Chapter 4

I was given room and board and 100 local credits a day for my services. Generally I would spend about an hour in the morning, afternoon and evening emptying my Aether pool casting my summon stone spell as they directed. I found as I got close my Aether tolerance I would get abdominal pains that increased the closer I got. Leo had a skill Aether cultivation. It was a skill that increased Aether channeling speed and also could increase my tolerance if I reached level 7 in the skill. It took me two evenings to learn the skill from the old mage but I was really excited when I finally did. It was my first skill on my path to becoming a space mage.

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| **Aether Cultivation** | 1 |
| Associated Stat: | Chan |
| Leveling Effect: | gives +10% Aether Channeling per level while cultivating |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Increases a mage's ability to store aether when in a meditative state. |

I made a friend, Cael, who was in his early 20s. We spent a lot of time together and he was schooling me in the local language, called Standard.

I hoped to level the skill quickly. Leo had five other skills he hoped to teach me, Air Magic, Teleport Magic, Space Magic, Force Magic and Time Magic. These would give me the core skills to be a FTL space mage. Since I only spent about 3 hours a day working I began a systematic questioning of other farmers hoping to find other skills they might be willing to teach me. Even though I was helping on the farm only a few farmers were willing to teach me skills. A younger man, Graive, had Water Magic and Somatic Casting that I was interested in. A young hunter, Cael, offered Aether rifle, tracking and sprinting. And lastly was the wife of the Leo, Silia, offered alchemy, botany, mycology, and short blades.

Somatic casting was a skill that used hand gestures to help speed up casting. Aether rifle was basically a laser rifle powered by Aether crystals. The weapon cost around 2000 credits before ammunition costs. A single shot cost 5 credits relative which made it a very costly weapon but I thought it would be a good backup if my Aether ran out. Mycology was the study of fungus. Botany and Mycology were needed to prepare and find ingredients for alchemy. I had 11 open skill slots and that was a total of 14 skills I wanted. I also needed to have Air Magic at level 7, have 1000 Aether pool and 30 intellect to learn Teleport Magic. I decided to learn Alchemy, Botany and Mycology since they were all intellect skills and could help me get me up to 30 to learn teleport magic. I would also try to learn all the skills from Leo plus water magic before moving on to any other skills.

Over the next week I learned Air Magic, Water Magic, Alchemy, Botany and Mycology. Leo taught me the cantrip spell Fleet Footed to help me level up my Air Magic. Being just a cantrip it wouldn’t level up air magic too quickly but Leo didn’t feel it was good to waste a spell slot on a low tiered air spell. He had another air magic spell I could learn once I hit tier 3 Air Magic. I also moved my cantrip Create Water spell to my regular spell list slot to level up water magic faster. I had added water magic skill to help increase my Aether faster.

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| **Air Magic** | 1 |
| Associated Stat: | Aeth |
| Leveling Effect: | Improve Air Magic spell effectiveness |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Allows access to tier 1 air spells, can now learn Force Magic Skill and Lightning Magic Skill |
| **Water Magic** | 1 |
| Associated Stat: | Aeth |
| Leveling Effect: | Improve Water Magic spell effectiveness |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Allows access to tier 1 water spells, can now learn Ice Magic Skill and Flow Magic Skill |
| **Alchemy** | 1 |
| Associated Stat: | Int |
| Leveling Effect: | Improve potion effectiveness |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Allows brewing of tier 1 potions |
| **Botany** | 1 |
| Associated Stat: | Int |
| Leveling Effect: | Identify higher level plants |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Allows identify of tier 1 plants |
| **Mycology** | 1 |
| Associated Stat: | Int |
| Leveling Effect: | identify higher level fungi |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Allows identify of tier 1 fungi |

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| **Fleet Footed** | Cantrip |
| Magic Sphere | Air (Tier 0) |
| Mana Cost | 15 |
| Range | Self |
| Effect | Improves speed by 40% |
| Casting Time | 34 seconds |
| Duration | 2 minutes |
| Leveling Effect | Improve Speed |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| Increase mages movement for short time |

Alchemy was a pain. It was like being in chemistry class again. Silia had me using botany and mycology to gather my own ingredients. Cael showed me the safer area around the farms to search for useful plants. There were two potion recipes I was given to brew. A minor Aether Pool Potion that increased Aether pools by 200 for 60 minutes and an instant heal potion that only healed 20 health but also stabilized damage effects on tissue and organs. The Aether pool potion was not too useful since it just increased the Aether pool and did not the Aether itself. The main problem with alchemy was that even though preparing the ingredients took time you still needed to infuse a potion at a certain point with your Aether to catalyze the ingredients. Potions also had a shelf life after which they became useless. Most potions also had a cool down which needed to be met before consuming another potion. Silia said there was a skill called Metabolize potion that could reduce the cool down effect and give a small increase to the potions effect. Silia also said you could ignore the cool down but consuming a potion before another potion was cleared from a body’s system could have no effect, a negative effect or a positive effect. Usually it was a negative effect such as poisoning so there was no point trying.

After 10 days I finally reached level 7 in the spellcraft skill. I paged through my character sheet after dinner.

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| **Primary Stats** |  | **Secondary Stats** |   |
| **Strength** | **11** |  | **Aether Tolerance** | **3** |   |
| **Constitution** | **12** |  | **Mental Resilience** | **4** |   |
| **Stamina** | **9** |  | **Soul Strength** | **2** |   |
| **Agility** | **13** |  | **Cellular Cohesion** | **1** |   |
| **Speed** | **7** |  | **Personality** | **2** |   |
| **Intellect** | **21** |  | **Fame** | **1** |   |
| **Aether** | **23** |  |   |   |   |
| **Channeling** | **19** |  |   |   |   |
| **Charisma** | **7** |  |   |   |   |
| **Luck** | **2** |  |   |   |   |
| **POOLS** | **Total** | **Regen/Min** |   |
| **Health** | 345 | 0.54 |   |
| **Stamina** | 245 | 0.60 |   |
| **Aether** | 460 | 0.82 |   |
| **Psion** | 52 | 0.11 |   |
|  | ***Skill*** | ***Level*** | ***Tier*** | **Percent Next Lvl** | **Stat** |
|   | *Spellcraft (Primary)* | *7* | *5* | 3% | *Chan* |
|   | *Spirit Magic (Secondary)* | *2* | *2* | 7% | *Aeth* |
|   | *Mind Shield* | *2* | *2* | 35% | *Int* |
|   | *Sense Psionics* | *2* | *2* | 67% | *Chan* |
|   | *Earth Magic* | *2* | *2* | 59% | *Aeth* |
|   | *Stone Magic (Secondary)* | *6* | *4* | 41% | *Con* |
|   | *Order Magic* | *1* | *1* | 8% | *Aeth* |
| 1 | *Marksman* | *7* | *5* | 17% | *Agil* |
| 2 | *Cooking* | *2* | *2* | 1% | *Agil* |
| 3 | *Aether Cultivation* | *3* | *3* | 30% | *Chan* |
| 4 | *Air Magic* | *2* | *2* | 18% | *Aeth* |
| 5 | *Alchemy* | *3* | *3* | 66% | *Int* |
| 6 | *Botany* | *3* | *3* | 19% | *Int* |
| 7 | *Mycology* | *2* | *2* | 4% | *Int* |
| 8 | *Water Magic* | *2* | *2* | 89% | *Aeth* |
| 9 |  | *0* | *0* | 0% |  |
| 10 |  | *0* | *0* | 0% |  |
| 11 |  | *0* | *0* | 0% |  |
| 12 |  | *0* | *0* | 0% |  |
| 13 |  | *0* | *0* | 0% |  |
| 14 |  | *0* | *0* | 0% |  |
|  | ***Spell*** | ***Level*** | ***Rank*** | **Percent Next Level** |
|  | *Heal Other* | *3* | *3* | 8% |
|  | *Summon Stone (Primary)* | *5* | *4* | 8% |
|  | *Stone Bullet (Secondary)* | *2* | *2* | 1% |
| 1 | *Create Water* | *5* | *4* | 10% |
| 2 |  |  |  |   |
| 3 |  |  |  |   |
| 4 |  |  |  |   |
|  | *Spell* | *Level* | *Rank* | Percent Next Level |
|  | *Light* | *0* | *0* | 0% |
|  | *Sense Danger* | *0* | *0* | 0% |
|  | *Sense Direction* | *0* | *0* | 0% |
|  | *Cool Self* | *0* | *0* | 0% |
|  | *Warm Self* | *0* | *0* | 0% |
|  | *Cleanse Body* | *0* | *0* | 0% |
|  | *Clean Clothes* | *0* | *0* | 0% |
| 1 | *Fleet Footed* | *0* | *0* | 0% |
| 2 |  | *0* | *0* | 0% |
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I had made excellent progress by spending 16 hours a day focused on raising my skills. The spellcraft skill was highlighted so I mentally selected it.

Spellcraft Boon Selection:

* “Spell Tailoring” – at spells prime levels choose a spell enhancement
* “Spell Efficiency” – reduce all spells Aether cost by 5%

I selected spell tailoring looking forward to modifying my spells. Immediately all my spells become highlighted. I selected Heal Other.

Heal Other Spell Tailoring: Level 1, Tier 1

* “Instant Cast” – once per 24 hours instant cast once
* “Improve Heal” – improve base heal by 5 points

Instant cast was a no brainer as it could save a life.

Heal Other Spell Tailoring: Level 2, Tier 2

* “Improved Casting Speed” – reduce base cast time by 2 second
* “Improve Heal” – improve base heal by 4 points

Huh? The improve heal had reduced its efficacy from 5 to 4 when I first had the option. I decided to select the first choice reducing cast time from 9 to 7 seconds.

Heal Other Spell Tailoring: Level 3, Tier 3

* “Improved Casting Speed” – reduce base cast time by 1 second
* “Spell Efficiency” – reduce base mana cost by 4

I selected the second choice this time. The screen automatically moved onto the next spell.

Summon Stone (Primary Spell) Tailoring: Level 1, Tier 1

* “Improved Casting Speed” – reduce base cast time by 3 seconds
* “Improve Hardness” – improves hardness of stone by 20%
* “White Stone” – summoned stone can be white or base gray
* “Spell Efficiency” – reduce base mana cost by 5

Four options. Probably because it was a primary spell. I selected spell efficiency.

Summon Stone (Primary Spell) Tailoring: Level 2, Tier 2

* “Improved Casting Speed” – reduce base cast time by 8 seconds
* “Improve Hardness” – improves hardness of stone by 15%
* “Temporary Stone” – summoned stone can be set to dissolve after 24 hours
* “Black Ice Stone” – stone summoned can be smooth reflective black stone

Wow these cosmetic effects were certainly enticing. This was a tough choice but after pondering I selected temporary stone. It just seemed like a good idea.

Summon Stone (Primary Spell) Tailoring: Level 3, Tier 3

* “Improve Hardness” – improves hardness of stone by 25%
* “Marbled Stone” – allows mixing of available summoned stone types
* “Spell efficiency” – reduce mana cost by 3
* “Sandstone” – summon sandstone instead of basic stone

Without hesitation I selected spell efficiency.

Summon Stone (Primary Spell) Tailoring: Level 5, Tier 4

* “Improve Hardness” – improves hardness of stone by 20%
* “Clear Quartz Stone” – allows summoning clear stone
* “Spell efficiency” – reduce mana cost by 5%
* “Glow” – can add a white glow to summoned stone that lasts 24 hours per spell level

This was a difficult decision. Since everything was random I might not get another chance at some of these. I decided on clear quartz figuring I could make windows if needed it the future.

Stone Bullet (Secondary Spell) Tailoring: Level 1, Tier 1

* “Spell Efficiency” – reduce base mana cost by 2
* “Whistle” – the stone can make a whistle sound on its way to the target
* “Blaze” = stone can leave a temporary blue light trail

I selected spell efficiency moving the spell cost to 8.

Stone Bullet (Secondary Spell) Tailoring: Level 2, Tier 2

* “Improved Range” – increase base range by 10 yards
* “Forceful Impact” – adds 25% improved impact damage
* “Clean Debris” = after impact the stone evaporates

I selected forceful impact.

Create Water Tailoring: Level 1, Tier 1

* “Spell Efficiency” – reduce base mana cost by 2
* “Lavender Scent” – can add a lavender scent to the water

I had selected this spell because it had a low mana cost and I could use it to level water magic. I had cast it many times when my mana pool had topped off and I wasn’t close to somewhere I needed to use my summon stone spell. When I checked my sheet during the last few days I was surprised how fast it was leveling. Leo said all creation spells were rare. Most mages used the spell condense water which had the same mana cost but was able to bring in a lot larger volume of water from the environment. I selected spell efficiency.

Create Water Tailoring: Level 2, Tier 2

* “Ice” – water summoned can be in the form of cube of ice
* “Animate Butterfly” – summoned water can take form of slow moving water butterfly for 20 seconds before collapsing…adds 3 mana to cost

Interesting. The animate spell would be a nice trick to impress kids. The ice spell seemed it would always be a cube. I selected ice figuring it might be more useful in the long run.

Create Water Tailoring: Level 3, Tier 3

* “Improved Effect” – add one liter to base summoned volume of water
* “Splash” – summoned water can be directed with minimal force on summoning

It was an easy choice. The 1 liter doubled the base volume of the spell and I selected it.

Create Water Tailoring: Level 5, Tier 4

* “Improved Effect” – add one liter to base summoned volume of water
* “Improved Casting Speed” – reduce base casting time by 4 seconds

I choose to add another liter to the base of the spell. This being the last spell with level the spell tailing mechanism closed. I had spent over an hour making those few choices. I stretched my stiff muscles. I went to find Leo and talk to him regarding my choices.

Leo was happy for me. He said my choices were all good except that I should have selected animate butterfly for the create water spell. Any spell effect that adds mana to a cast is extremely rare. Most alterations were generally very minor. Leo said at level 7 the spell boon options would usually be 3-4 times stronger. Leo said I should focus on my air magic so he could impart the tier 3 air magic spell. Yes the cantrip fleet footed was not great. I used it when I was out in the surrounding area looking for alchemy ingredients. Before going to sleep I went outside and spammed the spell for two hours. I was offered to add the skill running by the system but dismissed it. Before going to sleep I checked and air magic was at 77% to level 3. I could probably get there during my training breaks tomorrow. I went to sleep very happy.

The next day my summon stone improvements allowed me to cast a greater volume of stone. During a project to add a stone wall to a chicken pen, and I say chickens in a broad sense, they looked like chickens but were about 3 feet tall, I was prompted to learn another skill. It was called sculptor. I was guessing the skill would greatly improve my ability to tailor my summon stone spell. I only had 6 open skill slots left. After giving it a lot of thought I decided to accept the skill. I was hoping it would level quickly since I was using the summon stone skill a lot and was guessing the stat would be intellect which I needed to raise.

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| **Sculptor** | 1 |
| Associated Stat: | Chr |
| Leveling Effect: | improve sculpture accuracy and attractiveness |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| This is a crafting skill that produces art objects |

Charisma? Another mistake on my part. I really needed a manual. I decided right there not to use my own logic to guess in the future. I spent mid-morning with Cael in the woods. We had become great friends during the last two weeks and Cael typically guarded me while I looked for mushrooms and flora ingredients. We returned for lunch and after I was led to my next stone work project. I immediately noticed a change to my interface for shaping the stone I summoned. It was much easier to get the object to what I envisioned, it was quicker and the result was smoother. I was currently lining an irrigation ditch and the result looked like a manufactured half pipe. Prior my attempts looked like a rough trough. I regretted my decision less now. I played with the interface for most of the afternoon and leveled the new skill.

I managed to get some time before dinner to level my air magic to 3 and found Leo for the spell he promised me.

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| **Aether Respiration** | 1 |
| Magic Sphere | Air Magic (Tier 3) |
| Mana Cost | 1 Mana per 10 seconds (+2% per level) - Sustained |
| Range | Self |
| Effect | Caster utilizes Aether to breathe |
| Casting Time | 11 seconds |
| Duration | Sustained |
| Leveling Effect | improved length of time per mana |
| Level 7 Boon: | Not reached |
| mage uses aether to breathe |

Aether Respiration Tailoring: Level 1, Tier 1

* “Spell Efficiency” – increase base time by one second
* “Improved Casting Time” – decrease casting time by 3 seconds

I decided on improved casting time. I then asked Leo what sustained meant. Apparently the mage needed to consciously supply Aether to the spell. That meant he would have a limit on casting another spell and would also lose control over the spell if unconscious or lost focus. I cast the spell. It was weird, I was breathing but there was no air entering or exiting my mouth. I tried to talk but my voice sounded muffled. Interesting. I kept sustaining the spell as I lay in bed that night. About two hours later the spell leveled.

Aether Respiration Tailoring: Level 2, Tier 2

* “Spell Efficiency” – increase base time by 2 seconds
* “Instant Cast” – once per day the spell can be instant cast

I selected instant cast. I was a tough choice but seemed like a good backup if I ever made it to space and my ship was hulled. I went to sleep.

The next day the farmers gave me the day off as I had been working hard for them. Cael said he had a ‘secret’ he wanted to show me about 12 miles north near the mountains. We set out on foot with backpacks full of food.