get to ourselves, I end up sleeping or studying hard to stay at the top of Vuurik's good graces. Already one of the apprentices has been cast out for being lazy with his studies, which has rather shocked Kseth into very fervently asking me for practise. She noticed me casting my Night Pouch on my private things one morning when I thought she wasn't around and asked me if she could practise piercing the shroud to get a better understanding of what we were studying at that time, but I denied her- this is a good bag, and it belongs to me right now, so I won't sacrifice it for her to get a little better. She suggested a sacrificial pouch, one I cast the

spell on for her to break on her own, and if she can find one that nobody will miss then she's welcome to bring it to me.

22 Days after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons for good purpose and opportunity.

Here marks the day where I will actually make an effort to log my thoughts mostly every day.

Today we are embarking on a journey South through the forest to Hahlerm and then on to the border of Karsk. Just last year it would have been too dangerous for us to go South without signing on to be part of a larger cohort, but we are protected now by the new treaty signed a season ago. It is still dangerous, so Aasi is coming with us with his own sworn band to defend us

against bandits and forest beasts. I hadn't seen him since before he went South with his tutor and coven some years ago and he's quite the image of a Spellbinder now. The warring in Karsk must have sped his skill along quite quickly- he carries himself proudly. To think he's the same boy who used to practise spells with me before we parted ways, it's almost hard to believe! I feel a little ashamed that I've not made the same progress as he has, but in writing this entry I'm trying to remind myself that we just went in different directions. I hope he doesn't think lesser of me for choosing to study rituals rather than to become a Spellbinder, but we haven't had the chance to talk yet. He might actually outrank me now, so I don't know if I'll get the chance to.

At least I know for certain that he won't be able to get into the pouch without my coven-mates' help, so I don't have to be too careful with what I write. I got in trouble after my last entry for taking so long to write my entries so to make it look like I'm studying in a tome, I've painted the cover with a few spots of gloaming so it looks mysterious. I traded with the Crafter from the dregs of their supply in exchange for a little identification divination on something their cousin had scrounged and couldn't identify; it was just a little talisman, a chain with an amulet with an image of a hare; Imperial-made, useless to us and easy to parse, but it was pretty and any follower of the Way would buy it. With the treaty, that's a genuine possibility now! And it was good practise- i haven't done

something like that where I didn't already know the answer in too long a time.

The daily practise of casting the Night Pouch is going well. I've been doing two a day, or every other day; my own every day, and Kseth's sacrificial pouch when we can find the material to make something simple to use. If the others knew we've been sewing pouches just to shred them up again in minutes, we'd be punished, so we keep eachother's secret. Kseth is catching up to the rest of us rather quickly now with all the practise she's been getting and I think I've learned enough about shrouding that I could probably make a pouch more resilient against her attempts to break the spell. I'm supposed to be focusing all my energy on my divinations and scrying- while Kseth is catching up, I'm falling behind. I don't

know if Vuurik has noticed yet but I should probably set more time aside to study clarity so it's not too noticeable. At the very least we'll use fewer materials to make the pouches for Kseth's practise.

My ancestors have been quieter than normal today, or I have been too distracted to pay them much mind. I am grateful for the respite, even if the advice of who I think may be a grandmother is useful.

We start moving in an hour and I have to pack the rest of my travelling things and study some scrying theory before we go; Vuurik's gotten into the habit of quizzing us on the road and I have to keep up.

25 Days after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons.

It is the evening and I'm writing this by candle and I'm very tired.

We are some distance away from the shores of the Luhguren now and the forest has swallowed us. The trunks of trees older than I will ever grow to be creak in the darkness and moonlight seldom makes it past the canopy. Snow has already started falling as heavy as it should in Winter but I know there's still some weeks left before the Solstice. If it keeps falling like this, travelling will be made near-impossible. We'll have to move quick to get to where the rest of the coven is camped before the full weight of Winter falls on us.

Apparently tomorrow evening or early the day after we are going to hit the Spring-fed roads around the burl where nobody can venture. We cannot take the straight path, so we'll swing around- it'll add a day or so, but the others say those trails are easier to walk.

Vuurik has noticed my slackness. On the day of my first entry while we were on the path South he was quizzing us about the scry results we were studying and the methods and theory the coven had used to achieve them. I fell short on an answer that all of us should have memorized- even Kseth knew it!-- and then fell short on explaining my inadequacy. He didn't care that I knew things the others hadn't even been

introduced to yet, only that I had failed to meet the bar.

I've not been able to write for a few days as he has been bearing down on me with all the fury a pale, wizened scholar can muster. I ache from the punishments and weight I'm carrying and I have to be perfect for as long as it takes for someone else to inspire his wrath, and so Kseth's advanced practising in breaking open my closures is going to have to wait- as is my experimentation with making those closures harder to break. I'm too nervous yet to try it on the pouch I refresh daily- if it doesn't work, I could lose everything. I want to be sure I've got a handle on the shrouding first.

It's shameful to be punished in front of Aasi. He directed his sworn warriors away so

fewer eyes were on me during the worst of it, but I know he's seen it. Vuurik must be talking to him about it, too. I could never try and get time to speak with him now after this. I hear his warriors laughing as I write this and it inspires my ancestors to swear at my shame and assumption that they laugh about me.

"You are Thule!" they admonish. "You are above being cowed! This is no way for our daughter, our granddaughter, our blood, to react to this." They use harsher language, some just shout. Some are quieter, more distant, echoing on the walls of the Abyss. They have been loud the last few days but I've been able to hide it. I am used to pretending to be exhausted or confused by study material when they start distracting me.

I am focusing very hard on writing this in an attempt to make them be quiet. I don't think it's working but I have to make them shut up before I try to sleep or it'll take hours. I need to get a handle on their volume before we get to the rest of the coven before others notice.

The one who might be a grandmother to me is being drowned out and knowing that she's speaking and not being able to understand her is beyond frustrating. She speaks quietly and insistently, hardly above a whisper.

I think Kseth might know I hear them louder than the others do. We scry together sometimes, and the grandmother tells me the words she must have used. Kseth must

have noticed that I cast differently on the days when I am distracted. She hasn't said anything, and I have no intention of telling her if she doesn't already know, but it's another secret I have to trust her to keep.

I'm going to have to try to sleep.

26 Days after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons.

We reached the Spring-trail just before midday today. I've never been on this track before but I read about it and the burl it circles around some time ago. The Catazarri Imperials are apparently very interested in it and its ilk but we haven't been able to see any of their texts on the matter.

Apparently these trails web all across the

South, all leading to their own burls- and yes, it does feel easier to walk down. It feels warm, as if we haven't walked much today at all, and I am not dreading tomorrow as much as I was dreading today.

It's dark again and I'm writing by candle once more. The punishment continued today but I have been perfect in my answers and so Vuurik's wrath will hopefully fade, or focus again on somebody else. Kseth has been kinder to me the last few days, always where Vuurik cannot see or hear us, though I imagine it must be relieving for her to not be the subject of his ire for once. We walked together near the back of the wagons while Vuurik and Aasi led at the front, so today at least we've been able to discuss our studies.

She asked after my progress on making a harder challenge for her to break open. She seemed a bit disappointed when I said I wanted to make sure Vuurik was happy with me again- or at least, not angry with me- before I thought about experimenting with shroud and locks again. I've been sleeping with my real pouch close to my chest at night; we all can break open shrouds like the ones I've been weaving, so I don't really want to leave this one alone. I wonder if anyone else in the coven has also been studying shrouds? Would they help me if I asked them to?

I think if I was a real coven member, if I had graduated and mastered some real rituals that would be useful to the Warlocks, Vuurik wouldn't care so much. I'm supposed to only learn what I am taught, and told to

learn. I suppose I should be grateful that the punishments aren't too severe- I could just be in shackles, sent away to a field or forest to labour until my back breaks. I suppose it helps that he doesn't know why I've been falling behind. There must be at least one other person in the coven who knows more about what I'm studying, but I won't know until we get there and they might ask Vuurik why I'm asking. Worse, they might get curious why I'm asking how to shroud my belongings, and then come looking... Kseth could shred this one right now, if she wanted to. Maybe I'll try to shroud it better tonight, push it just a bit further.

This morning while we were packing down camp, I saw Aasi and his sworn warriors training. I've been catching myself being

distracted by him for days now, and I caught myself staring. The thin early morning light, gold as it crept through the boughs, shone down on them as they hurled spells at one another. Aasi was without his furs and robe and the years and military experience have broadened him out. He moved like water even though he stood in one place, beating the warriors back as they tried to knock him down with their own spells or with sticks to stand in for blades. Nobody could even get close enough to strike him with one- anyone who tried was hurled backwards. Eventually I think he must have run out of mana and it turned into a brawl. I can still picture the clouds of breath rising in the frost of morning, lit up by the rays streaming through the trees. I don't think he saw me- who would notice

one ritualist out of thirty watching a brawl? I hope he didn't notice me anyway.

It is worth noting that the voice who might be my grandmother is being presumptuous and encouraging me to go talk to him and I think if I followed her advice this time I would have to run away into the woods forever and never see another living person again.

I sound like such a child. I'm going to study the texts some more before bed, while I still have an inch of this candle left. I should try to write these by daylight, but if Vuurik saw me writing a lot instead of reading or looking sorry for myself then I might catch a much shorter shrift. I don't think any amount of gloaming ink on this cover could fool him.

29 Days after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons.

We are in Hahlerm now, by all estimates.

The snow has eased but it still weighs us down and, now the Spring-trail is behind us, it is harder to get through. I'm writing by daylight for once! I have about an hour left of it, judging by the colour of the sky.

Vuurik seems nearly satisfied with my progress and has given me one more assignment to finish before dawn; I have done interpretations of the runes of clarity and knowledge seven times over but he's given me a nasty one- the Banner, one for victory and glory. Very swannish, and I don't know what use he's going to have for the design, but I'll do my best. I'll write again when I've done something I'm happy with. He also wants me to start trying other

animals as I only ever do dragons, so maybe an eagle or bird? I saw one in one of the design books with an arrow through it, so I'll try to figure out their shapes. Dragons are easier for me to match up to the runic shape, so it will take me a while. Anyway, time to work on the Banner.

I think I'm happy with it. I've copied it in here to have a record of it in case he rips up the other paper or keeps it for himself. It reminds me of the rune of the Wyrn, though the other has three grand spines instead of two claws. I could probably have gone without the woven tail, but it looked so plain without it. I suppose Vuurik will tell me exactly what's wrong with it.



I didn't feel as relaxed as I normally do when I draft these. I think the meaning was just a little bit too anathemic than what

I'm used to. I've got some ideas for the Shutter, and want to try a new design for the Staff.

I wonder if Aasi would like my designs? He has some tattoos on his neck and arms, wyrms and knotwork, but he hasn't picked anything for his temples or cheeks yet. I think I could probably do something

I am MORTIFIED. Kseth came into our tent right after I wrote that and I didn't have time to tie my pouch shut. We chatted for a little bit about the day just gone while my book was right there for anyone to look at. I think if anyone read what I've written about Aasi I would jump into the Luhguren, or maybe push them in so they don't tell him. I have got to be more vigilant about people getting close.

Kseth seems to like my design for the Banner rune though, so that's something at least. She's gone now- has first watch. She'll wake me for my turn in a few hours, so I should get some rest. It's going to be cold tonight so I'll wear my furs to bed so they're warm for me to go out into.

30 days after first oath sworn

I'm writing this by the first light of day and don't have long before we have to get moving so this will be brief until tonight's entry, but you will never believe it. I had second watch facing East with Aasi last night after Kseth woke me. We were out there for four hours until the next watch

had to be woken and the time passed by so swiftly that it felt like little more than a blink. The rest of the camp is waking now and I have to give Vuurik my design for the Banner rune, so I will write later.

31 days after first oath sworn
Today I give thanks to the Dragons.

It would be quite easy to continue writing from yesterday morning's entry where I left off, given that I had so much room left on this page, but I fear given the business of our days and the constant studies that I may lose count of the days should I not be strict and accurate with the count thus far. I didn't get a chance to write again yesterday but Vuurik was not displeased by the quality of my work and encouraged me

to work on the Shutter and the Lantern. I was sketching them during lunch and will copy my final ideas into this book so, like the others, I don't lose them.



I think I am lucky that they look so similar. The only real difference between them is the central knot, or the 'light'. I should sharpen my pencils more often than I do. I'm much happier with these designs than I am with my first few attempts from when I began, and hopefully Vuurik will approve. The punishment was less severe today, hopefully because I've been making up for my slackness; given a couple of days or so more I hope to be under less scrutiny so Kseth and I can get back to our practise. I'm itching to shroud something other than this canvas sack for once!

Though I suppose it will always be a canvas sack of some kind, unless I get good enough for a rich crafter to pay for a shroud on a leather or silk pouch. I want to push the longevity past a day but I'm still too

nervous to try it on my daily pouch in case I break it or shred it by accident.

I can confess this to you, journal, because I know nobody other than I will read it. The night before last when I was on second watch with Aasi has only made my daily distraction worse. If Vuurik has been talking to him about my blunders with my studying, he didn't let it slip, and for a while we spoke as though we were strangers. Eventually we spoke as we had done before he left for Karsk and it was relieving to know he hadn't forgotten me in his studies. We spoke at length about all sorts of things, about what it was like facing the Catazarri Empire's armies and heroes in battle. He'd taken up the mantle of his old master, quite literally- the shaggy old bear furs he wears over his cloak have hardly

gone cold since the old fellow fell under a Varushkan axe.

I was desperate to ask him about the tattoos I saw when he was training, about who had designed them, but you'll be proud to know I held my tongue. He showed me some glittering embroidery on his inner robe, just barely visible in the pitch thanks to the shining rainbow silk it was stitched with; intricate swirling knotwork, spreading across his shoulder and chest, complete with some hidden impressions of runes that have inspired me to try to design something similar when we get to Oloy and I can sit next to a fire while I work instead of shivering near a candle. I don't know if we'll get the chance to speak again but if we do I should very much like to see the details by daylight- the pattern continued

past where his overrobes and furs drew in. I hadn't anything even slightly worth showing so I settled for complimenting his spellbinder regalia. If he can afford such beautiful things, he must be miles above where I stand.

Maybe it came from his old master. I'm imagining some terrible gash in the fabric somewhere under all the fur, stitched together with tapestry thread- it would explain how he managed to get something like that at our age. Maybe he's really just that good at being a Spellbinder and the Warlocks are fond of him. I suppose if he managed to come out the other side of the war in Karsk with his life and all his limbs, he must deserve it. Maybe I could have been good at it too. Is it too late to change my mind now? I shouldn't entertain any more

ideas about splitting my studies- I won't be as useful to the Warlocks as a-little-bit-of-everything. Better to have my strong uses in scrying and shrouding rather than getting lost down some silly whim of proving to an old flame that I can fight, too. Can I even still fight? I haven't cast those spells in an age, not since he left.

It was good to talk to him. I hope we get watch again tonight- when we get to Oloy I might have to ask him if we can train together, though he will be very busy. As will I. Night watch will be beginning soon as soon as the sun goes down, so I have maybe thirty minutes of light good enough to read with. I will study some scry theory and the results again.

32 days after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons.

Night watch was dreary and bitterly cold. I had first watch with one of the warriors sworn to Aasi and neither of us really wanted to talk all that much. She asked what kind of spellcaster I was and I mentioned rituals and she didn't seem all too much interested in me after that. I had half a mind to show her exactly how much I remember from training with Aasi before he left for Karsk but that would have solved nothing and caused many more problems than it would have been worth. Yes, I am directing this at you, voice who may be a great-great grandsire, I do not care and did not very much appreciate your nagging to put her in her place when I was trying to

focus on making sure we didn't all get eaten by something.

I wonder if they can read through my eyes, or if they just feel what I feel? They must have some awareness of what I experience for them to give me such detailed demands as to what I should be doing with my life and with the people around me. I will read the passages many times over to get the message across. Will they get louder as I get older, or will it get harder for them to get across to me? I wish I could muster the courage to talk to someone about it, but who here would listen to me? Vuurik? The old man's spent the last seven days punishing me for not knowing answers to some questions- I don't need him thinking I'm infirm or not worth the effort of tutoring, given he may think I will one day

be lost to the mutterings of the dead. I think I will just have to find it out on my own.

We're almost on the border. Maybe half a day or a day more and we'll be in Krevsaty, though there's still the hills and mountains to push over before we can get to Oloy. I suppose the route depends if we can get the oxen up there; we may have to take the longer route through the forest at the base and then cut back East. I won't pretend to be responsible for charting the course; I go where we're told to go. We'll know what Vuurik and Aasi have chosen to do in two days' time, when we're either on the foot of the mountain or if we're still in the wood.

Apparently chimera are easier to come across here. With any luck we will avoid them and get there without issue.

35 days after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons for safe journeys.

Today we arrived in Oloy. The senior coven members are organising longer-term accommodation for us and we're expected to be put up somewhere nearer their own within the next few days, but for now we are in what I think might have been a little hall before the previous occupants left. Given the warring, it may have been some time since last people lived here, but there is a fireplace and chimney and the windows mostly close all the way, so I personally am

comfortable. I will just sleep in my furs and cloak, though I am greatly looking forward to real accommodation so I may wash all of them thoroughly. The mud has been frozen so my things haven't quite turned brown but they are heavy with the grime of travel. I will feel better when my things are clean.

The fire is being fed and the others are a few cups in already, and I think it probably isn't too long before I'm coaxed away from my books. Aasi and Vuurik are away speaking to the rest of the coven so us ritualists and the sworn warriors have an opportunity to mingle and speak before they come back. After the journey I think it's a well deserved break, especially as we went wholly unaccosted the whole way.

We will be here until the Spring thaw comes. I am happy to be spending Winter in a slightly warmer climate for once. Vuurik says those of us who deserve to stay will take our second oaths and become full members of the coven when the Winter Solstice comes- I must work to ensure I am among that number.

Kseth is coming over now.

37 days after first oath sworn

Today I give thanks to the Dragons for sevenfold hangover cures and real beds.

My head is still pounding. I blame Kseth fully, as well as that other warrior woman who I thought was cold when we had watch together.

Yesterday and today has been many menial tasks to settle into the new accommodation we'll be living in until the thaws, and I am rather pleased to say that Kseth and I managed to snag a room for us two alone. There is only the one desk and both of us must study, so I am writing this in bed while she uses the desk. I am writing slowly today to make sure I don't spill my ink on my bedding.

My furs are still drying near the hearth downstairs and I am cold without them. Kseth offers to lend me hers as I sit here shivering but I think I'll cut this entry short and take the new scrying results to study downstairs nearer the fire.

It has been a few hours since I wrote that line. Kseth is asleep and I ought to be soon,

but I had to write this down to get my thoughts in order.

Vuurik is still away with the rest of the coven but Aasi has been watching the lodge and keeping us regular with orders. We were able to talk some more as he was downstairs near the fire as well, and we were speaking quietly enough that none could hear us above the wind outside. He apparently let it slip to Vuurik that we had both been training as battle mages before I decided to focus on rituals and I might be allowed- or even asked- to begin training again. I don't really know how I feel about it; I think casting spells like that can be fun, and definitely useful, but I'm already split between two anathema. Adding a third thing to be studying and practising would make me fall behind in everything.

The obvious solution would be to put the shrouding away for a while, but that's something I'm interested in. I obviously can't put my main studies aside. Shaking the dust off my wand would be fun, and it would mean I get to spend more time with Aasi, but I don't know what I want to prioritise. I won't really get much choice- as far as anyone other than Kseth knows, I am only studying that which I've been assigned, so maybe it looks like I have time and capability to take it on.

I suppose in the end I need to wait to see what Vuurik asks. Aasi said he seemed interested in the idea of having a little half-spellbinder in the coven so we didn't have to rely wholly on others for protection, but really I know I would be the most useful

if I was able to focus on the rituals and just get very good at those. I might have to ask Kseth what she thinks when she wakes. Apparently, Aasi has also properly joined the coven and taken an oath- I suppose its equivalent would be the second oath we're set to take at the Solstice- so where we go he will go as well.

My mind is swimming and nothing any of my ancestors are saying is useful. My grandmother is very keen on choosing to train with Aasi, because she seems to think of herself as an ephemeral matchmaker. He has grown to be very handsome, and it's impossible to deny that I also would very much like to train with him, but I have to think of my future beyond some flighty crush on a childhood friend. She does this with every handsome or beautiful mage I

spot- even Kseth, when we first met- but she seems very keen on him.

It's not as much comfort as it should be to know that the decision will be made when Vuurik makes it. Whatever he orders, I will of course do. I just have to remember that the choices he makes are for the benefit of the Warlocks, and thus the will of the Dragons.

We did get to talk about things other than the coven and our futures. It was nice. He's been changed by the war, that much is obvious, but with less of the awkwardness and tension of keeping watch hanging over us I see a lot of the Aasi I recognise shining through. Imagining that we could be anything more than what we are is a fool's errand, I think, but I can make room in my

schedule to imagine it. I think it would be nice.

Goodnight, journal.

40 days after first oath taken

Today I give thanks to the Dragons.

So much has happened today and yesterday and I am still thinking about it all. Yesterday a letter arrived for us and we all went to the other lodge that the rest of the coven has been staying in. There were many more of the coven than I had expected- Vuurik was very modest when he was describing how many magicians had taken his oath when he came North to recruit us. I had been expecting maybe fifteen, twenty including aides and scribes,

but there must have been at the very least forty. Among them were second-oath and third-oath takers. It must be an important coven if Vuurik makes everybody take multiple oaths in stages.

We were introduced to them one by one, but they were not introduced to us- I imagine they're waiting it out to see which of us are able to stay. Afterwards we had lectures and they examined us to see how much we knew of the scrying results they'd sent to our lodge for study, as well as if we knew off-hand which of the constellations would be most visible the next night, but last night was full of clouds and ashy drifts of snow so I suppose we won't know if we were right until the sky clears tonight. Yesterday evening before supper, Vuurik and Aasi came and found me from where I was tidying the

courtyard and Vuurik demanded a demonstration of what I remembered. Aasi lent me his arming wand.

I was able to repel him, but I think my knowledge of empowering has faded a little. Vuurik didn't seem particularly impressed. He's ordered me to train with Aasi thrice a week until the Solstice until I can get a grip on healing and entangling. I've been given special permission to use the sessions in which the others will be learning a new ritual, which stings. I have to get Kseth to teach me so I'm not left behind.

How funny it is, our roles reversed now. My shrouding will need to be forgotten for a time.

The spellcasting yesterday tired me out so I wasn't able to cast the shroud. I slept very little, knowing that all my precious things were hidden under my blankets safe outside of the grasp of the vanishing for anyone to throw them off and find, but if any secret force was able to read these pages I didn't notice.

Onto today. I cast the shroud first thing this morning while I was barely awake, invoking the Shutter. I was assigned to shadow a senior member of the coven today on her duties and we were wandering around Oloy and all its boundaries looking for things the Varushkans might have left behind.

Her name is Mirris Who-Sees. She's old and whitened like Vuurik is but not as grouchy

and bent, so she must be a decade younger. We scried and searched together for anything with a magical trace upon it and found very, very little.

My heart still pounds recounting this but towards the end of the day, as the shadows were drawing in and we were almost back to the coven's lodge, I saw her begin the movements to cast a spell. Journal, she cast it on me. On the shroud over my belongings.

I will never forget how fast nor how deep my heart dropped into my stomach when she asked if Vuurik knew I was hiding my things, or keeping others from finding them. I had no idea what to do and I daren't lie to anybody so I only shook my head like some scolded bairn. She had a smile on her face and she said she wouldn't

tell anybody and to come to her tomorrow so I can show her how I do it, so I don't know if a trap has been set for me and I'm about to end up sent away to work the fields. I sincerely hope not. I am considering burning this book and all the contents of my bag.

Though I have seen her casting those spells all day today, and I saw her cut through a much heavier and darker shroud like it was little more than a cobweb. If she wanted to split my shroud she needed only sneeze near it and the whole bag would have unraveled, I'm sure. This little hope I have that maybe she can help me learn how to shroud things better is beyond frustrating, given I've been given the order to split my time between the coven's dealings and training with Aasi.

All I can do is sleep and wait to see what happens. I don't think I will be doing much sleeping at all. I feel sick with worry and my ancestors are being very loud and overbearing and I wish there was some shroud I could cast on myself to give me just one day of silence.

I would try to devise something, but I am not so foolish as to think I would not make some terrible mistake somewhere and injure myself, or worse. I have heard what happens to people sometimes when rituals go wrong and even if it isn't fatal, someone will notice that I am different.

42 Days after first oath taken

Today I give thanks to the Dragons.

Things are alright right now but I am still anxious. Mirris Who-Sees seems to have good

intentions, but I know better than to disregard the fact she still holds a strong bargaining chip. When we are through this period of intense study, once we have all learned the ritual text they'd like for us cast, it will hold less weight and danger than it does right now- so I just have to be perfect until then. Kseth has noticed I've been anxious and has put it down to me wearing furs when they weren't quite dry yet, so she's been trying to be helpful and making me eat mustard with anything savoury. What is mustard going to do? But it makes her feel better. There's nothing barring me studying the things I've been studying, or practising the things I have been, but as I thought yesterday- the will of Vuurik is the will of the Warlocks, who in turn are the will of the Dragons.

Other than the ever-present anxieties regarding this, things are okay. I am learning quickly, I am eating nicer food than we were on the trails (it seems Oloy had some grainstores that weren't emptied after the treaty) and I'm excited to train with Aasi. Tomorrow is the first session.

62 days after first oath taken
Today I give thanks to the Dragons.

Hello journal, it's been a little while. From the moon and movement of the stars, I think it must have been at least twenty days since I last wrote. It's definitely been at least two weeks, likely closer to three as I've done nine sessions with Aasi as of today. I think by now it would be foolish to deny the way Aasi makes me feel- yes,

grandmother, you were right, please stop it now because I am trying to focus- and the training has done little more than make the issue worse.

I'm fairly confident I'm safe. I've learning the ritual, albeit slowly, that we are expected to cast soon. Mirris has been teaching me more about shrouds and piercing them and I have been passing on that knowledge to Kseth.

I am avoiding writing all too much about Aasi because when I think about him and how I feel about it all too much, it makes my chest feel weird and my breathing more inclined to randomly burst into little giggles which is VERY unbecoming of a mage of my stature and skill. I am Senn, keeper of secrets and piercer of shadows, scrying prodigy and soon-to-be battlemage. Stop

this now. I should acknowledge the feeling and put it aside, like acknowledging fear or anger and putting it aside. I can be in love with Aasi and also remain who I was, doing what I am bound to do.

Writing it has made it real. I've half a mind to rip this page out and burn it but I don't think I can take it back now. I've been thinking about him and this feeling in my chest every time I even catch a glance of him. I could really do without this distraction but I think the whims of my heart are harder to set aside. It's getting to the point where he knows I'm distracted during our training sessions. Dragons help me, I think I'm going to have to tell him.

I keep almost forgetting to renew the shroud every night. With everything going

on, it's hard to remember such a small moment in my routine.

I think Kseth has made some excellent strides. It seems she's had some tutoring from Mirris Who-Sees as well; she's come very far and is doing very well. It's like watching a fledge figure out how to use its wings.



