**Chapter 37 Magic Weapon Crafting**

After giving Pascal a week to acclimate to the training Callem had us all run the three courses again for individual time. He had added a few twists here and there to ‘improve’ their difficulty. Callem and Aelyn both made minor improvements to all three times, Cilia improved on two courses and both me and Leda were a few seconds slower than our personal bests. Pascal had massive improvements on all the courses from the prior week and of course, he was preening like crazy even though all his times were slower than everyone else’s by a good margin. As we finished the morning training Callem left to go get Freya and Monty. We would have the afternoon off and Freya would stay overnight and be brought home after breakfast.

Lunch was brown rice with vegetables topped with a thick sweet sauce. It was another experiment by Wynna and during lunch, I helped her refine the recipe to more of an Asian-inspired style. It needed some spiciness to offset the sweetness. We were all lounging inside the bunk on a break. Well, Aelyn and Gareth were chipping away the last bits of ice from the buckets. It was still functioning just at a much lower power, close to what I had envisioned when I set the runes. I made the mistake of mentioning different types of ice cream and milkshakes; chocolate, vanilla, strawberry, cookies and cream, coffee, and blueberry. At least those were the ones I could do with the ingredients at hand. The coffee would be from the coconut-like milk that Wynna liked. I also made a note to try Thorn Berry ice cream if we could get more of them. That was a kiwi-like fruit that tasted like strawberries and bananas.

Our discussion of ice cream and milkshakes was cut short as an excited Monty burst through the door. The dog was over 100 pounds (40 kg) and bowled over Leda without trouble and then made a beeline for me. I was sitting in a comfortable chair and braced myself. Monty’s momentum took him into my lap and knocked the chair backward, sending us both sprawling. The beast pinned me and licked my face making sure I was ok.

Freya entered shortly after the beast wave and her first words were, “It stinks in here.” Well, I couldn’t disagree with her olfactory senses. I had taken to essentially spamming my cleanliness spell while in the bunkhouse. I even used my extended range to clean Aelyn's bedding when she was out bathing. Aelyn herself had a nice earthy smell but her bedding smelled of stale sweat and acidic body odor. With the smell corrected, I slept much better and was surprised that Aelyn hadn’t commented on the improvement. Well, Freya had a list of things she wanted to do.

First, she wanted me to show her some real magic. Then she wanted to see her brothers square off against each other in a duel. She wanted to try running the obstacle course herself as apparently, Callem had told her during the walk back how much Pascal had improved. And finally, she wanted to try ice cream which was a thought Callem must have put in her head as well! When Aelyn told her how many flavors there were she wanted to try them all. So it was looking like my afternoon off was not going to happen.

Why couldn’t Freya just want to lounge by the swimming hole and lazily throw a stick for Monty? Freya suddenly stopped her verbal onslaught and looked around the bunkhouse. “Who are all these pretty girls? And why are they in here with you?” I didn’t like the tone of the last sentence because it either was said with jealousy or insinuated that I was not good enough to get a pretty girl.

“I’m Leda,” Leda said from up in her loft. “Storme is my boyfriend.” This caused everyone to freeze and even Leda’s light playful laugh didn’t break the awkwardness for a good minute. It only got worse.

“I’m Aelyn, Freya,” and Aelyn bowed to her. “I am Storme’s devoted servant. I do anything he asks of me. Anything.” Her tone was so soft and submissive and alluring all in one. I saw Pascal’s mouth fall open and I could see Gareth covering his mouth in quiet laughter. Not to be outdone Cilia joined in on teasing both Freya and me as she leaped from the upper loft and landed softly in front of us.

“I am Cilia. I am your brother’s faithful bodyguard. I make sure his body is clean and unmolested.” Cilia said with her ice queen voice and stoic stature but I could see a grin on the corner of her lips. She was no longer the ice queen and had accepted everyone, even Pascal with his lecherous stares. Freya was slowly nodding at all this new information as the truth of my situation. I could just imagine her telling all of this to my parents. I needed to correct this.

“Freya everything they are telling you is bullshit. I am their servant. I cook and clean for all of them. I tend to their wounds when they are hurt and I serve as a training dummy when they practice swords.” Aelyn was the first to process my words and slowly nodded as everything I had said was essentially the truth. Cilia nodded as well and then winked at Freya. That must be some secret female language.

Freya then bowed to Aelyn and Cilia who were in front of her, “Then mistresses may I please ask if my poor servant of a brother can have the afternoon off to play with me? And brother you shouldn’t use such language with your bosses.” So apparently it was more believable to Freya that I served the pretty young women rather than the other way around.

I think Monty was the most confused about all the interactions. He was now sitting and tilting his head and looking at each person in turn. It was Gareth who broke the stalemate by bursting into laughter. This caused a chain reaction for everyone else to follow with their own laughter.

Soon we were all outside at the obstacle course cheering Freya on as she slowly and methodically made her way through the easiest course. After she was done we all did our own run and a moderate pace. Aelyn did it with the most flourish, using her tumbling and acrobatic skills to show off. Gareth did his run with brute force. I took my sweet old time as did Leda. There was no need to impress my little sister. Pascal put in the maximum effort as he was the last to go. How had we gotten ourselves in a position to do training today? It was our afternoon off?

Next, we showed off our sword skills to Freya. She clapped and cheered everyone on. I let Pascal have a draw with me. He still wasn’t close to my level of competency but I didn’t want to shatter the relationship I had mended with Pascal by besting him in front of our sister. Gareth and Aelyn put on the best show, like a scripted duel. Maybe it was scripted as I knew Aelyn had done that as one of her acts.

I then healed everyone in front of Freya to show her magic and then removed a few scars on the back of Freya's hand. This caused the girls, who were not aware of this aspect of my ability, to ask for scar removal as well. Leda immediately pulled off her shirt. She was still wearing a bra and asked me to get the scars on her lower back. Embarrassed I said, “This is something we should do in private.” This made Leda blush.

Aelyn quipped, “Yes, in private, can I make an appointment for tonight?” I threw up my hands in utter defeat and walked away. Everyone fell in behind me like I was the mother duck and they were my ducklings. I went to Callem’s house and they all followed me in.

I turned to them, “I am not removing anyone’s scars!” I probably said it a little too heated so followed it up with, “I am making ice cream right now! Get my buckets!” I don’t think the comic scramble out the door could be made justice with words. Cilia and Gareth ran into each other and bounced in the door frame stopping their progress cold. Aelyn tried to navigate the bodies but Gareth’s quick recovery caused her to trip, causing a stack of three people in the doorway. Monty who was outside thought it was a game and jumped on top trying to lick everyone’s face in the tangle of limbs.

Thankfully, shortly later I was alone in the kitchen with Wynna. The others were entertaining Freya and Monty which I now knew was going to be interesting. Callem came out of his room and asked me to help him in the basement to move some things. So, I paused in my ice cream endeavors to head below.

After initiating the illusion field Callem spoke, “Storme I have some news from Sebastian. Well, from a friend of Sebastian anyway. Apparently, Callem Dregalla is alive and well and delving into dungeons these days for platinum!” He laughed at the absurdity of it all. I knew Callem hated dungeons. “I think it is safe to say all the attention of your sudden wealth will be attributed to me and my new live friend, Wynna.” I started to speak but stopped.

“Storme you need to be careful going forward, but you know that. I think Gareth’s excursion into the capital has been attributed to me as well. Casting my motivations for bringing Aeyln here was difficult. We had to rely on a few friends of Wynna’s friends in the capital and some of my old friends, what few I had left, think less of me for purchasing an indentured,” Callem said but instead of being angry, he had a half smile. “Don’t worry I care nothing for my reputation and the people that know me best wouldn’t believe the shit we planted out there.” He was chuckling now.

Callem sighed, “Well time to work Storme.” Callem went over to the large chest, opened it, and pulled out some leaflets with his notes and then two hand axes, some throwing daggers, and long hunting knives. “You have some aether dust?” I nodded. “Good. Storme, I want you to make these,” he indicated the array of weapons, “but I want you to fold in the aether dust between the layers like a master smith. This will prep them to receive enchantments.” Callem moved everything to a table. “I want you and Gareth to start carrying a hand axe, some knives, and throwing daggers. We will start training with them once your brother leaves. You need a permit to carry a sword in the capital and other cities but not these other weapons.” He moved toward the stairs. “I have a new crate of coal in the far corner to turn the iron into steel.” Callem left and I looked at the weapons before me.

Two hand axes, one smaller and designed for throwing and the other heavier and used for cutting. Six different throwing daggers of various weights and lengths. Throwing knives were the thrower's preference for the most part which was the reason for the variety. The six hunting knives; three specialized for skinning and dressing a beast and three for combat and utility. How many did he want me to make of each? I created a large block of iron and went to get the coal. Since I didn’t have the aether dust right now I decided to just make a large block of steel and call it a day. I put everything back into the large crate and went upstairs to make ice cream. I felt like I was an arms dealer who had a front of an ice cream truck.

The bucket was functioning as originally intended and I made batches of chocolate, vanilla, strawberry, and cookie dough ice cream. I didn’t have any Oreos so just made a batch of cookie dough, solidified it in the fridge, and then cut it into tiny cubes. It must have been about three hours of constant work with Wynna’s help and taste-testing approval. We now had four flavors of ice cream in the aether-powered freezer unit each around two gallows worth (8 liters).

After the ice cream, I had to make dinner. I prepared chicken cordon blu this morning with wild rice and green beans. The cheese wasn’t swiss but was sharp enough to substitute and the sauce topping was quite rich as I had used leftover heavy cream from the ice cream. When I was close to finishing Wynna called everyone in.

The mass of bodies crowded the table designed for up to six now held nine settings. Callem brought out the good red juice and everyone dug in. The dinner disappeared so fast that I was awe-struck. Everyone was clambering for dessert. I got large stew bowls and spooned a decent scoop of each flavor into each bowl. Before serving I announced, “No seconds tonight! Eat slowly with small spoons and savor the ice cream!” I felt like a mother telling her children to slow down and chew their food.

Freya’s eyes lit up with each bite and everyone else was making contented sounds. The chocolate had been much improved this round and I was happy with the other flavors as well. I made my escape from the dishes and laughed when Freya tried to follow me. I told her only the cook escaped washing dishes. And there were a lot of dishes…well that was my habit. I had never been a messy cook in the kitchen in my past life but since I didn’t have to clean up…

I had a good thirty minutes of privacy before the bunkhouse was again rowdy. Gareth and Cilia were playing with Monty, playing tug of war with one of Pascal’s shirts. It was an old shirt and Pascal for his part was trying to sleep in one of the two comfy chairs. Leda was up in her bunk and Aelyn joined me in our loft. “Your sister is sweet,” Aelyn said.

I paused in my studies, “Do you have any siblings Aelyn?”

The pause made me think perhaps they no longer lived, “Two brothers. Both are older by a few decades. I met them once.” She paused and I sensed strain in her voice. “They didn’t accept me. They live in Cullinbar, an elven city far from here.” Her tone sounded hurt but she continued, “My human father passed when I was young. I think my mother said he had some children earlier in his life but I never cared to search them out.”

“I am sorry Aelyn.” I paused before returning to my studies when I heard her grab her own book off the shelf.

Cilia made a bed up in the lower area for Freya as all the bunks were full. I was studying late into the night when I heard Freya say very loudly, “Pascal stop farting!” I heard Aelyn whisper to me, “He does fart a lot in his sleep.” Laughter ensued from all the lofts at Freya’s words and Pascal in response just ripped a long loud one.

Freya left in the morning after a large breakfast and we were back into our training routine. Wynna was tasked with escorting her.

My magic smithing was going fairly well. I had to be careful not to charge any of the aether dust accidentally. If I did the metal I was mixing it with got extremely difficult to shape. I made everyone except Wynna a set of six throwing daggers based on their preferences during practice. There were three weights and sizes and Callem decided which size and weight everyone would get and practice with.

When the girls asked where the blades had come from Callem said he had a good friend who was a weaponsmith. Everyone got a full set of hunting knives as well. The quality of the blades made them have high value and Callem warned everyone about flashing them in public. The axes were where I was using my tier 3 aether dust. I made six throwing hand axes and six cutting hand axes. Callem had secreted them away to ship to an enchanter in the capital that he was friends with. Callem also held onto the knives and throwing daggers after we all practiced with them and cleaned them.

My other project was working on a bigger broad sword for Gareth. As he grew in stature he would outgrow the one I already made him. Plus I had promised him the best magic blade I could make. I used all my remaining aether dust on the blade for him and it was impressive. I planned to give it to him on his 14th day celebration, hopefully already enchanted.

The weeks started to blur together and soon Pascal was packing and getting ready to return. Three weeks had passed since Freya’s visit and I was hoping Callem would bring her back soon. Pascal was extremely content with his time on the farm. His sword skills had greatly improved and he had learned a large array of other combat skills. He actually hugged me before he walked back home with his large pack.

My progress on learning the dimensional closet spell had at least progressed. I ‘felt’ I was over halfway to imprinting the spell. So maybe another month or so. I was actually quite excited about the prospect of having the space.

The day after Pascal left I was in the larder and looking at my creations. I had nothing to really do. All my tasks were checked and dinner was prepped upstairs. Maybe I should try something new? I held out my hand and focused, I had never seen the metal before so I was going in blind. It took time to envision what I wanted and with my eyes closed, I felt a small weight announce itself in my hand. It was a silvery-white mass about half the size of one regular coin. It was mitheril. Checking my aether core I was under 10% full so this took about 80% of all my current aether to create since I had done a fair amount of casting already this morning. I put the metal on top of everything in the large crate for Callem to find. I was hoping it would knock his socks off!