Chapter 54 Apollyon Silverhorn

As I was leaving the driveway, my dad was pulling in with dinner.  Mary and Rose and Rose had already gone home.  Dad passed me a foam container with a turkey sandwich and sweet potato fries.  I told him I would be back late from Iris’ house.

As I drove, I ate the still-warm fries, dipping them in BBQ sauce provided in the well.  The restaurant dad picked for tonight’s dinner was *The Smoke Shack*. They mostly did smoked meats and were only open Friday to Monday. I liked my turkey burger because it was smoked and smothered in spicy sauce. It would be too messy to eat while driving, so I just finished my fries on the way to Iris’ house.

I walked inside, and Bedelia was there. I asked, “What do you drive, Bedelia? I don’t see another car outside.”

“I parked my motorcycle on the side of the garage. It is behind the trash barrels,” she responded slowly. I hadn’t verbally attacked her yet as I had done in the past, so she was cautious.

Kiri said, “Vida and Eilina are up in their room putting away the clothes they bought today. They are getting along like two sisters.” She smiled happily. I nodded and returned her smile.

I sat, and Abigail got up and handed me a large vanilla envelope. I opened it and pulled out a package of various things. A birth certificate for Apollyon Silverhorn, driver’s license, a permit to carry in CA, passport, three bank accounts with a $100 in each, a tax information packet for Silverhorn Consulting, 20 business cards for the business and more papers beyond that.

Bedelia spoke, “You didn’t give me a name for the company, so I just used the last name of your alias. One bank account is personal, one is for the business, and the third is tied to the business credit card,” she said happily waiting for praise. I found the ATM cards and credit card behind the business cards with a social security card. Bedelia added, “You can wash your funds through any Bazaar for a 20% fee. It is much cheaper than paying actual taxes to governments.”

I said, “This is amazing. Is the address on the license real? How did you get it all done so fast?” I was still paging through more documents trying to figure everything out. I needed my own place to stash everything.

“I used my father’s account to expedite everything,” she said smugly. “Don’t worry, his office handles this type of thing thirty of forty times a day, and I tagged it as, ‘don’t ask, don’t tell.’ That means no one will ask about it. I got Vida and Eilina’s basic IDs as well but not under the same secrecy. The address on the license is a small apartment on the far side of LA. Rent is prepaid for one month. The rental agreement is in the back.” I spent more time looking, extremely impressed, as I didn’t know what half of these things were as I continued paging through. The rental agreement was $3,000/ month for a one-bedroom apartment with an ocean view. Maybe I would have to visit LA to check it out.

“Ok Bedelia, you have earned some trust. You are on the team.” Her eyes lit up and she gave a tiny fist pump. “How much did everything cost?”

Bedelia didn’t hesitate, “$70,000 for yours and $10,000 for Vida and Eilina. If I had known Kiri needed it as well, I would have gotten her documents as well.” Kiri had the basics, just not as intricate as all this.

Abigail asked excitedly, “Caleb can I get a fake identity too! I want to be Zendaya Saldana!” She had just combined the names of two of her favorite actresses.

“Yes, can get you a fake ID Abs. But not at this moment. When we have more time and funds. I have $60,000 in crystals I need to get exchanged. These IDs will be full proof at the Bazaar?” I faced Bedelia.

“Yes. Your registration shows you as a visiting upper tier 1 mage. You should be treated extremely well when you go,” she said confidently.

“Will they exchange the lesser tier 2 crystal without questions?” I asked seriously.

Bedelia’s eyes went wide, “A tier 2 crystal?” She looked around the room. Iris and Kiri nodded. “That I don’t know. Is it a monster or humanoid sapient crystal?” she asked nervously.

“Monster, a matron crab,” I said. Bedelia released a breath of relief. “Are sapient aether crystals hard to sell?”

Bedelia nodded, “It is frowned upon. They usually have a life aura. The Magus Arcanium doesn’t want people going around killing mages for cash. There will not be any issues with the monster crystal but…” She paused.

“What?” I asked.

Bedelia said, “Since only tier 2 creatures can be harvested in transit dungeons…you should probably register as a black dungeon team. The black team just means you are an independent. I just need a name, and it takes costs $5,000. You also only pay a 10% tax on crystals at Bazaars but global exchange rates are in effect.”

“How much attention will this focus on us?” I asked, considering.

“Lower tier 2 crystals are rare on Earth. There are maybe twenty dungeon teams that can take down tier 2 monsters. So you might get some fame and notice by the corporate dungeon teams,” Bedelia said without pause.

“Corporate dungeon teams?” I asked.

“Yeah, the teams that go in just to harvest materials and low-level aether crystals. A corp team usually has a device that can open a portal. Those devices require a tier 2 crystal to be built,” she grinned and winked.

“So if I went in and registered my black team under the new ID you set up for me?” I asked, connecting some things in my head.

Bedelia’s eyes brightened, “Oh, that would be good! Off-worlders frequently visit Earth and set up dungeon transit teams. Most of the more powerful humans on Earth are actually not from Earth.” Iris shifted uncomfortably. It was obvious that Bedelia’s education was far superior to hers even though Iris’ parents researched transits.

“What do you think, Iris? Should I register as a black team? An independent?” I had already decided but felt Iris slipping away, so I brought her into the conversation.

She sat up and gave it serious thought, “I think it is a good idea. I am not familiar with off-worlders and how they are treated, though. I mean, it does make it easy for us to exchange aether crystals, so just on that fact, it makes too much sense not to.” I nodded in approval of her wisdom. She looked better.

Bedelia offered, “I can go with you tonight.” Bedelia did seem like the best choice since she was training to delve the dungeon transits and would know exactly what to do.

“Can you come too?” I asked, looking at Kiri. Kiri shook her head no and pointed upstairs. So she was going to guard her sister. I looked at Iris, but she spoke before I could.

“I need to catch up on schoolwork,” she sounded guilty.

Abigail offered, “I can go!”

“Great! Abigail and Bedelia. We should get going. Iris, can you get the tier 2 crystal.” I grabbed the packet and stuffed everything inside, collected the larger crystal from Iris, and the two young women followed me to my car.

On the drive, Bedelia took my packets and organized them for me, talking the entire time, explaining things inside and what I needed to do once we arrived. The long drive to the city went by fast. I hate to admit it, but I learned quite a bit from Bedelia’s explanations.

We pulled into the garage at the building, and Bedelia took us to an elevator. Abigail looked confused, like I had been my first time here. It looked like a normal office building, no magic staircases or talking portraits. The elevator we were led to only went down to a sub-level.

A large elevator attendant in a suit stood in the elevator and pressed the button for us. We went down, and the door opened. It was a large open area with a handful of desks and doors behind them. Couches littered the room, and rough necks sat on them. This must be the dungeon delvers that worked in the city. I asked Bedelia, “Is there a portal in the city?”

She immediately said, “Three, but most of the people in here are contractors for the orcs. They have been finishing up.” My fist tightened. “Don’t worry, Caleb, I got Vida registered as an orc local. No one will associate her with the incursion.”

I followed Bedelia to a middle-aged woman at a desk. Bedelia informed her, “We are looking to register a black team.” The woman looked up and studied the three of us intently. I scanned the room, and I didn’t see any demis of the 20 or so people.

The woman handed Bedelia a data pad and a credit card reader. Bedelia paid the $5,000. We then went to sit on the couch to fill out the form. I sat hip to hip with Bedelia. She wasn’t very large, and I took the pad from her without protest. She helped snuggly in closer and closer as I worked through the pages and retrieved documents as I needed them.

Twenty minutes late, and I was done with the general information. I needed to log my team’s IDs next. I just entered mine as owner and leader and Bedelia as a member for now. I could update the team on an app on my phone. The final page was financial information for payouts and contact info. Bedelia failed to inform me that the Magus Arcanium could call all teams to help in an emergency. Your right to trade at Bazaars could be revoked if you did not respond. That was slightly irritating.

I was almost finished. The one blank space I had left was ***Team Name***. Planned Pandemonium. It loosely meant ordered chaos, but more importantly, the word ‘demon’ was in pandemonium, so I thought it was apropos. I stood and returned the pad. We had to wait an hour before the woman came and gave me a credit card. No, not a credit card, a metal card.

Bedelia explained, “That symbol on the back will let you download the app to your phone. The app connects to the Magus Arcanium website and auction sites at the Bazaars. You need the card to open the app, though. It costs a grand to replace, so don’t lose it. You will need to enter a password the first time you use it.

I used it and set my password, Planned Pandemonium spelled backward and alternating between lower and upper case. MuInOmEdNaP DeNnAlP. Simple but hard to guess.

Bedelia took us to another desk and said we were here to exchange aether crystals. The man at the desk made a call and then thumbed the door behind him. We entered a pristine white room with a single table in the middle. An older man stood behind the table and motioned us forward. I dropped my bag of aether crystals on the white pearl enamel table. The man’s eyebrows went up, and he slowly dumped them. He nodded and quickly sorted them with a spatula.

“Two-hundred and eighteen. That is $43,600, with tax that is $39,200.” I put the tier 2 crystal on the table, and his eyes popped. He pulled out a jeweler’s eye and studied the crystal intently. It was two minutes before he put it down with a big smile. “With current pricing, two million one hundred thousand. After the tax, that is $1,890,000.” Abigail gasped behind me.

I also tried to act calm, but that was a lot of money. “Transfer it evenly between my two business accounts,” I said. He nodded, swept up all the crystals onto a tray, and walked out the back.

He returned a few minutes later, “The deposits have been made. $964,600 to each account. Thank you for your business.” Bedelia pulled my sleeve. We left the room.

Abigail spoke, “Can we get my ID today? We have the money.” I looked at Bedelia, who nodded.

“We need to go up to the Bazaar level. Do you want to get anything, Caleb?” she asked.

“No, but I wouldn’t mind looking,” I said. Maybe I could find something useful, and now that I was registered, I could shop with oversight from Iris.

While Bedelia worked on the IDs, Abigail and I shopped. In a clothing shop, we found some spandex combat suits. The suits were two pieces. They had a long sleeve upper and full-length bottom. The salesman said they were extremely comfortable and highly resistant to slashing attacks. They had thermal regulation and were worn under normal clothes. We were measured, and I used my new funds to get each of us two sets. At $1200 each, not a cheap expense, but I wasn’t feeling thrifty after selling the crystals.

My next purchase was to get actual contacts to cover my off-color eyes. They did the same thing as my enchanted aviator glasses, except they were just contacts that could be worn 24/7. They were also four times as expensive at $2,000.

Being free to ask questions of the vendors, there were lots of unique items that I would have wanted, the magic items especially. I wasn’t planning on investing in anything until I came to a shop that was selling a bracer. It was metallic and only 4 inches long and was worn on the wrist.

The bracer had a sensor similar to the assessment gun Iris had. The tier reading on this device was only good to the hundredth place, not the thousands place like Iris’ parents. But it was easier to use, and the vendor said it was encased in magically hardened steel. The device was guaranteed indestructible with free replacement. Another shopper laughed at the claim and said if the device was destroyed, whoever was wearing it was likely dead and not going to be seeking a refund. I bought the device as it looked like a heavy piece of jewelry.

It cost $50,000 but I thought the investment was worth it. In the transit, I could assess monster’s power and use it to track how my partner’s aether cores were expanding from my efforts. Even with the price it was too good a device to pass on.

Bedalia found us and she had two envelopes, one for Kiri and Abigail’s alias. “So did these two cost $10,000 as well?” I asked Bedelia.

“Yeah, but don’t worry. Consider it my contribution to the team,” she said turning slightly red.

“No, I wouldn’t think of it. I owe you $70,000 for my setup, $20,000 for Kiri, Vida, Eilina, and Abigail, and $5,000 for the black team registration. So let’s transfer $95,000 to your account.” Her face soured as I proceeded to transfer her the funds to my phone. I just wasn’t going to have a debt hanging over my head.

With that done, I asked, “So, Bedelia, since you have been training to delve the transit. What do you suggest I buy?” Her frown turned upside down.

She laughed at my bracelet, “Caleb! The range on that device is only 10 feet! If you are getting that close to monsters, then you are already fighting them!” I didn’t care. I still had a good use for it.

I followed Bedelia through the shops as she suggested things. The first thing was flavored meal blocks. They were about the size of a cell phone and had 800 calories each and tasted pretty decent. They cost $10 each and I got 200 in various flavors.

The next was an enchanted bedroll. It drained a small amount of aether from the person inside but regulated the temperature. The seller said I could camp in the artic and be perfectly safe. I purchased six of them for $2500 each.

We got a bag of marbles next. One hundred and twenty marbles were single-use light stones. Channel aether into them and they were 25 lumens and lasted 12 hours. Much better than torches.

Self-refilling waterskins were not on her delvers list. These water skins slowly absorb water out of the air to refill. In normal humidity of 30% the skins could do about two gallons a day. The best part was the water was always cold when you drank it.

Firestarter peas were next. They came in a steel vial and looked like dried peas. You crushed them, and a few seconds later, they burned at 1500 degrees C for five minutes. Useful in starting a fire to cook with. There were 40 peas in each vial, and I got six vials. Of course, these could be a nasty offensive weapon by shoving a crushed pea down a monster’s throat.

The backpack we selected was much smaller than the one I had been lugging around with all of Iris’ gear. It only had a capacity of 25 liters but fit my back extremely snuggly. The seller said I wouldn’t even know it was there.

We shopped for weapons next. I ordered three magical tetsubos. Two had minor enchantments of durability, and the third had a lightning shock effect. The effect needed aether to be channeled into order to work. It was more of a stunning club than doing actual lightning damage. I also added four survival knives to my collection, each one 6 inches in length.

The next item we purchased was enchanted binoculars. They could zoom up to 25x and were extremely small. I got a utility belt that they fit well into. My batman belt had a dozen compartments and attachments to carry my two tetsubos.

The medkit we bought had mostly modern bandages and treatments. But it also had three small tubes of Neosporin…which actually was magical and closed and healed wounds. The shelf life was only 109 days on the tubes, though.

I found a shop that sold the capture grenade the Kiri had and bought two. That same shop sold magical restraints. They looked like plastic zip-tie handcuffs but were much stronger, requiring a saw to break them. I got 10 of them.

I wasn’t ready to buy any guns yet. Not until I could better understand their usage in the transit and had time to practice with them. It was past 2:00am, and Abigail had long since fallen asleep on a bench between the stores. I wanted to get some cool magic adventuring clothing to go with my skin suit but even Bedelia seemed tired from the hours of shopping. I could keep going for hours but decided to call it. We made our way to my car, and I drove the two back to Iris’ house while they slept.

When I got home, I showered and lay on my bed. The accounts on my phone showed I had spent almost a quarter of a million dollars…well, $95,000 was repaying Bedelia, and $50,000 was for the assessment bracer, so I spent $100,000! I did feel like James Bond after he visited Q, all geared up and ready to go…totally worth it! Maybe after training in combat with Kiri for a few weeks, I would be ready to go to the elf city.

I checked my life essence, 85/140. Not a great harvest from Mary this afternoon. Also, my upper limit didn’t increase with the new elixir powers. I did my aether manipulation exercises and then practiced with my dual-wield tetsubos in my dojo on manikins I created.

Before I knew it, it was 5:30 am and time to go to hockey practice.