**Chapter 33 Callem's Shopping Spree**

After passing through the gates, I fell in behind Callem. He was leading this shopping expedition. Our first stop was actually a clothing store. When he told me Gareth was outgrowing his clothes I understood why we were here. He went through the racks and pulled a few shirts here, a few pants there, some socks, a few belts, some underclothes, and a few pairs of shoes. It was all good quality and cost Callem a little under three gold coins from his own purse. The man fashioned the clothes into a large makeshift backpack and I was stuck carrying it. Soon I was once again following Callem. Thankfully we were headed to *Sweet and Treats* next, a familiar place for me.

While I was getting cocoa powder, bittersweet chocolate bars and semisweet chocolate bars in quantity Callem was stuffing numerous items into his own large basket! I noticed he was staying on the high-end shelves as he pulled things into his carrying basket without rhythm or reason to my eyes. My own package of chocolate weighed over fifteen pounds (7 kg) as I just took everything they had in stock and had the clerk package it.

The clerk was shocked but said my total was 2 gold, 8 silver after a small quantity discount. Chocolate imports were infrequent, so it was fairly high in cost. Callem on the other hand must have had 40 pounds (18 kg) of finished candy. I smirked to myself thinking what would happen if I gave such a bundle of candy to Freya on her fourteenth! Callem’s total easily outclassed mine at 6 gold, 39 silver. Other shoppers were just gawking at us as Callem paid with a large shiny gold and received one gold and 53 silver in change. We walked out and my backpack was much heavier. Callem said not to worry. Just a few more stops and then we could go back to the Gaskill farm to unload it all into his new cart.

I really wanted to ask him if he was going to carry anything but I knew his response would be one of two things. Either he would say it was good weight training or that he had to be unencumbered in case of an incident. I hadn’t seen any of the ruffians that nearly killed me my last time in the city but I was constantly on the lookout and Callem kept checking to see if I noticed things, quizzing me like we were doing observation training.

Unfortunately, our next stop was not *Margold’s Mystical Emporium*. It was a jewelry shop. At least I got to put my things down while Callem shopped. He got two necklaces, a brooch, two pairs of earrings, and a beautiful silver gilded jewelry box. The total was 46 gold! Callem happily paid with a shiny platinum coin. At first, I thought he might get an engagement ring for Wynna but that was not a custom in Skyholme. He was just going to lavish her with gifts it appeared. I thought about asking him what his intentions were with Wynna, trying to be all grown up but discarded that notion.

Our next stop was a weird storefront which I didn’t recognize until we entered. It was a specialty men’s store. Callem was a big man so he needed to shop here I guess. He didn’t get much, a new pair of leather boots, some underclothes, three sets of sleeping clothes, and four new shirts. The total was 2 gold and 3 silver mostly because the boots were expensive. At least Callem was carrying his own clothes and jewelry!

Our next stop was the cooper. I had told Callem I needed a special setup to make my ice cream and that was why we were here. At his urging, I talked to the barrel and bucket maker to get something that would work better than my improvised setup. It took ten minutes before I got nested buckets with room for ice and matching lids. It cost just a few silver coins and they were of high quality. I hadn’t told Callem I was planning to try my hand at enchanting yet.

I was pretty much all shopped out but Callem went to the butcher next and thankfully just placed a massive order. He paid in full, 9 gold, for the order and its delivery to the farm. The butcher in the city was much better than the one in Hen’s Hollow so I had no objections to his purchases here or the extra time it took. I made sure the order included lots of bacon. I found I missed having bacon and egg biscuit sandwiches in the morning.

We went to a pottery shop next. Callem was planning to buy a tea set for Wynna. While he was shopping the various sets I found a set of dinner plates that were pretty spectacular. There were 23 plates and each one had a painting of a mythical beast. Well not mythical as they all existed in this world. Callem had a great dining set but these plates were too cool to pass up. The artist in the store said the plates were black iron stone, painted with glazes, and sealed with a clear glaze. They cost 40 silver each. He was trying to upsell his work saying it took him two days to paint and fire each plate. The stone was extremely strong and was shaped by a mage's spellwork. There were three sets of plates, 69 in total. Even though the creatures were the same the artist had them in different poses and backgrounds in the different sets. Callem was done, paying 2 gold and four silver for ten aqua blue tea cups, a matching tea kettle, and three accessories for sugar, honey, and milk. When I asked Callem if I could get all 69 plates he came over and looked at them before paying the 28 gold for them. They would send a runner to the Gaskil farm to drop off the tea set and plates which I was thankful for. Each plate weighed over a pound! (.5 kg)

Leaving the potters shop we finally turned in the direction of Margold’s! I thought Callem would tease me and we would take another detour but we finally arrived before the shop. I had only peeked in the window of the shop prior to today. I had never actually gone inside so I was thoroughly excited. Callem leaned into me briefly while adjusting his load and whispered, “You budget is five platinum here and then we can return to the farm.” My eyes widened for a second before I nodded and entered.

The shop was arranged with three long shelves of books on the right. One shelf had textbooks, one shelf had spellbooks and the last shelf was labeled as enchanting and alchemy. On the other side of the shop was a selection of magical ingredients and items. The proprietor was located behind a large desk. She was an older woman, well dressed with long salt and pepper hair. Behind her was a large array of potions and crystals on the shelves. Only three others were currently in the shop. Two I immediately presumed were guards by their disinterest in the goods in the shop and their sword belts. The third person was shopping for a spellbook in the first row. Callem sat down in a chair by the door and I unloaded the burden I was carrying next to him. “One hour Storme,” was all Callem said as he started digging around in his candy sack for something good to eat. That shouldn’t be hard as he had practically bought out the candy shop.

My mental list only had two items, tier 3 aether crystal dust, and the tier one dimensional space spell for Aelyn. It didn’t take me long to find the spell book for Aelyn. They only had about 100 different tier-one spells here and a dozen or so tier-two spells. There were multiple copies of the tier-one spells for the most part. The spell I choose had six copies on the shelf, all identical. This was a far cry from the selection Gareth had relayed to me while he shopped in the capital’s spell shop. At least the bindings were color marked by sphere, similar to Gareth’s description. I wasn’t going to find anything unique here but Callem gave me a five platinum allowance. So far I had a book costing 12 gold.

I walked the rows and didn’t find anything piquing my interest other than a tier 2 healing spell for combating poison, 60 gold. I added it to my stack. There was a levitate spell but I thought to myself that I should probably just get the fly spell instead. I was about to move to the front to get my aether dust when I noticed the alarm spell. I had walked by it twice in my perusing. It was just a tier 1 spell but I opened it and studied the description and its utility.

It would be super useful after a few evolutions as it could wake you from sleep if danger was close. I added the book, just 4 gold. I think my biggest hang-up on not getting more spells was the fact I didn’t want to waste space in my spell matrix with tier 1 spells. I wanted at least tier 2 spells. And tier 2 spells that were actually useful to me.

I approached the desk with the woman and she had a kind smile, pleasant wrinkles, and bright eyes. I placed the books on her desk. She was starting a slip for my purchases and she started talking, “Newly awakened?”

“Yes, I got a few lesson books and plan to start on spell imprinting soon,” I replied eyeing the shelves behind the woman.

“Good choices on the alarm spell and pocket space spell. Both are easy to learn and have good utility. The poison spell? That is used mostly by adventurers in delving dungeons.” She left her question hanging and I figured it would be ok to lie a little.

“Yes my uncle over there,” I pointed at Callem, “wants me to attend the adventurer’s academy after my first year of the academy.” I paused and then said, “I plan to try my hand at enchanting as well. What do you recommend for a beginner?” She had a knowing look in her eye.

“Enchanting is difficult and you will find yourself investing in spells to make yourself into a competent enchanter if you travel that path,” she said. I already had a cheat with my metal shaping skill. She continued, “It is a financially rewarding path though.” She winked at me. “I would suggest a roll of thin silver wire with tier 1 aether dust already embedded. That should allow you some practice at runes. You will need the stylus that the wire feeds into as well to write out the runes ” I nodded at her advice.

“Do you have any silver wire with tier 3 aether dust?” her eyebrows arched at my question.

“Yes”, she went behind her and pulled a coil of wire, “10 gold for the spool, mostly due to the cost of the aether dust.” I nodded.

“How much for a unit of just the tier 3 aether dust and a stylus for writing the runes?” I asked trying to decipher the labels behind her. A unit was about the size of a golf ball from the looks of it...or I should say in a small bag the size of a golf ball.

“Five gold for a unit. That is about the amount in each spool. We have three styluses for sale. The basic one is two gold, and the other two are nine gold and twenty-four gold respectively. The expensive one should last a few thousand hours and has a fine point. The two cheaper ones will last a few hundred hours of use but truthfully they are the same except the nine gold one is made from rarer materials” She added looking at me anew. Maybe she had some respect for my coinage?

Damn, I thought. It was hard spending five platinum.

“I will take the stylus for 24 gold, 10 units of tier 3 aether dust, and two coils of wire with the tier 3 aether dust. Do you have any spell books, not on the shelves?” I asked hoping there was a book I could buy to get utilize my 5 platinum limit.

The old woman was looking at me harder now as she added the items to my invoice slip without breaking eye contact. “Yes, a few tier 3 spells and two tier 4 spells. I can also get you most spells in under a week for a price from the library in the capital.” I waited for her to continue. “For tier 3 I have Compulsion, Hail of Ice, Fire Mantle, Illusionary Companion, Wind Step, Advanced Water Breathing and Summon Greater Fog. For tier 4 I have Dimensional Step and Paralysis.” She looked at me waiting. The tier four were probably both over five platinum so no need to ask further on those. What sounded most interesting from the others?

“I am not interested in ordering a spell right now,” I said thinking Callem wouldn’t let me back into the city anytime soon. “Can I see the Illusionary Companion spell?” The woman went under the counter and unlocked a cabinet and brought the tome out. It was extremely thick and I went inside the cover and looked at the price, 350 gold. Excellent. I had too many spells to imprint already and this was mostly to get me to 5 platinum. I perused the spell. The spell created an illusionary and animated figure the mage could control with his mind.

My hour was almost up. “I will take this spell book as well.” The woman totaled everything to 530 gold. That was great but before calling Callem over to pay I asked about some of the enchanted items she had in her store. “What enchanted items do you sell?”

The woman was very attentive to me now. “I have an array of aether lights from a few silver to a few golds. I have fire starters, water condensers, cold chests, heater stove tops, leather armor-enhanced bracers, shielding brooches, and communication stones are my usual high turnover items.” Most of the items she had in stock were imported from the capital. Any enchanter worth his salt established his business there. The capital is where all the trade passed through. Any dungeon harvests or dungeon imports would pass through the capital making it the easiest place for a good enchanter to get materials.

I found a better aether light stone for 5 gold. It had adjustable brightness and an extremely small rechargeable tier 4 aether crystal. I thought about getting me and Gareth communication stones but we really didn’t need them. The shielding brooches were a definite possibility and started at 20 gold but before I could explore the selection Callem was approaching. “Storme are you finished?”

“Yes,” I said reluctantly adding the improved light stone to my pile. The woman handed Callem the completed slip after adding the stone. 535 gold. Callem produced five shiny platinum coins and four large gold to pay. The woman pulled a device to check the coins and confirmed they were good which caused me to grin at Callem who did not look amused. The woman packed up my purchases neatly into a complimentary leather satchel. The woman handed Callem his change, 5 gold coins.

Callem dropped the five gold coins in my pocket as I struggled to juggle all the packages into a comfortable carrying position. “For working on the farm and cooking,” he said in a low voice. Wait did he just pay me with my own coin for working for him? I didn’t see his face but by his gait, I knew he must be grinning.

Our shopping spree finally concluded we headed back toward the Gaskill farm. Callem was relatively silent during our walk. When we got to the Gaskill’s the cart was overpacked with goods and I was wondering how we were going to get the clucking mass of goods back to Callem’s farm when he got in front where a horse should be and started to pull the load. I quickly placed my burdens in the cart and tried to join him in pulling but Callem waved me off, “No need Storme. I need some exercise.”

The trip back to the farm was slow and I talked with Callem the entire way about menial things. The man was inhuman as he never breathed hard pulling the massive load at a steady pace. When the farm was finally in sight I was surprised things had gone so smoothly. I cursed. Every time I thought things were going well something bad tended to happen.