Chapter 125 POV Lorae Fadre, The Great Heist

Lorae kicked the metal container filled with runic arrows, causing a loud gong to sound.  The dark elf in charge of the shop gave her a hard stare.  She rolled her eyes. She was so bored.  She had been working in her father’s delve team, Dusk Hunters, shop for months.  The only excitement was when some adventures brought something interesting to sell.  Of course, she was just there to listen to negotiations and run errands.

At least after she finished her shift, she could continue to show Bleiz around the city. His naivety was comical to her. At first, she had made fun of him for how little he knew, but she stopped once she learned how he grew up. She had thought her life was rigged and structured.

Bleiz grew up from birth fighting for his very life. He could be culled if he ever fell below some imaginary line in the learning pack. It drove him to excel, and for being so young, he was a formidable fighter even by her father’s standards.

The problem was that Bleiz spent his entire day training with members of the Dusk Hunters, and she only got to play with him during the evening. She was sure her father, Relik, was trying to recruit Bleiz to his team. But Bleiz had confided in her that he was bound to Storme. Bleiz was bound by blood and magic, and he accepted it. Lorae did not like that and planned to find a way to break that bond.

Bleiz was fun, fluffy, and smelled good. She wanted to be his friend—and maybe something more. She could not reveal her infatuation to her father, though. It was best just to show that she wanted a friend. The day was a slow burn of boredom and people-watching. Her only excitement was running enchanting materials to Master Gorsch.

Master Gorsch was a gnome enchanter that she had worked for as part of her training. Her father wanted Lorae to experience a hundred different professions before deciding her Life’s Path. Some apprentices were better than others, and the gnome enchanter was fun to be around. They had an endless verbal spar from the first day she worked in his shop. It was one of her more interesting friendships.

She entered the shop with a pack of supplies, “Gorsch! Got your order from the Dusk Hunters!” She had yelled even though she knew the old gnome was just in the back room.

“Girl, no need to yell. My hearing is just fine, and you know where I am,” the gnome came out of the back in his leather apron.

Lorae ran her finger along a shelf and picked up some dust on her fingertip. “Looks like without me around, the shop is getting dirty.”

Gorsch grunted, “The mage I hired to do the cleaning has not returned from his vacation. I may have to find another. Or if you want, you can grab a rag and do some good.”

Lorae smiled at the old gnome, telling him without speaking that it was never going to happen. She had spent six months helping him and learning about artificing. Half her day was spent cleaning the shop and writing out info cards for the items he produced. Lorae asked, “Did you find out anything else about my request?”

The gnome cracked a small grin that the banter was over for the moment, “Your problem sounds correctable with a magical spellcraft than an artificed device.”

Lorae groaned, “I already asked Archmage Helena. She thinks it would require a tier-five cleanse spell at the minimum.”

The gnome sat in the chair behind his desk, “I think I could make a device to mute the effect, but it will not eliminate it completely. Maybe as a bracelet or necklace.”

Lorae’s eyes went wide, and she rushed to the counter, “Really? How much? And definitely a bracelet.”

The gnome held up his hands in subjugation, “Do not get too excited. It would be a theory crafting from my research. No guarantees and it requires mithril, so the cost is steep.” He put on his merchant’s smile. “For a friend like you, twelve hundred gold.”

Lorae’s face fell. She had maybe three hundred gold squirreled away. She could sell some things… “How much to get started?”

Gorsch raised his eyebrows, not thinking the young dark elf would want to spend so much on something that might not even work. He grunted softly, “Two hundred gold. That would be the cost of the materials I would not be able to salvage if the device was a failure.”

Lorae nodded and raced home. She returned with the coin and asked, “When will it be ready?”

Gorsh pondered, “Maybe five weeks. I have a number of orders to fill.”

Lorae groaned. Storme would be back in eight days to take Bleiz away. She made her best pouty face, “Can you do any better?”

Gorsch shook his head no. “Sorry, Lorae,” he said seriously. “I am already behind on my enchanting orders.” She nodded and placed the coin pouch on the counter. She walked back to the shop hoping that Bleiz would visit Llorth again in the future.

It was well after mid-day when Relik Fadrae entered the shop with his delve team.  Relik was Lorae’s father and one of the strongest fighters in all of Llorth.  He led the top delve team.  Every run they did cleared the lowest level and brought out a powerful reward.  Sometimes, this was a dungeon essence that imparted powerful tier-two or tier-three ability.  Other times, this was a dungeon artificed weapon or armor.  Sometimes, it was a potion recipe or spell.  No matter what it was, it was always worth dozens of platinum.

Relik spotted Lorae and wore a white smile on his dark elf visage.  He moved to her, his black armor creaking as he walked, “Lorae, guess what we recovered from the depths today?”

Lorae played his game, “Another giantsbane weapon?”

“No, it’s a dungeon essence for a tier three ability,” he said, grinning.  The grin looked out of place on one of the most feared men in Llorth. But that was how she knew her father in private, always smiling and grinning.

She thought, “Tier three…”  The Abyss Dungeon offered hundreds of rewards from its floor challenge monsters.  It was not unusual for something new to appear.  Most dungeon arches revealed the final prize for defeating the bottom floor’s boss, but since the Abyss had dozens of dungeon teams inside at a time, the dungeon had the symbol for random on the entry arch.  Meaning you would not know until you defeated the trio of bone nagas guarding the final chest.

Relik was excited, and her father rarely got excited, so it was something he had wanted… “I guess the Immunity to Heat?”  Relik had wanted that ability for a while and had been keeping enough space on his core for it.

”Wrong,” he couldn’t wait any longer and burst out, “Call of the Wild!”

Lorae froze.  Call of the Wild was what she wanted.  It was a lesser-known tier-three ability that greatly helped communicate and subjugate beast minds.  It was the best tier-three ability for a beast tamer.  Lorae couldn’t talk.  Relik continued, “It will be your gift on your 60th birthday if you still want to be a beast tamer then.”

Lorae blurted, “What! That is not fair! My thirtieth birthday is next week! You want me to wait thirty years!”

His smile faded, “Lorae, we have discussed this a hundred times. You will complete all your apprenticeships before deciding on a life path.”

Even at thirty years old, she could not make her own decisions! Humans would have their own children by her age! She stormed off, angry. She hoped her anger might help persuade her father to give her the Call of the Wild essence sooner.

At issue was that you could only assimilate so many dungeon essences, so you needed to choose carefully. Relik had hoped Lorae would choose a nice crafting profession, not an adventurer’s life like himself. Her mother had died on a monster hunt. She had taken a commission for yeti pelts. Yetis were solitary creatures, and somehow, her team ran into five in cave. Relik always felt guilty about not going with her on that quest. He always took any quest from the Adventurer’s Guild for Yeti extermination, but the guilt weighed on him even after twenty-two years.

Her father was good to her, and what she had planned made it slightly harder. As soon as Bleiz arrived from his daily training, she left her post in the Dusk Hunters shop. He greeted her, looking a little roughed up from his day, “Lorae, how was your day?”

“I had a great day!” She mussed with a smirk. “Let me buy you dinner in the city.”

Bleiz paused, Lorae always tried to get him to pay for meals in the city at her favorite restaurant. He asked, “What do you want, elf girl?”

Lorae rolled her eyes at him. When he called her elf girl, that was his way of telling her he was skeptical of her motivations. She took his hand and dragged him into the city, “I need a favor. Well, really more assistance than anything else.”

They were on the streets, and Bleiz asked cautiously, “How can I assist one of the most gifted dark elves in the city?” He was teasing her, but she let it slide. She constantly was flaunting her knowledge and skills, but that was to impress him and not display her mastery.

“I need help retrieving something from my father’s vault,” she stated clearly.

“I will pass,” he said immediately. “Your father and the Dusk Hunters have been good to me. I will not betray their goodwill.”

“You have not heard me out, Bleiz. I just want you to serve as the lookout. I am just retrieving something that my father promised me,” Lorae started her attempt to convince him.

“No,” he stated plainly.

It took all the evening meal for Lorae to convince Bleiz to help in her heist. His response had been no at every suggestion. He even began saying it before she asked a question or made a request. He was infuriating, and her effort and coin would have been better spent trying to convince her father just to give it to her.

She finally gave up on making Bleiz an accomplice and would just do it herself. She knew all the safeguards the vault had and had permission to bypass everyone except the arcane lock. Relik reset the arcane lock every time he entered the vault, and it lasted almost thirty days. If he did not return from a delve, the arcane lock would eventually expire, and she could gain access. It was his safeguard, but she knew Relik would never fall in the Abyss dungeon, at least not before her 60th birthday.

Her preparations took days. She needed a strong enough dispel to break Relik’s arcane lock. That cost her forty gold for the annulling dust. She was also certain Relik had some type of alert if the vault was opened, so she ‘borrowed’ a dampening stone from a mage in Relik guild. She was mostly certain no message would be sent.

Then, she had to plan for the household attendants. She had wanted Bleiz to help distract them, but he refused to assist. There were four of them, and their apartment was on the thirtieth floor of one of the residential towers in the city. Her best bet was to send the cook and porter out to restock the larder. That would be easy as she just needed to make sure all the food was spoiled. Draining the preservation rune and tossing in some dungeon fungal spores would take care of that. The other two would not leave the foyer unless there was an emergency.

She had finally prepared, and when her father left for a scheduled delve, she excused herself from the shop, telling the Dusk Hunter merchant she was going to the apothecary for something to soothe her upset stomach. She raced home, and the two guards questioned return her before she went to the kitchen. She tossed the spores in the larder after draining the rune. It was a lot of food spoilage and did not take long.

She called in the human cook, Quinten, whose mouth hung open in shock. He might be blamed for this, but Lorae took the blame, “I think this is my fault. I was playing with the preservation rune last night. Here, take Samuel and restock the larder.” She handed the cook a large gold coin. It would not be enough to replace everything, but it would be close.

After they left, she checked on the foyer, and the two guards were still there. She moved into her father’s room and toward the vault. It was a hardened marble vault with mithril hinges. The runic locks were everywhere. It would take a dragon to open it. She dripped some of her blood on the first seal and activated the dampening stone.

No audible alarms sounded, and the guards did not rush in from the lobby. She tried the latch and felt the warmth go up her arm, identifying her. The handle clicked, but the vault door did not budge. She waited for again for an alarm and nothing. She sprinkled the expensive dust to break the arcane lock. Sparkles on blue flashed as the dust worked. She inhaled deeply and pulled. The door swung silently open.

The inside of the vault was small. The left side had shelves for trays of gold and platinum coins and an array of aether crystals and gems. The right side had racks of weapons and dungeon artifacts. It was more wealth than most nobles in the city had.

She entered the vault and listened for any sound that someone was coming. The silence made her brave, and she found the shelf with the dungeon essences on the left. There were six, each with a slip of paper identifying them. She could read the runes and was told never to rely on someone else’s assessment, especially when it came to dungeon artifacts.

She found the Call of the Wild vial and took the paper with it. It was annoyingly stuck to the bottom of the vial. She ripped the paper away, and a pop sound emitted in the space. She had set off another arcane lock and alerted her father. She groaned even though he was going to eventually find out he would scold her for getting caught by such a simple trick.

Before she could change her mind she quickly confirmed the dungeon essence was genuine with her skill set. If it had been fake and she drank it, her father would be even angrier. She noticed the back of the slip that had been attached had some writing. Before drinking, she read it.

My Precious Lorae,

You are just like your mother. Hard to dissuade from your path. If this is your chosen path, I will support you. I hope you did not set off the paper arcane lock. If you did, you will spend another six months with Vantyne to improve your observation skills.

Love Your Father

Lorae cursed her bad luck. Even in her small victory, her father had gotten the best of her. She knew she had erred when she did not badgered him for the essence. It probably made him suspicious. There was no turning back now. She broke the seal and drank.