Chapter 4 Celebrity Healer

The morning was eggs, toast, and ham with a coffee-like drink. I tipped Amelia 3 coppers after having to explain what a tip was and getting my change from a silver coin. Then I was off on my bike. I was stopped and questioned twice by mounted patrols but reached the city after 9 hours. It was an impressive stone-walled city called Stormheart. It was maybe a square mile. Now that I was here I wandered through the city. I should have brought goods to sell, wait I had a few things. I went to higher-end shops and sold my tent for 2 gold after demonstrating how it was set up. I sold the down sleeping bag for another gold coin. I had two snickers bars left but decided I needed those calories. I decided to explore the city now that I had a few coins. I watched street performers use magic and was impressed.

Then I heard a scream. Turning around I saw a little girl on the ground and a carriage was driving away. I ran to help. The little girl was bleeding from a head wound and her foot was obviously broken. I carried her to the side while her mother screamed in dismay. My healing hands spell activated…I had forgotten about it.

I was appraised of her injuries, concussion, head laceration, two bruised ribs, six broken bones in her foot, and a fracture in her leg. I knew it would take 8 aether and 4 minutes to heal her. I started healing as I set her down. The mother was hysterical but watched in awe as her daughter’s wounds disappeared. She said she couldn’t pay for the healing when I was done and I waved her off. But now I was worried there was a healer’s guild in the city and I might get arrested. I left the city and started for home. I stayed at the *Golden Lager* again. It was weird sleeping with the sun up but I was good at napping during the day.

The ride to Blue Leaf was mostly uneventful except I saw a dragon attacking what I assumed was an airship high in the sky. I didn’t have a scope to get a better look but that was my best guess. Exhausted I almost missed my turn-off to the portal. I was glad as I rode through the portal. I had been gone 106 hours. I needed a shower but first went to the computer.

***COMPLETED: Travel to the capital city of the Tantarian Kingdom. Reward: +1 speed, 500 credits, +1 portal anchor***

The portal anchor was a prismed stone the size of a marble that favored blue colors. The voice said I just had to go location in the realm and crush the stone to create an anchor. This was good news and I looked at the offered quest list. I had nine options and based on rewards I selected the best one.

***Bring a copy of Blache’s Studies of Aether Ley Lines to the Mage Academy in Stormheart. Reward: +2 intellect, +1 stat point, 1500 credits, 25 kingdom gold coins***

The book cost me 100 credits in the Terminal store. It was a large tomb with illustrations. I couldn’t read it but it seemed there was a geometric structure of ley lines in the crust of the *World Sphere*. I checked my phone as I was getting ready to leave. My sister had texted me. She wanted me to visit her in Maine for Thanksgiving. I said I would be there.

My plan was to create an anchored portal in Stormheart when I got there. Then I could complete missions in the larger city more quickly. I rode to The *Golden Lager* and stayed the night without issue. Amelia offered her services again and I turned her down after learning she was 15. A person’s age might have less relevance here but I fell back to my upbringing. In the morning I was about a quarter of the way to Stormheart when I went flying as the road erupted. My right arm was definitely messed up as a hit the ground and rolled.

I scrambled and turned and a dog-sized beetle was eyeing me. I pulled out my Glock and started shooting. The carapace was bulletproof but the face and legs erupted with black blood. The bug was crippled but alive. I tried to get a new clip but the arm was in bad shape. I backed up and spent two minutes healing it enough to reload. Reloading the gun I finished off the beetle that was barely moving.

My bicycle was toast. The front wheel was bent and the fork was cracked. I was left to walk but decided to eat an MRE. A patrol on horseback came by and after a few minutes of talking with them, they gave me a token. It could be exchanged at the guard tower for 2 silver, a reward for killing the beetle. Not fair compensation for my bike. I started walking after the patrol left. Twenty hours later I reached the city.

I choose to set my new anchor in an alley between an inn and a clothier shop in the merchant district. After reaching the alley and finding it empty I gratefully made the portal at the dead end and returned to the Terminal. Being exhausted I choose to shower in the trailer house and sleep there. Waking around I was extremely sore and hungry. After eating four bowls of cereal I returned to the terminal. In clean clothes, I returned to Stormheart.

The Mage Academy wanted nothing to do with me! It took nearly an hour to get a librarian out to see me. After looking at the book things went quickly and I got my 25 gold coins from him. I also asked for a list of books the library was paying for and their amounts. I told him I was an acquisition specialist and might have other books they wanted. He gave me a list of 238 books with the prices they were offering. I walked the city and when I was sure I was alone in the alley returned to the terminal.

***COMPLETED: Bring a copy of Blache’s Studies of Aether Ley Lines to the Mage Academy in Stormheart. Reward: +2 intellect, +1 stat point, 1500 credits, 25 kingdom gold coins***

I used the bonus stat for speed bringing it to 64. Next, I used my phone to take a photo and upload the list of magic books the academy wanted. I put up the rewards next to the terminal cost in credits. I decided to pick three books.

*Mythos of Elemental Dragons by Archmage Gimil*, 110 credits, 150 gold

*Spell Designs and Enchantments Related to Flight Magic by Air Mage Florian Steele*, 90 credits, 80 gold

*Identifications of Aether Infused Fungi of the Under Earth Vol 2*, 50 credits, 25 gold

Not the most valuable books but midrange on the list such that they shouldn’t draw attention to me. The store manifested the books. I cut up a blanket and wrapped the books. Before returning I bought the three garage bay doors for 750 credits and then spent three hours installing them. I decided to buy a 5000-gallon water tank for the building. It cost just 200 credits in the auction. A condenser and purification unit cost 100 credits.

I set up the bots to dig a ditch for the tank and bury it 10 feet below the surface. I bought a small bot that could drill into puffcrete from the auction site, a water pump, and water lines. On the second floor, I divided the area into 3 spaces. Each was 38’ by 32’. The stairs from below led to the first area which would include the kitchen and dining room. The second area would be the living room and library. The third area would be the bedroom, walk-in closet, and bathroom. The extruder would have to put up the walls. For now, the bot could prepare the plumbing.

I needed a bot that could install plumbing, electrical, and HVAC. The cheapest one in the auction looked like a dog-sized spider and cost 700 credits. I was short of funds. Maybe the gold coins were worth something. Each gold coin gave me 10 credits! I traded in enough coins to get the spider bot. Adding a heating element to the plumbing and I should be able to have a functional bathroom and kitchen soon. I went to sell the books.

It didn’t take as long to have the librarian meet me. I was even invited inside a classroom this time. I revealed each book with a flourish and he was over the moon! The mythos of dragons book was super rare. Only four copies were known to exist, this was the fifth! I told him I would be heading out on a new expedition soon and if he had any preference in terms of one of the books on the list for me to find. He immediately said *Spatial Spell Constructs for Dimensional Storage*, which was valued at 500 gold. I said I would do my best. I asked about healing magic and learned a little about magic.

About 5% of the population had enough Aether capacity to be mages. Of those, only 5% are able to afford formal training. Of those, 5% about 30% become competent wizards. So about 1 in 1300 of the population were wizards. He went on to explain wizards chose from one of 13 fields of specialty. Healing arts was one such field and about 10% chose that field…so 1 in 13,000 people had healing magic. He said it was closer to 1 in 50,000 as wars and adventuring killed a fair amount of wizards.

And healing people for free? There was no law against it but I should be careful not to get conscripted into the army. There was no war currently so no active conscription. He said if I wanted to make some extra coin the mage academy's infirmary had a number of injured students. I traveled to the infirmary with the librarian and there were two dozen injured mages. I tried my hand at healing burns, blindness, loss of hearing, reattaching fingers, cuts, and broken bones. I found that there were Aether potions that could recharge my Aether. They tasted like cough syrup and I could only stomach two potions. I earned over 9 gold coins for 4 hours of work. There was only one healer at the academy and he came by every third day to heal students so I had gotten lucky.

On my return to the alley, I noticed someone following me, two people actually. This was exactly what I had tried to avoid. As I got to the end of the alley I waited in front of the portal for my fans. They looked like competent ruffians. As they asked for my coin purse and backpack I pulled my Glock and shot each of them 6 times then stepped into the portal. I figured I would have to wait about seven days before returning. Why did I kill them? I was sure they were going to mug me and I wanted to send a message.

I bought some puffcrete mix in the terminal and went to work at my home. The first thing was getting the underground concrete box for the water tank…well tanks as a hole the bots dug was big enough for two so I got a second 5000-gallon water tank. After the box was done and the tanks installed the water lines were connected. The bots covered the box with 5 feet of dirt and there was just a manhole cover to access the tank room. The wastewater and sewage line would be in a 5000-gallon puffcrete septic tank 200 yards downhill from the housing. The bots got to digging the channel for the line to the tank. The condenser and purifier were installed above ground behind the house. The specs said they would be able to generate between 500 and 900 gallons a day based on conditions.

Electricity was next with lighting a priority. This turned out to be simple. 180 credits got me wiring, lighting, and outlets that could be installed and connected to my fusion generator. After all the work I felt it was time for a new mission. Something not in Stormheart. I was eating hot pockets in front of the screen in the Terminal. There were two missions I really liked, one was in Stormheart so I accepted the other one.

***Rescue Madeline Berry from captivity at 380 Shortbeard Ct in Portland, OR. Reward: +2 stat points, +2 skill points, 1,000 credits***

It had the best reward of the missions and it was my first mission in my world. A quick web search found Madeline was a 12-year-old girl missing for 2 days. The drive was 5 hours. Shit…could someone check my search history? The voice suggested I install an AI on my phone to obscure myself. The upgrade cost 200 credits for a Tier 2 AI which I paid. My phone was now a sentient computer. I named the AI Flux. The AI asked for a terminal in the house. Flux chose a 500 petabyte unit that cost 600 credits. I had to sell some gold coins to get the computer which was the size of a basketball. Flux could now monitor 2000 internet sites simultaneously. My plan was to drive to the address and rescue Madeline then drop her off at the police station. But I didn’t want any local surveillance to record my truck or me.

I went into the auction site and found some light combat armor for just 120 credits. For another 5 credits, I would be able to get it resized to fit me by the system. The specs on the armor were excellent. It looked like a black suit with flexible paneling. The helmet had three vision settings, IR, low light, and normal. I turned in 13 gold coins and got the suit.

The drive to Oregon was fun as Flux had downloaded all the music on the internet and was slowly creating playlists for me based on my mood. The house was outside the city and secluded. I parked and watched for a bit from 100 yards away. One car parked and a guy in his 40s went in. I went to the house on foot as soon as it was dark and Flux killed the security cameras. The house was quiet to me but Flux said the basement had noise. The door was electronic and Flux hacked it and I went inside. I heard a noise at the basement door and I suddenly felt sick. He was raping the girl. I thought quickly and rushed to the front door and rang the doorbell. Then with my gun drawn, I waited for him. I had to ring it twice more before he came up. I put two rounds into his heart at 6 feet through the door.

I listened and carefully made my way to the basement. There were two girls tied naked to beds. I was sick. I just said everything was going to be ok. I removed my helmet and I used my knife to cut their bindings. I explained to the girls I killed their captor and didn’t want to answer questions from the police. I gave them his cell phone which was unlocked by Flux and told them to dial 911 in 5 minutes. They only waited till I was out the door before dialing but a couldn’t blame them. I returned to my truck and drove away. My music driving back was much more somber and I canceled plans to buy bathroom fixtures.

I pulled into the garage and had plans to carry out more justice in the future. I went into the Terminal.

***COMPLETED: Rescue Madeline Berry from captivity at 380 Shortbeard Ct in Portland, OR. Reward: +2 stat points, +2 skill points, 1,000 credits***

***BONUS: +1 stat point, 1,000 credits***

The 3 stat points went to speed bringing it to 67. Then I brought up missions. There were no missions in my realm but I had Flux start looking for more kidnapped victims. I ate and slept restlessly knowing there were evil people out there harming innocents.

On waking, I checked missions again and found a mission to cure a child at the Boise hospital. The rewards were not great, just 500 credits but it was some good I could do in this world. I bought a disguise mask in the store and a priest's uniform. I then drove to Boise, bought the bathroom fixtures, was happy to soon have a large shower, and went to the hospital on foot disguised as Chris Pratt. The boy was in the child’s ward and had leukemia. It cost me 4 aether to cure him. I cured two other children and healed the burns on 4 more children before running out of Aether. Feeling good about myself I dove home.

I spent three days working with my assortment of bots, finishing the living level of the house. I had hardwood floors throughout, purchased through the terminal auction for dirt cheap. The open kitchen and dining room area had a closet for coats and I was happy to have a functioning kitchen. The living room had the leather furniture from my parent's house and a massive 100” tv screen I got from the auction. The bedroom was 28’x20’ which led to a 10’x28’ bathroom and the 10’x28’ walk-in closet was beyond the bathroom. I added a covered balcony off the bedroom with a thin puffcrete and bought some comfortable wicker furniture. My balcony looked down the mountain and it was a nice view.

I watched the news about the “Miracle worker Chris Pratt Imposter” and the “Black Knight Vigilante” who killed a pedophile kidnapper in Portland. I decided to drive out and see my sister now rather than wait for Thanksgiving. I locked down the place and had all the bots move into the Terminal for now. I made stops in Des Moines, Chicago, Cleveland, and Hartford hospitals healing children until my Aether ran out. I had to rest in the terminal to recharge my Aether but that was ok. I disguised myself as various famous people each time.

My sister lived in Maine and I drove up to the house she had bought. She was working the yard and we hugged. I spent a week with her helping her make upgrades to her house but managed to complete a few simple missions at night.

***COMPLETED: Harvest 20 Red Aether Roses for the Apothecary in Blue Leaf, Reward: +1 Aether, 500 credits***

The roses were guarded by some water sprites but were not difficult to gather.

***COMPLETED: Trade 10 gold coins worth of goods in Blue Leaf, Reward: +1 Charisma, +1 Mercantile Skill, 500 credits***

This took three shopping carts from the supermarket of flour, peanut butter, jam, sugar, honey, and chocolate.

***COMPLETED: Eliminate the Rabid Boar near the river fork by Blue Leaf, Reward: 500 credits***

Being such a specific location this mission took less than an hour and I burned the corpse.

***COMPLETED: Help farmer Jackson near Blue Leaf plant his wheat field, Reward: +1 stat point, 500 credits***

***BONUS: +1 Aether***

The farmer had a broken leg and his plow horse had been mauled by a giant badger. I killed the badger and healed the farmer and horse. I only spent two hours actually planting but the system seemed to think I did enough.

***COMPLETED: Eliminate the bandits on the road south of Blue Leaf, Reward: +1 skill point, +1 stat point, 2500 credits***

They were 5 miles away! I wore my armor and walked the road till they attacked me. Mistake! One bandit had weak fire magic and I got some burns. There were seven bandits total and one got away. The mission showed as completed so I didn’t give it much thought. The morning after this mission I was a zombie as I helped my sister with her house.

The final mission I completed was a rescue mission in my world.

***COMPLETED: Rescue Melanie Hartgrove from 32 Ball Street in Abbot, ME, Reward: +2 stat points, 1000 credits***

Melanie was being ransomed for $250k. She was 22 and the daughter of a stockbroker. The drive was 45 minutes from my sister’s house and 3 men were guarding Melanie. Rather than kill anyone I used Flux to jam cell phones and make a call drawing two of them away. I entered the house subdued the 3rd and pulled the women out. I drove her to a police station and let her out.

My 4 bonus stat points went to speed. I also spent 4000 credits bringing my Aether up to 35. This was to give me more healing capacity as I stopped at hospitals on my way home. I saw on the news Melanie’s captors were in custody and her father was offering the $250k to her rescuer. Since I had worn my black armor I didn’t want to be tied to my other rescue so I ignored the reward offer. I stopped at hospitals in Boston, Albany, Toledo, and St Louis healing as many as I could. I spent two nights healing in St Louis because a boy asked me to heal his mother who was in a coma in another hospital.

There was a big news program about the mystery angel healing kids in hospitals. I was up to 48 kids and 3 adults. They tracked my location and the days…they said I would be in Denver next. Then the bastards interviewed kids at the children’s hospital with their illnesses and injuries. I had a soft heart. I had 750 credits and 220 gold so I figured I could raise my healing skill. It had leveled to Beginner-5 by itself! I used my ability point to raise it to beginner-6. I spent 730 credits getting my Aether to 37. Then I disguised myself as one of the doctors at the Denver hospitals and healed 15 children that night. I entered my Terminal room in the hospital and waited till the next night then disguised as a nurse healed the last 12 children. I made myself a promise not to watch any more news specials.

I got home and found someone had broken in and raided the fridge. They even slept in my bed. At least they were not messy. As I was stripping in the bathroom I heard a noise. Grabbing my gun I turned the light on in the walk-in closet and two young women were hiding there. They came out scared and with their hands raised.

The two girls were 16-year-old twins and runaways. After talking to them I learned their stepfather abused them. Their mother was an alcoholic. The child services in this state were terrible. They had been looking for an abandoned hunting cabin to crash at before heading to California to work as waitresses there. They had a beat-up dirt bike out back. I told them they could stay in the trailer home for a few days. I didn’t plan to turn them in or stop them.

The girls, Celeste and Olivia, thanked me and we got the trailer set up together for them.

That night I decided to start the mission in Stormheart I declined before. It was still there.

***Learn the Long Blades skill to Neophyte-5 from a sword master in Stormheart. Reward: +3 long blades skill, +1 parry skill, +2 strength, +2 agility, +1 stamina, +1 skill slot***

From my understanding, I would need 100 hours of training under a sword master. The rewards were extensive but I figured it would take 3 to 4 weeks to complete. I entered the city and after a meal and conversation at an inn, I found I had three choices. The adventurer academy, the sword academy, or find one of the sword masters in the city. I stopped at the academy first and learned they had 6-month programs and you had to start at the beginning and they were two months in.

My next stop was the sword academy. It was a collection of four sword masters who trained the nobility. I talked to one of the masters and learned it cost 2 gold per week for training but the masters each only took four students at a time and all were currently booked. However, there was the option of training with the daughter of another sword master, Violet. She had earned her sword master rank but the noble boys didn’t want a female mentor. Her cost was also just 1 gold a week. I agreed to meet her. She was maybe 6’2” and was jacked but limber. She was going through sword forms with a buckler on her arm. Her dark blonde ponytail whipped around her body. After she finished she approached us. She had deep blue eyes that seemed to flash purple at a certain angle. I introduced myself and said I wished to learn the sword under her guidance. She asked which style, two-handed, sword, and shield or dual wield? I hadn’t thought about it so I just blurted dual wield. After talking for a bit more I was to return tomorrow with my chosen duel wield weapons and two gold coins for the first week. I returned to the terminal.