

Beast Master 1161

Chapter 1161: Why Only Karl?

Azov examined the odd pair. They were well suited to each other, and their energies resonated on very similar wavelengths.

But only Karl was showing the sort of improved mental and soul power that would be expected of the Power Matrix. Had neither of them thought to ask Dana to start on it yet? Sure, she was only an Overlord, but she would be a Totem soon enough, and it was never too soon to start preparing for the Mythic Rank.

"Karl, I see that you've improved your Power Matrix to the twenty-seven pointed focus. But Miss Dana hasn't started yet. Was there a reason for the delay?" He asked.

"That's not a class exclusive ability?" Karl asked.

Azov facepalmed in dismay.

"No, not at all. All mage type classes need to do it to reach Mythic Rank. The stronger the Power Matrix, the faster their mana and soul power will grow. In theory, most species can make it to Mythic Rank if they can perfect the nine focus formation. Some won't live long enough at that rate, though.

But, there is no restriction on what classes can use it, only on the mental fortitude and mana levels needed to start.

Oh, right. You're from Kabtumia Continent, the Golden Dragon Nation, right? They probably still think it's only Monks who can use it, since they start with the skill." He realized.

Karl nodded reluctantly. Indeed, he had thought it was an exclusive thing, and that Mages had their own ways.

"That is fine, we can fix that right away. Your personal matrix isn't suitable for her, anyhow. You used... what is that?" Azov replied.

"Supreme Lady Matilda. I used her as the template for my Matrix. The instructions said that I should use a greater being whose form I could clearly focus upon to shape the matrix, and she's the most powerful being I have ever personally encountered." Karl explained.

Matilda smirked at her ancient companion. "See, you were all worried that he wouldn't be able to comprehend Chaos, and here he is using it to shape his entire Power Matrix. It's actually not a bad likeness."

"How did you even get to see her Dragon form?" Azov asked.

"She showed me once, but mostly I just asked Cara. The two of them mentally chat quite frequently, and the badger has a vivid imagination." Karl explained.

Azov flicked his finger, casting a spell over Karl.

"Your Fundamental Rule focus is Mana Manipulation, excellent choice for Immortality. But I see that you have an affinity for Fire, Holy Magic, and Chaos? Hmm. To even touch on the truth of Chaos is unusual. But it does explain how you can comprehend her form well enough to use it as a focus.

I will put an image into Miss Dana's mind, along with the fundamentals of the skill to improve her Power Matrix.

I see that her mind is better attuned to the God of Magic, and that is a Power Matrix that I know well, so I will grant that knowledge. It should help keep the two of you balanced after your wedding." He explained.

Dana's expression went blank as Azov cast a spell, and Karl watch curiously.

"So, you have a skill similar to mine? That teaches skills to others?" He asked.

Azov shook his head. "No, what I have is memory transfer. It just shows them my memories of a thing. In this case, lectures and the textbook on how to implement the process."

Matilda nodded. "He literally wrote the book on how to use the Power Matrix to reach Immortality. The actual textbook that the Dragon Isles use."

Dana smiled as she slowly began to comprehend what Azov was teaching her.

"That is brilliant, absolutely brilliant. I understand so much better now." She gasped.

Azov nodded. "Now, you just need to grasp one of the Fundamental Rules in a way that truly suits you, and you will be on your way to Mythic status and Immortality."

"That sounds like it is easier said than done. I see it in your notes, and I understand the concept, I just don't really get the rules themselves, if that makes sense." Dana agreed.

Azov's gentle smile said that was inevitable.

"If the truth of the universe was so easily imparted, we would all be immortals.

Though, if the two of you spent a bit of time in the Immortal Realm, you might grasp them more quickly. I would not recommend that at this point, the Immortal Realm is not a safe place, and those not Immortals are not considered people there." He explained.

Karl frowned. "Is that why they don't come here to assist with the issues in this world?"

Azov shook his head. "No, the Immortals who live here, and the Supreme Lady, cast a spell to hide this world so that they didn't come to raid the world for slaves. Otherwise, the issues that this world has would be the least of its current concerns."

"Well, that's not disturbing at all. Is the power disparity of the Immortals really that large?" Karl asked.

Matilda shrugged. "Well, the actual Immortal Ranked residents aren't considered much of anything, either. Especially if they're older. The ones with power in the Immortal Realm are the Legends and

Demigods. Few reach that level, even fewer of them die. So, they've all carved out their own kingdoms in the Immortal Realm.

Once you get there, you will understand.

The Immortal Realm isn't a single planet like this is. Instead, the more powerful beings create worlds, continents, or even just cities, floating in the void.

Once you become an Immortal, sustaining yourself off your internal mana isn't a problem, so moving in the void becomes possible.

You already know the basic skill of survival in the Immortal Realm, the ability to make a Tiny World. Just expand that by a hundred, with fully formed Rules, and you will be close to what the lesser domains in the Immortal Realm are like."

The dragon paused, then smiled. "You know, it might do you good to visit, just to learn the feeling of truly powerful mana. I will tell you when you're ready."

Chapter 1162: Casual Flex

Round after round of food was brought to them as the other guests socialized.

Everyone took a moment to give Karl and Dana envious glances for their spots of honour with the two most powerful beings in the room, and many had realized that they were members of the Supreme Lady's Guild.

That was a curiosity that they couldn't ignore.

But very few were brave enough to go to their table and socialize. They would wait for Karl and Dana to join the crowd.

"Will all the contestants for the fashion show please unequip any worn items they wish others to see the bonuses on, and come to the front of the stage." The host announced.

"That's our signal. Supreme Lady, Immortal Regent, it has been a pleasure." Karl announced.

"Oh, we will be here waiting for you when you finish. We have much to discuss tonight, and Azov gives himself an ulcer every time that I come to visit." Matilda replied with a smirk.

Karl unequipped all his items, but left them on. If the guests wanted to see anything that he was wearing, they could.

After all, Rae had more of it for sale.

The Cat Demon and the Divine Fox walking hand in hand to the stage drew not only attention, but the spotlights, so that everyone could take a better look at them as they approached.

"Everyone, please give a warm welcome to Karl and Dana of the Darklight Host, the first contestants for our fashion show this evening.

All of their fashion was made in house by the Darklight Host's artisans, and I see over a dozen Totem Ranked, Totem Grade items on display between them, all with tailored combat abilities, none of it randomized." The announcer declared, then the excited voice of a second announcer took over.

"If you look at the dress on Lady Dana, it has been custom tailored by Rae Bloodbath of the Darklight Host, and finished with Runecrafting by Lord Karl.

The fabric is Totem Ranked Demonic Spider silk, and the thickness of the weave has been altered to go from gossamer to full coverage without any sewn seams.

There are flecks of Mythic Rank elemental crystals reflecting the light, and they have been integrated into the mana storage spell on the garment.

Truly wonderful work."

Karl smiled as Dana's ears twitched, the fox version of a blush at the praise for her outfit, and the crowd began to cheer.

"Lord Karl is in a suit by the same designer, also made of seamless silk, but his has been enhanced with Runecrafting to include both percentage based and flat bonuses to damage reduction.

Truly, a fashionable armour piece with self mending bonuses on it, should it be damaged.

Of particular note is his tie clip, which has a Totem Ranked Holy Stone bearing the [Consecrated Ground] spell."

There were a few appreciative gasps, and then more cheering as Karl and Dana reached the stage.

But the contest wasn't entirely about the bonuses on the items, it was about fashionability, and that was entirely subjective. A fact that Rae was rapidly discovering in the best of ways as she paraded Nilla around the wine tasting.

It was mostly populated with Vampires and other nocturnal species who had dragged themselves out for the big day.

And they loved her style.

However, most of them were keenly aware that the Demonic Spider was an Apex Predator, and that wrapping themselves in her fashion might be misinterpreted by Rae as some sort of higher claim on them.

That probably wouldn't stop most of them from buying clothing from her later, but in an enclosed underground space, the possible downsides of the issue were a bit more prominent.

Especially when she kept vanishing every time she forgot that she was supposed to be visible to talk to people.

She wasn't actually becoming invisible, but with her adaptive colouration, and in a dark wine cellar, her black outfit just naturally blended with the background. Those like Nilla who had thermal vision thought that it was a wonderful trick, but those who relied on regular optical vision were mostly just mildly terrified.

Which was the greatest compliment that they could have paid her.

At the restaurant, all around Karl and Dana the stage was rapidly filling with both the models and the crafters who had sponsored them for the evening.

There were no poor designs, only the peak of functional fashion. But that didn't mean that there were no standout entrants.

On the male side, one particularly flashy Dragonkin was getting the majority of attention for his scale patterned suit that had been made from a monstrous serpent found in one of the Mythic Dungeons.

But on the female side, the resentment was building as the others realized that not only the dress but the effortless grace of a Divine Fox had put Dana head and shoulders above the other contestants.

Karl and Dana didn't know, because they were invited by Azov and Matilda, but there was a substantial prize for the winner, as well as the prestige and networking opportunities that would come from it.

Some of these designers were crafting Guild leaders from other nations, and getting to know each other was the real benefit to this event.

"Men, please step forward, and with a show of placards, we will determine the winner of the men's fashion contest." The host announced.

"Each of our contestants has a number on the stage by their feet. Please write the number on your placard and either raise it or show it to the staff to cast your vote." The host explained.

The voting was short. But men's fashion was the side show today. There were only so many ways that you could do a suit, and there weren't really any other high fashion outfits for them that didn't come across as a cosplay in a formal setting like this.

If the contest were for armour, not formal wear, the men would be the much larger feature, even if the ladies' armour was still more fashionable.

Chapter 1163: Sales Pitch

It didn't take long before the staff had a decision for the male fashion portion of the show.

"In a resounding victory, we have Gathach, wearing the Obliteration Python scale fashion of the Amitabha Group's Master Craftsmen." The announcer declared.

Karl clapped along with the others, as the man in the snake scale suit bowed and waved to the crowd.

That was their cue to retreat from the stage, and leave the rest of the show to the ladies.

"Lord Karl, wonderful showing today. I must say, simply exquisite work on behalf of your Guild. Tell me, what branch is best to request custom work?" One of the Mythic mages in the audience asked.

"The Alliance house here in Zilaz is the practical option, but if you happen to be in Drodh, we do have a storefront in our Guild House there, and they can take all your measurements and custom stat or skill bonus requests." Karl explained.

"What about the Darklight Host's third location?" One of the other mages at the table asked.

"The Supreme Lady has chosen not to involve herself with the drudgery of crafting, but any of the members there could certainly pass along your request to the other locations.

We split our staff based on their preference of residence, so the item may be made in sections, depending on the request." Karl explained.

"I see that mana storage is one of the buffs on Lady Dana's dress. Is that an intentional buff, one that you can replicate?" The mage asked, his draconic eyes flashing silver with excitement.

Karl took a small mana jade statue out of his inventory and placed it on the table for examination.

"That is a Monarch Ranked mana storage statue. The affordable option for daily use. We stock them in Royal and Commander Rank as well, because they are so popular with warrior class cleaning staff, who have limited mana of their own." Karl explained.

The Mages gave each other panicked looks, then stared at the statue again.

"You have cornered a market that we didn't even know existed." One of them joked.

Karl smiled and took out a pair of functional rings, one with a cleaning spell on it, and another with an enchantment to fold laundry.

"There are many things that can be done with the appropriate application of Runecrafting, and not all of them are combat related." He agreed.

The guests at nearby tables were all admiring the craftsmanship on the simple wooden rings, and calculating how much time and effort that would save around their own Guild Houses.

If they could have everything magically cleaned every day, it would change the entire vibe of many of their Guild Houses, which more closely resembled Frat Houses than any sort of dignified Noble estate.

Hiring domestic staff was expensive in Zilaz. But if they could get a magical item designed for cleaning, they could assign a few of the junior members to the duty and actually expect it to get done.

The mage slid a handful of Mythic Rank nature and arcane gems across the table toward Karl, who graciously nodded in acceptance and let him have the three items on the table.

"If you need more like those, we have them in stock at the Drodh Guild House. It's open to the public, and much easier to access than the Alliance House that we operate out of here in Zilaz." Karl explained.

The Mages smiled. It might take multiple hops for them to get to Drodh, but they could all use the Portal spell. They could make money reselling these once their alliance had enough.

Karl socialized with a few more groups of well-wishers, then rejoined the table with the Immortal Regent and Matilda.

"Good showing. But I think that you'll get the most important category." Azov greeted him.

Karl nodded. "Some of the other dresses are nice, but I can already see that the one Dana is wearing is getting an extreme level of attention, and not just for the enchantments.

Rae's fashion really is the perfect blend of form and function."

The announcer cleared his throat. "Ladies, can you line up to take a walk down the stage and back, let everyone get a good look at the fashions you are modelling today?" The host requested.

That somehow left Dana at the back of the line, as she never tried to push to the front like the others did.

But it would work out perfectly, Karl thought.

One by one, the ladies strutted down the stage, showing off for the crowd. Many notes were made, and Karl realized that the crowd actually took judging very seriously. They were not just leaders of powerful alliances, but some national leaders, and other very wealthy investors, who had a vested interest either in fashion or in equipment crafting.

Karl could hear his own name mentioned from dozens of tables around the room, so even though she wasn't crossing the stage, Dana still held many people's attention.

Then, as the last of the contestants crossed the stage and joined the group, she stepped out from the shadows, letting the spotlight sparkle off the embedded gem flakes in the dress and her fluffy fox tail swish behind her.

Karl couldn't help but smirk at the way that half the room's heads moved in time with the swaying of her hips. [Fox Charm] was a simply overpowered passive ability.

And the Dana Mage was all his.

She got to the middle of the stage and gave the crowd a twirl, letting them see all the features of the dress, and the audience rose to their feet clapping and cheering.

The announcer let them go for half a minute as Dana did her best not to fidget under their scrutiny and continue waving at the guests.

"Thank you ladies. Miss Dana, please take your spot, and we will begin the voting on the first category.

Esteemed guests, in the category of functional enchantments on accessories, please cast your votes. Just a reminder that the people's choice winner and the hired judges rankings may not match."

And now Karl knew why everyone was making notes.

Chapter 1164: Pageant Queen

But he had enough practice making items to assess them at a glance, and he quickly realized that as far as practical function, none even came close to Dana's. They even had mending and self-cleaning charms on them, just because he had some room to show off.

Azov chuckled as Karl came to the same realization that everyone else did.

Runcrafting was simply overpowered.

The other items weren't even close, though there were many Totem and Mythic Ranked Epic Grade items being worn. If there was a category for pure combat power enhancement, Dana might lose. But even against Mythic equipment, she wouldn't be losing by too much with the targeted bonuses Karl could add.

The staff came and collected the results, then the announcer came back on stage.

"Next, we have a more subjective award. Practical fashion. It's easy to add combat bonuses to accessories. But can high fashion be something that you would wear more than once?" He asked.

The ladies in the crowd laughed. High fashion wasn't intended to be worn more than once.

They knew what he meant. If there were multiple events during the day, like today, would you be able to wear the same dress all day and be comfortable not only on stage, but also in the street and at dinner?

Some of these dresses were only chosen for the stage, to the point they had even changed before the presentation, or had remained standing for the entire event, so the dress wasn't wrinkled.

"Ladies, make yourself comfortable. This might take a few minutes." The host declared.

Naturally, this was part of the judging, and an excuse for Dana to show off the Darklight Host's skills.

She took out a large Elven Steel loop and hook from the Guild Inventory, and the others were immediately baffled. Then, she hung one of Rae's hammock chairs from it and elegantly reclined, slowly crossing her legs, then fluffing her tail through the back so she could swing comfortably.

The hammock chair hook was made by Ashbringer for just this reason, with a single upright, so that the species with wings could lounge without them getting caught on anything or pressed into their backs.

Even the host was shocked by her actions.

When he said 'Get Comfortable' he had meant that they didn't need to be so stiff, but few would dare to actually lounge in a chair like that, for fear of damaging their dress.

There was one other eager crafter among the ladies on stage, though. She was circling Dana's chair, trying to understand how it hung just right.

"The weave is stretchy and weight sensitive. Would you like to try?" Dana asked.

The Blue Dragon girl nodded eagerly, and they switched spots.

Dana's dress shook out perfectly as she stood, and the Blue Dragon sighed happily as she reclined into the chair. Then, she crossed her legs underneath her, tucking her skirts like a young child would, and a few members of the crowd chuckled.

She was definitely making herself more comfortable than the host had intended.

In fact, she had completely forgotten that they were judging anything, and she took out a book to read while they waited.

A Mythic Ranked man behind Azov chuckled. "That counts as a technical knockout for the Darklight Host, doesn't it? She's completely lost, and they'll have to pry her out of the chair to get her back in the competition."

Karl shook his head. "It's fine. Dana knows the trick to dealing with juvenile dragons. You just need to get them to focus on something else, and they'll snap right out of it. I think that we can let her keep the chair as well. So she can study it later."

The judging ended and Dana poked the dragon on the nose, getting her attention.

"Time to stand and show off your dress. You can keep the chair and stand. We've got more." She whispered.

"Oh, right. Thank you."

The dragon pressed an item into Dana's palm, and she tossed it in her inventory to check later. It was better not to haggle prices here, as they weren't selling anything valuable. Well, not excessively valuable, as the stand was Elven Steel, but not enchanted or elaborately engraved.

"Now, for the category that everyone has been waiting for: the combined voting. Form, function and fashion. Who wears it best? Please cast your votes." The host declared.

The ladies posed and turned to show off the features of their outfits, giving everyone time to make their final decisions, if they hadn't already picked their favourite.

That was an easy choice for Karl. It wasn't like he was going to vote against himself. Well, against Dana, but she would surely hold it against him if he did.

Again, the results were collected, and then a list was handed to the host.

"It looks like we've got a clear winner today. In the Practical Function and Practical Fashion categories, as well as the judge scoring for the combined voting, we have Dana of the Darklight host as the winner by majority vote!"

Dana waved at the crowd, and the host handed her a huge bundle of flowers, as well as a small trophy.

Matilda snapped her fingers and a magical painting appeared in the air beside her, nearly as real as a photograph.

"Wonderful showing. Yes, this is a good outcome." The Supreme Lady decided.

Dana returned to the table with her prizes, and Matilda gave her a crushing hug from behind so that she didn't squish the flowers.

"Sit, sit. Now, we get to see the interesting part." She explained.

The announcer cleared his throat. "Today, we have a run-off for fan choice. Diana of the Budaram Alliance, and Narcissa of the God Crushers have an identical number of fan votes, tying them for the lead in the fan choice award, with Miss Dana having come in a close third.

The ladies will now have the chance to compete to gain the approval of the crowd one final time."

Matilda's smile told Karl all he needed to know. This was not about posing on stage.

Chapter 1165: Competing Auras

As soon as he finished speaking, two competing auras clashed on stage, and the guests cheered, even as they erected barriers over their tables to prevent damage to the weaker members of their parties.

But it was just a crude contest to attempt to suppress the other's aura so that they could shine.

Karl was sure that he could do far better.

Still, it was good entertainment as the two ladies kept the perfect political smiles on their faces as they battled for dominance.

They weren't hostile auras, they were carefully calculated to be friendly and welcoming, but at Mythic Rank they were still far too intense for most of the spectators to handle.

Finally, one of the contestants rubbed her temples and retreated from the stage, leaving the other to bow to the crowd and collect the prize.

That marked the end of the contest, but it was far from the end of the night's festivities.

Plates of dessert treats were brought to the tables, along with fresh drinks, and the stage was set up for some sort of dance show that involved a trapeze. That was a new one to Karl, but everyone else seemed excited about the spectacle, so it must be more than just an obscure side act.

"Please welcome the dancers of the Goddess of Life and Rebirth Temple." The announcer declared, right before a slender beastkin man made a running leap from the trapeze platform to catch the hanging rope and swing to the other side, where three others hopped on and rode it to the various hanging curtains.

Slow, sensual music was put on, and the dancers began to twirl and spin in the air, showing off not only an incredible level of strength, but agility and perfect timing as well.

"This should have words." Dana realized a few minutes into the show.

Azov chuckled. "It's actually a historical play, set to music. The chase and mating of the first Bunny Saintess. See how they weave between the curtains? It originally showed how the pursuit ran through the long grass."

His whispered voice barely carried across the table, but Dana nodded. Now it made more sense. It had just been adapted for a wider audience so that they could get crowds to watch the stories of their Goddess, even if they didn't all know what the show was.

The music changed to something close to the industrial dance music of the Golden Dragon Nation, and the show changed along with it, bringing in more dancers and what looked like a dramatized battle scene with extra flying beastkin.

The show ended with two of the dancers sliding down entwined silk sheets to land on a pile of pillows on the stage, and then a dramatic curtain drop, followed by thunderous applause from the crowd.

Once the show was finished, the guests slowly began to make their way out of the restaurant, but Matilda motioned for Karl and Dana to wait.

They were soon alone in the formerly packed venue, and Karl heard the staff locking the doors.

"Perfect, now we can discuss important things. Like the wedding cake." Matilda declared.

Karl smiled, while Dana rolled her eyes, becoming used to the Dragon's antics after spending so much time wedding planning with her.

They already knew the cake flavour and design.

Azov cleared his throat. "No, that's not what we were planning to talk about after the crowd left. We need to discuss this plan that you have with the Blue Dragons to start randomly changing people's class assignments.

Now, I know that the situation with the Warriors isn't normal, and that every class should be able to advance as they increase in Rank.

That's not the issue.

What I wanted to ask is if you would be interested in a little vacation to a region with the opposite issue. They have received a great diversity of classes, but the only System activations have been from those who left the area.

Not a single new class activation has occurred on the Neia continent during this resurgence. The mana level is high enough there that they should be keeping up with us here in the Dragon Isles, but for some reason, nobody is getting a class at all."

Karl smiled, and Dana gave him a poke in the arm to remind him that she had no idea about the Neia Continent, or why Karl would know of it.

"It's where Bishop Misty sent me into the past to find Cara. It was a chaotic place even then, so I can only imagine what it's like now." Karl explained.

Azov shrugged. "Primitive, mostly. The Barbarian Tribes and Elves control most of the continent. Unlike the other continents, the species didn't really segregate, except by terrain.

So, you'll find most species in the Barbarian Tribes, and any of the forest folk with the Elves.

They also have feral dragons which need to be dealt with.

Some of them are fugitive criminals from other continents, most are just juveniles who didn't like the idea of living a civilized and disciplined life."

Dana frowned. "You're saying that there might be wild dragons flying around burning villages because they're bored or annoyed?"

"Not might. There are, we know that for sure." Azov clarified.

"But we just couldn't be bothered to deal with it ourselves." Matilda added.

"Well, I'm sure that the ladies would love to have a new place to explore." Karl agreed.

Matilda shook her head. "No, it's better if it's just the two of you. Think of it like an advance honeymoon. If you take the others, the future gets all wonky. It's unstable enough just sending Cara with you, but someone needs to keep an eye on your antics."

Dana made a squeaking laugh as her eyes filled with amused tears, and she choked on her drink.

"Did you just say that Cara would be supervising us? Not the other way around?" She stammered.

Matilda nodded. "There might be interference from other planes or Mortal Realms that is disrupting the natural flow of the continent's Mana and System activations. If my suspicion is correct, Cara is the one best suited to dealing with it."

Chapter 1166: Who Goes?

Dana frowned as she seriously contemplated a reality in which Cara might be the responsible member of the party. In the Chaos Plane, all things were possible, but this one still seemed a bit farfetched in their own reality.

Azov sighed. "It would also be best if you had the majority of the beasts remain on this continent. If the Darklight Host suddenly stops producing goods, my poor secretary will never hear the end of it from your Alliance."

Karl smirked and patted the Immortal on the shoulder. "I don't think that will be an issue. We can open a portal to transfer goods back to the store, and I have a separate space for them to work in."

Matilda shook her head. "The Guild functions aren't online there yet. You won't be able to access them without returning, even if you open a portal. It's the same thing in Kabtumia. I can't even send a message to Orthos, I have to use messengers, and he should have a Guild Branch House coming online soon."

But if you have one of your beasts left behind, they might be able to send you a mental message. I don't know the limits on distance, or what restrictions you might hit."

Dana cleared her throat. "You are forgetting one crucial fact. Even if you call this an early honeymoon, I still have a wedding coming up, and I am not about to miss my own wedding, no matter how important the mission is."

Matilda smiled and patted her on the head, rubbing the fluffy fox ears.

"Don't worry. I have set an alarm. One week before the wedding, I will pick you both up so that you have time to prepare. Then, you can finish the mission after you are married if it still needs guidance."

With the strangeness of that continent, I can't be sure. But I feel like this is going to be a relatively straightforward issue." She explained.

"And I feel like those words are a massive red flag for things going wrong." Dana countered.

"You worry too much. Karl has a calendar as well, he can bring you both back on time if you don't trust my schedule." Matilda pouted.

Dana smiled at the dejected dragon. "It's not that I don't trust your schedule, it's that I don't trust this situation to be anything resembling a vacation, or even an easily solved problem.

If the system is being totally suppressed there, it must be for a reason.

Do you remember what the undead were up to this year? That was also an attempt to suppress the system and keep it from changing the balance of power."

Matilda's frown turned to a smile. "See, such a ridiculous notion. Utter Chaos. Who would even think that would work? That's why I thought that this would be the perfect trip."

In Karl's mind, Cara laughed. The problem wasn't the mission, it was that both ladies had very different views on what a fun and relaxing vacation was.

Matilda just thought that Dana would enjoy some Chaos more than Dana thought she would.

Cara was more interested in whether she would get a good chance to try out the [Elemental's Wrath] spell. They had been too busy to go on more dungeon runs, and she needed to know how it worked.

What did berserk feel like? Could a badger even go berserk? What kind of transformation would she get? These were all important questions she didn't know the answer to.

Karl ignored the train of thought that was sure to lead Cara into trouble, and asked Azov about the important parts.

"Do you think that it would be too dangerous to leave Thor, Rae and Remi here? If someone needs powerful custom items, they can ask Lady Sapphire. She's fully trained and capable, plus her grasp of language is so much better than mine that she's likely to come up with even more interesting items." Karl asked.

"That should keep all the departments of the Darklight Host stocked with what they need.

I know that the blue dragons are assembling a group to expand the skill library, using your Drodh Guild House as a base, but they're unlikely to reach a consensus on who gets to go before the wedding.

The last I heard, they had over ten thousand volunteers, not counting the ones who were currently assigned to other projects." Azov agreed.

Karl hadn't considered that. The Blue Dragons wouldn't struggle for volunteers to write new skill books. They would struggle to house everyone who wanted a chance to write new skill books.

Especially if they were ones that they could use.

Though, they might end up creating a whole new imbalance with their tests. If they were left up to their own devices, there might not be another Royal or Monarch Ranked warrior left in Drodh by the time that they had all the data they wanted.

Rae weighed the options. There were plenty of workers for her cloth now. She could give them a month's supply and come along with Karl. The cloth was the base for upgraded items, but that was mostly up to the Runecrafting team.

So, she could take a month off to adventure.

But there were so many people to decorate here, and she already had a small lake of blood waiting for her. Self-care was important.

It was a dilemma.

[I won't stop you if you want to come along.] Karl agreed.

[Can we really trust the Karl to the children and Hawk?] Rae asked nobody in particular.

Hawk screeched in annoyance, while Remi laughed.

[Sister Cara will be with us too.] Tian added helpfully.

[...]

Cara laughed at Rae's mental doubt response. [At least our little brother still has faith in the power of family. Don't worry, big sister. I will take good care of The Dana Mage.]

Rae gave a mental sigh. [I will let you go without me. I've already got commissions to decorate three whole Vampire Covens and two Mythic Raiding teams. I can't leave that up to a subordinate.

But I am warning you now, if the Totems come to ask, I am definitely going to the dungeon with them so that my kill count doesn't drop behind.]

Cara and Hawk nodded in agreement. It wasn't a contest if one of the competitors was throwing the game.

Chapter 1167: Road Trip Pre Honeymoon

As the beasts finished their argument about who should go, Azov was preparing to finish his drink and head out to meet with more dignitaries.

"When do we need to leave?" Dana asked.

"Well, you've got everyone you need here with you now, so I will just open a portal from the table. Don't worry, Karl should know where you are when you arrive." Matilda explained.

Then they were falling through the air.

Hawk laughed as he came out of his space, and even Cara came out to play as Karl transformed into the World Dragon Avatar, and Dana used [Cloud Dancing], one of her newer movement skills, to fly.

Karl flew under her, and Dana settled between his shoulders as Karl circled to get his bearings and see if there was anything here that might give him some idea where Matilda had put them, or why they had started thousands of metres in the air.

They were over the ocean, he realized. Then Karl saw the small port city with the naval fleet guarding the bay.

It wasn't a big city, perhaps fifteen or twenty thousand people. But big enough, given the primitive level of society that he could see.

The mana here was incredibly dense, but Karl only sensed the most basic of magic from the city, despite seeing multiple species that should be able to use some level of magic innately.

[I am going to scout.] Hawk announced, then activated Lord Of Destruction, as the ethereal form increased his speed.

After a few minutes of lazy circling, Cara landed on Karl's back, and he decided they had surveyed long enough. Hawk would bring back more reports in a few minutes, and there was a city beneath them where they could ask questions.

"Land outside the city. Remember what Matilda said about feral dragons?" Dana reminded him as Karl headed for shore.

Karl nodded, and circled down to land a kilometre outside the city limits before transforming back into Beast Form, his customary Cat Demon appearance.

Dana returned to human, just in case there were issues with her being a fox here as well, and Cara returned to her space.

She was sure that this reception needed popcorn. Or it was about to.

Karl and Dana walked to the gates of the wooden walled port city, where a pair of guards with spears and terrified faces blocked their way.

"Only the mightiest of warriors may enter Kapchor Clan's fortress." The Guard insisted.

Karl frowned, and then activated his rarely useful [Dominating Power], and used it to drive every guard at the gate to their knees before him.

[Dominating Power] The Pack Master's Aura gains a {Mental Domination} effect at will, requiring weaker minds to submit to his will. Hypnosis type ability.

"Now, that's a properly respectful way to greet guests. I had worried that I might encounter someone without manners." He informed them with a feline smile.

Rapid hoof steps on stone roads marked the approach of an Overlord Ranked Wrath Demon, holding an axe in each hand.

"Who is bullying my guards?" He demanded.

"They're just being polite. Don't take it too much to heart." Karl joked.

"A puny man like you?" The Demon demanded.

"Would you like me to be less puny? My size is merely a preference." Karl replied.

The Demon swung an axe overhand, flashing in the afternoon sun. Right into Karl's grasping hand.

A flex of his fingers shattered the Ascended Rank steel, and the Demon was left staring at Karl in confusion.

"You're not going to be able to injure me that way. Forget cutting my skin, you couldn't trim my fur with that blade. Now, my wife and I have just arrived on the continent, and I wish to know what city we're in, and what cities are nearby." Karl explained.

The Demon frowned. The axe wasn't a mighty weapon, and he could do better with his claws. But this Cat Demon was impressive.

"You are at the port of Kapchor, home of the Kapchor Clan's trade fleet. The road you landed beside leads east to Bunga, two days for soldiers on foot." The Wrath Demon reluctantly explained.

"Oh! Wonderful, we're right on course. You'll enjoy this trip, Dana. My first successful duel was for the title of City Lord of Bunga, but that was quite some time ago now. I wonder how my successors have done?" Karl laughed.

The Wrath Demon's face lit up with joy when Karl said that.

"You were once Lord of Bunga? We should spar. That would be good, I need to see the difference between myself and a big-city Lord." He insisted.

Karl frowned. "I am much more powerful than I was then. Dragons grow over time, and it has been a long time. But if you want to spar, we can.

You gave me good news, it's the least I could do for you."

Dana sighed. Karl was definitely up to something, and getting into a fist fight with a five-metre tall Wrath Demon was not the point of his experiment. Especially not one that was still at the Overlord Rank.

The unfortunate Demon wouldn't even be able to harm Karl.

Karl activated [Brutality] which made the two of them roughly the same size, though Karl was still more slender in build.

Then he changed to a pair of loose pants for easier movement and nodded to the confused Demon.

"How did you do that?" He asked.

"Magic, of course. Don't worry about it for now. Spar first, learn later." Karl replied.

That was solid logic in the mind of a Wrath Demon, and the town Lord dropped his axe to charge at Karl barehanded.

He threw a brutal punch, which Karl casually caught, and then used as leverage to toss the Demon away and flip him on his back.

The City Lord flared his wings and landed on his feet, then charged again, using short fast jabs now that he knew he couldn't overpower Karl with raw strength.

Karl let him go for a few minutes, remaining on the defence.

Then, he counterattacked, landing a single hard blow in the middle of the Demon's chest that shattered bone and sent him skidding across the sandy ground.

The Wrath Demon spit blood as he got back to his feet.

"No wonder you became a City Lord. You have power in your fists." The Wrath Demon commended.

Karl smiled. "Thank you. Let me heal that injury, and we can talk about what I truly came here for."

Chapter 1168: Port Kapchor

Karl used [Healing Splash] to heal the Demon and wash the sand off him at the same time.

"There, all better. It saves us the time of waiting for you to regenerate.

Now, I've got a question for you that will certainly seem odd if you're not a fan of history. What do you know of the System?" Karl asked.

The big demon frowned as he ran his hand over his freshly healed chest.

"The System? The legend of the ancient divine power that would let anyone who gained its favour ascend beyond their species limits? It is said that even your Foxkin bride could ascend to Immortality if she had access to the System.

Well, she would have a chance.

The Gods are not so simple to please, and there would surely have been trials and tribulations to gain that much power, even with the System."

Karl nodded. "Well, at least it isn't completely forgotten. But the System has started to awaken again on the other continents, and we came here to determine why it won't awaken here."

The Demon frowned. "Perhaps we have the favour of the Demon Gods? They know that prey is prey and scum are scum that belong beneath the powerful. What self-respecting Demon God would encourage a way for Succubi and Satyrs to get notions of rising above their station?"

Karl nodded. "That is a possibility. But we have heard that the Elves and the other species are having the same issue, and the other continents don't want to risk the chance that it's a curse of some sort that might spread."

The Demon nodded in understanding. "We don't do any trade with the other continents, but some of the other clans have bigger and better boats, so they do. If they spread a curse that weakened their trade partners, it could mean a disaster for everyone.

Is there anything that we can do to help you with your research? Is there a reward for proving that it's not contagious?"

Karl chuckled at the last part. "Yes, there is indeed a reward for the one who can gain access to the System and prove that it's not a contagious disease. It may not be easy, but if there is an Inn where we can spend the night, I will run a few tests tomorrow morning, to see if anyone has the gift."

The Wrath Demon nodded. "Of course. This is a port town, we've got not just one, but two inns here. Not all Clans welcome visitors, but we do. It's good for business."

Karl saw that the residents were trying to size him up as he entered, unable to effectively guess his power level, as most of them were only Ascended and Commander Rank.

He briefly considered letting his aura loose, but that would just be cruel to the people, even if the City Lord, or Clan Leader, whatever title the Wrath Demon preferred, wasn't trying to hide his own.

"Here is the Inn. Just ask the Innkeeper, and they'll have one of the servants get you anything that you need."

The Innkeeper, a magic Demon whose feathers were the same blues and whites as the ocean near the shore, nodded eagerly.

"Yes, Lord Kapchor. I will take good care of your guests. Is there anything that you need right away?" He asked.

"A room with a desk for writing. Preferably enough room for us both to work. Then, you can have someone bring up food and drink in an hour. You're from the Magic Demon lineage, and fairly well respected in town, it seems. So, we may call on you to assist with our research later." Karl replied.

The Innkeeper was confused but nodded.

The best way to deal with powerful people was to nod, agree, and hope that they didn't get bored and kill you anyhow.

But these strangers were very flashy and clean, not even trying to hide their wealth and privilege. Could they be so powerful that they didn't need to? Even the Dragons dulled their scales when they walked on another clan's territory.

Karl hadn't thought about the state of the local villages when he had arrived. He was still shirtless after the fight, and Dana had changed to simple layered martial artist's robes, ones that were easy to fight in if she needed to. She had also transformed back into fox form once she realized that her human form was seen as a lesser species by the locals.

But compared to the locals, they were still incredibly overdressed.

Karl sent out a thought toward the beasts and found that the thoughts of Rae, Thor and Remi were so faint that he had trouble hearing them, but the link didn't feel any weaker, just muffled by distance.

He could still tell exactly where they were if he wanted to open a portal at their location.

Next was the function test. {Tessa, can you receive messages from us while we are on this continent?} He asked.

{The message is distorted. Letters keep flickering, like it's trying to decrypt them.} Tessa replied, and Karl immediately saw what she meant.

The message was readable, but random letters kept changing.

{I will continue to send messages when we can. Thor can fill you in on the details, if he hasn't already.}

Karl couldn't see Thor keeping secrets from Tessa.

Or from anyone, really.

If they asked, he would get too excited about the chance to be helpful and just tell them.

"We should write a few skill books and see if the locals can use them. That's the most surefire way to awaken the System, but if it's being suppressed here, there is no telling what might happen." Karl explained.

"So, first we find out if it is possible for people from the continent to awaken the system, and then we work on finding out what is causing the delay? All in the next month?" Dana confirmed.

"In the next two weeks, preferably. Because I am looking forward to just taking you to bed for a week and not leaving. Then, Matilda is going to pick us up a few days before the wedding so that we can get ready." Karl agreed.

Chapter 1169: Book Choice

Dana smirked at Karl as she took out supplies to write a Skill Book.

"What spells should we even start with?" She asked, pen poised.

"Well, as the town we've seen so far was mostly Demons, with only a few others, the obvious choices would be [Fireball] or [Magic Missiles]. Those are the ones that they're most likely to be compatible enough with to use the skill book." Karl joked.

Most Demons could use basic fire magic on their own, or arcane magic in the case of the feathered descendants of the Magic Demon Clan.

But those sorts of controlled abilities normally came with System access or years of study, so if they found some young Demons to test, they should be fine.

"I will write [Rend] because I don't know [Cleave] and there are no more essential Warrior skills than those two. If they can't learn magic, they are probably warriors anyhow." Karl added.

They sat quietly across the table in the small hotel room, writing books for the next hour, until a knock at the door disturbed their flow.

An Awakened Rank Satyr in a frayed and repeatedly patched robe that appeared to have been made from a flour sack bowed as he brought in trays of food, and then a pitcher of wine, from a cart in the hall.

"Your refreshments, honoured guests." He greeted them.

"Thank you. Before you go, I have a few questions for you." Karl replied, trying not to scare off the skittish Satyr.

The servant bowed. "Anything you wish, Demon Lord."

Dana giggled, then snorted as she tried not to giggle.

"The power level of this place, what level are most of the species at, and how are they ranked? We came from overseas, and I know nothing of the region." Karl elaborated.

"Of course, my Lord. Naturally, at the bottom are the Common-Ranked cattle and slaves. Then Awakened Rank Indentured Servants like myself, serving our masters until we buy our freedom or Ascend.

The Ascended and Commanders are considered Commoners here, unless they're commanding a ship. Though I am told that further inland the Commanders are more like Knights. The inland tribes have a different way of doing things.

I do hope that you prepared proper clothing if you're going to visit them. They don't wear anything that wasn't living, and I don't have any idea what sort of magic you made those clothes with."

The last was spoken softly, and Dana laughed.

"They're made with Bloodbath Spider Silk." She explained.

The Satyr looked horrified. What sort of monster could capture a bloodbath spider and force it to make them clothing? Even the big boss might not win a fight against one, much less force it to work for him.

The Satyr bowed as he retreated, and Dana didn't try to stop him. They had already terrified the unfortunate man, and if he was an indentured servant of the Inn, he wouldn't know much, and he wouldn't benefit much from gaining a Class.

At least, not any time soon, as Satyrs had such a hard time Ascending, even in the Dragon Isles.

[Hey, I found our house!] Hawk announced.

[We're not even from this continent.] Karl reminded him.

[Are you sure? I just flew over the place called Bunga, and the notice says that the house beneath me belongs to the Darklight Host.

That's definitely us.]

Karl couldn't argue with that. If it belonged to the Darklight Host, it was their house, no matter how you looked at it.

"The system isn't completely inactive here. Hawk just got a notice that he flew over a Darklight Host Guild House." Karl informed Dana.

[How many people live there?]

[The city is big, but the house is abandoned. It's still intact, but it's all old and there is a barrier over it.] Hawk informed him.

Karl relayed the message, then began to formulate a plan.

"First, we find a test subject or two here, then we can move on to Bunga. If there is an unused Guild House there, we have somewhere free to stay, and there might be answers about what happened to the continent." He suggested.

"Alright. But who do we even pick?" Dana asked.

Karl chuckled. "I say we pick the biggest goon we can find, either an Orc or a Wrath Demon, and see if they can become a warrior. Then look for a mage of some sort, or a magic Demon, and see if you can awaken a class for them."

"Should we do that tonight or in the morning?" Dana asked, then gave Karl a suggestive wiggle of her eyebrows.

"Now. I don't want any distractions tonight, and we're going to need all night for what I have planned."

Dana laughed, and took Karl's hand to lead him down to the tavern of the Inn.

"Miss?" The Satyr who had brought them their meal whispered as they walked past him in the hall.

"Yes?"

"I would suggest that you change back to fox form. You do have one, right? You smell like Fox and magic, so you should be a shapeshifter. If people think you're human, they might misunderstand you as a slave in hiding, and try to capture you for reward.

It's better not to let anyone who has poor senses think that you might be Common Rank." The goat legged Demon whispered.

"Thank you. Where I'm from, it's the fox form that gets too much attention." Dana replied.

The Satyr shrugged. "But that's better attention than the slavers. Satyrs don't dare go outside when they're in town, even if we have our certificates. It's better to pay a delivery fee than to go missing onto one of the slave boats."

Dana transformed back, and Karl cast [Eternal Lightning Barrier] over both of them.

The Satyr nodded happily. "That's much better. Nobody will mistake you for anything but a different Fox species now, and they're all powerful."

Karl patted the young man on the shoulder and pressed a silver coin into his hand.

"Thank you for the information. If you have more helpful information for us later, feel free to pass it along." He quietly informed the little Demon so that anyone nearby didn't notice and try to take the Satyr's money.

Chapter 1170: Backlash

Downstairs, the Innkeeper greeted them with a warm smile. "Demon Lord, Young Miss, it is good to see you again. Would you like drinks? Perhaps an evening meal?"

Karl nodded. "The servants just brought up a meal, but both, I think. Something light to eat, anyhow. Then we need you to find us a young, as in still growing, but not before puberty, Wrath Demon or Orc. One with ambition and skills."

"And then we will need to borrow you as well. Just for a few minutes. It will help us with our work here." Dana added.

The Innkeeper was from a Magic Demon species, so he should be suitable for most mage type classes.

"I know just the one for your task. Let me send a runner."

The Demon motioned for the server to bring them drinks, and then joined Dana and Karl at the table.

"What can I help you with? Questions about the continent?"

Dana nodded. "Those as well. But first, I want to know what happens when you read this book."

She handed him the book of [Magic Missile Volley], an improved version of Magic Missile she had gained with her new class. It was no harder to write, and logically, it should be better for awakening a class, as it wasn't a basic spell that classically trained mages might know.

The demon opened the book, and then a pulse of black mist emerged from his body, and it was knocked out of his hands.

Cara leapt out of her space and onto the table to examine the strange phenomenon.

She hadn't even detected the magic on him before he tried to use the book.

That was new.

And new was interesting.

[Tell him to do it again. Nullify isn't finding anything.] Cara demanded.

"Are you alright? If you are, we would like for you to try again." Karl requested.

The demon was breathing heavily, but he nodded. "Just a moment, that was unexpectedly painful."

Karl focused on Remi's skills and created a Healing Totem on the table. The magical item would cleanse, purify and heal. Perfect for unknown negative effects from an unidentified spell.

The Innkeeper took a slow sip of wine, and then placed the cup well away from himself as he reached for the book again.

This time, when the black mist pulsed, Cara hit it with [Nullify] at the Mythic Rank, and a ringing noise, like a hammer hitting a gong, echoed through the room, along with a flash of blackness that darkened the entire room, even to Karl's senses.

But Cara wasn't giving up on Nullifying the effect, and the darkness quickly faded.

She nodded and tapped the book, which the Demon picked up and carefully opened.

It vanished in his hands, and the Innkeeper's eyes went vacant for a moment.

When they opened, they glowed blue with power, and his feathers seemed to crackle with magic. Karl smiled in victory, then inspected the man with the System Interface.

{Name} Tantala

{Rank} Commander

{Class} Spellweaver

Then the letters seemed to jumble, before fading from sight along with the demon's newly gained nameplate.

"So, it's not impossible, it's being forcibly suppressed." Dana muttered.

[And the spell isn't on him. It's just here, everywhere. See if he can use his skills.] Cara requested.

"Can you use your new spell?" Karl asked.

The Innkeeper nodded, then leaned forward to whisper his answer.

"Like you said, the Legendary System is real. I saw it. I can even access class skills, but I don't have any of the points I need to buy more," he whispered.

"Oh, very good. So, you can still use it?" Karl replied quietly.

The Demon nodded. "I can also see your names. All three of you. Yours has a strange thing around it, probably to let me know that you're a Demon Lord. But I can definitely see them."

That meant it was suppressing both Karl and Dana's System functions so that they couldn't see the System status of the residents. But if it wasn't stopping the Innkeeper from using his class abilities, there might be much more at play here, and many more System users than they thought.

The problem was that nobody could tell who they were unless they spread the news themselves.

And that would make it look like there were none on the continent.

Karl reported that directly to Matilda, but got no response, so he had to hope that the message had gone through after the troubles they had earlier.

The Inn's errand boy brought a hulking young Orc, perhaps fifteen years old, into the Inn a few minutes later.

"You needed to see me, Innkeeper? Is there work today?" He asked.

Karl smiled. "In a way. I need you to test something for me, and I will pay you to try. See, good pay."

He held up a silver coin, and then handed another to the Innkeeper, who blinked in shock, then pocketed the money.

A silver coin as a tip was probably a day's wage or more, even in foreign currency. But Karl didn't have any less valuable coins.

"No problem, Sir. I can lift all sorts of heavy things. Or if someone has been troubling you, I can take care of them right quick." The Orc agreed quickly.

"I need you to open this and tell me what you understand of the contents."

The Orc looked like he was about to say something, then reconsidered and sat down at the table. He took a pair of reading glasses out of his pocket, and then flipped open the book.

Cara flexed her claws, preparing for the backlash, but nothing came.

The book vanished, the boy's eyes went blank for a second, and then he got a nameplate that didn't vanish immediately.

{Name} Boy

{Rank} Commander

{Class} Warrior

"Your father named you 'boy'?" Karl asked.

The Orc nodded. "When I reach two metres tall, I can pick a new name for myself. Until then, I'm still a boy."

That actually sounded like a very Orcish thing to do.

"Oh! I can use even more new skills! What are 'Bonus Points'? Well, I'll figure that out later. Guard, Shield Slam, and Cleave. Those sound like an excellent set of Warrior Skills." He declared.

Dana gave Karl a disbelieving look. With all the options that he might have had, he picked the three most stereotypical Warrior Skills to go with [Rend].

Karl handed him a single silver coin and the Orc pulled him into a hug.

"This is the best day ever. Did you need more answers? If not, I'm going to train with the town guard. They're never going to believe how much stronger I just got."

“Go, have fun. Just try not to hurt anyone with your new skills unless they deserve it.” Karl agreed.

Warriors really were born to the role.