
Cleric Alder

Ok, ok, you can do this. You've been to a few weddings before. The nice person who gave you a way out gave you some books you've tried to read. Everything's going to be fine. Just don't think about what they'll do to you when you get caught.

You're totally going to get caught, aren't you.

See, you're Ter Fiero. Fire caste soldier. This wasn't such a bad gig a year or two ago. Tetrana was at peace. Sure, drills and such are work. You have to deal with guard duty, put up with the commanders, sleep in the barracks. But then, when you go to the tavern in the evenings, it's lots of fun. The pay's good, you stay in great shape, you have good stories. It was a good gig.

But then Izar decided it'd be a great idea to mass troops, to make some threats, to try some covert operations. Sure, that great hero Kinito or whatever stopped their invasion, but things are still tense at the border. Fighting could break out any time. And you almost died last battle. Your fort's liable to see heavy fighting if there is a straight-up invasion. And if your generals decide to take the fight to them, you'll likely get assigned to front guard. Not odds you like. Not odds you like at all.

So, maybe you had a lot to drink. And maybe the other soldiers were taunting you a bit, goading you on, telling stories about how horrible and bloody battle is. And at some point, you really just wanted to be anywhere else but a border fort.

So you ran.

Of course, in the morning, your situation hit you. Desertion is not looked on nicely by the military. Your family's all Fire caste; none of them would take you in. You had nowhere to go.

For a while, you just kept to the wilderness. Your military training prepared you to survive on your own for a while. But you couldn't live like that forever. So you headed for the capital. Maybe you could blend in there.

But by the time you got there, you still didn't really have a plan. You needed a place to live. An income other than fighting. But what could you do?

You were standing by one of the fountains when you hear the clank of armor. A cluster of soldiers, moving directly towards you! You panicked and ran into the building nearby, some temple. Seeing a Water cleric there, you called "Sanctuary!" They sat you down and listened to your story.

And then the cleric, Cleric Alder, made a wild proposal: switch places. They'd pull some strings to get around that whole "desertion" thing and go back to the border as you, and you could stay here as a cleric. It sounded wonderful, and you accepted without a second thought.

Of course, you hadn't quite gotten at the time that Alder was actually the Head Cleric for all Tetrana.

They helped you with a disguise, gave you some pointers, left you some books to read, and then left. And you were adrift. You couldn't make heads or tails of the books. And then people found you: clerics, messengers, servants. Asking you questions. Asking why you hadn't led services. Asking if you felt all right. You claimed illness, bumbled through the questions as best you could, tried not to tip anyone off. You avoided people as much as possible, but there was only so much you could put off.

And what you cannot at all put off is the Convergence. You never knew much about it beyond vague stories, before, but apparently it's some sort of once-in-a-lifetime mystical event that can reshape your whole society. There's all this ceremony that you have no idea about. There's something about people making butterflies out of elemental gems to reshape the caste system? That seems like it has all sorts of failure modes. If the Fire caste gets stronger, they'll probably get Tetrana into all sorts of wars. You don't wish the horror of war on anybody. But if the Fire caste falls in the social hierarchy, then life will suck for the ordinary soldiers like you were even more. That doesn't sound good either. It'd probably be safest just to leave things as they are.

Meddling with the caste system isn't enough for these people, though. They also want to change the sacred, codified, en-

shrined traditions of Tetrana. That's maybe not *so* bad, in theory. But one of those traditions is the ban on using fire magic in warfare. War's horrible enough for soldiers when it's just swords and bows. If we start using fire magic, and our enemies start using it back, it'd just be horrendous. No, that's one tradition that needs to stand firm.

You guess you're supposed to be orchestrating both of those ceremonies, but that's not all. Apparently marriages in the first half hour after the Realignment are supposed to be particularly auspicious, so there's going to be a lot of demand for your services officiating. But there are all these rules about weddings, and if you get them wrong everyone's going to know you're a fake.

The big rule for weddings is all about caste: someone can only marry someone else in the same caste or a caste that's adjacent in the social hierarchy. (You think there's even a bit in the ceremony where you're supposed to confirm the parties' identities and castes.) So, with the current caste hierarchy, someone in the Fire caste could marry someone from the Air or Water caste, but not someone from the Earth caste. Except, it's inauspicious to marry right before the Realignment, so these marriages will all be after the Realignment. Thus, who can marry whom will be based on the new ordering of the castes, after everyone's changed the caste system with their magic gem butterflies.

Were the gods drunk when they set all this up? Whatever, it's worlds better than getting shot at. It can't be that hard to bluff your way through officiating the most important religious ceremonies of a century among some of the most important people in all Tetrana. Knowing that if you mess up, everyone'll know you're a fake. And you'll probably get taken back to the fort and court-martialed for desertion.

Just don't let anyone see how scared you are.

Goals

- Do whatever you need to to stay out of the war.
- Keep your position as Head Cleric by keeping the Convergence running smoothly, performing auspicious marriages, and making sure no forbidden marriages take place.
- For the Realignment, maintain the status quo, especially as regards to the position of Fire.
- Maintain the tradition against the use of fire magic in warfare; war's hell enough as it is.

Contacts

- **Ter Fiero:** Actually Cleric Alder, the Water cleric you traded places with.
- **Their Majesty, Ceranest:** The monarch's here, of course. They must work with the Head Cleric all the time. What if they find you out?
- **Mim Kinril:** The Guildmaster of the Water caste, and the leader of Water's delegation to the Convergence.
- **Risdan Gully:** A less prestigious but still successful merchant, here to represent Water as well.
- **Quan Northwind:** An irresistibly attractive delegate. But alas, their status as a noble of Air places them forever out of your reach. . .

Items

- Water gem (×5)
- Alder's Spirit Butterfly