Chapter 12 “New Leathers”

I slept a few hours before dawn and found Jaesmin in my bed when I woke curled under my arm. Well as much as a six foot fit young women can curl under a man’s arm. Her hair smelled like lavender and was silky soft as I brushed it with the back of my hand. Her body was very lean and firm with muscle pressed against me. She had on a thin negligee that was see through. Tan lines from working in the sun were visible. I touched her skin. It was soft and warm. I felt desire stirring and extracted myself from the situation. It is just her programming I thought, she has chosen to seduce you. But would it be wrong? It would be like watching porn in the real world to follow through with my desires, right? I hesitated briefly as she turned on the bed to reorient face down and hugged a pillow now that I was out of the bed. Her firm buttocks was shaped perfectly under the negligee. Focus! I equipped my gear and went downstairs.

I looked at the door from the top of the stairs again for a moment before I turned and left. I stopped in the store on the way to the tower. I wanted to see if there was any better armor. To my shock there was now an entire section of the store with leather goods. From bags to household goods to armor. Currently it only had a few pieces of armor but they were better than what I currently had. Curraen, I presumed had been hard at work.

I talked with Elice and she confirmed my suspicions. She said Curraen had made me a suit of leather and I should stop by the tannery to pick it up. I admired his work in the store before leaving. Nothing in the store was lower than rare quality. Guess that is what a master leatherworker can achieve. Elice mentioned there was a currency problem in the village. Not enough coins now that people were switching from the barter system to coins. Hmm, I gave her all my coins from my bag. Hopefully with the silver and copper I had taken from the orcs it would help. Elice would act as my bank in the general store. I briefly considered the security issue, maybe post a militia here? I will worry about it later. That done, I skipped out the door eager to see what he had made for me. I saw one of the elf teens, Trista I think, riding one of the black mounts in the fenced in area by the mill. She looked like a natural at it. But I had other business and didn’t stop. Not even when I saw Simba on a roof stalking a sparrow on a gutter looking the other way.

Curraen was outside working on some hides. “Ah, Lord Tallis. Good to see you. Things have calmed down a bit and I have a gift for you!” Excellent! He brought me inside where his son was working. “Thank you for giving my daughters an esteemed job, they could not stop talking about it last night during dinner. They even kept my youngest daughter enthralled. I know nothing about horses but those mounts are exceptional beasts. Ah, here we are.” On a rough mannequin was a complete set of dark blue and white armor. It matched the color scheme Galana had picked out for the soldiers. I started to undress and equip the gear without analyzing it. I could see the stats once it was completely equipped.

Very Rare Heavy Leather Armor, Weight 34.5 lbs, -3 speed, +3 agility, +8 constitution, Defense Bonus 60, Armor 5, Durability 131/131

Very Rare Leather Bracers, Weight 6.8 lbs, +4 strength, +4 agility, Defense Bonus 10, Durability 131/131

Very Rare Leather Combat Boots, Weight 3.8 lbs, +4 speed, +4 agility, Defense Bonus 10, Durability 131/131

Very Rare Leather Greaves, Weight 12.4 lbs, +8 stamina, Defense Bonus 15, Armor 1, Durability 131/131

I wish I had a mirror. I felt incredible. I could feel the stat enhancements when I donned the armor. My soldiers would have a chance against the orcs with gear like this. On analyze it showed the item details of which animal hides used. All the gear seemed to incorporate many skins. Curraen seemed to know what I was doing and spoke, “The quality of the hides is what is important when I craft. The better the material and my skill the better the bonuses. Only the pride masters had high quality hide from what you have brought me so far.” He paused and continued reluctantly, “I appreciate the home and this place to work Lord Tallis but I wanted to discuss compensation for my services.” Ah yes, he wasn’t on the payroll yet.

“I noticed your wares in the store. Are you making coin from them?” I asked as friendly as I could.

“Well no, I am not. Those are your goods. Any coins from sales will go to your coffers. Typically, an employed craftsman owes forty hours a labor a week to his employer.” Curraen said. I nodded as I had learned that much from Sanso. Being a master I knew this man’s price was going to be high. Where was Simba when I needed him? Well, I could negotiate on my own.

“How does one gold a month sound and after one year double. Also if you complete a year of service you can take ownership of the house and this tannery building?” I really should look up how much these buildings are worth before just giving them away. Damn it, why couldn’t Simba be here. I tried analyze but it didn’t give a value, just a brief description and health. I returned my attention to listen to Curraen’s answer.

He had disappointment on his face as he spoke, “That is a nice offer but I was hoping for more. Maybe two gold for the first year and four gold after the first year?” If he was producing gear like this after only a few days then I knew he was going to be a virtual bank for me. I didn’t want to give in though. I countered.

“Ok how about this in addition to my offer. You can retain 5% of the hides and pelts we bring in from hunts for your own personal use.” Before I could get out another word he said, “Done!” I suddenly felt like I had been cheated. I figured 5% was maybe a gold or two. But I had forgotten that as our town grew so would our haul. But then again maybe Curraen was just figuring on the value of his crafted goods from the allotment. Well,what was done was done. We shook on it and I left.

The tower had the four guards. The sun was at mid-morning and I was feeling like leveling. I sent one of the guards to get Galana and the five strongest militia. I looked at the plains while waiting from atop the tower. The earth wall the elementals were building made it hard to see much from the ground unless I crossed the wall. I could see the plains were well populated again with monsters. Today was a smash and grab, a bloody romp through the plains at speed to gather as much experience as possible.

When Galana arrived she had a tired look on her face. She had been up all night making bows and arrows. After talking with her I learned apparently the orc who escaped yesterday had gotten her worried. Well I was worried too but I needed her as mother goose for this plains romp. I hoped to level myself and the best warriors we had. Off we went. Galana knew the general area of where three pride masters would respawn so those are the areas we headed to first. After some easy distance kills we went north and followed the base of the mountains west. We ran into a massive bear from the mountain. We retreated and tried to range it but it was too fast. Eventually Galana said she would melee it to keep its focus and everyone else needed to continue with ranged attacks to take it down. By the end of the fight Galana was very bloodied but alive. I checked the log, the beast had yielded 5000 experience, a massive pelt, meat and bear teeth. We had to skin it to get it in the bag of holding. We took everything else we could from it as well.

I then made the decision to keep our distance from the mountain, of course I was the one who had chosen to run along the base in the first place but no one mentioned it. We resumed our hunt and Galana healed slowly as we went. We really did need an alchemist to make potions. We ate jerky and water as we continued for hours running over encounters and grinding out experience. We found four more pride masters by the end of the day. The sun was close to setting and we were almost ten miles from the tower. Galana had asked me a few times when we would head back, now we had only a few hours of daylight and I concurred it was time. We bee lined for the tower and found one more pride master on the way. It was dark when we got to the tower and there were ten guards there. Apparently they were worried and discussing whether a search party should be sent. Curraen was there with his sword ready as well, good man. Our group went to the tannery with him and deposited our catch for the day.

69 Cleardusk Plains Lions

11 Giant Porcupines

48 Cleardusk Plains Deer

8 Cleardusk Pride Master Lion

Galana took the porcupines. I told Galena tomorrow I wanted the next seven best warriors to go with me tomorrow. We were going to hit the pride lion respawn points and she could stay home and make arrows. She didn’t complain. I was anxious to see my skill increases but held off. I hadn’t leveled so I resisted. Once I leveled I would check it out all together. That night I went back to drafting and worked on the school/library building. This building kept getting bigger…