

BLACK LANTERN REPORT: MAGE GUILDS & SCHOOLS

WRITING: DARREN PEARCE

RULES: HOWARD BRANDON

ADDITIONAL RULES: SEAN PATRICK FANNON

EDITOR IN CHIEF: CARINN SEABOLT

EDITING: GAYLE REICK, CARINN SEABOLT

ILLUSTRATION: BIEN FLORES, ALIDA SAXON

DESIGN: AARON ACEVEDO, JASON ENGLE & ALIDA SAXON

LAYOUT: ALIDA SAXON

LINE MANAGER: GAYLE REICK

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PROLOGUE: BRENNA MCINTYRE

"My name is Thaddeus Taft; I'm an agent within the Black Lanterns and one of the three handlers who has been looking after our young mage student, Brenna McIntyre. Brenna came to us early in life. Her magical career came later as she's one of the graduates of our orphanage and schooling projects. After a few accidents where her power caused some... unanticipated effects to the surrounding countryside, we suggested a new avenue for her to follow. She joined us so young that our Brother Brenna very quickly realized the opportunity in front of the Lanterns to gain information on the Mage School of the Seven Stars -- we deemed it vital to learn as much as we could about the mysterious mages and their magical means as possible. She quickly made her way to the school and was accepted as a student.

One never knows when or how this information might prove useful.

Brenna is eager, quick to learn, and has managed to gain a solid reputation within the School in a relatively short time. She's the perfect agent as well, since in the beginning, she had several unfortunate accidents involving night terrors and unleashed magical energy in the academy dormitories. This allowed her to befriend key members of the Eldritch Academy, and to gain their confidence while learning to control her abilities.

Since Brenna is in a mage school, the normal lines of communication are not open to us. In order to avoid detection, Brenna's developed a reputation as a copious note taker and letter writer. Her reports always arrive as letters about her life to a close friend or relative, so to this end I've compiled all available reports into a single document to be left in the usual location -- allowing us to further illuminate the many secrets of the mages.

Brenna always disguises her reports as letters to her parents, so we make sure that her letters find their way home." Brother ~ Thaddeus Taft ~ Blacksmith

MAGE GUILDS & SCHOOLS

"I have few friends here, but the ones I do have are good ones. I remember when you suggested I enroll in the Guild of Seven Stars a few years ago; I was younger then, still not fully versed in the ways of magic while thinking I knew it all. My power had only just begun to show, and I was a danger to myself, and those around me. I am sorry dearest mother, for accidentally blowing most of the pig pen sky high.

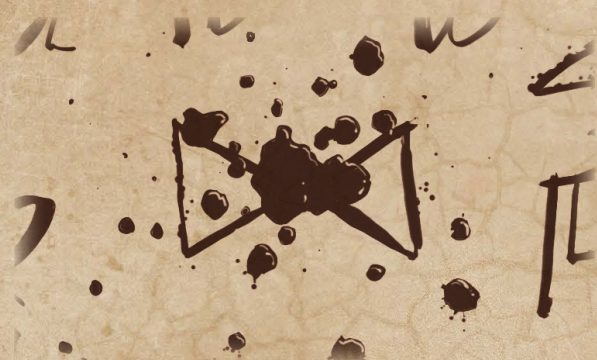
It might seem a laughing matter to those who look back on it in hindsight, but not to me, I still had second and third shockwaves from the magic coursing through my body. It hurt, and whilst I was furious at you for sending me away to one of the Mage Schools -- I can see the wisdom in your course of action now.

I have approached the third step of power, a new journey which will take my sorcery to new heights. I am controlling Essence and the forces that I can command with more accuracy now; there's not been a single incident where the Archmage Shyranna has had to scold me for detonating every window in the dormitory after a fit of night terrors. These incidents used to happen quite regularly.

Give my love to Uncle Jacob, I am sure he's eager to learn of my progress, and tell him that I'll try and keep up more frequent letters. We had to go into lock-down recently, one of the Aspirant Mages broke into the Sealed Library and managed to unleash a powerful summoned creature, it took the Archmage and her Senior Mages three whole days to put it back.

Thankfully it wasn't my fault!

I'll try and write some more soon, Your Loving Daughter, Brenna." ~ Brenna McIntyre.



A VERY BRIEF HISTORY

I sat in on the first lesson of that first day, and I remember some elderly mage and his penchant for long rambling speeches. It wasn't long before I found company with others - both mages and friends in the city. In addition there seems to be a bright light glowing in the Golden Lantern Inn. I turned some heads when I started learning more quickly than others yet I think that was due to the nightly meditations I'd learned as a child. It is more difficult to meditate now because all of us can feel the magic being learned and used on the school grounds. Who knew that it is almost like having a separate set of senses that are just for feeling when magic is performed and knowing what its composition is.

Senior Mage Denyn was his name. He had this thick accent which was hard to grasp at times, but thankfully Shanek wrote copious notes and I was lucky to have his help writing my own notes regarding the formation of the Eldritch Academies.

MAGIC, A NEED FOR CONTROL

I must admit that I did begin with a doodle of the old man talking, I couldn't help myself, but I don't think that's really important or appropriate. I was brash then but I'd hate him to think I was so rude to draw one of my caricatures. The basic point of that first lecture began with why we need learn to control our magic, whatever form it takes.

Magic, he stated, is one of the fundamental forces flowing through the world and those who can use it require control. He stated that we really need to be able to see the forces first to be able to control them, via our will, our thoughts, and the other ways we can display our magic. He went on to outline a few instances in which a lack of control had resulted in terrible events, and even went so far as to blame the Elders of the Elves for some long ago accident that caused untold damage. It seemed to have something to do with the Ascended.

I felt that the lecture was more a personal viewpoint, rather than any practical history. I must admit that I nearly dozed off a couple of times.

KAINE AND THE FIRST SORCERERS

I learned that the mages hold true to the idea that Kaine was the first sorcerer, a man who lived during or just after the Age of Darkness. He managed to discern that he'd a gift for manipulating Essence in ways that no druid, acolyte, nor necromancer could. He used this primal power to fight the Hordes of Darkness, and went off to find others to help him, those who shared his gift.

According to Denyn he was able to find several. A handful of humans and a fair number of fae were gifted with this power -- so they became the first sorcerers of Shaintar. They were weak though, their magic was crude, dangerous, and definitely uncontrolled. I learned that they were probably the first to use bursts of pure magic for attacking, and defensive fields of energy to prevent injury.

Kaine wasn't happy with the results, so he began to experiment, and Master Denyn says that Kaine was credited with the creation of -- in common parlance -- spells. With these spells he was able to create more sophisticated effects, gain more power, and eventually began to exert more control. Kaine's blueprint is what we mages now use in the learning of modern magic, experimentation, and in crafting new spells.

SORCERY AND THE THREE SCHOOLS

I didn't know this, but apparently it was Kaine, again, who studied magic to such an extent that he worked out there wasn't just Sorcery. Denyn rambled on about how Kaine was the first and only mage to truly understand this, and the father of the Sorcery art, the creator of the primary form of magic known as the School of Sorcery.

I had to interrupt, the old man glared at me, but I asked him what the other schools were.

He explained it as such:

"Any magic which is thus considered harmful, dangerous to life and limb, and can be used for sorcerous attacks -- along with magic which can be used for defense. This is considered to fall into the purview of the School of Sorcery, the kind of magic that you use young lady. Then there are spells which affect mind and body in some way, these are often known as Biomancy and fall under that School. Anything we cannot clarify, or we are so

unsure of which does not fall into the others we call Patternology. Though much magic, and many spells are often considered to be a combination of two, or three Schools. Or we did, because really, Sorcery changed so much now that the other Schools are a lost art."

So much of what they practiced has been lost according to the mage, only a small percentage remains to this day. Magic has totally changed, and modern Sorcery is nothing like it was.

Oh and he talked about Kaine's constant experimentation. I also learned that Kaine supposedly started the first crafted spell books: "The Lost Tomes of Kaine," which contained ancient spells and rituals -- many which might rival the spells of this age.

I find it hard to believe though, because as I studied I learned that people in Kaine's age were far more focused on surviving than writing things down. Not being killed or eaten is more important than recording things for posterity, scholarship, or research.

FORMALIZED TEACHING

Denyn went on to explain that although the mages look to Kaine as the root of Sorcery, and what it has become today, there's another mage they credit with the formation, and formalization of what we now come to call schools. He also notes that schools, are different to Schools, and guilds are a different thing altogether.

Brek, one of the other students, asked him at this point to clarify, and because it interested me, I jotted it down in my notes.

"Our School is one of the recognized paths of magic. These paths follow certain rules and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. The various common forms of magic are as such: Thaumaturgy (Acolyte), Necromancy (Necromancer), the Way (Adept), with specialized groups like Farspeakers, Warrior-Adepts of the Jade Flame, and the Order of the Azure Citadel, Alchemy (Alchemist), Channeling (Druids), with alternate forms like Shaman and Tempest/Storm, Sorcery (Sorcerer), Faith (Priest) and Arcmancy (Arcmancer). This ignores the power of item enchanting, which could be considered a magical art itself. Of course, these are a few of the paths of magic and the professions of the people who follow them. There's others which are a blend, such

as the Denier's of Death, and as no one knows what magic the Raven or Unicorn have and other forms have been lost in time. All mages learn somehow, whether through spells and books or creating potions or learning to control your surroundings with your mind.

This is a school is where you learn magical spells, control your gifts, and come into your power. There are a number of schools, but we feel that as ours has connection to the great Bran the Enlightened, it's the most important. Another term for these schools is Eldritch Academies, as that name encompasses a number of magical abilities..

A guild is a collected group of like-minded magical practitioners, formed for the purpose of protecting its members and crafting for others. An example of a mage guild could be a group of weather mages working together during the growing season and hiring out to help the crops get the right weather and encouraged to grow. Other guilds are formed for research to go beyond the mere capabilities of a school and into the unknown. Think of them like further education."

Centuries later, the old man continued after his discussion of the various magical abilities, the seeds of formal teaching began to emerge. He cites Bran the Enlightened, who lived centuries after Kaine, as the first mage who founded the first formalized school -- deep in the heart of what was to become known as the Freelands.

Master Denyn then goes on to explain that Bran was a devotee of a lost power. There were many scholars who decried Bran's work, claiming he was flirting with Necromancy, at best. The wily old mage called the accusations balderdash, falsehood, idiocy, and finally poppycock. There were some laughs in the lecture hall.

The old mage then went on to discuss Evander the Enchanter, Alain, and Oliana the Bright as masters of other arts. He also called Evander the: "Practical Man's Mage" though I'm not sure why, it must be in a later lesson.

Of course that was the sorcery of the past, modern sorcery is quite different. I'm told, Life is the magic of the Druids, Necromancy and Thaumaturgy are very bad -- which they're very quick to impress on the more unruly of the students here at the academy.

Something called Biomancy and Patternology are skills that have been lost to the ages or the magic has changed. I'd assume that these skills have been folded into the modern art.

I could fill my letters with such lectures, but I felt this was probably the most important one of them all to you. This is where I learned I didn't know anything. I'm off to study, Mother, I await your next letter soon.

LEARNING MAGIC

Dearest Uncle Jacob,

I'm writing to you because Mother said in her last letter to me that you've been really interested in the way schools teaches magic. I'm told that how I'm learning is typical of any of the magical schools found here in the Southern lands, and whilst some schools are devoted to teaching a particular aspect of the art, ours provides a balance between all the skills required to utilize magic for attack, defense, and to help others. I think you'll be really interested in the ideas behind how our teachers impart the correct methods for control, especially our elf lecturer.

Of course, the teachers are quick to point out that they've no idea how the Necromancers in Shave nor learn their craft, which I've no desire to learn. There's not much known about the Acolytes of Kul-A-Nar Empire nor the Prelacy of Camon - though the latter seems to stem from a desire to remove magic from everywhere.

THE STEPS OF MAGICAL CONTROL

Uncle, I've become rather fond of our teacher in this regard, he's an elf and he's rather pretty. I do catch some of the other female students in the hall staring at him, but Quillion doesn't seem to notice. He's an Eldakar (one of several versions of this race) sorcerer and very much in tune with the natural energies that exist in our magical world. He taught one of the best lectures I've had on the subject of magical control, and he's such a confident speaker, I suppose he has hundreds, if not thousands, of years of experience which I don't understand because he seems so young.

He first talked about the importance of being able to perceive the magical world, to see the Aetheric energies and to recognize them. I was amazed to discover that color plays an important role in such things, and I was so energized by his lectures that I promise I never once doodled a silly old man next to a goat in the margin of my mystical workbook!

I was fascinated and learned so much. I learned that something called Patternology was once taught at something called the School of Enchantment on Sunrise Island. Now it's called the Dawn Academy and teaches Sorcery with a curriculum very similar to our own. There's a whole bunch of actions involved in learning to control yourself and affect your environment. As mother always says "It boils down to" three steps.



STEP ONE: PERCEIVING THE MAGICAL WORLD

When a person's power begins to manifest, the magic is usually accompanied by visual or other effects which may involve mystical runes glowing in the air, sudden winds, other illusions, and odd sounds or feelings. If they've the talent, they'll see the magic around them take on a colorful hue that's based on the casters' inner being. However, those who can see beyond will eventually pick out a whole spectrum of color that will help them to determine what kind of magic is being used.

Once a sorcerer can see/sense the aspect of the magic they can move onto reaching out with their ability and intent to begin taking hold of the power and using it.

STEP TWO: TAKE HOLD OF THE THREADS

Many sorcerers often call this Spell Weaving, because you're literally pulling threads of magical energy into a whole Tapestry to create the effect desired.

As it turns out, I was one of the better students at seeing magic according to Quillion. So Uncle Marissa Cardyn was wrong, it's not only people who are born to the lines of famous sorcerers who can see magic the best. But I digress and it really isn't very nice of me to mention her in these letters, but I know you asked for my school life!

Marissa also needs a new hat; hers may have accidentally turned into ash from an accidental electrical discharge. I swear I didn't do it on purpose, but she got in the way when I was connecting an elemental thread to something and... Quillion wasn't happy, but he understood my mistake. I had to stay behind and help him clean up the hall.

Oh the hardship!

STEP THREE: EXERT CONTROL

Once you have the threads in place you really need to concentrate the most; it's something that Quillion has drummed into us time and time again. Eventually it will become second nature, but even then, there's room for error and if you're not concentrating one hundred percent -- well, Marissa would need more than a new hat. This is the most dangerous of the

three steps, and once you have control you can do what you want with the resultant magical energy -- Quillion demonstrated by erecting a magical barrier whilst some the students further along demonstrated by creating and throwing snowballs at him.

There you have it, Uncle. Three simple (ha ha) steps on how magic works. Sometimes I think I'll never have the hang of it, and then there're the days everything goes exactly right and I've no idea why. Love to Mother and Father.

OTHER LESSONS

Dear Father,

I wanted to tell you about some of the other lessons I've been learning about attack and defense. Our teacher is an accomplished sorceress from the Freelands. She's ever so nice, friendly, but I really don't think I ever want to be on the wrong end of her temper. Juliana Fero is her name, she's only slightly older than you, and apparently her lineage dates all the way back to the first known mages recorded, the ones I mentioned in my earlier letters -- like the people who helped found the Mage Schools with Bran the Enlightened.

She's good though, and has told us stories of her battles against the forces of Flame and Darkness. I think she'd make an excellent friend, and Father, you know how Mother is always telling me to try and make new friends. She's expressed an interest in meeting you both when the Academy holds an open day. I've told her about you and Uncle Jacob too.

I learned a new spell from her, one I was able to construct myself after watching her. I've decided to call it Brenna's Beguiling Bolt. Apparently, alliteration is important in Higher Magic. I'm not sure if she wasn't just pulling my leg, but I don't mind, she's fun to learn from and that's why I'm here.

Once again I was told I excelled at my training, and I was a model student. I hope you're proud of me. I hate to end this letter on a sour note though, it seems that Marissa (told you there was something wrong there) was caught with a book on Necromancy and now she's being expelled from the Academy. Her father's been informed and I don't think he's going to be happy she's besmirched her line. I don't want to be the student who takes pride in another's misery, but I think someone needs to watch her -- that's dangerous