

The joy of Lhonert's birth brought a glorious celebration to Marmol city. People filled the streets with dancing, food, and merriment that even the royal family ventured out to witness. She was the first child of Marmol's prestigious academy's headmaster, who was known to most if not all in the realm of Amanecer. The city folk and students of the academy eagerly awaited when Lhonert became of age to receive her gift bestowed upon her by Marmol's divine guardian, Onea.

Lhonert's mother turned from the open window with a smile: Her daughter's young existence is a true joy. Her eyes softened when she met the innocent gaze of her newborn daughter, Lhonert. Crystal blue eyes brightened against her porcelain skin, and her pale white hair framing her face twinkled in the sunlight. Her tiny pink lips spread into a gummy smile, cooing at the music and the warmth of her mother's embrace. Pale confetti carried by the day's gentle breeze drifted through the window, drawing little Lhonert's gaze away from her mother.

"My sweet child," She whispered, "You hold the hearts of many."

As a child and into her pre-teens, Lhonert valued and upheld the academy and family prestige. As the headmaster's daughter, she learned languages, histories, philosophies, science, and mathematics. During off times, Lhonert's mother taught her etiquette, compassion, and strength, the necessities for a well-rounded individual to contribute to society. Her mother's gift was divine bestowal (the ability to bestow powers upon another as a vessel of a divine entity/entities), and her father's gift was replication (the power to replicate the powers of others within oneself). Together, they spent hours into the night for years to come, training Lhonert's mind in preparation for her power.

Lhonert's kind heart and calm demeanor drew people to her throughout her teenage years, but it was hard to have friends between her studies and etiquette training. Her dearest friends, Mhin (gift of weapon proficiency) and Nabbris (gift of healing), attended academy courses with her and managed to get Lhonert in trouble now and then, as is healthy for their age. But you'd always find Lhonert in the quieter parts of town. She'd stop to admire the flowers, the grass bending in the wind, or find comfort under the shade of a great Molave tree. The peace within Lhonert extended beyond her and brought equal calmness to those around her.

In no time, it was time for her Phopinity ceremony - the bestowal of her gift.

The ceremony took place in the Haverlant Forest, comprised of Molave and Ilang-ilang trees, Sampaguita flowers, and the Cona mountain. Adolescent Lhonert, adorned in natural textile robes of white, waded into the Haverlant Lake's waters with her mother, whose robes were striking patterns of gold and blush, signifying her gift of bestowal. Lhonert's body was

weightless as it balanced on her mother's hands in the Haverlant River. Her mother began her incantation, and Lhonert felt her body tingle with a gentle heat rolling beneath her skin.

Then her mother's words began to slow, and the river's flow seemed to stop around her as if the moment was suspended in time. An unfamiliar voice spoke, gentle yet commanding, from the soil beneath the river.

"Hello, my dear child."

She quickly realized it to be the voice of Onea, calling to her with her gift.

"Lhonert - soft-spoken, kind, and as gentle as a flower. I gift you with the prodigious power of space and time."

"Thank you for this blessing, Onea," Lhonert whispered breathlessly.

An indescribable sound echoed down the mountainside in the distance. A gust of wind blasted against the greenery of trees and foliage as it blew over the ceremony. Lhonert's mother's words and the water's flow returned, then sped up as if to make up for lost time before she could hear the muffled cheers of the crowd. Lhonert blinked, and time was at its natural cadence again.

Her mother helped her stand in the water, and, to Lhonert's astonishment, her own white robes were gradient into a deep shade of blue. Stars twinkled at the base of her equally gradient, sheer overlay as if they were dancing to the success of Lhonert's bestowal ritual.

Lhonert's mother stumbled in the water, and the priestesses surrounded her - among them was Lhonert's friend, Nabbris. They began restoring Lhonert's mother's strength when someone from the crowd called out to ask what her gift was. Lhonert gently called back, "Time and space," with a beautiful smile and tears streaking her cheeks.

Expected cheers and praise did not come—instead, questions and murmurs rose from the crowd. Lhonert's smile faltered before a heavy arm rested on her shoulders. She looked up to see her father with his chest puffed and called for the city folk's attention. He explained that, although her power is that of great uncertainty, his faith didn't question the decisions and omnipotence of Onea, nor his trust in his daughter's moral compass. The crowd settled and applauded with apprehension as they congratulated Lhonert for her profound gift.

Lhonert understood why people were concerned, but she couldn't let the uncertainty of others keep her from becoming who she was born to be. She knew she had prepared for this, and Onea wouldn't give her something she couldn't handle. Lhonert vowed to herself and anyone who expressed concern that she would always do what was right when using her power. Now that she had a gift to learn came the actual training.

Successful in her studies and worldly knowledge, young adult Lhonert ventured on quests with Nabbris and Mhin. Lhonert's father gave her an enchanted hairpiece that held extra mana stores. Now that she'll be getting her feet wet with real experiences to use her chronomancy abilities, she'll need to focus more on her mana pool and casting control. Practicing may make perfect, but experience creates greatness.

Lhonert's father proposed that she go on a quest to retrieve a renowned merchant's stolen goods. She requested to bring her friends so they may earn experience too, but her father cautioned that she go herself so she wouldn't have to hold back her powers. Lhonert insisted she and her friends would have a handle on the situation, especially when it came to such precious items. Her father approved but asserted that the next mission he assigned her would be solo. She complied and went to notify Mhin and Nabbris to prepare for the quest.

A few days had passed, and Lhonert, Mhin, and Nabbris were well on their journey tracking the thieves who stole the merchant's carriages. They pulled off the trail they followed to set up camp for the evening. Lhonert was gazing at the stars when she noticed what appeared to be smoke from a campfire a short distance away. The three chose to investigate and found who their quest described: Several thieves with two carriages with the merchant's logo on them. To Lhonert's relief, the carriages' horses weren't harmed, but the carriage covers were torn and tattered, and the thieves fooled around with the carriage contents.

A skinny and scruffy-looking thief swung around the item that the merchant heeded in the quest. "Beware the radiating rune from the deep caves of Cona mountain. Its wielder receives the temporary gift to control the element of stone."

Lhonert pulled her friends out of earshot from the campsite. "We need a plan – get in and get out," she advised and reached up to ensure her pin was secured in her hair.

Nabbris proposed a bait and switch where Mhin draws the thieves away from their loot for Lhonert to secure. Mhin disagreed and suggested they charge head-first since they have the element of surprise on their side. The two bickered about who's idea was better, so Lhonert calmly asserted the bait and switch might not work because the stolen item fostered extreme power to its user. So, if the thieves chose to turn on the bait, i.e., Mhin, the thieves would have the upper hand. Mhin agreed, and Nabbris accepted defeat on the matter.

The three prepared in the bushes in front of the campsite: Mhin held her weapon in poise to leap, Nabbris started a longer incantation, and Lhonert tightened her grip on her chronomancy staff and had it against her sheer overlay. The same overlay that had twinkling stars at its hem, signifying Onea's trust in her gift. The three leap out of the brush and into the

camp, the only noise being the rustle of leaves and sticks, startling the thieves before retaliation ensued.

Thunder crackled, and fire blasted. Some turned invisible, and others rushed head-on, their weapons connected with Mhin's with sharp clangs. Lhonert supported Mhin's fighting style well with her chronomancy abilities, giving ally boosts and enemy slows, and Nabbris paralyzed people with a simple touch. But the fight quickly spiraled out of the trio's favor because the thieves had already claimed and familiarized themselves with the stolen goods.

Mhin became critically wounded, the invisible thieves ganged up on Nabbris, and thieves surrounded Lhonert with her back to a carriage. She had no choice but to warn her friends that she had to use the elite Well that her father forbade her from using. Nabbris begged her not to, but Mhin was unconscious, and Lhonert was meters away from her friends. Lhonert decided she had no choice and released just a little mana at a time to keep the Well under control as she began to cast Gravity Well.

"Onea, be with me!" Lhonert screamed before throwing her cast on the battlefield.

She managed to keep her mana and Well under control. It warped the area where Nabbris was captive, slowly expanding its event horizon. The force knocked her friend and foes to the ground, then pulled them into the air and threw them in different directions. Lhonert called out to Nabbris, causing her to lose focus of her mana pool and create another event horizon that warped near Mhin's area.

Lhonert struggled to retract the mana flowing into the second Gravity Well, causing Mhin and her surrounding enemies to float into the air. Lhonert managed to cancel the unwanted cast, the sudden absence of its force dropping Mhin and the enemies back to the ground.

The thieves that weren't thrown scurried and limped away, abandoning the stolen items to find their comrades, and Lhonert raced to where Mhin lay on the ground. There were cuts and scrapes with bruises that covered Mhin's body. Thankfully she was breathing, but she remained unresponsive. Lhonert looked to the forest but didn't see any sign of Nabbris, so she began gathering her mana pool to cast her healing ability, Well of Eternity. Unfortunately, the cast dissipated because Lhonert didn't have enough mana to support the ability.

A crackling noise came from behind her, accompanied by a brief gust of wind. Lhonert turned with her arms and hands outstretched, ready to use what little mana she had left to defend her and Mhin as best as she could. In front of her was a white portal and its center moved like flowing magma, but it didn't knock Lhonert off her guard.

Out walked a young boy who carried an exasperated Nabbris on his small back. Lhonert called Nabbris' name and raced toward them. The portal closed behind the boy when she

reached them, and he carefully guided Nabbris' feet to the ground. "Man, you're heavy!" He exclaimed, stretching his back while Lhonert pulled Nabbris into a bear hug.

"It's not my fault you're a child," Nabbris countered as she wrapped her arms around Lhonert. "I told you, you didn't have to carry me like that!"

Lhonert was relieved that her friend was alive and had already healed any wounds she had sustained. She informed Nabbris that Mhin was still unconscious and that she didn't have enough mana to heal her. Nabbris rushed to Mhin's side when the portal noise sounded again. Lhonert turned to the boy and called for him to wait.

"Don't worry," He called back, "My name's Thaz, and we'll meet again soon." He walked through the portal, and it closed behind him. The quiet was almost deafening aside from the quiet hum of Nabbris healing Mhin.

"He could've at least waited to help us get all this stuff back to Marmol," Nabbris stated.

"Who are you talking about?" Mhin asked between coughs.

Lhonert rushed over and gave Mhin a tighter bear hug than she gave Nabbris.

"Hey, I'm still healing here!"

"Sorry, Nab. I'm so glad you're still with us, Mhin," Lhonert stated.

"Yeah, me too," Mhin claimed. "You didn't do too bad with the Well, Lhon."

Lhonert cringed and sat on the ground. "I don't think my dad will let me do quests for a while," she announced. "He's going to be concerned there isn't mana in my hairpin, and I can't lie about using Gravity Well..."

Nabbris stopped healing and patted Mhin on the shoulder, confirming that healing was complete. "Well, we'll be waiting for you, then," Nabbris said. "In the meantime, we need to find those horses."

The crackle of a portal sounded, and the trio turned to see Thaz exit his portal with two horses in tow. "Told you'd see me soon."

Nabbris praised the young boy for being considerate, and Mhin asked how he kept the horses calm enough to go through a portal, but Thaz said that was a secret he'd only share for a hefty price. Lhonert couldn't help but smile: She may have a lot to learn still, but with the support of her friends and family, she'll become precisely who she was born to be.