

Diary of a Dunmer: The Rise of Rae'lan Dras

By Elizabeth 'Sage' Carr

The Archmage stood at the window of her study gazing up at the dark new moon. Candlelight flickered on the assortment of plants, specimen jars, dusty tomes, parchment stacks, and other curiosities. This very candlelight was one of the peculiarities that set this mage apart from most. Rather than use an arcane fire lamp or even a magelight spell, Rae'lan Dras burned beeswax candles as often as possible. There was a kind of magic that no mage could reproduce in the act of a mundane activity such as candle burning. Perhaps it was this very philosophy that carried Rae'lan from her humble and troubled past in Morrowind, through her adventures in Cyrodiil as she pursued knowledge and experience, all the way to her auspicious position of Archmage. This station meant that not only was she the official governing authority of magical education, but also considered an expert of magical practice by all other mages on the continent of Tamriel. There will be entire history books written about her...

Rae'lan mused up at the dark moon whose shadowed hues matched her own skin. She wondered if any of the history books would capture what it meant to be a Dunmer, also known as a dark elf, who was able to transcend the ill-conceived notions much of Tamriel held against the Dunmer. As she reached for her silvered tumbler of Cyrodiilic Brandy, her mind wandered back to the events that led her to this tower.

Morrowind, 2nd of First Seed, 750th Year of 3rd Era

"Rae'lan!" the startled illusionist exclaimed. His robes hung wetly about his shoulders, his proud coif dripped flatly onto his face. In fact, the whole room was soaked, priceless tomes and all.

“I- I’m so sorry, Erebfar...” Rae’lan Dras stammered. “I was trying to bind the aqueous elemental threads with the-” she was cut off as Erebfar sputtered and let out a small squeak of rage.

“Last week it was fire, the week before that a *fire tornado*, and yet another week prior, the tragic shattering of the ancient stained glass window in the foyer. Oh and let’s not forget when poor Vaynth was SUCKED into a vortex you forgot to unmake and spent a fortnight trapped in Nirn before she was found.” With each new accusation Rae’lan felt herself becoming smaller and colder inside. Her throat burned with her ragged breath and her eyes stung as she held back tears. She was trying so hard to follow the instructions of the mages whom she was studying under at the guild. The problem was that she didn’t see Nirn the way the rest of them do. Where they saw a few threads of magic here and there with meditation, Rae’lan saw a brightly churning limitless fabric of energy. It was so difficult to pick out the relevant bits based only on the words of other mages’ descriptions.

“Rae’lan,” sighed Erebfar, “the other Elders and I have been speaking. It is time for you to leave.”

Topal Sea, 4th of Rain’s Hand, 750th Year of 3rd Era

Rae’lan Dras felt certain she would be sick again. The wooden floor and walls creaked all around her as the waves churned and tossed the ship up and down in the storm. A sailor’s hide shoes patted damply on the wooden rungs of the ladder as he climbed below deck saying jovially, “at least this is just a light storm!” Rae’lan didn’t even look up from the bucket she was wrapped around and instead let out a nauseated groan. She desperately wanted to slip into the realm of Nirn so as to separate herself

from her physical body's awareness, but after weeks of using this tactic she felt almost raw in her bones and far too tired to attempt it again.

"How many more days until we reach Bravil?" Rae'lan asked into her bucket. The Nordic sailor paused with his finger on his chin, then replied in a sing-song tone, "about two more days if the storm eases and we row hard." Rae'lan found herself dourly wishing she was a master mage so that she could simply push this miserable storm off to some other sea.

Colovian Highlands, 15th of Sun's Height, 764th Year of 3rd Era

The sun's dying light bathed the shrine in a blood hued glow, adding to the sinister air around it. Rae'lan had come to the highlands just Southwest of Bruma to investigate claims that a rogue guild of Daedra-worshipping necromancers was attempting to open a portal to the Daedric realm through means of sacrifice and reanimation. Rae'lan shuddered at the thought of this hideous practice as the black shroud of night dropped onto the highlands. She was being sent as an emissary from the Arcane University's department of Magical Ethics and Safety. Just on sight she could see that these claims were certainly true: the blood-stained slab of rock was surrounded by bones and a jade idol of Mehrunes Dagon.

Rae'lan's task was to unwind any energies that were forming a portal into the Daedric realm and to set a ward in place that would prevent the activities from continuing as well as let these vile mages know that they are being watched. She set wards of protection in every direction around the site and then raised a self-warding shield around her own body. She then took a deep, steadying breath and allowed her consciousness to slip into the fabric of energetic forces known as Nirn. Rae'lan

immediately saw a dark twisting fabrication of energies swirling around a yawning black chasm. She looked carefully for a weak point in the portals' weave. There- a small empty spot where white light shone through the wreath of writhing energies. She gathered her will into that spot and began dismantling the energies around it.

"You are not one of the mortals who usually comes to feed me," a loud voice boomed cruelly. Rae'lan started and nearly snapped her will back to herself, but she quickly recovered and continued unweaving the portal. She refused to answer. This voice could only belong to one being- Mehrunes Dagon himself. Any who values their life knows that one should NOT engage in conversation with Daedric Prince under any circumstance.

Arcane University, 28th of Sun's Height, 764th Year of 3rd Era

The lecture hall hummed with a crackling energy of anticipation. It was palpable like the invisible current before a lightning strike. Acolytes and Masters spoke fervently in low voices as Rae'lan stood at the head of the room caught deep in thought regarding the nature of the academic etiquette. There was a shuffle of movement and three of the Master's in the front row of seats stood up holding the parchment scroll of the report she'd written to debrief the department of Magical Ethics and Safety before this meeting.

"Rae'lan Dras, what you are telling us is monumental. Your account of events is so thorough and brings to light much new knowledge that will certainly lead to much study and review for years to come. And your encounter with the Daedric Prince Mehrunes Dagon is nothing short of astonishing! There have not been any recorded encounters with a Deadra by any mage of the University in recorded history. Everything we know

about the Daedric princes tells us that you should be dead and your soul bound to service in his realm, yet here you stand safely before us.” The other two Masters were nodding along with the first Master’s speech, when another one chimed in, “The magical means by which you survived your encounter that you revealed to us in your detailed report are far advanced beyond anything that almost any of us Masters have attempted.” The third green robed master nodded enthusiastically and cut in excitedly, “We wish to formally promote you to the rank of Master.”

For a moment all the buzzing in the room ceased. Rae’lan expected to feel an overwhelming yet familiar rush of adrenaline to make her knees feel weak and her voice stammer. She felt none of that. The ten days that she had spent battling wills and dueling magically against the Daedric Prince made her feel...solid. The physical realm felt so serene and non bothersome to her now. Nothing in the physical realm could surprise or quell her. A strengthened awareness of her soul’s eternal strength after Rae’lan had bent, broken, and remade reality around her in the Colovian Highlands had been a rebirth into power. She did feel a small spark of satisfaction at realizing that she had the privilege of being aware of the precise moment in which her life had completely changed course.

Suddenly, the room exploded into applause and accolades. Mages were exclaiming with fervor about how they ‘just knew this would be an important chapter in magical history’ and that they ‘hoped they would get an opportunity to speak with her personally.’ Indeed, Rae’lan felt it in her bones and in her core that this was the beginning of an exciting new chapter.