**CHAPTER 39 The Dimensional Closet**

The spatial spell was finally complete and imprinted. For the first evolution at level one, I allowed the entrance to be altered to any size. The space itself was a cube, 10’ to a side (3m). The maximum size of the doorway was one side of the cube but with evolution, I could reduce that size. The side and orientation of the doorway were fixed on the initial casting of the spell to the caster.

When accessing the space all I needed to do was focus inwardly on my core and open the doorway. The doorway was fluid and couldn’t cut a person or object in half when summoned, that knowledge was included in the spellbook. I left my loft and went to prepare dinner early. I ignored Gareth’s question asking what I was making for dinner. He was excited because I was starting an hour early it had to be something special.

Inside the farmhouse, I found Callem and Wynna on the couch sipping some wine. Wynna had retrieved her entire stockpile of fine wine from her old residence in the capital, some three hundred bottles and they took up a corner of the cellar below. I saw the mithril chunk on the table near the half-finished wine bottle. “Storme!” Wynna said, “You are early! Are you making a dessert tonight? You didn’t mention anything this morning.” I studied her for a second. Still nothing about the mithril, it was right there! Fine I could play this game. I hadn’t made any more mithril, I had just been adding platinum and gold to the growing hoard in the old cask.

“No, just heading to the larder for…for some juice.” Yeah, that sounded lame but I was thirsty. Callem raised an eyebrow figuring I was up to something.

“Hold up a minute. We should talk.” I stopped at Callem’s words. Finally, he would talk about the mithril. “The end of the year celebration is coming in a few days. I thought it would a good idea if we could do a gift exchange before everyone went home.” I stopped to process his words, confusion on my face. “Yes, you can head to Hen’s Hollow for the celebration. I will be there with Wynna at Ennet’s house anyway.” This was great news. “Also Storme, Wynna and Ennet are headed to the capital tomorrow. They need to do paperwork as their old residence has finally been sold. We were just discussing that you may want them to pick up gifts for your friends or family?”

“Is it ok if they use my coins?” I asked hesitantly and I moved to sit on the couch opposite the pair some possibilities opening before me.

Wynna supplied her view, “No I will not use your coins. We are getting 64 platinum for the old building we owned in the city. I will use those coins and you can repay me from your…magic coins,” she giggled at the thought of it. “The knowledge that I had sold the house in the capital will make it more feasible for you to add to your balance at the depository as well.”

“Ok,” I thought briefly getting excited about increasing my balance. But what should I get my friends? “Can you get me three, no four potion belts, each with six potion slot holders. That will cover Gareth, Callem, father, and Pascal. And get two minor stamina and two minor healing potions for each.” Potions were only one to three ounces (30 to 90 ml) of fluid and came in vials. “Better make those potions in combat vials,” I added.

A combat vial was a small glass vial dipped in silver. The silver was engraved on the outside with a durability rune that could be recharged. If the vial was properly washed it could be reused. The stopper on the vials had the potion's name and its expiration date. The shelf life of potions was usually 6 months to a year, depending on the skill of the alchemist and his kit. A great alchemist could usually get their potions to have a shelf life of over ten years according to Gareth’s research. No such skilled alchemist resided in Skyholme. Callem was the one who mentioned the combat vials to me more than once from his studies on delving into dungeons. He mentioned there were preservation runes to extend the shelf life of potions as well but regular vials could only take one runic inscription. Any more and the runic could affect the potion within.

Wynna nodded then added, “I think Cilia would like that as well.” Oh, I hadn’t even thought about Cilia and Leda. I nodded in the affirmation that it was a good idea. What to get Leda then? Wynna supplied, “I think Leda would like the spell book *Arcane Missile*. She mentioned it once when we talked.” Wynna waived her hand like it was no big thing.

“Is that a tier 1 spell?” I asked unfamiliar with it.

“Yes, it should be seven or eight gold and is fairly common. According to Leda it has great range but minimal impact on its target when it is first inscribed. After a few evolutions, it can be used well in combat. I think she means to act in support of Cilia with it from our conversations.” I nodded.

“That sounds great. Maybe I should get a spell for Aelyn as well? I was thinking of *Shadow Merge* or *Quick Step*? She is currently working on the *obfuscate* spell.” I waited for Wynna’s wisdom.

“*Quick Step* would be better for her,” Callem interjected. “It would help her in combat more. *Shadow Merge* requires the mage to be stationary I think,” I nodded to his implied question. “Movement is her strength and she should maximize it.”

So who did I have left on my list left? Mother, Freya, Monty, Wynna, and probably Ennet. “Can you get some treats for Monty in the city? Gareth said he saw a few pet stores.” Wynna said no problem. For mother…”Can you get a nice set of leather graving tools for my mother? I don’t know how much they cost but something expensive.”

“I know just the place in the city Storme. It won't be an issue. What about your sister?” Wynna asked as I was still thinking.

“How about some basic textbooks? Hen’s Hollow doesn’t have access to good education material and Callem keeps reminding me that the education in the capital is far superior to what we learn out here.” Wynna smiled at that.

“Perfect! She may not be too happy with you but it is a fantastic gift!” Wynna's eyes were lively, probably thinking what Freya’s response would be.

“Then you should probably get her some candy too. I will give that to her after she opens the books.” I said chuckling to myself. “For you and Ennet how about some wine? I really don’t know what to get you two but I count you friends and owe you both a lot.”

“That would be perfect as well Storme. There are two vintages I had been wanting to try. My friends in the city said a shipment just came in from the lowlands.” Wynna and Callem both looked happy that I hadn’t forgotten the two master readers. I rose and headed downstairs. Still no mention of the mithril though. I would not lose this battle of patience.

In the basement, I opened my dimensional space. I made the doorway the size of a normal door. First I checked the edges of the door. Not sharp but firm and slightly elastic. I knew the door couldn’t close if an object was wedged in the archway. If there was an object wedged it would be expelled outside the doorway so it could close. Inside was…dark. The sides of the box were all matt black. Evolutions could change that but that would be a waste of evolutions. I was still contemplating the fact that this space was essentially inside my aether core. So the paradox of having my aether core inside and still being to enter it was still perplexing to me. There were two paragraphs in the spell book explaining how it was possible but I didn’t grasp the logic.

There were so many evolutions that I wanted. The expansion of the space allowed the box to increase two feet in any direction (0.6 m). Right now the space was sufficiently large for me. The next evolution that I wanted to learn was material exchange. This allowed me to put things into the space by touching them. I could also remove things from the space. I needed a single point of reference when the evolution occurred, so that was typically either the right or left hand. I walked out of the space. I had a semi-cheat I was eager to try.

The spell cost about 40 aether units to cast. This was much higher than a typical tier three spell cost. Tier 3 spells typically cost about 4 aether units to cast. After it was cast the dimensional space reduced a mage’s aether pool by 4 available aether units. If you canceled the spell you got that aether back. Items within the space when the spell was canceled got thrown back into the world.

The book clearly noted that canceling the spell and a mage dying were two different events though. When a mage died their aether core collapses meaning everything that was stored in their aether dimensional storage disappeared as well. Well, my cheat was to cancel and recast the spell until I ran out of aether to try and level it up. It was one of the suggested methods in the spell book. It took about five castings to get to level 2 and about twenty total castings to get to level three. For me, the 800 aether was about 60% of my total aether. A normal mage might need a few days to accomplish this!

I started the process and found I needed to wait about a minute between castings after canceling the space in my core. This was because my aetheric heartburn got super intense as the dimensional space dispersed. That had not been noted in the book! But maybe most mages who learned the spell already had their aether core fully formed. It took four castings and I was able to evolve the spell to get the exchange property. I choose my left hand as the point of reference since I was left-handed.

Fourteen more castings and the spell hit level three and I choose my next evolution. I choose stasis. It made items within age at one-tenth of their normal speed. This would allow me to store cooking ingredients. I could evolve this aspect again to slow aging to one hundredth with another evolution. And yes this was an excellent cheat to extend the shelf life of potions as well. Many alchemists and herbalists learned the spell just for this reason. Aelyn’s pocket space spell only slowed aging by half with her first similar evolution so the tier three version of the spell and its evolution was much more powerful.

The one negative, or maybe it was positive, was the dimensional space could not be closed with a person inside of it. Well, a person or being that had an aetheric field anyway. I couldn’t use the exchange ability to bypass this either, so no zapping enemies into my storage. Small insects were not an issue with no aetheric field, but a small mouse sneaking in? The mouse needed to be found and expelled or killed to close the doorway!

The good thing was since the space was essentially part of the mage finding the living creature preventing the door from closing was fairly easy. There was a track of using evolutions for the mage to hide within his own personal space detailed in the spellbook. It would take up six spell evolutions but I was not planning to make that investment.

Other evolutions I was planning to add were air recycling and temperature control evolutions. If I was going to put organic material in the space I needed to keep the air clean. The temperature control may not be needed unless we were hiking in a desert and needed a cool place to recover or perhaps we were on a glacier and needed someplace warm to retreat to.

There was a parade of footsteps upstairs. Everyone was here for dinner. It was usually plated and ready to eat when they arrived but I had gotten distracted down here. Well, they would have to wait a few minutes. I looked at my space before closing the door. I needed shelving like Sebastian had in his space to organize my things.

I went upstairs and everyone was dumbfounded. Where was the food? “Hold your stomachs. I will get out dinner soon. Wynna is going to go to the capital for shopping so if you need anything ask her.” That started a flurry of activity. Everyone crowded Wynna and the conversation was going full force as Callem revealed we would be free to go home for the festival and our group would be exchanging gifts before everyone left.

I mixed two large salads with dressing. The stove quickly got the water boiling and the fettuccini was fresh from Wynna this morning so cooked quickly in the water. The alfredo sauce was brought to temp slowly as it would burn if I heated it too fast. Soon I was plating piles of noodles and cheese sauce. Callem had everyone stop their verbal battering of Wynna and had them go and eat. Callem went downstairs and got two large pitchers of fruit juice and muttered he was running low.

The conversation at dinner was very animated as everyone wanted things from the city and to talk with Wynna privately later to tell them what to get others on their behalf. Wynna for her part was already taking notes. I was sure the notes already included everything I had mentioned earlier.

I wondered if I could get Wynna to get me some shelves for my dimensional space. I thought about what I would need before asking her. I would need two shelf units ten feet long and fairly deep, about 2 feet. If I got a shelf every two feet in height that would be at 0, 2, 4, 6 and 8, so five shelves on each. They also should be heavy-duty. Oh and I should get some book ends. No, maybe a specialized bookshelf for the third wall. That shelf wouldn’t need to be as deep, just 18”, to hold only books. I would have to wait though as Wynna’s appointment calendar was full after dinner, so much so that Callem canceled class this evening. I got the last appointment, after Aelyn who at Wynna’s urging was meeting her as well.

Back in the bunkhouse, I was getting everything packed. I planned to bring all my possessions into my storage. Aelyn returned from doing dishes and at first, she was quite upset at seeing me packing my belongings. She had thought I was preparing to move back to Gareth’s side of the bunkhouse but quickly calmed when I explained about my storage space.

She asked if I wanted the *obfuscate* spell back and I told her to return it after she imprinted it. We spent the next hour talking about the spell and how I had found it useful and how to manipulate the spell once she imprinted it. Aelyn was called in to see Wynna when Leda returned from her session so I was alone. I needed to choose my next spell. It was going to be either *alarm* or *aether shield*. Or maybe *lightning reflexes*? *Lightning reflexes* was a tier 4 spell though and I had struggled with a tier 3 spell. I needed more practice.

I decided on *alarm* as it shouldn’t take too long to imprint. It would be the only book left on shelf after tomorrow when I moved all my possessions to my space.

Twenty minutes later I was called in to see Wynna as Aelyn returned. She was alone on the couch and had a leaflet of notes. “So Storme have you thought of other things you need from the city?” She smiled but looked a little tired. “Oh, don’t worry about me Storme, I will have runners in the city get most of these things. I already planned to hire a skyship to get my furnishings moved to Hen’s Hollow so transport is not an issue.” My eyes lit up at the last bit.

“Wynna, Callem already has a list of the rarer cooking ingredients I need but I was hoping to get some shelving.” I described what I wanted and she nodded along, taking notes.

“There is an excellent carpenter who has a large warehouse in the lower city. I should be able to find what you need there. It may not be to your exact size requirements but should be close. So three shelf units for your *dimensional space* that measures 10-foot square(3m)?” I nodded. “That will be an impressive space Storme. I have seen the smaller dimensional spaces and they are incredibly convenient. Is there anything else you will need for your space? A chair? A desk?”

I broke the news, “Oh I imprinted the spell already, just need to furnish it.” Wynna looked up and I was happy to see her amazement. Callem as if he had been listening came out of the bathroom.

“Really?” Callem asked in disbelief. I nodded. “At your age…tier 3 spell right?” I nodded again. “That is amazing.” They both congratulated me on what I guessed was a remarkable achievement. I mean I had earned it with all my work but it still felt good to receive the praise. We returned to my shopping list to outfit my new space.

I started by detailing the three shelves I wanted for each of the walls and then continued, “Oh, I think large light stones, twelve I think. And a comfy reading chair…and a small table, maybe two feet by four feet. Ten small casks of water too. Best to have water at hand if needed. I will add food stores as I go.” Her eyes widened a little as I expanded my list. I thought it best to stop there though. I thanked her for helping and went to my loft in the bunkhouse. Aelyn was already asleep.

The next day at breakfast everyone was animated. Wynna was leaving right after the meal and everyone had a few additions to their list after they had thought overnight. I added four casks of apple-pear wine. It had very little alcohol and was generally a kid's drink but I liked it. A cask was roughly four gallons (16 L) so that should last me a while…I told Wynna to add ten mugs to my list which got weird stares from everyone. I had revealed my space to the group just yet.

After stretching that morning I moved everything from my loft to my space with the exception of my bedding and the *alarm* spellbook. I would move it out in the morning and multicast the spell to try to raise the level as much as possible before Wynna returned and then once I added the shelving I would move everything inside permanently. I returned Leda’s enchanting primers to her bed and found her sheets smelled like lilacs…she was evolving her spell. I grabbed the *cleanliness* spell book and brought it to be added to my other things. She had mentioned she was done with it but just hadn’t returned it. I was just making pizza tonight and trying out some new toppings, seven pizza crusts in total were being prepared. I would add the toppings before cooking.

I wasn’t the only one distracted as training progressed during the day. Apparently, everyone was thinking about the gifts they had gotten for others and what everyone might get them. Callem started to get frustrated at the lack of focus and made us run the obstacle course. The winner would get to decide the topic in lessons tonight. Without Wynna here Callem would just turn it into a discussion most likely. He was going to start us at intervals, a stupid suggestion I had made. We would start in reverse order of our best finish by our times. If we all ran our best time then we would finish at the same time.

The start model gave a lively run of the course but I hated when Gareth started behind me. He always gave me a little extra shove when he passed me and yes he always passed me. Leda started first, then Cilia, then me, then Aelyn, and finally Gareth. I decided I wanted to win today so took risks. Jumping off 12’ (4m) walls and rolling down cargo netting. I thought I had the win with just a fifty-foot climb up a ladder and fire pole descent and a short sprint left. But then Aelyn was on me during the climb and just as I was about to reach the top she pulled even. She gave me a cheeky grin as she passed me. Gareth somehow also swung up onto the platform right after her, passing me as well. They were human squirrels.

Aelyn was on the fireman’s pole first but Gareth was right on top. Somehow his descent was faster and he flattened her at the bottom and sprinted the 20 yards (18 m) to Callem for the win. I was dumbstruck and helped Aelyn up when I got to the bottom and we hobbled to the finish together. I did have an itch in the back of my mind. There was no way Gareth should have caught Aelyn. Did she intentionally let Gareth pass her?

The others stumbled in after us. Callem said, “Excellent! You all improved on your best time! Three times in this format and three times you all improved!” I didn’t like the tone of Callem’s voice. It was one of excitement, like a kid with a new toy. A toy I had given him. Gareth had recovered enough to speak.

“Dungeons!” He yelled hoarsely. “Tonight we will all talk about dungeons!” We all moaned. It was inevitable and it was probably why everyone had pushed hard today. Gareth only wanted to talk about dungeons.

The rest of the day progressed and after dinner, with everyone clean and healed we settled in for tonight’s discussion. Leda sat crossed-legged in a loose shirt and her bust was visible and Gareth kept getting his eyes drawn back to it. Callem started, “OK Gareth so what are we going to talk about in regard to dungeons tonight?”

Gareth sat up and said, “Instance dungeons. They were in the new book that you got for me. They are rare and interesting. From what I read they are mostly found in young dungeons. They allow multiple groups inside at once, each group experiencing a different dungeon. Similar but not exactly the same terrain.” Gareth rushed to the end. Callem looked a little aggrieved.

“Ah, instance dungeons.” Callem hesitated and then continued. “Let me tell you the story of my son, Gylan.” Callem got up and got a bottle of wine and poured himself a glass, sat down and resumed. “Gylan was an energetic boy. From the time he could walk he never stopped moving. As he grew he made friends, many friends. They got it into their heads to be dungeon divers. I supported him. I trained him. He finished third or fourth in the Annuals every year at the academy.” Callem sighed.

“He was the top swordsman at the adventurer’s academy. But there were twin boys from the Torrent family enrolled at the naval academy. They were exceptional lads in their own right and had advantages in terms of abilities. Well, I digress. Gylan and his friends were all at the top of their class in the adventurer’s academy and on graduating started their own delving company. They were very successful in the dungeons on Skyholme but soon wanted new challenges. They got a transport to the lowlands and settled in an adventurer’s guild town.” Callem sipped his wine.

“An adventures guild town is a town that is located in remote areas but has access to multiple dungeons nearby. The town was called Hero’s Rest if I remember correctly. The town was adjacent to an instance dungeon. It allowed up to twenty-three groups to enter at a time. Gylan’s group was there for over a year running that dungeon and others nearby, amassing fame and wealth. They did extremely well and I talked with my son every few days using stones. They were getting ready to move to a big city with a more challenging dungeon. Well, I didn’t hear from Gylan for weeks and I was getting worried. I went to the town of Hero’s Rest.” Callem drank the rest of the cup and refilled it. We were all listening in rapt attention.

“The instance dungeon had evolved. Seventeen dungeon diver teams were inside at the time, Gylan’s group was one of them. Ninety-eight men and women in total. Only six made it out alive, one from Gylan’s team. She was shell-shocked when I found her in the tavern. She told me the horrors of being inside during the transition. The adventurer’s guild said the turmoil was mostly due to the instance dungeon transitioning to a regular dungeon with just one instance from 23 separate instances. The adventurer’s guild was less concerned with those who had been lost and more focused on mapping the newly tiered-up dungeon. So you see, no matter how well you are prepared, dungeons are unpredictable.” Callem stopped and I hoped this might dissuade Gareth from delving.

After a few minutes of awkward silence, Gareth spoke. “Callem dungeons are notoriously difficult but fair. When a dungeon tiers up it conflicts with other dungeons as it tries to expand its footprint within the aether ley lines. Do you think some of those adventurers who didn’t return were pushed into other dungeons? It is extremely rare but you can travel between dungeons…” Callem was already shaking his head no.

“Yes, the adventurer’s guild thought that might be a possibility. But,” he sighed, “In the decades that have passed not one of those adventurers who perished in that dungeon has returned to my knowledge.”

Gareth persisted, “But Callem he could have exited anywhere with the sphere…he could have emerged millions of miles away! Or even on one of the 23 moons!” Callem was shaking his head.

“Hope is a powerful thing Gareth. I will always have it but no diviner or magic could locate Gylan.” Callem looked at Gareth, “I will not try to alter your path Gareth. But understand the dangers ahead of you on the path you wish to walk.” That ended the night. We returned to the bunkhouse and I noticed Gareth at least looked contemplative.

Unfortunately just before I climbed into my bunk Gareth whispered to me, “We should go and try to find Callem’s son when we go to the lowlands.” Well, I liked that about Gareth, he was an optimist.