

The First Legendary Beast Master #Chapter 121 A Different Style - Read The First Legendary Beast Master Chapter 121 A Different Style

Chapter 121 A Different Style

His question was answered by the girl two seats to his left.

"Thirty seven seconds this time. I know I'm close to understanding the timing. As soon as I work out the algorithm, I will ace that homework assignment." She whispered.

Karl smiled at her and barely whispered back. "It's not a math problem, it's a human question. How long did you have to wait when you were in the Common Rank dining room?"

The girls considered it for a moment, then one of them shook her head.

"It's a test of patience that only begins once we reach Awakened Rank. But the teachers assigned us to answer the question of why every day's meal has a different time to wait than the one before it.

It's not a thing in the other dining hall.

They start to eat as soon as the food hits the tables. There aren't any seniors there, so your team is likely to have a grand time." The girl replied with a gentle smile.

So that was the question they were asked. Now it made sense why they thought it was a math problem.

Karl turned over the paper with the names of the people at the table on it and took a pen from his uniform jacket's inside pocket to write a note.

[She doesn't eat until all the tables in the other room have been served.] He wrote, allowing them a few seconds to see the answer before folding the paper and putting it in his pocket along with the pen.

"I'm sure you will all understand the timing soon." He whispered, knowing that she would be able to hear their conversation, though she couldn't see him from where she was sitting.

They ate in silence for a few moments, and though the food was simple, Karl noticed that the quality wasn't any worse than what was served in the Golden Divine Academy. The meat was monster meat, and the plants magically infused, but the seasonings were simple and there were no signs of fancy pastries or complex desserts in the building.

What they did have was a rather tasty stew, and a seemingly unlimited mound of rice and beans. The same rice and beans that they served to the poor when they came to visit the small towns.

"I didn't realize that the clergy ate the rice and beans themselves. I thought it was like an alms for the poor thing." Karl whispered to the brunette on his left.

"Every meal except breakfast. The trick is to eat the main slowly while you fill up on rice. The main is portioned by the table in the kitchen, so every table gets an even share, but the rice is unlimited. If you run out, you can just take the platter to the kitchen and get more. But nobody ever runs out. It's barely even possible to eat two thirds of this.

But we will use the wax paper to make rice balls for later, and they're pretty good."

Karl didn't quite understand why they needed rice balls for later, as it seemed that there were three solid meals a day here, but he went along with it anyhow, and when nobody could eat more, he helped them press the leftovers into solid squares.

Then they waited for the head table to finish their meal, and when the High Priestess stood, everyone else in the room stood to join her.

The students quickly wrapped the rice balls in the wax paper, and the short blonde offered him her hand.

"Would you like to come with us?" She asked.

"Sure, why not." Karl agreed after seeing that the table full of boys and Dana were already joining them with another pile of rice balls.

The two Elites followed the young clergy out the back doors of the building, and found himself in the stables, where a large number of horses were eagerly waiting for them to arrive.

That was right. Karl had completely forgotten that the church liked to use horses for transportation when they weren't going too far. Horses didn't need fuel or manufacturing facilities that the church didn't have, and they could make their own saddles the same as they made their own outfits.

That was where the flood of students was going. Right after the meal, they went to groom the horses, with pairs breaking off to go meet a specific animal.

"We all get assigned a horse, two of us per horse, but those on stable duty take care of them all in the morning.

This is more of an informal bonding exercise." The blonde explained.

Most of the animals were eagerly anticipating their treats, which wouldn't make even half a meal for an animal that large. Karl was concerned that rice and beans might not be good for the digestion, but if they did it every day, it couldn't be too bad.

The horses seemed to love the long brown grains, and Karl was about to go make new friends when he heard an angry whinny, and the stomping of steel shod feet on the ground.

One of the horses was not impressed with its assigned pair, and everyone was looking nervously in that direction as it reared up and kicked at them the moment that they approached.

Karl wasn't bad with horses. As a small child, he used to go visit the retired ones that the mines no longer used to pull carts, but those were so tame that nothing bothered them. This was a very different animal.

Karl walked over to the stable stall, where the two students had fled in fear, leaving their package behind. He picked it up, thinking to try to calm the animal with food, but something felt off about the bundle of wax paper.

The balls hadn't been well pressed, as if the students didn't know what they were doing, and there were chunks of leftover stew in the pile.

Karl tossed it aside and held out his hand to the student at the next stall, while the angry horse slammed at the gate.

"Can I get a couple rice balls? The new kids messed theirs up with leftover stew. I think this guy doesn't like the smell of meat." He asked.

"They tried to feed him meat? Horses don't eat meat. They don't even like the smell of our dinner cooking." The older boy chuckled.

He handed Karl two rice balls, and Karl activated [Skill Master] to test a theory. It never said it had to be a magical skill, so maybe he could teach the horse a simple trick.

"Hey buddy, I have a proper snack. Calm down. That's a good boy." He muttered in what he hoped was a soothing tone as he pushed the latch open on the gate and stepped into the stall.

The surrounding students began to panic, but when Karl put his empty hand on the horse, it began to calm down and stop bucking.

"Good boy. Open up for a treat." Karl suggested, opening his mouth in demonstration.

The horse followed along, and Karl put a rice ball in his mouth, only narrowly saving his fingers as the horse's jaw snapped shut around it.

Then he held out his open hand with the other one on it, as he saw the majority of students doing, and the horse more delicately grabbed the other before bumping into Karl for a pat down.

There were brushes lined up along the stall wall, so he grabbed one and got to work, giving the horse a brushing that was making Rae jealous.

[You are totally brushing my fur later. Keep one of those brushes.] She demanded when she saw how much the horse liked it.

[I will buy one from them. I'm not stealing their tools.] Karl replied with a laugh.

He stepped out and latched the gate when he was finished, only to find the pair of older clergy from the Library waiting outside the stall with Dana and two of the rescue team members. Everyone else had cleared the area, and most of the nearby stalls were now empty, as the students had taken the animals with them.

"I hope I didn't hold up any plans. The new students spooked him, so I calmed him down." Karl explained.

"We saw that. But he's never let them touch him before, we assumed that they were doing a terrible job breaking and training him, but now he looks ready to be saddled. Tell me, have you ever ridden a horse?" The old woman asked.

Karl shook his head. "Never had the need or the opportunity."

"Well, let's see how he responds. It's part of the student assessment. Do you know why he reacted so badly to them?" She asked with a curious smile wrinkling her features even further.

"Check the rice pile. They mixed leftovers in with their rice balls." Karl laughed.

Chapter 122 Good With Animals

The High Priest walked over, looked at the pile and sighed in disgust.

"There is always one pair that doesn't listen, no matter how much you tell them. You see, those two don't like carrots, so they won't eat the stew. I wondered where it was going if they weren't eating it."

Karl was surprised at the revelation. "You know, they all think nobody is watching them at dinner."

All the clergy present began to laugh at that, and one of the rescue team members from the Inquisition winked at Karl.

"There are cameras in the room, we watch from the security station. It's the same in your Academy, all the public areas in both academies have cameras, in case of accidents or incidents." He explained.

Karl nodded. That was something that he already knew, and the Elite Academy didn't bother to hide. Of course, the Seminary Academy probably didn't hide it either, they just didn't go out of their way to tell anyone.

"Karl, was it? Can you ask this fine gentleman to kneel so you can put a bridle on him and then climb on his back for a short walk?" The elderly High Priestess asked with a head tilt toward the horse.

"Sure, I guess."

Karl picked up the mass of leather straps from the hook on the stall and tried to determine how it was used, while he was certain that the horse was laughing at him.

"Don't be like that. What way does it go on?" Karl asked, as he activated the training skill, with the question directed at the horse, who stuck his nose into the contraption and grabbed the bit between his teeth.

"You will want him to let to of the bit so you can tighten it properly, but that's the right way." The old woman explained, sounding shocked as Karl finished the work.

The horse didn't give him any trouble, and when Karl tapped his side and willed him to kneel so he could get on, the animal complied easily.

He hopped on top, and the horse stood back up, much to the surprise of everyone gathered.

"Alright, you said for a walk, right? Everyone else went out that door, should I follow?" Karl asked.

The horse was about to simply go, but the Inquisition team member held up a hand to stop them.

"How did you do that?" The man asked.

"Do what? I have an Awakened Physique, I could have hopped on his back without him kneeling, but this way was more gentle."

Karl's confused answer brought smiles to the faces of the two elderly clergy.

"I get it now, I get how the skill works. You use it, and they learn what you want them to know, but it's all up to their understanding. But the level of compliance is remarkable. It's like you're naturally attuned to animals." She exclaimed.

"It's a trained horse. I don't think it's all that impressive for it to know how to get its own bridle on." Karl replied.

She shook her head. "Not that one. They haven't started training it yet. It attacks its students every time that they try."

Now Karl was certain that the horse was laughing at them.

[I agree, he thinks that you're all idiots.] Thor joked.

[Do you speak horse?] Karl asked.

[Who needs to? You can see it in the body language. He's seen it all a thousand times before, he knows the whole routine, he just doesn't like the idiots that they keep sending to him.]

"My Cerro says that the horse probably learned all the routines ages ago and just doesn't like his handlers. I will take him for a walk, if you'd like, and then bring him back." Karl offered.

"Your Cerro? Who is Cerro?" The older priest asked.

"His Lightning Cerro, one of the three tamed beasts he has gained with his class abilities. Its name is Thor, I believe." The Inquisitor replied before Karl could find a polite way to answer.

"Interesting. Well, if your animals need a place to graze, we have an open field on the north side where they shouldn't spook any of the livestock." The old priest explained.

"They have a separate space to relax, thanks to my Class Skill. But I do appreciate your offer." Karl replied politely.

"Well then, enjoy your ride, and try not to let the cat get underfoot. He's been bothering us to let him out to see you all afternoon." The old man grumbled, while the Priestess and the Inquisitor hid their smirks.

Karl rode out into the training field, where the others were slowly walking with their horses. His dappled mount began to prance a little, and Karl laughed.

"Fine, but don't play too rough, we don't want to hurt anyone." He agreed, letting the horse trot around the field full of shocked students, many of whom were struggling to control their animals.

"That's cheating. It has to be cheating." The blonde from his table complained as Karl's horse walked past where she was standing, while her partner struggled to convince the horse that walking was more interesting than the grass along the fence line.

"I'm not giving any advice, I have no idea what I'm doing." Karl warned them, making the girls laugh as he kept moving around the field.

His mount didn't want to be outside for long, and soon it was looking back toward the stable, where Karl could see that the stable hands had put out fresh bedding and cleaned the stalls while the animals were out.

"Alright, let's go back." Karl agreed, riding back into the barn and hopping down at the gate.

He opened it, and the horse stepped inside, then pulled the door shut for Karl to latch.

"He's smart. For the record, I didn't teach him any of that last bit, he already knew."

"We guessed that. But if you would like to come with us, the church has a reward for the both of you, in recognition of your help finding the Holy Relic. The rest of your team is already there." The Elderly High Priestess explained.

"Of course, sorry to have kept you all."

The woman just shook her head. "It was good to see that one get out. We will have the animal handling teachers put the troublesome students in remedial classes. With so many students lately, it has been challenging to keep up with everything.

Back when I was a young Priestess, there were only thirty students in total here. Thirty. Now there are better than three hundred, with all the ones from the Serum."

Ten years ago, she would already have been counted as an old woman, moving toward retirement from active duties outside the compound. The development of the Serum must have come as a huge culture shock for someone her age, who had lived a lifetime without it.

They walked through the building toward an isolated building furthest from the student dorms and the mess hall while the Priestess told stories of her peaceful youth here, training scribes and healers, then stopped when they saw all the other students waiting for them to arrive.

"Good. Now we are all gathered, so we can discuss the important matters. Please come inside and have a seat. This won't take long, but there is no reason not to be comfortable." She informed the group, with a suddenly gentle smile.

It was obvious that she still saw everyone here, including the younger Priests and the Inquisitor, as children, but then compared to her, they were. If she hadn't devoted her life to the church, she would probably have great-grandchildren by now.

Chapter 123 Holy Rewards

The group took a seat, and Karl noticed that the two clerics they had rescued were also there now, but in their new gold and black robes that appeared in the chapel, and not the standard student clergy robes. They somehow seemed more fancy, though they were still the same style as the others, and only had an extra layer that was visible at the collar and sleeves and better construction.

"I will make this simple. The church would like to keep the location of this Holy Relic quiet, so we are asking that all of you don't mention it for at least as long as it remains out of the public sphere.

We will be building a new Dragon Temple at that location, but it will take some years to be ready and staffed. Having a flood of hopeful tourists and pilgrims coming to the site while we are working would be a nightmare for the construction team, and the Holy Relic isn't open for them to go in anyhow." The elderly Priest began.

Then the old woman took over from him. "But that doesn't mean that you won't be rewarded for your find. Your names will be recorded in the Temple as the original team to undergo the trials, and the Matron has prepared a set of gifts for you all.

First, she has prepared a Scale for each of you."

She paused there, and the two young clerics took out a silver tray with small golden dragon scale amulets on them. Karl could sense that they were some sort of Holy Magic, but he couldn't tell exactly what they were supposed to do.

"They are a good luck charm, blessed by the World Dragon's Archbishop at the main temple. The blessings of the World Dragon are many, but you have all shown an affinity for his favour, so these might be just what you need."

The amulets were passed out as the woman began to talk again.

"The next reward that we will grant you might seem trivial to some, or irreplaceable to others. It is a scroll of Holy Light. Use it with an item or an ability for a one-time bonus to its abilities. I would recommend using it on a magical item, as the effects will linger until the enchantment on the item is discharged."

That excited a lot of the students who had gotten magical items from their reward chests, but the Priestess was right, to others it was just a trivial thing. Karl hung the Dragon Scale good luck charm around his neck and tucked it under his uniform. You never knew when you were going to need good luck, and trying to get the charm out after things had already gone wrong was just about pointless.

None of these things was a major reward so far, Karl noticed. If they were going to be privately rewarded for finding a Holy Relic and expected to keep their mouths shut,

there was going to have to be something big, something that would equal up to the rewards that they would get for announcing it publicly.

Karl had no intentions of doing that, as he had seen on the Fate Stairs how that would end, but there was no guarantee that others wouldn't try to do the same. They had agreed, but once they were back at the Academy and their progress returned to something closer to normal, they might change their minds.

But even with that in mind, Karl was shocked to see what the two smiling young Dragon Clerics brought out next.

They rolled out an entire cart full of books, skill books handmade by the Transcriptionists of the church, but bound without titles.

"There is a reason we passed out the luck charms first, and I do hope that you're all wearing yours now, or at least before you choose. As you all know, skill books are rare, and a single one can change your growth path. So, we have prepared eight of them today, one for each of you." The elderly Priestess announced.

"Eight? But there are ten of us." One of the students asked, confused.

"Two of you received powerful skills as rewards from the Trial, and it was deemed unwise to simply add another new skill when they haven't adapted to the first one yet. However, we have instead prepared a Holy Relic for them instead."

The old woman's smile set Karl's heart at ease. She was right, with two new skills already this month, a third would have seemed a bit anticlimactic. But a Holy item would be something that he could keep with him for years to come.

"First, choose your skills. The luck charm should guide your hand to the one meant for you. No need to second guess yourselves." The Priestess instructed.

There were far more than eight books on the carts, but most likely it was eight different skills, out of the ten or so that the Inscriptionists could make, according to Overlord Drake.

The students rushed forward and a few began pacing in front of the carts, getting a feeling for the books, to see what might feel lucky. But the others just walked up and grabbed something, trusting to luck that it would be something that they could use.

It looked like the World Dragon's luck was no joke, and every book that was opened vanished. Even those who delayed and second guessed the luck of the charm they were given still managed to activate a new skill from the books.

Karl knew that these would all be basic skills, the equivalent of Slash, Rend, Fireball and such. But that didn't matter to the students. It was a new skill that they could use, and that they didn't have to go through the painstaking process of learning normally.

The more versatile they could be, the easier their lives would become in the future, as an Elite's reputation depended a lot on their personal skills, even more so in some cases than it did on their personality.

Then the carts were taken away, and the elderly Priest left for a moment to collect the two Holy items.

"These were made by our Matron just this afternoon. Or rather, they were enchanted this afternoon with the pair of you in mind. Please, do accept our reward." The Priestess informed them with a gentle smile.

Karl and Dana both took the boxes, mostly to relieve the elderly man of the strain of holding them, and Dana rushed to open her reward.

A simple golden sceptre sat inside the box in her hands, but when she touched it, the weapon lit up with soft white light.

"That will add a touch of Holy Magic to every spell that you cast. A bit more attack, a lot more defence." The elderly Priest explained.

Then Karl opened the chest in front of him and looked at the content with a confused smile.

It was just a simple bracelet, gold, but without a visible mark on it.

Karl put it on, and in his mental spaces, all three pets glowed with the same soft white light that the sceptre did.

"The bracelet is a support item. It will increase the skill power of you and your allies whenever you are wearing it."

The other students gave Karl a jealous look. More skill power for his pets? He was already basically four Elites in one, and now they all got a cheat code buff.

"This will be wonderful. The others and I thank the church for its generosity." Karl informed him with his best imitation of the formal church salute, with the thumbs hooked together, and his fingers spread in front of his chest to imitate dragon wings.

The bracelet would likely improve his ability to train skills as well. The more that he could teach these three, the better. They all had a unique role to play, but the real advantage that they could show in the future would be in their ability to use skills that no wild beast would be able to.

"You seem more enthusiastic about a support role than I would have expected." The elderly Priest noted as he saw Karl's reaction was true and not just him being polite.

"My beasts are also allies, you see. This reward will do them a lot of good, and allow them to make the best use of their abilities in the future. Even if it seems simple, an increase to all of their skill power will stack up to a much larger bonus than just enhancing myself." Karl explained.

The Priestess nodded in satisfaction. "In that case, enjoy your evening everyone, and we hope to see you all again soon. Please don't forget about our students when it is time for your next missions."

Chapter 124 Bad Navigators

With the meeting finished, the group was escorted back to the main building by one of the younger students, who had a bit of wisdom to share with them.

"Breakfast is a half hour before full dawn. So, as soon as it starts to get light outside, the bells will ring, and everyone will be up and beginning their day. I don't know when you will be picked up to return to your Academy, but if they're sending you on the train, it's about an hour after dawn, as it arrives just after breakfast." The boy informed them.

"So what you're saying is 'don't stay up too late'?" Karl asked.

"Exactly. Many of us have considered sleeping in when we don't have morning chores, but those bells make it impossible. A few of you might manage, but we're all so well conditioned now that it is impossible." The boy explained.

One of the warriors smiled at the younger boy. "Were they afraid that we wouldn't be able to find our way back? The building is right there."

That made the student laugh. "Oh, it's not for this part. You see, the inside of the main floor was designed during an age of strife, and it is designed to confuse breaching enemies. If you're not familiar with the layout, it can be nearly impossible to end up anywhere but the main halls."

The warrior chuckled. "Which is great for students. Since that's where the food is."

"Precisely. It's why we didn't bother to give you a tour. Because it just encourages people to get lost in the corridors, and then we have to go find them. Though the building is only a few hundred metres wide, the main floor has over four kilometres of winding hallways.

I suspect that the area between the kitchen and the student dorms is actually a labyrinth with fake doors, but I can't prove it. There is no properly drawn map of the building, since we all grew up here, except for the Serum Clerics.

But they start out with magic and rank, so they never live this far back in the Seminary. Plus, they automatically know the whole set of holy books for their patron, like memorized word for word, which is completely unfair."

Karl could only imagine the hours that a student expected to be an expert on theology when there were Six Major Gods, plus the Chromatic Divine Dragons, and the Beast Gods, and who knew how many others that nobody followed anymore.

Karl barely remembered the basics of the World Dragon's teachings, since they followed it here in the Golden Dragon Nation. But the clerics knew them all.

As the boy had said, the corridor was definitely suspicious, and Karl realized quickly that it was not straight, nor was it level. It seemed that way at first, but by the time that they had walked for a full minute, Karl was certain that they were no longer on the same level as they had been.

Rae had an excellent sense of spatial awareness to help her locate anything that had disturbed her web, and some of that had passed to Karl.

They took a series of twisting turns, until even their guide seemed slightly uncertain of the next one to take. But there were windows now, and they were on the second floor, facing the inner courtyard, so they were very close to his room.

"My room is to the right." Karl whispered, startling their guide into stumbling into the grey stone wall.

"Are you certain?" He asked.

"Once we're around that corner, we will be able to see it. I remember it from earlier." Karl explained.

"This is the guest area, and I don't get here often. At least not from that side. I swear that one day I will have this entire place memorized." The boy muttered under his breath.

But he led them around the corner, and the first thing they saw was Overlord Drake, sipping coffee and looking out the window.

With suppressed laughter in his voice, the muscular warrior greeted them as if welcoming them to his own home. "Ah, good evening, I was wondering when you would be along. If you'd just come around to the front instead, you would have been here five minutes ago."

"It's like we went on a small adventure instead. Good evening Overlord." Karl greeted him in return.

"There will be a bus here to pick you all up tomorrow after breakfast, bright and early in the morning. I suggested the helicopter, but they said it's needed for actual work, and that it isn't a shuttle service to bring healthy students back from missions."

The friendly tone of his words made the young Elites much more comfortable around the incredibly powerful warrior, but the young Cleric wasn't used to such a fraternal camaraderie. If someone here smiled at you like that, they were trying to comfort you before they gave you bad news, like extra chore rotations. If they were giving you good news, they would keep a straight face and try to downplay it.

That was just how the clergy culture was, Stoic to keep up their image, but secretly celebrating on the inside. Even the ones that decided that the clergy wasn't for them and left the Seminary Academy when they were old enough to work regular jobs tended to keep the same simple tastes and expressionless default setting.

"Where are you off to next? Somewhere more exciting than a hidden Holy Relic in its dormant mode?" Karl asked.

Drake shook his head. "I am headed back to the Capital. I just happened to be in the area when the call went out. But I wish you all luck with your studies, and a good result on the end of semester promotion exams.

Though, if you're doing well enough, you might convince your Professor to give you a chance to do the promotion during the midterms next month."

Then he walked away with a smile on his face as all the Common Rank students began to panic at the thought of trying to pass the Awakened exams in just over a month.

Karl was honestly impressed. The Overlord had an impeccable sense of timing, and that smooth exit before the students could ask any more questions was flawless. Even if it had been phrased as a casual remark, it was perhaps the best prank he had seen played on the students yet.

Chapter 125 Early Mornings

Karl and Dana returned to their rooms, while the guide led the others back to the dorms that they were sharing. Normally, that would have led to envy, but when they saw the broom closet sized rooms that the more powerful pair were staying in, suddenly the dorms didn't seem as bad with their bunk beds.

Until the snoring started.

Karl joined the group of bleary-eyed students outside the dining hall the next morning, and realized that they were possibly even more tired than they had been before they went to bed.

"I thought that we reminded everyone to sleep early? It's a travel day, so you can sleep on the bus, but still, you're Elites in the wilderness, you should be ready at any time." Karl reminded them.

"I know you said that, but once we got to those nice, comfortable cots, we learned a valuable lesson. Thor is not the member of this team that snores the loudest. Gerald is. How it wasn't a problem in the woods, I have no idea, but we should get him checked or something before we leave." One of the mages joked halfheartedly, still mostly asleep.

The girls all nodded in agreement.

"We were across the hall and I thought that he was going to shake the pictures off the walls." One of them agreed with an annoyed glare at Gerald.

As they were arguing, one of the local clergy came over with the gentle smile that Karl was beginning to learn meant that someone was in trouble.

"They may have forgotten to mention that we were forced to intervene when these young ladies very inappropriately stormed the boys' dormitory and began to pummel their teammates." The young man calmly informed them.

"It wasn't that bad, really. We were just trying to make him stop snoring." One of the girls offered.

Karl nodded. "While making him stop breathing will make him stop snoring, it is not the best option. We will discuss this on the very long ride back to the Academy. Thank you, Friar, I will take care of the situation."

The cleric smiled at the proper use of his rank within the church. These days, it wasn't used as much as their strength ranking, but the Friars were clergy who didn't have the gift for Holy Magic. Some might be warriors, but mostly they were the common preachers, the ones that those in small towns and villages went to for matters of faith and not matters of healing.

With one last warning look at the others, Karl headed for the second dining room, and found that while he was at the same table as before, it was a different spot, and all the people seated around him had changed.

He took his seat, and the girl beside him, taller than him by a head and with arms roughly the size of his legs, smiled down at him.

"We put the names out at random. Or at least we're supposed to. It appears that someone made the order not so random yesterday. You can call me Sister Betty, and I will be accompanying you back to the Academy today." She greeted him.

"Good morning, Sister Betty. What brings you to the Divine Golden Academy?" Karl asked.

"A group of final year students wanted to take on a level five mission to push for the Commander Rank. They have found some evidence of Commander Rank resources that they think will allow them to advance, but they needed an appropriate healer."

Betty actually seemed excited to be going on a mission that dangerous, but Karl was thinking of the Locust Swarm that he had encountered in the south.

"Well, I hope that it's nothing you can't handle. I went to the South to look for suitable partners, and we came across a monster attack on an outpost. Even with the team I was assigned to assisting the town's defence, it was a bit dicey." He explained.

Betty nodded. "I am a Priestess of the Red Dragon, The Dragon God of War. Healing is secondary among my abilities, as my Goddess grants me various abilities relating to combat buffs and Holy Light attacks. It makes me uniquely suited to this sort of mission."

A young man, shorter than Karl despite being ten years older, and with a balding hairline that didn't match his youthful features, walked up behind her and patted her on the shoulder.

"What she's saying is that she's probably a better fighter than their warriors, and she's always happy to get away from the sound of children crying." He laughed.

"You work with children?" Karl asked in confusion.

Betty smiled fondly at some memory as she replied. "War creates orphans, so the Dragon God of War charges her Priestesses with the care of them. When I'm here, I am the physical education teacher for the orphan children under age twelve, when they get sorted by the Serum and their aptitude for magic."

Karl's gym teacher in primary school was a paunchy and balding middle-aged man who couldn't even keep up with the kids. He just stood in the middle of the field and yelled orders.

"You seem like you would be an excellent teacher. I can see that you have a fondness for children."

She nodded happily. "All Dragons do."

Karl froze in shock.

"Back up. Did you just say Dragon?" He stammered.

"Oh, it's so cute when they don't know. Yes, all the Chromatic Dragon Priestesses have at least some Dragon features, either by birth or as a result of the Divine Serum.

I am technically a dragonkin now, as I have no tail or wings and can't transform, but I did gain some dragon instincts and senses. It is a result of the Serum Awakening, and lets me use magic much more easily than most humans, and gives me an affinity for my Goddess.

You can think of us as something like the Berserker Class of the Cleric world."

The boy beside her shifted his voice to a whisper in anticipation of the Matron entering for breakfast.

"All clergy in the Golden Dragon Nation work together. It's the same set of Holy Books, after all, and with the Serum, many Clerics now awaken to the powers of other Gods and Goddesses within the Pantheon. I am a Priest of the God of Magic, and the one who just sat on your other side is a Priestess of the God of Nature.

It's not really necessary to separate us most of the time, but like the mages and warriors of your Academy, we have slightly different powers."

"And that is why we all use Brother and Sister as titles. Because it doesn't really matter unless you have some personal business with our God." Sister Betty whispered.

Karl had only known a little bit of that, and the details of how the inner relations of the Church, and the way that the Serum enforced loyalty to the different Gods and Goddesses of the Pantheon, was an intriguing topic. They were all part of the same group, so maybe he could consider it more like a researcher's specialties.

Like how the mining town had four geologists, but they all specialized in different things.

Chapter 126 How To Choose

Karl realized that he hadn't even noticed that someone had sat down next to him, and gave the young woman who had been introduced as a Priestess of the Nature God a tentative smile. She smiled back, a truly happy expression, but Karl noticed that under the smell of soap and flowers, there was a coppery note of blood lingering around her.

He must have made some expression as the woman gave a soft laugh and patted him on the shoulder.

"Betty is the same way, she can smell the blood as well. I am a midwife, and there was a birth last night, or technically this morning, at the hospital on the grounds. To everyone else, I should just smell like hospital soap, but for those like the Dragon Priestesses and some really sensitive Rangers and Druids, I tend to smell like blood and babies." She explained quietly.

"My apologies, I didn't mean to offend. I was just a bit startled when I smelled fresh blood here inside the Seminary Academy. When there is a lot of it, the smell lingers more than if there is only a scratch. I do hope the young mother is alright." Karl whispered back.

"Here, in the Seminary Academy Hospital? We haven't lost a mother during childbirth in most of a decade. Not all the children can be saved, but with magic, the actual childbirth process is much safer." She replied happily.

Sister Betty stared at the trays of food waiting at the edge of the room for the Matron to enter.

"As you can see, on the outside, we're all the Golden Dragon Church. On the inside, we all have our specialties. So don't go falling for those hussies who just want some outdoor adventures, you need to make sure that you're getting a cleric that can handle the task that you need them to.

I would say that you should pick one of those newly awakened World Dragon Clerics, but it will be years before they're allowed to play unsupervised, and you're already much stronger than they are.

The Cleric doesn't have to be the strongest Awakened on your team, but it helps if they can take a punch." She whispered.

[Yeah because you should always eat the healers and magic users first. Then watch the rest panic and despair as they're trapped in the web.] Rae added wistfully, not realizing how her spider instinct still made her sound like an edgy teen human.

"You are smiling at something. Do you hear your beasts in your mind?" The Life Priestess asked.

"I do. Rae, the Bloodbath Spider, said that it's common sense to target the healers and magic users first, because the others won't be able to get themselves free of the web." Karl replied.

The Priestess shuddered at the thought, while the Priest of the Magic God looked horrified. But Sister Betty grunted in agreement. That was part of the reason she put so much effort into her fighting skills.

[I like the dragon lady. Ask if we can polish her scales later.] Thor suggested.

Karl choked on his water as the Lightning Cerro's voice entered his mind, and Betty smiled.

"It has to be difficult having three more intelligent minds giving you suggestions. I used to have a pet Nekomata, and it got up to all sorts of trouble." Betty joked, then pulled

back her blonde hair to show a long claw mark that ran up the back of her neck and into her hairline.

"She tried to climb my head as a kitten and slipped over the back because my hair was oily." She added.

"What did your beasts have to say that made you choke?" The Priest of the Magic God asked.

"Thor, the Lightning Cerro, wants to polish Sister Betty's scales later. He likes her, but then he likes almost everyone."

Betty smiled. "The only scales I have are on my forearms. But I bet that he has wonderful scales, very smooth and strong."

Thor made a humming noise that was somewhere between a purr and his happy bugle. [See, she likes scales, I knew she would appreciate my scales.]

"If we have time later, he would be overjoyed to show you his scales." Karl relayed quietly as the juniors began to bring around pots of oatmeal and soft bread rolls.

They finished the simple meal in silence, not wanting to disturb anyone this early in the morning, and as soon as the Matron finished eating, Betty pulled Karl to his feet and gestured toward a side room.

"There are showers over there. Get freshened up, and pack your bags, we will be meeting in an hour. I will bring you from your room to the bus, so you don't get lost." She informed him.

"Got it. I will see you soon." Karl agreed as he rushed out to get washed.

The signs for the shower rooms were carved into the stone above the door, so there could be no mistakes, even if you couldn't tell by the different colour schemes. It was a quick wash so that he had time to make sure everything was ready before Betty came looking for him, and Karl began to realize that he had vastly underestimated what the words 'morning people' meant.

He got up just after dawn every day for training. But most of the people he had seen were already showered and ready before the sun had fully crossed the horizon.

He wasn't alone in his timing, there was a constant stream of students coming in to get washed up before their daily chores, and from the talk, there would be even more after them, as some of the chores were dirty ones, and it would be rude to smell that bad all day.

Karl hurried to check his bag, though he hadn't unpacked anything last night. Everything was still there, loaded up with supplies and herbs for the journey back to the Academy. Sister Betty seemed to have been ready for that eventuality, and only minutes after Karl was done checking his bag, she was at the door, knocking for him to come out.

"Your team will still be a while, but we can go wait for the bus, and perhaps your Thor can come out and say hello." She suggested.

That would explain the eagerness. Nobody could resist Thor's charms, even when they hadn't met him yet.

Chapter 127 Fuel Stop

That was how Karl found himself in front of the bus a half hour later, surrounded by clerics and a bus driver, while Thor rumbled happily as he got his scales rubbed. Everyone had gathered, and they should have been ready to go, but nobody could resist just one more pat, and the Lightning Cerro had gathered a huge fan following.

"Alright, break it up. The bus has to leave now, and you all have chores to get to." An older man's voice announced.

The students scattered, and Karl's team began to get on the bus while the older Professor watched to make sure that they were all behaving. Once he was certain that they were all going back to their assigned tasks, the professor came over and gave Thor a quick head rub, then motioned for Karl to put him away and get on the bus.

The driver started out as soon as all the bags were stored, carefully stacked upright so that the contents weren't dumped or damaged during the journey. It was going to be another long ride, though probably not as long as the train ride to get to the mission site, as it had made multiple delivery stops along the way.

"Did you all have a productive trip before it was cut short by the emergency?" Betty asked as the bus left the Seminary Academy Compound.

"Well, not as well as the group you'll be going with, since we were after Common Grade resources, but we managed to fill our bags before we returned to the train tracks. Unlike your Academy which has all the healers, we are short on them, so we stocked up on the ingredients for healing salves and potions when we managed to find them.

It's not as cool as Holy Magic, but it's a lot better than nothing, and a little on the wounds after a bad training day can help keep us in top shape." Karl explained.

The muscular dragon cleric laughed. "Can you imagine if they mixed the two Academies, though? A bunch of frail and delicate little innocent clerics thrown to the wolves with the warrior trainees."

The mages laughed at her implication. They were the frail and delicate ones, but they had offensive magic. However, from what they had seen, delicate and innocent was a pretty small portion of the students at the Seminary Academy, as they were mostly sent there after the Serum Awakening.

A compatibility with holy magic didn't soften them that much, as Betty herself was a testament to.

The bus bounced along the gravel road, then the ride smoothed as they got to proper pavement and passed through the edge of a few small towns.

The small farm towns were even more rural than the mines were, and Karl noticed how the locals would turn to look at the bus as it passed, wondering if it would be stopping.

The bus had government plates, and it was clearly for official purposes. Official purposes meant either one of the local businesses was getting audited by the tax service, or there was something horribly wrong that required a team of Elites to be sent out.

So, if it looked like it was going to stop anywhere but the gas station or the diner, it was big news, and they needed to warn everyone.

Or stop what they were doing and gossip about it, which was the same thing, really.

So, when the bus did stop to let them out to get some lunch, Karl wasn't surprised that the locals seemed to vanish from the streets at first, until the group had made the walk from the gas station to the café.

"Priestess, Elites, what can I get for you today? I've only got the one cook on, so it might take a minute." The older woman in a faded apron greeted them over the sound of bells ringing to announce their arrival.

Betty smiled at her. "We will just take the special, Make it twelve of them in total, the driver is still fuelling the bus."

"Coming right up."

Betty turned to the group. "Do you know about the expense accounts?"

Karl nodded. "Yeah, I got the card with my equipment. Direct bill, no need for a reimbursement form. I'm told that is the much more popular option when the amount isn't so extreme that it exceeds the petty cash we are allotted for the mission."

"The direct billing makes life easier. The Elites just pay with the card, but the clergy carry a bit of cash, and mostly rely on goodwill." She explained.

In a way, that was the same case today, as it would all be going on the expense account card that Karl had been given for the mission. He would have to account for the spending, but he couldn't see anyone arguing about them ordering the special at a small-town diner. It was likely cheaper than the replacement of the uniform pieces that they had damaged during the trip.

The waitress brought out large bowls of stew with entire loaves of bread and fresh butter, a luxury at the mines, as they were too far from the suitable cattle grazing areas to get butter for cheap. The nutrition of it wouldn't do much for the Elites, but it would fill their stomachs for the day, and that was the important part.

"There you go, dears. It might not be so fancy as you are used to, but the farmers will tell you sure enough that there's nothing better." She announced as she set the bowls on the table.

Betty winked at the woman and gestured at her bowl with her spoon. "How could anything that smells that good not taste spectacular? Just set the last one here and the driver will be along shortly."

The server smiled and nodded. "The station is full service, so he's likely just chatting while the bus fills. It takes a bit, our pumps aren't the fastest."

The driver came in as she was speaking, making the bells on the door jingle as the old server nodded in satisfaction.

"And that's everyone. Holler if you need anything."

Chapter 128 Storm Rolls In

The driver took his seat with a polite nod to the rest of the group, and began to eat with such enthusiasm that the server was beaming at him like her child had just won an award.

"We don't have long to sit around today. There have been issues along the road thanks to rain, and there is more bad weather set to roll in later tonight." The driver explained as he ate.

"Alright then. We won't hold the process up. Everyone, be ready to finish your lunch by the time that the driver is done. If you need more snacks, perhaps this lovely lady would pack us some sandwiches for the road." Karl agreed.

She began calling back to the kitchen to get sandwiches made for the travelling Elites, and the driver smiled.

"It's likely the most business they've seen all week, other than the morning coffee crowd. Farmers love to come in and chat in the mornings, it's how they pass the news around to those who don't live in town." The driver quietly explained.

The group finished eating as quickly as they could, and then walked back to the bus, which was just finishing receiving fuel.

"At least this stop is along the pipeline, so there is no shortage of fuel. The bus holds over a thousand litres, so it takes some time to pump." The driver explained as the students headed back for their seats.

The waitress had mentioned the same thing, and that their pumps were slow, but the driver quickly paid for the fuel and got them on the road.

But their good intentions didn't help for long. No more than an hour down the road, they turned off the paved highway to start heading for the Academy, and the skies opened up with rainfall so heavy that they could barely see where they were going.

The driver slowed down to under fifty kilometres an hour, as the rain got worse, pounding on the bus roof in a pattern that was starting to sound more like marbles on a tin roof.

"Can the mages keep a barrier up over the bus? It's starting to hail, and the windows aren't armoured. If we don't have something, we will have to find cover and stop until it passes." The driver asked.

"Yeah, that shouldn't be a problem. We can shield the bus while you drive." Dana agreed.

They worked out a plan to each take a turn so that nobody got too exhausted, with Dana going first, as the hope was that the hailstorm would not last long. She had the best barrier out of all of them, and once it was up, the bus returned to silence, though they could see the hail landing all around them like tiny snowballs.

"That weather is crazy. Is it always like this in the prairies?" Karl asked Betty, hoping that she would know the answer.

The cleric shook her head. "No, only a couple of times a year. But if you get hit by it, then there is a good chance that your crop is ruined for the year, so everyone hopes that when the storm hits, it doesn't hit their home."

That made a lot of sense. This hail was brutal. They had seen a few hailstorms at the mining town in the past, but usually never with hail larger than a pea. These stones were larger than golf balls, and even Dana was beginning to grimace at the level of continued power that it was taking to keep the shield up.

"This is a natural phenomenon, right?" One of the warriors asked as he looked out the window at the trees with their leaves gone and branches broken off.

Some were lying in the road, but the driver wasn't about to get out and try to move them. He just carried on, driving over them and hoping for the best.

After a few minutes, the hail turned back to a driving rain, and the driver breathed a sigh of relief.

"You can let the barrier go for now. If the hail picks back up, just bring it back. A bit of water won't hurt the bus any." He instructed.

But when they got another few kilometres down the road, they realized that the bus wasn't the only thing that was in danger from the weather.

Large chunks of the road had washed out, forcing him to slowly weave his way through the remains of the road, until they reached the river, which was running much higher than normal, and about to reach the deck of the bridge.

"Think light thoughts, folks. If this bridge dips into the river, we're all in trouble. The pillars will hold, but if the water hits the bridge deck itself, it will get washed away before you know it." He warned them.

The options were going now or never, as the rain wasn't getting any lighter, so the bridge was almost certainly going to be gone in an hour, but the students' nerves were frayed as they reached the far side just as the water began to splash up and onto the bridge deck.

"Just in time. Now, we follow the railroad for a few hours and we're home. Easy-peasy."

The road led up to a ridgeline, and the bus came to an abrupt stop, just sitting at the top in silence as the students wondered what was going on.

Karl moved to the front, so he could use his heightened eyesight to get a better idea of the problem, but what he found was far worse than he had imagined.

The river had flooded, and it had uprooted a number of trees, which had formed an improvised dam in the gully up ahead.

That had diverted the river's route, and now the road, as well as the railroad, were under an unknown amount of water for at least the next four kilometres, before a hill rose out of the muddy rapids.

"Looks like this is where we sit for the evening. The rain isn't going to stop for a bit, and it will take a day or more for the water to go down enough to know the extent of the damage.

The Academy will get the road fixed up as fast as they can, but unless it is urgent enough that they send a helicopter for you, we will be sitting right here until they do."

One of the warriors gave a rueful smile as he watched the rain fall. "And we can't even start a campfire to roast meat. I guess it's diner sandwiches and ration packs for dinner."

Betty wiggled her fingers as if casting a spell. "Don't forget that I know how to make food. Plus, I've got cooking utensils in my bag, including a magic burning stove. It's a real fancy item, but I was gifted it for helping with a dungeon raid at the end of last year, and it's been a lifesaver more times than I can count."

The warrior smiled. "Well, the rice and beans are likely better than what is in my ration pack anyhow. It's nutritious, but too salty for my taste."

Betty kindly didn't mention that the ration packs were designed that way so that they limited the number of times you had to use the toilet when you were in the field. The new students would learn that soon enough if they had been eating them all week.

Chapter 129 Rainy Days

Betty got the cooking started, while the others sat and watched the rain fall. They were in a good spot, on an open hilltop with gently sloping sides that wouldn't wash away easily in the flood, but they were essentially trapped.

The bridge behind them was gone, and the road in front of them was flooded. They could try to head off through the open fields away from the river, but that didn't lead to the Academy, or to anywhere particularly useful that was within walking distance.

Betty tapped her spoon against the pot of rice and beans. "Well, the rice is ready, so we might as well eat. Who knows how long we will end up sitting here, but one thing that I have learned is that if you sit on the top of a hill long enough, someone or something will come looking for you."

"Thanks for the words of encouragement." Karl laughed as he looked out into the heavy rain.

"Just making sure everyone is aware. There is a huge amount of the grasslands flooded, and there are thousands of small creatures that live there. They all need somewhere to go, and we're on the high ground, furthest from the water." The cleric reminded them.

"You have a point, and I'm not sure that I'm happy about it." Karl replied, making her smile.

"You will find that I am very frequently right, and you will very often not be happy about it. But that doesn't change the fact that we need to pay attention so that we're not caught off guard if something starts coming up that hill to get away from the floodwaters.

Too many of the animals have lost their homes for the day not to need to relocate, so it's best if we just set a guard now, and expect that we're going to be attacked at some point this evening while we wait to see if the rain is going to stop.

If it does, there is a chance that the flash flood will go down again fairly quickly, and the railroad has been built to withstand a fair bit of flooding.

But if the flow is too fast, then there isn't anything that is going to save that road, and we will end up either walking it in with our driver, or waiting here for them to fix the road." Betty reminded him.

"See, that's the part that we didn't want to hear. I wonder if we could just let Thor outside to chase off the smaller monsters." He suggested.

"Thor, chase off monsters? You mean play with them, right? Thor is the least threatening monster I have ever met, and I had a pet Nekomata." Betty laughed.

"Good point. I would suggest Rae, but as much as she would enjoy eating the small creatures and insects, I can't see her agreeing to go out and stand in the rain." Karl joked.

[You're smart. But I doubt that even Thor would be happy about standing in that rain. The vibrations on his scales would drive him nuts. Heck, the vibrations of the heavy rain on his scales would drive me nuts, and I'm over here.]

[Well, be prepared for an emergency call out, in the event that we are attacked, and it's more than a few spells can take care of.]

Karl could feel Rae rolling ALL of her eyes at him, but he didn't mind. She would go out to defend the bus if he asked her to. She just wouldn't be happy about it.

After two hours of sitting in the pouring rain, the torrential downpour began to taper off, which let them not only see more clearly into the distance, but to see the damage that had been done by the flood, which had previously been hidden by the thick curtain of rain.

The base of all the hills had been completely washed out. The road ended in a dramatic cliff that led down to the current level of the floodwaters, and in the distance, there were train tracks torn up and pointed skyward, barely visible to Karl's enhanced vision.

"Well, that's one question answered. We're not driving out of here any time soon. But we can't exactly just leave someone here to wait for them to build a new road. Even leaving the bus here would just lead to it being vandalized by monsters.

Hopefully, the train tracks coming into the school from the other direction are still in good shape because I can see from here that the tracks in front of us are demolished." Karl noted.

The driver shook his head. "Fat lot of good it will do them. The supplies come from this side. If they go the long way around, they'll be a whole day behind before they get to the academy, and with the limited amount of heavy equipment that the Government has in the area for this sort of emergency, it will take them weeks to get the tracks fixed.

I will have to rely on you lot to get me to the Academy once the water level goes down. They can replace the bus, but I can't replace me."

"Good point. The bus is just a bus, but it would be nice if we could keep it. I don't fancy walking all the way to the Academy from here." Karl agreed.

"Well, the bus is set up for some minor off-road travel, so it might be possible to wait a day or two for the ground to dry and then go around on the high ground." The driver suggested helpfully.

Betty snorted in amusement. "We've got five strapping young warriors and a set of shovels in the belly. They have superhuman strength, so I'm reasonably certain that they can flatten out a few potholes and cliffs for us to get the bus through.

Once the sun comes up tomorrow morning, we will see what it looks like, and then we will ask them if they want to patch the worst spots in the road to get past the flood zone, or if they would prefer to walk the last eighty or so kilometres back home."

The warriors laughed.

"I think we can safely say that if it's at all possible, we would rather work a shovel for the morning than walk the distance. Plus, it will get a bit of the road fixed so that they can get more vehicles through here in the next few days.

If we play our cards right, the Academy might even thank us for taking a few more days off from classes to fix the road." One of them suggested.

"Good point. We can call it strength training and flatten out a path good enough to get the bus through, which will let them get the armoured cars through as well. It might be a while before they fix the bridge or the train tracks, but we can at least do that much.

This part isn't part of the river itself, I don't think. It just flooded because those trees blocked everything up." Another warrior agreed.

Betty looked toward the blocked portion of the river. "But before that, we need to send a Golem or something to pull that blockage free, so the river will flow properly. If we don't, it will be days before the road is dry enough for anything to move through the area."

She was disturbingly right again. That blockage was keeping the entire area flooded, and if it wasn't removed, the water would never drain naturally, it would just remain stagnant here until a drought hit or the river found a new path.

Chapter 130 To Remove The Blockage

The students slowly snacked on the rice and beans as they watched the sun begin to slip further toward the horizon. Betty was right, they were going to have to remove that blockage before the valley would drain, and the best option to do it was Golems.

The problem was that the mages who could use Golems didn't really have good ones, other than Dana, so sending them to pull whole trees from a riverbank was a pretty big request.

They were still Common Grade Golems, for the most part, so they wouldn't have the strength, and many of them were small mud and clay golems, which weren't big on physical strength to begin with.

Karl looked out into the pouring rain with a rueful smile. "Well, it looks like this one is on you, Dana. Just have them grab one of the logs and use it as a poker from the shore to break up the blockage a little, and it should be alright. We used to make dams in the creeks when it rained, so we didn't have to pump water to play in. But when the creeks got too full, you had to drain them back down to normal levels."

"Alright, I will have the Golems give it a try. They're not the most intelligent, and I'm not going to go out there to supervise them. So there is a good chance that it will take them a while to get it right." Dana reluctantly agreed, not hiding the fact that she had no intentions of going out into the storm.

"But on the bright side, if they do fall in the water, at least they won't drown. All they have to do is just keep working until the log jam is broken, and it's perfect." One of the other mages joked.

The driver turned to look at them. "You know, she's got a point. The golems are strong, right? I've got a length of chain here with a hook on it. You could have them hook a few of the logs and just pull. Most of the time, these blockages aren't all that solid.

It's not like it's blocking all the water, just enough that the increased flow of the river isn't moving past, but the flow of the river will be filling up the gaps with sediment and mud, so the faster we can fix it the better."

That meant that someone had to go outside to get the recovery hook, which was intended to attach to the winch on the front and back of the bus. But Dana kindly extended the barrier for him while the driver got the equipment out, along with a hundred metres of wire rope.

"There. If you can explain to them how to use that, they will be able to pull the logs free in no time at all."

Karl looked outside at the tangled mass of logs and shook his head. There was no way that the Golems were going to figure that out without help. But the rain was starting to slow down to just a moderate downpour, and he knew that he could give them proper directions.

"I will go out with the Golems and give them the orders. I have a barrier ability that might help, and if not, I've got dry clothes here for when I get back. I will help the Golems get the river flowing properly again." Karl informed the group.

Nobody was going to argue. The Golems needed a supervisor, and they didn't want to go out in the rain with them, but Karl didn't actually know if the Refreshing Lightning barrier would keep him dry.

[Thor, any thoughts?] Karl asked.

[Rain feels good on the scales.] The sleepy Lightning Cerro answered.

[No, about the barrier stopping the rain.] Karl replied.

[Oh? Probably, I guess. It blocks most things.]

Dana called out the pair of Golems with directions to take the equipment and follow Karl's orders, and Karl stepped out into the rain with the Lightning barrier active.

The rain simply sheeted off him, not actually touching him, and Karl smiled in satisfaction. That would do well enough.

It wasn't far to where the blockage was, but he didn't want to go down the hill and risk himself plus the Golems slipping in the mud and ending up in the floodwaters.

He could likely get Hawk to save him, but it would be embarrassing, and unnecessary.

"Pass me the equipment." Karl ordered once they were as close as he felt comfortable getting to the edge of the washed out hill.

The Golem turned over the coil of wire and the large hook, and Karl did his best to remember how they did the lasso throw in cowboy movies. They had a cattle rancher with them on the bus who would know how to do this, but he didn't want to wait all night

for the rain to stop and the logs to pack up with mud to the point that it would take a construction team to extricate them.

Karl tossed the hook, and when it had flown past the upright log he wanted to try first, he pulled back on the wire to stop it and throw again. But to his surprise, that made the hook dive down into the log, and as Karl tried to shake it loose, he ended up wrapping the one he wanted with the wire.

"It looks like I intended to do that. Alright, you two, get a good hold on this cable and give it a nice steady pull until I tell you to stop." He ordered.

The Golems grabbed the wire and began to pull, which began to tilt the log and lift it up out of the pile. It was really working. They might not get the whole pile free, but they had a good start on the first log.

Then with a booming crack, the log shattered, and the Golems took two steps backward as the top half of the log came flying toward them and landed on the hillside.

"Stop. That's good enough." Karl ordered.

The top of the pile began to collapse, and a few dozen logs broke free to float down the river, which sent a torrent of water flowing over the top of the other logs, and dislodged even more of them.

"Pull the rest of the rope back up here so I can free our log and try again." Karl ordered as the water level began to equalize at the top of the new dam a few minutes later.

Six failed attempts to replicate his first throw later, he had hooked another log, and the Golems gave a mighty heave, digging themselves into the dirt as it began to tilt. This one wasn't coming up out of the pile, it was taking the pile with it as it lifted out of the mud, and it was unclear if they had the strength.

"Thor, come out and help pull." Karl ordered.

Then he grabbed the wire himself, standing between the Golems and Thor, who had grabbed it in his mouth, further back than his sharp beak.

The four of them pulled, and a massive explosion of logs was thrown up in the air, creating a proper breach in the dam, and a massive flood of water began to pour through, raising the flood level on the other side by over a metre as the water raced to escape.

Anyone downstream of that was not going to be happy with him.