

## 26 Pflugzeit, Angestag

I spent the day covering for Doctor Muller, yet again. Three unidentified rashes, one colicky baby, and one broken arm on a stupid kid who should know enough to stay away from the Square of Martials by now. Poor Rufus. He's just a scrawny kid that dreams of knighthood and nobody has the heart to tell him that it couldn't ever happen. I know his father's given up on trying to get him interested in the family business and has started steering him toward the city watch.

While I hate having to shove my own work aside to deal with these problems dropped on me by a massively irresponsible man whose extracurricular activities can only be speculated on, I do have to admit it's sometimes nice to get back to actual physician's work. Hopefully my work administrating the guild will allow me to retire to my own private practice someday. It just seems like every time I get a little money saved, something comes along to wipe that out.

## 27 Pflugzeit, Festag

Another day at the temple, putting in some face time. Oh how I hate it. All the priestesses acting aloof and the last time I heard anyone actually try to broach the topic of what we have in common, we're brushed off. Our knowledge doesn't amount to anything in light of their holy charge. What's worse, is they always have the entire city convinced of this fact. It's maddening. They tolerate us as though we were boys playing in their father's workshop, so proud of the smallest accomplishment and that we should be looking to them for approval and guidance. Of course the temple has a place, but so do we, but try getting the priestesses to admit that. Especially as there are so few, you'd think acknowledging the importance of the guild would be common sense at that point. But no - you'd get better success setting an Ulrican on a mission of diplomacy. So understandably tensions between the guild and temple are running high of late, even though we're just trying to pick up the slack, so it's important to maintain relations. I suppose it does provide a more convincing excuse when I slip away to visit Maggie. I'd still prefer my colleagues not to know about it.

The Shallyans have denied my application, yet again. It doesn't seem to matter that my income has risen steadily over the past five months since I moved into

Conrad's old job, or that I can now afford that house in the Freiburg. I know it would be a wonderful place to raise a child... once I found a way to extricate the remains of that half-buried carriage from the front lawn. I still think about how I could turn that front solar into a small-ish examination room for seeing patients while teaching Maggie the trade until she was old enough to join the guild. I'm sure the others would scoff at the notion of a female physician, but I know she's tough and smart enough to handle it. Anyone who'd grown up like she had would have to be. I can just imagine her all grown up and being inducted into the guild. Smart and capable, steady and sure of herself. They'd have to respect that regardless of her gender.

But, of course, income and houses and plans for the future be damned! A single parent could never provide the loving and nurturing home that a growing child needs! At least, this is what they tell me, casually dropping the stack of application forms into whatever Void the rejects go when they are "put on file." I know the real reason of course. It's not so much that I would be a single parent as it is about being a single father. Damn these Shallyans and their eternal fixation on motherhood! They'd probably think a rabid boar would be a better caregiver for Maggie as long as it had teats! And since I'm not like to find anyone to marry soon...

Which of course reminds me of the complete fool I made of myself today in the temple. There's a new priestess in town, either recently arrived as she'd had to ask about the tensions between guild and temple, or not so recently and just cruel enough to twist the knife. I haven't decided yet. Young, and pretty (Shallyans are always young and pretty when they're not vile old hags. How is that fair?) and bold enough to just walk right into the middle of us and start asking questions. I, of course, handled everything with my usual charm and aplomb, which is to say I tripped all over myself whilst beating a hasty retreat out the door. At least I'm pretty sure I didn't stutter or actually stumble. Perhaps she doesn't think me deficient, just nervous. Wonderful.

Sometimes I wonder if I'd have better luck with that rabid boar. Sadly, an intimate familiarity with the inner workings of the fairer sex affords one absolutely no clue as to how they work.

So I'm back to sitting here, writing in my journal on this old bench across from the house in the Freiburg. There's a metaphor here, twisted as that is. Me, sitting

immobile, looking across the gulf of a street at a possible future. A future full of weeds with a carriage half buried in the front lawn. Days like these lead me to wonder if at least one of the Gods derive some amusement at these random cruelties.

## 28 Pflugzeit, Wellentag

Ah, Wellentag, day after Festag, that blessed, blessed day when the populace remembers that it's poultices rather than prayers that truly heal the sick and infirm and so rush from their temples and seek proper care and treatment. Herr Gaffwig has finally consented to have me put a splint on his horse-stomped foot after more than ten days of hopping - hopping! - down to the Shallyan temple to have it prayed over. I had to re-break the bones in two places to get them to align properly; suffice it to say that Herr Gaffwig shall -not- be naming any subsequent children in my honor nor inviting me to any feasts should the foot mend properly.

But perhaps the yesterday spent in prayer was not entirely in vain. Perhaps the Gods who so rudely slammed the door in my face yesterday are opening a window and inviting me in, or however that saying is supposed to go. The new priestess sent a letter to my office to arrange an appointment to talk with me about the tension with the temple. It seems that when I'm not directly confronted with a woman my brain decides to function properly. Rather than stuttering or walking into stationary objects, I managed to come up with the idea of suggesting the meeting take place over lunch. I should have just enough clout to arrange a table at The Harvest Goose for tomorrow.

Is this enough? She is rather pretty - red hair and blue eyes - and I imagine dressed in something more flattering than robes she must be stunning. Obviously she wasn't too appalled with my behavior yesterday. Maybe her not being from Middenheim will work in my favor? She does seem more proactive than any other woman I've met. I can't help thinking, what sort of person would the Shallyans think would be a better mother than one of their own? I'm probably getting ahead of myself, but the idea of retiring to a private practice with a pretty wife and daughter... well, it's all I ever dared to want. And a great deal more than I ever dared to hope.

If only I had more time to daydream. Tilmann's dropped this mess on my desk, insisting that most of his equipment be moved halfway across the city as soon as

possible, and for some reason was rather vague on the exact location. What is this, the Wizard's and Alchemist's Guild? You'd think so from the way people have begun hoarding their little secrets from everyone else. Honestly, I stopped caring about halfway through his explanation. I ended up assigning Hugo and Rufus to help Tilmann's boy Wolfram haul everything. It ought to be good for them. Hard work builds character.

It's probably just preparing for in-house care for the von Haniss family. I hear the Lord hasn't been doing well of late, but Tilmann doesn't seem too concerned. I know some doctors try to maintain an emotional detachment, but Tilmann isn't affected at all. That level of detachment might be unhealthy, even if it would save a doctor's sanity. Is the tradeoff worth it? I wonder what Tilmann's secret is. Maybe I'll ask him sometime when he's not so distracted, or when I'm not.

## 29 Pflugzeit, Aubentag

Is this what love feels like? The possibility of having an actual future with someone? I'd forgotten what it's like. It actually feels pretty good, like this big weight's been lifted off my shoulders. Like I can dare to hope again.

My date with Rosemarie was wonderful! The Harvest Goose was a perfect choice; she seemed very impressed. The whole time she was very interested in everything I had to say and the nature of my work. I think she especially liked the idea of setting up an outreach program between the guild and the Temple of Shallya to help smooth over some of this tension. Maybe this will finally get more of the Shallyans interested in proper ways to deal with the sick and wounded beyond "patch them up and wait for the sister doing prayers." And maybe, just maybe, I could finally get a better look at what the power of prayer actually does to a person.

I admit, when I first came up with the idea, it was simply an excuse to spend more time with Rosemarie without the other priestesses wondering why I was spending even more time at the temple than I already do or having Rosemarie herself think I was coming on too strong. But her enthused response to the suggestion makes me wonder if she is more interested in me than I originally thought. She is... proactive. Proactive. That's how many times I've used that word to describe Rosemarie now?

Is that really the best I can do? Proactive. How about forward? Too unseemly. Fortright? Too stuffy. Predatory? Perhaps I'm getting into some dangerous territory with that one.

I find myself fixating on the smallest things - like the precise shade of her eyes, and continually remembering the way her hair frames her face like she was posed for a portrait, or how enchanting her smile is - and that way she sets her lips when she's paying extra attention. And it's not just around her. Everything reminds me of her, and it's so wonderful and crazy all at the same time. I want to let myself get swept away in this, but I know that's - well - crazy! I'm a doctor. I've always prided myself on being able to put one thought in front of the other in an orderly fashion and not jump to conclusions no matter how many people are bleeding and screaming at the same time - or how many demands are dumped on my desk. But now when I think of her... it's all I can do to remember what I was working on. I should stop myself, somehow. It's only been one date, after all. I can't be going all dove-crazy because a pretty priestess was nice to me.

I suppose I should say more dove-crazy. I lost the remainder of the day trying to draw up a plan for this outreach program, which so far amounts to taking Rosemarie with me when I visit patients. Maybe I need to find another priestess interested in partnering with a member of the guild. Or maybe I could sew wings to a rat and teach it to fly. I should put this thing away and focus on the mountain of paperwork on my desk. Is it possible that I authorized Tillmann to import ten ounces of arsenic earlier? Maybe it was arnica, that makes more sense.

### 30 Pflugzeit, Markttag

One of the major disadvantages to living on top of a mountain: the price of herbs. I can either pay the exorbitant rates the growers in-city charge for cuttings from their gardens or I can pay the equally exorbitant rates charged by the merchants who have to cover travel costs and gate taxes. I would love to convert some of the guildhouse's property into a medicine garden, but the herbalist and apothecary guilds would have a fit and shut me down.

Still no common comfrey in the market, even though all my regular vendors

know to keep an eye out for it. Did the road to Marienburg disappear or get overrun by bandits? I could have had some shipped in through Salkaltan by now. I had to use the last of my blessed thistle for Lady Gabler's ointment. Her scallop rash isn't responding to the hazelnut mixture as fast as I'd hoped.

I was hoping to hear from Rosemarie after our date, though I guess in retrospect I should be somewhat relieved I didn't bump into her today. I must have forgotten her more than passing familiarity with herb lore when I bought that rather sizable pouch of valerian root that I've had on me the entire day. There's no way I would have been able to explain that one away.

### 31 Pflugzeit, Backertag

Rosemarie came to see me at the office today! She seemed very excited about the outreach program. Now I wish I'd worked on it more so I could have impressed her. She didn't have any ideas for other priestesses who would want to participate, so my idea to give myself some cover probably won't work out.

She had so many questions though! About my work and responsibilities and all the people I have to oversee. I have a feeling that if she hadn't gone into the temple she would have made a great administrator. Wouldn't that be nice, to have a wife I could share all my responsibilities with? Running a guild gives me a healthy appreciation for division of labor, but if it was just the two of us and our own little private practice we could each have little bits or take turns with patients and paperwork and maybe even have our own little herb garden out back. Small and discreet, of course, with a nice high fence and enough carrots planted to make it look like a vegetable garden.

Though she did have a rather peculiar interest in the interns I assigned to Tilmann. I guess she was just interested in how things are structured. The man does have more people working for him than any other. Come to think of it, I haven't seen him around in a while. Somebody had come by the guild looking for him earlier, a woman. Pretty enough (though I prefer redheads) but she seemed confused and flush, and I think her eyes were a bit more dilated than they should have been. At first I thought she was a patient he was treating for something, but then why would she come when he wasn't around? My gut told me she was some vagrant despite her

looks and I turned her away. I'm just glad the man doesn't have a wife or I'd be constantly worried I was going to accidentally inform on him.

I'm still hoping I'm not appearing too eager with Rosemarie. She seems interested but I don't want to slip and start talking about plans for the future too soon. It would probably be a poor idea. But on the other hand, my standing in the guild should be a fairly decent recommendation, shouldn't it? Or maybe she's waiting for some signal of greater interest. With her looks she's probably constantly bothered by men with a passing fancy trying to have her and I'd hate for her to think I'm one of that sorry lot. What if she thinks that's all it is? Just infatuation with a pretty face for this week without any real intention. A woman her age would be thinking about settling down - looking for someone steady and dependable. That should help recommend me, shouldn't it? Unless she misunderstands my intentions. But how can I let her know I'm serious without frightening her off because I'm too serious?

### 33 Pflugzeit, Konigstag

I've taken a personal day and dropped my work on Tilmann. After being so sore that he got passed over for Conrad's job, I figure he could use a taste of it. He's hasn't been around in a few days anyway. A guild only works if all the members contribute to its upkeep. And with that, I'm blowing it off and going to the market.

I'll have to be careful in choosing a gift for Rosemarie. I know she's not a normal Shallyan, but the temple frowns on overt displays of wealth. I just want to get her something beautiful. Maybe something for her hair. She does have beautiful hair. I'd want to get her a bright green ribbon sewn with gold, but I've only ever seen her wear her temple clothes and it might be too obvious. White, then. White with gold, maybe gold sewn into doves as a border. Can I find something like that in the city? If not, I'm sure I can have it made.

Maybe while I'm out shopping I'll find some small gift for Maggie. Something secret, something that she can keep hidden from everyone else in the orphanage so nobody (especially the priestesses) will take it from her. Of course, the loss of a precious item would probably sting less than a day-long lecture on the evils of temporal wealth and how someone with Maggie's lot in life shouldn't get too used to having nice

things.

Well, maybe she should get used to it. Maybe all of this is leading to a place where she can.

1st of Sigmarzeit, Angestag

This is what it feels like. The feeling of the other shoe coming down squarely on my neck. The rug being yanked out from under me. All my plans tumbling down around me. I'm not even sure how it feels. I'm just overwhelmed by this numbness, that somehow still manages to be combined with the most acute pain I've ever experienced. I think somehow this combination of sensations shouldn't be possible, but there it is.

The worst part? I didn't even get to hear any of it. I had to read it all in a letter. So much for proactive. Couldn't even tell me to my face. Didn't even let me have the chance to respond, or ask why. Just give a letter to some courier and hope it all goes away.

I don't want to just go away. I don't want to disappear just because some letter tells me to. I don't know why she did this. I don't know why she would do this. How does it all stop from just one action like that? I really ought to talk to someone. As a physician, I know it's not healthy to keep all this anger bottled up inside. At least, that's what I keep telling myself.

Stood outside the Shallyan temple for nearly two hours. Couldn't bring myself to go in. She could have been in there. Anyway, it doesn't feel right, the idea of talking to a Shallyan. Less like mental health, and more like confession. I don't think I can take that right now. It's not that I don't believe. But do I even believe? I've seen miracles happen, I've witnessed divine power heal what I couldn't. But what mercy is there in this? This ripping out my insides and stomping all over them. Killing me would have been mercy. All this is is suffering. How can a Shallyan, of all people, bring so much suffering into the world?

It's good to have friends during a time of need. I'm starting to think that the best treatment for this kind of pain really is a long talk with a good friend and a glass of



wine. I wasn't intending on telling him, it just came out going over the weekly review. I had no idea that he could be so understanding as my impression of him had always been remote, uncaring, and even a little shady. But I suppose one must leave room for people to pleasantly surprise you. Tilmann says that I shouldn't worry, that these sorts of things happen with the weaker sex, that it's hard for them to focus on one thing at a time. I should have known that the letter meant there was some other man in the picture, that it wasn't anything I said or did. That's just the way women are.

I wish I could just get ~~Rosens~~ her out of my system. I just need her so badly. I don't want to have to give up any of my hopes and dreams over a letter. Tilmann says he can help, but I'm not quite sure how. Maybe it has something to do with his wealthy patron. Women do tend to be attracted to men with money. Well, men with more money than I have, anyway. I have the feeling it's related to however he spends his spare time. I've always been discomforted thinking about that too much - but it doesn't seem to matter anymore. He's a good friend. Maybe he'll find a way. Either way, I'll meet him back here at the guild tomorrow morning and see just what it is he's come up with.

## 2 Sigmarzeit, Festag

I don't know how Tilmann was able to do what he did. Honestly, I don't think I care. We'll go down to the courthouse later so I can tell the tribunal about her connections to the von Haniss family and pass them a few crowns to see Rosemarie into the stocks. From there, we should be able to get her into the house nearby that von Haniss is renting for whatever it is Tilmann's doing there.

I've never seen anything like these things Tilmann gave me. Silvery greenish with a faceted appearance. They're about the size of a walnut, elongated, but I've no knowledge of what they're made of. I never knew that he was so well-versed in arcane studies. Suddenly it all makes sense. As much as I've been fascinated with the physical effects of the intervention of the divine - he's been focused on more arcane matters of altering body and mind. I'm astounded. After this is done, I must make time to inquire onto how he learned and from whom. Last I knew, wizards were as reluctant to give up secrets as priestesses. Perhaps even much of the same.

methodology would help in what Rosemarie and I have planned.

He says that implanting these foci into her arms and legs will calm her mental wanderings, make her more aware of reality and focus her mind on what is important. Apparently this has been something of a secret treatment he developed and applied to a handful of young women from wealthy families who had become entirely unmanageable and would have otherwise thrown their lives away on petty and frivolous things. I'd never be able to afford (or probably find) such materials on my own, but Tilmann has graciously provided these through his own personal supplier. I don't know how I'll ever be able to thank him.

After this is procedure done, he says she'll need me to be around for a period of several days while she acclimates to the change. I hardly mind that. After, she'll be rational and open to me explaining the situation to her. Naturally she'll see this proposal of marriage is the best thing that could happen for her.

And then - well - then I'm going to go down to the Shallyan temple tomorrow and introduce Maggie to her new mother.