Chapter 8

It was about time to head back. I decided to spend the rest of the day using summon stone to shore up my find. I started making the stone walls to prevent any more mud from seeping in. I also put a layer of stone on the bottom. Basically I was making a great big swimming pool with the ship in it. I made some underwater stairs near the cargo door making it easier getting down and up. I was a little upset I couldn’t close the bay doors just yet. I was hoping after I got the Aether core recharge spell from Leo some of the ship would work. Between Aether cultivation and forming the pool my day passed quickly. The pool was about 40% done when it got too dark to continue. Clouds obscured the moons. I was pretty wired from excitement and spent a few hours practicing sword form and reviewing the ship schematics before going to sleep. The only ‘to do’ on my sheet was to choose a new improvement for Aether respiration.

Aether Respiration Spell: Level 7, Tier 5

* “Speed Cast” – reduce casting time by 3 seconds
* “Speak” – allows castor to speak normally while under the spell
* “Improved Efficiency” – improves sustained effect by 30%

Two really good options. The 3rd option would allow the sustained effect to increase from 10 seconds per 1 aether to 13 seconds per 1 aether. But I knew soon as I saw the second option I would choose it. I wondered how it would work under water or in space? I went to sleep pretty happy.

Early in the morning I cancelled my personal pocket space spell then checked my pools.

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| **POOLS** | **Total** | **Regen/Min** |
| **Health** | 530 | 0.91 |
| **Stamina** | 433 | 1.14 |
| **Aether** | 1640 | 3.44 |
| **Psion** | 103 | 0.21 |

Not great. I had learned from the datapad that typical warriors had over 10,000 health. A good mage would have over 15,000 aether. Those pools were for level 50 people though. I was a long way from reaching that peak. I used 228 of my pool to cast my pocket spell. With bonuses the space was 4.3 cubic meters in size. I filled it with all the jewelry and unspoiled items and a second orc rifle I found on the ship.

The pool looked like a large oval pond. The ship was about 4 meters below the waters surface and looked like a massive rock. My stairs blended well enough as well. Beside the trampled earth, the five funeral burn marks and some signs of exposed earth and stone the site looked ok. I began my journey back. It was much easier as I was mostly going downhill. I moved quickly and reached the Aether pool at dusk.

I was happy to find a note from Cael by the pool. He was worried and asked me to check in. It was late so I set up my tent, practiced sword movements for a bit and then fell asleep studying engineering diagrams.

In the morning I entered the dungeon and practiced my swordmanship. Well the problem with melee combat is a got hit a lot more. Even with my personal force shield. It was super complex controlling the force shield’s movement and initiating the sword movements. I spent two hours practicing on minor enemies with the sword then I quickly dispatched the mini bosses and the boss using magic and the Aether pistol. My loot was a tiny Aether crystal, 40 copper coins, white silk boxer shorts, red pair of leather pants, and dark brown forearm bracers.

I headed back to the farm around mid day. I found Cael and we caught up. I didn’t tell him about the ship yet just about the SYSTEM quest. He was envious that I had gotten two free skills. He wanted to see all the loot I had brought back as well. I asked Cael to teach me his appraisal skill. At level 5 I had opened up another skill slot. I had thought long about it and since I was heading toward adventuring I desperately needed the skill.

Cael agreed and started the instruction while we reviewed my haul.

We started with the items I got from the dungeon.

*Heavy Black Shirt +5 Stamina, +5 Constitution, Can alter color to black, white or gray*

*Crimson Leather Pants +20 Leg Armor, +5 Strength*

*White Silk Boxers with Perfect Fit Charm, +3 to Tailoring Skill, +2 Speed*

*Black Socks +2 Aether, +2 Charisma*

*Black Heavy Boots +3 Speed, +2 Stamina*

*Dark Brown Leather Forearm Bracers +5 Arm Armor, +7 Agility*

*Black Fedora Hat, +2 Intellect, +2 Survival Skill*

*Scarlet Slippers, +1 Aether, +1 Channeling, Cast Light Spell once every 24 hours*

It was a decent haul. Cael asked for the black fedora hat and scarlet slippers. The hat for himself and the slippers as a gift for Marianna, a girl he was courting. I handed them over without thought, Cael had done so much for me and in my mind it was his dungeon anyway. I hadn’t learned the analyze spell yet but I did learn some useful information. Items had tiers as well. A tier 1 item had up to 5 points associated with it and was generally very common. A tier 2 item had up to 25 points associated with it and was considered uncommon. Tier 3 items, up to 100 points and considered rare. Cael wasn’t sure about tier 4 items limits. I asked if common items were considered white and uncommon green. Cael looked at me strangly and said no. There used to be an archaic system that used colors but it followed the light spectrum…red was common, orange was uncommon, yellow was rare, green was very rare, blue was epic, indigo was legendary and violet was mythical. But that system was used thousands of years ago. Huh I thought…guess the video games in my world got it wrong, this system Cael mentioned made more sense too since the light spectrum was universal.

I looked at my current gear. Cael helped me set my interface to show it compactly with just my magic items active.

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| ***Magic Equipment Slots: 5 (+1 at level 10)*** |
| *Deep Dark Green Duster +3 Str, +3 Stam, +10% energy resistance* |
| *Onyx Belt +20 stamina pool, +1 Luck* |
| *Azure Socks (both must worn for effect) +2 Agility, +5% to stamina pool* |
| *Brooch of Blades +2 charisma, +4 to long blades skill* |
| *Navy Blue underwear, +2 charisma, vanilla scent charm* |

I decided to switch out the underwear for the heavy black shirt. Removing an active magic item was like cutting a mental thread. I ‘felt’ the loss of the bonus charisma. I put on the black shirt and willed it active. Awesome boost. Cael said charms on items would remain active even if they were not active items so I could continue to have vanilla scent wafting from my groin he joked. I asked Cael about the ‘perfect fit’ the other boxers had and he said they would magically tailor to be as comfortable as possible but that my clean clothes spell repair function would do that with a few casts anyway. I decided I liked the vanilla scented groin.

My orc boots created a seal with the rest of the uniform so I passed on equipping the magic boots. I switched magic socks, opting for the slight improvement to Aether. I then cut the magic thread to the black belt and equipped the forearm bracers. I was going to continue to wear the belt as it was pretty bad ass looking. That was all the changes I made. It was time to identify all the orc equipment.

I had taken two complete suits with me. One I had already resized to fit me but decided not to wear at the farm. Cael said they were not magical and I already had the resistances info from the SYSTEM. Special Resistances: Cold +15%, Vacuum +40%, Fire +20%, Energy +15%, Slashing +15%. Cael said the armor was showing +60 for every part of the body. My description had just said it was light armor but Cael’s skill was higher and gave more info. Good to know. I gave Cael the other suit. He would have to get it refitted by a mage as my spell just worked on my clothes. Next was the orc sword and I was hoping it was magical and it was!

*Gerrn Warleader’s Battle Sword, Length 1.1 meters, Weight 2.9 kilograms, Material Silverite Composite, +25 Strength, +25 Constitution, +25 Agility, +5 Long Blades Skill, +5 Gerrn Sword Form, Can use Absolute Dodge Combat Action once per day*

Holy crap. This was an awesome weapon. Cael was also impressed. I wished I had tried to make it active when I was practicing but I hadn’t realized I needed to remove an active magic item. The weapon had to be worn or wielded to have the benefits. Guess I was going to have to get accustomed to wearing it. I deactivated my socks and tried to activate the sword. A message popped up.

***SYSTEM MESSAGE: The item you are trying to bond has restrictions. Must be of orc race or have completed the orc warrior blood rite induction ceremony.***

What the fuck! My first super powerful weapon and I couldn’t use. Well I could use but not to its full potential. I pulled the SYSTEM pad to see what the rite was. Cael’s eyes nearly popped out of his head seeing the SYSTEM device. We talked about it and I found it was worth probably 25,000 credits minimum. It had nearly unlimited information storage and could connect to the SYSTEM remotely and retrieve information. I just thought of it as the ultimate iphone myself. I paid some Aether and found the blood rite was a special orc warriors rite that was performed by an orc of level 23 or higher that recognized someone as having a orc warrior’s spirit. Sounded cool and all but I highly doubted I would find an orc warrior to do the deed on me. Curious I got info on the Absolute Dodge Action. It gave the wielder +250% dodge for 30 seconds! Angrily I put the sword in my special storage for now.

Cael also mentioned his analyze skill was only level 17. If it reached level 23, tier 10, then he could give me a lot more information about the blade. I wasn’t worried. We moved onto the rings, earrings and necklaces. Cael separated out the non-enchanted items leaving seven rings, two necklaces and a single stud earing.

*Platinum Brass Stud Earing, +4 tantric sex skill, +2 charisma, +2 agility*

*Silver Ring, +3 Marksmanship, +2 Ranged Combat*

*Platinum Ring, +8 Agility, +4 Strength, +2 Speed*

*Silver Ring with Ruby, +3 Steller Navigation Skill, +7 Intelligence*

*Gold Ring with Sapphire, +5 Teleport Magic Skill, +10 Aether, +15 Channeling*

*Braided Copper Ring, +4 Starship Mechanic Skill, +10 Intellect, +4 Agility*

*White Gold Ring with Sapphire, +5 Starship Piloting: Gunship, +5 Agility*

*Black Composite Ring, +10 Strength, +5 Melee Combat*

*Gerrn Majority Silver and Gold Necklace, +3 to All Primary Stats*

*Gold Chain Necklace, +10 Intellect, +5 Stellar Navigation Skill*

Cael was just as excited as myself as we went through each item. By the 5th item I had learned the Analyze skill as well. Although my info was more limited for instance all my rings just said ring and not the material.

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| **Analyze** | 1 |
| Associated Stat: | Int |
| Leveling Effect: | More detailed information |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Allows the basic details of items to be revealed and tier 1 and 2 magic items |

Holy crap! These were just items from a small ship and god only knows what items on the ship I had missed. I had left a lot of personal gear like short blades and objects I didn’t know what they were. I was also seeing just how insignificant Cael’s dungeon rewards were. Cael said a person could only wear two rings though. Something about the circular stored ability being too close to each other if they were worn on the same hand. I lot of people had toe rings to get past this… I had never checked under the socks on the orcs I had burned. Would it be bad form to go sift through the ashes?

I deactivated my socks and tried on the Gerrn Majority Necklace. Of course it was race restricted so I moved it to my special space. Next I checked the tantric skill out on my pad. It was a skill that helped the user get more pleasure from sex and better at giving pleasure to their partner during sex no matter their race. I moved it to my special storage and had flashes of being a sex god. The gold ring with the sapphire worked and I felt the marked power up. I was going through the items and Cael asked for the marksmanship ring and I gave it to him without hesitation. I also gave him the platinum ring. I said both were his rewards for being such a good friend. I know, kind of sappy.

I ditched the forearm bracers. They were not going to be of help much if I wore the suit anyway. I had chosen them for the agility buff to help with sword skill. I equipped the braided copper ring to get some of the agility back. I was hoping to eventually learn the mechanic skill as well and make use of the +4 to the skill on this ring. Having exhausted my ring slots that left the navigation necklace. It was pretty thick and probably weighed a kilogram. Unfortunately bonus intellect from items would not open new spell slots but intellect did give a little Aether pool boost. I removed the brooch of blades and planned to use it just when I practiced with the sword. I sent it to my special space. I put the heavy gold chain on.

The first orc heavy rifle I found with the orc leader was next. It was non-magical. Cael expertly opened up the rifle. He spent 10 minutes examining the internals. He said it could be cleaned and should work again if he had some power clips for it. I told him he could have it but didn’t tell him I had others. The last thing we analyzed were the grenades. The three types were explosive, incendiary and goo. The goo was a web like material meant for capturing. It exploded and hardened in seconds. I stopped there and let Cael use my SYSTEM computer for a bit after recharging it with a crystal.

While Cael worked on the STSTEM pad we talked for a few hours, draining the crystal but he used two of his own to charge it before returning it. I didn’t reveal the ship just yet. Cael had two visit two other distant farms to do some recon for them so was going to busy for another week or so. I decided I would talk with Leo then head to town to see if I could reconnect with the Andrew and the rest of the group.

Leo was shocked to see me. He had assumed I had either gotten killed or moved on. I assured him I wouldn’t move on without saying my goodbyes. We talked into the night and the next morning he I spent some time with Leo learning the space warp spell and charge Aether core drive spell.

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| **Space Warp** | 1 |
| Magic Sphere | Space (tier 5), Teleport (tier 5), Time (tier 5), Force (tier 5) |
| Mana Cost | 100 Aether per 10 tons multiplied by 1 Aether per light year |
| Range | Based on Aether and Navigation |
| Effect | Transport a Warp Martix over a fixed distance |
| Casting Time | 1 second per metric ton |
| Duration | Permanent |
| Leveling Effect | Slight increase to distance transported |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Moves a ship with a warp matrix inscribed in its hull over a vast intersteller distance. Typically a mage will utilize a ships aether core to supply the spell rather than personal aether pool. |
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| **Replenish Aether Core** | 1 |
| Magic Sphere | Time (tier 5), Force (Tier 5), Order (tier 1) |
| Mana Cost | Variable |
| Range | Touch |
| Effect | transfer 1 aether per second to aether core |
| Casting Time | Sustained |
| Duration | Permanent |
| Leveling Effect | increase rate of transfer |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Recharges a ships aether core |

I started asking Leo questions. What was a Warp Matrix. Apparently ships had special runes engraved through the hull to utilize the spell. Most ships had 3-4 sets of runes in case one set was damaged in battle. The spell always had a minimum cost based on one light year even if warping less than one light year. Ok in my head my ship had a mass of 3,000 metric tons so would require 30,000 Aether to jump one light year! Holy shit. Leo said that Warp Matrixes also had a single jump distance limit, somewhere between 1 and 100 light years depending on how advanced the runes were. Typically the bigger the max jump distance the more costly materials it cost. I started worrying about how much Aether would be required and Leo said don’t forget about spell tailoring. I opened my interface and looked at my options for level 1 of the space warp spell.

Space Warp Spell: Level 1, Tier 1

* “Quick Cast” – instant cast once per 24 hours
* “Improved Distance” – increase max distance by 14%
* “Spell Efficiency” – reduce Aether cost by 10%

I told Leo my options and he was flabbergasted. Quick cast was somewhat rare, he guessed maybe 10% of space mages had that option before leveling the spell to level 23, and that effect alone could get me a space mage officers position in most navies. Larger class ships usually had two or three space mages stationed on board with that particular skill for combat jumps. Most mages focused on improving efficiency every level but he strongly encouraged me to select the quick cast. I did as he instructed.

I read off my options for Aether Core, soliciting Leo’s advice.

Replenish Aether Core: Level 1, Tier 1

* “Aether Environment” – while charging an Aether core any other mages within 10 meters of the core will increase their channeling by 20%
* “Faster Transfer” – increase the base transfer rate by 1 aether per second

Leo said Aether Environment was another rare adaptation. It was used on larger ships that had 4 or more mages that cared for an Aether Drive. It was a cool effect that had a blue mist that surrounded the mage casting the spell. I decided to select the second option because I was not planning on joining a fleet just yet. It doubled my base speed. Leo mumbled something about the luck of youths and if he had more kids like me the Blue Light Kingdom would never have fallen.

I asked Leo about Aether core sizes. Small ships cores were usually between 50,000 and 200,000 in capacity. Medium ships were usually between 200,000 and 1,500,000. Larger ships, usually had a series of linked cores because the cost of making Aether cores with over 1,500,000 aether capacity was prohibitive. A good size ship core would be able to jump about 5 light years on a full core capacity. That would mean my ships core should have at least 150,000 capacity. And would take me…doing mental math…I currently regenerated 4.27 aether per minute according to my sheet. Somewhere between 18 and 24 days to charge the core! My dreams of gallivanting across the galaxy were quickly becoming squashed. Then I remembered I wouldn’t be the only crew member and I could still level up improving my Aether rate.

I asked what size class a gunship was. Leo said it fell into the small end of medium ship size. Medium ships were usually between 2,000 and 10,000 metric tons. My 3,000 ton ship was definitely on the low end. I asked Leo if he had any combat spells he could teach me. Unfortunately Leo’s combat spells were tetra spells with Fire, Lightning and Force magic spheres. He did have a force spell called Ship Movement and another spell called Artificial Gravity. Ship Movement linked the mage to the ship and using Aether in the ship’s Aether core allowed the mage to move the ship. It was usually a superfluous spell though as the ship had magitech that did the same thing for the pilot when the tech thrusters were not powerful enough. Artificial Gravity created gravity in a 5 meter radius around a mage. I had three open spell slots…I wanted some offensive spells. Well if my ship was damaged or the pilot controls were out…I asked for the Ship Movement spell.

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| **Ship Movement** | 1 |
| Magic Sphere | Force (5) |
| Mana Cost | Variable |
| Range | touch-Aether Core in Matrix |
| Effect | Accelerate a ship at 1 ms per 1 ton per 1 Aether |
| Casting Time | sustained |
| Duration | Permanent |
| Leveling Effect | minor increase to acceleration |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Moves a large vessel using aether from a ships Aether core |

Leo helped with the math. I said given a 3,000 ton ship how much Aether would it take to leave atmosphere. Well gravity on this planet was 9.0. So to hover the ship it would take 27,000 aether per second. I choked on a gulp of saliva. He then reminded me about spell tailoring and you could get it down to about 30-40 times as effective by level 23 of the spell. Also there was an advanced version of the spell that started four times as efficient at level 1. The Advanced Ship Movement spell was tier 10 and required Force magic at level 23. Leo didn’t have the spell anyway. I asked Leo about forgetting old spells and he said that it was possible but the spell slot didn’t return until roughly a year later. Ok, good to know.

I thanked Leo and let him know I was headed to town for a few days to check on my friends. I gave him the white silk boxers as a gift. I restocked my cooking supplies and tripled up of cooking fuel this time. Never knew when you would have to perform an Orc burial rite.

Even though I was a little paranoid about someone finding my ship I left for town on foot after a late lunch.