

Beast Master 1051

Chapter 1051: I'm Helping

Sure enough, thirty seconds later, one very annoyed old woman with a scarf over her head, covering her hair and her ears, stomped out and smacked him over the head with a wooden spoon. Then she placed her hands on her hips and glared at him.

"In my defence, she is the best in my group with food creation." Karl tried.

"And you didn't think to send someone to keep her in line? One experiment obsessed Naga Queen is not enough. They just hype each other up."

Karl could see that. Especially in the kitchen, when Remi was excited about experimenting with new foods.

Anything that could be turned into a research project was enough to get Remi excited, and if it was both an experiment and edible, it was even better. After all, food was the introductory level of Alchemy in Remi's mind. All the mixing and precise measurements, none of the requirements that the creator have magical aptitude.

Karl patted the little mouse woman, who huffed and turned away.

"They'd better be helpful in the kitchen, with all the mess that they're making." She muttered as she walked away.

"Ask them to make you extra sweets, and to stock your pantry. High Priestess Lotus will help you out."
Karl called after her.

The beastkin laughed quietly as the angry chef returned to her work, then laughed harder at the sound of happy squeaking after the door was closed. She could pretend to be angry all that she wanted, but her instincts got the better of her once she was alone with Lotus and a kitchen full of fresh vegetables.

"Well, now that we know we will be getting a well-stocked pantry for the next week, what would you like to drink? We have ale, mead and wine. Or Dwarven Whiskey if you have deep pockets." The waitress asked.

"Ale is good. I'm sure that they'll have something special for dinner soon. Lotus loves to cook almost as much as she likes fluffy ears."

The waitress shook her head in dismay. "One day, I will meet a sane Green Dragon Cleric."

Karl shook his head. "That's the problem. This is as sane as they get. The Green Dragons are just as excitable and curious as their Clerics. So, while they can be rational, they're never going to not want to touch the fluffy thing."

The waitress smiled gently and nodded. "That makes sense. We tell our children to watch for them, like they're a terror, but I can't recall the last time that I heard of a Green Dragon Cleric intentionally starting a fight."

They get in plenty, but they never mean to start them."

Thor relayed the situation to the others, who were happy to remain in the Tiny World for the night instead of coming out to deal with whatever chaos Lotus and Remi had caused. Thor had explained fairly well that the spot Karl had found was not very welcoming, but it would be good enough for the evening, and then they could come out tomorrow to see the city if they wanted.

However, his description didn't make it sound all that appealing, other than the food that was promised once Remi and Lotus were done experimenting.

Really, this city wasn't all that grand. It was large, and built on somewhat of a hill, so it wasn't too swampy, but the land around it was still very much waterlogged, and the buildings were all discretely elevated by a metre, with a space underneath to allow flood water to pass when it rained.

The terrain was the primary reason that there were no major cities between them and the western border as well. It simply wasn't desirable enough for tribes who had the resources to contend for territory elsewhere to stay.

The waitress continued to bring drinks as Karl chatted with the locals about the situation in the area.

There were no major incidents lately, which was a good start, but there had been quite a bit of rain, so the roads would be worse than usual between here and the Temple. It wasn't open enough to travel by boat, but the Naga group would certainly want to make the last bit of the trip under their own power, as it seemed to be some sort of holy pilgrimage for them.

Or at least for their Shamans.

In fact, it was almost suspiciously quiet in the town, with everything that was going on in the nation to their west.

It was only a few hundred kilometres away that things were utter chaos, and the whole army spent all their time fighting monsters that had wandered out of the changing zones. But the tribes here didn't appear to have the same issue, and the problem certainly wasn't a concern this far east.

Not only that, but the attacks by the Bomgon Army didn't target this region, so they weren't even having problems with foreign spies or curses.

It was almost as if Gabil itself were cursed with misfortune.

"Why did you go to Gabil? That land is dangerous." One of the beastkin asked.

Karl shrugged. "I was with a Black Dragon, and her Goddess demanded that the excess monster population be kept in check. Gabil has had many issues with them in the past, so the Death God decided it was time to start putting things back in balance."

The locals at the tavern looked suitably impressed with that answer.

Though many of them worked hard to build their power, it was mostly so that they would not be suppressed by more powerful forces in the city. It took a unique sort of personality to willingly go out

into the wilderness and put your life on the line when you could grow your System stats with trade skills and a vigorous training regimen.

Of course, that logic was why so many never reached more than mediocre levels of power, even with long lives. But it was safer, and it was better in nearly every mind to live a long and uneventful life than a short and brutal one aiming for the top.

That thought, naturally, had never occurred to Karl.

Chapter 1052: The City Never Sleeps

When Lotus came out with an entire cart full of freshly baked sweets, she was an instant hit with the visitors to the tavern.

Even the old construction workers who were sitting in a corner, looking grimly at their mugs of ale, were smiling as she passed them a small plate with a selection of baked goods on it. Her enthusiasm for snacks was contagious, and even Karl had chosen to ignore the fact that she had a large mug of coffee on the tray for herself.

If she got too hyper, he could just send her back to Ophelia.

The sound of blades clashing and wood smashing from outside caught Karl's attention, and the waitress quickly moved to bar the door.

"Is the area that bad?" Karl whispered to the man beside him.

The werewolf shook his head. "Probably. We sit near the edge of the district, and the Naga get into it with the Trolls on a fairly regular basis. The city guard doesn't care how much they break in their brawls, and they never make them pay for the damage.

So, we just get out of the way, or bar the door, so that nothing happens to the building."

The building itself was made of common field stone, oblong rocks patched together with mortar. If things actually got serious, Karl knew that it wouldn't take much to throw someone through the wall.

But it wasn't likely that things would go that far in the city.

"You look like you just had a strange thought." The Werewolf noted.

"I was just thinking that if they were serious about fighting, it wouldn't take much to throw someone through a nonmagical fieldstone wall." Karl replied quietly.

The Werewolf laughed. "You're not wrong. But they're usually not trying to kill each other, just to assert dominance. A territory fight of sorts between the two most populous groups."

A middle-aged Catwoman smirked at Karl. "You say that as if you could also throw someone through the wall."

Lotus giggled when she heard the comment, and sipped her coffee before patting the woman on the shoulder.

"The Karl is a monster in disguise. Forget throwing them through the wall, he could probably throw them out of the city from here. Over the city wall."

The woman laughed along with her, but Karl did a quick calculation. If he transformed, he was fairly sure that he could hurl an average-sized troll at least two hundred metres. That was far enough to make it over the city wall.

Of course, if they were an Overlord or Totem Ranked Troll, it would barely injure them, and they would heal before they stopped skidding through the mud. But they would be outside the city.

Naga were much more difficult to throw.

Remi transformed back to her Naga form and settled down on the bench beside Karl, while Lotus continued to make friends. They had time to kill, and she wasn't ready to go up to the room and pretend to sleep.

But she had forgotten that this city had tens of thousands of Naga in it.

None of them actually slept, they just rested when they didn't have things to do, conserving energy. So, the schedules of everything in the city were adapted to a population that was active at all hours of the day.

The markets were always open, and the staff just changed shifts four times a day. The same was true for most of the shops, and especially the taverns. One shift would finish drinking and go home, but another would arrive right after.

And that was what the crowd did a few minutes later, once the fighting outside stopped.

There were more customers waiting to come in when the waitress lifted the bar on the doors, but Karl noticed that while the wooden stalls of the vendors on the block were mostly smashed, the ones right in front of the tavern were intact, as if the fight had skipped the spot in front of their building.

The waitress sighed as she saw the extent of the damage, then shrugged.

"Well, at least they spared a few this time. Though they might just have not wanted to annoy the Totem." She muttered as she welcomed the next group to their seats, along with two more staff members, who were quickly served a meal so they could get to work.

That also meant a whole new batch of people for Lotus to meet and serve sweets to.

The Nature Priestess was quickly becoming a hit with the patrons, and when they found out that she had completely stocked the pantry of the tavern with stew ingredients and good flour for bread, she became even more popular.

Karl realized that would normally be considered very generous payment for simply getting to use the kitchen, especially when she was giving the patrons all the pastries, but that was the way of the Dragon Clerics.

Anywhere that they stopped, they tended to leave behind food, and the better you treated them, the more food they would leave.

It could almost be considered a devious tactic to build goodwill and recruit followers, but devious and Lotus didn't belong in the same sentence. It was just impossible to see her as anything but flaky and devoted to her principles.

{I should go back to work for the night. I need to make preparations before we reach the temple.} Remi announced a few hours later, as a third group of patrons was beginning to replace the second.

The waitress who had been on shift when they arrived was long gone, but the one on duty quickly brought them the key to a room, and refused Karl's attempt to pay for his drinks.

"The Priestess has provided more than enough. Just, please take her with you. Someone taught her about cream liquors in coffee, and it's going to end badly." The waitress whispered.

Lotus had mixed them in an ale mug, and there was no doubt that the waitress was absolutely correct.

"Lotus, time to go. Ophelia is ready for a nap." Karl called.

"Five more minutes. We've got an idea for better egg tarts."

Well, that was hard to argue with.

Chapter 1053: Backlog Of Work

Within half an hour, Lotus was deposited back in the Tiny World, escorted by Remi, and Karl headed for the upstairs room.

He brought out the Haint and the Epic Guard for company, then took out an Elven Steel chest plate to do some runic work. Then, he stared at it in confusion. This was clearly not armour, or at least not effective armour.

Could it be for Rae to put over a leather base?

The spider laughed as Karl stared at the thin and flexible plates of metal with ornately decorated breast forms.

[It's a decorative armour piece for Succubi. It's meant to be worn in the bedroom, not the battlefield. Though, knowing Succubi, that is kind of the same thing.] Rae joked.

Well, if that was the case, Karl knew just what sort of enchantments he should put on it.

He got right to work planning runes for comfort, agility, stamina regeneration, mana regeneration and damage reduction.

It wasn't a hard combination to make, and normally, it would be the base for some sort of much more grand effect. But for this particular piece, enhancing all of those aspects to the Totem Rank was precisely what the wearer needed.

They didn't need a combat skill, they would only occasionally need serious defensive enhancements, which could be placed on spell gems in accessories.

When he was finished, the item hummed with power, and Karl put it back into his inventory, as the Guild Store was still out of range. They had come a fair distance east, which was closer to Drodh, but not quite far enough to put them within range of the shop.

With the first piece done, Karl moved on to the next item that Ashbringer had piled into the travel crate for him.

It was a simple set of chain and plate pants, designed for a heavy defender. If it wasn't Elven Steel, the Dwarves would love this. Though, once Karl finished, they might not care about what the base material set was.

The Elven Steel was much lighter than the human equivalent of the same name, as well as being worlds apart in durability.

So, it could be comfortably worn all day, though it was a bulky design.

Again, the runes were deceptively simple, but powerful. It was just better to focus on the primary purpose of the item, and leave the accessories and weapon to add the specialty effects.

Though, when Karl brought out the third piece and found a set of delicate steel boots with snowflake patterns on them, he thought some should have a suitable effect for their design.

Using some runes from [Bulwark] Karl granted the boots' basic ice creation effects, then added runes for fire resistance to the standard defensive abilities. Those ones would definitely be worth putting up at the auction in Drodh when it was time.

Karl lay back on the bed while the Haint stared curiously out the window.

There were many things in the world that she had not seen yet, and though she had some memories inherited from Leafa, they were mostly on the instinctive genetic level, not detailed like Rae's knowledge of various species.

The night passed quickly with very little going on outside other than the steady flow of workers going to and from their jobs.

The Haint was disappointed. The other times she had been brought out were to watch for threats. But today it looked like she was only here to see how boring large groups of monsters could be when they weren't crazed by the anomalies.

But it was her duty to watch Karl as he meditated, and his progress was sure to make one of the others advance very soon.

Her bet was on Cara, despite the badger's laziness. Hawk also had a skill at Totem Rank effectiveness now, but it wasn't quite the same as Cara's grasp of high-powered skills. Even when she was inactive as a weapon, the Haint was still aware of what happened around her, and analyzing combat effectiveness was the specialty of the Haints.

But the living weapon was shocked when the first inklings of advancement did not come from the badger's space, but from Opal's.

The butterfly's advancement was subtle, her adolescent body becoming more durable as the Totemic Blessing formed around it, and she slowly stopped leaking mana.

She could still emit it at will to keep the energy in her surroundings balanced, but no longer was she uncontrollably leaking it with every move that she made. This was the point of natural survival for her species, where they could control themselves enough to function.

Both the Haint and Karl watched in fascination as Opal began to redecorate her space, throwing a party for herself to celebrate her victory.

[You know, you could do that in the Tiny World, and invite everyone.] Karl reminded her.

[Oh, that is a great idea, I can come out and visit with everyone for like thirty, no maybe twenty minutes.]

Karl tried not to laugh.

[Interacting with others in person really is that tiring, isn't it?]

Opal bobbed her wings in agreement. She would return to her space, but she could leave her illusion there, and it would fill in for her once her social battery was exhausted.

The other beasts passed over small gifts for her, all tailored to either her nature as an illusionist, or to something in her space.

The thoughtfulness would have made Opal tear up if she had eyes.

She was realizing that she had underestimated the importance of the affection of family, even though she had been observing it all this time. Now that she had opened up to being included in it, the feeling was quite warm.

Even the notoriously unserious Cara and the food obsessed Hawk had found her appropriate gifts for her advancement.

Then Karl finished engraving an Illusion Element stone with the [Golem] spell, and placed it on the stage in the small practice amphitheatre in Opals space.

[It's beautiful. I can make better solid illusions for my plays!] She gasped.

[I thought that you might appreciate that. I know that it's not actually an advantage in most of the shows, but now you can have crowd interaction when you want it.

I remember that you were reading a book on fake illusionist shows, where they have audience volunteers.] Karl explained.

Opal flitted around her space in joy. She really did have the best family members.

Chapter 1054: Totemic Opal

When everyone else woke up in the morning, there was a massive garden party in the open grass outside the Guild House in the Tiny World, and the Naga were already present, playing darts with moving targets.

The game had been a last-minute addition by Opal, but it had been an instant hit.

"What are we celebrating?" Dana asked when she saw the party decorations.

"Miss Opal made it to the Totem Rank last night, officially. It's a bit unusual to have her decorate her own party, but she's the best at it." Karl explained.

That made sense to Dana. She was born as a master of the Illusionary Domain, and as long as nobody was actively trying to damage her illusions, the butterfly could create any scene that she desired instantly.

The Naga had been shocked by the elaborate setup, but then Butterfly came out in person, they immediately recognized the slightly unstable aura that marked a recent upgrade.

{Oh, now I see why the fuss. A new Totem is an important day for any Clan. Even one as powerful as yours.} One of the Naga whispered to Remi.

Remi nodded happily. {More of us should make that point soon, as we all work together despite our different specialties. The goal is to have over half the group be Totem Ranked within the month.}

The Naga chuckled at her enthusiasm, then realized that she was completely serious.

Remi's confidence that they would actually make it to Totem Rank was confusing, but infectious. The Naga was excited to have an alliance with a Totem Ranked Queen, as it would lead to great respect for his people among the surrounding tribes.

What he hadn't realized yet was that Remi had no intentions of staying with their Clan after she visited the temple.

With Opal present, the party could get properly started, and Lotus started bringing out trays of snacks, while Karl did his best to mimic Opal's illusionary abilities to set off fireworks in the sky of the Tiny World.

But true to her expectations, after saying hello to everyone, receiving their congratulations and floating around for a bit, she was ready to head back to her space.

But Cara had a plan.

[Sister, I set up an obstacle course. Come race me.] The Chaos Badger insisted.

The course was a set of hoops on sticks planted around the garden at various angles and heights, but for smaller flying species, they were an excellent obstacle course.

[There is no set order, you just have to pass through them all.] Cara insisted, then frowned as she saw that Rae was going around the garden, turning the hoops so that they faced different directions.

That would completely change the most efficient route around the course.

Rae waved her human form's hands over her head to get their attention.

[Line up side by side. Ready? GO!]

The two smallest flyers of the group dashed out around the garden, and Cara realized that even knowing the course in advance wouldn't save her.

Sister Opal was incredibly fast, and her agility was on a whole other level.

Cara weighed close to fifty kilos, and even with her Skill to assist her flying, she still took some time to turn.

While Opal was technically larger in wingspan, she weighed closer to five kilos, and most of that was her body, as her wings were paper thin without the need for bone structure.

Cara was only a third of the way through the course when Opal finished and the crowd burst into applause.

Nachtia chuckled. "We have a similar course at the Dragon Gods' Temple in my hometown, and there is no way that any of us could beat a butterfly through an obstacle course. They look slow, the way that they like to float around, but they're really not."

Opal ran away only three runs through the obstacle course later, ready to rest in her space and sleep to plan her next epic play.

None of the Naga were shocked by that. The Glasswing Illusionary Butterfly was reclusive by nature, and masters of invisibility. The fact that this one had appeared around strangers was already a great show of trust.

But it was also almost time for the Auction to start.

{I will stay here with the Clan. I would like to know more about the temple. You can take the Dana Mage as your plus one.} Remi insisted.

Karl held out his arm for Dana, then returned to the room, where the Haint and the Epic Guard were still on duty, making sure nobody messed with their room.

Dana transformed into fox form and followed Karl out. It should be less conspicuous than showing up in human form in the beastkin tavern.

But she had forgotten about the side effects of Fox Charm, and the room fell silent when they walked into the tavern.

Everyone seemed mesmerized and afraid to speak until the waitress on duty curtsied and greeted them.

"Mister Karl, Lady Dana, were you staying for breakfast?" She asked, not sure where this lovely lady had come from.

Had Karl been hiding her somewhere? Keeping her for himself?

That was a shame. Such beauty should be revealed to the world.

Dana's fluffy ears flicked in amusement at the awed voice of the waitress.

"No, thank you. We're off to the auction. Karl listed an item, and we received an invitation." She explained, then tried not to frown as all the men in the room sighed the moment she stopped speaking.

{This effect is ridiculously strong on beastkin.} She complained with a System Message.

Karl shrugged and winked at one of the beastkin as he led her toward the door, accompanied by the Haint and Epic Guard.

"Thank you for your hospitality. We may be back this evening after the auction, if we don't head directly to the Temple."

The waitress smiled and nodded repeatedly, bobbing her head.

"I look forward to seeing you both again."

Karl stepped outside, and heard the waitress whisper to one of the patrons.

"I should have known. How could a man like that not already have a wife? But did you see her? Oh em gee. He must be fighting off the suitors everywhere they go."

Chapter 1055: Attracting Attention

Dana couldn't help but curse Tian's innocent eagerness to help as they walked down the streets, and heads turned to watch her pass.

She wasn't even wearing anything fancy, just her usual silk robes and the decorative armour that Rae had made for her. She had been hoping that it would attract less attention than dressing up, as Karl was in a suit.

But it didn't seem to help.

When they got to the Auction house, the two lizardfolk guards looked extra excited, and then enraged when Karl handed them his token and announced he was here with his plus one.

"Your guards can wait in the back standing area with the other servants." One of them growled, then ushered them through.

{That's not suspicious at all.} Dana whispered as they entered.

{Yeah, something is off. I suspect we've got about ten minutes before someone does something stupid.} Karl agreed.

He extended his senses out, and found that there were two Mythic Ranked guests inside the Auction house already, and dozens of Totems. If things went bad, he would toss Dana in the Tiny World at the first sign of trouble.

They took their seats, and the Totem Ranked beastkin next to Karl nodded politely.

"Were you auctioning an evening with your courtesan today?" He asked quietly.

Karl shook his head. "I put a master crafted Overlord Ranked weapon up for auction."

The beastkin smiled and nodded. "That could be even more interesting. Though I'm sure some will be disappointed that you flexed on them."

Dana looked at him curiously. "Flexed on them?"

The man nodded. "Fox Kin are known to be the world's greatest lovers other than Succubi, with their illusion and charm magic. For that reason, they live like pampered princesses and there are virtually no female foxes among the commoners. They're all Nobility, or taken in as ranking Servants to the Royal Family, which might as well be Nobility.

So, it's rare to see one in public at all.

So, showing up at an auction with one on your arm might as well be calling all the other attendees peasants."

Dana frowned. "But you don't seem upset."

The beastkin smirked. "I am the younger son of the Regional Governor. Far enough up the ladder that even without a title, I still have a fox and a succubus among my courtesans."

Dana thought about his words, while Karl thought about his past interactions. He had met many males foxes, but few females. But the thing with keeping fox girls as courtesans was definitely a local thing.

The Demons weren't as enamoured with them, and knew them more for their trickery.

A transformed silver dragon seated in front of them turned around with an expression that reminded him of the blue dragons when they were exposed to new information.

"Fox magic is powerful, but here in Nulnalgat it is stronger than usual because our local fox kin are descended from the Divine Fox lineages. Unlike the Common fox beastkin, their power is a hundredfold stronger.

If I had to guess, I would say that the young lady is from the Stonefur Divine Fox lineage. She has the feeling of their magic. Tell me, can you use their healing magic?"

Dana smiled back at the dragon, who served the dragon god of magic, and shook her head.

"Unfortunately no. I didn't get healing magic, only a small dose of Fox Charm and a battle mage type class."

That somehow made the dragon even more excited, and he gave the man on Dana's side a pleading look.

"Fine, I will switch with you. But only because I don't want to be caught in the middle." The Troll muttered, completely uninterested in talks of foxes or magical spells.

At least her charm didn't overly affect everyone, Dana decided. It was mostly just the beastkin that it affected too much, and some of the Lizardfolk, like the guards at the door.

The silver dragon lowered his voice, now that they were sitting side by side. "If you're trying to find the answers I think you are, it's beasts and humans. Lizardfolk are technically beastkin, though they get their own species name. The other species will find you charming, but not nearly as strongly."

Dana nodded in relief, but the dragon was curious.

"How did you make it this far without learning the extent of your powers?" He asked.

"It's a recent development. I used an experimental potion to advance to Overlord Rank, and it had Divine Fox fur in it."

The silver dragon was enthralled now. New magic was as exciting to them as new knowledge was to the Blue Dragons.

"So, you were not a fox before?" He asked.

Dana shook her head. "Human."

The dragon looked startled. "Now, that is shocking. But that might be because I'm originally from Kopji, and the humans there are almost all slaves or menial workers. Letting them grow in power is... unusual."

Dana frowned. They would have to add that place to the list of places to avoid. Though if she remembered right, Kopji was mostly dragons and dragonkin, with a few lesser reptile species.

The majority of the group would probably be fine there.

"We're from Drodh. The Demons are much less particular." She offered.

The dragon nodded in understanding. "Yes, Demons and humans have an odd relationship. They pretend to despise each other, but in practice they live together without any real issues, as the Demons only respect strength and don't try to stop others from growing their power."

The auctioneer took the stage and took out a small crystal orb.

She cast a spell, and the orb glowed softly, amplifying noise from its immediate vicinity.

"Welcome, dear guests, to the Khathar Auction. Today we will be starting off with a bang.

We have procured a rare item for you all to bid on. An Epic Grade Overlord Ranked blade made of pure Elven Steel."

The auction house filled with quiet chatter. That was impressive, but not shocking.

Then she continued. "And the blade has been enchanted by a Rune Master, granting a wide variety of enhancements, far beyond the standard of any regular blade."

Chapter 1056: Auction Bidding

Now the auction house was getting excited, and they hadn't even seen the blade yet.

It wasn't anything overkill in Karl's mind. Just [Sharpness] and skill damage. But the Sharpness skill did ignore the majority of the target's armour.

A magical sign above the auctioneer displayed a set of stats about the weapon, including the name of the creator, which was listed as both Karl and Ashbringer of the Darklight Host Guild.

A light shone on Karl, who waved at the Auctioneer, and the whole auction house turned to look at him, while Dana resisted the urge to facepalm.

They had been doing so well with trying to avoid notice after realizing that her appearance had an outsized effect on the locals.

Karl turned to look at one of the Mythic Rank guests, whose attention he could feel. The feeling was creepy, and he wondered if his estimate of ten minutes might have been far too long before something happened.

"This should be fun. He's a Champion from the Sholaha Arenas. The ones that they run for priority rights to the powerful Dungeons that they have. I wonder if he's going to try to make a move?" The Silver Dragon whispered to Dana, with the same excited tone that Cara used when she was about to cause chaos.

The beastkin beside Karl snorted in amusement. "It says right on the sign that he's the actual Runemaster. You'd have to be crazy to offend him here and risk having yourself blacklisted from his future sales."

The auctioneer turned off the light on Karl and began speaking again.

"We will start the bidding at five thousand golden Gat."

Karl determined that those were the larger local gold coins, and the bidding was quickly going up, but the Myth who was giving Karl the strange feeling wasn't bidding at all.

Perhaps he simply wasn't interested in an Overlord Ranked weapon.

The bidding moved quickly past twenty thousand coins, then fifty, before finally selling for eighty-five thousand coins.

That was more than enough to keep Karl happy.

{Transfer Notice} [Khathar Auction Guild] wishes to transfer 80,750 gold coins.

That should be the full payment, minus the five percent auction house fee.

{Transfer Accepted}

The Auctioneer was about to move on when a large winged form leapt from the upper balconies. The Mythic Rank Champion had made his move.

He took the voice amplification orb from the Auctioneer.

"The Sholaha Dominators Guild challenges the Darklight Host. We claim the right of ownership over the members Karl, Ashbringer and Dana." He declared.

{Guild War Challenge} Accept?

Y/N

Karl got to his feet, and the spotlight shone on him as he helped Dana to her feet and moved her through the entrance to the Tiny World.

"The Darklight Host accepts your declaration of war. Do you wish to hold an open war, or settle this by a challenge of Champions?" Karl asked, raising his voice, so the whole auction could hear him.

Then he equipped his armour, letting everyone see the double golden borders of two successful over Rank challenges.

In her space, Rae smirked. [Oh, I hope that he picks open war. Cara and Matilda are ready to explode with excitement.]

The Dragonkin smirked at Karl and made a 'come and get it' type gesture.

"We will settle this by Champions. Auctioneer, clear the arena."

The silver dragon turned to look at Karl. "I hope that you know what you're doing."

Karl winked. "Come and watch, you'll laugh until your sides hurt. But Supreme Lady Matilda was hoping for a real war."

The dragon went pale as he realized just what the Mythic Ranked Warrior had done.

If the Supreme Lady decided not to wait for the duel to be finished, or that she didn't want Karl to be the champion for the fight, she could declare herself the champion, and they would lose by default, as the challenging Guild didn't have anyone to fight her.

Then, they would have to pay reparations equal to the demand that they had made. Two Overlords and one Totem Ranked member.

Whether the Darklight Host took them, took equal payment for them, or killed them didn't matter to the System.

The Auctioneer opened a portal, and a powerful Mythic Ranked mage stepped through with an annoyed look on his face.

"Who is causing trouble here?" He demanded.

The Dragonkin bowed slightly to him.

"Your Majesty, my apologies. It's a simple guild matter. We will leave to settle it and the auction can continue."

The new arrival looked between them, then laughed. "Oh, I think not. The Auction is on hold. We will move to the arena now to watch this battle."

That confused the Guild Master. Why would the King of Nulnalgat care about a Guild Duel, even if it was at this level?

What he didn't know was that all the Myths who could use portals had gathered when Karl had advanced, and as he shared a border with Gabil, he had come to see what was going on as well. The advancement of some Totem two nations over hadn't concerned the warrior, so he had no idea that Karl was no average craftsman.

In the Guild House in Drodh City, Ashbringer got the message that someone had claimed ownership of him as their Guild Member, a forced Guild Contract, and the terms were unlikely to be favourable.

But the System said that it was being settled by duel by Karl, so he relaxed a little. There was nothing that he could do from here to stop it, and not much that he could do to help on such short notice.

In contrast, Mick was in a full-blown panic. If they lost Karl and Ashbringer, what would the Guild Branch do? They only had apprentices here, and they would lose most of their ability to fill the higher level orders that had built their reputation.

But more importantly, if Karl were forced to leave, would the others who travelled with him stay? If not, the Drodh Branch of the Darklight Host would quickly become a laughingstock here in Drodh, with a few Royal Rank crafters as their strongest members.

Chapter 1057: Duel In Nulnalgat

The King of Nulnalgat cleared his throat and opened another portal.

"Champions, please follow me through the portal, so we can discuss the terms of the challenge. Everyone else, you have ten minutes to reach the Arena before the battle begins."

Karl jumped over the crowd to land on the stage, using [Swims Through Air] to avoid a hard landing.

The spectators began to talk excitedly about his casual acceptance, and his physical control. But the King didn't wait, and the two followed him through to a room that overlooked a sand floor arena.

"What the fuck were you thinking? A Mythic Ranked duel here of all places? HERE! Forget the fact that the word is already spreading about you challenging someone in Nulnalgat, you did it in the middle of nowhere." The King raged.

"And you, why did you accept instead of negotiating?"

Karl shrugged. "He demanded ownership of Guild Members, including myself. Nothing about his terms was acceptable for negotiation. You should feel blessed that I didn't demand a full-scale Guild War."

The Champion snorted in amusement, and the King growled at him.

"Jerome, do you have no sense left in your brain? The Darklight Host has a Supreme Ranked Chaos Dragon among their members. If they refused to accept a Duel, there might not be a nation left for you to go home to, even if you won the fight." The King informed him.

Jerome, the Dragonkin Warrior who had started this whole mess, stared at the King in confusion.

"The only Supreme Ranked Dragon on the entire planet is..."

"Supreme Lady Matilda. Yes. You just challenged HER GUILD to a Guild War."

Karl's smirk nearly set off the warrior, and the King of Nulnalgat sighed.

"Do you have to keep annoying him?" He asked.

"Keep annoying him? I fully intend to kill him." Karl corrected.

A third ring would look good on his tabard.

"I can see that this won't be solved peacefully. I will have the Royal Council reinforce the barriers on the arena. Take your positions, and I will signal the start of the battle when the barriers are ready."

Karl and Jerome both jumped down onto the sand to wait while the arena filled.

Already, portals were opening, and Mythic Ranked fighters in well-worn armour were filling the best seats. These must be either friends or competitors of Jerome, though none of them were his Guild members.

"I hope that you're ready to start crafting. I don't give days off for failed challengers." Jerome taunted.

"You know, I always wanted a Mythic Dungeon of my very own. How much time is left on your claim?" Karl replied.

The people in the stands burst into laughter. The annual contest had just ended, he had it for over three hundred more days. At twenty percent tax on what was taken out, Karl would be filthy rich by the end of the year if he could actually win the fight.

But if he could, then he could likely claim a Totem Ranked Dungeon in next year's challenge anyhow. Not that any of them expected him to actually win this fight.

The visiting mages joined the Royal Council in reinforcing the barriers, trapping the two contestants inside.

[Hey, what's the rule on duels?] Rae asked.

She had never properly seen one done in an arena like this before, and wasn't entirely clear on whether she got to come out and play.

Karl checked the System interface.

[No bonded partners or outside assistance. Only the two champions and effects created by their abilities are allowed in the Arena.] Karl read.

Clearly, someone had tried to sign a contract to have a more powerful ally come to them in a challenge before, and the System had turned it into a disadvantage to classes like Karl's.

[You should leave your weapons in storage and just beat his face.] Cara offered.

Karl did have [Brutal Pugilist], which was far more effective in dragon form. 15 Percent unarmed damage per Rank. Totem was the eighth Rank, so that was 120 Percent in total.

[I hear what you're thinking. Definitely punch him in the face.] Cara laughed.

The King's voice boomed through the Arena. "Combatants, finish your preparations. The Arena has been sealed, and we have confirmed neither party is suffering from negative status effects."

Karl smiled and called the Haint, the Epic Guard, the Lamia duo and a pair of Dire Bear Golems, then activated [Avatar] to transform into the massive form of a World Dragon.

Jerome smirked. It was all posturing. He was Mythic, with ninety percent reduced damage from all the Totem Ranked trash. He could just ignore the extras, and it would be impossible to miss a dragon that size with any skill he used.

But the audience was beginning to place wagers with renewed enthusiasm. He might still be outclassed, but this Darklight Host Champion had talents far beyond simply crafting.

Plus, he had no fear. That alone put him far above most under Ranked Champions. The hesitation and instinctive need to protect their lives actually cost most of them their fights.

Inside the Tiny World, Opal was recreating the arena scene outside, while Remi did the narration with much more colourful interpretations than what the King had given to the live audience.

"Begin." The King declared, resigned to the waste of this duel.

No matter who won, it would be an overall loss for everyone else.

Jerome leapt forward, while Karl swatted at him with a massive claw. Dragon claws met Mythril as the strikes clashed, while the two opposing skills exploded outward in a burst of energy that shook the barrier over the arena.

Jerome Roared as he cast an additional layer of physical buffs on himself, but Karl wasn't concerned. Physically, he was still the far stronger of the two. The issue was going to be the level of power output.

His arm still ached from that strike, and it hadn't even split the scales.

[Nullify]

Yes, that was better. Jerome wouldn't have time to fully restore his buffs.

Karl didn't wait for his opponent to finish preparing for another attack and struck again, using [Void Blast] to rain explosions on the warrior from a distance, then he followed it up with [Ghostfire], used like a dragon breath attack, intending to confuse the enemy.

Jerome flung himself to the wall as the flames licked out. Dragon fire was evil stuff, and if Karl set him on fire, he would have to waste precious seconds putting himself out instead of dealing with this overconfident crafter.

Pushing off the wall, he hurled himself back into combat, but the Haint shoulder checked him, and aimed her long claws directly between his legs.

Cara cheered as the claws struck home, but the Warrior's defences held, and he was thrown off course with a painful shriek of claws on metal.

When he landed, the Lamia bombarded him with ranged blade attacks and the bears charged, keeping him away from Karl, who was still unloading constant [Void Blasts] at him.

"You damnable coward. I am going to rip you apart, then resurrect you and do it again."

Karl gave him a huge draconic smile and snapped his fingers, using Tian's [Earth Manipulation] skill to create a spike of earth, aimed upward from the floor.

Jerome was forced to roll away again, and the crowd burst into laughter.

If Karl lost this fight, the Warrior was definitely going to torture him to death.

Repeatedly.

Chapter 1058: Enraged Myth

Jerome hurled a barrage of [Slash] attacks at the summons, but Karl created stone barriers in front of them that stopped the skills, even though the barriers themselves shattered on contact.

So, the Warrior charged into close combat, quickly slashing both Golems to death before the Haint grabbed him from behind, and the Lamia stabbed him with all four blades, sending their skills directly into his body.

Karl's massive paw smashed down on Jerome's head, tearing open his face, and ripping the chest plate of his armour off with pure brute force.

The three long claw marks, from his forehead to his navel, gushed blood as [Hemotoxic Strikes] passively prevented healing from physical injuries.

Jerome burst with power, throwing the Haint back and destroying the Lamia.

"It's just you and me again." He growled, looking pleased with himself.

Karl swung at him again, and Jerome erected a shield in front of himself. But at the last second, Karl stopped his paw and used it as the focus to hurl [Purgatory Flames] at the warrior, engulfing him in flames that used every bit of mana in Karl's body.

Mana that he was quickly recovering from the Mana Crystals in the Tiny World, and from the spaces of the beasts.

Jerome staggered back, scorched and dropping ash from his body with every step.

He coughed, and smoke burst from his lips, even as blood spattered the ground in front of him.

Karl swatted him with one hand, hurling him against the barrier and leaving three more long claw marks across his chest.

The warrior fell to the ground, barely conscious.

He struggled feebly and tried to blast the massive foot off him as Karl repeatedly blasted his scorched body with Ghostfire.

Blood loss was making it hard to focus, and Jerome couldn't understand why his [Heroic Regeneration] skill hadn't fixed his body yet.

It was repairing the burn damage faster than Karl was inflicting it, but the claw wounds weren't closing, and his body only held so much blood, even with regeneration skills in effect.

Jerome activated [Heroic Intervention], an emergency skill that boosted his power and skills for a short time, then [Rip and Tear], an area attack version of Rend.

Golden scales flew as the skill tore into Karl's body, and the warrior forced his foot up, pushing Karl onto his hind legs and forcing him to retreat.

Karl called back the Lamia and the Golems as he retreated. The extra bodies bought him a few seconds for [Void Body] to begin closing the wounds, but he wasn't the only one with abilities to slow healing.

Void Body was working, but at less than half of its usual speed.

The two combatants growled at each other, oblivious to the roar of the crowd outside the barriers.

They had been expecting a fight, but not like this. This was not a duel, this was a grudge match, and the two powerful combatants were tearing each other to shreds.

Jerome's body was starting to show actual flesh again, but Karl's mana had almost recovered. The mana storage of the Tiny World was low, so he wouldn't be able to use the same technique more than one more time.

But one more [Purgatory Flame] strike would be more than enough to finish off the warrior.

Jerome frantically hurled attacks at Karl, trying to finish him off before the blood loss got to him. But Karl met the strikes with his claws, coated in multiple layers of barriers, and Totem Ranked stone.

With the summons back in action, it was only a matter of time now, and already the Warrior was slowing, his mind becoming fuzzy.

He repeatedly tried to go for potions, but before he could get them to his mouth, the uncanny accuracy of the Lamia shattered the bottles, dumping the healing potions in the sand.

If he hadn't had the Mythic Ranked blessing, those massive gaping claw wounds would have bled him out in a matter of seconds, but as the minutes drew on and the stalemate continued, he was still holding strong.

The sand of the arena was entirely soaked in gold and black blood from the dragon and dragonkin, as well as scales and ash from scorched flesh.

But still Karl couldn't get the advantage.

[We're getting low on mana.] Tian warned.

Their spaces were at a third of capacity and holding steady, but they wouldn't be able to make much of a final push if Jerome had more skills hidden.

Then, the warrior seemed to deflate, and simply collapsed. No attempt to stop himself, Jerome simply fell face down as [Heroic Intervention] ended and the last of the energy left his body.

"This duel is OVER! Winner, Karl of the Darklight Host!" The King announced before the dust of the impact had even settled.

It wasn't hard to see what his intention was.

In a duel between a Totem and a Myth, he was not going to allow a last-minute strike that would do permanent damage or prevent the recovery of the defeated opponent.

He had also recognized the [Soul Link] skill of the Haint, and knew that Jerome's soul was heavily damaged at this point.

It would take him months to recover without specialist treatment from the Dragon Temples, and if he let Karl finish him off, it would prove nearly impossible to recover enough of his soul energy to resurrect him.

And that would touch off an actual war among the Mythic Dungeon Guilds.

Karl patted the Haint on the head and let her return to storage, while he dismissed the rest of the summons so the King knew that he wasn't going to fight over the decision.

With the battle over, Karl transformed back to Cat Demon form, and into his armour, which now had a third Golden Ring on the Guild Tabard.

But this one was much more ornate. Not a simple line around the tabard, it was an interwoven knot design all the way around, and had a dragon skull pattern at the bottom, where the tabard came to a point.

The barrier came down, and a Mythic Ranked Cleric from the Sholaha Dominators Guild came to rescue his Guild Master. He winced as he saw the extent of the damage, but the Hemotoxic Strikes skill only affected nonmagical healing, and he was a Mythic-Ranked Cleric of the White Dragon.

Jerome was carried out of the arena by a Mythic Ranked mage, and Karl turned his attention to the Cleric.

"High Priest. Welcome."

The man looked startled that Karl was greeting him courteously. They had no idea what had touched off the war, as Jerome hadn't elaborated in the message that said he was going to claim a group of powerful crafters for the Guild.

"War Champion. Congratulations on your victory. Tell me, what was the agreed prize? The Guild Master didn't inform us in advance."

"A Totem ranked Rune Master, and two Overlords. A Grandmaster Demonic Smith and a Divine Fox kin woman." Karl informed him in a dry tone, attempting to convey his anger without actually snapping at the Cleric.

"And your counter?" The Cleric asked, knowing that had to be what Jerome wanted, as they didn't have any such members.

"The whole proceeds of his current Dungeon Claim."

The Cleric blanched and then cursed repeatedly in a language that the System didn't translate.

"Is there a chance that could be negotiated?" He asked hopefully.

"Everything in life can be negotiated, for the right price."

Chapter 1059: Negotiated Losses

The Cleric sighed in relief, and gestured to the exit of the Arena.

"Perhaps we could do this in private?"

From the stands, there was a round of booing.

"Hey, no taking this to a back room to pressure him, we're enjoying the show!" Someone shouted.

"Fuck you Bill."

A number of the other spectators laughed at the interaction. Of course, they wouldn't negotiate terms in public.

Bill just wanted more of a show.

But the battle between the World Dragon Avatar and the Battle Master with a whole Rank between them had been an epic that would be told for ages.

Karl hadn't noticed, but even with [Void Body] working, he still had countless slowly fading scars, both small and large, visible to everyone on his face and arms. It was only the insane amount of damage reduction that he had with the extra twenty percent from his new class, plus the Limited Invulnerability from Void Body that ignored the first portion of damage that actually made it through, which had given him the ability to stand against Jerome's attacks.

None of the others were confident that they could take such a beating and still keep fighting.

The Cleric led Karl to a sitting room that looked like a staff break room, and then flopped down on a sofa.

"Give me a moment to come up with something. I know you're not obligated to, but I think that I can make it worth your time without causing a riot among the Guild members."

Karl shrugged. It took five Mythic Ranked members to clear the Dungeon in question, so it wasn't like he could do anything with it on his own, even though there was free access as well as the tax on those who the Guild allowed to enter.

A few seconds later, the door opened and two more people entered. One wearing the logo of the Kingdom of Nulnalgat, and a Mythic Ranked Mage whose pointed ears made Karl think she might be an Elf or some similar sort of Fae species.

"What have you come up with? No offence, but we've talked to the Guild Master, and nobody among the Juniors is particularly eager to sign a servitude contract with the Chaos Dragon. Have you seen what she does to the Vampire?"

Karl cleared his throat, and the woman jumped.

"Sorry, I forgot you were going to be here. I'm sure she's a very nice person, but making a Totem Ranked Vampire Council member wear... never mind. I can't bring myself to say that in public."

Karl laughed. He would ask Cara about it later.

Supreme Lady Matilda was actually quite fond of Tiffani, but it wouldn't surprise Karl if she treated the Vampire like a living doll.

[It's not that bad. Matilda has been making her wear the same dress that Rae has Mick wear to work, only with a shorter skirt.] Cara explained.

So, a black and white frilly Lolita dress? That didn't sound so bad. But who knew what else Matilda had done to it. Though for someone of Tiffani's stature and age, it would be much more embarrassing than it was for a young shop clerk.

The Cleric leaned forward and took out a sheet of paper to write out a list of something, while Karl and the mage waited.

The Elf girl turned to Karl and tilted her head. "You're an interesting one, but I don't see why the Guild Master went so far trying to recruit you."

Karl shrugged. "It might be because I'm a Runemaster, or it could just be that his little head was doing all the thinking. The second person he demanded was my wife, while the other was our Guild's Grandmaster Demonic Blacksmith."

The Elf rolled her eyes. "I wish I could say for certain that you were wrong."

But a Runemaster at the Totem Rank is an insanely valuable Guild asset. Wait, pretend that I didn't say that."

The Cleric winced, then sighed.

Praising the man who was about to determine if their offer was equal to what had been demanded of his guild was not helping their case when he was part of the deal.

But come to think of it, how did you value a War Champion with multiple victories?

That thought gave him a renewed headache.

The tax from the dungeon was the primary source of income for their Guild, which had no crafting division. It was primarily assembled around a team of Mythic Ranked adventurers and their lackeys.

Once they removed that source of income, the Guild would fall apart, and at this point, there were over two hundred people relying on that income, as well as the income from the other Dungeons that they visited as a Guild.

The Guild also owned a few businesses, but they weren't profitable yet, and building them would take some time.

There had to be something that he could offer the War Champion.

Droth was at a significantly lower power level than the dungeon region around Lake Naraledum. What if he offered him knowledge? That should offset some of their loss, but it wouldn't be nearly enough to cover the debt unless he could come up with something incredibly rare.

Thor's words were amused as he contacted Karl.

[The Dragon gods think that it's funny that you're making him sweat. All three Clerics say so.]

Karl tried not to laugh, as that would just confuse the two Mythic Guild Members in front of him.

Finally, the Cleric sighed, and began striking out ideas on his page.

The Elf went over and started crossing out other ideas until they were staring at a sheet with every idea crossed out.

"It looks like you're having some issues." Karl noted.

"Almost there. Just a few more minutes, if you're not in a hurry. We can request that someone brings food while you wait." The Elven Mage offered.

Karl waved off her concern and reached into Remi's space to grab an entire cake that her and Lotus had made at the Inn.

"I have cake, take all the time that you need."

The Elf simply stared at him in confusion for a few seconds as Karl cut and plated slices for everyone after creating plates and cutlery with Earth magic.

"We're missing something. I can sense it in his aura. His mana is too calm, even for someone meditating. He's enjoying watching us struggle." She whispered to the Cleric, who just rolled his eyes at her.

Of course, he was. He had all the advantages here, and there was a good chance that even two on one, they couldn't take him. So, not only did he have the System on his side as the winner of the Challenge, he was the more powerful party all by himself.

Chapter 1060: Treasure Works Too

Karl watched them struggle for a few more minutes, then decided to relent and give them a few hints.

"Perhaps you could combine payment methods?"

Honestly, I'm not interested in taking unwilling Guild Members. They're just more trouble than they're worth, even if I use Compulsion on them. But we do appreciate treasures and rare skills." He suggested.

The Cleric gave him a thin smile.

"Perhaps we can work something then. The Guild has two treasures, and we can offer you payment on top to make up the difference." He offered.

Karl nodded. "If they're suitable, I don't see why not."

The Elf looked pained, but nodded in acceptance, and the Cleric took the items out of the Guild Storage.

The first was a Mythic-Ranked bracelet, and at first, it didn't look all that special. But when Karl actually looked at with the System interface, that changed immediately.

{Eternity's Blessing} Artifact Grade. Mythic Rank. Equips in Guild Inventory. Activates the Guild Skill [Eternity], granting Guild Members the physical stats expected to be present at the peak of their life, at their current Rank.

So, that was how the Guild Skill function worked. The bracelet wasn't something that a person wore, the item was equipped for the Guild.

For some of them, this would be negligible. Most of the ladies were close to peak physical form by age right now. But Nachtia would get much more powerful with age, even within the Overlord Rank.

It would also help Tian if it applied to him.

While Karl inspected the first item, the Elf put the second item reluctantly on the low table between them.

{Amulet of Destruction} Immortal Rank. Epic Grade. Increases the effect of one spell per minute by one Rank in the Mortal Ranks, or one Sub-Rank for Immortals.

Karl couldn't hide his joy as he saw the item. Activating [Avatar] at the Mythic Rank would be absolutely devastating, and it was incredibly unlikely that it would be dispelled within a minute.

But they were balancing items against three lives, including his own.

At least they were taking it seriously.

The Elf and Cleric shared a look, then nodded in response to whatever message they had sent each other.

"We can also offer you the full proceeds of one trip through the Dungeon every week for the remainder of the year that we hold the rights. That's normally one Epic Grade Totem Ranked item per week, plus the assorted lower grade items." The Cleric offered.

Karl considered the options. "Including any and all crafting materials and trash drops that come from the Dungeon. As a crafting Guild, the Darklight Host also has need of the raw materials."

The Cleric sighed in relief. That was very reasonable.

"Alright, what is the best way to keep in contact, as neither of us has branch offices in the same city?"

Karl considered the options, then took out a piece of Overlord Ranked stone from the Dwarves.

"You can send me a message, but I will make you a recall stone, so you can just send someone to drop the items off at our Guild Shop in Drodh."

The Cleric laughed, and the Elf looked embarrassed.

"You don't know the spell, do you?" Karl realized.

Both shook their head, but Karl only shrugged.

"Open a portal to a safe spot outside your Guild House, and I will put not only the spell but both locations on the stone, so your runner can go back and forth." He explained.

That intrigued the Elf, and she opened the portal to the courtyard of their Guild House in Zilaz.

Karl stuck his head through, looked around and nodded, certain that he could find that spot again and locate it with the Recall spell.

The pair of Mythic adventurers sat quietly for half an hour as Karl carved an egg-shaped relic. He wasn't much of a sculptor, but with Tian's Earth Manipulation, he could make an egg easily enough.

Though, he realized when he was nearly done that he didn't actually need the stone from the Dwarves, he could have just made one that would hold Totem Ranked runes.

The Overlord Ranked Mana Jade was pretty, though.

"There you go. It will bring you right outside our gates, beside the Guard Post, so if you send someone powerful through the portal, it won't alarm Lord Drodh about your intentions.

Our Guild House is right next to the city gates, you see."

Karl opened a portal to the location in question, and the guard on duty waved at him.

"Good morning. Just checking in to make sure everything is fine." He explained.

The guard gave him a thumbs up gesture. "All good. Is your Guild Challenge settled already?"

Karl nodded. "All done. We will have ongoing visitors with restitution payments, though. I don't know who they will send, but they will appear right here."

The guard nodded. It wasn't outside the wall, as city rules demanded, but it wasn't far.

Karl closed the portal and the pair smiled at him. "You really do get along well with the city guards, don't you?"

"We've got a Nature Priestess who excels in fertility charms, a healing pulse area effect on the whole yard, and a smoking bench on the other side of the wall, so they can take a break out of sight."

The Elf giggled softly. The Darklight Host really had made themselves popular with the Demons. Especially the city guards and the commoners, who were more likely to need a healer but not have coin for a specialist.

The Cleric got to his feet. "If that settles everything, I will lead a group through the Dungeon to prepare the first week's payment. With so many of our competitors here, I can't afford to wait too long to announce the terms and prove that we're paying.

The Dungeon Region is highly competitive, and we don't need anyone slandering us more than they surely already are after a challenge loss."

Karl patted him on the shoulder. "Best of luck. Let me know if things fall apart for the Guild, and I may be able to work something out with you."

They had red, green and black Dragon Clerics, but no white so far. With a bit of prep work and that new Amulet, he could definitely help out, and reap the bonuses that the System was sure to give him.