

Beast Master 1131

Chapter 1131: Spread The Word

Over the next few minutes, dozens of messages were sent back to Bara, describing the situation at the Darklight Host Guild House.

But it was the message about the man who was willing to teach Master Smiths how to use the lost art of the Dwarven Runeforge that garnered the most attention. They had seen a few Runic items in the city already, either purchased from Drodh, or shipped by merchants and brought by travellers.

But the weapons that were going around were mostly Commander Rank ones. The common items that the Guild House kept in stock, not the sort of masterpiece that they were looking for.

However, having seen them was enough to let everyone know that there was a chance that this was a real offer.

The question was 'who is willing to relocate to learn it'?

Dwarven Master Smiths were usually over a hundred years old, and had long-lasting ties to their home forge, which had usually been in their family for many generations. The only ones who would be willing to go would be a disgraced master, who wouldn't qualify for the task of certifying Journeymen, or someone from a family with more than one recognized Master.

There were some of those in Bara, but few enough that The Sculptor's Guild leader wasn't sure that they would get a volunteer without spreading the message all over the Dragon Isles.

There were plenty of other Dwarven Nations with Master Smiths.

But favours were best done close to home.

The staff that Opal had created for the workshop village continually refilled the drinks and food as the Sculptor argued animatedly with his System Interface, looking for someone to do the job and weeding out members of his Guild who he didn't trust unsupervised.

"I have a team of Sculptors coming, and the Master is an Earth Mage, so he can help with your Guild's Material Shortages. The cost won't be low, but I am sure that we can work that into the contract." He finally announced.

Karl smiled. "That will work wonderfully. The standard contract has profit sharing in it, and clauses for additional work, including raw material creation. If it needs to be amended, just let me know."

A copy was sent through the System Interface, and Karl waited for everyone to read it and decide if they would sign.

The whole process was highly entertaining to Slate, as he had never seen a worker's Guild simply accept a contract before. He hadn't read Karl's offer, but it was clearly more generous than the counteroffer that the Guild Leader had prepared, as he hadn't even brought it out.

Ashbringer's voice was followed by the sound of many stomping feet, and then the Demonic Grandmaster Smith led a large group of Dwarves into the tavern.

"Ooh, isn't this place swanky? And Fox kin barmaids? How do ye' expect any of the apprentices to get to work on time?" An old Dwarf with a bald head and thinning beard demanded.

"That's not really our concern, is it? Keeping Apprentices in line is the job of the masters. If they can't handle their ale or a pretty lady, you can just keep them in the forge. There are cots." Ashbringer explained.

Petros and the Sculptor's Guild Leader both looked confused when they saw this group. They weren't the Sculptors that he had called for.

"Karl, these fine gentlemen are from the Blacksmith's Association in Zindab. Someone informed them that there was a chance to obtain Dwarven Runecrafting here, and they came right over to negotiate." Ashbringer explained.

Slate Petros gave the smug group of aging Dwarves a confused look. "How did you learn about the opening so quickly? I wasn't going to put it up on the open board until tomorrow."

The Totem Ranked Dwarf standing beside Ashbringer smirked. "I have my connections."

The two Dwarves glared at each other, and then Sapphire walked in with Bobby and Jo behind her.

The Drodh city leaders were definitely doing some day drinking today with all these ranking visitors just showing up in the city unannounced.

Or, they might have just decided to ignore whatever went on at the Darklight Host Guild House.

"Oh, everyone is here. Guild Master, we had some questions about an item that I wanted to make, but it looks like everyone is here already." The Blue Dragon announced.

"Oh, you know these fine gentlemen?" Karl asked.

"That might be an overly generous description. But yes, I know them. I taught both of the young masters Petros primary school."

She gestured to the old man beside Ashbringer and to Slate, who smiled gently at her.

"Teacher Sapphire. I see that you have found a new target for your curiosity. Did the Darklight Host promise you a new skill to get you out of the Library?" Petros asked.

"Didn't just offer. He already taught it to me. I'm closer to recovering a lost art of the Dwarves than either of you, and I can't even use it when I do." She gloated.

The balding old man snorted in amusement, then shook his head.

"Hassan Petros, Master Dwarven Smith from Zindab. Formerly of Bara. It's a pleasure to meet you, Guild Leader Karl. Is that Ale that I smell?"

Karl gestured to the table. "Come and eat. There is plenty of food ready. We have Sculptors from the Guild coming, but it seems we might not need to wait for smiths."

Slate raised his hand to stop them. "Before we get started, when did you move to Drodh, teacher? I could have sworn that you were in Zilaz, looking for knowledge with the Mythic Dungeon teams."

Sapphire nodded. "I still live there, but the Darklight Host has locations in both cities and a portal between them, so I came here with my questions. It's not a big thing, Shaman. I will be back home in an hour or two.

Perhaps closer to two. The young apprentices here are most interesting."

Karl smiled back at the dragon. "At least the chaos of the Guild House didn't put you off your desire to work with us. They really are a great bunch, and we've got a whole new workshop made here.

If you want to relocate the workers from the Alliance Manor, there is much more room here. It's loud, though, so it might be wise to have the Runecrafters stay there, while the sculptors work here."

Sapphire waved her hand dismissively. "We will work it all out. I memorized all two hundred and ninety-six thousand possible compound runes last night, and I've got a fairly good grasp on them, but I came across an item that you made, and the outcome had no bearing on the actual instructions in the runes."

She held up her handwritten copy of the runes, and Karl laughed. "Read it in Dwarven, not Runic. It's a poem. Of sorts."

Chapter 1132: Choose A Forge

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Sapphire gave a very undignified giggle as she read the short poem about handsomeness and virility that someone, most likely Loros, had written on the Commander Rank charm bracelet that she had seen.

The primary function was personal grooming, and cleaning clothes. But the little poem gave a small bonus to the wearer's attractiveness and strength.

Read in Dwarven, it said [Only the most rugged and Manly know the value of cleanliness], but in Runic it was basically gibberish about strong arms and beards.

It had started as a joke by Karl, doublespeak that had a meaning in both Runic for function, and Ancient Dwarven for poetry, but the Dragon hadn't realized that other than herself, Karl was the only one present who spoke the language fluently.

"Ah, I get it now. I wonder if it works in Draconic?" Sapphire pondered, then walked off to sit at another table and work on a bracelet.

The dwarves chuckled, and Karl shrugged. "Blue Dragons get like that with new knowledge. Give her a chance to test her theory and she will come finish her conversation with you.

But on to important topics. I see that we have a Totem and a lot of Overlords. Are you all part of the same Guild or group? I don't see a system tag for an organization."

Hassan shook his head. "No, we all research together, but we're not part of any sort of formal organization."

"That's a good thing, I think. If you're part of another group, it's a separation level between the crafters and the sales of the products. If you were going to be learning here, and working here to make products, but there was someone in the middle looking for a cut of your income, we would have to adjust the deal so that you wouldn't end up broke." Karl explained.

The Blacksmiths nodded in understanding. "Oh, yes, that would be an issue. I know that the Sculptors pay an annual fee to their association. The Blacksmiths do too. But it's not a large one, it's just enough for them to keep track of everyone and send out the certificates."

The Sculptor's Guild Leader finished his ale and rose to his feet. "You've got new members to settle. I will go get the sculptors ready. They should be here in a day or two."

Karl shook the Dwarf's hand. "I look forward to meeting your recommendations. The Darklight Host has plenty of work for those with the skills."

Once the sculptor was gone, Hassan looked over the Dwarves from Drodh, who were all gathered in the Tavern now, preparing for the hardest part of the transition.

The bargaining for the best forge spots.

Ashbringer raised his hand to get everyone's attention.

"As the lone Guild Member among the smiths, I will be the arbiter for the forge choices. The third level forge by the entrance is already taken, but you may choose any other." He ordered.

"What if we were Guild Members?" Hassan asked.

"Then you would have gotten to choose first, as the Totem Ranked Smith. Then me, as the longest serving Overlord." Ashbringer joked.

Hassan smiled. "Well, I wanted the one at the back of the room anyhow. I don't like apprentices walking back and forth in front of my door all day. So, that works out perfectly.

Now, should we do this by lottery?"

Ashbringer shrugged, and Sapphire looked up from her work.

"I have an idea. We used it to pick chairs when I was teaching school. Everyone, write your name on a piece of paper, and put it in the cup for the forge spot you want. Then, I will pick one name for each spot, and any spots that weren't chosen will be available for the names that weren't picked.

So, it's up to luck whether you get your first choice or not." The blue dragon suggested.

The Dwarves considered that, and then reluctantly nodded.

Sapphire smiled, and took out a cloth with holes cut in it, and a collection of cups.

"You can go in any order you like, I will be using magic to pick the slips, so it doesn't matter who goes first." She instructed, using her well-trained school teacher's tone.

Karl laughed as the Dwarves had a silent slap fight over who would get to drop their names first, which ended when Sapphire gave them an unamused look.

"Form a single file line. One at a time, drop your name in the chosen cup." She ordered, and the Dwarves all fell in line, well-trained by a childhood of Blue Dragon Clerics teaching basic school.

They did fight over the spots, but they followed her orders, taking their positions by internal hierarchy that Karl didn't understand. While they were all Overlords, they were from two different cities and at least four different forges.

So, he hadn't expected it to go so smoothly.

Such was the power of the Blue Dragons.

The line went through once, and then Sapphire lifted the curtain and removed six cups.

"There will be a second round." She declared, then cast a spell that caused names to lift, and then fly to the various forges.

Karl smiled. "Once everyone has chosen forges, I will upgrade them with Runes. Each forge can be slightly different, if you have preferences for your forge fire."

The victorious Dwarves cheered, and Ashbringer patted Hassan on the back. "You should have him do yours first. If you've got a favourite form of forge fire, or other conditions that work well with your skills, his Runes can do a wonderful job of recreating them.

I have gotten quite proficient at using Ghostfire in my forging process, and it adds an excellent chance at soul-based attack and defence bonuses to my items, even without targeting them."

The elderly smith nodded. "That's not a bad idea. Soul defence is even more rare than soul attacks. But it's not my style. Runemaster, might I ask you to accompany me to the forge? I know just what would be perfect for my next masterpiece."

Karl followed him to the forge at the back of the new crafting area.

Not only would he upgrade the forge, but Karl believed that he had just the right combination of skills to give the old Dwarf a proper upgrade.

If he mixed the language proficiency for Ancient Dwarven, which wasn't a skill, but was listed by the system, with Runecrafting it gave him the option to make a new type of skill book.

[Book of Dwarven Runeforging] Requires Master level or higher Blacksmithing or Runecrafting. Requires Bloodline {Dwarf}.

Chapter 1133: Master Hassan

The forges weren't actually different. They were all the same, except for their position within the workspace.

At least for now.

"Before we start with the forge upgrade, I have a question for you. How would you like to join the Darklight Host?" Karl asked.

Hassan frowned and took out a carved stone pipe to take a long drag.

"Becoming a proper Guild Member at my age? I suppose there might be advantages. Being in the Guild will also let me access the Guild Storage, and I'm too old to be lugging raw materials across the forge, even if there is a conveyor from the storage room.

Alright, I will accept your offer, Guild Leader Karl of the Darklight Host."

{Guild Member added} Hassan Petros

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Dwarven Runeforming] will be transferred to the prematurely balding Hassan.

The Dwarf glared at his notifications.

"Why the hell did you have to bring that up? I'm older than Slate is by ten whole years." He grumbled.

"The messages are actually set by the System, I don't get any input into them. But now that you're in the Guild, you can just grab a jar of hair growth cream and work on your hairline." Karl suggested.

Hassan chuckled. "It's all because of my slow childhood growth. I thought that I could do things better my own way, and I didn't make it to Royal Rank before I was getting old. Then, I gave in and made it to Overlord and finally Totem, but my youth was long gone, even with the extended lifespan."

"Well, now you don't need to look like the old man anymore. At least not in the beard. But before you go off on a fashion journey, what do you want me to do with your forge?" Karl asked.

"I specialize in Earth Magic, so if you can add some deep earth element to the runes on the forge fire, I think that might be best for my work." Hassan offered.

Karl thought about it. "What about a lava forge? I've seen the Demons using them, made of superheated stone. With runes, there is no reason that I can't make a Totem Ranked lava forge, which can be hot enough to melt anything you want to work with."

"Oh, now that sounds interesting. Alright, let's go with that."

Karl began writing the runes, including the spell inscriptions for Ghostfire and Earth Manipulation, onto the forge. It wasn't a quick process, but when he was finished, the space was a masterpiece, completely covered in black runes.

It seemed to ooze darkness until the forge was activated, then the deep red glow of the forge, flickering with blue Ghostfire flames, lit up the room.

Hassan didn't say anything, he simply took a block of Mythril from his storage and tossed it into the Totem Ranked crucible.

He worked the bellows, forcing air through the works, and nodded as the crucible began to glow and the metal softened. That was perfect for what he needed. But he didn't need liquid Mythril, so he pulled it with the tongs and began working on an axe head.

"I will let you work. Don't forget your new Runic skills. Once the weapon is nearly finished, you're in for a real treat." Karl announced, then stepped back from the forge.

"Yes, yes. See you soon."

The Dwarf was already lost in his work, so Karl began to work his way down the line, stopping at each occupied forge to give them the runes they needed.

Unlike Master Hassan, the others simply wanted what they called "A Proper Dwarven Forge Fire." Just Totem Ranked forge fire. They would add all the bonuses to the items themselves, while keeping the forge itself as a neutral factor that didn't add or remove from any other effects they wanted.

That was the great downfall of a specialty forge. You could only make certain types of items with a heavily elemental forge. Like Ashbringer, and his Demonic limitations, Master Hassan would only be able to make a few types of armour and weapons at that particular forge.

But that was enough for him.

It took until late evening to get everything sorted and all the forges operational, including the unused ones that they didn't currently have a Blacksmith assigned to.

But it revealed a small oversight on his part.

They had forgotten to get the Dwarves to pick an actual home before they got too deep into their work to care about anything else.

That was easy enough to fix, though.

He just put up a map of the work area in the tavern with a signup sheet for housing. It was included in their work contract, or in the case of Master Hassan, his Guild bonuses.

Later, Karl would ask the others if they also wanted to join, but he also hadn't offered them the bonus skill yet. They could learn of its value from Master Hassan.

He had enough excitement for the day, and just wanted to find his Dana to cuddle up with and have a nap.

Karl found her in their room in the Zilaz house, eating snacks while helping Rae 'decorate the bunnies'. The crafters had a day off coming up, and they wanted new fashion to go out into the city that marked them as Darklight Host Guild members, but which looked good enough for a day out on the town.

The issue was that Rae wanted to dress the bunnies like Princesses, and the bunnies wanted to wear something sexy.

Karl was inclined to side with Rae. The bunnies personalities were far too innocent for the sorts of outfits that they wanted. But he did recall something about the Bunnies worshipping the Goddess of Fertility.

"What about a compromise? Rae, can you make what I'm thinking of?" Karl suggested.

He focused on the image, and Rae gave him a concerned look. But she made the dress, which was not only shorter in the hem than what Rae had wanted, but also had transparent silk panels up the sides, showing most of her belly, and a fair bit of side boob.

Dana gave Karl the same look that Rae had, and mouthed the words {No sexualizing the bunnies}. However, the other three were all gushing about how amazing their friend looked.

"The bunny god is a fertility god. As I understand it, they don't like wearing too much clothing unless it's a work uniform. This is a good compromise. They're still adorable, but not all covered up." Karl explained.

Rae looked over the effect, then added stockings with little red bows that matched the colour of Lala's eyes, and tied a silk bow in her hair.

That was better.

But Dana just thought that it looked like Rae had gift wrapped the bunny for someone.

Lala loved it.

Chapter 1134: Karl's Dana

The other three were given dresses in the same style, but different colours, so that you could tell that they were together, but not identical.

All four dresses had the Darklight Host's black and white emblem on the left sleeve, in case anyone could miss that they were spoken for. But Karl suspected that the eight Dragonkin would not be willing to let them wander unattended. They were extremely protective of their 'little sisters'.

[Rae, I have a big plan for today. Do you think that you can help me make it work out?] Karl asked.

There wasn't any better moment, and he had been putting this off for far too long. It would probably come as a huge shock to Dana, but Karl was confident that Rae would help, and that Dana would say yes.

Once the bunnies were finished with their outfits, Rae motioned for Dana to get up.

"We're throwing a party, you need a new dress as well." Rae announced.

"We're having a party?" Karl asked, feigning ignorance as they silently plotted their next moves.

"Yes, my chronologically impaired friend, we have a major milestone to celebrate. We have skipped far too many birthdays, but now both you and the Dana Mage are over eighteen, while both me and Thor have our hatching day coming up.

Four is a big age for Cerro.

Well, Thor might not be a Cerro anymore, but it's still a big age. If he were a Cerro, this would be the year that he hit his full adult growth." Rae explained.

"Oh, that is a big one. You're right, I shouldn't have forgotten that." Karl agreed.

Rae winked at Dana, who realized that the Spider had made the event up on the spot so that she had an excuse to continue her work.

Then Rae got a flash of inspiration. "We need to have a mating ceremony! Yes, that is perfect. I will talk to the Lala bunnies about the details. Now, get naked and raise your arms to the side so I can work."

Dana stared at her, not moving.

But Karl moved to stand behind her.

"What do you think? Would you like to mate, my lovely Dana Mage?" He whispered in her ear, then smirked as Dana's face flushed bright red.

While she was distracted, Karl took a platinum Ring from his pocket and used [Earth Manipulation] to quickly add runes to it. It wasn't easy to get all the runes for [Life Link] onto the band of the ring, but she was so shocked by the sudden tag team of distractions that Karl was already sliding the ring on her finger by the time that her brain recovered.

Karl turned her to face him, and Dana's eyes filled with happy tears as she saw him on one knee, then noticed the ring on her finger.

"Dana, will you marry me?" Karl asked as she stood frozen.

Cara laughed from her pile of loot as she ate popcorn.

[Ooh, this is good, you broke the Dana.]

[You totally screwed up the order of operations.] Thor noted.

[It's going to work.] Remi insisted.

[Maybe if we add more sparkles?] Opal offered.

[Dana Mages only get excited about Karl and new magic. This should work.] Hawk disagreed.

A thousand possibilities flashed through Dana's mind.

The difference in their growth rates.

The centuries of life ahead of them.

All the new places to see, when they were still on very different levels.

The fact that Rae was impatiently waiting for her to undress so that she could start on what was totally not a wedding dress.

Dana was sure that she could feel Cara watching them from somewhere, but she tuned that all out. She loved this crazy little family, and she couldn't see herself giving up on Karl to go another route.

"Yes. Yes. I will." She agreed, and flung herself in Karl's arms.

[I'm going to have to wait to make the dress, aren't I?] Rae mentally complained, then silently Shadow Stepped out of the room to leave Karl and Dana alone.

Even Cara left her space to go play with the gargoyles. They could use a bit of privacy for this part. And a reinforcement of the soundproofing spells in the bedroom.

Tessa and Thor were relaxing on the sofa, reading the same novel, when Cara appeared with a tray of snacks, which brought Lotus and the bunnies right behind her.

They were eating those before the badger stole them.

"What's got Cara all worked up today, I haven't seen her this smug in a while." Tessa asked.

"The Karl is mating Dana." Thor replied proudly.

"They do that fairly often." Tessa reminded him.

Rae flicked Thor on the head. "He means that Karl asked Dana to marry him. We set up the perfect ambush when I was dressing the Lala bunnies."

Lotus squealed in joy and turned to run up the stairs before Rae caught her.

"You can congratulate them later. They are busy now."

Lotus grabbed Rae by the hands and spun her in circles. "Good work, excellent work. I didn't think that they would ever get around to it. But an ambush proposal? That had to be your idea."

Rae frowned. "He sprung the trap too early. I had an outfit in mind."

"Don't you think that would have given it away?" Lotus asked as she stopped spinning around Rae.

Rae shrugged. "I will just ask Opal to edit it when she makes the replay."

"Opal isn't watching everything that happens in the house, is she?" Tessa asked, suddenly concerned.

Rae smirked. "Opal sees everything."

[I always liked this part of the Romance books. Steamy, spicy, all the good stuff.] Opal agreed.

Tessa gave Rae a suspicious look, not sure if she was liking the implications of that. But the Lala bunnies were all laughing and poking each other, while making quiet jokes about all the silly things they had done since they settled into their new rooms.

Rae's suspicions were confirmed. Bunnies really were too pure for this world.

Chapter 1135: Spread The Joy

Standing at the top of the stairs after a brief affectionate moment with Karl, Dana did her best not to laugh.

She had changed into a different dress, And Karl had on a new shirt, as she may have mistakenly torn his with her beast form's claws when she got excited. But they were intending to go down and give everyone the good news.

Karl wrapped his arms around her shoulders and waited as they listened to the group.

"Are you ready to go face them?" He asked softly.

"I think so. I just need to mentally brace myself." Dana agreed.

Karl took her hand and escorted her down the stairs, waiting for the moment that Lotus saw that they were out of their room.

"Ah, there she is! I have to see it. You got a ring, right? A pretty one?"

Dana held out her hand, showing the platinum ring with its runes and the diamond set in it.

"Ooh, and it's a Karl special." Lotus held up Dana's hand so that everyone could see.

For two seconds before the pair were swarmed with bunnies.

"Congratulations, Miss Dana!"

"Yay wedding!"

Dana stroked their ears as the girls celebrated. Then noticed the look Tessa and Nachtia were sharing.

"Would you like to see?" She asked.

"Of course. We're just wondering where we're going to do the wedding. There could be some very important guests there." Nachtia replied.

Dana hadn't even thought of that. The guest list for the wedding should have their friends from the raiding team, probably the other Alliance Guild masters, their friends from Drodh, whoever Karl intended to invite, then Supreme Lady Matilda, and their parents.

She would be happy not to see her useless father again, but her mother would be heartbroken if she knew that she had missed her daughter's wedding.

Then there were Karl's parents. His mom was a sweetheart.

It was all overwhelming, but she had good friends, and they could certainly help with some of the details. Maybe they even had a specialist here who could do some of the details for her? Wedding organizers were a thing in the Golden Dragon Nation.

Karl noticed when Dana began to hyperventilate and picked her up to set her on one of his hips. The distraction when he bounced her, broke Dana from her thoughts and she swatted at his shoulder.

"Put me down, I'm wearing a skirt."

Karl relented, then kissed her forehead. "Welcome back. I thought we'd lost you for a moment. Don't worry too much, we have a bunch of clerics, including one who is centuries old. I am sure that at least one of them has trained for this moment."

The air shimmered around them and an old woman in black robes walked through with a familiar Totem Ranked vampire, who was being led by a leash on a collar around her neck.

Dana had to work to hide her surprise at the situation, while Tiffani was pretending that none of them existed.

"Oh, right. I will end your punishment early, but no trying to run off on me again." Matilda insisted, then ended the spell that was linking Tiffani to her.

The collar and leash vanished, and the vampire was magically changed into a white and red dress that matched what Rae had just dressed the Lala bunnies in.

Tiffani sighed and rolled her eyes. She really was only leaving for coffee, she had no idea what sequence of events would have led to her not returning, as the Chaos Dragon had seen in her vision.

"I heard my name and wedding planning, so I came as soon as I could." Supreme Lady Matilda declared.

Then Azov, Immortal Regent of Sholaha, stepped out of a portal beside her.

"Matilda, we have talked about this." He began, then saw how excited everyone was.

"Wait, I missed something."

Karl smiled at the confused Immortal. "I would like to invite you to my wedding. We haven't set the date yet, but Miss Dana said yes to my proposal."

The Immortal sighed, then smiled. "I would be honoured. And now I understand why Lady Matilda felt the need to suddenly show up here."

Matilda looked around the room. "Will we even have enough room here? We might need to rent a venue. Azov, do you have a good spot in the city? I'm sure that we can touch up the right venue to be suitable for a wedding."

Then the dragon plucked Dana from Karl's hands.

"We are going to have so much fun. Come along ladies, we have much to do."

Then, everyone was gone, leaving Thor and Karl standing alone in the living room.

[We will be back later. I will take care of the Dana.] Cara assured Karl from wherever they went.

[Try not to let her get too overwhelmed, and don't let them talk over her ideas.] Karl agreed.

[Matilda knows. Well, she knows many things, but she also knows how to do this.]

The badger had a good point. A dragon that could see the future was probably a wonderful wedding planner.

Karl winked at Thor. "Well, what should we do today? They've stolen our women for the wedding planning."

Thor shrugged. "I was thinking of transforming to go have a nice nap in the Tiny World."

The pond in his space had been made for when he was still Cerro sized, and Thor couldn't bring himself to alter it. So, he either needed to reduce his size, or he wouldn't totally fit in the pond.

But there was a full lake for him to lounge in inside the Tiny World.

Karl laughed. "In that case, I should probably get some work done. We've got enough requests already, and we've got sculptors coming soon."

Thor laughed. "Yes, make all the warriors extra stabby. It will make Rae happy, even if you're using Dwarf armour and not her clothes."

"Good point. Enjoy your nap, and I will start working on the last of the armour sets that are in the Guild storage. Let me know if you get any fun ideas for later."

Chapter 1136: Sculptors

Karl was nearly out of armour sets when he got the message from Sapphire that the sculptors had arrived.

The Dwarves were still in the yard when Karl walked out of the Library. The workmanship of the aging stone building had pulled them into intense discussion on what could be done to the old barracks building without completely tearing it down, but Karl could tell that they were also enjoying the stress relief of the healing totem in the yard.

All of them had luggage with them, on top of what was surely in their inventory.

"Good afternoon gentlemen. I am Karl, the Drodh Branch Leader of the Darklight Host. It's a pleasure to meet you all."

The Dwarves nodded politely, and one middle-aged man stepped forward.

"I am Master Geralt. I am looking forward to working with you. From what we have seen, Drodh is quite different from Bara, but in a good way. Quite friendly."

The other Dwarves laughed, and the Master shrugged. "I thought that the best way to get here would be a straight line down the side streets. But apparently, Demons don't build their cities that way.

We may have ended up in the more interesting parts of town."

Karl laughed and shook his head. "If you came here from the portal platform, you didn't. There are some interesting sorts on the west side, but the east side is where all the questionable activities happen.

I recommend that you not go before you're familiar with the city, at the very least.

The Demons are quite friendly, though. At least most of the time."

The other sculptors were openly laughing now.

"He got beat up by an old woman for cutting through her yard, and punched in the face by some massive feathered guy for talking to his wife." One of the others explained.

Karl gave the Master Sculptor a sympathetic pat on the shoulder. "I will find you a primer to Demon culture. But fear not, we've got a whole workspace filled primarily with Dwarves, and at least one of them can surely help you acclimatize.

There are a few others working here, primarily demons. But some Orcs, Dragonkin and others. Plus the dragon and the beastkin who usually work at the Zilaz Alliance house."

Geralt smiled. "Yes, I see that you managed to recruit teacher Sapphire. Her niece was my teacher, and she used to come bring her lunch."

"Everyone knows the dragon, it seems. She was the teacher for our Master Blacksmith as well."

Geralt looked around, then spotted Hassan, who was leaning against the entry of the workshop and smoking his stone pipe.

"Master Hassan! It's good to see you."

Hassan harrumphed and rolled his eyes. "Good to see that you survived the divorce. It was a close thing there for a while. Well, welcome to Drodh. Come take a look at your new workspace, it's across from the forges."

The sculptors all looked confused at the comment. The building was only a little over ten metres wide. There wasn't room for them all to stand in there, much less work next to a forge.

They might not be engineers, but their spatial awareness was impeccable.

Hassan stepped back inside, and the sculptors immediately recognized something was off when he simply vanished. It was a side effect of the spatial distortion and the dim light inside, but it was interesting enough to get them all moving.

The ten sculptors pulled their luggage inside, and paused by the entrance.

Karl raised his voice to be sure everyone heard him.

"Everyone, welcome to your new home. This is the crafting space of the Darklight Host, Drodh Branch.

Hassan, have the smiths chosen rooms yet?"

The Master Smith nodded. "We did it after we ate. It's not like the place is crowded. There are hundreds of rooms."

Karl nodded. "Well, there is work space for that many, if you're working three shifts at the forge, or working in pairs."

Master Geralt looked around the cavern, which reminded him so much of Bara that it was almost uncanny.

"This is wonderful. Spatial magic?" He asked.

"Technically, an illusionary Domain that we filled with Earth magic. It's a form of space magic, but not a fully spatial spell." Karl explained.

"Alright. We can put our gear away and get to work. The Guild appointment said that we would be expected to create a demonstration piece to prove that we were qualified." Geralt explained.

"Certainly. Pick a room and come back in ten minutes. I will have a collection of items available for you to work with."

Technically, Tian would. But it was the same thing for the sculptors.

Like the Smiths, they had gotten one Totem and nine Overlords. Karl hadn't specified a power level for them, only a skill level. But they should be skilled if they were using their crafting skills to increase their power level.

Karl had never actually seen a purely crafting class before, or seen what they could do with only magic.

It was going to be an interesting experience, and he was certain that Loros would be fascinated.

Sculpture was her Obsession, and she had long since proven that she would sacrifice everything else in life if it meant she got to sculpt. She was bound to be around here somewhere, Karl assumed. She wouldn't miss the opportunity.

Karl used Soul Sight to search for the Demoness, and found her in one of the sculpting workshops, engrossed in a project. The Orcs were there as well, but not Wendy, which was odd.

{Wendy, where did you get to today?}

{Shopping. There is a list for the Alliance. I'm doing the pickups from our hired shoppers now, and then I will do deliveries.}

{We've got the new sculptors here, if you want to meet them on the way.}

{Sounds good boss. I will see them before I go see Hugo and the others.}

Ah, that explained her enthusiasm. The big mage had new spells for her to study. He would have to keep an eye on Wendy, so the big man didn't steal her away for his own Guild once she gained a Rank or two.

Chapter 1137: Master Sculpting

Loros was beside herself with excitement. These were actual sculptors. People with the sculptor class direct from the system.

She had gotten the warrior class, and Sculpting was her obsession, so she didn't have all the cool special skills that these masters were likely to have.

The sculptors came into the work space when they had dropped off their luggage, and found that there were a dozen colours of stone, all Overlord and Totem Ranked.

"We weren't sure what sort of stone you would like today, so I had Tian make a bunch for you to choose from. I do hope that the quality isn't an issue, we chose them for quality so that they could be upgraded by our Runecrafters.

A common statue made of mana jade or other mana compatible materials can turn into a magnificently powerful item." Karl explained.

"Oh, that will work wonderfully. We have to be careful if a stone is too weak, but we can also add some abilities to our statues as we make them. Not to the extent that a blacksmith or others can, but our art is sculpting, not equipment making." Master Geralt explained.

Each of the sculptors picked a piece, while Loros stood eagerly beside Karl, waiting for them to start.

"Are you not going to join us?" Geralt asked.

She shook her head. "I've never seen someone with the actual sculptor class. I want to see how you do it. I carve all my pieces by hand, as I have the Warrior Class. So, this is a big thing to me."

The Dwarves chuckled as they realized it was her Obsession, and each examined their stone, focusing magic into it.

A few taps of hammer and chisel created the rough outline of the pieces, then a few more gave it crude details. The impacts had nothing to do with the actual progress, it was just a focusing method for the skill. And then, when the basic statues were created, the Sculptors switched skills and began adding details in a wave over the pieces.

From one end to the other, statues of dragons gained scales, bears gained fur, and a statue of the Dwarven Forge God gained such a perfect level of detail that it looked like the god's tunic was transparent with sweat, revealing skin and veins beneath.

Even a few stray hairs from his beard had been detailed.

"So, that is what a true master can do." Loros breathed, her eyes firmly locked on the statue of the forge god.

How he had managed to get the veins in the marble to line up with the veins on the statue's arms, Karl didn't know. But it was possible that he simply adjusted the stone itself to be precisely what he needed.

Karl smiled at Geralt. "Well, there is no doubt that is a true masterpiece of the sculptor's craft. But it's a bit of a shame if we put it away. How about I carve a blessing into the bottom of the base, and we put him on display?"

Geralt nodded, and grabbed the statue to put it up on a tilted display stand that either appeared from his storage, or was created on the spot.

Karl thought about what needed to go into the poem, and then began to rearrange the runes into one large decorative knot, without losing the meaning.

{Whiskey, Ale, Steel and Stone.

The Dwarves need the Mountains as surely as flesh and bone.

Melt the Mythril, build your home.

Patience and power make true art with a hammer's tone.}

Karl nodded in satisfaction as he gave up only four lines into the poem. He was only part Dwarf, right? That should be enough of an excuse for the abruptness of his horrible poetry.

He carved the design into the bottom of the statue, and sighed as the whole thing pulsed with golden divine light.

{Statue of the Forge God} Totem Rank Epic Grade. Grants a bonus to all crafted items within 100 metres, dependant upon skill and materials used.

The Dwarves stared at the statue for a few seconds.

"What a strange description. It's Epic Grade, but it only has one vague bonus. Does that mean it's actually a Divine Blessing? Or is it just not telling us how much of a bonus or what sort?" One of the sculptors asked.

Karl shrugged. "It should be a Divine Blessing of sorts. But I don't know what you'll get."

Geraltn stroked his beard and nodded. "One hundred metres. I guess we should put it in the tavern, then. It's right in the middle of town."

Karl smiled. This wasn't really a town. But in a way, it was, wasn't it? They would have to replace the staff at some point, with real people instead of illusions which Opal had programmed to run things for now.

And at that point, what difference would there be between merchants and barmaids in the cavern and the same people on the outskirts of the city?

The design even had multiple shops in it, mostly intended for the workers, but they could quickly become departments of the Guild Store.

It would give the city guard constant headaches to see hundreds of people coming and going through the gates of the Guild House every day, but the more that they had in stock, the more customers they were going to draw.

All that was left was to have Rae acquire some tailors and leather workers, and they would have enough people to fully stock the shops.

Maybe he could make it Alliance specific?

No, that wouldn't give the guard any fewer headaches, with all the Totem Ranked and Mythic visitors who would be showing up at random to do their shopping.

If there was one thing that Karl knew about them, it was that they liked doing their shopping in person, and not sending a personal shopper for anything that mattered to them.

Groceries, yes. Furniture, clothing, or equipment? No.

Well, it could remain two thirds empty for now, and he would hire workers to tend the shops.

Chapter 1138: Extra Capacity

Karl wasn't the only one with thoughts about what could be done with all the extra space, though.

Sapphire stormed into the workshop seconds later with a red robed dragon priestess, who looked much too excited.

"Tell him what you told me." The Blue Dragon insisted.

"The Goddess says that you made a space for us." The Commander Rank Red Dragon insisted.

"Oh, that is brilliant. Yes, I believe that I did. Come with me. Gentlemen, we will return. You're all approved for the position, so feel free to grab what materials you need from storage, or use the extra stone here." Karl informed the Sculptors.

Then he grabbed the statue.

"We will place this on the way, it goes behind the bar of the tavern." He explained to the confused dragons.

"Quick question. What sort of strength do you need to just pick up and carry a life-sized stone statue of a Dwarf? In human form, I don't think I could do it." Sapphire asked.

"I'm no weaker like this than you are as a Dragon. Don't worry, if it were too heavy, I would put it in inventory."

Karl led the way to the tavern, where the helpful illusionary barmaid served both ladies honey wine in pint glasses the moment they entered.

"How did they even know?" The red dragon asked.

"I often wonder that. They shouldn't know anything that their creator doesn't. But they're made by a Glasswing Butterfly, and she simply knows things." Sapphire replied.

[It's in the book on how to stock a temple for the winter. I read it a few weeks ago while preparing a new play.] Opal informed Karl.

Karl's amusement made Sapphire gesture for him to speak his mind.

"She read a book on how to stock a temple for the winter, to make one of her plays more realistic. The Honey Wine is one of the items in the list, so she assumed all clerics drink it."

Sapphire laughed. "Well, she's not wrong."

The Blue Dragon moved a spare keg from the middle of the back shelf, and Karl replaced it with the statue, then put the Keg in an empty rack to the side.

"Perfect. That's nearly exactly in the middle of the city, for maximum coverage of the statue's blessing.

Now, I have a spot in mind. It's near the front, closest to the market area, which is currently empty.

What is the church's position on having the orphans staff vegetable stalls? We have nature clerics and druids to make the food, but we don't have enough cooks on staff at the moment to make dinner for everyone every day.

I should probably hire more of them, but we only have three right now." Karl asked.

The Red Dragon smiled. "We actively encourage our children to hold productive positions in society. We can even have the older ones cook, if supplies and funding are sufficient."

Karl patted her on the shoulder. "There is no fear of running out of funds. I won't charge you for the supplies or the cooking implements. But I do need you to cook for thirty hungry Dwarves three times a day, plus whoever you bring here for the Orphanage."

Sapphire laughed. "So, that's your plan? Exploit child labour?"

Karl shook his head. "No. Exploit orphaned child labour."

But I will pay them a proper wage. That's half the staffing that we need covered, and we don't even need to look for them.

They've already been found.

Now, I just need to find some barmaids, and likely some extra cleaners. Unless there are enough orphans in the city for that job too?"

The two dragons began to laugh as Karl waited for an answer.

"There are hundreds of orphaned children in the city. And that's just inside the city. Working conditions in Drodh, especially in the Sprawl, aren't great. Plus, crime is high. It leaves a fair number of children for the church, and they're overflowing their current building." The Red dragon replied.

"Well, it looks like you've got some expansion work to do, Matron... sorry, I didn't catch your name."

"Blackclaw. At least, that's what my name translates to in common."

"Matron Blackclaw, then. We will also provide magical rings to help the children clean. This whole area will need to be maintained, even the empty areas will need at least twice a month dusting."

But with the rings, you should only need ten or so children to keep up.

If the Dwarves are really messy, we will approve more cleaners. Oh, and one on the early morning shift at the tavern, to clean before breakfast every day. We will serve the food your orphanage makes as well, but I will get proper staff for the Tavern." Karl explained.

"We have a few who have aged out of the orphanage as Ascended Demons. They're working part-time in the Sprawl, so I will ask them if they want to work here. I have heard that you hired Caretaker Jo as well." Matron Blackclaw asked.

Karl turned to look toward the house. "I'm not heartless enough to kick her out of her home, even though we bought it from the city. She's still Caretaker Jo, and we found her a newt beastkin to work as her assistant.

If you two know each other, you can find her in the house. Her room is on the third floor, but she's always busy with something. You'll have to get someone to let you up, though. The Gargoyles might not let anyone but Guild members go up unattended."

Sapphire sighed. "Do you just take in every random person you meet?"

"Of course not. But these ones were recommended by the Red Dragon God. It should be fine. That reminds me, did you find a chance to visit the Library here? I know you had to pass through it to come visit."

The blue dragon's eyes sparkled. "It is a wonderful Library. Many ancient and rare tomes, much better than I had expected out of a Guild House. I will show my apprentices to it later. Apprentices should read in their spare time, it's good for the mind."

Then she paused. "You just sidetracked me from my questions about hiring policy by mentioning the Library. Devious little Demon."

The Red Dragon laughed. "The Monster Man has quite a reputation in the city. He's not as open about who he hires as you might think, but he's got the Gods' own luck when it comes to finding employees.

He managed to get a Grandmaster Demonic Blacksmith simply because the man came in that gate and happened to smell the forge fire."

Ashbringer stuck his head out of his forge when he heard someone talking about him, then waved to the Priestess.

He already knew the Orphanage Matron. They used her kids to do the shopping for the Alliance that Wendy was out delivering.

Chapter 1139: Wedding Planning

In a private room of Supreme Lady Matilda's castle, the ladies of the Darklight Host were in the middle of complete and utter chaos.

Matilda's method of planning was to bring out every possible option side by side and see what her visions said about how those things would work together, then ask the others what they thought, to see if that would change the visions.

"What about this colour for the bridesmaids?" The ancient Chaos dragon asked.

[I like that one.] Cara commended her, but everyone else just looked confused.

"You're not holding anything that we can see." Dana informed her.

"Oh, and it's such a pretty shade. Shame that nobody can see it. Feel how smooth it is."

Dana reached out, then stopped when her fingers touched something impossibly soft, almost like silk, but it felt like it partially merged with your finger as you touched it, like running your finger through warm water.

Tiffani sighed. "You wouldn't believe the fight she put up when I first told her I wouldn't wear that in public. I don't even know what she thinks it looks like."

Dana smiled at the vampire. "Somehow, I suspect she's going to tell us that she foresees great fortune for the bridesmaids if they wear it to the wedding."

Cara gave Dana an affirming gesture, while Matilda laughed.

"Well, you could call it that. But let's move on to another combination."

The Chaos Badger relayed to her sisters what she thought the dress looked like, and Rae immediately began to pout. That dress was spectacular, and she couldn't even see the real thing.

But part of that was because the dress didn't exist fully in reality.

It was like being partially incorporeal, but still solid enough to touch things a little. If you tried to damage the dress, Cara's thoughts said that you would pass right through it.

Which in Cara's mind made it ideal for a bridesmaid's dress.

Remi considered the potential. It was like a non-newtonian fluid, but in reverse. It was solid until you applied too much force, and then is simply phased out of reality. The problem was that the colour was one that didn't exist in any light spectrum that their eyes could see, the light that it reflected only existed in the Chaos Plane.

Matilda brought out another dress, this one was almost white, but in the way that white light was white. It radiated white to the point that you couldn't see any detail to it. Then, she moved the dress, and the colours shimmered, flickering like the rainbow.

Matilda frowned at the dress, then did something that made the light fade.

"Fae Silk. It's lovely, but if you get the mana attunement wrong, the colours get all wonky." She explained.

Rae took the dress from her, and Dana waited patiently as she was changed into the fiftieth new dress of the morning.

"Oh, that is lovely. You can fly, right? We should get you some wings to go with it." Matilda cheered.

[How about a shawl? It would flap in the breeze as she floated down the aisle.] Cara suggested.

"Oh that is great. Yes, one second."

Dana waited for someone to explain, as only Matilda and the other beasts could hear Cara's mental messages.

"She says a shawl with the dress would be right."

Matilda flipped through dozens of gossamer pieces of cloth in the next minute, then held up her choice.

"Here, put this on. Yes, pale violet flowers on simple white. The classics are always the best luck."

Rae put the cloth over Dana's shoulders, and she found herself floating involuntarily. But she could still move normally, she just wasn't touching the ground.

"I need one of those too. I hate getting other people's mud on my scales." Remi demanded.

Matilda laughed and passed her a red one, then took it back and held it up before Dana.

"Would you consider red and gold as wedding colours? Red is a good luck colour for the day."

Dana shrugged. "I wouldn't object too strongly. Some of the Demons I've met use red for wedding gowns, and they look lovely."

Nachtia nodded. "Black Dragons use red wedding dresses as well, and white dragons use black for special occasions."

That made sense. They wore white every day, so they would have to pick something else if they wanted people to know that they were celebrating.

Matilda gave Remi a different red one, with the same effect, and the Naga silently celebrated this small victory over filth. Sure, she could fly in Spirit Snake Form, but that form didn't have arms.

This one had four.

It was clearly the superior option for an alchemist.

Dana was just being rearranged into a red gown when a sudden thought came to her mind.

"I got a skill book from the dungeon, but I never used it. I wanted to have Karl duplicate it for Rae, and then I forgot about it." She gasped.

Lotus laughed. "Ha! They say that I am infectious, but it's the Karl who is corrupting everyone and making them forgetful."

Rae laughed. "Well, if you give it to me, I will make Karl learn it and teach us both."

"Then make him make a copy of the spell book. No, two copies, so that we can give one to the blue dragons for their records, and still have one for the Library at the Guild House." Dana added.

Matilda nodded eagerly. "Tell him to take in the blue dragons. They will make great Guild Members. Having a blue dragon to protect your books is the best thing you can do to guard knowledge."

[Karl, learn this book, teach me the thing, then make two more books. And take the blue dragon into the Guild. The Chaos Dragon says she's good luck.] Rae informed Karl, startling him out of a discussion about items that would be needed to place the overflow of orphans into a new home.

"Lady Sapphire, how would you like to join the Darklight Host? I can offer you a few benefits, and one super exclusive skill." Karl offered, halting the conversation.

"What brings on this offer?" She asked suspiciously.

"Lady Matilda says that you're good luck. And Rae just gave me a skill book to learn and copy. I know how blue dragons feel about those, even if they're not Inscriptionists.

Actually, make it two bits of exclusive knowledge. I bet that you can learn both." Karl explained.

"I'm listening."

Chapter 1140: Lady Sapphire

Karl sent a Guild invite, then took out the book of [Golem Duplication] and immediately learned it.

The look on Sapphire's face when the book vanished was priceless, but she still accepted the offer.

{Guild Member Added} Sapphire

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Skill Book] will be transferred to the curious maiden Sapphire.

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Eternal Lightning] will be transferred to the curious maiden Sapphire.

"There we go. The promised super exclusive skill. Only Blue Dragons and Thor have been able to learn it so far. You need very high affinity for both holy and lightning magic, and blue dragon breath is lightning.

The other skill allows you to make skill books of any skill that you know, similar to an Inscriptionist. The skill goes well with Runecrafting, as we already know the language, so we can do it much faster than others."

Sapphire's eyes glowed with divine favour, and the dragon laughed out loud.

"You know, I think I understand now why the dragon gods like you so much. You make no sense at all."

The red dragon priestess nodded energetically. She had absolutely no idea what was going on, but she could feel the divine reaction to whatever Karl had done, so it had to have pleased the god of knowledge.

Karl focused for a moment and taught the [Golem Duplication] skill to Rae through her space, but teaching it back to Dana would have to wait until they were face to face again.

"I don't suppose that someone would tell me what is going on? Does this affect the schedule to order the furniture for the orphanage?" The Red Dragon priestess asked.

Karl shook his head. "Not at all. I will send a runner to order it all now and get the building stocked before the evening so you can move in.

I put furniture in many of the units with an illusion, but this building is still empty, and none of the others would be suitable for an orphanage's setup as they are.

I just inducted the lovely Miss Sapphire into the Guild and taught her a unique skill for Blue Dragons."

"A unique skill for blue dragons? How do you know something like that?"

"It's actually an evolved form of the Refreshing Lightning Barrier that the Lightning Cerro have. If you help them evolve with holy magic, there is a chance that their skill will evolve as well. In Thor's case, his did, and it's highly compatible with the Blue Dragons."

Sapphire huffed, and lightning crackled around her mouth before the [Eternal Lightning Barrier] formed.

"Then he taught me how to write skill books for any skill that I know, and the Goddess got really excited." She added.

"What does that have to do with the Orphanage?" She asked, confused.

"Nothing. One of my Guild Members gave me a book of [Golem Duplication] and it reminded me to do all that other stuff."

The Red Dragon shook her head. "This Guild is a strange one, but I can tell already that it's going to be an adventure for the children. Now, is this the building? I can see that working. How much renovation are we allowed to do to it?"

Karl shrugged. "It's made of Totem Ranked stone, so the changes that you are physically able to make are limited. But I don't mind what you do to the interior. Repaint, change the flooring, put in new lights. Whatever works best for your situation.

I know that most of the orphans will want more light than this region normally has, but it should be good for helping them get to sleep when the cave is always dark." Karl agreed.

The priestess smiled. "You have a good point. We're not going to be able to take down the walls if they're that strong. But that should also make it quiet inside, unlike the wooden buildings in the sprawl, where you can hear people stomping from three floors away."

Karl frowned in sympathy. That sounded truly horrible. Especially for a house full of children.

Karl led the way in, and the two dragons examined the interior of the building, which was designed to be single worker apartments.

"Well, this is perfect. We don't actually need the kitchen facilities in most of the units, as the kids are too young to cook for themselves. But I think that if we reorganize it, we can room one older child with the younger ones.

Right now, we've got them on rotating helper duties. But that could be changed to an assigned group to help with their studies and late night issues, like a need for snacks.

Well, when there are actually snacks in the house.

Most of the time, the orphanages are operating on the standard rice and beans diet, and that's not really snack food."

Karl chuckled. "Oh, ye of little creativity. If you add a bit of spice, and then pan fry them, you can make excellent snacks with the leftovers.

At home, the church Acolytes made leftover balls to feed to the horses, but Lotus learned that you can save some for yourself and fry them into a spicy snack for later."

"Green Dragon Acolyte or Silver?" The Red Dragon Priestess asked.

"Green, naturally. But I wouldn't have thought that the silver dragon clerics were on that list."

The two dragons chuckled. "They get lost in their magical studies and exhaust themselves until they can't walk. So, they like to have something to eat with them."

"That makes sense. The Red Dragon Clerics seem like the 'We eat on a schedule' sorts, and the Blue Dragons would lose their mind if someone brought snacks into the library, so they definitely have a meal schedule." Karl joked.

"Sticky little acolyte fingerprints are the bane of our existence." Sapphire agreed.

"Now, are all the suites like this?" The Red Dragon asked, bringing them back on track.

Karl shook his head. "Only the first two floors. The top floor is larger suites with a second bedroom. But I know how the orphanages are always crowded, and I have an idea on how to use those well."

Sapphire laughed. "Just the fact that there are so many bathrooms will make the children cry in joy. Most orphanages have a boys and girls' common bathroom and showers. If they're lucky, they might have them on multiple floors."