**Chapter 20 The Second Spell**

I was happy to just be hungry when I woke, with no lingering pain. I quickly made use of the diagnostic spell and I was happy at what little wrong I found. Gareth was still asleep which didn’t surprise me as he had read really late into the night. I was quiet as I made my way down my ladder. I had my *cleanliness* spell book in hand and started studying. It was just thirty minutes later when I heard Callem yell for breakfast. I calmly walked out as Gareth was scrambling to get up and dressed and he yelled after me, “Damn it Stormy you could have wakened me! Callem is going to work me over in practice today if I’m late for breakfast again.” I was out the door. My fiendish plan was just to get the choicest morsels at breakfast. Gareth was a fast and relentless eater after all.

Breakfast was potato pancakes with butter and a side of boiled oats with fruit. No juice unfortunately this morning. Both items were plentiful though. Gareth barged in just a minute after I had sat down. I had already loaded my plate. Gareth sat and was piling the pancakes on his plate. I snagged two more before he got them all. Callem immediately said we would not talk about dungeons at breakfast. This news had Gareth portraying a deflated and disappointed look.

Getting close to finishing breakfast Callem spoke, “We will stretch together then Gareth and I will work on harvesting the tobacco. Storme you can work on dinner after stretching then study your spells till lunch.”

“I already learned the mend flesh spell,” I said between mouthfuls and noticed everyone staring at me. “Yeah, it sort of locked in while I lay there dying in the alley. If I hadn’t imprinted it I would be dead.” Wynna looked concerned, Gareth shocked and Callem thoughtful.

Callem spoke first, “So Storme the mend flesh spell…how many times can you cast it and what are your evolutions?” Light suddenly dawned on Gareth’s face and it went panicky.

“My spell is just second level and I just have a self-assessment and mend organs, tendons, and ligaments.” Callem was thinking and Gareth looked resigned, already knowing the outcome of Callem's deliberations.

“Well, it would be best for you to practice that spell as much as possible. We should increase the intensity of our training then to help you level it. Spells don’t adversely affect growth like potions so no limits on your casting.” Oh shit. Gareth would have two days of getting beat down and then I would join him. I gulped and nodded finally catching up to Gareth's worry.

We went outside and did the stretches at a quicker pace after Callem noticed I was moving ok. He probably figured I had cast the mending spell on myself. After stretching I was off preparing dinner. I decided on an orange chicken with pork fried rice. I would add some broccoli florets to the rice for fiber. I would just get everything ready to cook for now. Before dinner, I could quickly make the meal. Wynna was there watching me from a couch with a book in her hand. She tried to start a dialogue, “I may have retired but if you or Gareth need a reading all you have to do is ask.”

“That is very kind of you. If you don’t mind me asking what are your intentions with Callem?” I had put on my adult face. I was more trying to deflect her attention from me but I was also curious.

Wynna didn’t look upset at the question, more thoughtful than anything else. “Callem and I are both at the tail end of our lives. We both didn’t think we would find much joy in our remaining time. Callem found something to invest in you two and had enough left over to share with me.” She paused and I was nodding. “We enjoy each other's company and still have some intimacy left in our bodies.” She winked at me and that was enough for me. I then steered the conversation to the carnival. She told me about her impressions of the play. She was very insightful regarding the implications and lessons within the simple plot. Much like an English teacher reaching for layered meanings in Shakespeare. Soon I got up and left as I had finished prepping dinner but I found myself liking the older woman.

Back in my loft, I delved into the *cleanliness* spell. Now that I had one spell imprinted the next shouldn’t be as hard?

Yes it was still hard. My best analogy was being able to memorize and write a 30-page short story from memory without any errors. I felt I made some progress before lunch. Wynna made a hearty vegetable soup and some quite tasty warm crusty bread with a choice of a butter spread or olive tapenade spread. Fortunately, there was a lot of soup and bread for three hungry men. Callem had me heal Gareth, I found just some minor bumps and bruises when I explored with my skill. I couldn’t assess him like myself but the spell naturally sought his injuries. At first, I was a little hesitant as I didn’t want to cut into my coin creation at night but the amount of aether was actually minimal.

After lunch I returned to my studies and Gareth and Callem started practicing outside. The clang of weapons was a bit distracting but I had learned how to tune things out growing up in a small house.

Before I knew I had to make dinner. Callem brought out some of his fruit juice stash and a bottle of wine for him and Wynna. Everyone said the dinner was excellent, but Wynna said she would need to get her wine collection transferred from the capital after sampling Callem's offering. When dinner was finished we again took up positions on the couches. First I cast my healing on Gareth, he had a few good bruises and one small laceration on his thigh. Callem was already turning up the intensity in sparring and Gareth was loving it by his mannerisms even with the increased injuries.

As we began class Gareth had finished the last three chapters last night so I was behind. I said I could read and tune everyone else out as Gareth asked all his burning questions. It was something I was getting really good at, tuning out distractions.

I started the reading. Chapter 4 was about reward chests from dungeon challenge bosses. The chests were generally well-made and contained coins and items of value. Sometimes artwork, sometimes minor enchanted items, sometimes well-crafted weapons, sometimes aether crystals. The items were usually much more valuable than the coins also contained within. The chests themselves were also valuable so some divers hauled them out as well.

The 5th Chapter was mostly a chapter warning of dangers in dungeons. Traps, staying too long, underestimating beasts and monsters, environmental dangers, and warnings not to eat or drink anything not confirmed safe by the Adventurer's Guild.

The final Chapter in the book was just giving examples of how to prepare for certain environments and challenges. I tuned into the conversation but didn’t ask any questions. Gareth was mostly interested in ways to fight beasts and monsters with his abilities and it was a back-and-forth between Gareth and Callem. I was glad when the session ended. I wasn’t interested in risking my life in a dungeon. I already had all the wealth I would ever need at my fingertips. I hoped Gareth would grow out of his interest in delving into dungeons. If we traveled the sphere exploring safe cities and I kept him in luxury that should be enough for him, right?

That night I made two more platinum coins, did my aether core exercises, and studied the cleanliness spell.

The next day Callem decided I was recovered enough to rejoin training. He had reworked my schedule. My new daily schedule became, breakfast, stretching, preparing dinner, conditioning training, an hour to work on and to study spells, lunch, observation training, weapons training, dinner, book discussion with Wynna, and then a few hours of study on my own. The book discussion was to be limited to just 90 minutes in the evening to give me time to study spells before bed.

The observation training involved Callem teaching us how to recognize changes in the environment and be more observant. Callem kept changing things in the practice yard, his kitchen, and dining room during the night. We had to identify the changes the next day. It wasn’t fun at first but at least it was something that I was better at than Gareth. I caught maybe 70% of the changes while Gareth was around 50%. The training was working as I started noticing things quicker and puzzling things out. I felt like I was being trained as a detective. Move over Sherlock Holmes!

The days started to blend together and before I knew it ten days had passed and I hadn't realized we hadn’t had a single day off. Gareth didn't seem to mind but I did. When I brought this up Callem said I had two off days coming up on this 6th and 7th day. Freya would be visiting. I was excited to see my younger sister, it felt like it had been ages. I refocused my efforts and two nights later my cleanliness spell was finally imprinted!