

Beast Master 1001

Chapter 1001: Scared The Monsters Away

Karl headed for the other group, just in case someone came for them as well.

It sounded like Lord Bomgon has asked the mercenaries to target Karl in particular, and not just his entire group. They had mentioned getting him away from his beasts and the Dragon Clerics, which did make it sound like they were not the target of the mission.

He found them waiting near the final group that they had selected for the day, a group of Monarch Ranked Gnolls led by a single Totem Ranked Chimera.

It was an odd combination, for sure. But they were likely to have originally been part of a larger monster spawn with multiple monster types in it, as many dungeons had.

But when Karl approached, the Chimera simply turned and fled.

That was not the behaviour of a monster straight from the spawns. The creature must have used an ability to make the Gnolls accept it as part of the group, and now that it had noticed that there was actual danger coming its way, it took the most prudent course of action and retreated.

Rae gave Karl an arachnid look that conveyed infinite frustration, and he shrugged.

"It's not my fault that he ran away." Karl insisted.

[You scared the monsters away.] Rae retorted.

[Technically, Chimera are beasts.] Thor added helpfully.

If a spider could roll her eyes, Rae definitely did it.

"I will wait this one out, so everyone can get more practice in. A good fight pushed me to Totem, I'm sure that it can push everyone to Overlord with enough grinding." Karl informed the others.

Tessa smirked. "It wouldn't even be a fair fight if you got involved. A certain someone tells me that you soloed a Raid Group."

The Red Dragon Cleric tapped the side of her head, indicating that it was a mental notification, and Karl briefly wondered if she meant her Red Dragon patron, or Thor.

Dana sighed. "We will have to discuss this later. Ladies, let's show the boss mob how the rest of us do things."

Thor led the charge into combat with everyone on his back, allowing Dana to float up into the air just before they reached the Gnolls, while Ophelia transformed in midair as she leapt into the battle.

Remi was still in snake form, and fighting from Rae's back. Adding her Bodyguards to Rae's Golems and her unit of Spectre Knights, ghostly undead in black armour.

Karl shook his head in dismay. Dana said that it was unfair for him to fight, but he had forgotten that he could add a small army of Undead to the fight. Rae and Remi were a military unit all by themselves. They had tanks, agile damage dealers, even a spell caster and healer combo.

Remi's healing totems might not be as good as Lotus' version, but they were more than enough for their group.

The air distorted beside Karl, but he didn't feel any threat as the Portal opened.

With delicate steps, a small white dragon with shimmering scales that reflected impossible colours as the sun reflected off its body emerged from the spell, and looked up at Karl with great curiosity.

{Interesting. I guess I lost the bet. I was totally certain that you just beat them so bad their minds broke.}
The dragon whelping announced.

Karl smiled at the strange young dragon.

"Oh? What did you wager?" Karl asked.

The little dragon growled. {One of my favourite Immortal Pearls. But what were the odds that someone actually sent mercenaries after a wandering world boss?}

Karl chuckled. "World Boss is a bit of a grand title, don't you think?"

The dragon shrugged, and puffed a small rainbow of fire. {It's like Dungeon Boss, but outside. What else would you call it?}

Karl frowned. The dragon had a point. Logically, the names were related. "I was thinking something like an Elite Mob. Because my constitution is Epic Grade."

The dragon perked up, momentarily forgetting about his lost pearl.

{Oh, that's not bad. We could call you a Named Elite. It reminds people that they can't fight you one on one at the same Rank, but doesn't sound like you're in charge of stuff.}

"I don't suppose that you're from the same location as the mercenaries are?" Karl asked.

The dragon shook his head. {No, They're from Nerud, and I'm from Gabil. Gabil Kingdom, that is. Not here. I live in the Opal mine in Gabil City, in a weyr over a very nice Dwarven Inn. They make the most wonderful mead.

Did you know that you can make cake with mead, and it tastes like honey butter cornbread?}

Karl blinked slowly. Did that even count as a cake?

If the dragon thought it did, then it did.

"That sounds wonderful. We will have to check it out some time. But if you're from a whole other country, how did you find out so quickly? The fight only ended a few minutes ago." Karl asked.

{I have a friend in the Arago Temple in Nerud, where they went for resurrections and healing. The Spider Priestess there appreciates sweet things just as much as I do. And when she heard about the fight, she called me to let me know that a fun thing happened.

Then we made the wager, and I lost.}

Karl patted him on the head. "My friend, I believe that you were set up. Look over there. What do you see?"

The dragon stood on his hind legs so he could see what Karl did.

{A Blood Destruction Demonic Spider. Nearly ready to advance to Totem Rank. Oh, that devious spider woman, she tricked me.

The Spider Goddess must have told her about the fight. The Spider Goddess loves watching her children, and that one is exceptional. She's got better skills than almost any other spider I've seen.} The dragon grumbled.

"But on that note, how many Spider Goddess temples are there in Nerud?" Karl asked.

The little dragon shrugged. {Thousands. They've got a weird thing going on there. Arachnid monsters, Arachnid and Insectoid beastkin, and the Darklings.}

Karl clearly had no idea what that was, so the Dragon explained.

{Oh, they're humans, but also not? When they are teens, they get a blessing from the dark gods. It makes their System users superhumans with death magic. Like the Unholy Paladin that you beat up.

Even the Cleric was a Spider Goddess Cleric, but they all wear the same silly outfit when they want to be all incognito.

I think it's a spider thing.

"Look at me, I'm all mysterious, the creepy thing in the shadows."}

Karl smirked. That was totally Rae when she was little. Now, she was legitimately terrifying if you weren't on her side.

And she still liked to lurk in the shadows.

The little dragon sighed. {I've seen all I need to. They really did run into a big boss Totem that can take on a whole team alone. But the fight is about to end here, and if I don't run away, mom will kill me for eating snacks before dinner.}

He opened a portal and Karl quickly stuck his head through to see where the dragon was headed. The view was of a glimmering mountain face, unlike anything Karl had ever seen before.

{Oh, you've never been here before, have you? The south face is pretty distinct. You should be able to use that sight to open another portal in this location.}

Then the little dragon pushed Karl's head back through the portal to his own side, and ended the spell.

Chapter 1002: Too Strong For This

Karl watched as the last of the Gnolls fell before the might of Rae, and the group gathered to discuss their tactics.

What worked, what didn't work well, and what they thought that they could have changed to make their fight more efficient. It was not a bad fight by any means, but the ladies were getting used to working as a team and not relying on Karl to take care of whatever was most troublesome.

"I think that if we spread the Golems a bit further apart, we will end up with breaches in the line. It would be better to have them stay close and push a bit deeper, so that the Greater Golems can fight without exposing the flanks." Ophelia suggested.

Dana nodded. "That sounds like a plan. We make a pretty good wrecking ball, but we really could use two more golems to fill in the rear."

Tessa shrugged. "Getting surrounded isn't the goal anyhow. We just need to keep moving so that they can't get too many behind us. Thor does have a tail weapon, so the back isn't fully exposed when we're in a cluster like that.

But when Lotus is on the ground doing her thing, we will have to move Ophelia to the back again."

Tian was confused by the conversation. [Why are they making plans like we're not here?]

[Because we're two Ranks higher than they are. The things that we'll want to be fighting are too strong for them to deal with. And the things they want to fight to help them grow are too weak for us to interfere without making it pointless for them.] Karl explained.

[Oh, that makes sense. Even Sister Rae is too strong to be picking on these Gnolls.]

Rae turned a glare at the tiny fox. Did he just call her weak?

Tian didn't see what he said wrong, or understand why she was giving him evil looks, so he just dismissed his concerns. The fight was over, and now they could go see more stuff.

"Should we return to the camp and see what they have for us next? Or do you want to just inform them that we finished all four tasks, and we're going to wander for a little bit and see what we can find?" Karl asked the group.

That was a good question. Taking missions was kind of rigid and boring, in Nachtia's mind. The monsters that were overpopulated weren't just the ones that were directly threatening the towns and the military outposts, so it would be better if they just attacked whatever there was too much of.

The dragon shrugged. "I think we should explore and fight. Hopefully, we can find some of the larger excess monster spawn packs and start really thinning out the numbers."

Nobody else had a problem with it, so Karl opened a portal back to the camp.

"I will hold this open while I inform them of what we're up to. Just give me five minutes."

He didn't actually need that long, as there was a scout standing only ten metres from the portal's opening.

"Hey, guard. Can you pass these to the General? We finished these four missions today, and now we're going to head inland to look for more groups that aren't on the list." Karl called.

The Dwarf jogged over and took the notices with a smile.

"Good work, Mercenary. We will see you again one day, I'm sure. You can send us updates if you would like. So that we know what else you've managed to eliminate. Some of it might be on the low-priority list."

"Got it. The Black Dragon wants a general culling of the overflow, so there might be a lot of little things on the list. I will have someone write the details down, and we can send them in once a week or something." Karl agreed.

"That works for us. Good luck."

Karl returned to the ladies and closed the portal. "Alright, we're good to go. Do you want to go any particular direction, or just wherever the mood takes us?"

"Adventure!" Lotus and Remi cheered simultaneously.

"Well, that pretty much settles it. We will head away from where we know that there are other army units and marked villages, and just look for excessively large groups of monsters. Do we want to fly or walk?" Karl asked.

"I say that we keep walking. I have heard that there is something strange about the layout of the land, and I wonder if we can see it firsthand if we're on the ground and Hawk is in the air." Nachtia suggested.

There was a slim chance that they would see something different from the ground and the air, but it wasn't zero. Nobody knew for sure if things were actually changing or if it was an illusion.

If it was just a powerful illusion, or a localized effect, they might be able to provide extremely valuable information to the army units. Gabil, or this part of Gabil, as Karl now knew that there was another region named Gabil Kingdom, had a serious lack of information infrastructure.

They might be rural, but not having a proper map of your own country seemed a bit too negligent.

Nachtia returned to dragon form and made a loop over the area, then gestured for them to follow her to the north. Hawk hadn't seen anything interesting in that direction, but it was away from any of the army units, and headed for the middle of the nation, where they would be the furthest from any of the regular patrols.

If they wanted to find monster packs that hadn't been culled at all, that was the best spot to find them.

Nachtia had only been flying a few minutes when she began to get excited.

"I think that I found a fresh anomaly. Like, I think that I just saw it open. At least, I don't think that it's a portal." She declared.

[Definitely not a portal. The monsters just appeared all over the place. I think that this place likes us.] Hawk elaborated.

[How so?] Rae asked hopefully.

[FOOD!] Hawk cheered.

Chapter 1003: Crab Invasion

The sound of crashing through the brush and long grass alerted everyone that they weren't going to have to go looking for the spawn, it had already found them.

And the moment that Karl saw what they were facing, he knew that Hawk was right.

This was food.

Giant crabs, with a nearly circular flat-topped shell, and two metres tall, to be precise.

Their colouration was all wrong for where they had ended up in the grasslands, and the bright oranges and greens were immediately recognizable, but the creatures were incredibly fast, and every bit as large as Rae.

Because the spawn had just started, they hadn't had time to gather, so what the group was facing was only three Overlord Ranked crabs. But the crabs didn't seem to care about the disparity, and they were charging straight at Thor.

The thought confused him. Did they think that he was the biggest threat because of his size? Or did they think that they could defeat and eat him?

Both were incorrect assumptions, and didn't bode well for the intelligence of their targets. But they did at least hesitate for a moment when Ophelia transformed.

She was covered in fur, not hard scales, and nearly as large as Thor was. However, the crabs still continued to charge for the Behemoth, snapping their claws as their legs clattered with their eagerness to reach him.

Only when they were twenty metres away did they begin their attack, sending powerful jets of water towards Thor, while Rae prepared to pounce.

The crabs worked well together, and the streams all hit the same spot on Thor's armour. But that made little difference with [Eternal Lightning] active, and the team charged into battle.

Dana's golems quickly isolated one of the targets, pulling it away so she could face it alone, while Ophelia worked with Nachtia, who was in dragon form, but on the ground.

The two were similar in overall size, though Nachtia was twice as long, and not nearly as tall as the Dire Bear. Both were much larger than the crabs, and it was almost comical watching them pin down and pull apart the monsters.

Karl could almost hear them salivating.

The final one continued its assault on Thor until Rae arrived and cleanly punctured a forward spot on its shell, killing it cleanly with little damage. Her long, armoured forelimbs were perfect for the job, as they could get deep enough for a clean kill without ruining any of the potentially edible portions of the crab.

{Sorry about your luck, Hawk. We're keeping this one.} Nachtia called, unsure where Hawk was at that moment.

The gigantic Thunderbird had a better Crab Hunting method.

He had gone to find another group, and simply grabbed one by the shell and flew into the air, intending to slice it apart. The crabs couldn't reach the top of themselves, and it seemed brilliant, until he got a jet of magical water in the face.

Lifting them was not the best way.

[Rend] to the rescue.

Hawk cut into what he hoped was the head section with [Rend], coated in Ghostfire, and the crab died after only a few hits.

That worked much better.

After making sure it was dead, Hawk tossed it in his space for later and began to bombard the others from a distance where he could dodge the return fire.

[Are we still working? We don't have to keep working, do we?] Tian asked hopefully.

[What did you have in mind?] Karl replied.

[I can make a big pot with a lid, and we can have crab for lunch. Mom showed me how, she loved crab.]
The tiny fox replied.

"Crab dinner anyone?" Karl asked.

Nachtia paused her examination of the dead crab and nodded eagerly.

{We need a plan.} She agreed.

Tian created a large pot with [Earth Manipulation], on stands to create a fire under it.

Catching on quickly, Remi filled it halfway up with water, and Rae tossed her dead crab in it.

Lotus had plenty of spices, and Tessa started a pot full of rice to go with the crab.

Hawk returned to his hunt, slowly adding more crabs to the pile and organizing his ingredients.

[I need to make a donation soon. I've got too much outdated food.] Hawk informed Karl in a serious tone.

[Oh?]

Hawk nodded gravely. [Look at all this. It's delicious, but Royal Rank and lower. I don't need nearly that many snacks. The more powerful I get, the less I need to eat, and it's all piling up.]

Karl chuckled. The bird's space looked like a supermarket meat section.

[I need the room for new things.]

[Alright. The next village that we come across, I will make a deal to trade them a lot of meat from you. You can transfer some to the Guild House storage as well.]

Hawk made a keening laugh. [The storage room at the Guild House is full already. They've got enough to last them a year.]

They really did need to start cleaning out Hawk's space, then.

The water was already boiling for their crab stew, and Lotus was happily adding diced potatoes and carrots to what smelled like a lemongrass curry base.

"Do you think that this will pull the other groups of crabs to us?" Ophelia asked as she settled a blanket on the grass.

"Hopefully? It would let us stock up without going hunting them. Hawk is already working on clearing some of them out, but as he's at the Overlord Rank, the same as them, it takes a bit to safely eliminate them alone.

In a group, we can take care of them in seconds. Especially if we're not trying to save the corpses." Karl explained.

That sounded like a massive waste to everyone, and not just the food obsessed Hawk.

The wonder that was crab stew was enough to end all thoughts of productivity.

The smell of spices and crabs together was wafting away on the wind, filling every breath that they took, and Karl knew that there would be no more working done today, even if they were attacked.

The ladies would just ask him to kill another for the pot.

Chapter 1004: Crab Stew

And attacked by more crabs is exactly what happened.

Before the soup was even ready, they already had crabs coming from three different directions, and Cara was out hunting them.

She had realized that the creatures had a fatal flaw. The actual brain was right between the eyes, and behind one of the least armoured portions of their body.

The trick was to get past the claws, as they would guard their vulnerable frontal area as they charged.

You couldn't attack it from the top, as most would try. And you couldn't attack from below, if you were smaller than the crab. You had to attack it from the front and straight inwards to get a clean hit. But with a bit of practice, she learned to taunt them into snapping their pincers at her, and that revealed the soft spot for her to hit them with a [Void Blast].

She definitely didn't want to damage them too badly. These shells were Overlord Ranked chitin. Compared to most materials, they were exceptionally durable, and light for the amount of protection that they offered.

It might not be as good as some of the special Overlord Ranked metals, but Cara was pretty sure that Rae could make some really awesome armour and trinkets out of Crab bits.

All they had to do was have crab for dinner for a few days, and Rae would have all the materials that she could need to make entire suits of armour.

Wouldn't that be cool? They could make it a shop specialty, as it would layer so well in the traditional Drodh armour style.

Oh, that would look good on the Dana. They should make her new armour.

[I made her armour a month ago.] Rae reminded the badger.

[That's working armour, not decorative armour.] Cara replied haughtily.

Rae paused. The badger was right. It was working armour. She could make it look so much cooler if she wasn't worried about function. If she went all out on the decoration, Dana would become a walking billboard for her armouring skills.

She could have a Limited Edition Samurai Dana.

She was already getting properly Stabby with that increased attack speed, and Rae was proud of her squishy little human sister. She had even made her Golems competent with a sword, and that was a real accomplishment.

Rae's golems were pretty good, but they were still lacking on the skills front.

The Spectral Knights, on the other hand, had excellent skills. They should teach the Dana Mage how to summon those.

Rae mentally nudged Karl, reminding him that he should be more generous with the skills.

{Target Incompatible with Skill [Undead Army]}

[Boo this system.] Rae complained.

A whole army of undead knights fighting in front of Dana would be wonderful. Especially after Rae made her some new decorative Lady General armour.

[Is combat a cosplay competition of sorts?] Tian asked curiously.

[Wasn't it always? Beating up bullies and bad people is only properly satisfying when you look cool doing it.] Rae insisted.

The little fox nodded, accepting the words of his older sister as gospel truth.

Tian began to brush out his tail. A properly groomed tail was essential to looking impressive, and he might need to be ready at any moment. The fact that he weighed all of one kilogram and was far too adorable to intimidate anyone never crossed his mind.

Karl considered his failure for a few minutes. Maybe there was a way that he could fix that skill? Dana couldn't use [Bodyguard] or [Army of the Dead] but she was good with Golems.

If he mixed the skills for Golem and Army of the Dead, wouldn't that make something like an army of Golems?

Of course, the two spells had very little in common, other than that it made a solid construct as a final result, so mixing them wasn't going to be easy. But they had some time, and Karl could work at it slowly while resting and during travel time.

The crab stew turned out to be a huge hit with everyone, but the portion sizes were a bit ridiculous for such a small group.

In order to hold the full crab, as they wanted, the pot held nearly four hundred litres of stew.

So, after the six of them, plus the beasts, had managed to eat most of a single crab leg between them, Tessa packed everything, including the new pot, into her inventory for later.

Rae stretched out, and then got to her feet. "Are you staying here for the night? I am going to go hunt more crabs for later. Hawk and Cara are already at it again, and I don't want to let them win."

Then she transformed and vanished into the distance with [Shadow Step]. Karl would tell her the answer when they had one.

Lotus laughed at her impatience and shrugged. "This is as good of a spot as any. If we leave the Golems and some bodyguards on watch, we can just rest in the Tiny World. Just put the entrance inside a simple tent, and nobody will ever know that it's not the Bodyguards' camp."

Karl nodded. "There is a nice simple tent in my inventory. But I have a better plan. If you ask the lovely Tian, I bet he wouldn't mind making us a shelter."

Karl brought Tian out of his space, and Lotus' hands began flapping in restrained excitement.

Or the restrained urge to simply grab the fluffy creature.

"Mister Tian, will you make us a shelter for the night? That would be so kind of you. I've got special treats. Do you like peaches? I made peach cobbler squares before we left." Lotus blurted in a rush, while the tiny fox laughed.

Tian nodded in agreement. He could make a den for everyone. But an above ground one, the way that other species did it.

A flick of his tail created a dome - roofed circular hut of sandstone with an arched door and a single window. It had a stone sleeping bench on one side, up off the ground, so that bugs didn't bother you, and the thick stone walls would keep the afternoon sun off you, while keeping the hut warm all night.

Lotus hung a hastily conjured grass mat over the door, and then a covering for the window. Now it looked like someone lived in it.

Then, she held out her hands, one with the peach cobbler square on a small plate. Clearly luring Tian back to her.

But he didn't mind. As much as he had complained about it, the little fox actually enjoyed having someone stroke his fur.

Chapter 1005: Combined Advantage

Karl called the Lamia Bodyguards, and Dana brought back her golems as additional guards. That should slow down anything that might consider attacking them in the dark.

With a pair of Totem Ranked Lamia at the hut, they were likely to be the strongest things in the area.

"You look like you've got big plans for the night." Dana noted as she led Karl to the reproduction of their bedroom in the Tiny World's house.

"Rae pointed out that if you could use her Spectral Knights, you would have a whole army of master blade wielders to fight on your side. But you're incompatible with the Necromantic Magic. So, I was thinking of something more like a Terracotta Army. A complement to your existing Golems and Greater Golems."

Dana smiled. "I have a skill in my skill tree that is along those lines, but not quite as impressive. It's called [Blade Spirits], and it will advance my [Blade Swarm] skill to pick targets on its own with ethereal spirits. I'm only a few points short of being able to use it."

Karl frowned. "Isn't that one attack per conjured blade, though?"

Dana giggled softly and rolled her eyes at him. "Even Skills from an advanced class aren't intended to be everything you could ever want all in one package. Sure, I'd have to call more of them once they attacked, but that's still a massive amount of damage.

Plus, I can leave the blade swarm in place until I'm ready to counterattack, and [Auto Parry] will let them block incoming attacks.

That's hard on the mana usage. But if we're being attacked by multiple enemies, I can continually control the blades on my own to keep them away. It's a failsafe in combat, since I'm usually the closest to Lotus.

That isn't the biggest issue we have right now, though, is it?

You're two full Ranks above the rest of us, except Nachtia. And given whatever happened to your constitution, you might as well be considered halfway to Mythic already. There isn't any realistic chance that we're going to be able to fight in one cohesive group for much longer.

Once the beasts start to advance, we will be totally left behind, and operating as two different groups who happen to be in one spot."

Karl picked her up and then flopped back onto the bed. "You're right. I didn't get to go into details, but while we were apart, I was attacked by a group of mercenaries, who had taken up a bounty placed by Lord Bomgon.

A full raiding group of Totems. Ten to be specific. And if they hadn't run away to save their surviving members after I killed the healer, it would likely have been a draw. Sure, they weren't anything particularly impressive, and they all used Death Magic. But if I had Rae and Cara at Totem Rank with me, it would have been a massacre.

I don't want to separate like that, though.

There has to be something that I can do that will bring our power levels closer together again so that we can keep travelling and adventuring together."

Dana gave him a sad smile. "And that's why you're trying to come up with overpowered new spells. So that if I can make it to Overlord Rank, I will be so far beyond the average that I won't feel like I'm holding you back.

I appreciate it, but I'm being realistic. It won't be long before it's simply impossible for me to keep up. I've known since we started at the Academy that you were going to leave everyone in the dust eventually. Look at the head start that you got on everyone else. But I'm savouring the time that we can work together.

Even after that time passes, I'll still be there for you to come home to."

Dana snuggled into his chest, and Karl wisely kept silent about the fact that he had completely overlooked her feelings on the matter in his excitement.

Instead, he swapped to his silk sleepwear and pulled the blankets over them.

Dana might have come to terms with the reality that even after her class advancement, she wasn't going to be able to make up the gap in their power levels. But Karl had not.

What was the purpose of all these skills he had if he couldn't empower one Dana Mage to keep up with his team?

So, while they rested in each other's arms, he wasn't just meditating on adding power to the nine pointed power matrix which enhanced his own abilities. He kept a portion of his mind focused on working on ways to combine the clauses of the Golem and Undead Army spells.

But, as morning approached, he found that they were still too different.

So, he added [Bodyguard] to the mix, allowing its clauses on intelligence and autonomy to fill in the missing areas. That was almost there, but there were still some requirements that weren't being met.

Then Karl remembered when he had tried to combine Ghostfire Body, Night Haunter and Apocalypse, among other skills. It had created a transformation skill called [Lord of Destruction]. It was a Totem Ranked transformation skill that he couldn't use at the time, but he had the memory of the attempt.

There should be something in there that he could use.

{Spell Combination Successful} [Army of Unholy Retribution] Immortal Ranked Skill. No compatible users found.

Karl stared at the message. If they could use all the component spells, why couldn't they use that spell? Was there something missing? Other than the fact that none of them were at the Immortal Rank.

Maybe if he started lower? Combining advanced skills tended to have incredibly high requirements. The better the skill was to start with, the more powerful the components needed to improve it, and the more powerful the user needed to be.

Karl took a moment to consider his next step, then decided to teach Hawk [Lord of Destruction] and call it a night. He could work on how to improve Dana tomorrow.

Maybe he would come up with a new approach to improving either her power or her growth rate in the morning.

{Skill Created} [Lord of Destruction] Totem Rank Transformation Skill. Ignores most damage types, incorporeal, Deals fire damage to both physical and metaphysical targets.

Chapter 1006: Lord Of The Hawks

Hawk cheered as he hunted crabs in the dark.

His flames burst out in bright white flames, leaving only a light blue afterimage of his feathers at the core, and then his fire attacks advanced from Overlord to Totem Ranked. It might not have been his own effort that advanced his flames before his body, but winning was winning.

He was the second to have a Totem Ranked skill.

Well, third, if you counted Tian, but Tian was too cute to count as a combatant.

Their newest addition was already having a significant effect on the others as well. Hawk had noticed that Thor was feeling extra protective with a hatchling in the group, and Remi spent all her time outside her lab in a greatly reduced version of her Spirit Snake form.

He wasn't sure whether turning back into a small Spirit Snake actually made her cuter, but Remi was quite certain that it did. It didn't affect her spell casting abilities in any way, so Hawk mostly ignored it.

Looking at his transformed body, Hawk realized that he still looked like himself, only with hotter flames on the outside. But when he dove to attack a crab for a close range flaming Rend, he could pass through tree branches, as if he were made of pure fire.

Of course, that set the scraggly little tree on fire. But that was a minor side effect.

The real concern was that he couldn't grab the crabs in this form without using a skill. That part was annoying.

The damage was still so worth it.

He called it a night just an hour after Karl got him the new skill. It was already getting close to morning, and he needed more sleep than Rae did. So, if he didn't sleep now, he wouldn't be able to keep up with his scouting duties after breakfast.

Even Cara and Rae eventually returned to their spaces to sleep. They had collected so many of the crabs that they had to actually search for more at that point, and the rest of the group still needed something to do tomorrow.

Lotus woke everyone up with the smell of blueberry pancakes coming from the kitchen, and the team gathered to make their plan for the day.

"Should we go look for the core of the anomaly to see if there are good things? Or should we clear out all the crabs we can find first and see if it collapses?" Ophelia asked.

She knew that the beasts had been hunting in the dark, so there should be hundreds of crabs in storage by now.

"Speaking of which, can we still reach the Guild Store?" Tessa asked.

Lotus shook her head. "I had to make my own ingredients today. We're out of range of the Guild Store. But we can put things in the main Guild Bank and let them collect them."

Karl shrugged. "We can also open a portal back. Just let me know when we need to get something. Or ask Dana."

Lotus smirked. "I have come prepared. Plus, with this class advancement, I have incredible nature magic. We don't need to worry about plant-based ingredients."

[I've got nearly a month's worth of average potion sales stocked at the store as well. No need to rush back.] Remi added silently.

She was back in Lamia form to eat breakfast, but Karl noticed that she was still using [Unobtrusive Behemoth] to shrink herself. The fork and knife were huge in her hands, but the greedy look that she was giving pieces of pancake which were each the size of her head was hilarious.

Karl checked the System Interface, and found that they were now in range of the Cyhosasa Guild House, though he didn't have access to its Guild Bank. That proximity was likely what gave them the link to the main Guild Bank, so as it was in the northern corner of this island, they should be good over the whole island if they really needed to move things.

But now that he thought about it, he could make Totem Ranked items. He hadn't had a chance to make any Totem Ranked Runic items yet.

There wasn't really anything that they needed. But he was curious what Totem Ranked runes looked like. They had gone through metallic, then purple, red and a greenish blue colour that seemed to shift to one or the other depending on the nature of the effect.

He did have a bit of Totem Ranked stone to work with, thanks to the Dwarves trading with him. He didn't have much for creation skills, though.

He did have a few Overlord Ranked weapons in his inventory. They were the ones that he was going to make for Oathbreaker to sell at the auction this month. They were Overlord Ranked ore, so it should be able to handle Totem Ranked runes.

Lord Drodh was going to lose his mind.

"You look suspiciously happy." Dana noted.

"I just realized that I have a sword here for the auction that I haven't upgraded yet."

Dana smirked and winked at him. "And now you can imbue it with Totem Ranked runes. Well, let's see it. I think we're all interested now."

Karl took out the Greatsword and placed it on the table to plan what he would do. It had a place for a gem in the pommel, so he could add a skill stone to it.

The others looked at the weapon on the table, wondering what sort of warrior it would be targeted to. It didn't suit Dana's style, and Ophelia had a nearly new pair of axes.

Karl thought about it for a moment, then decided not to troll the auction house that badly. He would make it for himself, in case he needed more reach in combat than the Blade of Champions allowed.

The Epic Guard was quite fond of the Haint Claw, and it was using it more often recently. That didn't cost Karl anything, as he still got the Soul Energy feed from the weapon even when the Epic Guard used it.

So, a backup sword for fighting larger targets would be alright.

If he put [Life Leech] and [Shatter] type runes on the blade, along with increased Skill Damage and durability runes, that would make a good base. Then the gem could be [Gravity Slam] so that he could counter much larger and heavier weapons.

Karl took out a Totem Ranked Earth Stone to carve the spell, then got to work on the blade.

Only when they were both finished and the gem was mounted did Karl begin to add the mana to upgrade the Runes.

The change in his power level was obvious as the runes rapidly flickered through the colours as they improved, a nearly effortless process on Karl's part.

The runes turned from red to blue, and then the light seemed to be sucked out of the room as the runes went pitch black. Karl stopped as the runes' power level equalized with his own, and admired his handiwork.

The gem had turned entirely black, hiding the runic writing. But the blade remained the same shimmering silver of Elven Steel, but engraved with delicate black lines, thanks to the tiny writing necessary to get all the effects that Karl wanted without writing too close to the edges of the blade.

{Achievement Obtained} Craft a Totem Ranked Runic Item

{Title Awarded} Rune Lord

Chapter 1007: Haint

Karl picked up the blade, and immediately felt the resistance from the Blade of Champions.

It had been some time since he tried to use another weapon, and he had totally forgotten that the blade was actually intensely territorial. With its effect, Karl wasn't sure that he could properly bond the weapon at all.

Everyone waited, wondering what Karl was doing, and not privy to the silent objections of the Blade of Champions.

After a few seconds, Karl relented.

"It seems that I offended my other sword. I will have to find a proper home for this one later." He explained.

Dana gave him a strange look. "How do you offend a sword?"

"Attempt to cheat on it with another sword? One with a longer blade and a fancy skill stone." Karl replied with a shrug.

Dana resisted the urge to facepalm as Karl took out the Blade of Champions, which now pulsed with Totem Rank power, as if staking its claim.

"Didn't it let you use the maul without any issues, though?" Tessa asked.

Karl nodded. "Yes, the Maul wasn't an issue. Just swords, as far as I can tell. I guess I'll just have to work on a skill to improve my one-handed blade work. Or maybe learn to fight with a shield."

[Rae can make you an excellent Crab shield. Well, once she's done with the one that she's making for whatever she's doing.] Cara suggested.

Rae looked up from her sketchbook. [That one is just for art. It's not for function.]

It was part of her new decorative line of equipment. She had already planned out the whole set for Dana, and now she was just waiting on the proper method to dye the shell portions black.

She had plenty of reds, but she wanted them to be glossy black to go with the stripes in the fur of Karl's beast form. She could paint it, but that just wasn't the same as properly dyeing the shell so that it was the right colour all the way through, and the looks couldn't be chipped away.

It took a few more minutes of searching her memory of Leatherworking skills, but she eventually came up with a plan that would work on orange chitin, and began formulating the dye to make properly black shields out of the crab shells.

While Rae worked on plans to make new armour, Karl set out his assortment of weapons on the table, so he could form a plan to create something to fill the gaps in his abilities.

Looking at them all side by side was easier for Karl to compare than just going over the System Interface, but it really did highlight how far he had come since acquiring the maul.

A single moderately powered attack would cause the formerly prodigious weapon to explode now. He should likely put it on display somewhere or see if he could release the bond and trade it to someone less powerful.

Out of habit, the Epic Guard picked up the Haint Claw and let it equip over her hands, then the whole body, which transformed the black drake scaled construct to a ghost - bodied Treant nearly identical to Overlord Leafa.

For a moment, the Guard looked at the two less used weapons, and then picked them up.

It looked hilarious, as both weapons were designed to be wielded with both hands, and the Epic Guard was smaller than Karl by quite a bit.

Lotus smiled at the semi-intelligent construct.

"Did you want them?" She asked.

The construct nodded, and Karl shrugged. "I don't see why not. But be careful trying to actually use the maul. It can't handle Overlord Rank power, and even Monarch Rank is pushing its limitations."

The Epic Guard nodded happily, then both weapons simply melted into its body.

"What the hell was that?" Dana exclaimed, while the Epic Guard strutted around proudly.

{Weapon upgraded} [Haint Claw] has become [Haint].

The Epic Guard seemed to split, and the original body stepped back, leaving the Leafa copy, in all her ghostly glory, standing in front.

[Living Weapon: Haint] Artifact Grade Living Weapon. [Soul Steal] [Soul Link] [Spirit Shift] [Teleport] [Life Steal] [Force Slam] [Ghostfire] Deals extra damage when merged with a construct or wielder.

Everyone stared in shock for a moment, then the Haint vanished. It reappeared behind Lotus, and picked the little cleric up in a princess carry, so it could pet her with its hair branches.

{HA! The tables have turned.} Tian laughed as he came out to watch the show.

The Epic Guard smirked at the show. Without the Haint, its intelligence wasn't nearly as high, but it was well aware of Lotus' love for all things plant and animal.

"Well, that's one way to deal with excess weapons. But I must say that creating a second Leafa was not what I had on the bingo sheet for today." Tessa joked.

The Haint smiled at her.

"Who is Leafa?" She asked.

"Oh, that's the Haint that broke off a bit of its own hand to make the Haint Claw that you evolved from. She named herself Leafa because she looked like an ethereal Treant." Tessa explained.

The Haint nodded slowly. "Interesting. I would say that we look more like a Tree Revenant. But perhaps she wanted to be seen as a friendly creature?"

"Did you not want to be known as friendly?" Tessa asked carefully.

The Haint shrugged. "I am Pack Master Karl's weapon. Whether my presence is friendly or not depends on his mood."

This living weapon didn't have the rebellious spirit that Leafa had, Tessa realized. It still respected the bond with its wielder, and didn't have any inclination to rebel against his authority or go off on its own.

Perhaps that would come with age, but for now, they probably didn't need to worry about a rebellion.

[I wonder if it kept its combat instincts.] Cara wondered.

The Haint turned to face her. "Indeed. I learned much about combat as I grew. Including the first lesson that you taught me. Gouge out the eyes and then claw off the delicate bits."

[She can hear me!] Cara cheered, and did a little happy dance on her hind legs.

"I can hear what Karl hears. So I hear everything."

Lotus poked the ghostly looking body of the Haint, and found that it was actually warm and squishy.

"Can you put me down now?"

Chapter 1008: New Use For Old Skills

A brave crab approached the camp, and the Haint extended on hand, then made a rapid up and down gesture that lifted the creature, then slammed it to the ground.

Thor's eyes opened wide. That was a brilliant use of [Gravity Slam].

It only took him a moment to realize that the skill had evolved, and that her version was called [Force Slam], but it only took a nudge to get Karl to transfer the altered spell.

[Pass that one all around.] Cara complained.

{Skill Transferred} [Force Slam]

{Skill Transferred} [Force Slam]

{Target Incompatible}

{Target Incompatible}

...

[Well, at least I got it. Sorry about everyone else's luck.] Cara gloated as the rest of the team except her and Thor proved incompatible with the gravity magic.

As he watched the Haint methodically disassemble the Giant Crab, Karl realized that most species would be horribly adapted to trying to defend against that skill. Not many were evolved to keeping themselves attached to a surface.

That was what gravity was for.

But when gravity was reversed, and you were suddenly lifted, most targets would be nearly helpless unless they could resist the skill directly.

Karl assumed that at higher levels, some magic resistance was normal. He wasn't sure if he had any, but it was likely in the System Stats somewhere, if he went searching through the options.

"Should we go look for the rest of the crabs now? I know that Rae and the others cleared out a lot of them last night, but we should look for the source anomaly and clear the remainder of them from the area." Karl suggested.

The Haint put Lotus down and stretched her clawed fingers, ready to go hunting.

"Why don't you take your new friend and go look for the Anomaly, and the rest of the team can go hunt crabs together?" Dana suggested.

That would leave them with plenty of protection, and Karl wouldn't have to be bored all day, facing monsters that he could kill a whole group at a time with a single strike. Karl thought about arguing, but if there was an instance of some sort at the Anomaly that spawned the crabs, then it would be the final requirement for him to do his class advancement.

{Requirements for Next Class Advancement}

⇒ Reach Totem Rank

⇒ Fill All Beast Slots or combine spaces to remove redundant areas.

⇒ Visit any Dungeon, Instance or Relic with System integration

He had reached Totem Rank. He hadn't started to form a new space yet for a Totem Ranked pet, and if there was something in the Anomaly, it would be the final requirement.

Fortunately, Karl already knew exactly where he had to go.

Hawk had done extensive scouting of the area yesterday, so everyone knew where the remaining groups of Crabs should be. But it also revealed the Anomaly that spawned them, which would be Karl's target for the morning.

Unlike most spawns, there was no guard around the entrance. Ogres and Giants would remain there, as well as most other monster species. But the crabs had just wandered away, looking for food.

So, Karl stepped inside without any challenge, and felt a brief sense of disorientation as the world twisted.

Remi would love this place, Karl decided.

It was a large swamp with a sandy beach and a large open ocean, plus one small island with a stone temple on it. A perfect home for Naga.

But as far as Karl could tell, there was nothing here.

Using [Swim Through Air] he moved above the water's surface to check for signs of life. The crab nests were here, some with eggs in them, but there were no signs of anything alive. Even the eggs in the nests were either dormant or unfertilized.

So, Karl opened his system interface, and found himself pulled into the familiar class change option screen.

{Welcome, Enlightened User Karl} The System message floating in the air in front of him greeted.

{Please Select a Class}

Karl looked at the options, then did a double take. There were no normal class options this time, everything was a strange and unique sounding progression.

They also came in multiple ranks. Three had blue rings under them, two had purple, and one shone with golden light.

Starting with the blue, which were likely the lowest ranked option, Karl began to read the options.

{Beast Lord} A rounded combat class that specializes in joining their beasts in combat.

{Class Skill} [Rampaging Beast] Transforms the Beast Lord into animal form and doubles the bonus stats gained from their partners.

{Pack Master Elder} Trade Skill Class specialized in raising packs of beasts. Gains multiple bonuses to taming wild beasts, and to successful breeding of hybrid species.

{Class Skill} [Mystic Husbandry] Allows the Pack Master Elder to increase the chance of successful mating between magical beasts under their influence.

{Pack Guardian} A defensive specialist Class. Gains multiple bonuses to defence and regeneration.

{Class Skill} [Invulnerable Pack] Grants the Greater Immunity effect to all bonded beasts as well as the Pack Guardian.

Karl nodded as he read through the options. Each of them was good, though not ridiculous. But they were also the least shiny of the options.

Cara would approve of this method of sorting. The more rare they were, the shinier they got. It was definitely a badger approved method, and even Hawk would immediately understand the meaning of this sorting method.

So, Karl moved on to the class avatars that had purple rings under them.

{Pack Master Destroyer} A brutal combat class, specialized in wide scale destruction. Grants bonuses to all stats gained from bonded beasts. Increases damage to area of effect and multiple target spells. Deals increased damage to structures and fortifications.

{Class Skill} [Bring The Pack] Doubles the Destroyer's number of available Beast Spaces, and the growth rate of beasts resting in their assigned space.

{Beast Master Patriarch} Blessed of the Beast Gods. A Cleric Class, specialized in the enhancement of bonded beasts.

{Class Skill} [Pack Territory] Domain Effect. Doubles Beast Damage within the domain, and increases enemy skill energy requirements by 300%.

In his space, Tian laughed. [We could be a Destroyer, and bring all our friends with us. Nobody would dare to bully us if we had fifteen sisters.]

[Why fifteen sisters?] Karl asked.

[Sisters are much scarier than brothers.] Tian explained, as if that should be obvious.

His living situation might have been shaping his developing views of society. Rae and Cara were much scarier than Thor and Hawk.

[Sister Remi is the terrifying one. You should see what her failed potions can do to people.] Tian countered.

Becoming part of a lab experiment was much more horrifying than being torn apart or pranked to death.

That left only one more option. The version of Karl in a casual suit, standing in the golden shining ring of light.

Chapter 1009: Champion

Karl examined the final option with his fingers crossed for good luck.

{Beast Master Champion} Avatar type Class. Blessed by their Patron Deity, the Champion grants a wide variety of skills to their bonded partners, as well as gaining increased strength, an improved mana pool, and growth rate bonuses.

{Class Skill 1} [Bestial Champion] Passive Skill. Doubles the applied effect of all buffs cast by the Champion on himself or his bonded partners.

{Class Skill 2} [Avatar] Transformation Skill. The Beast Master Champion transforms into the incarnation of the wrath of their Patron Deity, and gains a corresponding bonus, based on the nature of the Patron.

{Class Skill 3} [Ascendant Divinity] Passive Skill. The Beast Master Champion's Soul Power increases at an improved rate, based on the progression of their Power Matrix. Fundamental Rule comprehension increases with Soul Power.

Karl read the final class skill again. When he reached Totem Rank, the System told him that he was compatible with three Fundamental Rules. Chaos, Fire and Mana Manipulation. The problem was that there were no instructions on what exactly that was supposed to be used for.

So, he focused on the newly improved Ghostfire skill, and then on the Fundamental Rule of fire. The flames immediately burned a bit hotter, and gained something extra. Karl got the feeling that the extra power from the Rule of Fire would be nearly impossible to resist, as if the world was being bent to his will.

Assuming that he was using the power correctly, that comprehension should be the difference between powerful and overwhelming force.

There didn't appear to be any downsides to the Beast Master Champion class. It had more Class Skills, better Class skills, and it should be a reliable one for his own progression, with the third class skill constantly improving his power level as he worked on his Power Matrix.

{Class Chosen} [Beast Master Champion]

{Patron Deity Detected} [World Dragon]

{Skill Bonus Confirmed} [Avatar] While transformed, the Avatar of the World Dragon may walk freely anywhere within the World Dragon's influence. Increases resistance to Negative Statuses that impact movement and thought. [Portal] spell range limits increased.

Karl frowned. That was not the sort of bonus that he thought he would get from the Avatar skill.

Shouldn't it have been some sort of buff?

Well, it was a buff, in a way. It increased his resistance to control spells. But with the bonuses being based on freedom of movement suggested that Karl had greatly misunderstood the nature of the World Dragon.

Was the Golden Dragon God in charge of the System actually a free spirit? Someone who didn't like to be tied down and loved to travel?

That was a hard thing for Karl to comprehend.

But after a few seconds of thought, Karl realized that he was most likely thinking about it the wrong way. The movement wasn't the point. Nothing stopped the World Dragon from doing as it pleased. The bonuses probably weren't about wanderlust, but the unstoppable nature of the World Dragon's will.

He would have to test that in the future, but it was the reason that made the most sense to him right now.

The Class Selection menu faded, and Karl realized that he was not alone in the Anomaly. There was a single Orc in here with him, curiously stabbing him with a pitchfork.

"What are you doing?" Karl asked.

"Defeating monsters?" The Orc asked, clearly confused.

"I'm not a dungeon monster. I came in here to trigger a Class advancement."

The Orc tilted his head and stabbed him with the pitchfork again.

"Are you sure?"

Karl laughed. "When was the last time that a Dungeon Boss spoke to you? I didn't see you come in because of the System menu screen. Did you come with a group?"

The Orc nodded. "My clan was travelling this way when we found crabs. They are probably good to eat, so we are working with a bunch of dragon clerics and a behemoth to catch them all."

Karl nodded. "They are very good to eat. I am travelling with the Impenetrable Bulwark Behemoth and the others. There should be a Black Dragon and a Ghostfire Thunderbird around as well, but they might have flown off together to hunt separately."

The Orc sighed in relief. If he knew that much about the group, he couldn't be from the Dungeon. Good thing too. He had proven immune to the skills used on him when the Orcs first entered.

Of course, they were all Monarchs and Overlords, but still, their skills didn't even make a scratch on him.

Karl turned and walked out of the anomaly, with the lone Orc following him. He could hear the thoughts of the beasts as they hunted and herded the crabs to the others so that everyone had something to fight.

The Orcs were having a grand time, as there were rarely any chances for them to taste seafood when they lived so far from the ocean.

They were still technically in a desert, though not as completely sandy as the region to the south.

Just finding any water was difficult.

Karl examined a group of crabs in the distance, not yet being herded towards either of the groups. This was the perfect opportunity to try out his new class skills.

Well, the only active one of them.

Karl took a few long running steps towards the crabs, then activated [Avatar].

And watched the world shrink beneath him.

New information about how to walk on four legs and operate wings entered his mind as the spell completed, and Karl realized that he had missed the most obvious possible answer.

Of course, the Avatar of a Dragon God was a Dragon.

A rather large one.

Curious about his power. Karl swatted a crab with one front paw, and watched as his claws dug deep furrows in the shell without activating any skills at all.

The creature went flying, then bounced for a few more rolls across the dry grass.

That was way more fun than expected.

[No playing with your food.] Cara laughed as she realized what Karl had done.

[I can see why you do it. They fly so well.] Karl joked.

Chapter 1010: Orcs and Crabs

Karl punctured the next one, saving the shell in case Rae needed more materials. Then he pinned one down with his tail as the Orc gleefully stabbed it with his pitchfork, using [Cleave] to kill it.

{Good work.} Karl congratulated him, and realized this form could only speak Serpent.

"Thanks. Is that a skill, or was the other one a skill?" The Orc asked.

{Both of them are skills, actually. My natural form is much less impressive to look at.} Karl laughed.

Karl smashed his way through the small group of crabs, then let the Orc go to rejoin his Clan. It was a good chance to go for a flight in dragon form, and see just how fun it was to fly on your own.

Powerful muscles extended enormous golden wings, and a single downward thrust hurled Karl into the sky. With [Agile Flyer] from Cara, and [Swims Through Air] from Remi, flying in dragon form was

effortless. On top of that, the knowledge from the [Avatar] skill told him exactly how to work his transformed body, and soon Karl was soaring through the sky, looking for anything that the rest of the group might have missed.

Nachtia flew over to greet Karl, once she took a look at his name tag with the System Interface and realized that they didn't have another Totem Ranked visitor.

{Looking good in Gold. Did your transformation spell change? I think that Dana will miss the fur.} She called over the noise of the wind, which was oddly muffled in dragon form.

{No, I managed to update my class, and now I have a second option for transformation. Cat form, or dragon form.} Karl called back.

Nachtia dipped to the side, and Karl followed, chasing the dragon through the air as he got used to moving around on two wings.

Hawk came over to fly alongside the others, and to see how Karl did in a winged form. He could kind of fly before, but nothing like he was doing now. The skill turned him into a Totem Ranked World Dragon, at least in appearance, and he was half again larger than Hawk or Nachtia.

So, when he opened his wings to soar, Karl floated on the drafts much better than either of them, and his immense strength let him cut and bank every bit as well as the smaller duo.

Though, he did have a habit of losing spatial awareness and ending up upside down after a manoeuvre.

They didn't totally slack off, though. Every minute or so, they would dive down and take out three more crabs, just enough that the others couldn't accuse them of just playing around all day.

But the Orcs weren't fooled. They knew when someone was having fun in battle.

Fortunately, they also assumed that the Dragons were making an effort not to steal all their potential food supplies, as the team on the ground had already made huge progress. The Orcs took that as a sign of kindness, as they were always short on food in the desert, as well as the surrounding grasslands, and mentally noted that these Clerics and their companions were friends.

When the crabs were nearly all gone, Karl led Nachtia and Hawk down to meet with the Orcish Chieftain, to say their farewells, or make a trade.

Whichever worked for the Chief.

But the moment that he landed on the ground, the desert shifted to long savanna grass, and the Orcs were gone.

{Dana? Do you see what I see?} Karl messaged, after checking the mental link to the beasts.

{We do. Everything just changed around us, and the Orcs are gone. So are the rest of the Crabs, and the Anomaly that spawned them.} Dana replied quickly.

A quick flap of his wings brought Karl halfway over to the others, where he transformed back to his Bestial form and jogged the remainder of the distance.

"Does anyone have any clue what just happened?" He asked, after verifying that they didn't lose any team members in the event.

[The time changed. The sun moved back towards morning.] Cara informed him, intrigued by the sudden change.

"I think it's a time distortion. We weren't targeted for a move through time, so it didn't trigger any of the resistance skills. But the world around us changed to a different point in time." Tessa offered.

"Can we message the Guild House?" Lotus asked.

{Hey, Ashbringer, how are things going in the forge? We're out of the store's bank range, but we can send things to the main Guild Bank if you need it urgently.} Karl asked.

{Everything is fine here. I've got enough Elven Steel to last me for months still, and the sculptors are doing incredibly well.

I think that the Alchemists might cry soon, though.

We just had a caravan come through and ordered a thousand Commander Rank healing potions to be shipped off to the front lines.} The demonic blacksmith replied.

"Everything seems fine at their end. Ashbringer didn't mention anything about a long absence, and he's not running low on materials yet. So I think that we weren't part of the effect." Karl explained.

Remi nodded. {I was talking to the Alchemists before and after. Nothing changed in the conversation. I also gave them the recipe for bulk potions, so they can make them in the big cauldron, instead of five potions at a time.}

Nachtia transformed back to human and sighed. "And now we know why the maps of Gabil are a mess. Nobody knows what the inside of the nation looks like because it has changed over the course of however long these time distortions cover.

So, it really is different every time that they send another group in.

What I'm more worried about is that we will get trapped in a time loop at some point if we remain. The Orcs vanished with the change, and when the next change comes, it might be us vanishing to some other reality."

Tessa nodded in agreement. That was a real possibility. Assuming that the events they were part of did just move to another reality, and weren't thrown hundreds or thousands of years into the future.