Chapter 17

*Kill the Fear Goblin Chieftain in the Dungeon, Return with the Head as proof. Reward: 5000 experience, +5 free stat points, +2 skill points*

We accepted the next quest in the chain but didn’t have plans to complete it at any time.

I put all my stat points in Aether. I was going to use my entire Aether pool to make the dimensional pocket as big as possible. I used 3 of my 15 skill points to move my Supplemental Aether Core skill from 14 to 17. I then used 4 spell points raising personal dimensional pocket space from 15 to 19. This gave the spell two upgrades. I increased the stack ability to 5 and reduced the Aether cost from 63 to 52. Cancelling my current space pocket spell the room filled with the dungeon loot. I had 3,355 total Aether so I cast a 60 scale personal space spell. That left me with just 235 aether. The space was a cube, 4.6 meters per side. The transport was 6 meters long so wouldn’t fit. I was disappointed. Our plan was to drive to a town then take a shuttle to hop to the other continent and drive to the ship but I would either have to leave it behind or get on a cargo shuttle. Cael estimated its value at around 15,000 Ballan credits. I started to transfer items to my dimensional space. The two brothers of Meranda helped me showing me what to store. The shop was bare when I was done. When Meranda got back I transferred all the parts. I had 3 cubic meters left and another 4 cubic meters in the transport and let the orcs take personal items filling the space to the brim. We left in the dark heading to a modest dungeon town toward the coast.

We arrived in the morning. Cael found a cargo shuttle that would pick us up for a steep price, 10000 credits, and we sold some dungeon items in town to get the funds to get us all across the sea with the transport. We then drove 160 miles to the cave with the ship. I cancelled my pocket spell and let Meranda settle in. I spent the first day making rooms in the cave for storage and bunks. Cael set up a security perimeter. Celeste helped Meranda move equipment and disable some ship mechanical systems.

The cave was hopping. Meranda put up a large electronic screen with a todo list on it. She put a list of needed parts as well, a long list she constantly added to. I was recruited to make rooms in the cave and line the floor with black marble and walls with clear quartz because our cave needed to be fashionable according to Meranda. The rooms I made were an armory, security room, common dining area with kitchen, 12 bedrooms, workshop, 3 storage rooms, utility room, combat room and a cold storage. Why 12 bedrooms? I didn’t ask as I just followed Meranda’s blueprints to the best of my ability. Her two brothers Vern and Torek were taring everything out of the ship to expose the rune scripts. At least the bedrooms made sense now that we couldn’t sleep on the ship. Celeste was tasked with getting air and heat circulators to all the rooms in the cave and setting up a water tank and plumbing. Why? Because Meranda wanted to be comfortable for the next six months, which was her estimate now that she had seen the ship damage in person. It took four days for me to finish everything. The ship was half disassembled but the bat cave looked awesome if I did say so myself. Black marble floors throughout. It had two levels of rooms with the living quarters on the second floor and all other rooms on the first. Cael had gotten remote sensors and cameras for the security room in town. I had to go to town and get furniture and doors for the entire hideout because I had the dimensional space spell. We decided to keep the transport hidden. I left with Celeste, we had to walk because my bike was in town with Vlad.

I took Celeste to Cael’s dungeon on the way. I wanted her to get the dungeon soloist title but learned that companions could only ever have the first title they earned. We ran it together for loot to sell but Celeste kept a pair of red high heeled shoes we got from the boss frog, *red shoes, +7 Charisma, +4 Seduction Skill, Charm Sparkle*. They reminded me of Dorthy’s slippers from the Wizard of Oz movie. Celeste was able to fly us intermittently with good speed and we got to town late at night. We checked into the hotel, I didn’t see Gallana. In the morning Gallana entered the room unannounced and it was awkward. Celeste introduced herself after a pause. Gallana looked angry, sad, angry, sad. I couldn’t figure it out. She turned slowly to leave but Celeste jumped up and stopped her. Celeste of course was naked. I had told Celeste about Gallana. She started to talk to Gallana explaining that she was free to do whatever she wanted with me. I just lay in bed awkwardly listening. Eventually Gallana slowly walked out saying she needed to think about it. I wanted to order 500 beers for the bat cave but figure I should do it at the front desk. We dressed and I got my beer before leaving and didn’t see Gallana.

I went to Bammi and unloaded all the loot I had accumulated. Celeste browsed the goods in the warehouse shelves and pulled items we needed while I dealt with selling loot. Unfortunately the loot didn’t get the prices I was hoping for. The magic items did well but Bammi explained the furs and wood wasn’t too valuable here. There wasn’t a lot of crafters, so outside of loot that could be made into food I would get much less return from her. I sighed and took her offer for store credit the brought out my list of furniture, doors, kitchen equipment, HVAC supplies and everything else. I kept with the story that I was starting a farm. Celeste had found about a quarter of what we needed on the shelves in the warehouse. The rest would need to made in the fabricator. Bammi said six hours to create everything. I only had 2,534 remaining credits and converted that to higher quality instant meals from Bammi, getting 250 meals.

We headed to see Vlad and Red while we waited. Celeste was a hit with all the guys drooling over her. I used the same intro saying Celeste was my adventuring companion without saying she was in fact a SYSTEM companion. Andrew said snidely that now I had chosen to be an adventurer in a party of two. Eventually I got Red and Vlad alone and gave each of them a Shadow Cloak and comm unit. Even though they had maxed their magic item count out the cloak still had the blend with shadows charm that would work. I caught them up on our travels and adventures. They were excited to meet Meranda and her brothers. Red was happy Celeste was going to fill the navigator role and he wouldn’t have to. I told them it would take 6 months and Meranda said we would probably have to make two more trips to Sand Bastion for parts. We were also pretty much broke so running dungeons was in the future. After a few beers Vlad wanted to spar to see my progress.

Even though I was at level 15 in my Gerrn Sword Form I still got my ass handed to me. After being made fun of Celeste stepped in. She was a whirlwind of action dual wielding a sword and void dagger. She was an equal to Vlad who was grinning the whole time. I checked her sheet. Short blades was level 7, long blades was level 12, Gerrn Art Form was level 9 and she had a new combat action dual wield at level 2. I couldn’t understand how she was matching Vlad who had long blades at 27 and four sword combat actions at level 15 or higher as he liked to brag. After 30 minutes of activity they called it a draw. Talking to Celeste I found her dancing and acrobatics skill gave her bonuses for melee combat. And her acrobatics boon from level 7 gave her a big bonus to dodge. Huh? I also had noticed she had leveled up her singing to level 4 on her sheet and asked her how? Apparently she hummed which counted as singing.

We sat drinking beers after and Vlad asked if I had hit the cap in any stats yet? There was a cap? Apparently each race had a cap in the stats and it varied by individuals. Once you reached the cap it took 2 points to raise a stat one point. After a certain point it would then take three points. I brought out my SYSTEM pad and looked it up.

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| **Human Male Primary Stat First Tier Cap** |
| **Strength** | **90-125** |
| **Constitution** | **90-125** |
| **Stamina** | **90-125** |
| **Agility** | **90-125** |
| **Speed** | **90-125** |
| **Intellect** | **100-150** |
| **Aether** | **100-150** |
| **Channeling** | **100-150** |
| **Charisma** | **50-150** |
| **Luck** | **0-100** |

Wow it did exist. Vlad said his strength cap was 118 and he had hit it and that was how he found out. Vlad said magic items were not included though so it just base stats and the magic items always gave a one for one increase. Vlad showed me how to display my personal stat caps.

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| **Oliver Primary Stat First Tier Cap** |
| **Strength** | **121** |
| **Constitution** | **124** |
| **Stamina** | **111** |
| **Agility** | **99** |
| **Speed** | **94** |
| **Intellect** | **136** |
| **Aether** | **118** |
| **Channeling** | **140** |
| **Charisma** | **90** |
| **Luck** | **22** |

Red said Andrew had said it gave more weight to min maxing stats, get your important stats to the cap before raising others. Well that was one point of view, I always went with what I felt at the time gave me the best chance of survival…or courting. I wasn’t able to access Celeste’s stat cap so she read them off to us.

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| **Celeste’s Primary Stat First Tier Cap** |
| **Strength** | **110** |
| **Constitution** | **110** |
| **Stamina** | **110** |
| **Agility** | **200** |
| **Speed** | **200** |
| **Intellect** | **200** |
| **Aether** | **200** |
| **Channeling** | **200** |
| **Charisma** | **200** |
| **Luck** | **NA** |

We thought she was joking but apparently she was genetic perfection for her race and had the max allowed cap for each stat. We all at that instant regretted chosen human when being imported to this universe. Time was up and we went to pick up our fabricated items. I got my bike back to Vlad’s dismay.

The furniture was set up for transport at Bammi’s. Basically we had dozens of IKEA boxes. I maxed my dimensional space again and I pulled everything to my storage space and we headed back. I didn’t see Gallana before we left.

It was like Christmas morning as I unloaded the items from storage filling a large area. Beds, mattresses, chairs, tables, air circulators, heaters, showers, toilets, it was civilization. Everyone working together got everything installed and assembled in two days. I was happy to see my room was the only room with an oversized bed and walk in shower thanks to Celeste. We didn’t have a water tank yet so the running water wasn’t quite ready. I cleared a new room, made a stone tank and then I was expected to fill it! Meranda said it would be good practice for the ship. I had just made a 10,000 gallon stone reservoir. Doing the math that was 40,000 aether to fill! The ship had two 15,000 gallon tanks and one 1,500 gallon. That was another 120,000 plus Aether! Meranda ignored my shock saying the spell water was contaninment free and perfect for the fuel and oxygen generator. I was still dizzy with the expectation. Well the spell could be leveled and improved. I cast a 320 aether create water spell into the tank, generating 80 gallons of water. I completely cancelled my pocket space spell and went to my room to cultivate Aether.

After an hour I left the cave figuring the Aether pool was a better recharge space. It was a hot sunny day and a swim would be nice anyway. Celeste joined me on my bike and when we got there we stripped, putting our clothes into the dimension storages, and started swimming. The pool was only 12 meters across but the water was clear and refreshing. I had wanted to cultivate to further increase my Aether pool refilling but Celeste started kissing me from behind. Her hard nipples pressed into my back were too distracting with her lips on my neck. Then she wrapped her legs around my waist and hugged my chest from behind. She loosened to let me turn and face her and I returned the passionate kissing. Soon she had me backed up against a rock in the shallows where I could stand. Her hips were high on my chest and she lowered herself onto my erection. She didn’t hesitate and soon established a rhythm. I lost self-control and matched her motion. After a while we moved to the grass and during the third round my danger sense went off. I jumped up to see Red and Vlad riding their bikes toward us. Red turned away shyly while Vlad rode right up to us and said he could come back after we were done. I wasn’t upset with guys, we had probably been in passion for over two hours and I knew more was to be in the future. Vlad and Red went into the dungeon while we dressed. My Aether pool was 90% filled and I was good enough to return. I thought about taking their bikes and making them walk to the bat cave but resisted the impulse.

When we got back Cael took one look at me and said about time. He said I had been uptight ever since Celeste joined me and that was the first time I looked relaxed. I said in a low whisper, yeah I like feeling relaxed.

The water tank was already empty, apparently Meranda liked long hot showers. Celeste said we should get a water recycler next time we were in town. I nodded. I spent 3200 aether to create 800 gallons of water then retired to my room with Celeste where we picked up where we left off.

When we emerged Vlad, Red, Cael, Meranda, Vern and Torek were eating in the dining area. Vlad and Red had been here over two hours but no one commented on my absence. Vlad was interested in orc traditions and Vern and Torek were explaining their Gerrn clan practices. Wait what? Of course they were Gerrn clan orcs. I pulled out the Gerrn majority necklace from storage. They all looked at it wonder when they heard the stats. The majority necklace was a gift from father to daughter when they reached age to marry in Gerrn culture. The boys usually got a weapon. I gave the necklace to Meranda and she could bind it. She asked joking to Celeste if she borrow me so she could thank me privately for an hour or two. To which Celeste deadpanned responded no problem but don’t use me all up for the day.

The table went quiet before everyone started laughing as my face turned red. I still had the Gerrn warleader sword and eventually pulled it from storage. I wasn’t sure who should get it Vern or Torek. Vlad solved the problem by saying the first one of them who could beat him in sword combat deserved to wield it. In the interim I would continue to hold on to it. The rest of the evening passed by in celebration. The 500 bottles of beer was a good investment.

Red suggested we get an actual door for the cave instead of the illusioned tarp. Meranda said it wasn’t in the budget but maybe a tech force field hologram would be ok to be a back up.

Vlad asked why the extensive remodel of the cave. Meranda said because a woman needs some comforts. Vlad offered to comfort Meranda all she wanted. We were all a bit drunk but that seemed a bit forward. Meranda wasn’t ugly by any human standards. She was only 25% orc but those features definitely highlighted her looks. Dark gray skin, square jaw and shoulders, and under bite with short lower canines showing and a deep red hair color. She looked very athletic and I blurted out that Vlad probably couldn’t handle her. They both looked at each, got up, and went to Meranda’s room. Soon we heard loud fucking. I looked at the others and said we needed better sound proofing of the rooms. They all said tell me about it at which I flushed remembering me and Celeste earlier.

I retired to my room with Celeste and she gave me the best full body massage.

The next morning we gathered at the dining table. There were eight of us. I announced this was our crew with perhaps one more if I could get Ophelia signed on. Vlad and Red were going to split the ship weapons. Vlad on offensive weapons and Red on defensive weapons. Meranda noted and said she would create a second weapons station. Both stations would be able to operate all weapons as well. Meranda was our engineer and mechanic. Meranda quipped, sinced she was doing two jobs would she get two ship shares. I announced a ship vote to give Meranda two ship shares, it passed unanimously. Basically everyone knew she was rebuilding the ship from the ground up and deserved it. I would be the ships owner and captain and responsible for FTL travel. Celeste was the ship’s navigator and backup pilot. Cael would be the ships seneschal and responsible for finding cargo and passengers. Vern and Torek would be the stevedores and security.

Meranda opened he SYSTEM pad and a hologram of the ship appeared above it. She started going over the changes and repairs to the ship. 300,000 in parts needed and another 200,000 spare parts to have on hand. Another estimated 350,000 for the refurbishing of the interior for comfort. The heavy armor hull was going to be reduced by 14%, increasing cargo capacity to 50 tons from 36 tons. She was going to rebuild the crushed nose and upgrade the sensors and increase the defensive missile capacity. She zoomed in on the crew quarters. The captains cabins would be combined with the adjacent crew cabin into one for me and Celeste. The captains ready room/ navigation room would remain as is. The other five crew cabins would be slightly enlarged but the corridor would be narrowed slightly from 2 meters to 1.3 meters. In the cargo bay the 5 quarters designed for 15 marines would be converted to passenger cabins. Two would have double bunks and the other three ‘luxury’ cabins just one bed. Each would need its own sonic shower and bathroom. These bathroom additions took up the space where the battle armor alcoves were for each room. The ship had two top mounted turret with functional guns. The underbelly turret had sheared off. The armory would be converted to a workshop for Meranda. The common area would be for crew and passengers so additional security to the bridge corridor and the upper and lower deck were to be added. She then went into a redesign of the common area and galley. Couches, two tables with eight chairs each, vid screens, an alcohol dispensary, a high end food synthesizer and two high end service bots.

Everyone was excited about the common area. It was going to cost a pretty penny though. The food synthesizer was a priority if we wanted to function as a passenger ship. Meranda also asked for two robots with programming in mechanics to help with the build. They could bought in Sand Bastion for 100,000 credits each. They were needed to keep to her 6 month schedule though. My cheap cleaning bot didn’t have the fine dexterity or advanced programming needed. No changes to the lower deck. Upper deck had a crew cabin added. It was larger than the others but was for her two brothers.

Next up was Cael. He said the nearest system with a large population was a 7 light year jump, and it was part of the Ballen Empire. We would need 20,000 credits to register the ship in the Ballen Empire and should also get a salvage title claim for 5,000 credits. The typical rate for passenger tickets to that systems primary space station was about 8,000 credits. We were looking at 7 passengers for an estimated 50,000 credits plus 2,000-3,000 from sale of alcohol and food during the trip. We could consign cargo at around 1,200 credits per ton for an additional 60,000 credits minus insurance. Or we could try our hand at trading. The biggest margin was currently on various frozen meats. The refrigeration units for the cargo hold would cost 60,000 credits and weigh 10 tons while holding 40 tons of frozen meat. Purchase price be would be 60,000 credits with a probable sale price of 200,000 credits.

I was shocked how organized Cael was. I asked about other products not requiring the refrigeration units. Alcohol had good margins but we would have to goto over 5 farms to collect enough, maybe 40 tons for 400,000 credits with potential sale in the 480,000 range. I decided to have him focus on a consignment cargo. We would need to buy insurance equal to 10% the value of the cargo Cael said. If we consigned a 400,000 alcohol shipment then that was 40,000….we would make almost no money.

I could use my pocket space but I needed to have a sizable Aether pool for charging the core. I was getting a headache.

Celeste was up next. Because of her special ability she estimated two jumps to the star system Cael mentioned with three days transit once in system to the space station.

Vlad gave a list of weapons he wanted for ship defense. Red asked about side trading. I decided each crew could have 1 ton of the cargo for personal dealings. Cael noted it. The orc boys had nothing to contribute. Basically I needed a shit load of money. I began thinking…