

Beast Master 1181

Chapter 1181: Can Gargoyles Get Bored?

Late into the night, Karl and Dana returned to the Bunga Guild House, where the Gargoyles and the Bunny Maids welcomed them back with enthusiasm.

Karl got the impression that they were bored without guests.

He wasn't sure if a Gargoyle could actually get bored, but he'd never put one anywhere that didn't get frequent traffic. Even the ones in the Alliance house had rapidly spread to the whole house from the basement, and they had Lotus and the Lala bunnies to keep them constant company.

Or Thor. They loved to pile on the behemoth when he was relaxing on the sofa.

While the gargoyles just seemed like they had been bored, Karl got the impression that the bunnies viewed this level of even temporary isolation as a form of sensory deprivation torture on the level of locking Lotus in a concrete room with no windows.

They even went so far as to put the sheets by the fireplace to warm, so that Karl and Dana didn't get into a cold bed on a cool night.

Not that it would have mattered, as both of them were in fully furred forms at the moment.

But it was the thought that counted.

[You're going to need to gather Guild Members to the Guild House, or at least a few clerics or something. The staff is lonely.] Karl warned Orthos before taking Dana to bed.

[Why did you make staff that needs constant companionship?] The Bronze Dragon replied.

[They're cute.]

Karl could almost hear the dragon sigh as he received that message, but a few seconds later, he responded.

[I will arrange for a few of the Beast God Temple's faithful to come and repopulate this branch of the Darklight Host. The residents of Bunga are not yet suitable. Perhaps in the next generation, they will be. But not now.]

That was good enough for Karl. They had started to bring the system back online on this continent, and that was one step closer to finding out why it wasn't working properly.

The theory that it was someone from the Immortal Realm who didn't know about the System seemed to be the most likely scenario. But until they actually found the source, Karl wouldn't rule anything out.

Including that it was the Giants starting shit again.

They had been a giant pain in his ass all through the early Ranks in the Golden Dragon Nation, and he knew that their Titan God Clerics had been working since before recorded history to deactivate the System.

Or at least keep it for themselves.

Logically, it might also be both. An Immortal Rank Giant.

That wasn't something that Karl could deal with, even with the multitude of tricks that he had at his disposal. But if an Immortal Giant did try to enter this world, it would alert Matilda immediately, and she could take care of it.

That brought up another thought.

Had the old Chaos Dragon sent them here as bait?

If they were bait, there was a greater than zero chance that Cara would get to punch someone in the face, and that was more than enough reason for the badger and dragon to coordinate to arrange the whole trip.

Cara was conveniently napping, so he couldn't get her reaction to that thought, but Hawk wouldn't put it past them.

Tian was sure that his sister wouldn't lie to them. But if you never asked, did it really count as lying? Cara would be happy to tell them if being bait to pick a fight was her plan from the start.

You just needed to ask her.

Karl wrapped his arms around Dana and settled in for the night with troubled thoughts on his mind.

Unfortunately, they weren't gone when he woke up to the mental equivalent of a poke to the face from Orthos.

[What is so important that you woke me up?] Karl asked.

[Get ready for battle. There is a hostile clan coming for Bunga. The city belongs to the Darklight Host, so it's your job to defend the city too.

We've got incoming feral dragons with a dragonkin death cult.] Orthos explained.

Karl nudged Hawk and Cara awake, then gave Dana a gentle shake.

"Dana? There is an attack on the city. We need to keep them from destroying everything that Orthos just built." Karl whispered.

She was in fox form, she would hear him.

It took a second to get moving, but then Karl scanned the horizon outside the window and saw the incoming hostile tribe, which was already attacking the farmers outside of town as the noncombatants ran for safety in the city walls.

"What's the plan?" Dana asked.

"I will transform. You ride on my back. Hawk and Cara will work together, while Tian and Opal will provide support for the ground troops from inside their spaces.

Neither of them likes to come out during battle." Karl explained.

Then he jumped out the window and activated [Avatar] along with a full set of buffs over the group.

Orthos joined them in the sky as Hawk appeared in the air by Karl's side, with Cara riding on his back.

The bird immediately gained altitude, racing upward like a shooting star in reverse.

{That Hawk of yours is insanely fast.} Orthos commended.

{He shouldn't have too many troubles dealing with rogue dragons. I hope.

What do we have? Have you gotten a report yet?} Karl asked.

{One rogue Sand Dragon Matriarch and her clutch. I'm afraid that we will have to let you deal with the Matriarch today. She's near the peak of Totem Rank, so you've got the best chance of settling her aggression before the city is damaged.

You don't need to kill her if she wants to run away.

Once the cult is gone and the spell they've cast over the dragons fades, their aggression will fade as well.}

Well, that was interesting.

Perhaps the dragons weren't all going feral on their own. If there were dragonkin cults casting spells to make them more aggressive, the problem might be more easily solved than expected.

After all, they had a Cara.

Chapter 1182: Sand Dragons

With Dana settled in on his back and held in place by [Eternal Lightning], Karl flew out to intercept the Matriarch, while Orthos went to join Bunga's ground troops, and Hawk vanished into the clouds.

[Don't you think that you've gotten too much altitude?] Karl asked as the bird vanished from sight.

[We have a plan.] Hawk assured him.

As long as he wasn't distracted, it should be fine.

The Matriarch roared when she saw Karl's massive form, large even for a Mythic Rank dragon, thanks to his buffs. That was a threat that she couldn't ignore, and when Karl moved the fight away from the infantry, the Matriarch followed.

Even if they were thousands of metres in the air, the aftermath of their battle was likely to cause wide scale destruction. It was simply inevitable during a battle between Totem Ranked Dragons.

"Drop me off here, I will ride with Orthos to deal with the ground forces. I want to know what Epic Golems do, and I won't be able to use them from two kilometres in the air." Dana instructed.

Karl chuckled.

{Go ahead, I will inform Orthos that you intend to ride him into battle.}

Cara laughed in Karl's mind. Yes, let the Dana Mage ride the stuffy dragon.

It would do him good.

Dana flew down to where Orthos had circled back to collect her, as her own flight was not fast enough to get her to the battle on time.

{I will not forget this. I am not a horse. Or a Cerro.} Orthos warned Karl.

{I can have her make an oversized lance if it helps?}

The old cleric gave Karl a slight draconic smile. The children of the city would tell stories of this battle for a century if she did. But it was purely excessive to use a lance when you were riding a dragon.

Karl and the Matriarch circled each other as they ascended, looking for an opening in their enemy's guard.

The Sand Dragon had a barrier of swirling sand around her body that should equal [Eternal Lightning] in effectiveness. Or something close to it.

That would not make this an easy fight for either side.

Sand vortexes appeared in the air all over their portion of the battlefield, and Karl countered with dozens of [Hellstorm Vortexes]

The combination turned the battlefield into an obstacle course, where both had to weave around the swirling winds to avoid having their wings shredded. It was standard for Dragons at their level, Orthos knew. But he didn't have an opportunity to warn Karl about the most common battle tactics the Matriarch would likely employ.

Karl sent out a barrage of [Disintegration] attacks, which the Sand Dragon countered with fireballs, causing explosions of black fire to pepper the sky like anti-aircraft flak.

The two dragons crashed together, snapping and snarling as they clawed at each other before twisting free to make another pass.

Neither barrier fell in the first exchange, but Karl knew that his strength was buffed to a level much higher than what the Sand Dragon could claim. It was unlikely to go for another direct confrontation now that it knew it was physically outmatched.

But the real battle was not between the two champions.

From ten thousand metres in the air, Hawk and Cara put their plan into action.

Hawk twisted and flapped once, hard. He rocketed toward the ground at nearly six hundred kilometres an hour, and then at three thousand metres out, he flared his wings and activated [Lord of Destruction] turning himself incorporeal.

While Hawk rapidly decelerated, Cara did not.

A small black and white fur missile hurtled toward the back of an Overlord Ranked Sand Dragon, who hadn't even noticed the incoming threat.

With [Disintegration] as a protective shell outside of [Eternal Lightning], she prepared a [Void Blast] in front of herself.

Cara hit the dragon's back like a thirty kilo cannonball, and then [Void Blast] exploded on contact, evaporating a large portion of the beast's body and letting Cara hurtle past him toward the ground without slowing.

[Badger Incoming!] She cheered as she realized that she was headed for a Totem Ranked Dragonkin warrior.

The wind was knocked from her as she slammed into the man's hastily raised shield, but the satisfying sound of shattered bones let her know that her [Disintegration] barrier hadn't been wasted.

The Dragonkin cult members began to panic as a blur of teeth and claws tore apart one of their champions, then launched itself at the unfortunate Black Dragon Cleric who happened to be closest to the dead warrior.

[Satisfying.] Hawk laughed as he rained Ghostfire meteors on the battlefield.

From Orthos' back, Dana shook her head at the duo's antics. She hadn't expected any less from them when Hawk had vanished into the clouds.

The Sand Dragons had scattered to avoid the meteor bombardment, and Orthos was about to chase them with Dana on his back.

"Just let Hawk and Cara deal with the dragons. They're both faster flyers than we are." She suggested.

Orthos nodded and landed at the edge of the battlefield to let Dana disembark and join the ground fight.

After millennia of training Magical beasts, Orthos was an exceptional ground combatant. Most species couldn't fly, and part of his job as an Elder of the Beast God Temple was to teach them to fight.

They might not be dragons, but four legged combat was similar for most species.

Dana focused on [Epic Golem] then frowned when she got a System Menu and not a guardian.

{Please Select form before each activation}

{Ogre King}

{Naga King}

{Naga Shaman}

{Earth Elemental Champion}

...

Each listing was a dungeon boss that she had faced in the past.

In this case, she went with the Earth Elemental Champion, a ten-metre tall Titan sized beast with incredibly high durability and damage reduction.

But more importantly, it could reshape its stone club into a massive stone blade, which gave it access to [Auto Parry].

Or, they could reshape their weapons, as [Golem Duplication] gave her two of them.

She might have just found a new favourite spell.

Chapter 1183: They've Got Your Back

The rest of the Golems joined the pair of Epic Golems, while the Epic Guard remained back to protect Dana from anything that might make it close enough to threaten her from behind.

Four Golems and a pair of Earth Elemental Champions at the Overlord Rank would make her a priority target among the Bunga defence force very quickly.

Assuming that the enemy understood what was happening.

Fortunately, she had the Orcs on her side, and even without a System interface, they hadn't had any problems reaching higher ranks through pure dedication. They were happy to have a proper fight, but it was even better when they got comedy with it.

The Earth Elemental Champions weren't actually very agile, so Auto Parry was only minimally effective. But one of them had just parried a fireball from a flying dragon, making it explode in the air overhead.

That made the big guys a whole city worth of new friends in one fight.

If Rae was here, she could create a whole army of undead, but Dana was satisfied with the force that she had managed to create.

The Golems served as the vanguard of the Bunga City counterattack, driving deep into the enemy lines, and allowing the defenders to push in behind them and get at the juicy meat.

Also known as the Clerics and Shamans that the enemy had tried to protect in the middle of their formation.

Hawk was fully engaged in a dogfight with a pair of Sand Dragons, but Dana couldn't see Cara. She didn't realize that the Chaos Badger had never left the ground again after she had landed, or that she was most of the reason that the Golems were able to advance so quickly.

Cara was in heaven today. None of the armour on the dragonkin soldiers was bonded. That meant that it was all up for grabs, she just had to remove the armour from the enemy before someone wrecked it.

Or remove the enemy from inside the armour with disintegrate.

That worked too.

The sight of Cara's looting methods had absolutely terrified the enemy army, and it was already clear that the ones closest to Cara desperately wanted to retreat, but the forces behind them hadn't realized the problem yet, and they were trapped.

Worse, they couldn't even attack her properly because she kept retreating between the Golems' feet so that the constructs would parry the attacks intended for her.

The dragonkin weren't sure if it was possible for a badger to smirk, but they were pretty sure that they had just seen it.

Karl and the Sand Dragon exchanged spells and dodged vortexes in a complex aerial dance, each trying to get the upper hand, but both wary of what the other might be holding in reserve.

Then the Matriarch suddenly broke off and abandoned the cause, taking her surviving whelps with her.

By the time that Karl realized she wasn't just circling for another attack, she was far off in the distance to the east, and Hawk was asking whether he should follow them.

[Let them go. I don't think that they'll be in any hurry to come back to Bunga. Help with the ground assault so that the city doesn't lose too many warriors.] Karl instructed.

That didn't look like it was going to be a huge issue, as the Bunga City residents outnumbered the attackers by quite a large margin.

Without their dragons, the cult didn't stand a chance.

[Hey, boss! Did you know these guys aren't local? They don't smell like this continent.] Cara welcomed Karl as he landed at the edge of the battle.

The Chaos Badger had created a mound of corpses, and was currently using it to play a macabre game of king of the hill, so she could look down at her enemies.

Sister Rae taught her the technique, and it really was fun.

The remaining members of the cult did not show any signs of retreating. No signs of fear at all.

No, that wasn't right, Cara decided. They were terrified. But more terrified of what would happen to them if they retreated, so they would fight to the very end and consider dying a victory of its own.

That meant she didn't have to worry about being nice to them.

Then, Cara remembered that she had forgotten an entire step in her plan.

[Elemental's Wrath]!

The sight of the suddenly enlarged and flaming Chaos Badger was the breaking point, even for the heavily brainwashed cultists.

They broke and began to flee, but in her transformed state, Cara was much faster than they were, and everything that she touched erupted with elemental flames. Even a simple scratch from her was enough to doom most opponents, and when her claws got into your flesh, you would burn from the inside out.

But the enemy cultists weren't the only ones terrified.

None of the Bunga City defenders dared to come within twenty metres of Cara so that they weren't mistaken for a cultist and attacked by that blur of fur and flames.

Especially the Bunga City Dragonkin.

Karl laughed as the enemy troops began to run right past him to escape from Cara.

[The Karl isn't even scary enough to stop the stupid ones from fleeing.] Hawk laughed.

Cara giggled as she gave a Dragonkin an atomic wedgie, then threw him on the pile.

She didn't even attack him, just pulled his underwear up over his head and threw him with the corpses. If he knew what was good for him, he would stay there until she was done.

The fight was almost over anyhow, with the survivors having fled, and the dragons who could actually threaten the city long gone.

But it was Cara's assertion that these attackers didn't smell like this continent that stuck in Karl's head. He hadn't been trying to sniff the Sand Dragon when they were grappling, so he hadn't noticed.

But Karl did notice that Cara was still only a little over a metre tall, even when transformed with [Elemental's Wrath].

That skill should surely cause a more extreme transformation than simply making her into a flaming badger, but with the Chaos Element on her side, there was nothing saying that the spell couldn't have turned her into a llama or something.

Chapter 1184: Follow The Retreat

Cara ended the transformation spell as the last of the enemies left.

[Berserk] was fun.

She imagined it was what Sister Rae felt like all the time in combat. But she couldn't be absolutely sure. It definitely made stabbing things feel more satisfying.

Orthos transformed back to human as he approached Karl.

"I think that you and Dana should go follow the retreating attackers. They were not from this place. Everyone born on a world under the influence of the Dragon Gods has signs of it.

They were dragonkin, but not from a world subject to the Dragon Gods. That most likely means that they're from the Immortal Realm, but it might be another Mortal Realm where the old gods are forgotten, and there are no chromatic dragons to remind them." He explained.

"Will you be alright?" Karl asked.

The Bronze Dragon smiled. "Of course. First, I will heal many of the most severely wounded, and then the fountains can take care of the rest. I'm not a High Priest of the Beast Gods for nothing."

Dana frowned. "I've been meaning to ask. How does that even work? Aren't you a Cleric of the Bronze Dragon God by default?"

Orthos smiled. "I am, actually. Think of it as something like dual classed. You see, I started as a Bronze Dragon Cleric, but when I advanced, I was already working with the beast Temples to help civilize their orphans.

And I chose an advanced class that made me a High Priest of the Beast Gods as well.

Like how You have been a few different kinds of mage at this point."

Dana nodded in understanding. "That makes sense, it just seemed odd that you had entirely changed pantheons."

Orthos shrugged. "It wasn't so big of a change. There is a Beast God of Order, which is similar to the Bronze Dragon of Law. Both of the Gods get along well, and there was no resistance to my old skills when I changed."

As he talked, Orthos began casting a ritual magic spell that was spreading healing over the battlefield, patching up the wounded in some sort of triage order, as not everyone within the zone was healing at the same time.

That should make it a multiple target healing spell, Karl reasoned. Not an Area of Effect. But the result should be the same.

"Well, Miss Dana, should we shadow the retreating enemy? If they return to where they entered the continent, or even to an overnight camp, we might be able to learn what Matilda sent us here for." Karl suggested.

Dana looked at the horizon, where the sun had only just risen.

"Alright, let's go. We can sleep later." She reluctantly agreed.

Hawk and Cara returned to their spaces to wait for the next event, but only a few minutes after they took off, Hawk was out again to scout the area.

This was a whole new continent, with all new mice. Even if he didn't really care where the dragonkin who attacked the new house's city were going, he might still come across something good.

While Hawk might not be headed out for the right reasons, Karl knew that the bird would actually do his job and track the retreating enemy troops.

"I can't see anything from up here but the scenery. It's nice, really. The mountains to the north, the woods beneath us." Dana muttered as they reached the second hour of soaring in the sky, watching the troops scurry away from the battle.

[I found it. They're coming from a big mouse tunnel that leads underground.] Hawk reported.

Karl turned to find the spot that Hawk was talking about, and realized that there was an entire village set up there. They had a dragon breeding facility set up, with hatchling feral dragons being trained as mounts, chained dragons of the lesser species locked in pens, and clutches of eggs under warm lights.

They didn't let the dragons guard their eggs, probably to reduce how protective they were of their pens.

But that meant that this was more than just a simple cult invasion from another world. They were established, and they were intending to stay here for a long time. In fact, they might be behind many of the reports of feral juvenile dragons that Matilda had mentioned.

The real problem was that they had dozens of Totem Ranked dragons and dragonkin mages in the camp, and neither Karl nor Dana could transform into a dragonkin to try to infiltrate them.

{Hey! Little help? Just melt these chains and we can all be free!} The dragons on the ground were shouting as they saw Karl flying overhead.

[It's a trap, they're under a mind control barrier.] Cara noted.

[{Don't get close. They've stolen my first clutch.}] A mental voice informed Karl in draconic.

The pure agony of the young dragon's voice was all it took for Karl to make the decision.

[Hey Cara. Want to play with some dragonkin? You can have everything but the eggs. We'll put those in the Tiny World because they'll bond if you bring them in your space.] Karl suggested.

Tian scoffed as he examined the situation. [I can break those chains. They're just Overlord Ranked alloy enchanted to bind dragons. I'm the furthest thing from dragons, and even from here, I can shatter the shackles with Earth Manipulation.]

[Wait until we're close. Hawk, you get the honour of the first pass. Blow Ghostfire into the tunnels and see what pops out of the escape hatches.

I will be right behind you to join the attack when Tian pops the shackles.

Cara, you find the mages keeping that mind control barrier up.]

{Dana, we're going to attack the camp and jailbreak the dragons. Hold on tight.} Karl instructed aloud so she could prepare for the dive.

Hawk was a streak of fire as he dove, but he didn't just flame the tunnels, he cast [Apocalypse] over the dragonkin camp on the surface before sending a stream of flame down the access tunnel to the underground.

There was momentary panic, but Karl was approaching, and the mages were shouting for the capture teams to be prepared.

Cara laughed as they made it super easy for her to find out who she had to deal with first.

It was like a two for one bonus day.

Chapter 1185: Dragons Freed

Dana bombarded the ground with spells, then summoned her Golems as Karl approached the ground, giving them someone to fight before Cara arrived.

Karl added his, including a full team of Spectral Knights, adding to the attack force.

Then, Tian destroyed all the shackles on the dragons at the same time that Cara stole the barrier orb.

Not destroyed. She killed the man holding it, and then tossed it in her space to inspect later.

The barrier over the dragon pens collapsed, and the captured dragons cheered in victory before either attacking their captors or grabbing handfuls of eggs from various clutches and flying away.

{Thank you, World Dragon. Good luck.} The female voice who had warned Karl declared, this time in his ears, not in his mind.

It was a young Ice Dragon, her scales nearly transparent over blue hide, giving her the appearance of thick ice, like what was found in the Frost Giant nation.

Then, there was Cara everywhere.

[Lesser Cara, Greater Cara, Epic Cara!] The Chaos Badger cheered.

"Did she just turn herself into Golems?" Dana laughed as the whole group exploded with flames.

Cara had activated [Elemental's Wrath], and the Golems gained the skill as well.

Karl bit the head off a Dragonkin mage, then shook his head. {I don't think that they're actual Golems. They're illusions. She's mimicking the Golem Spell with clones made of pure chaos energy, then transformed into Elementals.}

In her space, Opal nodded in agreement. This was a form of minor illusion. If someone damaged them, they would vanish. The problem was damaging them when they were berserk and had Limited Invulnerability based on Cara's durability.

The badgers were relentless, tearing through the camp with one destination in mind.

The tunnels.

Where did you hide the good loot? In your room, of course.

There was nothing good in the camp, just a bunch of leftovers that the dragons didn't leave with. So, the good stuff had to be underground, and she was going to find it.

The real Cara was intently hunting down all the mages who were trying to influence the Dragons' minds, killing and looting all the mind control and dragon imprisonment devices that they kept trying to use on Karl, not understanding that he wasn't really a Dragon.

"It must be the dragon rider! Aim for the rider, and we should be able to recapture the product." One of the dragonkin shouted.

Karl smashed him under one massive foot, and Cara used [Pilfer] to see what he was hiding.

She got a single golden key, which wasn't too interesting.

But keys led to things that were

interesting.

The man didn't even realize that he had been robbed before Karl activated [Void Blast] around his foot and obliterated the leader's body.

Soon, there were no other dragons in the fight. They were either dead, or they had fled after the enemies on the surface were all gone. The reinforcements that the dragonkin had been counting on had never arrived, as Hawk was a master at grabbing little rodents who popped their heads out of tunnels.

He had flooded every entrance that he could find with Ghostfire, except the one that the Cara Clones had entered.

[Boss, we found good stuff. Well, good stuff that you can have. There is a portal stone, and it's got an open portal.] Cara updated.

[Where does it lead?]

[Dunno. Some other world. Not powerful, weaker than the mana here. I sent a few Caras through, and they didn't find anything good. It's just a basement with nothing but a portal and no doors.]

The mages must enter with magic, then.

[Tell them to grab the portal stones from both sides and bring them here. I'm not going to transform and clear the tunnels, we will let the golems do it.] Karl explained.

[Got it. Portal stones incoming.]

The stones were made of polished obsidian, and carved with active runes. Whoever had made these knew the art of Runecrafting. But they were set to randomize the destination every time that the spell was activated.

So, even if the same spell was used again, it was unlikely that they would end up on this world.

[I don't see any more survivors with Soul Sight.] Hawk informed them.

[Alright, the Golems will try to flush some more from underground. I don't know if there will be any, but we shouldn't leave any of them to try to open a new portal home.] Karl agreed.

Cara hummed happily as she began to pile eggs into the Tiny World.

Nobody had claimed these ones, so they were definitely lootable, even if they didn't go in the loot pile.

The caretakers in the Tiny World were thoroughly baffled by the sudden appearance of hundreds of dragon eggs scattered over every part of the Tiny World, but the Forest Dragon was overjoyed when she found some from her own species carefully tucked into the branches of the largest trees in the forest zone.

{Dana, can you go update the caretakers about the dragon eggs? Cara doesn't speak common.} Karl requested.

"What caretakers?" Dana asked.

{Right. Forgot to mention them. There is a whole group of Nature Priestesses and Druids living in the tiny world, taking care of the plants for Remi's Alchemy, and the tiny world itself.

Cara moved all the dragon eggs into the various environments there for safekeeping.

They're bound to be confused, and I didn't want to drop you in the dirt when I moved.} Karl explained.

He opened the portal, and Dana stepped through to find herself face to face with a tiny cleric with branches in her hair and tears in her eyes.

"Did you send me siblings? Thank you so much, pretty lady. You must be the Dana Mage. Boss Karl told us all about you. Do you know how many of them there are? We're finding dragon eggs everywhere." The tiny woman rambled.

"Yes, I am Dana. We raided a camp that had imprisoned dragons for breeding purposes. These are the eggs that none of the survivors claimed. I don't know how many of them there are, the Chaos Badger placed them all.

But might I ask who you are?" Dana replied.

"Oh, you can call me Button. I'm a Forest Dragon Nature Priestess."

That part was self-explanatory. The introduction alone was enough to tell Dana that this was a Nature Priestess. But a Forest Dragon? When did they get a Forest Dragon? And she was very close to the Totem Rank.

The branches were also part of her hair.

Chapter 1186: Dragon Eggs and Loot

Dana was about to brush them out when she noticed that the branches were attached to her head, and that the leaves fluttered when she was excited.

"I don't know if the eggs are all in places that will help them hatch, I will have to ask Karl later. But he wanted me to let you know that there were dragon eggs coming." Dana informed her.

"Got it. The others are all off on a treasure hunt for dragon eggs now. We will have to send someone underground to find them. And maybe to the Library? Do you know what dragons they came from?" Button asked.

[None are Chromatic Dragons, and they're all near the camps in the various biomes, except for the ones in the mountain city, which are in the park on a pile of gems.] Karl informed Dana with a System Message.

Dana hugged the tiny dragon. "They're all near the camps, but there are some in the underground city. I'm sure you know where that is by now."

Dana didn't. She hadn't been here since it was renovated, and the Tiny World was much larger than she remembered.

"How many of you are there?" She asked as she followed the little dragon.

"About a hundred in total. Not all dragons. Mostly beastkin, with some elves and such. My sister is around here somewhere. Likely in the swamp. She likes the humidity." Button explained.

She had led Dana to the shore of the lake, near a campsite which had a pair of Elves and a dragonkin woman fussing over a pile of mottled blue eggs.

"Oh, you wanted to examine the eggs." Dana realized.

Button looked confused.

"No, they'll take care of it. Let's go swimming. I made the cutest swimming suit the other day. Do you have one with you? If not, it's all girls here, no need to be shy about skinny-dipping.

Nobody else ever wears swimsuits, no matter how cute they are." She explained.

Dana sighed. Perhaps a sense of urgency simply wasn't part of the mental programming of Nature Priestesses? This one seemed even less concerned about timelines than Lotus.

[Karl, I'm going for a swim with Button. Then I will meet with the rest of the caretakers. Do you have everything handled there?] She asked.

[Yeah, we're good. They've cleared the underground. It was just an old den they expanded. Only a few side tunnels, and they're all empty now. Enjoy your swim. I will come join you tonight if you're not busy.]

Dana laughed. If the others were just as flaky as Lotus and Button, she would likely be in the middle of a cuddle pile with snacks by dark.

“Alright, we’ve got the rest of the day to play.” Dana informed the young dragon.

“WINNING! The others always want to do chores and responsible stuff.”

While Dana and button played in the lake, Karl spent a few minutes focusing on the effect that was suppressing the use of magic on this continent. The effect was subtle if you could already use magic, but it would effectively limit the growth of anyone here.

Only a few minutes of focus gave him a general direction, and Karl spread the wings of his dragon form to head toward the strongest point.

It would be hard to tell how far he had to go until he was there, as he didn’t know how strong the effect should be at its core. But the further he flew, the more obvious it was that heading northeast toward Glatt was the right choice.

Then, Karl got a brilliant idea. He had been to Glatt before, though it had objectively been a very long time. But that didn’t mean he couldn’t open a portal there now. He still had a good enough sense of spatial awareness for that.

A thought was enough to open the portal a thousand metres above the trees of the Elven village of Glatt, but it was nothing like what Karl remembered.

The massive trees were gone, the Elven City made of tree forts and suspended bridges was no more. Instead, it was a mangled battlefield slowly regrowing around the shattered stumps of the formerly mighty forest.

There were still thousands of Elves present, huddled in tents and looking dejected.

Not so much a village anymore, but a refugee camp.

Karl landed at the edge of the camp, and noticed that not one of the people got up to defend against or greet him. They just sat there, awaiting their fate.

This time, he returned to his natural form, the version of him that they would have seen the first time. Just in case one of the long-lived species remembered him.

Karl didn't actually know how long elves lived, but there was a forest dragon here before, and she might remember him.

"Is this Glatt?" Karl asked an elderly woman as he reached the camp.

"Glatt? Glatt hasn't existed for a hundred years. But yes, I suppose that you should be close to where it once was." The elderly Elf agreed.

"Can you tell me what happened to it? Or were you not from the area?" Karl tried.

The old woman sighed and gestured for him to sit.

Karl took out a bag of trail mix from Thor's space, as the Elves were vegan, and most of the baked goods he had contained either eggs or milk. Usually both, plus sugar, as Lotus made them.

The other Elves cast longing glances at the small bag of food, and Karl realized that things were worse here than they had looked.

Cara gave him a mental nudge. [There are bags of rice and beans in Thor's space. Tessa makes them in advance, and he holds on to them for her.]

Not just a few bags, either. There were literal tonnes of rice and beans stored in Thor's space for some emergency that may or may not ever happen.

Karl took out two thirty kilo sacks of the ubiquitous cleric food, and nodded for the refugees to come get them.

He could help at least this much.

Chapter 1187: Send Them To Her

“Do you have cooking utensils? If not, I can make some for you.” Karl offered.

The Elves looked around the camp, then frowned.

“None big enough to cook for everyone.”

Karl smiled and let Tian use Earth Manipulation to make a pair of giant metal pots.

“Those should be suitable. Here, take this ring as well, it makes water. You can use mana, right?”

The old man who had come to get the bags winked at Karl. “We might be in bad shape, but we’re still Elves. I can use enough magic to make water to boil rice.

But the Giants killed all our actual mages and Clerics, so we don’t have anyone who can make food. With the forest destroyed, it’s been hard to find anything at all.”

The old woman sighed, and nodded. “Just over a thousand years ago, the Titan Gods declared a holy war on the continent. With their Immortal Lords suppressing the mana on the planet, we couldn’t even fight back. They started in the middle of the continent, somewhere near Sallo Lake.

That wasn’t Giant territory before the war, I don’t know where they came from. But as the war started, it became harder for our mages to use grand magics every day. It took them a hundred years to make their way across the continent, and the old civilizations collapsed under their relentless assaults.

Then, they retreated to the lake, and made the centre of the continent into their new nation.

But they still send armies around the continent, looking for anyone trying to repair what they broke. They steal people sometimes, but I'm told that there are no slaves in the Giant cities, so they're probably eating them.

Savages, they are.

But what brings you here?"

Karl patted her on the shoulder. "Supreme Lady Matilda, the Chaos Dragon Elder of the Darklight Host, asked me to come here and find out what was messing with the continent's access to the System.

We have found that it's mostly just magic that is restricted, as we managed to restore system access to a few warriors.

Once I find the source of the problem, I will either fix it or call the Supreme Lady to deal with it for me."

"The Ancient Chaos troubled herself over us?" A middle-aged Elf asked.

Karl nodded. "She is awake again, and your situation intrigued her because it's not right. Anything not right, and not influenced by Chaos, is new and interesting to her. So, she sent me to go deal with it, while she takes care of her usual tasks in the Dragon Isles."

The elderly Elf sitting next to Karl smiled. "Is she actually doing something?"

Karl patted her on the shoulder. "It doesn't look like it, but she prevents all the attempts by the Immortal Realm to enter this world and claim the people as slaves.

I suspect that the Titans came from another Mortal Realm world, and that's why she didn't catch it before there were too many of them here for the people to handle.

A thousand years ago, she was mostly sleeping through the downturn in the world's magic, not paying close attention to everything that happened around the world."

The Elf got a nostalgic look on her face.

“I don’t suppose that you could send us to her? The Chaos Dragon has always been a friend of the Elves in our times of need.” She asked.

Karl smiled. “I don’t see why not. Join the others and have dinner, and then I will send you all to her hometown, so you can go petition to speak to her directly.”

[Do Chaos Dragons eat Elves?] Hawk asked, confused about what she would want with a bunch of people with no power.

[No, but they live for a very long time, so she can talk to them long enough for them to start understanding things.] Cara explained.

Hawk stopped caring about the conversation at that point. He had known Thor almost all his life, and he still didn’t understand him any better. It must be a Chaos thing that he didn’t have an affinity for.

Cara thought about pointing out that Hawk struggled to even remember important people’s names, but that just felt mean.

Unlike all of the others, the Windspeed Hawk species was not known for its keen intellect. It was an absolutely lethal hunting bird at the Common Rank, but even the Lightning Cerro were known to be much more clever, and able to employ complex defensive tactics to ward off predators.

Even after all this evolution, Hawk’s thought process was still somewhat simple. Far beyond what anyone would expect, but very single-minded and focused, not horribly innovative except when it came to fire magic.

Perhaps learning Mystic Cooking would be good for him, as it encouraged developing new mixtures of ingredients to improve food.

The Elves used their innate Nature Magic to help cook the food faster, and probably improve the taste with limited ingredients, which had them all eating less than thirty minutes later.

Karl got the impression that they were actually rushing through the meal on the hope that they could finish before he changed his mind and didn't bring them back to Cyhosasa.

But he could use Portals, and it wasn't a big deal to just send them directly to Matilda.

Once they were finished, the elves packed up their camp, which looked like they had practiced the process dozens of times before. They had clearly been here for some time, but within ten minutes, everything was loaded into packs or on to narrow wagons and ready to move on.

"Alright, I will put you near the Supreme Lady. She's a Guild Member of mine, so I can target her, but I'm not sure where she's standing.

Actually, that's probably not a great idea.

I haven't been to Cyhosasa to drop you there directly, but I can bring you to Drodh, on the Dragon Isles, and have one of our members forward you from there." Karl explained.

Sending them directly to the Supreme Lady had sounded easy, in theory. But once it had occurred to him that she might not be at home, and he might dump the Elves on the wrong continent, or even in the Chaos Plane, the idea seemed much less appealing.

He should probably go visit her in person, in case this happened again.

Chapter 1188: Resistance to Magic

Karl began to cast the portal spell to Drodh and was immediately hit with the most intense resistance to magic use that he had ever felt.

[Cara, a little assistance?]

The Chaos Badger brought up a [Nullify] bubble around him, suppressing the effect. That let the portal form smoothly, just outside the main gates to Drodh.

Karl waved to the city guards and then tossed them a couple of gold coins.

"Can you lead these fine guests to the house? I will ask someone to get in contact with the Supreme Lady, as they are requesting a direct meeting." Karl explained.

"Of course, Sir. Ladies, Gentlemen. This way, please. We will get you settled in the crafting village for now, as it has lodging for everyone. Karl will have someone here to assist you in just a few minutes." The guard agreed.

From outside of Karl's line of sight, a matronly voice replied. "No need. I will see them in. Where did you say that they needed to be?"

"Oh, Librarian Sapphire! Yes, that is perfect. Karl is on the other side of the portal, and he says they need to speak directly to the Supreme Lady." The Guard replied, sounding incredibly relieved that he didn't need to be the one to tell someone to bring the Chaos Dragon over.

"Sapphire, before I run away again, how is the project coming?" Karl called.

"Very well. We've got the Inscriptionists from the Library here, and they're working overtime on the skills needed for advanced Warriors, Clerics and Mages. Mage is still a bit spotty, as not every mage is compatible with the advanced spells we have found.

But there are also more advanced Mage Class residents compared to Advanced Warriors, so they're not our biggest concern." She replied, then frowned.

"How long will you be gone? We could use your expertise here as well."

Karl smiled, though he knew she couldn't see him. "Only a few weeks. Once we finish up here, we will be back for the wedding, and then I can help with the projects more frequently."

The portal closed immediately after the last of the Elves were through, and Sapphire shrugged. Karl must be busy with whatever he was doing there.

But on the Neia Continent, Karl found himself surrounded by dozens of dragonkin warriors with furious expressions.

"We finally found you. Return the portal stones, and we might let you have a quick death." The leader of the group demanded.

Karl laughed. "It won't do you any good. I destroyed the stones on the other side. You're never going home."

The Dragonkin was about to retort when more portals opened, and five Totem Ranked Giants with four arms and massive bodies walked through.

"Well, look what we have here. A little spat between the Dragon Hunters and the Demons, is it? The boss doesn't mind if you don't like each other, you all end up in the same spot anyhow." The Giant with the darkest complexion announced, then chuckled grimly.

The Dragonkin turned to face the Giants, while Karl tapped his chin, considering his next move.

"Before we start the fun part of this, I have a question. Which group is the one suppressing magic on the continent? It's like wearing underwear a size too tight.

Very uncomfortable." Karl joked.

The Dragonkin looked confused, but the Giants sneered.

"Did you think that we would just let the lesser beings use their silly tricks on us? We aren't like you pathetic, short-lived species. We remember." The Giant retorted.

"So, it's the followers of the Titan Gods. That makes things a bit easier."

That still left the question of what the dragonkin that the Giants had called the Dragon Hunters were doing here, and how long they had been operating on the continent.

There might have been more slipping through Matilda's protective net than the Chaos Dragon was aware of.

Or, they might all be from Mortal worlds, and she simply wasn't concerned about them.

More Giants came through behind the initial group, but they were all Monarchs and Overlords, not an immediate concern for Karl.

{Stay out of our way, and we won't attack you, thief.} The leader of the Dragonkin whispered.

Karl nodded. {I don't attack those who don't attack me.}

It was a nice sentiment.

A blatant lie, but a nice sentiment.

The leader of the Giants equipped a two-handed maul, letting Karl know that they had some equivalent of an Inventory, or perhaps storage devices. If they weren't from this world, they probably didn't have System Classes, and Karl didn't see any other signs that they did.

Then the Giant slammed the ground, and a wave of force raced toward Karl and the Dragonkin.

A stomp of Karl's foot to activate [Gravity Slam] caused a collision halfway between them, and threw dirt up in the air, shading the battlefield as Hawk appeared high in the sky, and Cara snuck out of her space to join the fight.

She loved picking on big dumb Giants.

Karl transformed back into the Avatar of the World Dragon, and activated all his buffs so he could get the fight really started. The Giants began to curse the moment that he transformed, and the Totems all abandoned the attack on the Dragonkin to target him.

Karl called for his Golems.

First the Epic Guard, then Dire Bears, which duplicated to four. Then the Epic Golem, which brought up a system message that Karl didn't have time to deal with as he was using [Void Blast] to parry skills from the Giants.

[Randomize] He thought.

{Epic Golem Selected} Myceloid King

Two towering Myceloids appeared in all their fungal glory, and immediately rained spores down on the battlefield as skills crashed into their bodies.

Cara laughed as she grabbed one of the spores to stuff up a Giant's kilt.

[Damage Reduction doesn't stop them from spreading spores.] The badger laughed.

[But you forgot that you've got the More Golems Spell from Dana.] She added.

Right, Greater Golem.

Karl called for the last Golems, and four Totem Ranked Lightning Cerro appeared, looking exactly like Thor had before he evolved into a Behemoth.

[YES! Brother Thor is back, baby!] Cara giggled.

That armoured head fringe was the perfect spot to hide from retaliation after she stuffed itching spores up the Giants' kilts.

Karl laughed as a Giant roared in frustration at being touched inappropriately by the badger, then summoned the Spectral Knights.

The Giants wanted a fight. Now they had one.

Chapter 1189: Suppressed Battle

Karl frowned as more thoughts filled his mind, strategizing a defensive perimeter around what the Greater Golems assumed were the weakest members of the group. Cara and the Epic Guard.

"Damnable World Dragon! He can still use all his magic, even under suppression." The leader of the Giants snarled as he dodged Karl's attempt to bite his face off.

It took many times more mana than it should have, and they weren't even at the centre of the effect yet. But yes, Karl could still summon Golems well enough. However, if he was going to keep spamming [Void Blast] he was going to need to supplement his mana supply, even with his prodigious mana reserves.

Fortunately, the Giants were all Warriors, so he didn't have to deal with too many complex spell effects, mostly just direct attacks.

The Golems were doing an excellent job of holding off the rest of the Giants, but the constant stream of thought from the Greater Golems was surprising. Karl didn't even hear the Myceloid Kings' thoughts, and he knew that they were intelligent, as they were speaking to each other in some language of flashing colours he couldn't decipher.

Then, it came to him.

They were Cerro.

The Cerro Packs shared a mental connection, it was an innate ability of the species, and Karl had just never noticed because it was also a skill granted by his class. So, the Golems treated him as part of the pack, and the Golems were close enough to real Cerro that the mental communication worked.

Karl did notice that their Refreshing Lightning was either missing or superseded by Eternal Lightning, though.

He could hear swearing in the distance, but Karl didn't have an opportunity to search for new threats. A crushing blow of the Giant's maul narrowly missed as Karl charged, but the Giant had four arms to grapple with, and only two holding the maul.

The two massive forms were deadlocked for a second, then Karl breathed [Ghostfire] in the Giant's face, forcing him to retreat.

"Tricky. Using a spell instead of your real breath weapon." The Giant snarled.

Karl chuckled. "You're surprisingly durable. I thought that you'd be a snack by now."

His claws sparked against the head of the maul as the Giant parried his next attack.

"The Titan Clan does not go down so easily. We are not the discarded dregs of your world." The Giant panted.

Karl was proving to be incredibly annoying to fight.

Not just because he could still use magic, but because it was nearly impossible to damage him, and when you did, he healed so fast you didn't make any headway.

The Titan Clan healed quickly as well, but against the greater Dragon species, they couldn't claim absolute superiority on a physical level.

Plus, those shambling mushroom men were turning everything toxic.

The angry noises were getting louder, but Karl still couldn't tell where they were coming from. It wasn't any of the four armed Giants he was fighting, but it sounded too close to be the other Giants, who had retreated along with the Dragonkin to fight in an area that wasn't covered in spores.

[Gravity Slam] on his fist knocked the Giants' leader backward, and Karl used the opportunity to assess the battlefield.

Over half of the reinforcements were dead, along with almost all of the Dragonkin, who were trying to flee the battlefield. There were only two more of the Totem Ranked Giants standing as well, but he could see that two of the downed Giants were only injured, and would rejoin the battle in a few minutes if they could escape from Cara long enough to heal.

The pained screaming was coming from the other side of the portals, as Hawk had cast [Apocalypse] through them to stop the Giants from sending any more forces through.

A gurgling moan made Karl instinctively wince in sympathy as one of the fallen Giants had his groin crushed by the foot of an overgrown Cerro golem.

That was enough sign for the survivors that this fight was over.

But they couldn't retreat when their village was on fire on the other side.

Even if they closed the portals, they couldn't safely retreat. It had been the opened portal that had drawn them here, so Karl could just open a new portal to their hometown now that he had marked it with a spell.

Or, with a curious badger, as Cara had gone through to look around, but quickly came back when she saw that it was all on fire and nobody wanted to fight.

Another of the Totem Ranked Giants fell to the combined efforts of the Golems and Cara, leaving just one unfortunate fighter plus the leader, who was deadlocked with Karl.

The leader barked an order, and the Overlord Ranked Giants at the other side of the battlefield began to retreat, grabbing the bodies of the fallen as they ran for the portals.

{Good fight. I am sure that I will see you again soon.} Karl informed the Giant.

"Don't meddle in things that don't concern you, and we won't have to." The Giant replied, nearly shattering [Eternal Lightning] with a strike to Karl's shoulder.

"The suppression effect is causing trouble for others. I can't just let it go." Karl replied, speaking quietly enough that only his opponent would hear.

The Giant retreated a few steps, then grabbed his last standing ally.

"Good luck with that. If you find it, I'll pay well for it."

Then the leader hurled his partner through the portal and exited the battlefield.

The portals closed behind them, and Cara climbed up one of the Greater Golems' backs to inspect the battlefield without the effort of actually flying.

The Dragonkin took one look at Karl's group, and simply ran away.

There was no point in them trying to get their stolen portal stones back from him. He could fight a Totem Ranked Titan Champion to a standstill, and even when everything else was dead or dying, neither of them had taken any serious damage.

That wasn't something that their surviving members could handle.

They owed the Giants for that one. If they hadn't shown up when they did, the Dragonkin would have all died here.

Chapter 1190: Source Of Suppression

Cara stretched out on the Greater Golem's back as the summoned Cerro pack scoured the area for more threats.

Once they were sure that there was nothing else nearby that might be a threat to them, the Cerro relaxed and stood around in a circle, waiting for Karl to give instructions.

Karl wasn't sure what to do with them. It was getting more and more difficult to use magic as he got closer to the source of the anomaly, but travelling on foot across a continent was simply not an option when they had limited time.

The next best option would be to move them to the Tiny World so that they didn't have to be dismissed.

Then, they could be brought out as needed, and the only risk factor was that someone might notice the entrance and try to force their way into the Tiny World.

Karl didn't know how likely that was, as he hadn't met anyone else with a similar skill that was active.

So, without any evidence that it wasn't relatively safe, that was what Karl went with.

He just had to remind the Epic Guard to warn the others that there were golems coming to visit.

[I am going to fly closer to the source of the suppression, and try to find it.

Something that the Giants said bothers me, though.

They wished me good luck, and offered to pay well if I did find the source of the suppression. It might not be in this world anymore, simply linked to it to keep the effect active.] Karl informed Dana, who was still occupied entertaining Button, and unaware of what was going on outside.

[Giants? I hope you're not out there causing trouble already? I'm not even done napping on the beach yet.]

Karl laughed at her annoyed response.

[No, just a small group that came when I cast a spell. Don't worry too much about it. I will come to you tonight if there isn't a good spot for us both to sleep out here.]

Karl began following the path of destruction to the east, the most direct route to the strongest point in the suppression.

From his vantage point, it looked like the suppression was still coming from the territories of the Giant Clans, but if the one he had just fought was to be believed, they had lost whatever had caused the effect.

How they had managed that was a mystery. But with the decline in power between system resurgences, when the mana was deeper within the planet, they might have thought that it had done its work, and placed it somewhere for safekeeping.

Then, generations passed and they forgot what it was for.

That was usually how lost artifact stories went.

[You know, this is the same path that we followed to find Cara.] Hawk noted.

Cara looked around. [I remember it looking better than this. I wonder if the Orcs are still here? The local tribes were so annoying, always trying to poke me with sticks.

They didn't even bring food.

This place sucked.]

The further that Karl flew, the fewer signs of life he found.

Not just the sentient species. The ground was dry and barren, and what used to be the grasslands of the Miviascan Empire were turning into cracked earth flats.

But Karl saw rain clouds on the horizon, and there were muddy ponds all over the hillsides. So, the problem wasn't the rain. Something else was suppressing growth here.

At first, it didn't make sense to Karl. But then he began to understand.

It wasn't that there was a second negative influence here. It was that the first one was too strong.

Whatever was making it difficult to use magic or access the System had suppressed the mana to such an extreme extent that even the plant life, which normally only needed a bit of vital energy, had begun to die. However, if that were the case, then the lands of the Giants, still far to the east, should be completely uninhabitable.

Not even animals would survive if the plant life were gone and the suppression effect got any stronger.

It didn't seem like the sort of effect that the Giants would have wanted for their empire, assuming that they were going to try to take over the continent and suppress the other races.

It did them no good if they couldn't thrive themselves.

Karl kept flying east, until suddenly, he felt the imbalance shift. It was now south of him and beginning to subtly fade as he flew away.

The centre of the effect was not at Sallo Lake, where the Giants had made their Capital. Instead, it was somewhere in the dead wilderness of what had once been the Miviascan Empire.

Soaring on the up drafts caused by hot sun on baked earth, Karl searched for the source of the anomaly.

There, far beneath him.

There were kilometres of bleached white bones scattered across bare stone.

And right in the middle was a portal.

No, a Dungeon Entrance.

Immediately, Karl understood what had happened, and why nobody had ever found the source of the suppression effect.

Someone had taken it into a dungeon.

And then died inside.

But the effect was too strong, it didn't remain within the dungeon, it leaked out. And with nobody to control it, the effect was running at full output, unrestrained and without any of the usual guidelines that would be used.

Like not suppressing mana so much that it killed the plant life.

The question was how Karl was going to deal with it.

If he just flew down there without a plan, he would surely become part of the bone pile around the Dungeon. He was five thousand metres in the air, and he could feel the effect trying to leech the mana from his body.

If he was under two thousand metres, he may not be able to resist, as the others had failed to.

The bones didn't lie.

But even if he could overcome the effect, it was most likely inside the Dungeon, and Karl had never heard of anyone entering someone else's Dungeon Instance.

Every group that entered was separated.