Chapter 57 (Arc 2 Chapter 11)

I woke early and was anxious to increase the level of my *lightning reflexes* spell. Although I wanted to badly demolish Gareth in a spare I decided to keep the spell secret. If I openly displayed the spell then the news would travel and I would lose my advantage.

The spell enhanced my speed by 50%. The spell was a balance between the lightning sphere and the healing sphere. With the accelerated movement you damaged your body so the healing aspect countered it. The spell also had a massive aether drain of one unit per second. With it being a teir 4 spell it meant a mage would need to use 8 slots on their aether matrix to learn the spell. So that is why the spell wasn’t coveted.

A mage wouldn’t want to use so much space on their aether core for a melee combat enhancement that would drain their aether. I was fortunate that with my affinities the imprinting cost only took up 2 slots, as much as a tier 2 spell. That brought my total spell slots used to 12. During my last reading I learned I had 22 spell slots that would grow to around 103 when my aether core fully matured. I figured I should start to be a little more discerning in which spells I imprinted. I looked at my spell list on a sheet of paper in my dimensional space.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Imprinted Spell List** | **Tier** | **Slots** | **Affinity** | **Level** |
| Cleanliness | 1 | 1 | Aether | 14 |
| Mend Flesh | 1 | 1 | Healing | 12 |
| Obfuscate Abilities | 1 | 1 | Darkness | 7 |
| Dimensional Closet | 3 | 4 | Space | 13 |
| Alarm | 1 | 1 | Divination | 11 |
| Privacy | 1 | 1 | Illusion | 7 |
| Neutralize Poison | 2 | 1 | Healing | 1 |
| Lightning Reflexes | 4 | 2 | Lightning/Healing | 1 |

My *obfuscate ability* spell got an evolution at level 7 to add a fake ability line. I wasn’t sure what I was going to add but thought it might be useful to fool someone down the line. The *dimensional closet* spell got the air recycler evolution. This allowed me to keep a breathable atmosphere in the space with a tiny bit of aether. The only issue with using this spell that I learned if I entered the portal and closed the portal it would be anchored in place relatively…and the islands were constantly moving. So hiding out in the dimensional closet was currently not feasible.

I think I could anchor the portal opening to an object in the real world with an evolution which would solve my issue but using a spell evolution, when they were coming slower and slower, on this irked me some.

The *privacy* spell evolution allowed my to allow outside sound into my bubble while keeping sound on the inside contained. I choose this because Gareth had crashed through my bubble a few days ago surprising me. I could already see out but the privacy bubble had been a barrier to sound. My *alarm* spell got another uptick in brightness. It was now enough to temporarily blind someone in the day. One more evolution on brightness and I think I would be able to cause permanent damage to someone’s eyes. So after that next evolution, I could start to focus on increasing the volume.

My tier 1 evolution of the *lightning reflexes* spell had increased the speed by 10%. So now I would have movement enhanced by 55%. Since it was a dungeon spellbook it didn’t have a list of evolutions in in it like most spellbooks. I spent my morning of conditioning trying to puzzle and feel out possible evolutions. Selina had taught me a lot about spell evolutions and two were readily apparent when I examined the imprinted spell. One was increasing the effectiveness of the speed enhancement by 10%. And this was compounding. So the next evolution would be 55% x 110% = 60.5%. I could also increase the spell efficiency by 10%. I wrote out the effects of the possible evolutions.

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| Spell Cost | |  | Speed | |
| Per Second | |  | Enhancement | |
| Base | 1.00 |  | Base | 50.0% |
| Evolution 1 | 0.90 |  | Evolution 1 | 55.0% |
| Evolution 2 | 0.81 |  | Evolution 2 | 60.5% |
| Evolution 3 | 0.73 |  | Evolution 3 | 66.6% |
| Evolution 4 | 0.66 |  | Evolution 4 | 73.2% |
| Evolution 5 | 0.59 |  | Evolution 5 | 80.5% |
| Evolution 6 | 0.53 |  | Evolution 6 | 88.6% |
| Evolution 7 | 0.48 |  | Evolution 7 | 97.4% |
| Evolution 8 | 0.43 |  | Evolution 8 | 107.2% |
| Evolution 9 | 0.39 |  | Evolution 9 | 117.9% |
| Evolution 10 | 0.35 |  | Evolution 10 | 129.7% |

Since I had a large aether pool it made sense to focus just on the speed enhancement. I learned there were three factors in leveling up a spell. First was the amount of aether used. Funneling aether through an imprinted spell on your matrix matured it. The second was using the spell in different ways…expanding its utility. And the third was using a spell under duress, like in combat. These three primary learning methods were well documented. Since the *lightning reflexes* spell was such an aether hog I expected to level it up quickly.

At breakfast, I barely touched my food as I examined the new spell. I found a unique evolution I termed ‘overdrive’. It doubled the speed enhancement but for four times the cost in aether and the healing aspect of the spell looked slightly lacking in overdrive mode so you would be either extremely sore after or you would just tear apart your muscles. I had a healing spell but thought it best to invest in the compounding effect of strait speed enhancement. I couldn’t tease out any other evolutions from the spell by the end of breakfast.

Spellcraft with Selina was after breakfast and I told her privately about my success in imprinting the spell. She kind of gaped at me and mumbled something about a 13-year-old imprinting a tier 4 being insane. She did work with me to find two other evolutions for the spell during class while Aelyn, Mera, Fera, Byron, and Gemma worked on imprinting spells on the other side of the classroom. They didn’t complain that I was hogging Selina as I usually helped everyone in the class and only got passing advice from Selina with written notes.

One of the evolutions was useless to me currently. It allowed my eyes to process visual information quicker. When my speed started exceeding my vision by too much then I would need this evolution. The other evolution was controlled deceleration. It used aether to slow down my entire body. I think it could be used to save myself from taking damage from a fall of impact. Maybe I could jump off the islands and use it to stop myself from going splat in the lowlands? I needed to practice with the spell before deciding on evolutions beyond speed enhancement.

I also needed to select my next spell. Selina said the *thermostatic aura* spell should be here in the next two weeks and I owed her 280 gold for the spell. I produced three shiny platinum for her and she pocketed them.

I looked at my remaining spell books.

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| **Spell Books** | ***Tier*** | ***Affinity*** |
| Lightning Sphere | 2 | Lightning |
| Illusionary Companion | 2 | Light \* Illusion |
| Lightning Spear | 2 | Lightning |
| Ranged Healing | 4 | Healing |
| Aether Shield (dungeon) | 2 | Aetheric |
| Arcane Lock | 1 | Aetheric |

After the nightmare of learning the tier 4 *lightning reflexes* spell I shelved the ranged healing spell for now even though it would allow me to repair bones, a restriction on my *mend flesh* spell I was not able to overcome with evolutions.

The *arcane lock* was a utility spell that evolved by adding wards into the arcane lock. It started by just ‘supergluing’ a door or lid shut using aether. Enough force could overcome the lock but it was very effective. Using it on a potion cap for example would make it impossible to open the stopper without breaking the vial. The *aether shield* spell was calling to me as well. It was a very useful defensive spell. Or I could learn my first offensive spell, *lightning spear*, or *lightning sphere*.

I decided I needed a quick win. The arcane lock spell should take me less than a week to learn and I was already thinking of using it to have some mischievous fun at Gareth’s expense. Locking him in the privy for one. After the *arcane lock,* I would learn the *aether shield* spell.

Lunch and weapons training couldn’t pass fast enough. When the class went to go bathe I made my way deep into the woods to experiment. When I first activated the lightning reflexes spell I could see why the vision enhancement was needed. I was able to acclimate at 55.5% of the increased speed but processing visual data at the faster speed was difficult. The spell hit level 2 quickly and I added the evolution for the visual processing.

It was like night and day now as the evolution also appeared to affect my brain's ability to receive and interpret visual data. I couldn’t believe how fast I was. I could easily beat Gareth on the obstacle course and would be a match for him in combat as well. When the spell hit level three I increased the speed to 60.5%. When I got used to the new speed I was already approaching level 5 of the spell but I heard the bell ringing for classes about to begin so I returned to my artificing class.

My aether pool was down to just under 10% and I could see why the spell was unpopular. Any normal mage would only be able to sustain the spell for a minute or two. I needed to find out what my current aether pool was so I planned to visit Wynna and Ennet tonight.

I made two more globes in enchanting class and started working on making my ice cream device with the help of instructor Aldon. I wasn’t planning on selling my ice cream churn but planned to offer various flavors at my restaurant in Aegis city. One of my notebooks had my planned menu. The bakery would be open for just breakfast and offer simple breakfast sandwiches with eggs and meat and sell loaves of bread. The restaurant would focus on various burgers and chicken sandwiches with an option for three different types of fries. Beverages would be cold beers or milkshakes. Definitely not a fancy high-end restaurant in my old life but it should be a hit here.

I had kicked around names to call the establishment. The *Genie’s Last Wish, A Maiden’s Virtue,* and the *Polished Platinum* were at the top of my list. I dropped the *Maiden’s Virtue* as it was too close to the Miaden family name and it might upset the family. The *Genie’s Last Wish* might have been good but none of the mythical creatures were going to be genies. The *Polished Platinum* also sounded too alliterative. Maybe the *Shiny Platinum*…that would be throwing my coin creation in the face of the ruling families. My *cleanliness* spell could make any coin shiny and look new. Since my ability was financing the project I decided that *Shiny Platinum* was a fitting name.

After classes ended I made my way to Ennet’s house with Callem. Callem talked to them and they prepared for the reading. “Storme don’t be disappointed if you haven’t grown as much as you wanted. It has only been a few months since your last reading,” Wynna advised. Ennet eyed her mother questioningly, “Oh Storme, Ennet wanted to know if you would rent one of the apartments in your building to her. She plans to move her reading business to the city.”

I gave it some thought. “Yes, she can rent the apartment next to yours on the second floor. Will her boyfriend be moving with her?” I asked curiously.

Ennet spoke, “No we broke up two months ago Storme. You should stop by more often since you are so far behind on the gossip.” She was eyeing me and it made me slightly embarrassed as she was three times my age. She wasn’t unattractive but I had the mental hangup of my old life. If fact I was closer in mental age to Ennet than the twins and Aelyn. Granted much of my past life’s knowledge was a blurry mess to my recall. Either way, I hastened the reading and took my paper, and left the house.

Walking I unfolded the parchment. My aether matrix showed 28, so it had increased by 6! My max matrix had also increased to 105 from 103! Being tutored by Selina was definitely paying off. The next line also made me feel pretty good about my progress. My current aether core was 2,406, over a 1,000 point increase. Even more importantly my max potential aether core had increased from 23,060 to 23,402 on the paper. I would have to think of a way to thank Selina. It was definitely not going to be by dating Talia.

“Storme!” I jumped and went on alert. It was just Isla walking the street though. She approached, “Storme did you come to see me?” She asked eagerly. I evaluated her body language and tone. She was too excited…she was interested in me. Selina had been right. I had put on blinders when interacting with women.

“Uh, no.” I said but seeing her face fall I added, “but I do have some free time.” She brightened and went to the tavern. We went to her room and she pulled out her plans.

“The warehouse has been rebuilt already and we started putting in the supports for the new building. I hired six Miaden security guards and insured the building. I didn’t want anything stolen from the warehouse.” She said as she organized her papers.

“That was extremely smart Isla. Do you need more funds?” I said to her and she blushed at the compliment. I seemed to have that effect on women. Was I really that attractive?

“No, no. The coins Wynna gave me should be enough to last for a while longer. They were enough for the furniture and the entire structure.” She pulled a contract out and placed it front of me. I looked at it.

It was for the painter I told her to go see. She spoke, “He wants 14’ x 14’ panels installed on the walls. It will be easier for him to paint on them and the quality will be much higher,” she said and I nodded. “He wants 50 gold per image plus the cost of paint and the clear coat resin to be sprayed over the finished artwork to preserve it.” That made sense. Twenty-three images times fifty gold was 1,150 gold or roughly 12 platinum plus materials cost. Isla slid a paper with the cost of paint, resin, and panels, 20 gold for each piece of artwork. So 1,610 gold.

“That is fine,” I said after a few minutes of thought. “Ask him to include hordes of treasure behind the creatures. Dungeon prizes. Make sure the hordes include platinum coins. Shiny platinum coins.” I said smirking to myself.

I produced a bag with 46 large gold coins. The coins I had received from Aldon for the sale of the globes. “Here is 460 gold to give to the painter so he can get started. I want the images to look as realistic as possible. Tell him I will give him a 300 gold bonus if I like all 23 images.”

“He was sending me sketches for you to choose from,” Isla added looking for a document she failed to find. “He wasn’t going to start any of the images until you approved each one. Unless you want me to bring them to Wynna?” She asked.

“No bring them to me,” I said decisively.

“I found you an interior designer for the restaurant that we can meet when we travel to Aegis city on the 7th day,” she added sliding me a paper with the name, Harold Miaden.

I had forgotten we were headed to the city together to see the progress. “That is fine. I should get going to get some sleep before conditioning tomorrow.” As I left Isla made no secret of counting the gold coins in the bag.

Gareth was in the twin's rooms when I got back. It was late so I just set my alarms, set my privacy screens, cast my *cleanliness* spell, and fell asleep.

Gareth woke me and I was extremely stiff upon waking. Using my *lightning reflexes* spell had some lingering effects apparently. I used my mend flesh spell to alleviate the soreness and stiffness in short order.

The entire day was dedicated to getting ready for the inter-academy match tomorrow. I didn’t have time to sneak off and level up my spell in secret so I just focused on preparing with everyone else.

We were going up against the premiere first-year academy in Solaris city. There were four academies apparently and this one resided in the upper city. We walked as a group through the city and were led by our instructors and Bylura. It was the same arena where the qualifiers were held. The opposing academy students were lined up and I easily picked out Leon. This was going to be fun.