

Aesandre Solaire

Cleric of Erastil, bonded to Anliath

Origin

As the sun reached its daily peak, Aesandre was born into the world. There was no ceremony, no omen nor portent; a simple birth without incident.

The circumstances of her birth continued for much of her early childhood. She was a simple girl born to a simple family, encountering the same simple problems all commoners faced.

The eve of her fifth birthday rolled around. Having spent the day playing as any normal child would, Aesandre came home to her family, filled with joy at her upcoming birthday celebrations.

As she entered her family home it became instantly clear that something was wrong. Her mother sat hunched over in a chair, sobbing. Her father stoically stood, staring silently at the three hooded men around them. His eyes moved as he spotted Aesandre, and he quickly looked away.

Turning as Aesandre paused in the doorway, one of the hooded men stepped toward her and knelt down so he could better see her.

"Well now. At last this must be the child. Let me see your hand, girl."

Aesandre froze, her eyes darting from the man to her mother, then to her father. He continued to look away, unable to meet her eyes.

"It is alright, child" the hooded man soothed. "Let me see your hand." As he spoke, the hooded man reached out and took hold of her left hand, raising it gently toward him, turning it palm upward.

He paused for a moment, searching for something, before releasing her hand and reaching for the other one.

"Hmm, perhaps she is not the one after all." he mused, turning her right hand palm-upward. Just as he had finished speaking he tensed, jolting Aesandre closer as he saw her palm.

There, marked clearly upon the skin, lay an intricate birthmark. The two arms of a longbow arced across her palm, the notched arrow pointing along her middle finger; the symbol of Erastil.

"it **is** her!" he gasped, now wrenching her hand forward to show the others. Aesandre couldn't

help but look wild eyed at the hooded men as they clamoured over her birthmark.

"You were wrong to try and hide her from us." one of the hooded men scorned. "But it is no matter now. She can finally begin her true journey."

Service to Erastil

Aesandre didn't remember much of her family. All she could ever recall were vague shapes and dark silhouettes. Her life belonged to the temple, and in its service she lived.

Growing up within the walls of the temple of Erastil in Rheinbach, she was trained to one day become a cleric of the order. Naturally, she was guided in the arts both divine and martial.

Her divine tutors were kind and wise, teaching her how to aid the wounded and less fortunate with the powers granted to her by Erastil.

Her martial tutors were not so kind or wise, beating her into shape with discipline and rigour. Though stern, she took to the challenge and excelled, advancing into the upper echelons of the initiates.

Years of study and training went unbroken, save for the annual mission initiates undertook to gain practical experience. Though they were observed by an elder cleric of the order, she and the other initiates would be left in unfamiliar terrain with little but a task to complete.

Anliath 'The Grey'

The eve of her fifteenth birthday rolled around. The clerics had all gathered, for when she came of age she would be granted the status of full cleric, and expected to head out into the world performing duties in the name of Erastil.

Aesandre was unusually tense as she donned her ceremonial robes. The upcoming ceremonies were no real cause for concern, more for show than serving any real divine purpose, but even so she felt the pressure of her peers.

The summer night was calm and warm, a high moon beaming down across the temple grounds. It was closing in on midnight as the proceedings began, Aesandre stood waiting next to the raised platform. She would soon be called on to perform the rites of passage.

The head cleric, Tobias, began speaking to the crowd from the raised platform, emphasising the importance of the event, and of Erastil's grace and virtue. She couldn't stand these long speeches, any moment expecting Tobias to break into an anecdote of her childhood at the temple.

Tonight, however, Tobias was brief in his words, and sooner than expected he called for Aesandre to lead the ceremony. She met Tobias halfway across the stage. Clasp hands, he pulled her close and whispered "Good luck", before leaving her along on the stage.

Turning, she faced the crowd of her peers. How many hours had she spent rehearsing the lines? The speech was ancient, and, by this stage, rote. Taking a moment to compose herself, she took a deep breath and began reciting.

"Aaaaaaarrrrrggghhhh!" she screamed, grasping her right hand, collapsing to her knees.

Panic rippled through the crowd, several of the clerics standing as if to go forward to help, others turning to face an unseen attack. With a single wave of his hand, Tobias ordered them down.

"Hold, brothers. Observe the will of Erastil!"

Tears brimming in her eyes, Aesandre remained hunched over, cradling her burning hand. The pain was intense, and it took all of her will to stop herself crying out again.

She stared intently down at the her birthmark, the symbol of Erastil and the source of the pain. She couldn't comprehend it. Why would it cause her such pain? Why now of all times?

As she focused on the symbol she began to feel something beyond the pain, a forceful pounding like a stampede of hooves. It pulsed rhythmically through her hand, through her body; the pain was still there, but it was washed aside by the power.

Finding a focus, Aesandre shakily rose off her knees, still cradling her hand. The gathered clerics continued to murmur with uncertainty. Through the symbol she could feel the presence of a powerful being, she could feel it as if it were a part of her, as if its life and hers were the same.

The pain suddenly subsided, leaving her shuddering with relief. The intensity of the experience had drained her of strength, and she staggered, starting to feel extremely light-headed.

Pointing and murmuring, the other clerics were intently focused on something on the stage, something that wasn't her. Looking down, she saw a new-born foal was lying by her feet.

Her vision swimming with stars, the words "Anliath" escaped her lips, before the void of darkness consumed her.

Journey to the North

As a cleric of the order, Aesandre was sent forth to complete missions and aid those in need. With her trusty companion and steed, Anliath, she ventured across the Kingdom for the next six years.

Now, with dark tidings reaching her from the north, she sets forth on a new mission to bring light to the darkness.