Chapter 72 (Arc 2 Chapter 26)

An alarm woke me, and I checked the image the spell sent me.  Isla was in my room.  I needed to get the locks installed on the doors.  In the future, I would also use my wizard lock on the room door.  I dropped my privacy bubble, and Isla jumped as she was staring right at my privacy screen.

“I am sorry, Storme, I didn’t know you were in here.  I was just checking what furniture had been delivered up here,” she said while blushing.  I extended my arms over my head and stretched.

“No problem, I got a few hours of sleep.  Are the cooks here?” I asked.

“Yes, they are downstairs, and I think they are unpacking things and confused about why they had to get so much heavy cream and chocolate,” she stated, but she also sounded curious.

“Very good.  Can you see if the glass for my windows is coming soon?”  I asked while walking to the door.

Isla pulled out some paper, “Each room has three panels of glass, and they are ready for pick up in the capital.  I was waiting to hire a transport, but Loriel offered….”

“No.  Your only job today is to get those window panels here and installed and get my bedroom set up.  I am staying here the rest of the week, and I don’t want to sleep on a couch—even if it is very comfortable.  Nice choice with those,” I instructed her.  The panels were special in that they had aether dust embedded in the glass so I could enchant them and make them one-way viewable glass.

“If you had told me you were planning to stay here, I would have had the room ready for you.  You can have Loriel’s room.  It is fully furnished,” she stuttered.

“I am not annoyed.  Just make sure it is ready tonight.  If not, then get me a decent room at an inn,” I tried to quell her angst at the minor failure.

She left the room with purpose.  I went down to the kitchens to see what was happening with the cooks.  I found the group milling about and waiting, “Ok, today’s first lesson is how to make ice cream!”

Teaching them to make the vanilla and chocolate ice cream took less than an hour.  Then I sent some cooks out for containers to store the ice cream in and pour the honey in.  The other cooks I had making batches of sauce and fries to practice their skills.  My baker had samples of the three types of buns, and the pretzel and brioche styles were acceptable.  The sesame bun needed work, the bread was too dense and the sesame seeds didn’t taste right.  I sent my one baker on a mission to find a second baker and pastry chef in the city.  A pastry chef was more of a dessert specialist chef than a baker, and I had to explain that to him three times before he understood.

I found the stone mage working on the third floor, and I explained about making the walk-in freezer walls hollow so I could fill them with beeswax to insulate the room.  After some back and forth, he was going to do the walls and ceiling.  After I filled them from above with melted beeswax, he would seal the access points.  Magic made life so much easier.

I took a break as it was lunchtime, and I wanted to go and pick up my scabbard.  I grabbed a bowl and filled it with fries and the BBQ sauce, and left.  As I walked and ate the fries, I got weird stares but thought that I could make paper boats and use the beeswax to coat them…we could sell portable lunches.  The first shop I entered that sold paper killed my dreams of a food takeout empire.  The paper cost too much.  When I finished the fries, I slipped the bowl into my storage space.

The leather shop was next.  My scabbard was ready, and it was elegant and functional.  I would only use it when I needed to carry a sword on my person.  Most times, I would leave the blade in my dimensional space and remove it when needed.  I walked around the shop and selected some very simple leather armor for myself.  It was a soft leather set except for the hardened chest piece.  I knew why I was purchasing it.  I planned to go back into the dungeon with my team.  It was a great workout.  It was fun.  And it was productive.  In addition to my neutralize poison spell leveling, my lesser restoration spell had reached level 4, and my cleanliness spell reached level 18.

I stored the leather armor in my dimensional space and returned to the warehouse.  The kitchen was abuzz as my delving team, now well rested, was sampling the four varieties of fries and the myriad of sauces.  My baker had a pastry chef candidate and two bakers interested in joining the staff.  I just hired all three of them after finding them competent after a short interview.  I spent a few minutes with the pastry chef before giving him a few coins to get supplies.  The bakers were set to work on the three types of rolls for now.

I was having flashbacks of my past life of a restaurant kitchen buzzing with electricity during a busy service.  I stepped out with Remy and brought him up to his room.  At least his room had windows and a bed already, I noted sourly.  “So Remy, you don’t seem to like dungeoneering overly much,”  I started.

“Storme, I will do whatever you need of me.  I am grateful for you securing my contract.  I have not said no to anything and have done whatever you asked.  Please don’t…”  He rambled.

I held up my hands, “I am not firing you.  I just need you to use your skills elsewhere.”  He looked much more relieved.  “I need an accountant in charge of paying everyone and someone to track expenses and sales.  I want that person to be you.”  His jaw didn’t work.

Finally, he muttered, “Everyone?”  It seemed the scope was kind of too much for him.  A person who had only been in charge of himself for so long now tracking dozens of people.

“Yes.  You can talk with Isla.  She has the information on the restaurant staff.  The delve team…well, I have not really been tracking that too well.  You will have to ask everyone what I have paid them and when they were hired and set up regular payments.  I think it will be easier as by the end of the week everyone should be living here.  We have running water in the kitchens and a few of the apartments,”  I relayed to him.  “This is your room, by the way.”

His head was suddenly on a swivel, looking around.  Its decor was nice but nothing special.  It was his own space.  “I will let you get settled in.  After you are comfortable, you can go and buy some accounting books.  Keep four books, one for the restaurant, one for the bakery, one for the dungeon team, and one for employees outside of the first three.  That will include nine guards and Mia.  Mia is in charge of building security, and she will also have four other guards I am paying to attend the guard academy in Aegis city.”

The more I talked, the more ridiculous everything sounded.  I was responsible for over fifty people!  “Remy, is everything acceptable to you?”  I asked the shell-shocked boy.

He nodded, “So I won’t have to delve into a dungeon ever again?”  His voice sounded hopeful.

“Your skills will be needed to heal, but I think we can keep you out of the dungeons,”  I confirmed.  The first level of the dungeon was so easy that I didn’t think his healing would be needed.  I did note to add a healing potion belt with some cure poisons in it for everyone.  Being over-prepared is never a bad thing, and Gareth already had one such belt.

I went back to the kitchen and brought the cooks together.  It was time to make burgers.  I showed them how to select the steaks for the grinder.  Too lean was bad, and too fatty was bad.  You needed a middle ground and wanted to cut off tendons and gristle.  We made the ground beef, and I got the enchanted griddle heated.  I showed them how to form a patty and season it.  I cooked twenty-one patties at once.  I had three types of cheese available and cut seven slices of each.  In batches of seven, I topped and added the hamburgers to the freshly baked buns.  I cut the burgers into quarters and called everyone in to sample them.

It was a feeding frenzy, and I think Gareth had two burgers by himself. With round one done, I told the cooks to practice. If everyone got full from the practice cooking, then they could give samples out on the streets. I left my notes on the 23 different burger combinations I had planned. Five of those were crispy chicken sandwiches, but that could be addressed later. One cook volunteered to go and get the missing ingredients for some of the creations. I promoted him to my other head cook.

I told everyone the plan was to open on this 6th day. Today was 1st day, so they only had a few days to practice. I was exhausted but also excited as I made my way up to my third-floor room. Gaeth followed me was a massive plate of fresh french fries. He followed me into my room and sat on my couch, “Your couches are a lot nicer than the ones in my room.” He settled into the stuffed leather padding. “So Stormy, when is our next delve? And how much did we make on the first?”

I sat on the second couch and watched Gareth drip some sweet Thai chili sauce onto his shirt from a fry on the way to his mouth. I thought about our harvest, “I think I lost about 20 gold.” Gareth jaw dropped.

“What? But we must have brought back hundreds of pounds of that honeycomb!” Gareth leaned forward and put the empty bowl on the polished stone floor.

I explained to him, “The honey was the only true value Gareth. Maybe forty gallons. I am paying six delvers six gold, and I paid ten gold for the token to enter. That is forty-six gold, not to mention the cost of boarding and feeding my team. The forty gallons of honey can be made into one hundred and sixty gallons of mead worth about forty gold.”

“Wait! You are paying everyone six gold for one delve?” Gareth exclaimed in disbelief.

“Just five gold and a one gold bonus,” I retorted. Seeing his disbelief, I understood his incredulity, “Your contract was just all the food you can eat,” I said, pointing at the empty bowl on the floor.

“Well, we need to go deeper into the dungeon then….And I want to renegotiate my contract, Stormy.” He said, flittering between seriousness and a smirk.

I laughed openly, “Fine. I was just joking with you anyway. Everyone will be paid the same. Remy is paying out the coin, so you can see him. I don’t think going deeper is the answer. The honey could be the key. We got four times the amount of a normal harvest. If I can get the team to get that in four hours, reset the level and do it again, I might make a weekly profit. The key is getting Lana to learn the dimensional closet spell.”

Gareth, who never really focused on the monetary aspects of dungeons, protested, “But the boars that wander the second level of the dungeon are easily worth a gold each Stormy! And if you reach the second level, there is no time restriction on how long you can stay.”

I pulled out my reference book from my dimensional space and opened it to the chapter. Gareth moved over to my couch and looked on while I checked out his assertion. The boars weighed around three hundred pounds and yielded about 150 pounds of salable meat at one large copper per pound. So about about 15 silver. The tusks went for a silver each. The real value was the aether stone the boars had inside them. It was tier 1 but not small, with about 2.5 units of red crystal. They could sell for around 50 silver each.

Gareth had done the math as well and figured his estimate was off. “Sixty-seven silver is noting sneeze at Stormy! And you can use the meat in the restaurant,” he pleaded his case.

Maybe the bacon. Five of the twenty-three menu items had bacon slices. I caved, “We can check it out next time.”

He jumped up in excitement, “When is next time?”

“Next, sixth, or seventh day. If we can get a slot,” I replied, enjoying my friend’s enthusiasm.

“I will go and check right now!” Gareth was rushing out of the room.

I took a short nap and then started working on Gareth’s new blade. I was interrupted by the arrival of the window panels for the two bedrooms in my apartment. The stone mage came down and used stone to secure them, and they looked great. Isla entered just after they were installed, “Storme beds and linens are on the way up now for your rooms.” She looked at the glass, “And they already installed your windows!”

“You did great, Isla. I need a writing desk and an enchanting workspace in the second bedroom,” I told her, and she turned and left in a hurry to get it done.

I moved to the aether-infused glass and pulled out my enchanting materials. I set up a privacy screen and got to work. This was going to be my first time connecting all these runes together and powering them with an aether crystal. I would be connecting all six panels with my runic wire so they would all draw from just one aether crystal battery. I was adding three active runes. The first rune would make the glass viewable in only one direction. The second rune would strengthen the glass, and the final rune was a camouflage rune. If it worked as advertised, then the glass on the exterior should match the wall around it.

It was an incredibly ambitious project. The reason I was attempting it was a proof of concept. If this worked, then I was planning to try the same thing with my skyship, giving it a coating capable of making the ship blend in with the background. It was not true invisibility, which would pull a large amount of aether to maintain the runic spell.

It was late evening, and I had only done the simplest steps of connecting all six panels when a knock at my door interrupted me. “Storme, it is Isla. I have the desks, workstations, and the rest of your furniture.”

Isla entered and looked haggard. I guessed she had been running around all day to accommodate me. I gave her some praise, “Fantastic! You can bring everything in.”

The scribes desk was large and had a fair amount of storage. The enchanter’s desk was just a large bench with storage underneath. With these two massive desks in the room, it got crowded with the full-sized bed, “Isla, can you have the laborers take this bed away and bring in a smaller bed? I think my only guest will be my sister anyway.”

She gave the orders and collapsed on the leather couch, “There is a one-person bed in Loriel’s room for Bylura. They will bring that.” I shrugged.

The furniture and the smaller bed were set up while I worked. After they left, Isla came in with linens and began to make up the beds. When I dropped my privacy bubble to rest, she asked, “When do you think you will have time to make the rest of the copper pipe for the plumbing?”

I sat on the bed next to her, “How much more do you need?”

“There are notes by the copper bars. We have a number of leaks that you can probably fix quickly as well. There is a central chimney that drips straight down to the sewers. It is narrow with a ladder but could save a lot of expense,” she asked hopefully.

I was getting tired of my enchanting work, so the chance to stretch my legs sounded good. I walked with Isla as we tackled the leaks. What the installers had done was put my pipes end to end and then wrap them. I wasn’t sure what the material was, but it would never hold under pressure. Copper piping was not something these builders had dealt with before. It was easy to find the connections and make all the pipes fuse. I even had time to get the pipes set to my bathroom to give me cold water. At least all the shut-off valves seemed to work. The chimney was way too tight for someone my size, and I ripped my shirt.

Back in my room Isla was reviewing the progress while I changed. The blush on her face as I took off my shirt raised something in me that was quickly gone when Gareth came barging in. He paused to see Isla and then me without a shirt. He was going to turn around but instead started talking, “Storme, sorry for the interruption. Isla, right? Well, you might have to tackle him onto the bed to get anything out of him,” he chuckled. He then looked at me, “Stormy, I got us the afternoon delve on the 6th day. And you owe me twelve gold.” He turned and left.

Isla looked like she might just take Gareth’s advice. I just said, “You really need to get those locks installed on the doors soon.” The room was awkward for a bit. I looked at Isla, and she was an attractive woman. I offered, “Why don’t you go and get us some dinner, and we can continue to talk about progress in my room? In the meanwhile, I will be working on windows.”

Hope flared in her eyes as Isla left the room. I was working on the windows when a knock came. Expecting Isla, I opened the door, “You don’t need to….” Remy was on the other side with a mess of paper and five heavy books secured in his arms.

He walked in as he seemed about to drop the mess, went into the bedroom, and placed everything down on my desk, “I have talked to everyone, and Isla gave me all her accounting work, but I have a hundred questions….”

When Isla returned with a platter of food, she was sweaty from carrying it so far and looked disappointed that Remy was here. Remy just said, “Isla, it is fortunate you are here. I have dozens of questions for you as well! For the next five hours, Isla and I helped sort out the accounting books. When we finished, Isla, already tired from the long day, went down to her room. At least Remy was happy as he had a firm grasp on his new job.