

Beast Master 1201

Chapter 1201: Minor Adjustment

Cara and Button were the perfect partners in crime because they were nearly the same size, so Button fit everywhere that Cara wanted to go.

Most of her prank partners were significantly larger than she was, but Button could follow her down all the smaller tunnels.

Today's mission was to sneak into the Dark Dragon egg nest, and rearrange all the lamps that the caretakers had left to help them find their way around. Karl could hear Cara's plan in her mind, but there weren't too many tunnels in the mountain, so at the very worst, tomorrow morning's shift would be lost for about ten minutes before they found their way to the nest.

That wasn't a prank that was really worth stopping, in his mind.

Most of them would make their way out by memory anyhow, even with the light locations changed.

Once dinner was done, Karl took Dana back to their room in the duplicate Guild House, and locked the door before activating the soundproofing spell.

They were going to need that.

They did find some time to meditate and attempt to improve their power levels before morning, though.

With the upgraded power matrix, energy flowed into Karl at a truly astounding rate, fast enough that even Opal was impressed with his ability to restore the mana that he had used up while rearranging the focal points.

He didn't want to waste any time getting it perfect before the wedding, as he was reasonably sure that either someone was going to notice that they were back, or Matilda was going to come get them in the next day or two at the most.

Once that happened, everything was going to get hectic right until the day of the wedding.

But come to think of it, he didn't even know who was on the guest list.

Or where they were holding the wedding.

Those sorts of minor details seemed like things that he should be aware of, but none of the beasts were concerned about it. Rae's attention hardly even flickered away from her design project when he mentioned it.

She had finished the requests for the Vampire Covens that she had met at the winter gala, and now she was on to making outfits for the wedding guests that she didn't trust to dress themselves.

Which was basically everyone, as most of the ones she might trust to dress themselves were already planning to go in one of her outfits.

The only one that was interested in their return was Remi, as she wanted to harvest some of the plants in the Tiny World, and with Karl so far away, she had to wait. Her alchemists were doing wonderful things, though.

With everyone doing their best in the new work space, the Darklight Host had actually nearly managed to restock their Guild Store during the week that Karl was away.

There were still some things that were on backorder. But Sapphire had been spending every hour of the day either conducting experiments to improve the classes of the Warriors, or making products with Runecrafting to fill the custom orders for Totem Rank items.

She had yet to make a Mythic Rank item for anyone but herself, and she had no intentions of doing it.

Having a trade skill was a wonderful thing, but she had no intentions of letting it interfere with her other studies.

Despite Karl's intention to remain in bed with Dana all day, the return of Remi to the Tiny World was a trigger to let everyone else know that they were back from their mission, and before noon Matilda was waiting for them downstairs with a whole list of wedding related chores.

"Good, good. You got that settled well enough. The matter of the Dragon Hunters coming to this world, and how the Titans managed to sneak children from the Immortal Realm here, can be dealt with later.

The continent will slowly begin to regain access to the System, and that is what matters. Now, I will know what to look for if they try to put a new mana suppression barrier up." Matilda informed Karl as he came down to get food.

Karl sighed. "There is a lot to unpack in that sentence. But you are right, we can deal with other continents' problems later.

How are we going to arrange pickup for all the guests?"

Matilda smiled. "I have arranged portals for the ones on the Dragon Isles. So, that just leaves the ones that are not on the Dragon Isles.

That part will be just so much fun.

It wouldn't be right for me to go get them, the old Myth would get all cranky, and then I'd have to suffer his incessant complaining messages.

Letting him have System Access back was a mistake.

For a follower of the God of Death to be annoyed with you is the worst thing in the world. They're not even afraid of death, so you can't properly threaten them to shut up."

Karl chuckled. "Well, with each of you in charge of a continental region, I suppose it is necessary that you keep in touch."

"Plus, he's also properly aged. I believe that he will reach Immortality soon, he was a Myth at the end of the last resurgence. With the mana levels on the planet's surface recovering, it should be possible for him to ascend without leaving soon." Matilda agreed.

Which meant that they would have forever to annoy each other.

"So, I will be going to pick everyone up from the Golden Dragon Nation? How many are on the guest list?" Karl asked.

"Not too many. The parents of the bride and groom, the King, Ahmad the Catman, Othello, Nacht, Misty, The Drake Rider Kenichi, Niall and Rae's baby Rogue Sybil. Then some teachers. Tank, Morgana, the Mackenzie siblings, Dave, Jill, Daniel, Alice and Rita.

Fortunately, most of them can be found in just a few locations.

I think that we can have Dana go for both of your parents. That should panic people a little less. If we leave today, the Drake Rider will be in the Capital holding a meeting about something, so we can grab him directly instead of going looking for him."

Why they needed to invite a foreign Overlord who Karl had met all of twice was a mystery. But if Matilda thought it was necessary, then there was surely some good reason behind it.

Chapter 1202: Pancakes Bring All The Girls

One of the dragonkin Druids came out with a huge stack of berry pancakes, and a happy squealing let Karl know that they had visitors.

Lotus and Button skipped into the room, with Cara right behind them and an angry old Orcish woman herding them.

"They're your problem now. I'm going to fix the lights again." She grumbled, and Karl tried not to laugh at the smug look on Cara's face.

They had rearranged the lights in the underground complex last night, then did them again this morning, when the staff thought that they had them all fixed.

"Who did you want to go see first? I am thinking that going to see King Axel and Ahmad would be fastest, as they're in the same room. Then they can take you to Othello and Kenichi.

Yes, that will work. If we do it right, some of the others will come straight to you." Matilda decided.

"And you'll send me to go get our parents?" Dana asked.

"Yes, that is good. Actually, I don't need to send Karl to get Niall and Sybil. Rae can do that. I know she's been wanting to go see them again." The Chaos Dragon suggested.

That should be entertaining.

"Is Sybil still at the Academy?" Karl asked.

"Yes, but Niall is out on a mission nearby. Whoever goes to invite them will have to find him, then message me to open a portal." Matilda explained.

Rae appeared next to them with a huge smile on her face. "That sounds like fun. I will go collect my baby Rogue, and hunt Niall through the wilderness. Maybe we can even hunt monsters together."

That sounded like a nightmare for whoever was with Niall, but that wasn't really Karl's problem. Rae likely wouldn't eat them, and a little excitement would keep Niall on his toes.

Karl nodded to the dragon. "Alright, you might as well start opening the portals, and we can get started on collecting the guests."

The Chaos Dragon looked like he had just given her a present, and then Karl's vision blurred, and he found himself standing in the Archbishop's office in the Golden Dragon Nation Capital, with two panicked faces staring back at him.

"Ah, perfect timing. Gentlemen, I believe that you received an invitation to my wedding? Supreme Lady Matilda has sent me to start picking up the guests from this continent for the festivities." Karl greeted King Axel and Ahmad.

Then he frowned and looked around. "Shouldn't the Archbishop be here? This is his office. We can grab him at the same time."

Ahmad took one slow breath, then began to relax.

"Karl?" He asked slowly.

That's when it dawned on him. He had forgotten to transform back into his natural human appearance.

"Oh, right. I got too used to being transformed. Yes, it's me."

Karl returned to human form, and changed into a casual suit of Rae's creation, with golden dragons embroidered down the left sleeve.

"You really have mastered the art of giving people heart attacks, haven't you? But I'm afraid that the position of Archbishop is open at the moment, as they are conducting discussions on which of the new Totem Ranked members of the Clergy are best suited for the position." Ahmad explained.

Karl shrugged. "Well, then that saves us finding one more dignitary. I do still need to find Othello, Nacht and Misty, though. Oh, and I was told that the Drake Rider Kenichi should be around here somewhere."

King Axel gave him a confused look. "First, how did you know that? Second, how are you so powerful at Totem Rank?"

"Matilda told me he would be here somewhere. But how do you know I'm powerful? I haven't done anything." Karl replied.

"You really can't tell? I can feel the oppression from your aura as you stand there. It's like standing next to a mana vein lodestone that has [Oppression] cast on it. Just how much mana do you have?" The King asked.

Karl snapped his fingers. "I get it now. I don't notice because I've been on the Dragon Isles, where it's more normal. What if I do this?"

He put up [Nullify] as a thin barrier over himself, blocking his aura.

"That's just creepier. It's like you vanished completely, even though I can see you. But it's a bit more friendly than the other way. Like you don't have System Access at all."

Karl shrugged. "Well, I will have to work on suppressing my aura later. I just finished upgrading my mental strength, and that must have caused the effect to increase.

Do you think that you could invite the others who are here in the Capital to come meet with me? Or we can go find them around town.

I am familiar with their scents and auras, so I should be able to find them on my own if needed. But tracking like that works better with the [Avatar] skill activated."

"Avatar? What god gave you the blessing of being his Avatar on this world?" A sharp voice asked from the doorway.

"Drake Rider Kenichi! Perfect timing, I was just about to go looking for you." Karl greeted the new arrival, who he noticed had advanced from Overlord to Totem Rank.

"So, the letter inviting me to your wedding wasn't a prank, then? I must admit, I was shocked when it showed up in my bedroom."

That was something that Karl had never thought to ask. Matilda said that she sent out the invitations after the list was finalized, but he never thought about how she was planning to get them to all the guests.

With tiny portals, it would seem.

"What God's Avatar did you become? One of the Dragon Gods, yes? Perhaps the Laughing God? You do seem to have an affinity to Chaos." The Drake Rider asked.

Karl shook his head. "No, the World Dragon. I will have to show off the transformation later, it is quite impressive."

All three men froze, then Kenichi made a warding gesture across his chest.

"No way. The Avatar of the World Dragon has returned to the world? It can't be?

The ancient legends say that is the final sign of the resurgence, soon, the ley lines will reach their peak, and even the common workers will be System Users." He murmured.

That was already the case on the Dragon Isles.

The residents of this continent were in for some real shocks when they met the members of the Darklight Host at the wedding.

Chapter 1203: Hunting Guests

While Karl was discussing his advancements with The Golden Dragon Nation's leadership, Rae had [Night Haunter] active, and she was stalking her first wedding guest through the woods near the Academy.

There was a pair of Mountain Giant infiltrators only a few kilometres away in the woods, transformed to look like humans.

They were Niall's target, but he hadn't found their traces yet.

The wind had told Rae where they were, and she immediately went to investigate, thinking that the Inquisitor might be there.

He wasn't. But with the Mountain Giants as bait, she knew where he was going to be. That made it much easier to find him, and now she was incorporeal and invisible, sneaking along behind him as she tested how close she could get before he noticed her.

In order to keep the difficulty level up, she had hidden her aura as well. But she had faith in the Rogue to find a way to locate her before she got close enough to touch him.

Maybe she should lick him? Cara seemed to enjoy it.

Rae's natural form didn't have taste buds, so she had never seen the appeal. But she could taste things in this form. Still, that was Cara's thing, and Cara already knew what Totem Ranked Rogue tasted like.

Rae was five metres from Niall when he spun and struck out at the air in her direction, then paused as he activated a skill, looking for the threat he had sensed.

She leapt up into a tree, and let her stealth skills fade.

"Not bad, five metres away. Your depth perception is still a little off, but not bad." She informed him with a smile.

"Lady Rae. What brings you to the woods today?" Niall asked cautiously.

"I came to get you for the Karl's wedding. Did you want to finish up here and go back to the Academy? It's just those two transformed Giants, right?" She replied.

Niall nodded. "Did you find them on your way here?"

Rae smiled. "Yes, but I left them for you. They weren't worth messing with."

She motioned for silence and led the way through the woods, right to the edge of the little camp that the two spies had set.

Niall vanished, then appeared behind the spies, ending them both with a single strike.

"That should do it. They have been seen stalking students from the Academy lately. I don't sense any others around, and the reports were just about two spies." He explained.

Rae shrugged. "There were only ever two in this camp, but there might be more. The Giants liked to infiltrate everything before we left. Now, did you want to go to the Academy?"

I left my baby Rogue there, and the Chaos Dragon says that we need to invite a bunch of teachers too."

"In that case, why don't we play tag? If we use [Shadow Step], it shouldn't take more than an hour to get back." Niall suggested.

"Tag sounds fun. Nobody will be mad if we spend a little time to practice our skills before going back to the Academy." Rae agreed, then poked the Inquisitor and flashed away.

Game on.

While Rae was having a grand time playing tag with Niall, Dana found herself standing outside a mansion that was somehow both shabby and new at the same time.

How that had happened was a mystery. She had asked Matilda to look into it, and her family had been getting monthly transfers that should have made them wealthy, without any need to do their own chores.

But the house was dirty from a recent dust storm, the yard hadn't been mowed, and the flowers were dying.

She took a deep breath to steel herself for what she was likely to find, then double checked her appearance so that she would look her best for her mother.

A brisk rap at the door brought the sound of scurrying feet, and the sharp features of her mother, more lined with age and stress than she remembered, appeared in the doorway.

"Dana? You're really here. It's you, isn't it?" Her mother asked, pleading for it to be true.

Dana wrapped her arms around the frail figure of her mother. Even with her strength restrained, it felt like she might accidentally break her.

"Mom, it's good to see you again. I came to collect you for the wedding." Dana whispered.

"Wedding?" Her mother asked, confused.

"Did you not get the invitation? I know that we delivered it." Dana asked, not understanding.

Her mother shook her head. "Your father must have collected it. We're not on speaking terms lately. His last business venture was a disaster.

The debt collectors take everything every month, the moment the government transfers it. He lost billions, and now he's missing. Likely off with his mistress."

Dana sighed. "You know what, come to the wedding with me, and I will get you settled at the Guild House afterward. There is no need for you to stay here and suffer from his stupidity and gambling debts anymore.

You will love Karl when you meet him, mom."

Dana paused as her mom broke down in tears, just holding her.

"We should go. There is nothing in this house that I will miss. If they want it, they can take it." Her mother insisted, her voice firm.

"Perfect, I will open a portal, and we can go collect Karl's parents as well."

Her mother nodded, and Dana opened a portal, then smiled as she saw a group of men who were very clearly debt collectors running down the street, calling her mother's name.

Let her deadbeat father deal with his failed business debts. The collectors wouldn't follow them to the Dragon Isles.

The Inquisitors arrived just as the portal closed behind them, leaving two confused members of the clergy facing a dozen irate debt collectors who had just watched their target leave.

"Well, that was unexpected. Did the stranger harm the woman who lives here?" The Inquisitor asked.

The debt collector shook his head.

"No, she just showed up at the door, talked to her for a moment, then they left before we could get here to ask for our overdue payment." The debt collector replied, frustrated by his inability to collect.

"Thank you for your assistance. We must be on our way now." The Inquisitor replied, then stepped back through the portal to return to the Cathedral.

Someone would know where they went.

Chapter 1204: Meet The Parents

Dana stood in front of a small house in the Lithium Mines housing complex, smiling at Karl's mother.

"Well, who do we have here? Come in, I will put tea on. This must be your mother. It's a pleasure to meet you, Madam."

Dana's mother smiled. "You can call me Wendy, we're to be family, it seems."

Karl's mother smiled back at the haggard woman with her messy brown curls, so much like her daughter's.

"The government assigned us new identities so that we weren't immediately linked to our son, who apparently has a knack for causing trouble.

But you can call us Jake and Ella.

Now, did you prefer tea or strong black coffee? There isn't often milk available at the company store, but we might be able to get some." She asked.

"Black coffee is good, thank you Ella." Dana replied with a smile, while Wendy looked confused.

"Does your son not send money back? It must be such a hardship living in a tiny mining town." She asked.

Karl's mother snorted in amusement, while his father chuckled. "Oh, we stay at a place in the Capital for a few months every year, during the down season, when it's too cold for the factories to properly process the lithium and the stockpile is full.

But I'm the head of workers here.

The town might not be glamorous, and the mines aren't a pleasant place, but it's been better now that they've got me to speak with the big boss for them. If I left, the job would go to some crony who doesn't give a damn and pockets any savings he can find.

Probably plus all the bonuses and overtime pay, like the last one did."

That explained a lot about why he was passionate about his work here at the mines.

Things had always been, and most likely always would be, bad for the miners. But when you had managers above them who were skimming their benefits, or outright embezzling from the company, things would be even worse.

"I hope you booked some time off." Dana joked as the coffee brewed.

Jake nodded. "Indeed. I booked it the day that I got the notice. It took a few tries to convince the boss that my Karl wasn't dead, but off on a secret government mission. But there is enough of that going on with the Inquisition and the more powerful Elites that he didn't argue too hard."

As if speaking about him had summoned him, there was a knock at the door, and an elderly man in a pinstriped suit stood with the Mayor, a Commander Rank warrior who was rapidly approaching his middle years.

He had been one of the earliest successful test subjects for the Elite Program, and now that he was approaching forty, the years and experimental treatments were catching up with him.

"Overlord, welcome to Lithium Mines village. Might we ask what brings you here today? Or is it just a social visit?" The Mayor began.

Dana smiled and stood to shake their hands.

"Mayor, Mine Boss. It's a pleasure to formally meet you. I am actually just here to pick up my father-in-law for my wedding. You see, we're holding it in the Dragon Isles, so it simply wouldn't be feasible to invite our families to come without sending a mage to open a portal for them." Dana explained.

The Mine Boss nodded, but the Mayor froze in shock. "Miss Dana? The fastest mage in history to reach Commander Rank? You are marrying Karl?"

Dana giggled. "We get that response a lot. But yes, I am."

"Two Overlords in one family. Now that is enviable. Please accept my humble wishes for your future prosperity." The Mayor replied.

"Actually, Karl is a Totem already. That is part of the reason why I came instead of having him come collect his own parents. There are some restrictions on moving Totems around the nation, you see." Dana explained.

That was a fact that Karl was rapidly realizing as more people noticed the presence of another Totem in the capital city.

And it was about to be very hard to miss him.

"Totem Karl, if you would please transform and place your draconic paw on the mark at the side of the Temple. That should certify your status, and finish activating the features of the Temple," an elderly High Priest explained, his hands clutching at the gold trim of his white robes.

He was one of the World Dragon Clerics in the Capital, and would have been one of the top contenders for leadership of the church if he had been more powerful.

Lady Othello stood on Karl's left, waiting expectantly, with the sword he had made for her hanging from her hip, even in her ornate formal robes. She was a Paladin, but politics had dragged her into the struggle for the leadership of the Church, as she had also reached the Totem Rank.

"Alright. I will see what I can do to bring all the functions back online. Don't worry, I have some experience with this." Karl agreed, then transformed, and let [Behemoth] expand his dragon form for a bit more visual shock factor.

At this size, the mark on the temple roof nearly perfectly matched his foot, which Karl gently placed in the outline, then gave the temple a pulse of mana to see if it had dormant functions.

It was the temple used for advancements, and it had been vital to the success of the Church after he had left the continent. But when Karl started the process, runes lit up all over the surface, and the Temple began to demand an enormous amount of mana.

That was something that Karl could provide, even when it started to demand something more. The power of a Fundamental Rule.

Karl's understanding of the Fundamental Rule of Mana Manipulation wasn't complete.

Far from it.

But it was enough to satisfy the temple, which sent a burst of golden light high into the sky for a few seconds before the power faded.

Karl nodded in satisfaction as he examined the changes. It wasn't anything new to the temple, but an improvement on what it could already do. The temple had been able to give advanced classes to those who qualified, but it should have been able to give rare classes and even reward supplicants with rare skills that had been saved in its magical memory.

Now, it should be useful to everyone, right up to Totem Rank.

But they had definitely attracted attention.

Chapter 1205: Annoying The Neighbours

A large portal opened in the courtyard, and Karl noticed that everyone was immediately on guard, including Kenichi.

Through the portal, a dozen Totem Ranked mages strolled, looking confident in their power and authority.

"Who is this? We sensed an exiled soul returning to the continent without permission." One of the mages demanded.

Karl smiled down at him, fangs glistening.

{I am Karl. And your demand for exile no longer holds any power over me. I will go where I please.} He explained in draconic.

The mages frowned, then read the nameplate over his head and looked confused.

They had never seen a person with a marking on their name like that.

"That is not how it works. You are exiled for life from this continent." The mage insisted.

{Or, I could simply fly in and take one of your nations and call it my own. Then I would have the right to vote to nullify my own exile, would I not?

I think that this arrangement where I simply come visit as I please will be much less work.} Karl countered.

Othello chuckled. Some things never changed. Whatever part of Karl's brain was responsible for telling him that he was in danger had never developed.

Fear simply didn't compute for him.

But Othello couldn't know that Karl really had nothing to fear from these mages. Even ten on one, they didn't stand a chance against him.

The mages began to cast a spell, and Cara immediately [Nullified] it, while Karl smirked at them.

With the long tongue of a Totem Ranked Dragon, he licked a wet trail up the side of one of the mage's faces.

{As I said, I will do what I want. Even if you try to cast something to stop me, you can't. I suggest that you behave. I am just here to collect the guests for my wedding, and to take care of some maintenance on the World Dragon's relics.

Once I am done that, I will collect a few teachers from the Academy and return home.

Everyone will be returned in a few days, once the festivities are over.} Karl explained.

The mages tried individually to cast something, but Karl simply activated [Overwhelming Presence] and let the [Terror] effect freeze their actions for a few seconds before he deactivated it.

{See, you're slowly learning. There is nothing you can do to stop me.

Nothing.

Even if I let you cast spells, you couldn't harm me, and your warriors do not have a weapon that could pierce my hide.} Karl informed them smugly.

The mages were definitely not happy about it, but they were realists. The man they exiled had gained an immense amount of power, and they could no longer do anything to stop him from doing what he wanted.

If anyone might be able to, it would be the Mythic Black Dragon, or possibly Nacht, who was one of the closest to advancement among the ancient dragons.

But neither of them were strong allies of the humans, and with his form so convincingly changed, Karl might be on better terms with the dragons than they were.

They were right.

Drawn by the chaos, and the aura of impending death, Nacht came out of seclusion within the Capital Temple to observe the chaos.

And immediately recognized Karl.

"I should have known that you would have something to do with this sort of chaos. Welcome back to the Golden Dragon Nation." Nacht announced with a wry chuckle.

{It's a pleasure to see you again, old friend. Your niece has become a core member of my Guild, and quite the indispensable part of the Overlord Ranked raiding team.} Karl replied.

The black dragon smirked. "To think, a black dragon is actually making friends. She sends me regular messages, you know. She's been working hard to surpass her namesake."

Nacht wasn't wrong. Nachtia had been working hard to surpass him. Not out of any sense of rivalry, though. Simply because she didn't want to be left behind if her friends advanced.

She had worked hard to find them.

Or, she had worked hard and suffered many disappointments until she met them, depending on how you looked at it.

Because right now, she was napping, and preparing to go into the dungeon as a healer and observer before Matilda sent her off to the wedding venue.

Half the team had been part of Sapphire's experiments on upgrading classes, and she needed data on the improvements, while the team still needed healers.

Karl turned to the group of Totem Ranked foreign Mages. {Would you like to accompany us? I am sure we have the space to arrange for a few more guests. Weddings are a joyous occasion, and you can think of it as networking, with all the Totems and Myths that will be there.

Even the Immortal Regent and Supreme Lady Matilda will be in attendance.

A real who's who of the world, really.}

The mages considered it for a moment, then shook their heads. "No, we should return home. We will consider this a misunderstanding, and please accept our best wishes for your married life."

Then, they turned and left through the portal they had entered from.

King Axel cleared his throat. "Have we caused enough panic and dismay in the city yet? You know that the residents can feel it when a new Totem arrives, and when we all gather. So, half the lower ranked Elites are going to be in a panic by now, with all that power that was given off when you upgraded the Temple."

The man had a good point. But they were also going to panic when Karl took everyone away for the wedding.

{Maybe you should make an announcement? Something about leaving a subordinate in charge while you go to a foreign Totem's wedding?} Karl suggested.

King Axel shook his head in dismay. "Announcing that we really are leaving the Capital, and not just hiding our aura inside one of the instances, would just encourage the Giants to do something dumb and violent again.

I am sure that we didn't get all the spies and traitors."

{Should I ask someone to come and keep a watch while we're gone? It wouldn't take much for me to hire a team of Totem Ranked mercenaries to keep order in the city while we are gone.} Karl offered.

Kenichi chuckled at the thought. If the Dragon Isles had so many Totems that there were mercenary teams for hire, perhaps being exiled there was not the punishment that they thought.

It might be tough to get respect or to get settled in, but clearly Karl was living well there.

Chapter 1206: Family Reunion

Karl transformed back to human and adjusted the casual suit he had chosen for the day.

"Well, now that the annoyances are gone, should we head to the Academy and gather more of the guests? I believe that Lady Rae and Miss Dana should both be headed there, unless they are going straight back to the Dragon Isles after they collect their first few guests." He suggested.

Nacht smiled. "A trip to the academy sounds fun. I haven't been there in ages."

King Axel nodded. "If your wedding is going to disrupt the class schedule, we should at least give the Academy the honour of a personal visit to explain why."

Karl double-checked the people present. "Alright, we need the King, Ahmad, Othello, Nacht and Kenichi from the capital. Then I need to find Bishop Misty, and the four Mackenzie siblings. The rest are at the academy, or have someone already going to find them."

"How did you even get invitations to all these people if you don't know where they are?" Ahmad asked.

"The Supreme Lady delivered them. It's not a big deal for someone who has surpassed Immortality to deliver a few invitations around a planet she's guarded for millennia. The hard part was done by the ones who hand wrote all the invitations." Karl explained.

Nacht smiled. "Then you're in luck. All four Mackenzie siblings are in the Academy right now. Two as teachers, and two as Student Advisors."

That really did make things easy, and Karl simply opened a portal to the front gates of the Academy, large enough for them to walk through.

"Wait for me, wait for me!" A squeaky youthful voice shouted as he was about to step through.

"Misty! It's good to see you again. Are you all ready? Or should I open a portal from the Academy back to your place? I know how it is when you get caught up with things." Karl asked.

The time dragon's shimmering hair fluttered in the wind as she threw her head back and laughed.

"Technically, I'm not late. I got here just in time. But I've packed everything that I need. Lady Rae has new dresses for the ladies, so I won't need much."

Karl nodded in understanding. Like Matilda, Misty could see both the future and the past. So, she would already know most of what was to come, and would have prepared accordingly.

On the other side of the portal, a half dozen curious teachers and staff were waiting to see who was coming through.

So, when they saw that it was Karl with a strange white haired girl who came through first, they were utterly baffled. The official story that the Agency had told everyone was that he had suffered an accident and was no longer an active Elite.

Normally, that meant one of three things. Either he was dead, had joined the Inquisition, or he was out of the country on a secret mission.

One of the two was a possibility, but seeing him come back as a Totem, accompanied by so many of the nation's strongest, was enough to cause great concern.

"Totem? What brings you here today?" The Vice Principal asked as Karl ushered the others through the portal.

"Good tidings, as it happens. You see, I have invited a number of my close friends to my wedding, which is being held overseas.

So, I came to pick them up in person.

I believe that one of my people is already here, you just may not have noticed her yet." Karl replied.

"Someone we haven't noticed?" The Vice Principal asked.

"Lady Rae Bloodbath, my bonded spider. She is with Inquisitor Niall in the back training grounds. I can sense them from here, but I wouldn't expect you to. They're sneaky like that." Karl explained.

The Vice Principal took a steadying breath. At least the bloodbath spider was with an Inquisitor.

Then, another portal opened only metres away, and Dana stepped through with Karl's parents and one other woman, who Karl assumed was her own mother.

The fact that she had left her father behind wasn't missed by him, but Karl wisely chose not to say anything about it, or the fact that Dana's mother was wearing a dress that Rae had made for Dana.

"Oh, we're all here now. Mom, Dad, it's good to see you again."

Karl moved to give his mom a hug, then pulled her to his chest as he shook his father's hand.

The aging miner smiled proudly at his son, and motioned at the fine suit.

"Well, aren't you all fancy now? Looking like the mine boss himself, and standing at the top of the power structure. I'm proud of you, son."

Karl smiled happily. "Thanks, Dad."

Those simple words meant a lot to him. His dad wasn't one who easily gave out praise to anyone.

Rae appeared behind Dana, where she could assess the need to upgrade the clothing of Karl's parents, and Karl laughed at the confused Rogue in her arms.

"Sybil, it's good to see you again. How are the new ears doing?" Karl asked.

"Still far too sensitive. But when I am working, that's a good thing. I made Commander on my second year, just like I promised Mistress Rae. So, they let me go out on missions and do things.

Even Inquisitor Niall has been really helpful, and I'm learning so many new things now." Sybil explained.

Her accent was still a little off, possibly the result of having been deaf for most of her life before Cara and Lotus 'fixed' her ears. But Rae's baby Rogue was incredibly excited about her new job.

From the background, Niall winked at Karl, letting him know that she was being vetted as an Inquisitorial candidate.

That would actually be the perfect job for an assassin sponsored by Rae and trained by Niall. Plus, it suited her personality. Sybil had never been shy about doing what she thought needed to be done to reach her goals.

Chapter 1207: Teacher's Guild

Ahmad whispered something to one of the teachers, who ran nodded, and then gave him a thumbs up.

"The teachers have organized themselves as a Guild, now that the System Functions are coming back online. So, we can just send Guild messages when we need to talk to each other." She explained.

Karl nodded. "That is convenient. I've got most of the craftsmen, and all of the senior crafters, in the Darklight Host with me. We've also got a Guild House set up, with a Guild Store, so we can easily transfer crafted items around and distribute wages."

He could see the teachers making notes. That function might not be online here yet, but they also simply might not have noticed it yet.

With the Academy being their base of operations, it would be easy enough to set it as the Guild House for the Teachers' Guild. Then, the supply room could become the Guild Store.

It would be a huge improvement in inventory management, as the System logged everything that was sold or stocked.

But that was not Karl's problem.

Rae had vanished again, and he wasn't sure where she had gone.

Then, she reappeared with an arm wrapped around Morgana, and an excited smile on her face.

"You will love this look. It's perfect for you, and I've been waiting for just the right time to be able to deliver it.

Don't worry, I have more dresses for the actual wedding trip.

Try it on." Rae informed the Witch Doctor.

The outfit was a long silk corseted gown, with spiderweb pattern embroidery, a gossamer caplet that had runes glowing around the edges. Not actual Runecrafting runes, but additional effects added through Rae's Master Tailoring abilities using glowing threads.

Then Rae added a thin veil and headscarf, and Morgana giggled.

"I feel like a princess." She laughed.

Rae nodded and Karl shrugged. "You look like a Princess. A goth spider princess, but still a princess. It's a good match."

Bob Mackenzie shook his head in dismay as he walked up to the scene. "Who would have thought? After all this time, the Monster Man is back, and he's taught a Bloodbath Spider how to make clothing."

Rae winked at him. "Would you like me to cocoon you as well? I can make something wonderfully fashionable?"

The warrior shook his head. "Perhaps a suit for the wedding, but I'm good for now."

Slowly, the other guests made their way across the grounds.

Everyone had been in the middle of teaching a class, other than Doug Mackenzie, who was working in the infirmary and had to finish healing a broken leg before he came over.

Cara came out of her space to greet all the new people, and then settled on climbing up Doug, who was happy to carry her, so she didn't have to look up to see what was going on.

Karl made a round of greetings before everyone went over to congratulate Dana on the wedding.

"I can't believe that it's actually happening. Did you know that when you were still here at the Academy, there was a betting pool on whether you two would end up together by the time that you graduated?

I suppose that you would have graduated by now, so the pool would be decided. But still, we need to get a bard here to write out your story." Jill, Dana's former personal Tutor from the Bureau of Elite Development, joked.

Dana smiled back at her. "I would say that it's a big win. Look how far we've come.

Who would have thought that in just these few years since we joined the Academy we would be an Overlord and a Totem, running a Guild Branch on the Dragon Isles with over a hundred craftsmen working under us?"

The teachers all looked suitably impressed by his accomplishments, but Daniel and Alice, the pair who had been assigned by the bureau to guide Karl, began to laugh.

"Did you know that we actually followed through with the Lightning Cerro Farm in your name? They have a herd of over a hundred now, and the techniques that you left behind have allowed an entire force of Beast Rangers to rise among the senior Rangers." Alice explained.

"Thor would be overjoyed to hear that. I wasn't sure what would happen to that investment after I disappeared from the country. But to think that they not only followed through, but named it after me. That's impressive." Karl replied.

"They did more than that. The housing development you funded was built near the farm, and it's become a training retreat for green dragon clerics, nature lovers, and Rangers. Nearly two thousand people live there now.

Colonel Valerie oversees it, for obvious reasons. But I think that she actually enjoys living there with so much nature around her." Alice added.

Karl shrugged. "I can't blame her. Living among nature is always pleasant. I spend most of my time inside the city now, and it's a relaxing outing to go into the wilderness for reasons that don't involve combat."

That made the teachers laugh. There was nothing in the wilderness that didn't involve at least the risk of Combat. But when you were both at the Totem Rank and Karl, you could probably go out and pet a wild monster for fun.

The Green Dragon Clerics would be jealous.

Hopefully, he never taught that trick to them. They would be unstoppable menaces to society.

Little did they know, it was already too late. Lotus knew [If Not Friend, Why Friend Shaped]. With that skill on her side, nearly everything became pettable.

"Should we prepare lunch? Or are you all leaving right away?" The Vice Principal asked.

"We're actually heading out right away. It wouldn't do to keep the Supreme Lady waiting. Plus, I've got dozens of Guild Messages that I've been ignoring from the crafting team and about custom orders from the Guild's Alliance members for their Raiding teams." Karl sighed.

"A Guild Alliance? Raiding Teams?" Bob Mackenzie asked eagerly.

"Oh, I have so much to tell you. The Dungeons around Drodh, my new hometown, are Royal and Monarch Ranked, so I'm sure that we can arrange for some of the guests to go through them later. But in Zilaz, entire teams of forty Overlords or Totems will join together to clear more powerful dungeons.

It's quite the sight, and the need for gear is never ending." Karl explained.

Bob smiled. "Well, perhaps we don't have to rush back right after the wedding."

Chapter 1208: Borrowing Teachers

The Vice Principal looked pained.

He didn't object to letting the teachers take some vacation time to attend a wedding, but how was he going to get them back afterward if Karl was going to offer them unlimited access to a Dungeon on their level?

Even though Karl had graduated, he was still giving them headaches.

"We are going to need our teachers and leaders back, Totem. I understand that everyone is excited about getting to see new places, but there is a power balance to maintain, please understand." The Vice Principal pleaded.

It was a sad sight to have such an elderly mage pleading to have his employees returned, and it softened even Karl's heart a little to see it.

"You know, now that the balance between the continents is starting to restore itself, to some minor degree, I could probably arrange for a regular portal route between Drodh and the Academy.

It would allow the strongest teachers to continue to advance, and it would give a reason for Royal and Monarch Ranked Elites to return to the academy, where you could try to shame them into helping out." Karl offered.

The Vice Principal looked immediately relieved.

"Most of the teachers have reached Royal Rank already. The power advancements have made huge gains for the Academy, but we also send them to the Commander Rank dungeon as often as we are able so that they don't fall behind in their growth." He agreed.

Royal Rank was considered below average in strength for the Dragon Isles, but there were dungeons suitable for them near Drodh. The best one was for the Monarchs, but that was fine too.

Then, once they got more teachers and Elites to Overlord Rank, they could start spreading them out.

[Why don't you just make them a trial? You can just set it to adjust to the power level of the person who enters.] Cara suggested.

She was very fond of her new skill, and if Karl carved it into a large stone, they could make a super fancy gift for the Academy.

"Cara has a good idea. If we delay returning for a bit, I can make you a trial ground for the Academy. I know that you had an Awakened Dungeon nearby now, but I can make one that will be good all the way up to Overlord Rank, though it might not be as good without the dungeon's rewards." Karl added.

That got the attention of everyone.

"You can make a trial ground? Like a repeatable test?" Ahmad asked.

Karl nodded. "Yes, and I am quite sure that I can tailor it to adjust to the power level of the ones who enter so that it's always a challenge, until they get too powerful for my abilities."

The Catman mage nearly purred in satisfaction when he heard that. If the standard was that the team entering had to be weaker than Karl, wouldn't that be nearly everyone in the entire nation?

If he went in alone, he wasn't sure that he could beat Karl. So, if Karl could make a whole dungeon on his level, even the leaders of the Golden Dragon Nation would be able to refine their skills in his trial ground.

"Just how powerful would these monsters be?" Ahmad asked, just to confirm.

Karl winked at him. "Not more powerful than my current golems. But I do have the Greater Golem and Epic Golem spells. Oh, I suppose I could put an undead army in there as well. Those things are great opponents because they come in larger numbers."

The mage gave him an envious look, and Karl chuckled. "I will see about getting you a copy of the skill books later. I'm sure that the Blue Dragons would go crazy over it."

"I'm surprised that they don't have you locked up until you make them more books." Rita joked from the back of the crowd.

"Rita! Come up here, I have a present for you."

The warrior came forward cautiously, and Karl spent a half second deciding what path was best for her. She was an agility type warrior now, so nothing too brute force. That sort of new class wouldn't suit her.

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Hemotoxic Strikes] will be transferred to the loyal soldier Rita.

[Hemotoxic Strikes] wounds from physical strikes inflicted by the user will not heal naturally.

Rita smiled, and her eyes went vacant as she entered the Class Selection menu.

Tank watched the process with a frown on his face. "You just taught her a new skill, didn't you? I can sense the bias toward pretty ladies from here."

Karl laughed. "Come over here, and I will give you something good, too. It's not a pretty lady exclusive skill."

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Elemental's Wrath] will be transferred to the Pork Rind Enthusiast Tank.

[Elemental's Wrath] Epic Grade Transformation Skill. Grants Limited Invulnerability, adds 250 Percent Fire Damage to all attacks, causes [Berserk] increasing strength by 100 Percent.

That was not a descriptor that Karl had ever expected to see. How much did you have to like a snack before the System would name it as part of your personality? Even Lotus didn't get a snack or sweet related nickname.

Tank Roared in victory, and transformed into a three-metre tall flaming elemental made of black volcanic stone. Then, he grew again, to four metres tall as he activated the rest of his enrage type skills.

Bob Mackenzie sighed. "He will be insufferable now, you know that, right? With the ability to set himself on fire, he will never lose another grappling match."

Karl frowned at his old friend. "Has he ever lost a grappling match in the first place?"

Ahmad cleared his throat and Karl shrugged. "Sorry, I'll have to get to you later. I've hit my two use a day limit for the skill. But I will get you more Golems soon.

Now, where should I put up a trial ground here? Do we have an unused building site? Maybe somewhere that's undergoing renovations?"

If he just kept handing out skills, they would never leave. But Dana could also help him with the skill books later if he was going to keep up the act.

They had built a huge number of new buildings at the Academy in the last few years, so there really should be somewhere that he could add just one more.

Chapter 1209: Training Location

"The old mage training grounds are unused right now. You know, the ones where you used to go with Hawk to harass water mages?" Rita suggested.

Hawk laughed from his nest. Picking on water mages was fun.

Karl stopped at the training grounds, and wrapped his arm around his mother.

"Would you like to see something incredible? I know that most of this is overwhelming, but I swear that it's actually pretty cool once you're used to it." He whispered.

His mother shook her head in dismay. "You left me as a skinny teenage boy starting puberty, and now look at you. Taller than your father, all muscles, and such a strong elite that even the Headmaster of the School is polite to you."

The other Elites began to chuckle, and Rita leaned over to whisper in her ear.

"You probably can't tell with their auras restrained, but Karl is most likely the most powerful person standing here. And not just in raw strength, he's got incredible wealth and valuable skills as well.

The place he went to after he left the Golden Dragon Nation has magic beyond anything that we have ever seen here." She explained quietly.

Karl's mother looked to him for confirmation, and Karl shrugged, then picked up Cara to pet the badger's back.

"Cara here could likely beat up half the academy on her own. But power isn't everything. I would like to think that I've built up a reputation that would make you proud as well." Karl insisted.

Dana snickered at the idea. Yes, Karl had a reputation alright. Whether it was a good one or not depended on who you asked. But there was no denying that he was highly valued for his skills and power.

Karl gathered mana to cast [Earth Manipulation], but Tian and Opal were getting excited about helping, so Karl didn't cast the spell himself.

Instead, he channelled the mana to the pair of reclusive beasts, who had a grand vision of what a trial tower should look like.

Opal had seen the Gothic Cathedrals of the Capital today, and while they weren't the most popular of architecture, this was called the 'Golden Dragon Nation' and nothing else looked like it should have a dragon perched on the roof.

They were simply the most suitable style of architecture for the location.

According to Opal.

So, they built a five-story cathedral, with a large belfry that would be the main trial tower structure.

[Illusionary Domain] was limited in how much she could expand a space, so the tower portion would be mostly stationary trials. But in the cathedral area, she could create something more like a dungeon, or large combat field.

[Alright, we have a list of things we need added to stones.] Opal informed Karl, before presenting a list in her space for him to make.

Some of the spells needed elemental affinity to the material for stability, so Karl took out stones from storage and began carving them as everyone watched, then placing them back in Opal's space.

The parts that only needed enough power for the desired ability, he just created with [Earth Manipulation] and [Runecrafting] directly in Tian's space, so the fox could drop them in the spots he wanted them as they constructed the ornate cathedral themed structure.

The belfry tower actually had a dragon made of stone wrapped around it, extending over the top, where victorious challengers would be able to exit the trials.

[Ooh, we should have lights or something, so people can watch and see how many trials the current challenger has finished. We already wanted to make them harder with every victory, so there should be a ranking.] Tian suggested.

[Light up dragon scales. That's almost as good as glowing feathers.] Hawk suggested.

[Good idea. That's an easy spell with Holy Light. I can add that to the building as I finish it.] Tian cheered.

Cara returned to her space to assist with setting up the challenges, and because her assistance would be needed to properly randomize the trials and rewards.

Karl knew the [Randomize] spell, and that could be added to a runic item designed to make gifts, but with [Chaotic Zone] it would be so much better.

Karl's parents watched in awe as he created an entire cathedral in front of them in the course of ten minutes.

That sort of power was unlike anything that they had ever considered possible. They had heard that Elites could destroy massive areas with their attacks, but nobody had ever mentioned that they could simply construct massive works of architectural mastery with pure willpower and magic.

Plus, when had Karl learned about architecture? It surely hadn't been long enough for him to get an engineering degree.

If either of them were well versed in architectural engineering, they would have known that he clearly didn't have one. The building existed to spite the laws of nature, and the strength of regular stone should not have supported this design.

But the true wonders were hidden inside and waiting for Karl to finish the spells.

Karl wove [Illusionary Domain] and [Chaotic Zone] together into one spell effect, imbued into the inner walls of the building.

The level of mana use had alerted Totems all over the continent that something big was happening at the Academy, but after the first group of mages had visited, they had passed the message that an exile had returned to collect guests for his wedding.

So, while they were desperately curious as to what was going on, none immediately made a move to visit the Academy.

Not even the Emperor of Newbon, though he knew exactly which of the exiles had returned for a visit, and he sensed a strangely familiar presence with him.

He was going to have to talk to his bonded weapon. She had definitely been up to no good at some point because not just anybody could obtain a Haint Claw. If it was all grown up and at Totem Rank, it was likely to be nearly uncontrollable, so he wasn't too worried yet.

But he was certain that Karl was in for a tough time when that sapling of a living weapon gained sentience.

A Haint Claw sapling that was currently napping in his mental space because construction projects didn't interest her nearly as much as destruction projects and challenges did.

Sitting in a room down the hall, Leafa giggled at his silly notions. It wasn't that sentient weapons couldn't be controlled. It was just that her wielder was a boring jerk, and she didn't want to see his face.

Chapter 1210: Karl's Tower

The Totems watched in silence as Karl finished the trial tower. Or perhaps this one should be called a trial cathedral, given the shape. Either way, it was definitely shaping up to be a proper trial, and when Karl began to finalize the spells, he found that he was missing a vital aspect for the effect.

"Mom, I'll need to step away for just one moment. I need to use a transformation skill to finish the work." He explained.

While she didn't understand what he meant, she still let Karl leave her with Dana as he moved to a large open area.

Then, the shocking part began.

The son that she had raised since childhood vanished, replaced by a gigantic golden dragon.

The power around him surged, and Karl finalized the spells over the building using the additional blessings granted by the [Avatar] form, then transformed back and nodded in satisfaction.

The combination of spells had worked perfectly, and there was a proper trial ground here.

Not a dungeon, but a trial. Anyone who entered had eight hours to complete as much of the trial as they could, and if they were severely injured, they would be ejected.

If they were starting out at Overlord Rank or lower, that should be more than enough because the top power setting was in the higher end of the Totem Rank. For those stronger, it would be more of a prolonged sparring session after they reached the power cap.

But that was a good trial as well, because it would still help them gain Skill Points and master their abilities, both mental and physical.

"Wonderful. That is one trial ground completed. If you would like to send someone in, you can make sure that it is working properly. Maybe not one of the people who are coming to the wedding, though.

The trial can last up to eight hours, and that sort of delay would be a bit inconvenient today." Karl explained.

That made the others laugh. Yes, it would be inconvenient for them all to wait for someone who was inside a trial for eight hours.

"We have plenty of options. Is it an individual or group trial?" The Vice Principal asked.

"Individual. Though, if you're in a Group using the system function, it should let you all enter at once."

The Vice Principal nodded, then motioned for one of the teachers watching in the background to come forward.

"Overlord Joram, please give the new trial a test. Keep us updated as much as possible while you're inside, so we know what to expect." He instructed.

The Ranger Class teacher came forward, but Karl halted him for a second.

"The trial will not be identical for everyone. I set it to randomize the trials, but they're set by difficulty. At first, they will be fairly easy. But with every victory, you will receive more difficult opponents.

There are two entrances to the trial ground, but they both lead to the same trial.

Once you're inside, you will understand." Karl explained.

"Got it."

Joram called out his bonded partner, and Karl chuckled when he saw that it was a Windspeed Hawk. One of the stronger partners that a regular Ranger class could get, but still Common Rank.

The Ranger vanished into the trial, and Karl realized that he could still sense him.

The spell was complete and self-sustaining, with the building as one giant magical artifact, but he was still linked to it as its creator, and he could sense what was going on inside.

If he could grant that sort of access to another person, it would really help the teachers, but Karl hadn't added any such function, and it was too late now.

Well, he could have Opal replay the events inside. But that wasn't the same, and the great advantage to a private trial was that you could go all out without worrying that others would see your hidden tricks and true power.

When Joram entered, he was in a virtual waiting area, where he could choose to enter the combat grounds or the ranked trial tower.

The first option sounded more like a group event to him, so Joram chose the ranked trial tower, and Cara began to celebrate.

This was her favourite part, and it gave them a chance to make sure that the reward function was working.

If it worked properly, every time you set a new personal record, you would get an item suitable to your accomplishments. None of them were set to be excessively powerful, but with [Randomize] used on the reward function, there was a measure of Divine Intervention involved.

So, if an Awakened contestant managed to fight at the middle of Ascended Rank, or a similarly improbable feat, the reward might be much more than a simple Ascended Rank item suitable to their class or progression.

They had put as many things in there as possible, and then set the trial to randomize and duplicate them as rewards.

So, it could be jewellery, armour, clothing, weapons, resources, or even an advancement potion.

Chaotic Zone was perfect for this sort of application, and when Karl paired it with Randomize, even the Chaos Badger got excited.

Joram finished the first two fights quickly, as they were at the high end of Monarch Rank, and he was already an Overlord. But after only thirty minutes, with eight scales on the dragon that encircled the tower lit up, he was beginning to struggle.

The trial had given him an Overlord Ranked Lightning Cerro as an opponent, and he was struggling to break its defences without getting gored or run over.

"It looks like the trials really do get more difficult. It has been some time since a new scale lit up." Tank noted.

Nacht smiled. "He's fighting for his life in there. I can sense enough fluctuation from the trial to know that what he is facing now is high Overlord Ranked."

The teachers all turned to the black dragon, who sighed, and began to explain how to sense the fluctuations of a magical item in use. It wasn't a hard thing for a black dragon, but not everyone had that level of magical affinity.

The mages got it quickly enough, though.

Once the Cerro fell, and Joram had taken a rest to get back his mana and heal, the trial gave him a peak Overlord Ranked Crocolisk.

And that was the end of his run.