

## Beast Master 1101

### Chapter 1101: Dungeon Study

Dana looked at the detailed map that Quinn and the other tanks of the Overlord Ranked groups had made of the Dungeon they were going to today.

It was intended for twenty-five people, and normally, they brought two main tanks, four off tanks and three clerics with them.

That was enough that the other sixteen spots could be pure damage dealers, and they shouldn't have any issues. Today, they had an extra cleric, one of their regulars. They didn't want to trust all the healing to the new members, and one of their Clerics was a Black Dragon, who would be better suited to dealing damage than healing most of the time.

Ophelia would be assigned one of the off-tank roles on the right flank.

The hope was that with Tessa in the group, the extra buffs she could give them would make up for the loss of a dedicated damage dealer.

Little did they know, Nachtia was fully geared for damage output, and her equipment had both [Crushing Blows] and [Shatter] on it, so if she stayed in dragon form her paw and claw attacks would be devastating.

"In summary, keep in formation A until we get to the first boss, where everyone but melee fighters should be at the edge of the marked circle to remain out of the area damage effect.

Do not stand in the fire.

Then, return to formation A as we move through the second section. There is a chance that we will get Earth Elemental spawns out of the walls or piles of rubble after the front line has passed, which is why we bring four off tanks.

If you see a stone construct forming, move to intercept.

Then, the second boss, ranged fighters remain in the middle, and the tanks will pick up the twin bosses as they appear from the edge of the structure.

Then, it's the same thing until the third boss, which is a simple hack and slash. The boss is on an enrage timer, and its damage increases every five seconds. So, the faster we get it down, the less our healers hate us.

The damage will hit everyone, so we're counting on the area healing effects to keep everyone going." He finished.

Lotus gave him a cheerful salute, and their experienced healer gave the boss a grim look, wondering if it was a good idea to replace all the other healers with newbies who had just made it to Overlord.

They did seem to be pretty well geared, though.

He couldn't inspect the gear while they wore it, but it all looked like crafted Overlord Rank gear. So, they might actually be the highest output members of the team.

With everyone assembled, Quinn led them all to the Dungeon and paid the group entry fee. The Guild in charge of this particular Dungeon had decided to collect in advance, but for the more experienced Guilds, the fee wasn't that high.

The loot from the Dungeon wasn't great, even on a good day.

When they stepped into the Dungeon, the usually carefree Lotus suddenly became focused, and Ophelia winked at her before transforming into a massive Dire Bear that made every other member of the group look tiny.

At least until Nachtia transformed into her dragon form.

The Black Dragon was assigned to the tail position of the group with Dana, who laughed and motioned for Tessa to hop on the dragon's back the way she usually rode Thor.

It would give her a better view of the battle, and she was already used to mounted combat while healing.

Nachtia gave Dana a wry smile as she was chosen to replace Thor for the run. He was technically still an Overlord, so maybe they could bring him along on the next run, once they had proven to themselves that they could do it without the overpowered defensive buffs.

Tessa's blessings made everyone pulse with faint red holy light, and Quinn led the group into combat.

That was when they realized they were about to have some problems.

Dana sent her Golems to the front lines, while she remained back to attack from a distance, despite being a blade specialist.

Her position here was to defend the healers.

But the Golems tripled attack speed and auto-parry managed to pull Earth Elementals away from the tanks on the first pull, and when they used a taunt to get them back, the ones on the other side were drawn by Ophelia.

The damage differential was simply too high.

The first fight ended abruptly when Nachtia stomped on the Elemental attacking Ophelia, and Quinn motioned for them to pause.

"Alright, I will admit, that wasn't the greatest start. Do either of you have threat reduction abilities?" He asked.

Dana and Ophelia both shook their heads.

"We will talk to your Guild Leader after the run. It's best if the mage doesn't draw the trash mobs away. Though for Ophelia it's understandable, as she is a Tank Class, so there is nothing in her skill set intended for monsters to ignore her.

Change of plans. Send the Golems to fight with the main tanks, so if they do draw attention, the monsters won't move. Ophelia, you get extra attention from the healers if you need it.

That's the best we can do for now."

The next group was a bit smoother, as the tanks simply let a few of the elementals go to the Golems, who had no issues dealing with them. Dana had more than one skill for improved damage, on top of her equipment. But she also had [Durable Constructs] which had granted her Golems their first set of equipment back when she was just a budding young mage.

The thought made Dana laugh. It had only been a few years, and they had flown by far faster than they had any right to.

However, it wasn't her inattention that annoyed the group. She was still casting spells.

It was Lotus singing as she worked, and dancing in the Dungeon, that was making it hard for everyone else to focus.

"No. That song is expressly forbidden. Off limits, never to be mentioned again." A middle-aged Warrior insisted.

"But I like that one. I even changed the wording. {Baby Snake do...}"

A hand clamped over her mouth, and the Cleric laughed.

"He's got five kids, don't antagonize the poor man. Just pick another song, maybe a hymn. They're used to battle hymns." He suggested.

Lotus shrugged and renewed the healing totems in the backpack that Rae made for her.

"Alright. I have a better song. We can keep going now."

#### Chapter 1102: Tank Spec Mage?

Quinn turned to look up at Tessa, who was just above his head, riding on Nachtia, who had stretched out her neck to use a small blast of her breath weapon on the elementals.

"How does your group get anything done?" He asked.

"Well, normally, Lotus does the melody, and the Golems harmonize. If we have Sister Rae with us, she will add a background symphony. But she's calmer after the first time. Sister Lotus is just too excited about meeting new people today." Tessa joked.

"Her healing is incredible, though. I don't think that we've taken any noticeable damage with whatever healing spell she is using." Quinn added as he prepared to move forward.

"Yeah, long duration is her specialty. Only when the group starts taking major damage will the rest of us have to step in."

The group moved to the first boss, and the ranged members moved to the left and right, remaining along the outermost ridge of the clearing, where the boss's attack skills shouldn't hit them if the tanks placed it properly.

The melee group charged, and Tessa laughed as Ophelia's claws caught on the Elemental's chest and gave it an unintentional body slam.

Most knockdown effects didn't work on bosses. But whatever skill she had been using apparently did.

The mages unleashed their spells on the defenceless boss as the rest of the warriors got into position, and then Quinn stepped back with a smirk and let the boss engage Dana's Golems.

If they were going to try to steal the boss from him, why not see if the constructs could take the beating in his place? Not every mage was a soft and squishy liability that needed protecting.

Even if this one was adorable in fox form.

Dana hadn't wanted to transform, but she had quickly realized that [Beast Form] actually granted her a substantial bonus to her spell power.

Lotus transformed into the Tree of Life, and the singing stopped, while she still danced in place to the song in her head, shaking her branches as pulses of golden healing light washed over the fight.

Tessa kept her buffs active on the warriors, and periodically sent [Smite] and [Holy Slash] attacks at the boss.

"Well, this is unconventional." The White Dragon Cleric muttered as he also began to cast [Smite].

There was nothing for him to do, as Lotus had a constant healing effect active, and the damage that the melee group was taking wasn't overwhelming the combination of Ophelia's damage transfer and Lotus' passive heals.

Tessa winked at him. "Yeah, she's a bit of an oddball, but she's fantastic at her job. You should see what happens when you put a fluffy beastkin in the tank position."

The other Cleric laughed. He could only imagine the enraged expression a Green Dragon Cleric would have if someone dared to damage the fluffy thing.

She was already sending extra healing effects to Dana's Greater Golems, the Dragon Hounds, and they weren't taking any damage.

"I just wish that I had more than one offensive spell." He muttered.

"Talk to Karl later. He can likely teach you something. Like this." Tessa suggested, then cast [Consecrated Ground] under the boss, increasing the Holy Damage it took, and the damage reduction of the melee fighters.

The boss dropped, and the Dungeon's ambient light flashed red.

{Special Event Triggered} Overwhelming Force. (Take zero damage during boss encounter, without a Totem Ranked or higher Guild Member)

Elementals began to swarm the platform, and Tessa activated [Compliance] as she hopped down from Nachtia's back.

[Compliance] Creates an area of {Oppression} 10 metres per User Rank, and grants the Dragon Crusader the physique of a Red Dragon at their own Rank.

She turned to engage the incoming Elementals as Dana summoned her Golems to her and the other Cleric retreated to where the melee group was standing.

"Fall back. Fast attack, intercept the elementals and defend the healers."

Dana's blades flashed as she fought off three elementals at once, and Lotus began to shuffle toward the middle of the platform without transforming. She couldn't move fast in tree form, but she didn't have to go far to be in the middle of the group.

Her oversized form made a natural regrouping point for everyone, and Quinn couldn't help but hum in appreciation as Tessa sent an Elemental flying with brute strength.

Whatever skill she was using, she wasn't any weaker than the Black Dragon or the Dire Bear. It had to be some form of Draconic Strength.

There weren't enough tanks to deal with twenty Elite Earth Elementals at the same time. But with the six of them, plus Tessa and Nachtia, they had enough to protect the ranged fighters and stop the initial charge while the other warriors and rogues got in position.

Finally, the White Dragon Cleric needed to start casting healing spells, as the Elite Golems were using Earth Magic to target the fighters close to them, and the damage was more than Lotus' tree and her healing totems would cover.

She could add more spells to increase her healing output, but she had a partner who hadn't been doing anything.

So, she didn't.

Lotus didn't consider Tessa a healer, she was the support member, with the buffs. Even when she wasn't on Thor.

Dana and her Golems quickly hacked through six of the Elementals, creating a hole in the attackers' formation. But more were coming from the edge of the open area.

"Melee, move back. Let us grab them again before you engage." Dana ordered.

Quinn looked over when he heard that musical voice, but Dana was already moving with her Golems to grab some of the Elementals and pull them back to the circle.

A Mage Tank? Since when was that a thing?

But, she was good at it. That [Auto Parry] skill was an absolutely broken ability. The only things that she had to actively deal with were the magical attacks, their fists weren't able to touch her or her Golems.

As the Elementals fell, more arrived, and each wave was more powerful than the last, to the point that both Lotus and the White Dragon Cleric were beginning to run low on mana.

But each wave also had fewer attackers.

That let Tessa retreat from the line and add her own healing to the effort, and the others' mana began to recover. Nachtia was going to do the same thing, but her body was so large that it blocked an extra attacker worth of the circle.

If she retreated, they would need two people to replace her.

#### Chapter 1103: Bonus Boss

For a moment, Quinn thought that they had finished the special event, as no more Elementals were coming.

Then, the building at the edge of the boss fight area began to shake. Stone by stone, it rearranged itself into a massive Earth Elemental boss and stomped toward the fight.

Ophelia huffed and stomped her foot, using [Gravity Slam] to slow the boss and let the others know that she would take the lead Tank role against this oversized opponent.

She was the only one other than Nachtia who was close to its size, unable to be stepped on or knocked over.

The boss rumbled, a sound like stone grating across stone, and Ophelia roared as she charged, claws clashing against stone clubs as the titanic combatants engaged.

"Gods above, that is terrifying." Quinn muttered as he joined the attack.

On four feet, Ophelia was twice the warrior's height. Standing upright to engage with the Elemental, she was simply enormous.

Ophelia grappled with the giant Elemental, who wrapped her form in a massive hug, smashing its clubs into her back as she tore apart its sides with her claws. She twisted as she sidestepped, turning the boss away from the group, so that everyone else was attacking its back.

The boss twisted its wrists and got the clubs between them to push Ophelia away for a moment, then the two collided again, shaking the ground under them.

And not just because Ophelia was using [Gravity Slam] on her attacks.

The group was hacking large chunks out of the Elemental's back, faster than the stone was reforming. But the healers could see that even with the damage reduction of [Consecrated Ground], Ophelia was slowly losing health.

Eventually, she would have to switch out with someone. But there was nobody who could take her place, the boss could just step over them.

Or on them, as had happened to one unfortunate warrior.

He had survived, but judging by the amount of damage and blood, it was not a pleasant experience.

Finally, an attack made one of the boss's legs crumble, which effectively ended its mobility and let Ophelia retreat for a few seconds to regenerate. It was still hopping after her, but now she could just drag it around in front of her without taking too much direct damage.

The rest of the melee fighters followed, circling around the mages in the middle.

It looked ridiculous, but it appeared to be an effective tactic to deal with the boss. Quinn made a mental note to do that next time, if they happened to trigger this special event again in the future.

The first boss had focused entirely on Dana's Golems, so it was possible that she could trigger it on most visits if it was a repeatable event.

With a crashing of stones, the boss collapsed, revealing a large glowing orb in the air above its corpse.

{Event Completed. Please select rewards.} Appeared in everyone's System interface.

{Uncommon Class Advancement Token}

{Grade 3 Skill Book}

{25 Skill Points}

{Amulet of Elemental Protection}

The whole group stared at the notices. Did they get to choose individually? Was this one reward for the whole group? And in a few cases, 'what are skill points?'

The Uncommon Class advancement held no real appeal to Dana and the members of the Darklight Host. They all had Uncommon or Rare Classes already. However, they could tell that the rest of the group was tempted.

So, if it gave the same thing to everyone, they would hold on to it, and see if they could pass it off to someone else for a nice bit of profit.

It didn't say that they couldn't.

Dana noticed as the first few eyes glazed over, indicating that the member was in the Class Selection menu.

"If you're picking the token, and plan to use it immediately, do it now. We will guard you. I already have a Rare Class, I will pick a different reward." She informed the group.

The chances of Dungeon mobs moving to attack them in an area that they had cleared was low, but never zero.

That caused all but one of the group members, other than the Darklight Host members, to vacantly stare at nothing as they picked a new class.

"I've got an advanced class. I'm going to take the Skill Points." The Blood Knight explained.

Dana made her selection, and then smirked as she saw the outcome.

{Grade 3 Skill Book Granted} [Golem Duplication]

Her first instinct was to use it, but she put it in her inventory instead.

If she gave the skill to Karl, she could let him learn it, and then make him make her a copy and teach her the skill. That way, she got the skill, got to keep the book, and Sister Rae would have a small army of Golems.

The Spider would be overjoyed if that applied to her Undead as well.

The skill wasn't clear if it was only [Golem] titled spells that it duplicated, or all summons. But she had two types of Golems, plus her Epic Guard, so she would find out soon enough.

Lotus giggled as she made her selection, and Dana rolled her eyes as she realized that the Nature Priestess's healing Totems had turned into four dragonfly winged Pixies that were waving little wands around and sprinkling dust everywhere, which vanished a few seconds later.

"Now they last until I dismiss them, and the healing doubled." Lotus explained.

Tessa patted her diminutive friend on the head and smiled. "I upgraded Consecrated Ground to level 3 directly. Same spell, greater effects."

Nachtia turned back into a human and shrugged. "I took the skill points. I've only got a few of my class skills. I need to get the rest, and I didn't start out with Karl to get all the bonus points that all of you did."

Ophelia chuckled. "I got a skill book of [Spell Lock]. It prevents casting of the element of their next ability for ten seconds if the hit lands. It should be pretty useful against bosses, even though it's got a long cooldown timer on it."

Dana laughed. "So, you don't get to do the Cara and just deny them all their abilities? Shame that. But I think that this suits your personality better."

#### Chapter 1104: Pixie Totems

The White Dragon Cleric gave them a confused look. "Who is Cara? Was there another mage in your group? We could have made space."

Dana shook her head. "Cara is an Overlord Ranked Chaos Badger. Not a beastkin. One of Karl's bonded partners. She's got Totem Ranked [Nullify] as a racial ability. It's absolutely, disgustingly broken against mages."

Ophelia nodded. "She tortures Totem Ranked Lich Lords for fun."

The Cleric blinked slowly. "You're saying she can just cast it over and over? As soon as she finishes the activation ritual?"

Ophelia shook her head. "I'm saying there is no ritual. She can use the skill instantly and at will, until she runs out of mana."

"How do you even capture, much less domesticate, a creature like that?"

Ophelia shrugged. "I don't think that we ever asked. One day, Karl just came back with a badger who liked loot and pranks."

Dana nodded in agreement. There was more to the story, but that pretty much summed up their introduction to Cara. The question of whether she was actually domesticated could be settled later.

"Is it true that actual badgers will pick pockets? Badger beastkin get a bad reputation as untrustworthy." One of the Warriors asked.

Lotus laughed, and motioned for Dana to answer.

"Not only will she do it, she will do it while you watch her. Then possibly give the item back if it wasn't interesting enough. She even has a Skill, an actual Skill, called Pilfer. She uses it on boss monsters in the Dungeon to see if they will give extra loot."

Ophelia smirked as a memory came to her. "You know, I heard a story about her from when we were still living overseas. She beat someone up, then stole a barbecue packet from a woman's purse as a way of suggesting that they roast him as a snack. You never know what she's going to do, and without Karl or one of her bonded siblings, it's impossible to stop her from doing it."

Quinn nodded in understanding. "Dealing with magical beasts is best left to the professionals. Even if they are bonded, they are still who they always were, and that doesn't tend to mingle well with other species."

The group sat in silence for a few minutes while everyone recovered, and when Lotus transformed back to human form, they got to their feet, ready to head to the next boss.

The process was the same as heading to the first boss, except now the warriors were singing along with Lotus' silly songs.

And that was driving Quinn and the White Dragon Cleric insane.

She was infecting the others.

But morale was high as they reached the second boss platform, and the ranged members retreated to the centre, while the tanks moved into position to intercept the bosses.

Ophelia moved up with them, and Quinn chuckled to himself.

The big berserker had a point. Even if she didn't want to be the tank, she was going to be one.

The Earth Elementals appeared and Ophelia moved to her right to gather one of them.

But because she was so intent on her task, she didn't notice the confusion of the other members. These Bosses were larger than usual, stronger, and they were using new skills.

"Something is off. The boss event must have changed the dungeon. Everyone, be on your guard for unexpected attacks." Quinn ordered.

There were still two bosses, so the fight proceeded as planned. The fact that they were using new skills made it a bit harder for everyone in melee range, but you couldn't always rely on muscle memory and familiarity to keep you safe.

So, while all of the warriors took splash damage from attacks targeted near them, only a few took direct hits.

"The bosses have changed, but follow the standard procedure. Focus on taking down the west boss first, then the north boss." Quinn ordered.

Dana moved the stone golems to help Ophelia hold the other boss, while she sent the Greater Golems to help the rest of the team with the main target. With her own spells added, she was confident that she wasn't slacking on the damage, even compared to the more experienced Overlords of the main team.

There was no question that Ophelia was earning her spot on the team with her damage transfer and ability to prevent a boss from turning away from her.

But it was more difficult to make a noticeable change with over a dozen others specialized in the role alongside you. What she hadn't noticed was how the boss responded to the different attacks. Dana deliberately targeted the same spots over and over, as that was the easiest way to take down a larger target.

But it was also the best way to do maximum damage to an Earth Elemental.

The deeper into the body you cut, the softer they were, so her strategy was actually noticeably more effective than the others, who aimed wherever they could hit easily.

It took nearly ten minutes to take down the first boss, but Lotus was still in a good mood, so the healing must not have been too intensive, Dana assumed.

She had a lot of constant area healing, and the White Dragon Cleric was taking up the spot healing role for those who took harder hits. The fact that she hadn't had to do more than that even with both bosses up was enough to keep her happy.

The fact that she had managed to turn her Totems into adorable tiny flying Fae probably didn't hurt, either.

"Back off and catch your breath. We will take over." Quinn instructed Ophelia.

They had been trading tanks using taunt skills throughout the fight, but she had been holding this one alone, they assumed.

Only, she hadn't needed to. The Golems had [Auto Parry] and they were able to block most of the boss' attacks, so Ophelia was mostly just fighting freely while they protected her.

She followed the directions, though. She couldn't tell them without transforming, and that would drop off the stacks of buffs that she had built up. Not worth the effort.

#### Chapter 1105: Paired Bosses

The second of the paired bosses died much faster than the first one, and Dana realized that there was a reason they were supposed to focus on them, and it wasn't survivability.

They shared a buff, and when both were alive, they both took less damage. So, you had to kill one first, and then you could more easily kill the other.

The warriors slumped to the ground as the second boss died, and the cleric turned his eyes to the sky.

"You know, we're likely to get the same issue with the last boss as well. But at least this one didn't give us any new surprise messages." He muttered.

"That's because we took damage. We will have to work on that until we can do a perfect run." Lotus agreed.

The Cleric gave her a confused look. "I thought you enjoyed your job?"

Lotus nodded. "I do. But I like it even better when I know that it is just for moral support and nobody would actually die if I messed it up."

"That is somehow exactly the sort of answer that I should have expected. Fortunately, the rest of the dungeon is just a straight damage test, and it looks like our team has more than enough, even with these tougher bosses."

After a short rest, they all got moving again. But their motivation was a direct contrast to Karl's current situation, as he worked his way through stack after stack of clothing that Rae had made.

There would be enough that he could put a dozen pieces a day on the market and not run out for the rest of the month. But Karl suspected that Rae would have objections to that plan.

She wanted her clothing distributed.

In fact, she wanted it so much that she had wandered out into the city to start selling some of it herself to people who looked like they needed a makeover.

Karl sighed as the Gargoyles reported that there was a large group of women at the house, about to knock on the door. He had put the items up for sale, but when he listed them on the Alliance sale boards, there had been no option to do direct sales like there was in the store.

He was avoiding putting Totem Ranked equipment in the Guild Store so that he didn't get in trouble with Lord Drodh if it made its way into his city.

If he put them up in the general store, someone would definitely start reselling them, or a certain fashion obsessed spider would start giving them to the employees, and that would cause even more questions and envy. They were already wearing clothes worth a small fortune as their uniforms.

If they were high fashion as well, the Demons would never let them sleep. It would be an eternal loop of design requests.

The Gargoyles led the pack of excited young ladies into the house, where they quickly surrounded Karl's worktable.

"I have separated them into three different groups, based on the major buffs. The secondary abilities vary, but if you stick to one pile, you will get a similar major buff.

Please don't mess up the sorting as you look for your perfect item.

I was going to hang them on racks, but you got here a bit faster than expected." Karl explained.

The ladies laughed. They had been waiting to see if he would put anything in the store today, as they had the day off. So, the moment that he did, they had been ready to start organizing a shopping trip.

Tian quickly made a set of racks with hangers for the clothing, and the shoppers began hanging everything up after they had lifted it to admire it.

That saved Karl a lot of effort, and then the next group could just turn them to look at them, or hold them up to compare them to themselves. That was less effective with bonded clothing, as it didn't always come in your size, even though it would adjust to fit once you put it on.

"Are we sure that this is for outdoor wear?" One of the ladies asked, holding up a bright red cheongsam with gold dragon designs on it.

The cloth was very light, and while it wasn't transparent, Karl could see how easily it flapped in the breeze.

"It looks like an outdoor type dress for hot weather. I will ask Lady Rae."

[It won't flap like that when you have your legs in it. Plus, there are straps to hold the upper thigh slit shut if you're shy.] She explained, knowing what one he meant as soon as Karl asked.

"She says it's fine once you put it on, and you can limit the movement of the upper section of the skirt. There are straps, see? They'll keep your modesty."

The mage shuddered a little and put it back, where it was immediately snatched back by a young warrior.

"This is perfect. If I wear it with my jade bangles, I will be the star of the club tonight."

She took out a bag of precious crafting metals, and a stack of Fae Hound pelts.

They were the most popular crafting material drop, so everyone would have plenty to trade. Normally, crafters would use what they needed and then trade the others around the continent, so there wasn't really a hard limit.

Just an intermediate stage that reduced the value.

But Rae had no intentions of selling raw pelts. Instead, she would make a full line of fur and leather clothing to sell completed.

There were plenty of cold and mountainous regions of the Dragon Isles, and the Dwarves adored fur fashion. Having people sell her all this Fae Hound Fur opened up a whole new market full of people that she could decorate.

"Is there a chance for a budget line? I could use a few more dresses for formal occasions, but buying them all as Totem Ranked armour is... extreme." One of the warriors asked.

"Rae says that she will have plenty of it coming once she has distributed enough armour. Around here, people wear their armour everywhere, so it's almost their casual fashion. Her goal is to spread her brand and see people in her clothes, so the armour came first." Karl explained again.

The warrior sighed. "I was afraid of that. Alright, I will have to bite the bullet and buy a few more today so that I have something for the winter formal."

"Winter formal?" Karl asked.

"Oh, the year's biggest festival. It's a party to celebrate the shortest day of the year when Earth Magic is at its strongest. Everyone dresses in their best and gathers for parties all over the city.

But don't worry, we don't actually get cold here, so the ladies can wear their best."

#### Chapter 1106: Remi Relents

The Winter Formal sounded like just the sort of thing that Dana might like, and if Karl's mental calculation was right, it came the day before her actual birthday.

This year would be a big one for Dana, as she had just turned eighteen.

Openly telling others that would be a bit awkward, though now that they were here on the shores of Lake Naraledum, where the strongest of adventurers gathered, it wasn't so unthinkable to be an Overlord before you were a proper adult.

"I will make sure that the ladies are ready for the Winter Formal. I'm sure that Lady Rae will make them something special so that they don't look too impoverished." Karl joked.

The mostly Totem Ranked group laughed at his description.

There was no way that the ladies of the Darklight Host could be said to look impoverished. Even a single accessory on their body was worth more than the entire wardrobe of half the people they passed.

They could wear the simplest of Clerical hassocks, and still be flaunting their wealth with a single bracelet or ring on their finger.

"Will you be making accessories any time soon? Or are you focusing on armour and clothing?" One of the warriors asked.

"No, I will have accessories available in a few days. I've finished with the first big load of outfits, enough that it should hold everyone off for a few days.

Now, I can plan for the Winter Formal, help the rest of my beasts advance to Totem Rank, and work on accessories."

The warrior gave him a sheepish look.

Even as a crafter, he had a lot going on, and the monthly Totem Ranked Dungeon was coming soon as well. He would certainly be wanted for that, and he would need to have all his beasts ready beforehand.

Though, as they recalled, he didn't actually need them in combat.

[Once we finish with this mass purchase, I have devised an intensive training program that should help everyone advance before the Dungeon run.] Karl informed the group.

Tian flexed, which made Thor and Hawk laugh.

He didn't need the advancement, but some training would do the tiny fox good.

Hawk smirked and squawked, waking Cara up from a nap. She was on her back, feet in the air on a pile of loot, using the stolen Lich Lord's sarcophagus as a mattress.

[Hmm?]

[Time to work. You need exercise and training. Karl says we should all be Totem for the next time we work.] The bird gloated.

Cara considered that for a moment. Playing with Karl sounded fun. But she was having a good dream.

[Sister, help me out here.]

Remi tossed Cara a small golden potion between their spaces, which the badger swallowed, bottle and all.

[I don't think that's how you do it.] Thor noted.

You definitely needed to at least open it, or chew it, or something.

But logic and Cara only had a passing familiarity with each other, and seconds later the potion was taking effect, and her power levels were rapidly climbing.

The effect of the potion was still growing when Cara reached the Totem Rank, but then the strangest thing happened. All that power simply vanished, and her eyes turned jet black, with sparkling golden flecks of light in them, like a night sky.

Outwardly, her appearance hadn't changed, and it certainly wasn't as dramatic as what Remi repeatedly went through when she advanced. But those eyes were a sure sign that something had changed.

Cara held up a mirror from her pile of loot and examined herself, then nodded happily and rolled over to continue her dream.

Goal accomplished, Totem Rank achieved.

Hawk squawked in annoyance. The sisters were definitely ganging up on them at this point. All the sisters were Totems already, but had they offered any help to the brothers?

Remi giggled at Hawk's annoyance, then activated [Polar Apocalypse], the new spell that the Goddess had taught her. It was exactly like the regular flaming version, but everything was ice.

Hawk rolled his eyes, and Remi's giggled turned to full out laughing.

[Fine, I did make potions for my brothers as well. But there is one small problem. I don't think that I'll be able to do them again. I got the Totem Ranked version of the ingredients, and it doesn't work.] She explained as she passed matching golden potions to Thor and Hawk.

[What do you mean, it doesn't work? It's the same ingredients.] Karl asked.

[Oh, poor phrasing. The potion works. But it's not any stronger when you use better ingredients. So, with both of them close to the bottleneck, they should be fine getting to Totem Rank. However, it will be useless to them after that.

I don't think that it will do much at all for a strong Totem.

So, we can help our allies grow, but not all the way to the top until I learn a new potion recipe.] Remi elaborated.

Karl knew that they wouldn't be too mad about that. Mythic Rank anything was rare enough. Being able to make more with an Overlord or Totem Ranked potion was asking far too much.

Most likely, they would need ingredients from the Immortal Realms if they were going to make a potion to force an advancement to Mythic Rank. And in the Immortal Realm, such a potion would be completely worthless, as everyone there was expected to be above that rank to begin with.

Karl didn't know all the details, but Remi and Opal had both been reading books on the topic in their spare time, so he had heard plenty of random details from their thoughts.

[That's fine. If we can get everyone to Totem eventually, they will be happy. Now, which brother wants to go first? Thor or Hawk?] Karl asked.

[Thor.] Hawk insisted.

Not that he didn't trust his sister, but he wanted to see if an Impenetrable Bulwark Behemoth could actually make it to Totem Rank, when their species wasn't supposed to be able to.

#### Chapter 1107: Totemic Thor

Thor looked at the glowing potion, and then gently picked it up in his beak before pulling the cap off with his tongue to let it pour down his throat.

[And now we know why Tessa likes him so much.] Cara sleepily mumbled, almost making Thor spit up the potion.

But he got it down successfully, and his power was growing even more rapidly than Cara's had. It was almost as if the potion were extra compatible with his immense body, and he crashed headlong into the bottleneck at the very peak of Overlord Rank.

Then, he stopped, while the power in his body continued to grow.

Along with the power, his body continued to grow, as if the Behemoth was aging at an accelerated pace, sitting at the species cap for internal power.

At first, it looked like the species barrier was going to be too strong to overcome, but just as the potion's effect was beginning to fade, Thor's space rang with power, vibrating like a bell and waking Cara from her nap.

[What's going on? Oh, congratulations. Are we having a party? Where is Lotus?] Cara asked.

[She's still in the Dungeon with the others. I'm getting everyone ready for our own Dungeon trip. That's why you had to advance.] Karl reminded her.

[Oh, we're doing a Dungeon? I was distracted. The visions come much more often here, and it's like an afternoon drama.]

Thor still looked like Thor. Or, like Thor the Behemoth, as it was so much different than he had looked as Thor the Lightning Cerro. That was a good enough sign for Hawk, and he popped the cork on the bottle with his beak and drank the potion down.

He flared with Ghostfire as the potion flowed down his throat, and his body began to change. The Ghostfire Thunderbird was shaped very much like an actual hawk would be expected to look, if you ignored the fact that they were covered in fire.

But now, his body was becoming more slender, and his tail feathers were becoming longer.

[He's beginning to look more like a Ghostfire Phoenix.] Remi noted.

It still wasn't the same as the pictures in her book, but he was certainly more agile looking than the images of Thunderbirds.

Hawk gave a long, keening cry. He had reached Totem Rank, and his flames were now perfect. This advancement was everything that he had hoped for, and it even came with a lighter body, so he could be more agile for strafing runs on ground targets.

That made everyone, and Karl wondered what the team was going to think when they showed up to hold the briefing before the Dungeon.

But Karl also suspected that Thor's advancement wasn't entirely finished. His energy had a sense of resistance, as if something was still holding him back, or a skill wasn't fully advanced yet.

Hopefully, that would sort itself soon, or Karl would have to find a way to help.

"You seem distracted, Guild Leader." Karl heard, pulling his attention back to reality.

"Sorry, I was speaking with the beasts. What did I miss?" He asked, just realizing there were still many people in the room, as well as the crafting team, who must have just come upstairs.

"Not too much, everyone is still trying to decide on the fashions, but they thought that you fell asleep." Lala whispered.

Karl exchanged goods with a few who were ready to pay and leave, and Lala the bunny opened a trade interface to pass him a bunch more.

"I think it should be enough. I didn't argue with them, but it looks like a lot." She informed Karl quietly.

"You did good. It looks like more than enough to keep Rae happy, and you got lots of fur for her new winter crafting line."

The Totems chuckled at the pleased blush the girl got when Karl praised her, and continued going to the four bunny girls to check out their shopping.

That left Karl free to take items out to start working on his Accessory inventory.

More people were still arriving, drawn by the news of the inventory, or possibly to the potential for the sight of the ladies modelling their new purchases. That seemed to be the draw for most of the men, who were picking from a much smaller selection of clothing.

But there were still valuable items for them, and having all the benefits of light armour while looking casual was a huge flex for the adventurers.

For safety's sake, almost everyone wore armour in public. So, showing up in slacks and a shirt showed a level of supreme confidence that you could deal with anyone who held a grudge against you.

"Do you think that Lady Rae could make more suits? Like black suits with long sleeved shirts? It would be good to have formal outfits with good defensive stats." One of the warriors asked.

[Rae, do you have suits?] Karl asked.

[In the chest under the crucified Ettin. The top ones are Overlord Ranked.]

Karl pulled the chest of suits out, as there were plenty of Totem Ranked shirts and pants available.

"I have some Overlord Ranked suits available, and I can upgrade them for damage reduction, if you're worried about being attacked." He offered.

"Oh, that would be great. Overlord Ranked isn't quite as expensive, but it will still make a point."

The other men came over to see what Karl would do, then looked confused when he just wrote something strange on the back of the pants and the collar of the jacket, then flooded them with mana.

But the item immediately changed when he finished, and they all smiled when they realized that the suit now reduced 400 points of damage.

That would be a joke to a Totem Ranked monster. But for a punch to the face, it was just the right amount of damage reduction that they shouldn't take much, if any, damage from one of their fellow Totem Ranked warriors.

"How many of them do we need?" Karl asked as he finished.

"How many do you have? There are twelve of us here who often wear suits." The warrior who had first asked about the item replied.

Karl checked the pile.

There were four more Overlord Ranked suits in black sitting in the chest, then the rest were all older stock from when Rae was a Monarch. The styles also varied with the older items, where the Overlord ones were designed in the style that the Demons in Drodh liked.

"Three more. First come, first served."

## Chapter 1108: Personal Shopper

The men all glared at each other for a second, then rushed toward Karl.

A rapid motion slap fight ensued, as they all fought to prevent anyone from putting a hand on the crafter. First come, first served was a cruel mistress, and they were not going to give up their chance at a spot without a fight.

A hand landed on Karl's shoulder, and he looked up to see a smirking female mage.

"I will take one, please." She announced.

The warriors instantly began shouting at her.

"Evil woman, what tricks are you playing? You've never worn a suit a day in your life." One of the men insisted.

"Plus, it wouldn't even look good on you. Just stick to the frilly dresses and leave our fashion for us." Another warrior agreed, while trying to pretend his effort was to push her away, not to claim the next spot in line.

"Oh no, you don't. First, she needs to tell us what sort of stunt she's pulling." One of the other warriors demanded, pulling him back from Karl's seat.

With a flip of her auburn curls, the woman smirked at them all and held up her left hand to show off a diamond ring.

"Have you all forgotten? I am a married woman, and my husband is standing right over there at the back of the room." She declared.

"Jethro! You no good slimy dog. How could you do something so underhanded?" The man next to him, who had long since been pushed out of contention for the final two spots, demanded.

"All is fair in love and war. And today, my love went to war for me." He declared proudly.

The other men laughed at his proud assertion. He wasn't wrong, though. There was no restriction that they couldn't have someone order for them.

"Alright, you all sort out the order while I work." Karl insisted as he got started on the next suit.

While Karl and the Totems argued about casual wear, the Overlords were sitting on the ground in the dungeon, looking over the corpse of the final boss.

"You know, we may have miscalculated slightly on this run. Who would have guessed that if you didn't take any damage on the first boss, the final boss would start out enraged?" Quinn laughed weakly.

Ophelia shook out her fur and transformed back to Werebear form. "But look at the loot. You guys told me that we shouldn't expect much, but we've got nine epic grade pieces here from a single run. Plus, look how happy Ruth is."

Ruth was one of the group's mages, and was currently engrossed in lovingly cradling an Overlord Ranked Epic Grade staff with maximum spell haste and reduced mana cost on it.

As far as Epic Grade weapons went, it was among the finest, and perfectly suited to most mages.

A true rarity with random stat generation.

"Are you sure that you ladies don't want to bid on any of these items?" Quinn asked, looking at the pile that he had arranged on the floor for inspection.

Lotus laughed and flopped down on Ophelia's lap.

"We're already wearing nothing but Epic gear. While some of the pieces are good, it's more of a side grade. Is that a word? Not really better but sometimes better." She explained.

Quinn nodded in understanding, while the group's only other Cleric smiled at the tiny Nature Priestess.

"We should do this again. As stressful as it was to realize that the final boss was going to be enraged from the start, nobody died. Plus, we got more usable loot today than we have in a month of twice-weekly visits.

For that reason alone, it's worth it to try to do the first boss without taking any damage again." He offered.

Lotus nodded. The final boss hadn't actually been bad. She had set up in the middle of the room, and they had fought it at the edge, while slowly moving backward so that it didn't turn on the melee fighters behind it.

She had to actually flex her healing muscles today, but only a few times did Tessa need to join the healing team to prevent mana depletion, and Nachtia had remained in dragon form, doing damage, the whole time.

Lotus frowned for a moment, then continued.

"You know, if we got everyone the good gear, you could probably change the whole composition. Four clerics was definitely too many today. Even two would have been enough if we had time to craft fully healing specialized equipment for them both."

The group didn't look sold on that idea. Three healers was the bare minimum for a group this large. Many groups kept the balance the same as when they were doing five person dungeon runs. Five tanks, fifteen damage dealers, five healers.

The extra tanks mostly worked as damage dealers, but they would swap out roles, so nobody got too tired before a boss fight.

"Well, that's mostly up to your Guild, isn't it? You're the only ones in the Alliance with access to that much Overlord Ranked equipment." Ruth joked.

Lotus shrugged. "The Karl is weak to puppy eyes. If we beg him properly, I think that we can get him to spend at least half a day making equipment for the Overlords. It's easier for him than the stuff for the Totems and Myths."

Ophelia tickled her little cleric and laughed as Lotus squirmed.

"We are working on getting the power level of the others up, but it will be a while before we have other Overlord Rune masters. Monarchs might be coming soon enough, but an Overlord will take a while."

Lotus nodded in agreement. They could make the Lala bunnies into Monarchs right away. And those dragonkin guys too, she supposed. But she would have to talk to Remi about doing the whole Guild.

They would need better materials to work with. They had Dora and those Orcish Druids with the good jokes working in the Drodh Guild House. If they were advanced to Monarch, they could make all the wooden accessories anyone could want.

The Druids were still Commanders, as far as she knew, but Remi could probably fix that.

Remi was good at fixing the boring spots.

## Chapter 1109: Work Mode

And that was how the next few days saw Karl stuck in worker mode, making a constant stream of accessories. Rae and Thor were working the retail side, selling off all the casual and formal clothing that Rae was making, and which Karl had quickly upgraded.

But Karl was spending nearly every waking minute upgrading accessories that the crafting team had made from Overlord and Totem Ranked metals and stones.

Almost all of it was Overlord Ranked and contained targeted buffs, starting with the healing specialist buffs that Lotus had requested. But he was also doing some more creative ones for the Totems, who had more specialized skills.

With the rarity of non-class acquired skills, adding even the seemingly simplest of spells to different items had become the most lucrative of abilities.

Especially healing.

Just for laughs, Karl had put [Sacred Heal], Tian's combined healing and cleansing ability, on a Mythic Ranked Holy Stone set into a Totem Ranked bracelet.

The result had been utter chaos in the Alliance Chat, and a meeting with the Guild Leaders, which was scheduled for fifteen minutes from now.

But the meeting wasn't a big deal. If they had more Mythic Holy Stones, he could make more of the bracelets.

It was the notice that he had received when he completed the item that had Karl excited.

{Verified} [Fundamental Rule Compatibility] Divinity

It hadn't seemed like a major thing at the time, but once Karl took time to focus on it, he realized that he had been neglecting the most important part of his own advancement.

If he was going to make it to Mythic and Immortal Rank smoothly, he needed understanding of the most fundamental rules of the Universe. But the higher levels of understanding were a passive buff to his skills that wasn't affected by resistance of the common sorts.

Karl finished making another batch of attack speed and skill power rings, the most common Overlord Ranked request, and prepared for the meeting. There were only two healers in the Mythic group from the Alliance, so it shouldn't be a big deal for them to decide who got the first bracelet.

But the way Deve had spoken in the message made it sound like things weren't so simple.

A knock at the door had the Gargoyle on main floor duty running. They loved answering the door. Of course, there was a Gargoyle on the roof, so they already knew who was at the door, but the small creatures would visibly pout if someone else opened the door while they were running for it.

So now, nobody bothered. It was their job, unless you were right beside the door.

Deve led the group inside, and Karl immediately felt the power of one stranger in their midst. The others he had all met, at least briefly, while making equipment.

But this one was powerful.

"Karl, meet Azov, the Immortal Regent of Sholaha." Deve began.

"And Avatar of the White Dragon. It's a pleasure to meet you, Regent." Karl replied with a polite bow to the Immortal Rank powerhouse in front of him.

The White Dragon smiled at him. "You are a most curious sort, aren't you? I can smell the divine favour on you from here. But that's not our concern for the day. I was made aware that an item with [Sacred Heal] was put up for sale on the Alliance market today."

Karl frowned. "I thought that the Alliance markets were private?"

Azov chuckled. "I was in a debriefing with one of our Clerics about an incident in the Overlord Ranked Dungeon a few days ago when it happened. His response made it impossible to miss, and he had no problem sharing.

But if he hadn't, I doubt that either of these two would have been able to resist the urge to brag."

That was almost certainly true.

Nobody could resist bragging about getting a new item that gave them an overpowered skill.

"I take it that you would like one?" Karl asked.

Azov nodded. "That I would, but it's less urgent, as I can use the spell. What I am more interested in is whether you can inscribe the spell into a book. Normally, Divine Magic cannot be written by anyone less than an Immortal, so imagine my shock when I learned that someone had put it on an item at the Totem Rank."

Karl shook his head. Trying to write that spell in a skill book would take more paper than he had seen in his life. Writing it on a Holy Stone was more like guidance, and only those who had enough favour of their gods could use it.

"Creating items with the effect is different. Mostly, I describe the basics of the spell and the desired outcomes, along with a short prayer passage. Generic, because I don't know what God or Goddess the user will be following. If their deity doesn't grant them the ability, the spell won't work, or it will only work at partial efficiency." Karl explained.

Then, he handed the Immortal the item in question.

The runes on the stone were mostly hidden now that the gem was set into the bracelet, but there should be enough visible for him to guess what Karl had done.

Assuming he could read them.

The dragon's eyes shone golden with holy light, and the runes on the gem lit up in the air in front of him.

"Oh, this is lovely. Yes, you understand the spell very well. But tell me, how did you learn it? This is not a spell that most Clerics of the World Dragon receive, much less someone with a simple avatar transformation." He asked.

"From a Stonefur Divine Fox. My Class allows me to share some of the skills of my bonded partners, and that is one of them. I'm not particularly skilled with the spell itself, but I understand it well enough to make a gem with its effect.

But, I suppose that shouldn't be unexpected on my end. If the Gods don't grant you that favour, it's only a mediocre healing spell. And I'm not a Cleric." Karl explained.

Though, that did bring up an interesting paradox. Could Dana use the spell, now that she was part Stonefur Divine Fox? It might only be a tiny bit from her advancement, but it might let her learn some sorts of healing magic that would lead to an even more advanced class the next time she advanced hers.

#### Chapter 1110: Immortal Azov

Azov turned the bracelet in his hands for a moment, then took out a Mythic Grade Holy Stone.

"Please make another of these stones for me. I wish to give it to my successor in celebration of his advancement."

Karl nodded. "Your successor in the Clergy, or as Regent of Sholaha?"

"Both. He is reaching the peak of Totem Rank now, and it is only a matter of time before he can take over the day-to-day operations of the nation. Then, when and if he reaches Immortality, he can take over my position in the Clergy, and I will retire to the Immortal Realm."

Karl nodded. That meant that this was an extra important gift, so he wondered if he should have the large stone carved into a statue. It was a milky white stone brimming with holy power, so it would make an excellent gift as a dragon carving.

But actually adding the spell to that would be a nightmare.

So, Karl formed the spell on the stone as the others watched silently.

"There you go. It should work perfectly now. But I'm sure you know that if you try to test it, there is a good chance that it will bond to you instead." He warned.

Azov smiled. "Oh, I'm well aware of the phenomenon. I will pass this to him now, and then we need to have a discussion about a few other topics."

Then Azov opened a portal and handed the stone through to someone, who made a startled noise, but was cut off in the middle of his first word as Azov closed the portal.

"Portal token linked to my office, a relic from my predecessor. Very handy." He explained.

Karl smiled, trying not to laugh at the fact that he had obviously just cut off whatever question his assistant had for him.

Most likely it was about the random Totem Ranked item that had been dropped on the desk without any form of explanation. But he was the leader of the nation, so it could have been about nearly anything.

"Now, I have brought the leaders of your Alliance together for a reason. I have spoken with the court Seer, and they determined that your Alliance was on the ascendant, to a degree far greater than any of the other Alliances in the nation.

Unlike some insecure leaders, I'm not threatened by powerful residents.

However, a large financial imbalance between Guild Alliances is not optimal for the region. More than that, a large power imbalance does not suit my goals of social stability.

In next year's Totem Ranked Challenges, I will be placing a new restriction, and I thought that you should be the first to know of it. Each Champion may only compete for one Dungeon trial. It should clear up the backlog of competitors going for multiple dungeons until they win one.

But it will also stop certain competitors from claiming multiple Dungeons in the name of their Alliance."

Karl chuckled, and the Immortal smiled at him.

"You're not quite alone. There are two others who took multiple Totem Ranked Dungeons this year. I considered just making all the trials start at the same time, but that was a logistical nightmare to arrange judges and referees for."

Deve poked Karl in the side. "And there is already a rule against competing above or below your Rank, so you can't go for the easy pickings in the Mythic Rank."

Azov rolled his eyes at the Druid. "Do you really think that he could claim a Mythic Dungeon?"

A chorus of affirmative responses filled the room, and Deve laughed. "Unlike the Guild Challenges, there is no rule against using bonded pets in the trials. How do you think that it would end when he brought out five Totem Ranked beasts with Limited Invulnerability and superfast regeneration?

You might as well say that he's mugging them once the Behemoth and the Demonic Spider get a grip on his competitors."

Azov sighed. "I see your point. All the more reason not to change the rules about the challenges themselves. If you're the strongest at your Rank, that's that."

"So, your goal is to stop us from becoming obscenely wealthy by capping the number of Dungeons that we can control?" Karl asked.

Azov made a noncommittal gesture. "It's a start, but the Seer says that it's not even close to enough to limit the imbalance, so don't worry too much that you will be left impoverished.

I talked to Lord Drodh, and he informed me that your Guild has been good about complying with his requests not to flood the market with dangerous items.

I believe that something similar might be a suitable request for the Nara Group Guild Alliance. Equipping all your members is a noble goal, but spreading dozens of Totem Ranked items a day through the open market would be disruptive."

Karl shrugged. "Well, I have limited amounts of raw materials to work with, and even more limited amounts of crafting time. So, the damage would be limited. But I see your point. Even five Totem Rank, Totem Grade weapons or armour pieces a day would cause chaos.

The dungeon loot here really is trash compared to even the Overlord Ranked Dungeon in Bara. At least that dungeon drops all Overlord Ranked crafting materials."

"There are Overlord Ranked Dungeons that do drop better loot, but they tend to be monopolized, as even here, there are only so many Dungeons to go around, and most of them have entry limits.

The best only open once a month, but some of the others open daily and only allow a few groups. So, the Guilds closest to them set up guards to keep anyone else from entering without an agreement.

I let it slide because ultimately, an Overlord Ranked Dungeon doesn't really matter, and none of the Guilds that engage in such behaviour are Crafting Guilds, so they can't even use the materials they loot. They have to sell them all wholesale." Azov explained.

"And because they have to sell, they don't unbalance the system, and most of the trade goods get shipped out of the country because Sholaha has the vast majority of the powerful Dungeons." Karl realized.

"Exactly."