
Resilience

In the early days of the Great Change, the potential that lay within each of us was little known. What is now a commonplace fact of life due to the efforts of the Church, was then a mystery to many outside of that same organization—the significance of Core Quality and the advantages it provided.

In our present times, nations understand the importance of individuals with higher quality cores. As such, they require licenses and permits for travel. However, you might be surprised to learn that during those early days even Exceptionals could freely traverse national borders. While this is closely monitored today, the healing corps of the Cognitari believes this freedom of movement provided a much needed benefit to those who were attempting to establish themselves in this new reality—personal resilience.

Had the nations of that time understood the potential of these individuals, they might have sought to make allies of them, particularly the first and only Renowned at the time, rather than put them in a position to become enemies.

Some argue that their loss was our gain due to the case study this provided us. Given the high value the world now places on the handful of Renowned in existence, I cannot disagree. I will not list their names here, as they are known to all.

In the next section, we will briefly explore the importance society and the gods have placed on the Empyrean.

A History of Mana. 184 SA

Sloane kept Mariel close to her side as they descended the gangplank of the smuggler's ship, trailing behind Nemura. Vesper, her large panther-slash-displacer-beast golem, followed closely behind like an imposing figure in the soft morning light. Sloane's body ached with exhaustion, but she held herself upright, aware of the need to present a strong front. Stefan brought up the rear, cradling the box that held the damaged form of Tiberius.

“Welcome to Nornport, the northern pride of the Kingdom of Rosale,” Lord Estos announced, spreading his arms wide as they joined him on the bustling pier.

Sloane couldn't help but smile. “It's beautiful.”

Indeed, the city was breathtaking. Its coastal charm and vibrant atmosphere outshone even the grandeur of Marketbol. Perhaps it was her fondness for coastal cities back home, but Nornport felt more welcoming and alive than even the jewel of the Banking Guild.

Mariel, her eyes wide with wonder, nodded in agreement. “I've never been to Rosale. It looks so...”

“Expensive,” Nemura finished, her voice gruff.

Sloane chuckled, glancing around at the ornate buildings and well-dressed citizens. “Yeah, it really does, doesn't it?”

Lord Estos laughed, pointing towards a collection of even grander structures perched on a cliff overlooking the port. “It’s not as bad as Calling, but the noble quarter is right over there which makes this area in particular a bit more... exclusive as it’s the piers dedicated to nobles. We’ll go through the merchant quarter on the way to my family’s estate.”

Sloane exchanged a glance with Stefan, who offered her an encouraging nod. She stepped up to Lord Estos, ignoring the curious stares of the townsfolk that lingered on both her and Vesper as they made their way towards the city proper.

A chill autumn breeze swept through the streets, causing her to shiver involuntarily. She brushed a stray lock of hair caught by the wind from her face and tucked it behind her ear. “Actually, Ilian, I think I’d like to find an inn for us. While I greatly appreciate all you have done for us and letting us stay at your estate in Swanbrook, I would like to not take advantage of your hospitality.”

Before he could protest, she continued, “If we’re going to be entering into business with each other, I would like to do so from a place of equal standing. This will allow me to do that.”

He appeared to give it some thought, because when Ilian Estos nodded, understanding seemed to flash in his eyes. “I understand. Then you must allow me to show you to one of the best inns in the city.”

Sloane’s smile widened. “I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

The two of them started making their way up the pier which prompted Toren to rejoin Lord Estos at the front of the group. Sloane walked quietly as the Rosalian noble and Banking Guild representative spoke back and forth like old friends.

They all slowed as they reached the city gate where a few lines of people waited to be admitted into the heart of Nornport.

It appeared there was a separate, expedited line reserved for the local aristocracy.

“You will need to join the line for foreigners, unfortunately. My status does not allow me to grant you an exception,” Ilian told her.

Sloane shrugged. “It’s fine. We have everything we need to get through.”

She gestured to her group and settled in to wait, but luckily the line moved swiftly, with numerous sun elf and telv guards checking over documentation.

Nemura leaned in to speak to Sloane quietly. “We should make time to go to the Church. However, we should not reveal Mariel’s identity until we are sure they are not compromised.”

Sloane nodded, glancing at Mariel. “Did you hear?” she asked.

Mariel nodded. “I did.” She looked at Nemura. “Stick to the plan?”

Nemura nodded, and Mariel turned back to Stefan. “Hurry up, father. Lady Reinhart doesn’t have all day,” she teased.

Sloane couldn’t help but huff a laugh.

“Is that any way to speak to your elders in front of our liege, *daughter?*” Stefan retorted, feigning a scowl.

Mariel turned to Sloane. “Apologies, milady. Forgive this simple maid.”

Sloane snorted. “Okay, stop it. We’re an informal House.”

As Sloane and the others reached the front of their line, the city guards turned their wary gazes to Sloane and Vesper.

“Uh... papers?” one of them asked, his eyes darting between Sloane and the golem.

Nemura stepped forward, her hand reaching into a bag to retrieve a small bundle of papers. She handed them over to the guard with an impassive expression.

The documents confirmed Sloane’s nobility and citizenship of Blightwych, along with papers for Nemura, Stefan, and Mariel that placed them as members of House Reinhart. Nemura was listed as Sloane’s Head Guard, Stefan as a guard and attendant, and Mariel as Sloane’s personal maid.

The guards scanned the papers, their eyes flicking back and forth between the documents and the group. Their gazes lingered on Vesper, the golem’s presence causing a ripple of unease.

“What is that thing?” one of the guards finally asked, his voice wavering slightly.

Sloane smiled, her gaze softening as she looked at Vesper. “That’s Vesper,” she replied. She turned to the golem, instructing it to greet the guards. “Say hello, Vesper.”

The golem tilted its head, issuing a leopard-like meow that sounded both throaty and dangerous. It was beautiful. The guards shifted uncomfortably, their eyes wide.

“Is-is it dangerous?” another guard asked.

Sloane shrugged, her gaze steady. “*She* is perfectly safe. Unless you attempt to harm me.”

The guard swallowed hard, his gaze darting to his colleagues. He muttered something about needing approval and rushed off, leaving the others to continue the inspection.

Soon, an older sun elf approached, his armor adorned with ornamentation that marked him as a guard captain. He studied Sloane and Vesper with a keen eye, asking questions about the golem and its capabilities in a way that made her believe he was more learned about creations such as this than seemed possible. *Something to figure out later.* His gaze was sharp, but not unkind. He seemed genuinely interested, his questions thoughtful and measured.

When he asked if Sloane was on her way to the Royal Arcanum, her brows furrowed in thought. She remembered the name of the capital and took a chance with a nod. “I am. It is in... Calling, correct?”

The guard captain nodded, his expression softening. “Yes, I knew the king and his advisor had put out a call for people like you, but I didn’t know it had reached Blightwych.”

Sloane nodded, her mind racing. “Oh, well we’ve come from Swanbrook,” she said absently, then winced at the mention of the blockaded city.

Hopefully this doesn’t get us in trouble... we did have to use a smuggler to get out.

The guard captain's demeanor softened further. "Are you alright?"

Wait... what?

Sloane tilted her head, confused. "I am... why?"

"It's just horrible what's happening up there. Don't worry, milady. You're safe here. Despite all that's going on in the heartwoods and on the eastern border, the kingdom is the safest place on the western coast. The war won't touch us here. Go on through, I can't imagine what you've had to go through. I wish you luck on your journey to the capital. I hope to go myself sometime soon to see the great project and my brother who is working on it. I hear it's nearly complete."

"The great project?" Sloane asked, her curiosity piqued.

The man chuckled. "I don't want to spoil it. You'll see."

With a nod of thanks, Sloane led her group towards where Ilian and Toren were waiting with their guards. As she walked, she couldn't help but wonder what the guard captain had meant by 'the great project'.

That was ominous but oddly wholesome.

They began their journey through the merchant quarter, making their way towards the noble quarter. Lord Estos played the part of tour guide, explaining that the central street of the quarter was lined with various cafes, eateries, inns, and shops—establishments that catered to both the nobles who lived there and those who were visiting.

Before they passed through the gate to the noble quarter, Toren chimed in, promising to inform the local banking guild of Sloane's presence and her importance. "But for now, I must bid you all farewell. I need to deliver the equipment before anything happens to it."

Sloane glanced at the two guild guards who were sweating profusely under the weight of the bags filled with Runecard devices.

Lord Estos bid Toren goodbye, promising to meet him soon.

Toren gave Sloane a bow and smiled as he raised. "I look forward to working with you after you get settled in, My Lady."

Sloane agreed and wished him farewell. After he left, the group continued their journey, following Lord Estos towards the noble quarter, and before long they passed through the gate and onto the street Ilian had told them about.

It was everything he had described and more.

There was so much to take in and she knew she could and *would* spend so much time here. She was for *sure* bringing Mariel to the hair salon she saw.

Sloane took in the bustling street. "I can't wait to explore everything here, and the rest of the city." Turning to Mariel, she asked, "What do you want to do first after we get settled in?"

The young raithe girl's eyes lit up. "I would love to try a cafe!"

"That sounds like a wonderful idea," Sloane agreed.

She then smiled and playfully added, “You can help me change out of this outfit when we get to the inn and see that my room is properly set up. Then we shall partake in one of these quaint cafes.”

Mariel gave a semblance of a walking curtsey that almost made Sloane cackle at the absurdity. “Of course, milady. I shall fluff your pillows as well.”

Lord Estos turned and raised a brow. “I believe you two are overplaying it a bit much.”

Sloane tilted her head and let out a haughty laugh. “Oh hohoho, Lord Estos, are you volunteering to fluff my pillows?”

Wait... that's probably a bad question.

She groaned when he got that infatuated look in his eye. *Damn it.*

Sloane rolled her eyes. “Alright, alright. Let's get to this inn.”



Vesper trailed quietly—*and invisibly*—behind her as the two of them descended into the common area of the Ivory Rose Inn. Sloane had left Tiberius upstairs for his repair runes to work while the bird himself rested in a sort of standby mode from his damage during the escape from Swanbrook.

As she walked into the area that was filled with cushioned chairs and tables for people to sit around and relax, Sloane was yet again struck by the opulence of where they had ended up. The inn, a former noble estate, had been transformed into a luxurious lodging for traveling nobility. Its grandeur was evident in the high ceilings, ornate furnishings, and the sheer spaciousness of the place. It was so lavish that even Nemura, usually unflappable, seemed slightly uncomfortable.

I need to get them better armor to look the part, Sloane mused, her gaze sweeping over the diverse crowd in the common area. She saw representatives of every race she knew of that really hammered the cosmopolitan nature of Rosale home more than anything else. She wondered if any of the people here were from Blightwych and might recognize any of her friends, if only by reputation.

Regardless, Rosale had certainly not disappointed so far.

While there had been some initial hesitation due to their state of dress, when Sloane presented her guild badge, complete with its embedded ruby, the staff's hesitance had quickly turned into a lesson in noble ass kissing.

That, along with Lord Estos's recommendation, and surprisingly, the Banking Guild's endorsement, they had been given a sprawling suite in its own wing. The suite was large enough to accommodate a noble family and a dozen retainers with ease.

They even had dedicated stalls in the stables, an option they would definitely take advantage of before leaving.

As she navigated through the common area, Sloane spotted Nemura and Mariel. Nemura was seated in a chair, Mariel next to her. Sloane frowned as she noticed the judgmental looks some of the patrons were giving Nemura as they passed by. She sighed, her heart heavy with frustration, and approached them.

“Hey guys,” Sloane greeted, her voice warm despite the annoyance simmering beneath the surface.

Mariel's face brightened as she saw Sloane approach. “Sloane!” she greeted, her voice filled with youthful enthusiasm.

Nemura's greeting was more subdued, a simple nod and a gruff, “Sloane.”

“Where's Stefan?” Sloane asked, looking around the common area and ignoring the looks they were getting from a group of sun elves in fancy silks.

“He's checking in with the guilds,” Nemura replied. “His guild isn't accepted in Rosale, so he needs to register his presence and purpose with the Mercenary Guild.”

Sloane nodded, understanding the necessity of such a procedure. She just hoped it wouldn't cause any unnecessary complications. She took a seat next to Mariel, her mind already turning to their next steps.

“So, we need to stop by the temple and then the banking guild to get some money,” she began. “Then I think we all need to do some shopping.”

Nemura tilted her head, a silent question in her eyes, while Mariel's smile broadened.

“Why?” Nemura asked. “Do we need to go shopping, that is?”

“I've seen how we're being looked at here,” Sloane explained, her gaze sweeping over the room. “And I'll be honest, we do look like we don't quite belong. But hey, we're rich. Let's get you and Stefan some proper attire, along with Mariel and myself. I could really use something other than a damn dress.”

“Probably should stick to the dresses if the goal is to fit in,” a voice interjected.

Sloane turned to see Stefan approaching. “Why is that?” she asked.

“Rosale is very sophisticated,” Stefan explained. “If you want to fit the part, you can get away with a skirt at the most.”

Sloane nodded. “Your business all good?”

Stefan shrugged. “It is what it is. I'm not sure they believed me when I told them I was only here as part of my House, but they gave me a stern warning and I signed a document stating that I am not here on any Blade business.”

“Huh.”

“Anyways, I have some ideas for what I'll wear, and Nemura will need to dress like a knight. Which is a subject we should speak about at another time. You need a knight. Yemina fit that role well.”

Sloane glanced at Nemura, whose eyes widened in surprise. The woman quickly raised a hand. “No. Not for me.”

Sloane shrugged. “We’ll figure it out. You guys ready?”

They all nodded, but Mariel’s eyes glinted with mischief. “Father, it would make me so proud to see you become a knight. Ah,” she said before letting out an exaggeratedly wistful sigh. “It would assuredly be such an improvement over your lowly guard status. I dare say with how much you focus on your hair you almost already fit the part. Perhaps it would also allow me to rise from simple maid to the esteemed position of handmaiden.”

Stefan huffed a laugh. “Cheeky girl.”

Sloane and her companions left the Ivory Rose behind, making their way through the noble quarter towards the old city where the temples lay.

When they reached the plaza, Sloane’s mouth fell open. Which prompted Mariel to take the lead and fill the role of tour guide.

The holy plaza itself was a sprawling expanse of cobblestone, surrounded by a myriad of temples that stood tall against the sky. Each structure was beautiful and unique, their architecture reflecting the individual characteristics of the deities of whom they were dedicated. The plaza was a symphony of colors, from the gleaming white marble of the Temple of the Celestials, to the deep blues and greens of the Temple of the Seas. Statues of various gods adorned the plaza, their stone forms standing as silent guardians. The air was filled with the scent of incense and the soft hum of prayers, creating an atmosphere of tranquility that seemed to seep into one’s very bones. Despite the bustling city that surrounded it, the holy plaza was a sanctuary, a place of peace and reverence amidst the chaos of the world.

Their journey across the plaza was filled with the excited chatter of Mariel, who was more than eager to share her knowledge of the various temples and gods.

“This plaza is much larger than Marketbol’s,” Mariel explained, her eyes wide with awe. “The Family’s temple is smaller than most other temples in the plaza, but it’s the central feature, as is expected. The other temples are dedicated to numerous minor gods, the most prominent of which is the Temple of the Seas.” She pointed to a temple adorned with a massive statue of a sun elf woman, clad in a skirt and what looked like a bathing suit top, brandishing a harpoon and a net covered in seaweed.

She’s never been here before but she’s acting as if she’s an expert on it.

Cute.

Sloane squinted at the statue. “Who’s that?” she asked.

“That’s Aldum, the patron god of Nornport,” Mariel replied.

Sloane frowned, recalling what Maud had told her after she first arrived. “I thought Aldum was a high elf man?”

Mariel gave her a small smile, that was exactly the same type of smile she'd give a young Gwyn when she was about to explain how her worldview was completely wrong. "The gods have a primary avatar, yes, but they can take any form they want. They're the gods. The important thing is their mantle and their regalia. Aldum's Regalia always includes their net and harpoon."

"So the Regalia is how you identify what god it refers to despite what people—and in this case, gender—the god appears as?" Sloane asked.

Mariel nodded. "Yes, there are many different people and cultures. The gods and, of course, the Church recognizes that cultural differences are vast, and thus the gods appear to people in forms that make them the most comfortable."

"Huh. That makes a surprising amount of sense," Sloane mused.

Interesting way the Church deals with such a wide variety of species. Although, they are the sole religion. They had to have adapted in order to rise to such prominence.

After some more explanation from their young tour-guide-slash-priestess-in-training, they walked into the Temple of the Celestials. A young sun elf priest, not much older than Mariel, approached them.

"Greetings, how may this one assist you today?" he asked. "The next service is not for a few more bells, yet. However, you may of course freely enter to pray should you desire to speak your heart to Them."

Mariel smiled and bowed. "Greetings brother in Eona. Allow me to introduce my liege, Lady Reinhart and her entourage. I am Mariel, milady's personal maid and follower of Tenera. May She protect us from those that lurk in the night, and bring swift retribution on those who would harm the faithful."

The priest smiled kindly and bowed respectfully to Mariel. "Blessed is the Night that comes before the Day. Each brings that which allows the Mother to nourish us. Eona provides."

"Eona provides," Mariel echoed.

The priest rose and turned his attention to Sloane. "Milady, what can Their faithful do for you today?"

Despite the wholesomeness of the interaction, Sloane let the seriousness of her news settle into her. "We need to speak to the Praetor. We bring... grave news from the north, and it must be heard by them first."

The man nodded and glanced to the left. Sloane followed his gaze and saw a paladin in full armor and helm step from where they stood guard with a halberd held rigid. "Please, milady, follow me."

The priest smiled at the tall man. "Thank you, Vicori. I leave them in your most capable care."

The paladin gave them all an assessing look before giving a curt nod and leading the way, his halberd leaning against his shoulder.

Sloane, with Mariel at her side, followed the low-ranked paladin through the temple, her two faithful guards trailing behind. They were led through a door at the rear of the temple, into a large room and then down a set of stairs that led into a hallway. The paladin knocked on the first door on the right.

The door opened to reveal a weathered sun elf man. He took one look at Sloane and Mariel, then sighed. “Come on in. Thank you for escorting them, Vicori.”

The paladin saluted with a fist over his heart. “Of course, Praetor. I will return to my post.”

The Praetor nodded respectfully before gesturing them into what was a surprisingly small office. The room was almost comically tiny for his position, the walls lined with shelves filled with scrolls and books, the air heavy with the scent of parchment and ink. A single window let in a soft stream of light, casting long shadows across the room.

In fact, Sloane just had to comment.

“This is much smaller than what Shalas had in Marketbol.”

The man narrowed his eyes. “Of course, because I make a point of not sitting with a stick up my ass all the time. I have things that keep me busy outside of my office. I don’t need something large. Relena’s dead tits, the Guilds spoil even the Church in their cities.”

Sloane could only raise a brow.

The man chuckled. “Sorry, I know Shalas. She was in my brother’s squad when we were all still assigned to Dawn’s Rise. Prickly. But competent.” He crossed his arms, before reaching up and stroking his beard. “You didn’t come here just to demean the size of my office at her request, not that I wouldn’t put it past her. You wouldn’t have been brought to my attention if so. Did she send you with something important? Speak.”

Sloane shook her head. “I wish. No, we come bearing news from Swanbrook.” She turned to her raithe guard. “This is my guard, Stefan Stranca. He... he is the bearer of this message. Please allow him to explain.”

The man stood straighter as he looked at the shorter raithe man. Stefan closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Sloane knew this was hard for him. He’d personally saved Yemina and fostered a close professional relationship with the woman for a year. Only for the woman to die as they attempted to escape.

Apparently, the paladin had given him a scroll that explained much in case she were to perish, and he held it now like a lifeline in the sea.

“Praetor, as milady said, I am Stefan Stranca. I... I mean we barely escaped Swanbrook. The Temple has fallen. To traitors and cultists.”



Sloane found herself seated in the Praetor's chair, her gaze fixed on the man as he leaned against the wall, absorbing the weight of Stefan's account. The tale of Yemina's near assassination, the relentless attacks of the cultists—which they explained as an attempt to finish the job—and the ultimate betrayal by Praetor Moren had left a heavy silence in the room.

“Moren betrayed the Order?” Praetor Laum, as he had introduced himself, asked, his voice filled with disbelief.

Sloane nodded, her throat tight. “We... tried to stop Evocati Yemina, but she trusted him. When she realized... they fought, but he overpowered her and used magic...”

Laum closed his eyes, his face pale. “Can you give a detailed account of his magic? We... we will need to prepare a counter when we go for him.”

Sloane nodded again. “I can.”

Stefan stepped forward, extending a scroll to the Praetor. “Evocati Yemina wrote that in case...” His voice trailed off as Laum unrolled the scroll, his face growing darker with each passing moment.

Finally, he closed his eyes, appearing to say a silent prayer. They gave him the time he needed. “Will you be in the city long, Lady Reinhart?”

Before Sloane could respond, Nemura spoke up. “She will, Praetor. We will be here for some time to recover from all we have been through and to make a plan of action for the future.”

Sloane narrowed her eyes at Nemura but didn't argue. It wouldn't be a good look. The Praetor glanced at Sloane for confirmation, and she nodded.

He moved to his desk, placing the scroll down. Sloane rose from his chair. “Thank you for this information. I... I will dispatch riders to Dawn's Rise,” he said. “I will need to call upon you for more details at another time.”

Sloane found herself nodding in agreement, her gaze lingering on the Praetor as he carefully rolled up the scroll and placed it on his cluttered desk.

After passing him some information on how to contact her, they left the office. The door closed behind them with a soft click, leaving them in the quiet hallway of the temple. The air was cooler here, the stone walls radiating a chill that seeped into her bones.

Stepping outside of the temple, they were again greeted by the sight of the holy plaza. The plaza was a hive of growing activity, with people of all races and walks of life moving about, their voices blending into a constant hum. The sky above was a canvas of shifting colors, with clouds gathering ominously, hinting at the possibility of rain.

Sloane took in the sight, her mind already racing with the tasks that lay ahead. They were heading to the Banking Guild, but first... “Nemura. Why did you say that?” Sloane asked, her gaze fixed on the tall telv woman.

Nemura winced as she looked down at Sloane. “I’m sorry. I meant to speak to you about it first. I think it is in our best interest to... slow down.”

Sloane raised a brow. “Nemura, we spent a year in Marketbol, and a year in Swanbrook. We’ve been going nothing but slow.”

The tall telv woman nodded, her copper hair blowing lightly in the autumn wind. “I know. I don’t want us to stop moving, but I want us to take our time instead of reacting from one crisis to the next. You’re a resilient woman, Sloane. It’s something I respect the most about you, but we need to prepare ourselves before moving from place to place.”

She paused as they stepped around a group of people that were taking up half the damn sidewalk.

Nemura looked around before continuing, “Nornport gives you an opportunity to shore up your House. While you do business here with Lord Estos, Stefan and I can look into Gwyn. Then, when you’re done establishing a branch here in Nornport, we continue. We’ll ask in every town and village on the way to Calling. You also have the paladins who are supposed to be helping you search as well. We need to follow up on that. Clearly word hasn’t come to Nornport, but that doesn’t mean it hasn’t elsewhere.”

As they moved away from the holy plaza and into the bustling streets of the old city, the atmosphere changed. The buildings were older here, their architecture a blend of various cultures and styles. The streets were narrow and winding, filled with vendors selling everything from food to trinkets.

Stefan joined in the conversation as the people around them thinned out, “We also need to figure out the state of the country. The guard captain said something about troubles in the Heartwoods. We have to travel *through* the Heartwoods to reach Calling. We need to determine what’s going on there so we are not blindsided. With just the three of us, we need to prepare. Perhaps you can craft us things that will help us.”

Nemura was nodding along as the man spoke, clearly relieved to have an ally. Sloane narrowed her eyes.

Mariel scowled. “I can help too. I have magic.”

The cityscape changed once more as they moved into the merchant quarter. The buildings were more colorful, the streets wider. The air was filled with the sound of haggling and people moving about their day. Sloane could see the potential here, the opportunity to build something.

Sloane sighed. They were all correct. “Fine, we gather ourselves. I will get with Estos,” she said as she scanned the busy streets. “Then I will come up with another source of funding.”

She looked at Mariel. “I think it’s time we start practicing with your magic, as well, Mariel.”

Nemura’s head jerked to Sloane. “Is... Is that a sound idea? The Church...”

“They have plenty on their plate, but we will do it secretly. I have some ideas of how to help her in a way that won’t immediately *appear* blasphemous to the Church.”

Mariel smiled. “I can’t wait! Then I can actually contribute to the House.”

Sloane chuckled and ruffled the girl’s hair. “You’re young, and you’re an honorary member, but you don’t have obligations to the House. You just gotta keep being a kid. But! We’ll help you be a safe kid.”

Mariel scowled again. “I can be a part of the House too...” she mumbled, mostly to herself.

Maybe she would work on her magic too. She glanced to her side where her silent protector weaved through the crowd without anyone even aware. Yes, she would need to come up with a better way to use her magic. It was clear that she wasn’t being the most efficient mage she could be.

She stepped off of the sidewalk and crossed the road with her group to where the Banking Guild lay. As they approached the grand building that towered over the others, Sloane took a deep breath. There was a lot to do, and Nemura was right. All the resilience in the world wouldn’t save them if there was nothing to bounce back from. They needed to reassess. They needed to prepare.

And Nornport was the perfect place to do it.

Sloane would need to figure out what she really wanted to do with her... build, or path rather, as well.

After all, I’m an Artificer... not a mage.