Chapter 35 Skipping Enchanting 101

We got to the farm and everyone came out to greet us. At first, I thought they were excited we had returned but as they got closer the three girls looked beat up, bruised, and with cuts on their arms and faces. Gareth had a black eye and a bandage on his arm and spoke first, “Storme heal me first!” That had all of them voicing their persuasions for me to heal them first. Only Aelyn stood back as the other three mobbed me. I started with Gareth and proceeded to Cilia then Leda and finally Aelyn.

I found my *mend flesh* spell had progressed finally from this work and the evolution to level five allowed me to assess another person’s injuries. I already could assess my personal injuries through a diagnostic evolution and this allowed me to extend that skill to others. This really should have been my second evolution but I had just put it off.

Once things settled Callem questioned everyone about their day and then handed out presents. Gareth got clothes, the girls got the massive bag of candy…well after Callem pulled out a few specific sweets for himself, Wynna got the silver jewelry box stuffed with the items Callem had selected. I handed the *pocket portal* spell book to Aelyn as well. She was a little flabbergasted and unable to thank me for a good minute. Then she gave me a short but strong hug. I didn’t say anything but noticed the others pretending not to notice the extended embrace.

Everyone contributed to unloading the cart and setting up the chicken coup on the far side of the tobacco field. Callem had gotten one rooster to protect the hens from the local foxes. We released the chickens one by one and watched them as they explored. I was the first one bored and started bringing my own haul to my loft. I had the enchanting materials, the ice cream buckets, the 69 plates, and the chocolate which actually went to the larder in our basement.

It didn’t take long for everyone to come into the bunkhouse. Gareth climbed into our loft and began talking about what I missed. I half listened as I rearranged my shelf. I put three books on the end of the shelf along with my new aether light stone. This gave me easy access to them at night. The three books were *aether shield*, *alarm,* and *dimensional closet*. I hadn’t decided which of these to learn next. Well ideally I wanted to imprint the dimensional spell but since it was a tier 3 spell I worried it would take too long.  
  
In order to get Gareth to stop talking I had him look at the stack of plates and he was quickly engrossed in them. Each one was an artistic masterpiece in my opinion. I paged through the *alarm* spell and thought I could learn it in five or six days. It was fairly simple but felt I didn’t need the spell’s utility right now…but leveling it up would make it invaluable in the future. The *aether shield* spell was next and it was complex but I thought maybe it would take me three weeks…maybe four. The *dimensional closet* spell was the last one I reviewed and it was incredibly complex. It was the first tier three spell I had looked into learning and I didn’t have an affinity for space magic so it was a migraine-inducing perusal of the spell forms. I had no idea how long it would take me. My best comparison would be saying it was a book in a foreign language and I needed to translate each word, one at a time. After completing the translation I had to memorize the book cover to cover. I had a few new tricks I could apply but still didn’t see this as taking a short amount of time. Eventually, I slid the *alarm* and *aether shield* spells back on the shelf and got to work on the *dimensional closet* spell.

Gareth called me down for some food as I had lost track of time. It was a beef stew, heavy on vegetables and needing just a little salt. I used some buttered bread to clean the bowl. Leda asked me to make chicken parmigiana for tomorrow’s dinner and Cilia tried to talk over her friend asking for spiced pepperoni pizza. Gareth said I would make fried chicken. I waved them all off and asked Aelyn what she wanted. Without hesitation, she said ice cream and Mac and cheese. The half-elf girl was a junk food junkie apparently. It certainly hadn’t hurt her figure. Ok, I would make mac and cheese and add some broccoli to give it some fiber. For the ice cream, I would plan on trying my hand at chocolate ice cream.

I climbed into my loft and put away the spell book for now. I got the buckets, stylus, and silver enchanting wire. I wasn’t going to use the stylus, just pretend to use it as a cover for my metal shaping ability. I got the book for the cold rune primer out and opened a parchment and began sketching out my design. It was fairly simple as I just wanted the outer bucket to create an inward aura to maintain the temperature exactly at freezing. I planned to use enough silver wire to hold a charge for two days, about half of a roll if I was correct in my quick calculations. I was extremely good at math so I wasn’t worried about that aspect.

It was late when I was ready to try my hand at inscribing the bucket. It was a bit frustrating to use the stylus, just using my shaping skill would have made the process take just a minute but I had to fake trace the runes took over two hours and Gareth’s loud sleep breathing didn’t help my focus tonight. When I finally finished I just put the bucket down and fell asleep.

Morning came too soon. I was exhausted and not able to match everyone else’s positivity this morning. Why was everyone so chipper? At breakfast, we had fresh eggs, bacon, fruit, and toast. It made my mind wander as I was eating the toast. We didn’t have jelly or peanut butter in the larder. I hadn’t actually seen any peanuts in this world so I asked Callem and Wynna and neither of them was familiar with the treat. We did have cashews that could be made into a sort of peanut butter. For jam, all I needed was a touch of lemon juice, sugar, and high-sugar fruit. Mash it all together and heat it all in a pan to reduce the water and then cool. It would make a good ice cream topping as well.

The banter during stretching was quite intense. Apparently, some feelings had been hurt yesterday with no one to monitor the group's training. My mind was focused elsewhere though, and I was soon in the kitchen after stretching was completed. Prepping the mac n cheese was quick. Three types of cheese this time around and Wynna made fresh egg noodles. I then tried out my new ice cream bucket, my first magic item! I put water inside the big bucket and then nested the smaller bucket within. Then I channeled my aether into my first enchanted object. The water froze instantly, and the runes started to glow and smoke. I stopped channeling and just prayed I didn’t ruin the bucket.

I watched the bucket carefully and went to try to make cashew butter and some berry jam. I had obviously channeled too much aether into the runes I had made. Did I burn them out? I wasn’t worried about the waste of silver runic wire but lamented the possible loss of the perfect buckets for making the ice cream. I had a large pot of jam going and Wynna was working on the cashew butter at my direction.

Wynna interrupted our normal back-and-forth meaningless banter in the morning, “Storme I have been thinking a lot about your obfuscate spell. I think instead of completely shielding your aether soul you should just cover up what you don’t want others to see. Let me explain. You see readers can read a multitude of things. They can quantify your physical, mental, and magical statistics. They can read potentials…well let’s just say there is a lot there. If you block everything then a reader can tell you have access to the obfuscated spell. So don’t hide everything…just the things you don’t want others to see.” She finished.

“That just makes too much sense.” I recast the spell just covering the abilities, traits, and skill affinities I wanted to be hidden. “Wynna can readers see status effects…like the fact I have the obfuscate spell active?” I asked.

“I don’t have that ability but yes some readers can. You should be able to hide that with your spell I think. Just focus on what you what hidden when you cast it… maybe?” I recast the spell again and ‘felt’ the spell status was now being hidden. Why hadn’t this suggestion been in the spell book? I was just thankful that Wynna had figured it out for me. My spell even advanced to level 4 for this brief amount of effort.

I kept checking on the bucket and it seemed I was cooling the entire farmhouse with the bucket, like an overcharged air conditioning unit. A thick layer of ice was forming on the outside of the bucket and the inner bucket seemed clear of ice for the moment. It just had a light fog. The enchantment seemed to have stabilized so I got the ingredients for the chocolate ice cream together and made the largest batch I could, 3 gallons (12 liters). The device worked too well. I was quick with my mixing and the ice cream hardened too fast. I must have made some errors as the temperature was obviously below freezing.

Did the over-investment of aether do something? I had to wait until the enchantment exhausted itself…or could my metal shaping skill get me an image of the runic workings? I touched the exposed runes and sent out my senses. The rune was correct…the silver was over-saturated with aether…and the functionality…I think I saw the problem…the regulator extension of the rune that was supposed to hold the temperature at freezing was reliant on the aether content…so over-saturating just supercharged the rune. I also could sense I burned up about one-third of the silver! Another odd effect was the over-saturated silver resisted my metal-shaping ability.

This device was supposed to last for hundreds of uses! I tried to get a feel for how much aether I put into the device, feeling out my aether core….it felt about 70% full or thereabouts so 30% of 1200 was 360! Oops! I guess I should feel fortunate I hadn’t blown myself up. I had a book on how to properly fuel magic items. Guess I needed to read it, to charge my aether light stone I had just used a kiss of aether so I should have known better. I found my fingers now had frostbite as well so I quickly healed myself.

It took some effort to transfer the hard ice cream to another container. I put the finished ice cream in Callem’s freezer box. I sampled the chocolate ice cream and it was good. Not nearly as sweet as modern ice cream but much creamier after it melted in your mouth. The chocolate content needed some tweaking as well and maybe the tiniest addition of salt should be added to the cream before mixing and freezing. I looked at my ice cream bucket as the outer layer of ice was slowly growing and sighed. The enchantment was going to last much longer than two days I surmised and the bucket would be completely encased in ice and useless. Well at least everyone would have ice cream tonight. My foray into enchanting was over for now.

Conditioning this morning was brutal as we all had to carry half our body weight through obstacle courses A and C. We were all filthy, sweaty, and miserable at the end and I knew it was Callem’s punishment for the group beating on each other yesterday. I wasn’t sure how I got included in the punishment but I didn’t complain especially since cleaning off took me a few seconds while everyone else needed to bathe and wash clothes. Lunch today was the cashew butter and jelly sandwiches with cold milk and some fresh fruit. Everyone except Leda liked the lunch. She didn’t like cashews in general so I couldn’t blame her.

During our free hour, I talked with Leda and showed her my failed ice bucket sculpture which was now three feet in diameter (1m), outside and growing. She laughed at me a little before explaining there were a number of additional runes to attach to control such a complex device. She had loaned me just the primers and not the generic control runes and linking runes for say connecting to an aether stone power source.

She said I had basically designed a maul to kill an ant. Enchanting was about finesse she stressed. Leda then said no need to worry, she was terrible at enchanting as well. When I asked her how much aether I should channel into such a device she asked how much tier 3 silver wire I had used. After I told her she said about as much as a tier 2 spell took to cast.

Well damn, I estimated I used 360 so 180 times as much as was needed! I then asked her about overcharging an item. She said tier 1 dust would just dissolve the silver quickly if a device was overcharged. Tier 2 would hold aether better but the runes would glow white and burn the silver after. Tier 3 aether dust silver would try to act like a sponge to hold as much aether in reserve to power the device. Aether technically had no mass or minimum volume according to mages but aether crystals and aether cores were the only places aether could be stored.

When I asked if I could blow myself up if I overcharged something, which was a big worry of mine, she said no. Then she said well actually yes but that would only be because the runework was incorrect, oversaturated runes just burned the silver, gold, or platinum quicker and the excess aether bleed into the environment. I briefly thought of making an aether bomb but decided I needed MUCH more experience in the enchanting field before trying something so brash.

We got to choose our weapon practice today so I picked the bow since it would be the least physical effort on my part. That only lasted half the session before Callem pulled me to spar with staves with Leda. I was smart enough to not complain to Callem. Leda had gotten much better and we were pretty much equal now. I still managed to win two out of three times but that was mostly due to Leda trying stupid things to get me in a compromising position. Gareth was working with a broadsword, Aelyn a rapier, and Cilia a saber. I didn’t follow their practice too closely as Leda had me on my toes.

It was no surprise that dinner was a hit. Chocolate ice cream was even better received and I was shocked our group ate half of it. Gareth and Aelyn both got brain freeze from eating too fast and that just cracked me up when I explained what happened to them. I then gave everyone a short lesson on dessert ‘portion control’. Callem asked me to help him in the larder as everyone else was cleaning up and getting ready for tonight’s lesson.

In the basement Callem had me pause at the bottom of the stairs. “Storme you see this brick I am pressing here?” I stopped and focused and Callem was pressing on a brick that had a dark gray protrusion on it. I nodded. “Well, Sebastian installed it. It is an illusion charm. Anyone scrying will see an illusion within the cellar of the people doing menial things.” He then walked to the far wall and trigged another stone that opened a secret passage. “This is another new addition of Sebastian’s. I doubt we will ever need it but this passage emerges 200 yards away from the farmhouse. Show the others when you can.” I nodded at all this cloak-and-dagger stuff. What was Callem worried about?

“I think it would be ok for you to practice your metal creation and shaping abilities for half an hour in the morning while you are preparing dinner.” He held up his hand which usually meant he knew my next question. “I will extend the farm work the others do in the morning by 30 minutes so you don’t have the extra time and it won’t interfere with your dinner duties.” Yes, the extra time was to make sure I still had time to make dinner.

“Well, that wasn’t my question actually. Can I make more platinum coins?” I asked. Callem nodded slowly as he was considering.

“Yes, you can.” He looked around and went to an empty juice cask. “Put them in here and make sure you don’t leave any out in the open when you turn off the illusion. Also, put the weapons you are working on in the chest over there.” Callem pointed out a new large chest that was a new addition to his larder. “Inside the chest are the notes on the weapons I want you to make. I will inspect them in the evening and leave you notes to make changes to them.”

“Why all this subterfuge Callem? Is there something going on that I should know about?” I asked.

“Sebastian thinks the Sadians are going to attack…that is the reason for the tunnel. The reason for the illusion spell is in case the Inquisition starts sniffing around the farm.” A panicked look spread on my face, “Don’t worry Storme. It is very unlikely. They have bigger things to worry about. But the man who brought you to the healer at the carnival was an agent of the Inquisition. Sebastian has some connections and there have been no inquiries in regards to you…some people have been interested in me but nothing serious.” I nodded feeling relieved.

I was more than a little excited to reacquaint myself with making platinum coins. It made me feel powerful to make such wealth. Callem was leaving so I followed him. We returned upstairs ending the illusion as we climbed the steps. The discussion tonight revolved around the twenty or so kingdoms that Aelyn had visited in her time with the carnival. It was interesting and the most animated Aelyn had been in the time I had known her.

Later as I was in bed struggling through my *dimensional closet* spell I felt things were going too well. Something bad had to be on the horizon.