Chapter 73 (Arc 2 Chapter 27)

After Remy and Isla left, I worked through fatigue and finished the enchanting on my windows.  The crystal I was using to keep them charged should last about thirty days in between recharging as none of the enchantments drew a lot of power.

I went outside, and it looked like it had worked.  It was early morning, and Talia was leaving to return to the capital island.  “How was your room?”  I yelled from the plaza.

“Oh, Storme.  I didn’t see you over there.”  She walked to me, “It was great!  I spent the evening with Lana and Sammie.  They are very nice!  I think we are going to get along great.  Gareth even joined us for a while.”

I was shaking my head at this.  I hoped Gareth wouldn’t alienate all the women on the team.  “Did Aelyn not join you?” I asked, realizing she hadn’t mentioned her.

“No, she was with Gimble in the training room on the third floor.  I think she went to sleep right after that.  I am glad Selina convinced me to join you,” she said with a smile.

Talia left, and I went to the kitchen to eat, only to find Gareth with a bucket of chocolate ice cream and a spoon, “Stormy!  How did it go?  I saw Isla returning to her room—much later!”

Gareth’s reward for winning the Pre-academy Annuals tournament had been a dungeon essence bestowed ability.  It was called Hasten Dream, and it allowed him to only need two hours of sleep in order to get complete rest.  This meant he was up most of the night reading his dungeon books or doing extra training.  When we finally moved permanently to the city the next year, I could imagine him enjoying the nightlife here a little too much.

“It went fine, Gareth.  We hammered out quite a few things.  I am pretty sure it was an evening she will never forget,” I told him slyly.

“About time!  Well, I met this woman last night too!  She was one of the guards in the warehouse.  I am meeting her for lunch today.  So Storme, I really need to get that twelve gold.”  Gareth pulled out the stamped dungeon token and handed it to me.

“Gareth, a token only costs ten goldto get a token,” I stated plainly.

“Yeah, I had to buy it from another team.  All six slots were filled for the 6th and 7th days this week.  I found the team captain in the adventurer’s hall, and he sold me this token for just two gold over the standard price,” Gareth explained, like that was the most natural thing in the world to do.

I shook my head in disbelief, “In the future, Gareth, only the team leader or I can purchase the token.  It would be a shame to waste it, though.”  I pulled out twelve golds and handed them over to a grinning Gareth.  He quickly slid them into his money pouch and continued eating the ice cream.

“So, Gareth…this kitchen,” I indicated the massive space, “Is under the supervision of my two head cooks.  You can not go and grab things from the freezer.  If you want something to eat you need to ask the servers.  Your apartment has a small kitchen and I will enchant your ice box and stove top eventually.”

Gareth smiled, “Tell Vidalia, she told me to help myself.”

“Who is Vidalia?”  I hadn’t learned the names of everyone yet.

“The older woman server.  She told me I could help myself,” he smiled innocently.  I had schooled the cooks but not the servers yet.  I needed a restaurant manager to take care of the staffing and education.

“Gareth, do you think your parents want to move to the city?  Your mom…” I started.

“No!  Please, Stormy!”  He started begging.  “My parents just adopted Geoff.  If my mother was here, she would be looking over my shoulder all the time and judging me!  I like being free.”

I sighed.  His mom was a tiny woman but educated and not afraid of anyone.  She would have been perfect.  And I think Gareth needed someone looking over his shoulder.  I didn’t have the time to do it.  “Fine.  I will think of someone else.”

A relieved Gareth patted me on the back, “Thanks Stormy.  I am going to the Adventurers Guild with Sammie to practice against some other delvers.”  Gareth handed me the bucket of ice cream and walked out.

I worked on some of the enchantments in the kitchen while I waited till all the staff arrived for the restaurant.  I then spent a fair amount of time in educating the group about expectations, sanitary practices, dress code, treatment of customers, treatment of my delvers, attitude while working, and being to work on time.  I think it went well.  Since I was paying a premium for their services and I had already made a few examples by firing people I think they understood my expectations.

I wanted the restaurant to run on its own.  I didn’t want to be involved other than supplying coin to keep the place running.  I doubted the restaurant would turn a profit but it should get close to neutral.  I spent an hour showing the cooks how to batter and bread the chicken for deep frying.  Then I left them to practice.  I had my two bartenders go out and order casks of ale.  Since I wanted to sell my beverages cold the casks were to be stored in the walk-in freezer off the kitchen.  Enchanting every cask with cold runes that came in was not feasible. I had enough work ahead of me with the finishing all the enchantments on the building.

My next task was borrowing two cooks to heat the beeswax and pour it into the walls to insulate the walk-in freezer.  The wax was not normal when they tried melting it in the pot.  It was white and had a much higher melting point than normal beeswax.  Even with a funnel the dumping of wax into wall was extremely messy.  The worst part was the cavities were about 4” thick and all the wax we harvested barely dented the amount needed for the four walls and ceiling.  By my estimates I was going to need about 220 more harvests the same size to completely insulate the walk in freezer.  I just shrugged my shoulders and figured it at least gave us somewhere to dispose of the wax.

The rest of my day was spent being a plumber.  I made the copper pipe and connected it.  The cold water was pretty much finished with just the hot water for the apartments remaining.  At lunch I tried the chicken sandwiches and was extremely happy with the product.  I had the cooks keep practicing the 23 menu sandwiches.  When someone ordered the ordered a burger, they selected one of the four types of fries, a dipping sauce, and one ale for a complete meal.  Milkshakes were coming once I came up with a blender.  For now we would just serve the ice cream in a bowl.

After lunch I was on the roof and enchanting the hot water tank.  I embedded the charging aether crystal for the runes in the metal and hoped it wouldn’t be noticeable.  It was another expensive investment.  The runes were placed in the bottom of the 250 gallon copper tank.  They heated the bottom to just below boiling.  I installed the piping to my room first.  I made my own shower head and valves with my metal shaping skill.  It took some experimenting but by dinner I had a working shower.  The problem was the water pressure was so low.  I would need to pressurize the tanks on the roof.  It wouldn’t be hard.  A small rune to boil water to create steam with a pressure release valve to prevent it from exploding.

I tried the ogre burger for dinner.  A 1 pound patty on a pretzel bun with a sharp-smelling and tasting cheese with caramelized onions and  ketchup.  The burger was fantastic!  As I was eating, Remy brought me my accounting books.  I couldn’t believe he was done already.

“Storme, I have finished with all the accounting for the construction of the warehouse,” he paused. “The substantial investment in this building was fairly well documented by Isla. I did find one supplier double charging her for their work. The stone delivery volume just seemed off, so I confirmed it with the stone mage.” He put a sheet in front of me, and I reviewed it.

He was correct. The invoices were for two consecutive dates, and the stone mage signed off that he only received one delivery on the first date. This happened again in the following week. I asked, “Did you confirm that maybe the amount of stone delivered was twice as much on the first date?”

“The mage confirmed that was not the case. He said this company is run by a Bricio delve team, and they frequently pull off scams like this. He said since we didn’t challenge them immediately, it is usually hard to prove. He suggested just filing a grievance with the Miaden run traders guild,” Remy finished. I looked at the amount we were cheated out of. 3 gold and 18 silver.

I thought for a long minute, then said, “No. Put it down as a loss. But find out all the connections this delve team has and do not deal with them in the future.” I didn’t know if Remy had the capacity for this task, but I had confidence in him.

We reviewed the other books, and it was as bad as I thought. With my menu pricing of one silver per meal I would have to serve around 2,500 meals a week to break even. It was achievable if the menu was well received. My idea of a fast-order-to-serve restaurant may be a hit…if not, I would just ignore the losses.

The delve team is what concerned Remy the most. I had seven delvers I would potentially be paying 42 gold a week, plus he listed the value of meals and housing at another 4 gold per week. His concern was probably because he didn’t want to lose his job. “Well, Remy, you can move yourself from the delver payroll to the general payroll. That means the delve team just needs to make over 40 gold per delve,” I stated with a smile.

He nodded, unsure of my ascertain. I told him he was doing a fine job and he could give me weekly summaries.

I let the staff go home early and told the bakers and pastry chef to be in early tomorrow. I needed to set up the small bakery offerings, and then I would be done with training and open the restaurant. I made my way up to my room and found my door locks had been installed. This was great, but I still planned to use my *arcane lock* spell on the door.

I took out Gareth’s sword and worked into the night to finish the blade. The enchantments matched mine, so I had some practice. The aether crystal in the hilt would need to be recharged between delves, but other than that, the blade would serve him well. I wrapped it in a blanket and put it on the desk.

I finally felt I had some time to myself. I sunk into my leather couch and pulled out my book for the *thermostatic aura* spell. I fell asleep studying it.

When I woke, I was energized for the day. Everything was breaking smoothly. For the next few days, I worked on the plumbing and trained my kitchen staff and servers so we could open on 7th day. The delve team practiced in the sizeable three-floor training room under Gimble’s supervision. I was too busy to join them. Before the delve, all the artificing for the restaurant and bakery was completed by me, and the plumbing for the apartmetns was done as well. The only annoying thing was I had to improve the faucet and shower valves with my metal-shaping ability.

The bakery was ready to open on the 4th day. We sold loaves of bread to take home and a small assortment of breakfast sandwiches. We had a beverage similar to coffee, but it was closer to coffee-flavored milk than coffee. We put up advertisements for the restaurant opening on 7th day, and the stone mage finished the exterior façade of the warehouse, smoothing the stone and coating it in a nice white finish. It made our building stand out among the dreary gray building in the warehouse district.

The bakery started extremely slow. Almost no customers on the first day. We were expensive—a large copper for a sandwich and beverage. We had to give out two hundred samples on the second day we were open before the foot traffic started coming. The biggest seller was the honey cinnamon buns. We baked them in batches of four and sold them the same way. Each bun was massive, the size of an adult fist. Even at four copper for four, they were sold as quickly as we could bake them. Apparently, Aegis city had an untapped sweet tooth.

Mera and Fera arrived on 4th day. I had sent them the request as I wanted Mera to spend a few days with a master brewer. Isla had found one that was amenable for a few silver. So Mera would spend her days with him to learn the basics. I told her not to reveal her *fermentation* ability to him.

Tatum felt the pressure to finish the panels before the 7th-day opening, no matter how many times I told him to take his time. Quality over quantity. I spent half a day with him working on what color light globes I should make to illuminate each of his paintings. The directional globes I made were usually a softer white light with a single added color element. We had the stone mage embed them in the ceiling. It meant the servers would need ladders to turn them on and off, but that was fine. He managed to finish 20 panels and was working on the last three when opening day came. Rather than wait to give the painter the 300 gold bonus, I handed Tatem three shiny platinum and told him he was a fabulous artist.

Later in the week, Mia found someone to manage the staff. His name was Marcellus Hernan. He was one of the candidates to take over the guard duties for the warehouse. He was an older man who had taught at the guard academy for many years. His pension was small, and he needed work as his daughter and six grandchildren had moved in with him. His son-in-law had been killed in the Sadian attack.

Marcellus had actually been helping Mia find guards. Since she was so young, she hadn’t been getting a lot of respect when she made inquiries. Marcellus not only knew good people, but after he made introductions, potential guards were much more receptive to Mia’s job offer. We had our entire guard contingent lined up to start next week on 1st day.

Before opening day, we had our second delve attempt. Lana was still working on the spell, so I volunteered to take her place. The six delvers were Gimble, Gareth, Sammie, Aelyn, Fera, and myself. Talia had classes on the 6th day, and we never informed her she needed to be back for delve. Fera had been working with the arborist, and Gareth asked her if she wanted to come. He promised to protect her, and she agreed to tag alone. Gareth took her on a big shopping spree for leather armor and a heavy cloak.

Fera and Gareth were talking excitedly while we waited for the hourglass to expire so we could enter. When the older guard nodded to Gimble, he led us into the stone arch for our second delve.