Chapter 29

The town was waking early this morning. There were people I didn’t recognize and I found Gwen walking to the general store and asked about the unfamiliar faces. Apparently, we had an influx of 29 people migrating to the town. I checked my interface and was shocked to see yes the overall population had jumped to 162. Twenty-eight of the new additions were human and there was one…centaur?

I looked puzzled at Gwen asking about the centaur. “Ah Yes, Sheila, she lives in the Shiverwood across the river. Apparently, your friends who were hunting goblins brought her attention to the village. She came by and talked with me. She is a druid of grove across the river and was willing to be recognized as a member of Malcum. She wanted any lumbering to be monitored by her and also asked if we could eliminate the goblins in the forest.” Gwen finished.

I didn’t understand how someone across the river could be counted in my village population but if she lived there then she should be at least level 50? So if she was friendly I was good with that. Well, if the enchanter decided to leave then at least we added a powerful druid. I turned and headed to Curraen’s residence. I should check with Vivale first to get some feedback on Persephone first.

Vivale answered the door and her kids were at the table eating. “We can talk in the side room,” she said. Curraen and my eldest left for the shop already. The youngest waved frantically to me with a big smile on her face. Guess her first day of alchemy went well.

In the side room Vivale asked, “What did you tell my youngest? She has never been so well behaved? Well, no matter it probably won’t last, you can’t contain her love of life for too long. I suppose you are here for Persephone?” She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly before continuing.

“I talked with Persephone alone. She has not had a good life. She was adopted into a High Elf family. The adoption was mostly a farce though. She was basically a maid.” Oh I heard this one before. Our enchanter was Cinderella. She continued, “The family was wealthy and influential and ran multiple enchanting shops in various cities. Persephone over the years managed to pick things up here and there and advance her own enchanting knowledge without the knowledge of the family.” Vivale paused again.

“Seventy-nine years she toiled in the shadow of the family. When they discovered she was a proficient enchanter she toiled for another eighty-eight years enchanting for them with no pay.” I sickened myself at the thought of prolonged slavery. What a terrible background. “She left in the middle of the night and has spent the last two years looking for a permanent home. I think she wants to be in control of her own destiny. If you can offer that you can convince her to stay her.”

I processed this information. “Thank you Vivale. I will do my best to give her what she wants.” I left and waved to the youngest who waved back enthusiastically.

Shortly later I knocked on the tower door. It took twenty minutes before Persephone answered the door. She moved aside and let me enter and we sat in the living room that Jaesmin had furnished. “So Persephone you had some time to see our humble and growing village.” She nodded and didn’t say anything. “Well we are in desperate need of an enchanter.” She nodded. “In exchange for your services I am prepared to give you the deed for this tower. You will own it.” She nodded and still had a blank face. “What else can we offer you?” I asked trying to get her to speak and pleading a little.

She looked contemplative before speaking, “Lord Tallis. Your community is unique. What I am really looking for is someplace I can advance as an enchanter. I want to exceed my step family in their ability. I want them to see me one day and be envious of how much better at the craft I am than them. Elves live for millennia so I will do it.” She said with some sternness. “Unfortunately, your small village can not provide the materials I need to practice my craft with abandon.” She finished and seemed torn. “The tower and workshops within are fabulous…better than what I could have ever hoped for at my proficiency. But I don’t see myself being able to …I’m sorry. I know how hard you worked and the people in your village are happy but…”

I put up my hand to stop her, “What materials do you need for your craft? If I can supply what you need in sufficient quantities would you reconsider?” She looked me over. She started listing ingredients; ruby dust, gold wire, platinum thread, aetheric water, unicorn hair, black pearls… The list went on for quite some time and she finished after naming around 50 ingredients.

“Wow Persephone, I can see why you would think we wouldn’t be able to supply you with what you need. Vivale has told me you have been traveling for two years and are still searching for a place to hone your craft?” She nodded slightly. “Do you know how to enchant a portal stone?”

Her eyebrow rose slightly at the question, “It is difficult but I do have the required runic formula in my books. Since you have been generous and gracious hosts I will be happy to complete Portal Stone for you before I depart. It should only take two days.” She had disappointment in her voice. I think she was hoping that I would be able to offer her a steady supply of her ingredients.

“That would be fantastic! But more importantly with a Portal Stone I will be able to build something called an auction house. It will allow us to get many things that you require. But you will need to be patient as I do not know how difficult it will be to build one. Can you give me 90 days?” I asked…well my tone was closer to begging. I didn’t know if I could draft building plans for an auction house of if I needed to go and acquire them.

Her face finally changed from blank and unreadable. She was thinking and I waited a few minutes before she finally responded. “Forty-five days. I will give you forty-five days to establish the auction house. I have heard of them before and know only you out worlders can use them. So I would expect 2 platinum coins worth of material every month to ply my craft. You will also pay me 10 gold a month in salary and I will own this residence. I will only work on your assigned projects for…lets say 20 hours a week. The rest of the time will be my own.” She finished and nodded to herself like the negotiation was completed.

Damn that was insane compared to hiring my other NPCs. She essentially wanted 210 gold a month! I did not have enough grasp on the enchanting game mechanics to know if she was worth this investment. I asked her to wait while I checked I few things in my sheets.

I went to my tabs to review the village finances. I guess I should have been looking a little more closely at this. Currently we were projecting a surplus of just 27 gold and 18 silver a month. My heart started pounding a bit. The majority of our income was through the hides. The only positive was the village had a current balance of 29 platinum, 88 gold, 49 silver, 9 copper. That was mostly from selling the loot and looting corpses. My mental calculator was ringing, “Danger Will Robinson, Danger!” I could not sustain the enchanter. When the army unit arrived they were going to cost 96 gold and 66 silver a month. My breathing hurried on but then it struck me. I didn’t need to balance the trade.

This was a game world. All I needed to do was go dungeon diving and gather some loot. Still this game seemed to be pulling me in numerous directions…adventure, manage, build, draft…all to sustain my gains. I needed to find out how well the dungeon provided. I made the decision to bring in the *Silver Linings Playbook* guild into confidence.

“Persephone I think we have an agreement. The only stipulation I will add is the enchanters tower is the residence of the Malcum’s enchanter. If you decide to leave Malcum or your position then the tower will revert to the town’s ownership.” I thought this would protect my investment. If I needed to recruit another enchanter so be it but she was not going to sell back my own building to me!

It took her a moment before she realized my train of thought. She nodded and went back to negotiation, “If after 45 days there is no auction house or materials I will be paid in full for the second month and be free to leave.” Her counter was basically saying I would owe her an extra 5 gold for breaking the contract.

“Agreed!” I said without hesitation. “So what exactly can an enchanter do?” She finally smirked into a smile.

“Well I have two enchanting tracks I have studied. Building runic modification and household utility runic devices.” She seemed smug for a second before continuing, “I have not dabbled in weapons, armor and object enchanting. I can make building resistant to damage, and elemental attacks. I can make buildings more comfortable to live in with temperature controlling runes. I can build runic devices for creating water and heat and light. All of my runes require large runic stone anchors though.” She finished and was expecting a reply.

So basically what I got in my enchanter was a building enchanter? How perfect was this? Was the system AI somehow assisting me? What did Simba call the governing AI…the Matriarch? I focused back on Persephone and we talked a bit.

A building can only receive one enchantment. She had an armor enchantment decreasing damage and elemental resistance for fire, air, lightning, water, earth and time. You could only choose one element though. She could also do a climate control room for the interior of buildings. The enchantment required gold wire to make the runes and a magic jewel to power the enchantment. The jewel would need to be recharged to keep the enchantment functioning. A magic jewel was just any gem prepared by an enchanter, the larger the gem the more capacity it had…like a battery. She suggested either a time enchantment or armor enchantment for military buildings. With the time enchantment the building would not degrade over time, it could save thousands of gold for large city’s in terms of maintenance!

Her other set of enchantments were basically making heating stone, large ceiling lights, water tanks and self cleaning rooms. Each of these effects needed to be anchored to a runic stone at least two feet in diameter. All very useful items…my village was going to be coming into the modern age! That was until I learned the cost. A building enchantment cost around 20 gold, not including the gem! A device was around 2 gold, not including the battery gem. So basically I was just a poor sop right now and dreaming.

I went with Persephone to see Manarag and he would have no difficulty in making the gold wire she needed. As for gems I would need to find a source. I would ask the players when they returned. Our next stop was finding Sanso. He was working on the town hall.

“Lord Tallis I am glad you here! I was not too sure where these supports should go…” Sanso was holding plans to the town hall in his hands and trying to figure them out. The problem with Sanso was he had assigned all his skills so even though he had been building things for a while he needed a ton of direction.

“Don’t worry about. This is out new enchanter, Persephone. Is the Portal Stone ready?” I asked in anticipation.

“Yes!” he replied. “My golems have it. I made it 10 meters across from runic stone. I can transport it to the square if you want to?”

I thought and said, “No, I think we will build a second town plaza near the inn. I expect a number of adventures will use it and want to make use of the inn. Forgive my ignorance but what is runic stone?” The two casters looked at each then at me and giggled.

Persephone answered my query, “Runic stone is any hard stone purged of impurities, it can be mined or processed by a powerful earth mage. Mined runic stone is usually more potent though.”

“Well my young elf,” Sanso started with a grin on his face, “You are in luck because the stone my golems are carrying here is in fact mined from the mountains north of town!” As if he waved a magic wand a sextet of golems came from the distance carrying a massive disc of stone. It was not very thick, just over an inch but the weight must be immense. We walked as a group to the inn and the portal stone followed. I decided the new plaza would be about 20 yards from the inn. Sanso would make a road eventually.

On choosing the spot Sanso summoned a massive square block in the road with a perfect impression for the disc. He then used some of his magics to harden and fuse it in place. My enchanter stood next to me and spoke, “I may have underestimated your little town. He is quite proficient for an earth mage. I should have enough gold wire to enchant the stone but if you could ask Sanso to remain around to embed the gold runes it would save me considerable time.”

“That shouldn’t be a problem. What about the gem battery for the Portal Stone? Where does that go?” I asked.

“It is not needed. The traveler’s pay with either their own pool or someone else can pay for them. The amount is dependent based on distance…about 1 pool point per mile travelled. They also need to have physically touched the portal stone they are being portaled too. Since you are not familiar with portal stones you may not know but there are individuals who are called porters. They had large magic pools and people pay them around 1 copper per point for transit. The entire cost for a transit can only come from one source and some city’s only allow Porters to activate their stones.” All great information to know. So was I going to need a porter? She answered my question. “Portal Stones all have a key to activate. Sometimes that key is imbedded in the center of the stone so everyone can use it freely. Other times that key is embedded into a small object like a stone. The enchanter who creates the portal stone decides which method it will use. What do you prefer lord?”

“Lets just go with the free use portal stone for now. If things get out of control we can destroy it and start over.” I was thinking this portal stone might be a great way for players to invade a city and take it over. Another question I would need to ask the players.

I let Sanso and Persephone work. They started talking and I was glad she was opening up a little. She no longer seemed like she had a broomstick shoved up her ass anyway. I was in a good mood so stopped into the inn for a drink. Manto, with a new haircut and trimmed beard, was sipping some ale in the corner with some empty plates in front of him, “Lord Tallis! I must say you are exceeding my expectations by a large margin. That Fareth is a remarkable woman and chef and I don’t think I will leave even if you do not employ a tailor I requested.

*Quest Completed: Manto is now employed by Lord Tallis*

I was getting too much good news too fast. This was a sign that something bad had to happen soon right? “That is great to hear! Manto the spell you cast to down the beetle…?”

He was a little inebriated and answered quickly, “A tier 20 greater lightning bolt! Impressive right! I hate casting it though as it leaves my ears ringing long after. It was the only spell I had with enough range though. So Lord Tallis what new attractions are going to be added to your fine hamlet next!”

I liked the old man. I sat down and a young woman brough me an ale. I sipped it and it wasn’t great. “I plan to build a brewery a little ways up stream. We need some better stock.” His eyes lit up…literally lit up with a liteglow.

“Oh my! How long? What can I do to expediate the construction and functionality of this new and wonderous building?” His face seemed to get younger with an enthusiasm I hadn’t seem from an old man before. Well I had a powerful air mage…even if he seemed to be an aspiring alcoholic.

“After the town hall it will be the next building I think. I still need to bring in a brewer to make it function and make sure we have enough excess grains to make the beer.” I said trying to calm his enthusiasm.

“Grains…yes. I can help with that.” He stood up. “I have some weather spells that can help! We can double, no triple production next cycle! Leave that part to me! Get the building built and you will have you grains!” He left excited and a bit wobbly. Well it seemed he was at least motivated.

I spent the rest of my day up river marking off the site for the brewery. I started on the foundation as well. I was a little creeped out because across the river there seemed to be a lot of activity but I couldn’t make out what it was in the darkness created by the forest canopy. I returned home with a smile at seeing Jaesmin humming away in front of the stove. I told her all about my day and the amazing amount of progress we had made. She told about her day as well. She had been going around town and doing maintenance on buildings. She also said she visited and had lunch with Zion. He was quite the character and very amiable toward her. He did ask when his sheep would arrive? Well I hoped the players succeeded in their mission. They would return in two days.

Rather than work on new plans tonight I spent it giving Jaesmin a sensual massage getting familiar with every body part and then making love to her.