

THE SIF CHRONICLES: AN INVESTIGATION INTO EMBERS



Welcome again, dearest reader, to my latest publication about this bizarre world we all find ourselves wandering in. Embers by far are the most interesting and communal form of magic we see here in Ithilion, especially within our own continent of Elos. It is my aim here today, reader, to enlighten you more to these mystical powers and to shed some light upon their powers and their origins.

THE ORIGIN OF EMBERS

Let us start at the beginning, dearest reader, for that is the most sensible place to start any tale. As we all know from the research of Velkani Handerval and Gauldar Meviros at the recently unearthed Vilorian ruins of Mik'thuul, with the help of our friends at High Rock Academy, that before The Dusk Shroud descended upon us the Vilorians were practicing some form of Shadow magic from The Shadowfel. What this magic specifically is, researchers are not fully sure. Do not fret, dearest reader, for I can see you already losing faith. Do not, for this is what we are here to do. We shall piece together this mystery collectively, reader, and I hope to be alive for the day we finally figure it out.

When I stopped by Mik'thuul a few days after this discovery, I spoke with Gauldar and learnt of the nature of magic that resided within this tomb. It would appear that they had stumbled upon the tomb of one of the long lost leaders of the Vilorian Empire whom we believe held most of the land across western Elos before The Dusk Shroud. This leader, from our limited understanding of Vilorian, appears to have been called "Vorn" which would align with our previous records. It is quite important to understand this man's importance in all this, reader, and be sure that we are not taking a tangent from our path. Vorn held extraordinary power over those that he ruled, some would even say it reigned more as a dictatorship - though this matter is very much up for debate.

Regardless of the politics of the Vilorians, this man had this power to control. Each of his soliders, a vastly loyal sect of people I must lay regard to, reader, wore a band upon their arms, usually the left. These bands would allow for them to communicate with each other using the enchanted gems within, as well as allowing Vorn to issue commands on the battlefield through just a thought. We are confident in our research that several of these soldiers, especially those in the higher ranks of the Vilorian military, would wield other powers attached to these gauntlets. Is this seeming at all familiar, readers? It should do, for I believe we are looking at a form of primitive Ember.

These gauntlets appear to be far weaker than what we know today as an Ember, however they do have one element about them that is vastly different. It is that they are indeed gauntlets, they can be removed and transferred to another person. They can be stolen, destroyed, and created, much unlike the Embers of today, dearest reader. How fascinating is that? A form of magic so advanced and so long ago - we are talking almost 12,000 years, reader! If you are not excited by this, then maybe you should be reading *The Frisky Succubus Merchant* by Diavolo instead. Good, now that those people are gone, we can be excited about this together, reader. Such power held in the hands of one man and his Empire! Truly a remarkable feat, though we must wonder how he first came upon this power. And that, reader, is what we do not fully understand yet. As I have said before, it has its roots in Shadow magic, so we can assume some connection was made with the Fetchlings of The Shadowfel to obtain knowledge of their magic. This was a time where knowledge of planar travel was new to the people of the Material plane, where they met explorers from other planes of existence but did not know how to get there themselves. Had Vorn, or more likely, one of his advisors managed to obtain this power from the Shadowfel, then this lands as a solid proposition for this thread of logic.

Now, reader, let us assume this is true. For our hypothesis to work, we shall be taking this thread of thought forwards. We know that The Dusk Shroud is brought about by some cataclysm, one which Velkani assumes to be related to the Vilorians in some way. Gauldar would disagree with this, stating otherwise that it was of high entities than man at play, with the Vilorians being a side-factor to the whole event. Regardless of this, they were involved in some way, whether it be minor or not. The important thing, dearest reader, is that they were involved. I implore you to bare this in mind. From the thesis of Kyren Baradin, "On The Matter of The Shroud: A Study Into Dusk Magic", we learn that The Dusk Shroud does seem to slightly weigh into the bounds of Fey magic, with strong elements of Shadow magic mixed within. The exact quantities were measured by Baradin at different points of remnant Shroud matter, each giving similar results. As a base test, she was granted permission to visit the Feywild to test within there too. And reader, if you have not read her paper, I much implore you to for it does enlighten us to the possibility of what has happened here. Baradin found that the Shroud contained roughly 65% Fey magic and 35% Shadow magic. Is that not fascinating, reader? These two kinds of magic, mixed together into one! How truly exciting! It was Baradin that coined the term "Dusk Magic" for this type of essence - the mixing of Shadow and Fey magics.

But now you might be asking: "Sif, what does this have to do with Embers and the Vilorians? Surely you've gone upon another tangent!". And to that, you might be right, dearest reader. What DOES this have to do with Embers and the Vilorians? Well, oh most astute reader, always diligent in asking the questions that set me straight. I propose that the Vilorians were indeed involved in the creation of The Dusk Shroud, that their gauntlets of Shadow magic were somehow a catalyst to the focal point upon which Embers form upon our bodies, and the magic that is contained within is a culmination of these magics brought together. The order and simple nature of Shadow magic fused with the chaotic and powerful nature of Fey magic, which seems to be supported by Baradins claims. Dusk magic, reader. Dusk magic! A new form of magic, born in our time and that we have the chance to explore and utilise! I believe that Embers are only the beginning to this magic, reader. We must do more research into Embers to try and unlock the knowledge of their power.

AN EXPLORATION INTO EMBERS

We all know of the defeat of Erothir, I'm sure. For those of you that do not, one can go visit his skeleton, for it forms the capital city of Menderin and marks the end of The Age of Disparity. I'd highly recommend the visit, reader, for it is a hallmark of our entire plane and something we should hold as a turning point in the power of the Material plane. Shortly after his passing, The World Anchors were constructed and we were left in peace from the other planes. A well needed respite, dearest reader, for our history with them appears to be long and not so pleasant. Regardless, the point I am trying to make here, reader, is that a number of Tier 0 Embers were used to take down this god. It is truly incredible, do you not think, that mortals such as ourselves have powers within us with the potential to take down even gods. It seems that Fate has dictated something else for our path as a plane, to become something stronger and something more unique than what we were first seen as: The remnants of the other planes. The castaways of allegedly more powerful races. The Elves just the offspring of the Fey. Ashensworn simply the production of Fetchlings. Gnomes the creation of the Fey themselves. We are more than that, reader. We are a powerful plane with our own gods and our own races. And that, we should hold to the highest esteem for if it were not for that, I would not be writing to you today about this fascinating plane we live in.

SPARKING

I have studied my own Ember at length, readers, however one cannot simply learn everything of their own knowledge. They must seek to expand that and gather new findings. Only then can we hone in on the true answer behind these myterious yet ever-present abilities that form within us. I have spoken to you of the origin of Embers as a whole, but let me now speak about the origin of individual Embers within ourselves.

I have learned that Embers almost always come about from exposure to stressful events or trauma. Myself, I was but a young Elf making his way into this world as a Mercer, when it sparked. The fact that death was upon me and a Hurgolf was tearing at my side seemed to justify my Ember calling itself forth. I don't deny that is saved me that day, reader, for it most certainly did.

What I wish to get across, is that if you speak to anyone with an Ember, they have all come about in situations such as this. Near death experiences, the loss of allies, the need for power where power is lacking. In some cases however, they also appear when one shows their power to be strong and of use to others. Fate might deem these the paths of these abilities forming, and of that I am quite confident. Those of you reading that own Embers, I'm sure you recount the time yours first sparked and can ascertain that what I say is indeed true of your experiences too.

It would become apparent to me, as I explored this magic further, that Mercers, military and politics are the focal areas within which Embers commonly form. Not to say that they do not form outside of these areas, not at all, reader, but simply that these are the places upon which they commonly are found. Most simply due to the stressful environment that the people within these fields face. Do not lust after the idea of an Ember, reader. They are markings of the trauma that a person has gone through, the inner most values of their being coming forward to aide them in their times of need and leaving behind a residual strength that they may tap into. If you do not have an Ember, consider yourself fortunate to never have been exposed to such situations.

EMBER FORMS

Across my travel, dearest reader, I have delved into the topic of the formation of Embers a small amount. All Embers I have seen take upon forms down either, or both, of the wielders arms, resembling something of a tattoo. They can be hidden at will, and often glow or move in reaction to magic. They also seem to form bands around the wrist to indicate how much energy an Ember can exert, with the less bands, the more powerful an Ember becomes. As such the "Tiering System For Ember Classification" was written by Sylv Osdil in her paper "An Inspection of Embers: Uncovering The Hidden Powers" and has been widely adopted across Ithilion as the standard for ranking Ember power. However, I'm sure all Ember wielders are aware of these properties.

Now, reader. Most Ember forms take upon aspects of a magical basis. Whilst we theorise that they are created of Dusk magic, their specific attributes seem to be born of fragments of other magic within the person. Helgorim postulates in his writings that every person born upon the Material plane is formed with some element of Dusk magic inside them, hence giving rise to the ability to wield an Ember. However, he also proposed that the personality of the person, their desires, their aspirations, their skills: everything that makes up the core of this person somehow warps the Dusk magic within them to form the unique Ember that they wield. You should always question propositions such as this, reader, even my own that I have made previously within this paper.

Helgorim performed cruel experiments upon Ember wielders, using his Ember to restrain their own powers. Despite having been cast out of the scientific community of Elos, that does not discount that his research brought forwards some light as to these aspects of Embers. This research has been elevated within the community as a matter of rampant debate, with such researchers as Baradin and Grimdark supporting the findings with more ethical experiments of their own, whilst others such as Osdil and Rameck providing proof against, alleging that Embers are constructed of Dusk magic alone, with the chaotic nature of the Fey magic within it causing the power and the orderly nature of Shadow magic forming the more predictable sides of the Embers. I would personally side with Baradin and Grimdark on this topic, though you are free to hold your own opinions on the matter, reader. That is why we are here, we aim to collectively discover the truth lying behind all this.

ANIMUS EMBERS

It is certainly proved that stress and trauma is an element that can spark mutations of Embers. Whilst the only confirmed mutation is that of Animus Embers, as written by Grimdark is his thesis "The Mutation of Embers: A Case Study Into Animae", it is considered that more might exist that we are yet unaware of. We must bare in mind, reader, that a fraction of Elos has been reclaimed from The Dusk Shroud and much of the landscape still remains a wilderness to us. I shall talk briefly about Animae and their wielders here, though I suggest you read Grimdark's works if you are to learn more about them.

Animae are formed of intense emotions, whether they be positive or negative. The wielders of Animae are usually scarred in some aspect of their being, many having faced torture or prolonged traumatic experiences before the sparking of their Embers. This energy, this emotion that builds inside them coalesces. It compacts into something very powerful indeed. So powerful in fact, that it gains a sentience of its own. This is what Grimdark postulated in his writings. Baradin seems to have connected links between the Animus to the wielder in being an extension of their own mental state, and as that changes, the state of the Animus indeed changes also. How amazing is that, reader? The mind of one being morphing the entire state of the other. It is quite extraordinary, indeed.

Grimdark noted that once this emotion had reached a critical point, the Ember was sparked and this new being attached to it, resembling a fragment of the wielders inner-most feelings. Whilst this link is made, the being is indeed sentient and possesses its own mind, separate to that of the Ember wielder. It has emotions of its own, and can indeed activate and deactivate the Ember of the wielder of its own choosing. These Embers do indeed seem to last longer than the average Ember, it would seem about ten times as long before they burn out and need recharging. The reason for this, Grimdark is still unsure of. He has theorised that the presence of another being allows the Ember greater energy with which to act upon, potentially fueling the magic for longer durations. Regardless of this, it has been confirmed by Grimdark that these are indeed a special mutation of Embers and can be treated as a sub-category in their own right.

EMBER STRENGTH

It is undeniable, reader, that the prowess of one's Ember is relative to the training and practice that the wielder undergoes whilst using it. Baradin, Grimdark and Osdil all have proven in their experiments that Ember tiers can be directly correlated to the amount that the wielder uses the Ember, and the circumstances under which they are used. More stressful and life-threatening situations seem to evolve an Ember faster than more general use. Now, this is not me telling you, reader, to go off and put your life in danger to evolve your Ember. Not in the slightest, however, I will not deny the proof that this is the fastest way to do so.

We can also observe that the strength of Ember tiers mostly come from within the wielder itself, as if the Ember itself is inhibiting the power until it feels the wielder is strong enough to handle what it can fully accomplish. Of course, in some cases, this is regulated in conjunction a deity or an animus, though in a majority of cases, it is almost entirely from the wielder. This means, dearest reader, that one must focus on self improvement to forward their own Ember. One cannot rely on others to do this for them - though I shall not deny that some potions and gemstones have been developed to aide in this regard. I would tread carefully with such items, reader, for they might not always have the intended effects.

In a case study by Handerval, we have learnt that the power of a Tier 0 Ember seems to parallel that of a deity within this plane. As such, researchers have become hesitant to call Tier 0 Ember wielders gods in and of themselves, but certainly they possess god-like abilities. We are lucky in the regard that all Tier 0 Ember wielders to date have not seen it proficient to turn their powers against civilisation, for this would be a sort Age for us here indeed if they did. Many postulate that if one were to turn against civilisation, it would be possible to stop them with the power of several Tier 1 Ember wielders working together - though the power step between the two tiers is still vastly noticable. For all our sakes, reader, I hope we never have to put this to the test.

CONCLUSION

In summary, my dear readers, I would like to draw together my hypothesis towards the origin of Embers and the relative paths that one might take on improving their Ember. I propose in this paper that Embers are, indeed, constructs of both Shadow and Fey magic, which we have come to know as Dusk magic. The Vilorians certainly had something to do with their creation, regardless of how big or small their overall impact was. We have discovered that ones personality is a strong indicator to what an Ember might be, and that only through extreme trauma will this ability break through - in some circumstances, forming a mind of its own. I encourage you, readers, to go out and do research of your own. Do not take what I say as the perfect truth. Only through more research can we hone in on the true reality behind these powers that are Embers. And as always, readers, venture far.