

The First Legendary Beast Master #Chapter 11: First Classes - Read The First Legendary Beast Master Chapter 11: First Classes

Chapter 11: First Classes

The next morning was the official start of their training, but there were no scheduled classes. Instead, everyone woke up to announcements that they should wait in their rooms for the teacher in charge of their group to come inform them of their new routine.

That sounded like a much more relaxed class atmosphere than any school he had heard of before, and Karl became a little more jealous of the elite lifestyle. Perhaps he would even get lucky and have a kind and gentle teacher who didn't shout at students for wrong answers, or believe that laps around the school were the cure for inattention.

At breakfast, he gathered another roasted chicken for Hawk, along with a collection of raw meat, but the beast's consumption had temporarily slowed as the bird had grown overnight.

They weren't a large predator by the standards of monstrous beasts, just a deadly one due to their eyesight and attack power. As they grew to maturity, most of them would perfect the knowledge of the [Rend] skill, allowing them to take down much larger prey with a single strike.

That might not sound too impressive, given that the full-grown bird only weighed a few kilograms, but when the proficiency reached a high enough level, a monster could actually ambush and kill monsters a Rank above its own, using the power of the mastered skill.

It wasn't a feat that many beasts could accomplish, and it was entirely a result of the Windspeed Hawk's incredible rate of skill growth.

It was well after noon before the teacher showed up to talk to him, and Karl was getting bored with just standing around in the garden and waiting. He had practised his [Rend] skill until he wore himself out, trying to improve his accuracy and activation speed, and then had a short nap, but he wasn't really sure where to go from here, and none of the information in the bag of textbooks he had received told him anything on that topic.

The sharp knock at the door woke him up, and Karl rushed over to open the door for the sharp - featured female soldier that was waiting outside.

"Good afternoon, Karl. I am your combat skills Professor, you may call me Sergeant Rita. In addition to teaching you martial arts and essential skills for the elites, I will be your personal guidance professor. The Academy has determined that your class is too

different from other warriors for the standard class schedule to be useful outside the daily battle training courses, so we will be working together for the time being.

Did you have the space here to take lessons, or would you like to move to a classroom?"

He had almost gotten his wish. Rita certainly wasn't ugly, but her nature was about as far from kind and gentle as was possible, and laps around the academy didn't seem like they would be outside her list of preferred teaching methods.

"There is a spot on the patio that should be suitable. Please come in, Sergeant."

The gazebo seemed like the best learning space, and with the weirdness of magical training golems, staircases that only went to your floor and everything else in this dormitory, Karl couldn't see how the plants left to him by the senior would be an issue.

Sergeant Rita followed him into the unit, then onto the balcony with an intrigued look. But it was not the number of plants that shocked her.

"Are these all freshly watered?" She asked.

"There was a watering guide included with the room. Most only need it once a week, and I didn't know when they were watered last, so I did it the day that I moved in. They seemed fairly dry, but everything is still in good condition." Karl replied with a shrug as he walked to the Gazebo.

"This is a nice unit, very outdoorsy. I'm not sure if it will rain on the patio, with the magic that's in effect, but other than that, you lucked out.

Now, I need to know everything that you know about your powers so that we can start a proper training plan. How are the physical improvements, how has the power of your skill adjusted with a single day's practice, and are there any other hints as to what you can do with it?

I won't lie to you, the classes that can send a golem or magical construct into battle for them are in much higher demand than any of the others except the mages who can use unique spells. But with a ranged attack from the start, you're not in a terrible spot." The Sergeant informed him very sincerely.

Her honesty startled Karl, and it felt like she genuinely had his best interests in mind as a guidance counselor. Hiding too many things from her wouldn't do him any good, so Karl decided that it would be best to just put everything out in the open for her to understand.

Maybe she would know how to help him and Hawk grow.

Karl focused and brought out Hawk from his Beast Taming space. "We should start from here. This is Hawk, and my skill awakened him from an egg in the kitchen. It allows him to live somewhat comfortably in a space inside my mind, and our thoughts are linked.

Once I contracted with him, I gained the ability to use [Rend], the same attack skill that all Windspeed Hawks have, and my senses gained an incredible improvement."

Sergeant Rita stared at the tiny bird for a few seconds, trying to process the information that she had received.

"So, your ability lets you contract with monsters and what? Use their abilities? While that sounds pretty cool, it's still a high-risk path to fight against other monsters." She asked.

"Well, I guess that's true, but we both know what the other is thinking, so with a bit of training I shouldn't have to fight alone. I'll have Hawk with me." Karl offered.

Sergeant Rita smiled. "How about we see if we can't find you another Beast Cub? If you can get something that's a better fighter than the Windspeed Hawk, you might have a real chance to become one of the more powerful elites."

Hawk squawked in indignation at the suggestion that he would be replaced right after being born.

[Does this woman have no shame? Looking down on the Windspeed Hawk. Fully grown, I am sure that I can make it to the Commander Rank, and she's just an Ascendant warrior. Give it a month, and I'll bet I could beat her up.]

Hawk's mental communication was accompanied by audible screeching when he was outside like this, and the Sergeant smirked at the irate fledgling.

"What is he saying?" She asked.

"He says that when he grows up he will be a Commander, and you'll still be Ascendant." Karl gave her the abridged version.

The Sergeant glared at Karl, who raised his hands in defeat. "You asked, and he said it, I'm just the translator here."

"So, it really is intelligent enough for coherent thought at that stage. Interesting. I know it's the first day, but we should go to the training grounds to see what you two can do when working together."

Chapter 12: Sparring With Rita

Sergeant Rita led Karl down to the main floor and out across the grounds to a large open coliseum.

"This will be our venue for the day. You'll love it, at least when it's empty. With nobody here, you can send your Hawk as far out as you want, and we can spar with the training gear. Don't worry too much, it's capable of withstanding the attacks of Commander Rank magical beasts, we won't be in any danger from the practice." She explained.

The coliseum was actually a football stadium that was converted to an arena when the facility was repurposed as the Divine Golden Academy a decade ago after the injections were developed.

It was huge and open, with more than enough room to fight, and plated with a powerful magical barrier and armoured plating to keep the battles from affecting the crowd.

"Call out your bird, you two can make the first move." Sergeant Rita suggested as they walked to the middle of the battlefield.

[Hawk, fly up high, and attack from the side, she will be expecting you to go behind her.] Karl instructed as he checked his gauntlets and drew his sword.

As soon as he released it from the mental space, the Hawk flew up fifty metres in the air and began to circle, waiting for its master to be ready.

[Go.] Karl instructed as he slashed forward with the blade, activating [Rend] halfway through to create a small arc of power that Rita blocked with ease using one of the two daggers that had appeared in her hands.

Then she dodged to the side as the attack from Hawk streaked towards her, and parried again as a flick of Karl's fingers sent more rending energy her way.

Then she counterattacked, surging with energy and rushing toward Karl. He had no actual combat experience, but a sword was bigger than a dagger, so he sidestepped and swung his blade, which she easily parried, but while she was distracted, Hawk's next attack hit her in the back of the neck, leaving a bright red welt.

[What do we do? Her neck doesn't break when I attack it?] Hawk asked in a panic.

[Just keep attacking. She's stronger than us, but she is going to teach us how to fight.]

Karl frantically blocked the daggers with his gauntlet, but he could see that she was holding back, pushing him to see his physical limits.

"That bird's accuracy is deadly, I can see how you would have confidence against a Common Grade monster with a companion like that. If I were one of your classmates, I would likely be in the infirmary right now after that strike to the neck." The Sergeant congratulated them.

She had underestimated how fast that bird was, and hadn't realized that it had time to come in for another dive-bombing run so soon.

Rita turned to keep them both in her line of sight as the bird continued to circle overhead, then launched a flurry of attacks that knocked Karl to the ground just in time for her to block Hawk's attacks.

"Alright, I know where your weaknesses are now. The first thing that we need to train is your fighting skills. While the bird is equivalent to a repeated sneak attack, low output but incredibly difficult to dodge, you will have to face the wrath of your enemies until you can find a second pet or a group mate to take their attention."

That made a lot of sense. In a way, he was still a warrior class, just a pet warrior, who could fight alongside a magical beast. Learning an entire combat system wasn't going to be easy, but at this point, his life literally depended on it after graduation, unless he gave up on the dreams of becoming famous and powerful in exchange for doing some cushy job for the ultra-wealthy and somehow never get the reserve force call to battle.

But if he did that, he wouldn't be much different than where he had started, he'd just be at the bottom of a much fancier pile. Even most of the music and television idols among the elite were known to go and fight to improve their strength or deal with attacks.

They just did it with assistants and cameras following, so the world would know how awesome they were, not like some bureaucrat or lawyer who got sent to an attack that didn't even make the news to fight alone against a rampaging monster.

"Alright, what do we start with? Sword fighting? Martial arts? Some sort of secret magical body training art?" He asked.

Sergeant Rita laughed. "First, we start with basic physical conditioning. Your body is adjusting quickly to the mana injection, and it triggers an awakening in place of your natural growth. That's why we give the shots at the end of middle school, so that all the recipients are still in the rapid growth phase and can adapt more easily to the changes.

As your body adjusts, you should be able to move from a Common Physique to an Awakened Physique fairly quickly, and then you will be able to actually fight at an acceptable pace, closer in speed to the movements of your Hawk."

Karl sighed. He knew it, there were definitely going to be laps around the academy.

"Follow me to the gym. There will be a bunch of agility type fighters there now, so your standards should be suitable for the equipment that is out. I will lead you through a basic routine today, and then we will set your baseline for improvement.

Within the next month, I expect that you will be able to make the minimum Awakened Standard, but you have until the end of the semester before the official tests are done."

"So, most students take that long to make it to awakened?" Karl asked. That didn't sound so bad.

"No, many of them will make the minimum standard within the next few weeks. The true Geniuses will be getting close to Ascended by the end of the first Semester, and make it there either late in the year or at the beginning of the second year."

Just like that, Karl's dreams of easy days as an elite were crushed.

Chapter 13: Agility Training

When they got to the gym, the attendant issued Karl a workout uniform consisting of sneakers, shorts and a shirt in the Academy's white and gold colour scheme, and sent him to the locker rooms to shower and change.

That was their policy, shower before and after using the equipment. Apparently, new students didn't wash enough on their own, and they needed to shower when they arrived. Or perhaps, like he was that day, they were expected to be sweaty already.

It didn't take long to get ready, but Sergeant Rita was already there, changed into a black tank top and a different pair of green cargo pants with clean boots. Did they think that she might be mistaken as a student if she didn't wear green? Or perhaps it was a military rule.

Karl had heard that the elite soldiers weren't officially military, but their own branch of the government. However, they didn't come to the mines, there was no reason for them to be there, so he had never actually seen one before the injection day.

The agility type warriors, as Sergeant Rita called this class, turned out to be almost entirely female. That made Karl wonder deeply about what sort of bias the mana injection had for the skills that it awakened in people, or what that said about his current physique.

He might not be the most macho man ever, but being subtly told that you currently have the physique of a fourteen-year-old girl was hard on the ego.

Then he looked through the glass wall and saw the strength type warriors from the senior classes training, and the class was full of musclebound meatheads with arms the size of his torso.

Maybe he was in the right place.

"Alright, first up, upper body strength. That skill of yours puts a lot of resistance on your body, and you need to be able to power through it, but without building up so much bulk that you can't evade anymore." Rita began.

What followed was two hours in hell. By the time that Karl limped back to the showers, he was sweaty, exhausted and ready to fall asleep right where he was. He was about to collapse when Hawk pushed a piece of cold roast chicken out of the space for him to eat as a form of emergency energy, or a survival ration, Windspeed Hawk style.

A very deeply missed survival ration, even though the bird still had a quarter of a roast chicken and plenty of raw meat left.

Once he was changed, Karl made his way back to the dorms for the afternoon, and straight to the cafeteria for some much-needed sugar and caffeine. If this was going to be the daily routine, he was going to have to start eating much heavier meals than usual.

Somehow, despite feeling like death, he still managed to look like he was in better shape than the next few groups to arrive. They were holding each other upright, and mostly bruised, cut, scorched or dripping with some sort of mystery liquid.

"What happened to you?" Karl asked the mage sitting at the next table, startling him so much he almost fell out of his chair.

"Skills training. All day long, the magic classes undergo skills and theory training. I have one spell, Lightning Bolt, and they had me drink supplements over and over to cast it thirty times today until it stopped hitting me and everyone around me." He complained, clearly in agony, and so tired he was about to pass out.

"What about you?" The other mage at the table, a girl with charred sections on her uniform, asked.

"I had a combat class with the instructor, then two hours of fitness routine with the agility type fighters. I think my legs have started to turn into pudding already." Karl sighed.

"Two-hour fitness routine? What did you do to the instructor to deserve that? Even the newbie warriors only get a thirty-minute intensive weight training session and a thirty-minute cardio session along with their weapons training." The girl asked.

"No idea. I think that she's got high hopes for me, though, because she's already talking about forging me into an Awakened body this month."

The mages winced. "We need to get our mana levels up to awakened levels before the end of semester exams, but that's way harder than it sounds, and we need to meditate whenever we're off, but you can't do it when you can't focus, and we're all too sore today."

"Well, almost all of us. I think that she might be fine, that woman is a demon." The boy Karl had spoken to first complained, gesturing toward a woman covered in slime at the next table.

"Slime girl?" Karl asked.

"Don't let it fool you, she's a water mage, and her first spell is [Refreshing Water Slime]. It helps her recover stamina and mana, so she's been wearing it like that all day."

That was almost a cheat ability. From what these two said, the mages trained their aptitude by maintaining and controlling their spells, and hers refreshed her stamina and magic while she wore it, so she could do it all the time without getting exhausted. She would almost certainly grow quickly.

That was the sort of luck that a true protagonist should have, Karl decided.

[Slimes suck, you can't even eat them, they just squish.]

Hawk had a point, not only was he an excellent combat assistant, he was also edible.

The students slowly made their way to their rooms, and Karl let Hawk sleep off his overindulgence while he lay in bed, too tired to sleep, but too sore to do anything else. He wasn't sure when that changed to blissful slumber, but he was very aware of his alarm going off the next morning, alerting him that he had fifteen minutes before Sergeant Rita arrived.

Karl took a quick shower and changed into his uniform before the Sergeant was at his door, impatiently knocking and holding a breakfast tray in her other hand.

"You're running late, so I brought food. Let's go to the gazebo so you can eat while you study." She instructed.

Once they sat down, Sergeant Rita took out a small stone, and set it on the table.

"What do you think of this?" She asked.

Karl looked it over. It wasn't an egg, it was just a rock of some sort. He even poked it, first with the handle of his spoon, and then with his finger. No response.

"It's definitely a rock." He replied.

"Interesting. So the psychic stone has no response to you, but you can communicate with your bird." Rita noted.

"Now, try this one."

Again, Karl put his hand on the stone, tried to make it do something, but it was just a rock.

Then another, and another. But when she put a small golden coin on the table, an ancient monetary instrument from the Golden Dragon Nation they lived in, Karl immediately felt an affinity for the object, and when he touched the dragon on the coin, a sense of power filled him.

"So, that's the answer. That coin was blessed at the Dragon God Shrine during the last Dragon Festival. It appears that your powers resonate with the dragon energy. Since that's the case, I want to try something else."

Rita took out a small vial filled with shimmering red liquid.

[Oh, I want it. Ask the evil lady to give me that.] Hawk demanded.

[You should be glad that she can't hear you.]

Chapter 14: Updated Mission Statement

"Hawk thinks that will be useful to him if he can have it. What is it?" Karl asked.

"It's mana infused monster blood. It's the most basic of Common Grade resources for physical cultivation type elites. Drinking mana infused monster blood strengthens the body and can induce mutations. Without a proper method to handle and guide the process, it is often fatal, but for a monster or magical beast, it should be perfectly fine." She explained, with amusement sparkling in her eyes.

For a moment there, she almost seemed like a happy young woman, but then her serious face was back as she gestured toward the table.

"Call him out so that I can see the process. If it works, the Academy will get you more resources for the bird until it can grow into a proper combat unit. According to this morning's briefing, leadership feels that trying to turn you into a frontline fighter with just one Rending attack is pointless, and the senior professors think that we might have more luck training the Hawk, with you as its backup and leader in a support or scouting role." She explained.

Karl sighed. "Day two and I've already been sidelined?"

Rita gave an honest laugh at his disappointment. "All the mages are being cultivated in this direction as well. It is a measure to reduce casualties. The more people that we can have fighting behind golems, summons, barriers, and in your case, monsters, the better we can resist the Magical Beasts, and the more success we will have against the armies of the other nations.

They know that we have the advantage, and this relative peace won't last for much longer. If you don't want to be cannon fodder, you need to act quickly to gain strength.

So, strengthen the bird, and when you feel that you are strong enough to take on another pet, let me know and the Academy will find something suitable for you."

That was a sharp change from yesterday's regimen of focusing on building his physical strength as fast as possible, but if they didn't know any more about his powers than he did, there wasn't actually much they could teach him, other than methods that had worked for others with different powers.

But Hawk was already out on the table, and happily lapping up the mana infused monster blood while radiating an amount of power that was far beyond what anyone would expect of a Common Grade beast.

After a few seconds, the effect seemed to fade, but the former swallow - sized hawk was now much larger, and while it was still a Common Grade monster, it was getting much closer to fully grown and awakened level power.

Then, something truly strange happened. Karl felt energy flowing from Hawk to him, clearing his mind, sharpening his eyesight, and leaving his muscles feeling fresh and strong.

He had no way of subtly testing it, but Karl was almost completely certain that his physical strength had suddenly increased as Hawk grew.

Most of the people he had seen these last few days were changing rapidly after the mana injection, so it might just be that, but the fact that it happened so suddenly after Hawk was given the monster blood seemed incredibly suspicious.

Karl cleared his throat and looked at the empty vial on the table. "So, I resonate with Dragon energy, and Hawk likes monster blood. That second part isn't exactly a surprise for a Hawk, but do you think that there is a known technique that will let us grow stronger more quickly?"

"Well, we are limited in Dragon type energy, there just isn't a lot of it floating around, but there might be another way. Carnivorous magical beasts grow stronger by killing and eating, absorbing the life force of other beasts. I think that moving the two of you to the practical courses as soon as you can finish basic skills and survival lessons would be for the best.

We can't just send you out of the Academy without getting you trained enough to defend yourself, the public would riot if they found out that one of the elite had died during training. The mana injections are great for us, we get the superpowers of all sorts, but to the average people, they are the promise of a safer future, without the nightmares of impending monster invasions or being left helpless during a war."

Karl rolled his eyes as she got into the official propaganda. While she wasn't exactly wrong, most of the students here would never fight in any war. Heck, half of them would

never develop a skill that was actually useful during a war. No matter how cool a sword skill was, artillery still existed. Unless your sword could deal with an air strike, it was not suitable for use during a real war.

But some of them really could deal with artillery using sword techniques.

The Mages were a different story. But also, if his beast got powerful enough, or he managed to bond with a particularly powerful monster, he could also become a deadly fighting force. The hide of a powerful magical beast could stop bullets, and many types of beasts could breathe fire, call down lightning, or even slice apart armoured vehicles with their claws.

He was already headed down that last road, with [Rend], and if he could get it past the Awakened level of the power scale and into the Ascended levels, there was no reason that he couldn't tear through an armoured vehicle on his own.

"But for now, that's mostly hypothetical. We're not at war with anyone, and the magical beasts are being held at bay throughout the Golden Dragon Nation." Karl replied.

"For now. Just trust me, Karl, you want to get in as much combat training as you can, and I will apply for improved resources for Hawk. I know that birds are usually fine with whatever sort of meat you feed them, but if we want to force it to grow faster, it will take a detailed plan." Rita informed him.

Karl thought about that. A Windspeed Hawk was full-grown at four months old. But at that point, they were only low Awakened Level beasts with a Common Grade physique. It would take time and hunting stronger beasts if they wanted to grow past that strength level. Without some sort of reference or plan, he could be stuck at a very low level in his second year.

Chapter 15: Resources

Rita started to take textbooks out of her bag, but a very different set of books than Karl had been issued his first day here. These were all about magical beasts, their diets, traits, abilities, and other factors that might be relevant to Hawk.

"I will leave these for you, and come back tomorrow morning. What I want you to do today is come up with a care and feeding guide for the bird, and justify it with the information from the books. If it's good, and it follows the information that we have in a logical way, I think that I can get you some more resources.

At the very least, I can get some more of the mana infused monster blood. We stock quite a bit of that for the warriors and other classes who need an instant physical power boost." She informed Karl with a smile.

Rita left Karl alone with the stack of books on monster data, which were all written from the perspective of a Hunter. At best, they noted what the beast's usual diet was and where it could be found, but that was much different than a guide to help him properly raise them, much less one to raise them faster than usual to compete against wild beasts and magic users.

Fortunately, he only needed a care and feeding guide for Hawk to complete the homework, which was a perfectly reasonable level of workload for the day. Plus, he had a cheat.

"Hey Hawk, what sort of things do you think would make you stronger? Something that you could eat, or keep near you to grow extra fast." Karl asked the happy bird, who had settled down in the space inside his mind to rest.

[I like meat. And the red juice from the evil lady, and those blue fruits over there. Can I eat those?]

"Give me a second while I see what they are and what they're for." Karl replied, before opening up the notebook for the balcony greenhouse.

[{Mountain Gooseberries} Tasty treats for both humans and animals. Used to make monster bait. No nutritional value that I know of, but the smell will attract all sorts of monsters.

This berry contains a high mana content, suitable for creating mana potions of the weakest variety. Even in concentrated form, it is not as strong as a normal mana recovery potion.]

Karl read the description twice and then went to pick three of the berries.

"You can have this many, one time a day. If you eat too many, you will get sick." He warned Hawk.

Really, he just didn't want the Hawk pigging out on junk food when he had a whole pile of meat in the taming space.

The Hawk took the berries, looked at them with longing, then spread them all over the raw meat and began to tear it apart with renewed vigor.

Karl added a note to the papers for his homework. [Windspeed Hawks will use the Mountain Gooseberry as seasoning on their preferred raw meat diet.]

Once the Hawk had finished eating for a moment and lay down to let the influx of mana and nutrients settle into its body, Karl started with the questions.

"Why do you call Sergeant Rita the evil woman?" He asked.

[Every time I see her, she wants me to work, but there is never food. What else could she be except evil?]

That made a lot of sense. The baby Hawk was still a magical beast, and his stomach was a primary driving force for his behaviour. Whatever bond they had forged made Hawk friendly to Karl, but that consideration didn't extend to anyone else around him.

"Alright then, where is the most comfortable spot to rest?" Karl asked.

[Right here, maybe the branches of that tea tree. Those ones smell good, and they hide your scent from prey. Tea trees are good trees.]

All afternoon, Karl quizzed the bird and wrote out a report with the answers. Then he started to go through the textbooks, looking for supplements that might help monsters, or even elites with [Rend] type skills.

The first group didn't have much research on it, but the second one was pretty common. All sorts of warrior classes had a rending attack after a bit of training, and it was among the skill techniques that the Golden Divine Academy taught its warriors.

Naturally, they had supplements that were designed to increase the ability of the warriors to explode with inner power. The question was if they would be effective on Hawk. Neither of them could tell from looking at the description, so Karl began to flip through the standard textbooks until he found the alchemy text.

That one was more productive. Once they had the list of potential potions and treatments, Karl just had to check the ingredients and see if it was something that Hawk might like. Most of them were all herbal based, but once he got to the Strength Potion, he found something promising. It was made from monster blood, infused with the dust of a gemstone that gave off strong magical energy. The two together gave the human imbiber a long duration burst of energy.

That stone was the promising part. He didn't really need something that would give Hawk a burst of strength, it was a bird, not a gorilla, but the stone that it was made of radiated power that might help him grow more quickly.

After that, Karl kept searching, but only found one other resource, a Wind Magic stone of the same sort. That one wasn't a natural resource, it was created by Mages as a mana storage device. Hawk loved to absorb mana, and since it was air magic, Karl had some hopes that it would be able to work with that stone to improve its own abilities.

That was four potential resources. High-energy monster meat with berries for seasoning, the infused blood, the strength stone and the wind stones. If he could get all four of them, he might even be able to get Hawk through to Awakened strength in the next few weeks.

Chapter 16: Growing Fast

The next morning, Rita returned to collect Karl's homework before breakfast, and then came back with a small bag for their class work.

"Alright, I got you what I could to see if the resources actually help a pet beast grow faster than the average. This isn't going to be a short process, the Windspeed Hawk is going to need the whole semester to make it to Awakened naturally, so if you can do better than that, you should get good marks on your training.

We will still work on your martial arts skills, though. If you get targeted by the opponents in a mock battle, you need to be able to defend yourself, and you do have at least one attack method of a magical variety." She informed Karl with a smile.

"Well, at least I'm not expected to run and hide while someone beats up Hawk. What did you manage to find us?"

Rita dumped the contents of the bag on the table, and Hawk went crazy in Karl's mind. There were two strengthening stones, an entire litre of infused monster blood, and six blue wind stones that were giving off an incredible aura of power.

"The Wind Stones were made by the headmaster personally. He was part of the first batch of successfully injected elites, and he is now an Overlord Grade Mage. He says that if the Wind Stones really can be a cultivation resource for the Windspeed Hawk, he will gladly make you more, and look into ways to awaken more elites in the same direction." Rita explained.

[I take it back, evil lady is actually nice lady.] Hawk screeched as it stared at the buffet in front of it.

Karl ignored the bird's antics in his mind, and placed one of the strength stones in a small dish full of monster blood. The energy seemed to seep from the stone to the 'soup', but Karl wasn't sure what to do with the wind stones.

"You can't crush the wind stones, it will break the spell. But if he just sleeps beside them, or wears one as a pendant, the mana should help. Assuming he can use it, anyhow. That's how the new air magic users do it."

Karl called Hawk out, and the bird immediately went to the soup, and licked the entire bowl clean before turning its head to the Wind Stones.

Each was no bigger than the diamond on a wedding ring, but the energy contained inside was immense. Sleeping next to them shouldn't be a problem, and Karl could even make a little pouch to carry them around Hawk's neck.

But the bird immediately ate one, and swirling winds began to build around the balcony, tearing leaves from trees and nearly knocking over planters for the smaller varieties, before Karl pulled Hawk into his mental space.

[What are you doing?] He demanded of the tiny bird that was now radiating magical power.

[It's food. Amazing powerful food. What else would I do with it if not eat it?]

Inside the space, winds whipped, and power flowed constantly from Hawk to Karl, strengthening his body as if he were the magical beast. But from the outside, from Rita's perspective, everything was calm, and Karl was meditating or distracted by his thoughts, with no sign of external stimulus.

All she could do was patiently wait until an hour later, when Karl finally opened his eyes and gave an exhausted sigh.

"The Wind Stones are indeed an excellent resource for Hawk. Come on out and let her see you, my friend."

The Windspeed Hawk appeared on the table, looking exactly as it always did, with cream feathers covered in mottled brown patterns that matched the common trees of the forest. But now it was much larger, as long as Karl's forearm, as a nearly full-grown Windspeed Hawk should be.

It was also giving off the aura of an Awakened Grade monster.

"Well, we can say for certain that feeding a Wind Stone to a Windspeed Hawk will cause an immediate growth breakthrough, and it will progress from fledgling to a young adult state within a few hours. He's also starving again, and he has eaten everything I stored, so I'll pour him some more blood into the dish." Karl offered as an explanation.

"It really worked. There actually is a way to cultivate tamed monsters. How do you feel? Is it a strain on your body? Did you gain anything from the process, perhaps more mana, or a new power?" Rita asked, ready to take notes for the Academy.

"I feel stronger, but I don't know how to check my mana levels. Is there a device for that?" Karl asked.

"No, the mages know instinctively, but I'm not a mage. We can bring you to one later, and they can give us a reading for the records. But meanwhile, you can try to use your abilities and see how long it takes for you to get tired."

Karl ran off to the closet in his small room to get the gauntlets, and came back out. A quick flex of his arms gave him a sense of great power, and once he got to the railing, he found that the resistance of the [Rend] spell on his actions was negligible. He had

more than enough strength to move his arm normally, and the four thick arcs streaked through the air and out over the Academy courtyard.

"Impressive. That is definitely at the Awakened Rank in power, but how many times can you do it? If there is no stamina, the Academy will classify it as a Common Class burst ability on your part, where it is an Awakened Ability for the Hawk." Rita explained.

Three more at full power was enough to leave Karl panting, but he had an idea.

"Give me a few minutes to recover, and I think that I can do better."

A short break, and a bit more to eat, had Karl back up to full strength, while Rita quietly made notes about his recovery speed.

Karl tried again at half strength, and the drain on his energy was negligible. The feedback from Hawk was enough that Karl felt he could do this for hours, but instead he did it a dozen more times, alternating hands and directions of the cuts, as if he was shadow-boxing with [Rend] as the strikes.

"Fifteen minutes at half output. That's still Common Grade strength, but on the strong side of it, and it looks like you are improving as the Hawk improves. Once he is stronger, you should really become an Awakened Level fighter, or rather Beast Tamer, with the advantage of an Awakened Level beast to help you."

"Not bad for the first week, right? If you leave those resources here, I think that we can do better by the end of the month. We might even have enough strength to fight with some of the second year students by the time the exams come around."

Rita laughed at Karl's enthusiasm. "You had better make time in your day for combat training then, or even with Hawk, you'll get beaten to a pulp."

She had a point. This whole Beast Taming thing would be a lot easier if he had a giant rhino or something scary in front of him.

Chapter 17: Proper Training Regimen

Hawk went straight for the Wind Stones again, once nobody was paying attention, and grabbed another. But this time, it didn't integrate into his body in the same sudden rush. Instead, there was a steady flow of Wind Magic from the stone to the bird, and its body seemed to be adapting to the excess energy at a much slower rate.

"Does it only work that well once? That was a pretty high-level resource, compared to Hawk, so perhaps it damages the body when it is used in such an abrupt manner." Rita suggested, while flipping her short black hair out of her eyes.

"That's possible, I can't really tell and Hawk doesn't understand either, he just wants the stones. I will ration them out for him, so he gets a new one when the old one is absorbed." Karl agreed.

That would be a while, as after he ate the second stone, Hawk was begging to be let back into the mental space to sleep off its overindulgence.

"Food Coma." Karl explained, when Rita gave the disappearing bird a confused look.

She sighed and shook her head. "That's not part of a proper training regimen. But today, we can forgive it, since he had such a large breakthrough. I approve of your diet plan, and the infused blood will be brought to you regularly, along with a new strength stone, in a few weeks. Hopefully, this one lasts because that's as fast as we can get another.

It looks like your abilities are very fast-growing, but equally resource intensive. Perhaps if you grew naturally at the rate of the contracted beast, you could do it with only food resources, but from what we know of the wild magical beasts, they also need to eat some rare objects, or absorb strange energies to reach the higher ranks naturally."

What Karl really needed was a way to improve the Hawk so it could beat other monsters at its level, and not just keep growing. They were likely to have to face beast packs and invasions in the future, and one monster on their side against ten on the other would mean very little to their chances of winning.

Being able to work together was a nice start, but not enough to be considered a truly powerful sort of existence on his own.

Hawk snorted in amusement in his mind. [What other Hawk of my level is so good with its magic or so majestic in flight?]

[I know you're the best, but I'm trying to think of ways to make us even better.] Karl countered.

Hawk went quiet as he thought about it. Hawks only needed one skill, the ability to kill their prey, but he supposed that more ways to kill his food wasn't necessarily a bad thing. Maybe if he watched other birds do it, he could find ways to do it better?

The Windspeed Hawk wasn't sure that was even possible, but it wanted to make Karl happy, so it was willing to try to use [Rend] in new ways.

"Can we go down to the training areas? I think that the more we see actual combat while we're training, the easier it will be to come up with ways to make ourselves better." Karl suggested.

Hawk wasn't going to be coming out for a while, so he might as well train himself while he had the chance.

Rita led him out of the dorms and out into the field on the opposite side from his balcony. There was a large training area there, with stone squares in the open field, and a large group of students were training unarmed combat techniques there.

They were all second year students, and very good at what they were doing, but just watching them gave Karl ideas on how he and Hawk could work together to overcome them.

"We're going to try something different today. Since you have a ranged skill of sorts, I want to start you on defensive basics. If you're fighting from a distance without magical armour skills like the mages learn, then you need to have a way to block.

Today, we will practice blocking incoming attacks with your claws. The more you practice, the better you will get. Think of it like learning to play catch. Just hit the incoming attack with your own."

Somehow, that friendly description sounded extremely sinister to Karl, especially when she led him away from the unarmed combat field and toward a huge bunker.

"There are mages at your level training here, stronger Common Class students that are close to breaking through to Awakened. They might have a bit more stamina than you do, since they've been practising longer, but it takes less to deflect the attacks than to form them.

Now, at first, they will be firing down the training hall above your head. Don't worry, they shouldn't miss the target entirely at their level. Just do your best to deflect them off target."

The mages nearby glared at Sergeant Rita as she said those words. Who was she to come in here and interfere with their training? They were already at the bottom of their class, but now she was bringing in some newbie hotshot just to mess with them?

"Alright. Seniors, I apologize for the inconvenience." Karl apologized as he felt the glares directed his way.

"It is training for the mages as well. It's one thing to just hit a target, but in the real world, targets will defend themselves. Being able to work around the defence to land a solid hit is also a necessary skill." Rita added.

In the end, she was a teacher, and they didn't have any say about her intentions for their training, but the thought that this was a real-world exercise, while they had been mostly abandoned to their own devices as the weakest of the elites, was somewhat reassuring.

Rita led Karl to the other end of the training grounds, where a dozen targets were lined up.

"Alright everyone, here is the goal. You just need to land hits on the targets, the same as always, but this time, Karl here will be doing his best to deflect those shots and keep them from landing. With a dozen of you and one of him, it shouldn't be hard, but he needs the stamina training to help stabilize his foundation.

Have fun, and don't be afraid to push yourselves to find new ways to get to the target."

They started casting as soon as she finished speaking, and Karl frantically began to cast rending blades at low output, letting them crash into the various spells. Some were deflected, some were only slowed, and some pushed through on their own with only a slight loss of power.

It all depended on the element and the power of the spell as to what happened. Fire and water were the hardest to deflect, they just passed over with a loss of power, where ice, earth and other solid objects could be easily knocked off course.

The next time, he only used one rending claw per attack to save mana, but increased the power of each as he swatted aside and nullified the attacks.

Karl panted with exertion and sighed. That was a mistake, the power needed was an exponential increase compared to the increased output. It was better to hit a target with multiple small attacks than one big attack.

The Mages were actually beginning to enjoy themselves, as they realized that he wasn't some wonder genius sent here to humiliate him, and that he was a newbie working on his mana control, just like they had been all last year.

Chapter 18: Playing The Game

With everyone limited in stamina and magical power, there were constant breaks, which also became part of the game that was played between Karl and the mages. He would sit down to recover, but still swat at attacks if someone got lazy and an attack was particularly weak or slow moving.

In the eyes of the supervisor, the lone teacher assigned to watch over the dozen mages in this class, it was the best motivation that they had seen in months. None of these students were good at self motivating, and their abilities weren't strong enough to get them a personal instructor, even one at the low level that Sergeant Rita had reached.

To his trained gaze, the warrior with the Rending Claws was likely to overtake her in power by the end of his first semester, while she had taken three years to make it to the middle of Ascended Rank combat power.

Sergeant Rita was no genius when she had to learn magical powers, but she was a great martial artist, and from what he could see, a superb teacher. Not only had she motivated her own student, it was motivating him as well.

Karl and the others trained together until lunch, after which the mages would be moving to theoretical training to help them learn new spells, and Karl would be moving on to either close combat training or theory classes on how to care for a magical beast and research assignments on the chances of increasing its power more than its species would normally allow.

"Come with us for lunch. It looks like you awakened a pretty cool combat ability right from the start with the ranged claw attacks. Most warriors are boring until they're at least reaching the end of the Awakened Rank, and they can start to hit targets more than two metres away from them." One of the mages informed Karl.

She was a tall and buxom blonde, but with the growth spurt that he had undergone the last few days, she was only a little taller than he was now, and Karl had hopes that he would reach an acceptable height before he had enough classes with others that his reputation as a shorty would precede him. At the very least, everyone seemed to respect his abilities.

None of them seemed to notice that Karl covered an entire plate of raw meat in a drizzle of mana infused monster blood, or that it simply vanished into thin air, they were all more eager to discuss the ways that they had thought of to use their spells to get around his defences.

"I think that if we increase the speed and fire them as double balls instead of a single, we can get at least one through to the target." One of the mages was suggesting.

"Better if you send them a few metres apart, so that the other claws don't hit. Or better, at slightly different speeds, that will make it harder to guess when they will arrive." Another mage sighed. His specialty was ice, and he had a terrible time getting the ice shards to hit the target when they were so easily knocked off course.

"This is a different cafeteria than I'm used to, where are we?" Karl asked.

"Oh, this is the cafeteria in the mage district. There is another in the warrior training area as well, for students who were a long way from the dorm cafeteria at lunch. The foods at each are totally different because they are specialized for the different groups.

The warrior one has more nutrition-based options, designed to build muscle, while ours is more mana rich. The one at the dorm is a mix of everything, but mostly it's used by the students who study in their dorms all morning, the noncombat elites." The tall blonde explained.

"That's good to know. I have to train everything, but today, I definitely need the extra mana. I'm Karl, by the way."

"Molly." The blonde replied.

"Formerly known as Gertrude Dingwall." One of the boys teased.

"But now I'm Molly. It's on my ID card." The blonde replied in an annoyed tone.

"You don't have to put your real name on the sheet, you see. She asked if she could change it when she was on the train, and the guard said they'd call her anything she wrote there. Legend has it that some prankster a few years ago was known as Tater Salad for an entire year before he could get his card changed." One of the other mages informed Karl with a giggle.

Hawk sighed in contentment as he feasted on the upgraded lunch package, courtesy of the red sauce that the not so evil lady had left for him, and Karl sat and joked with the mages for an hour before Sergeant Rita came to inform him of his next training task.

"We will see you all tomorrow morning, but for the afternoon Karl has actual combat training to do. He might have a ranged attack magic, but the Academy has determined that he is still a warrior class."

The mages made praying motions, wishing Karl the best of luck on surviving warrior training as well as ranged casting practice in a single day, then slowly made their way to theory classes with a renewed motivation to learn new spells that would get past his defence.

Karl had been getting better all morning, but they all had thoughts on how to evade his defensive abilities.

As they walked out across the grounds, Rita smiled at Karl's concerned look.

"Relax, it won't be so bad. We're going to the first year unarmed combat classes. It's just basic martial arts, and most of them have very little skill. Your physique is miles beyond most of the other newbies, so you shouldn't have too many problems adapting.

Plus, I brought you one more resource that I scooped from the Mage Class instructor. It's a memory drop, a condensed focusing spell that makes it easier to memorize things. It's not powerful magic, but it's incredible for studying. The Mages get them as a reward when they do well on tests."

Chapter 19: Unarmed Combat Training

"Ah, Rita, welcome. It's good to see you back here as a teacher instead of a student. Who is this that you've brought with you?" The instructor, a small but muscular man in his late forties, asked.

Chances are he wasn't part of the elite, he was too old to have been chosen even a decade ago, but if he was a martial arts expert, he would be the perfect person to be training new recruits. They wouldn't be stronger than he was, and they knew basically nothing, unless they happened to have some special training at home, with the hope that they would be in the lucky five percent that managed to gain an affinity to mana from the injection.

That was a fairly big risk to take, but some would surely have done it, just in case.

"This is Karl, he's an agility type warrior with a ranged magical attack that utilizes the claws on the gauntlets. It has proven quite versatile, and since it's a gauntlet type weapon, he should fit in fairly well in your unarmed combat classes as well." Rita explained.

"Well, that sounds like it's a properly versatile skill set. Alright, let's see what you can already do, and what you still need to learn." The instructor agreed.

Karl laughed and Rita smirked. They both knew that he knew nothing, but with the enhancement that he had been getting from Hawk, at least he might not embarrass himself.

The instructor noticed his uneasy look and smiled. "Don't worry too much, it's unarmed combat. Just leave your gauntlets over there, and we can spar a little. If you're a complete newbie, just do what feels right, and that will tell me what way is best to help you develop."

[Yeah, swoop down from above and break his neck.] Hawk added.

[Not helpful, I can't fly.]

[Then jump or something. I don't know.] Hawk pouted.

Karl set his gauntlets off to the side and took a combat stance that he had learned from Rita on the first day. At least he now knew how to throw a punch without hurting himself, but they would have to see how the actual match went.

The instructor threw a sudden punch, and Karl swatted it aside as Rita had told him, then counterattacked with a punch of his own, which the instructor simply sidestepped to evade.

For a man who couldn't be an elite, he was insanely agile, and Karl's follow-up punch also missed, making him think that Rita had been taking it even easier on him than he had first suspected.

The instructor's knee caught Karl in the midsection, forcing him back, but he swung his leg out in a sweep, trying to knock the instructor over.

He misjudged the range, but being down low let him block the next knee, and tackle the instructor, who was only a little taller than Karl was.

That turned out to be the wrong move, as the man caught him, and then suddenly Karl was spinning through the air to land on his back. Dust puffed up around him as the wind left his lungs and Karl gasped, but rolled to his feet.

"Not bad, kid. I've got a good idea of how you like to fight now, so we will put you with the mixed martial arts group. Those stand up fighters do well against soldiers, but it looks like you will be better in bar brawls and nastier fights against monsters.

It might seem counterintuitive, but with your speed and power, a punch to the head will stun many Common monsters, and grappling skills can be adapted to keep their claws away from you.

It's not an offensive art, you have your ranged attacks for that, but if they get past that, I think we can teach you to defend yourself."

Somehow, punching a magical beast in the face seemed like an awful idea, but if the option came down to that or being bitten, he supposed it wasn't all that bad.

"Rita, come over here and give us a hand. Your student needs to learn the basics of the style, and we've already got an even number of students."

Sergeant Rita looked like she had been prepared to sit this class out, but when she was called, she didn't resist. Not many of these new students would be Karl's match anyhow, and it would just be bullying for him to spar with the ones who didn't receive a large initial physical boost.

Once again, Karl found himself headed back to the cafeteria for dinner, totally exhausted, sore in every muscle and barely able to walk. But the memory water was working, and he could recall each of the fifty techniques that he had been shown that day with perfect clarity, along with the proper way to use them.

After a few more weeks of training, so his body remembered it as well, he might even be able to consider himself a trained amateur fighter.

Karl sat down alone at a table, but he was soon joined by other members of the unarmed combat class.

"Man, you won the lottery with that awakening, didn't you? It's the first week, but you're already so fast, and you even got a personal trainer." One of the boys from the mixed martial arts group greeted him.

Karl laughed. "I got a personal trainer because my marking is different from any of the others, and they had no idea what sort of skill I was going to get. So, I was tossed a personal trainer, and we're just guessing our way through it. Most of you guys should have gotten the grappler or monk marks, right? The open hand or the staff over the fist?"

The small group at the table nodded. "Yeah, the initial skills are crap, but at least it was easy to awaken. All you need to do is punch something, and I managed that before I even got out of bed. I gave a fist pump in joy and hit the shelf, and that was enough to awaken my mark."

"Plus, we get a load of extra stamina. Even if we can't get to the most powerful ranks, we can at least grow up to be popular with the ladies." One of the other boys laughed.

"It's better than nothing. But sitting around all day talking about magic symbols like the mages sounds like much more fun than working my butt off learning martial arts and body strengthening skills."

One of the other students laughed. "Your head hurts trying to do basic math, you'd never survive as a mage."

"It has to be easier than getting beat up every day. I'm a lover, not a fighter." The boy complained.

"We all know you've never done that either, so you might as well learn to fight."

Chapter 20: Wind Stone

While Karl lay in bed, wondering how he was going to deal with the mage class in the morning, Hawk was busily finishing absorbing the wind gem that he had been given. With the level difference between the Hawk and the stone, it should be giving him all sorts of benefits, but after the first stone, which brought him to the Awakened Level, there wasn't much change.

His mana levels were steadily growing, which was pulling Karl up with him, but nothing as shocking as the first stone.

It was with great regret that the generous offer of resources was wasted that Karl fell asleep, only to be awakened before dawn as a surge of magic flowed through his body.

[Skill Gained: Wind Shield]

The absorption of the stone had granted Hawk a new skill, though the new spell was unavailable to Karl, at least for now.

"Now that's more like it. Another spell for you, and that is one that a normal Windspeed Hawk wouldn't manage to learn. Congratulations." Karl cheered for the bird, who was already settling back down to sleep.

It had managed to comprehend better magic with the help of the stone, and now it had no intention of being awake while it wasn't hungry. Unfortunately for Karl, he wasn't so lucky, and the excitement kept him awake for hours, letting him get back to sleep just before the alarm went off to get ready for breakfast.

"You're looking chipper this morning. Aren't you sore?" One of the boys from the combat training class asked.

"I recover pretty quickly. It's all just a matter of eating enough to keep up with your needs." Karl laughed as he pointed to the plate in front of him.

After the breakthrough yesterday, his appetite had grown much larger, and again this morning, his clothes were a size too small. Before he went for training, he was going to have to go to the supply room and get new uniforms that actually fit.

Karl made his way to the laundry room, where the sign said they could apply for new uniforms, and was greeted by a very large woman in a raincoat.

"What do you need then? A bit early in the day for laundry, it won't be ready until later, and I'll put it in your room." She announced.

"Actually, I need uniforms that fit. I've been growing like crazy since I arrived, and neither of the ones I was given fits anymore, I can't even do up my shoes, I'm standing on the heel." Karl replied.

"Ah, right then. I'll get you sorted out. Just bring the others down to me later."

The laundry woman came back a few seconds later with two uniforms in fresh plastic bags and a pair of boots, plus a pair of shoes and sandals.

"If you turn out to be one of those giants, then you might need the sandals later. Just try to keep things in good condition, so I can issue them to the other students once they're all washed. Once you're settled through the growth phase, you should be fine."

Karl returned to his room to change, and then went down to meet Rita for their morning visit with the mages.

[Hey Hawk, which one do you think is more mana efficient, Rend, or Wind Shield?] He asked.

[Rend, of course. But Wind Shield can block big things, and water balls. Stupid water balls.] Hawk replied.

Karl wasn't sure what the water had done to him, the bird had been sleeping most of the morning yesterday, but there was a chance that the young bird was just moody and needed more attention.

"Why don't you come out and sit on my shoulder for the morning? We can block water balls together." Karl suggested, and Hawk was instantly out, sitting on the shoulder of his coat while impatiently rocking, waiting for them to get to work.

"I take it Hawk is going to join us for the day?" Rita asked.

"He was feeling a bit caged in, waiting to be able to do something other than sleep and wait. I think it will be good training for him as well, and there are plenty of spells for him to block. Don't worry, he knows to block the spells, not to attack the casters."

Rita laughed as she led them to the training grounds, where the mages were already assembled and waiting.

"You have a pet bird? That is just awesome. Will he be watching? That's a male Windspeed Hawk, right?" One of the girls from the mage class asked.

"He is. His name is Hawk, and he will be helping me out today with the blocking duties." Karl agreed.

The mages looked extra excited. They were wondering what a magical beast would do to block their attacks, but they didn't want to go find a wild one to find out firsthand. This was much safer, and they would be able to learn if the Hawk's logic on what should be blocked was different from what a human's would be.

The barrage began again, but with faster attacks, variable speed attacks, and multiple castings to try to get around Karl's defences. As soon as the fight started, Hawk leapt up into the air and circled behind the targets so that he could attack downward, the way that he was used to, and began targeting the water balls.

Nobody else noticed at first, as there were only a couple of water mages, but they were quite certain that the bird had something against them.

"Hey, did that Hawk just cast a Wind Shield? I swear that it used a barrier spell when my water balls split to go around the rending blades." The water mage complained.

"It's a Windspeed Hawk. Since when do they have a barrier ability?" One of the other mages laughed, and then saw his fireball simply dissipate against an invisible shield.

"Dammit, they do have a Wind Shield. Alright, I've got a counter for that." The Fire Mage raged, while the other mages laughed and the Hawk screeched happily.

His next attack was three fireballs, split in speed so they wouldn't be easily blocked.

Hawk spread his toes and swung his foot, sending a trio of rending blades out to intercept. They hit all three fireballs at once, and the other mages cheered.

"Man, he's good. No wonder people tell horror stories about trying to get away from bird type monsters."