

Beast Master 1231

Chapter 1231: Trust Your Sisters

Dana sighed and stroked Tian's head. The little fox might be plotting to help her love life, but it did come from a pure mindset. He just wanted more baby foxes to play with, and he was pretty sure that Dana would be having at least partially fox offspring.

Baby Stonefur Divine Foxes would be best, but baby fox girls would be alright too. Brothers were competition, but little sisters were just there to be adored and pampered.

Cara told him so, and it must be true.

Dana was highly dubious about that logic, but Karl wasn't concerned by the plotting. All the outcomes were good ones for him, since he wasn't the one who would have to carry the pups, kittens or children to term, depending on what exactly they ended up with.

Dana was doing her best not to think about that part, and instead focused on the plans that Karl was making for a new arena construct.

She had learned the art from him, but this sort of Runecrafting was completely out of her element. Just understanding how the runes would work was not enough for a project like this one. You would also need to know all of the relevant spells, understand the concepts behind them, and how to merge them into one effect to stabilize them.

In short, she had no intentions of trying.

However, his process did give her some ideas on how to create new effects of her own that might enhance the armour and accessories that she was planning to make later.

Now that she understood how to put the Golem effect on an item, she was beginning to understand how to alter the runic sequence to specifically target bonuses to improve the Golem spell.

Adding specifically construct damage to an item would give a much larger bonus than a general damage bonus that applied to everything that a mage would cast.

Sure, it would hamper their overall abilities, but if you were primarily relying on Golems and summoned creatures to do your damage, you could easily double their abilities instead of giving everything that you did a thirty to forty percent bonus.

The generic bonuses were what Karl usually gave items, so they would be useful in any situation. But Mages usually relied on only a few core abilities, and the rest were support skills.

Lacking a bonus didn't stop you from using them, but if she created items that only improved fire skills or added burning damage, someone like Hawk would gain massive bonuses.

Hawk was a big fan of that plan.

No need to work out other runic combinations, just add burning damage to everything and it would be fine. What skills did a mage actually need other than Fireball?

[I think that there is something wrong with that logic, my friend.] Thor reminded the bird.

Hawk frowned. [You might have a point. Fireball is good. But then there are flame tornados, there is flaming rain, there are flaming meteors. Limiting the bonus to just fireball is too extreme.]

Thor shrugged. [But when I stomp on things, I don't want them to catch fire, it would burn my feet.]

Dana shook her head and decided that it was better just to ignore the banter of the beasts for the good of her mental health.

Karl laughed as Dana tried to adapt to all the extra voices in her head, including Cara's whispered messages, which the Chaos Badger intended to be like intrusive thoughts, encouraging Dana to do fun things.

It wasn't working very well, but given time, she thought that she might be able to break the Dana Mage's defences down.

The only issue was that Dana could also hear her plans to wear down her resistance. Karl was much better about ignoring that part, but Dana was mentally calling her out all the time.

Cara decided that she needed to up her game, she had gotten sloppy.

While the plotting continued all morning, Karl and Dana saw no good reason that they should actually get out of bed until they were hungry. So, at noon Dana finally lifted Tian off her chest and placed the fox down on the bed beside her.

That was his signal to return to his space so that he could play and work on his holy magic. Playing with other people wasn't bad, but it wasn't as fun as napping on Dana when she was in foxkin form.

"Did you have a good morning?" Ophelia joked when the couple finally came downstairs.

"Not bad. Sleeping in is a nice change now and then. Where is your little troublemaker?" Karl replied.

"In the Tiny World with Button and the others. You left the portal open in the main room, so there are others visiting as well." She explained.

Karl smirked, and the Berserker laughed. "What can I say, the ladies might not want to have men living with them, but they certainly don't mind taking them home for an evening.

Let them have their fun, there will be plenty of hangovers to go around today, and all the healers will be busy if we drag the Guild Alliance Members back now."

"Alright, I will keep the portal open, but I'm moving it to the basement so that it's next to the portal to the Drodh Guild House, where the Gargoyles can keep an eye on who is coming in and out.

If I have to take off for some reason, the other Guild Masters won't be happy if I take a few of their Raiding Team members with me by accident." Karl joked.

"I don't think that you will get far. They are all eager to see how you and Dana do in the Mythic Ranked Dungeons, and they don't care if they've got to wait all day to talk to you."

Dana sighed. "So much for lazy days. But a trip through the Mythic Dungeons should be both fun and profitable for us. At least the dungeons are exclusive enough that we won't be going with a full group of newbies."

Chapter 1232: Now That You're Myths...

Karl and Dana didn't have to wait long for the Guild Leaders to realize that they were up.

Hugo was still at the house, discussing magic with Wendy, who was grilling him on all sorts of esoteric magical theories that Karl couldn't even begin to comprehend. So, as soon as he realized that the voices in the main room were Karl and Dana, he alerted the others and had them make plans to organize a run through a five-person dungeon with one of their strongest damage dealers.

Karl and Dana should be capable enough, but they were both freshly advanced, and even the best of gear couldn't always make up for the difference in power levels between the peak of Mythic and the start.

The question was just how close to the minimum would they be?

Both of them had rare skills that added a lot of damage to their abilities, and they both had multiple Golems, which would multiply their damage output.

Karl had the beasts, but it might not be safe to bring them along on this trip, as they hadn't advanced yet, and even if they were to come along, they would only do ten percent of their usual damage.

That just wasn't efficient.

The real question was: What sort of role would Karl pick if he wasn't backing up his beasts? Dragon form and melee positioning? Or would he go for something ranged, even though there wasn't as much crowding at the front?

No, that wasn't right.

The front line would still be crowded with Golems when both Karl and Dana were in a group.

That bonding spell that linked both of their souls so that they would advance at the same rate was really something. Karl was advancing at an insane rate, and he would now have a perfectly matched Mage with him who was never behind him in progression.

Most people wanted a pocket healer so that they would get into more groups and not have to worry about an uncaring cleric letting them suffer for their mistakes.

He had the opposite.

Incredible self-healing and damage reduction, and a bonus damage dealer.

That would work well in most groups, though. While he wasn't the tank, he wouldn't make life hard on the healers, which would allow them to keep the group up through any mistakes or particularly difficult points.

Keeping one person alive was no problem for a cleric. Keeping five of them alive was not always a simple proposition, especially if the damage dealers were too focused on killing and not on the damage that they were taking in return.

For example, one of the bosses had a thorns effect, where you took return damage when you injured it. So, the highest damage dealers took the most damage from the boss, and it was a nightmare for the healers when the warriors weren't paying attention to their own injuries.

As they recalled, Karl had limited invulnerability active all the time, and not just for a limited period. For [Thorns] that was the best possible skill to have, as the damage was not large at any time, it just added up quickly with countless small injuries.

"Karl, welcome back to the land of the living. Do you have time to talk?" Deve asked as he led the other Guild Masters into the Darklight Host's common room.

"Always. I can already guess what you have in mind, and I think that we can work something out. I hope you weren't in a hurry, though. We've just gotten married, and I have no intentions of working hard for the next few weeks." Karl replied.

Deve chuckled. "Well, I can't blame you for that. For the entire month after I got married, I didn't do anything productive. Fortunately for me, I was still a Totem at the time, and there were other tanks to take up my role for the monthly runs."

"The more power you get, the more work that they have for you. It's a bit ironic, really. All the hard parts are the ones that can't be delegated to anyone else." Karl joked.

Deve sighed. "Welcome to life as a Mythic. Nobody ever asks us for things that someone else could do. They call it being respectful and reverent of our position, but really, it just means that we can't slack off nearly as much as we used to.

A real buzz kill if you ask me.

But with the two of you in the Alliance, we've actually got a few extra damage dealers, and we can rotate out a little more often."

Karl smirked at the Druid. "No rest for the wicked, though. There are never enough tanks and healers to go around."

Deve shrugged. "We're working on it. Now that we've got two more members, we can start working on a whole backup team. It's not easy to recruit Mythic members, but we're building a pretty good reputation."

Dana frowned. "Don't get too excited. We've got far too much to do to be going multiple times a week into the dungeon. Keeping it as an extra rotation in the main group for now is probably better."

The Guild Masters sighed in unison, which made the others in the room chuckle. They were all super excited to get more people in their raiding rotation, but the Darklight Host was primarily a crafting guild,

and now that they had a pair of Mythic Ranked craftsmen among their numbers, they were sure to be flooded with extremely profitable requests.

Far more than anyone could expect to be making from even a Mythic Dungeon for the day.

The imbalance in the Zilaz region was really unfair that way.

But on the other hand, Sapphire flat out refused to make Mythic Ranked items, even if you had the materials. Unlike the stubborn blue dragon, there was a chance that they could get at least one item each at the Mythic Rank out of Karl.

Possibly from Dana as well, once they figured out what crafting skill she had. She must have taken one by now. It simply didn't make sense that she wouldn't have.

Chapter 1233: Mythic Dungeon

Karl thought about the offer for a moment, then smiled. "Why don't we go along on the trip this time? It will give the damage dealers a day off, we can get to learn the Dungeon, and then we can put off the complaints until next week.

Once a week shouldn't be too hard on the schedule, even with all the backlog of orders that we've built up over the last few weeks."

Deve smiled as they relented. "That would be perfect. Each of the three teams goes on a different day every week, but if you are available once a week, that would give us a chance to give all the damage dealers some extra time off when they need it.

I know that there are a few teams who wouldn't mind an extended vacation."

Raj laughed. "I know, my team is getting lazy. But we still need to keep the bills paid."

The man had a point. The Mythic Dungeons were the primary source of funding for the head tax that the region charged people to live in the city and access the open dungeons.

Deve smiled. "Why don't they come with me this time? I can get a healer and one more ready in a few minutes, and it's halfway between our rotations, so nobody will miss out.

My guys have been grinding hard lately to make money for new gear, so they won't turn down an extra run."

Karl chuckled. "You are making me feel bad, like I'm taking advantage of them."

Deve shrugged. "Totem Ranked gear is stupidly expensive, no matter how you look at it, and the Dungeon that we won doesn't have the greatest loot. It's also a really short one. We will be done in under an hour after we arrive."

Hugo nodded. "The Mythic Dungeons have fierce competition. Plus, a lot of them are kind of sad. There is one that is just three pulls of guards and a single boss, but with a week-long timer. One year, there wasn't even a challenge for it. The Guild who held it the year before won it by default because nobody else showed up to claim it.

It's cheap to enter if you want. They ask for one Overlord Ranked or higher trash item as an entry fee."

Karl chuckled. That was truly an inexpensive dungeon to visit. But with only one boss, it might actually be a good training spot.

[Epic Golems.] Dana thought, and Karl's amused chuckle turned to a smile. She was right. The more bosses that they saw, the more that they could summon as defenders in combat.

"Well, we can talk about doing some of the short and easy dungeons later, just to build experience. Who knows, one of them might help a beast advance." Karl agreed with fake reluctance that didn't fool anyone.

The other Guild Leaders might not have known him long, but they knew Karl well enough to know that he was always up for a challenge, and even if he wasn't the beasts certainly were.

Having them in his head would influence Karl to be more amenable to challenges, even if he was otherwise considered extremely busy for a Mythic Guild Leader.

And that reminded Deve of another point. "You should have space for two hundred Guild Members in your branch now, not just one hundred, right? Were you planning to recruit more craftsmen?"

I can see that the ones in Drodh have been busy, even with the number who came to the wedding."

Karl nodded. "We brought a lot of workers to Drodh. Some of them will be promoted to full Guild Members soon, and I might look for a few more to round out our ranks. But no rush."

"Did you want to eat and then head for the dungeon?" Deve asked hopefully.

Karl turned to Dana, who shrugged. "I don't see why not. Call your people over, and we can plan the dungeon run."

The dungeon was actually a simple one. It was a small jungle section with Demonic Apes in it and just two bosses. All you had to do was follow the path and eliminate the groups.

Simple. As long as you didn't get encircled by the apes and their earth elemental attacks, or knocked down by [Earthquake].

"Alright, I will call over a cleric and a Warrior. Not that I think we will need more bodies in melee, but it will help guide the Golems. Once they know what to do, we can likely send you two with any sort of group and expect it to be fine.

Though..."

Karl laughed as Deve paused. "We are likely to be the only thing resembling a mage in most of the groups if we go because there are so many warriors?"

The Druid shrugged. "Your words, not mine. We did curate the groups for a better mix of Mythic team members. But most are still three warrior types, a mage and a healer."

There was simply no getting around it. There weren't enough of the other classes to have it any other way. Even having Deve as a Druid Tank was more diversity than most groups claimed.

"Alright, you call the members, we will grab something to eat, and then calm the ladies. I'm sure that they're not going to be happy about being left behind when there are new things to fight." Karl joked.

Deve rolled his eyes. "The badger will be easy to distract, but I don't know what you're going to tell Rae. Telling her that with the damage reduction, her stabbing will be ineffective might just get you stabbed instead."

In her space, Rae smirked. The badger lover was a smart man.

But she was already preparing her advancement bath and consolidating energy from her space into her body to force herself to the bottleneck so she could be Mythic as soon as possible.

If everything went to plan, not only would she be the first one to advance, she would be ready for the next week's dungeon run, and she could stab all new things to her heart's content.

For this week, she would have to bother Nilla's group to take her on a run. When the tank said to take her, the rest of the group wouldn't argue with him.

Chapter 1234: Prep The Team

The other two team members from Deve's group were over within minutes, as Karl and Dana had gotten out of bed so late in the day.

But that also gave them an excuse to stay for lunch, and sample some of the Mystic Cooking skills of the Darklight Host's head chef.

And Lotus, who had created a super fluffy specialty quiche.

Picking both the actual chef and Lotus to have the new Mystic Cooking skill had actually been a brilliant idea because they both had different ideas of what should be prioritized to be improved, and they were willing to exchange recipes.

So, Lotus added new sweets and breakfasts, while the rest of the kitchen staff focused on properly nutritious meals.

Deve cleared his throat, "There really isn't much to tell you about the dungeon. It's demonic apes. We go to the groups, kill them, move on. They all use Earth Magic, so watch out for flying stones and earthquakes. The bosses are the same, but on a larger scale."

Karl and Dana nodded. "Alright, that's manageable. But we have an idea. Remember how Dana and Ophelia accidentally triggered a new difficulty level in the Overlord Ranked dungeon by tanking with Limited Invulnerability and Golems? I suggest that we try the same thing in this dungeon too, if possible.

I know that Deve has the [Limited Invulnerability] skill and solid damage reduction, so we don't need to change the tactics, just keep the others from getting hit hard enough to break the barrier I will put on them.

That should be enough to ensure zero actual damage is taken.

So, if there is a hard mode, we should find out, and then the Alliance might be able to get a loot improvement."

Deve frowned. The loot from the Mythic Dungeons was universally terrible. If it dropped mostly Mythic Ranked trash, it would already be worth more than it currently was. If it dropped Mythic items at Rare or Epic Grade on every boss, it would be huge for the Alliance.

"Alright. But if this works, I will ask that you teach that barrier skill to someone so that they can let the other groups survive the harder difficulty." Deve agreed.

"No problem. [Eternal Lightning] should be usable by Blue and White Dragons. Some of their clerics as well. The base form, [Refreshing Lightning Barrier] was only usable by the Blue Dragons, and they already have that skill book." Karl agreed.

The hard part would be getting the blue dragons into a dungeon.

Getting them into the Alliance was easy. Deve could just unleash their curiosity on Karl. But getting them to put their lives in danger for money? The blue dragons had close to zero interest in such things.

The white dragons were easier to work with. They would come along just to heal for the sake of healing. And they already had one in the group.

"Can you teach Lars?" Deve asked.

The white robed healer turned to watch them when he heard his name. Instead of laughing at Lotus' dancing as she cooked, which was actually more entertaining than discussing a dungeon he had been to a hundred times.

"Teach me what?"

"How to create an Epic Grade barrier skill." Karl explained.

The healer nodded, and made a 'go ahead' gesture.

{Champion Karl offers knowledge} Epic Skill [Eternal Lightning] will be transferred to the devoted Medic Larsharamon.

The cleric's eyes glowed with white light, and Karl saw scales shimmer on his skin as he got excited and almost transformed back into his natural draconic form to test the skill.

Deve patted the healer on the shoulder. "I haven't seen you so excited in a long time, old friend."

Lars winked at him and nodded. "I have a new class option waiting for me now that I have an Epic Grade skill. This will be a good day."

The Druid shook his head in dismay. "Go ahead and check it out. Most people enter the class change immediately. We have plenty of time to wait for you if you have a few options to look through."

Only a White Dragon would put off their advancement just so they wouldn't delay a dungeon run.

It only took a moment before the dragon's attention was back with them, and his pleased smile was somewhat smug.

"The new class is Archpriest. Fear not, nothing has changed in my role, but I now have a few more options for protective barriers and healing spells that are more mana efficient." Lars declared.

"Then let's get going. Everyone is done eating, right?" Deve asked.

Their warrior, Abel, picked up one more croissant and nodded. "Good to go, boss."

The dungeon was very close to their Alliance house, a deliberate measure so that they could respond to issues quickly. It was the first one that the Alliance had gained, before they even had control of a Totem Ranked Dungeon.

The guards on duty waved at Deve as he walked up, and Karl saw that there was a group of ragged looking adventurers standing inside the cordoned area, making plans for the run.

They obviously didn't know each other. But if what Deve said was to be believed, this was a good dungeon for that sort of pick-up group.

"Let's enter. They'll be a few more minutes planning." Deve announced, then led the way directly inside.

Karl followed him in, so he could prepare the Golems. Tian saw an opportunity and came out to sit on the shoulder of their healer. Fighting enemies with ninety percent damage reduction didn't mean anything when you weren't planning to do any damage in the first place.

He could just keep area buffs like [Consecrated Ground] up on the Golems, and use his area healing ability if they were actually taking damage.

Lars stroked the little Fox's head, wondering how he had become suddenly popular.

He didn't realize that he was simply standing in the appropriate spot for a healer, so Tian was using him as a location reference for where he should be when they came back here.

Once all his sisters were at the Mythic Rank, they could come here with just the Karl.

Wait, did the Dana Mage count as one of his sisters? That shouldn't be right. There was another word for her. Whatever, he would figure it out later.

Chapter 1235: What's In A Name?

Tian thought about calling her Auntie Dana, but that made her sound old.

Definitely not good.

But Sisters shouldn't do those sorts of things with the Karl.

Cara nodded in agreement. Mating with Karl would be weird, and she was adopted, not born in his space.

Remi considered the situation. Logically, Dana should be something like their adoptive mother, perhaps their stepmother. But that didn't fit. She had read many books, and stepmothers were supposed to be evil and biased.

Maybe she could be a cousin?

Or, they could just call her big sister, since she had been adopted into the family like they had. Her position might be a bit different, but it was still a good name.

[Can you not discuss my love life when we're about to start a Dungeon?] Dana pleaded.

[Oh, yeah! The Dana Mage hasn't figured out how to mute everyone yet. Alright, we will discuss your title later. But how do we know when the baby Dana Mages are due?] Tian asked.

[Really? Now is not the time for that conversation, either.]

[Multitasking. It's easy to chat and heal at the same time.] Tian complained.

Karl gave Dana's mind a slight mental nudge, showing her how to move the thoughts of the others to the back of her mind, turning it in to subconscious chatter unless it was something urgent and aimed at her.

[Thank you.] She replied, then began to summon her Golems to get the fight started.

With her four humanoid Golems, and the pair of Dragon Hounds, they were already doing very well. Then, she added the pair of Epic Golems, in the form of Earth Elemental Lords, and Deve shook his head in dismay.

How was he supposed to lead a raid when there were four boss monsters in his front lines?

What was he even supposed to be doing up there?

Deve focused himself and gave his usual first instructions as he led the group forward.

"Follow me into the group, I will pull them with a ranged spell. Golems spread to my flanks, and stop them from encircling the group. Damage dealers, you know the routine. Five seconds for me to get all their attention, then join the fight."

Karl did exactly that, and five seconds into the first fight he sent in his Golems, in the form of a pair each of Myceloid Kings, Lightning Cerro, and Dire Bears, backed up by a squad of spectral knights.

Between his team and Dana's the outcome was inevitable.

Especially after the Myceloid Kings pinned two of the Demon Apes with their arms behind them for the others to massacre.

"It feels like we're bullying them at this point." The healer noted as the Demon Apes howled in pain.

Karl nodded. "You're right. We should probably use some area attacks, so it doesn't feel as much like a mugging."

The White Dragon simply stared at him for a moment, then shook his head in dismay.

How would that help? By reducing visibility so they didn't have to see the mugging?

The first group fell, and Deve turned back to them, to pass a message in bear form.

{Change of plans. Just have that pair of thugs grab the Apes. They grapple better than I do.}

Karl smiled, and sent his Golems forward, then bombarded the area around the Apes with [Apocalypse], in case they had missed something.

No more Apes came out of the forest, but Deve waited for a few more seconds before he joined the fight.

There was no need for him to get beat up when those things were present.

Dana used a movement skill to step up into the air over Karl's head and began an elegant sword dance that threw multiple attacks at the Apes every second, a fitting counterpart to Karl's area of effect fire damage.

"Don't let Annabelle know about that skill, she will never let your Dana sleep until she learns it. Giving her an Idol dress was a mistake." The healer, Lars, quietly joked.

"You know, we can teach her the skill. It might even advance her class, since it's an exclusive ability of the class that Dana has. Mystic Blademaster, it is called. It has a bunch of bonuses to Golem Damage, and blade use.

She's actually a brilliant melee combatant." Karl explained to the dragon.

"And she is back here, in the air, why?"

Karl shrugged. "Because she can? Her skills have more than enough range for her to fight from that distance, and her primary melee bonuses are her incredible agility and [Auto Parry], but what is going to attack her with all those Golems around?"

Lars chuckled. He wouldn't complain that nobody was getting hurt.

Whatever ability Karl was using on the Golems had them either taking no damage or healing as fast as they were being injured. So, he was just chatting with Karl as the Beast Master channelled a rain of fire and meteors onto the battle.

"You know, I just realized that you're not going to be eligible to challenge for a Totem Ranked Dungeon this time around. It looks like our Alliance might be out in the cold again." Lars realized.

Karl shrugged. "Well, we've got a chance if one of the other ladies hits Totem Rank in time, or if one of the beasts doesn't advance. I would wager that Thor could likely hold his own in a Totem Ranked challenge."

"Not Rae?" Lars asked.

Karl shook his head. "Rae certainly won't wait that long. She's already preparing for her own advancement. But Thor is quite attached to Tessa, and I suspect that his bloodline is going to give him some trouble.

Normally, an Impenetrable Bulwark Behemoth cannot advance past Overlord, but he already did. We might be able to help him advance again, or evolve into a form that is more compatible with higher Ranks. But both will likely take some time."

Lars sighed. "Well, you'll be able to challenge for a Mythic Dungeon anyhow. We can always use another, if you're a good enough combatant in the duel format at Mythic Rank."

Chapter 1236: Speed Run It

Karl winked at the Dragon. "Oh, I can most definitely duel better than I could at Totem Rank. I don't think that I will have too many issues, even if they ban summons from the format.

Plus, I have a secret weapon if things get messy, and I don't think that any of the others will be able to stand against it alone."

The item only increased one skill by one Rank. But if he made [Avatar] turn him into an Immortal Ranked World Dragon, the fight would just be completely lopsided.

The damage reduction alone would make it nearly impossible to hurt him, and the extra strength would turn it into a slugfest that nobody else could win in an enclosed area.

Lars realized the same thing after a few seconds. Dragons had an immeasurable advantage in an arena setting, in that nobody could run away from them. Even if you weren't a warrior class, you were still a dragon.

Just bite them and bathe them with your breath weapon.

In that order.

The Golems didn't slow down as they reached the boss, because Karl was distracted talking to Lars, so the boss fight started immediately, with Karl just adjusting the target of his attacks when the golems moved.

[Spam fire Void Blast at the centre of the chest.] Cara instructed, causing Karl to change tactics and cast more than one type of spell.

The rapid fire black bursts exploded over the boss Ape, who staggered back before flailing at the Myceloid Kings as the Earth Elementals circled behind it with massive broadswords made of stone.

It was so screwed.

{System Announcement} New Kill Time Record Achieved

{Enhance Difficulty Level?} Y/N

Deve paused as he saw the message.

"Dammit, they really found a way to do it." He muttered, while Cara mentally cheered.

Beating up stupid apes who only attacked the closest thing was no fun.

Deve steeled his will, then thumped his paw on the ground.

{Yes} He announced.

{Select difficulty level.} 1-5

Before he could answer, Cara appeared in front of him and threw her paws up in the air, like she could grab the System message and keep it for herself.

[YES! ALL THE DIFFICULTY LEVEL!]

{Difficulty Level 6 chosen} Good Luck

Deve Roared. {You Damnable Badger! You're not even part of this fight, why are you here causing me headaches?}

Cara laughed as she danced out of the way of his paw, but then there were Apes coming from every direction, while the next group along the path doubled in size and began to glow with increasingly potent red light.

{Enrage effect. It gets stronger by the second, but we've got to fight through these new monsters to get there. If this affects the other groups attempts to clear the dungeon, I am going to strangle that badger to death.} Deve informed them.

Cara laughed as she flapped up into the sky and began to hurl [Void Blasts] at the new apes.

They were mostly Totem Ranked, and would be relying on numbers to delay the dungeon group, and not massive amounts of damage.

However, every fifth one was a Mythic Demonic Ape, effectively tripling the number of real enemies that they had to fight, while the regular groups were all on an enrage timer.

And the Gods only knew what they would face when they reached the next boss.

Karl chuckled and transformed into the [Avatar] of the World Dragon, then took his golems to charge the enraged group.

{Deve, you strategize. Dana, work with him to clear the way. Cara, you had better pull your weight if you're going to cause trouble.} Karl insisted.

Seeing that there were Totem Ranked Apes now, Rae came out to play, bringing four spider Golems with her. Then her whole group of Spectral Knights.

She didn't have any Mythic Ape blood in her bath, and it didn't smell too bad. Kind of leafy and meaty at the same time.

"Well, at least she called for reinforcements." Lars chuckled as he watched the group's lone warrior trying to fight off a wave of Totem Ranked Apes to get to the main fight, where Karl and his Golems were just reaching the enraged Demonic Apes.

Karl felt a surge of power from the Blade of Champions as he attacked, and the weapon got its first taste of Mythic life energy in a long time.

This was what it needed. New infusions of higher quality energy.

[Brutal Pugilist] applied its bonus damage on top of [Shatter] [Sharpness] [Brutality] [Rampage] and [Predation]. The final effect was dragon claws that cut through tough ape hide like warm butter, and blood everywhere.

Rae made a mental note to go there and clean up in a moment.

Once Karl was finished with the enraged ones, she could go get all the good blood for her bath. It might not be what she was after for her advancement, but the earthy notes made a good base, with strong vitality and regenerative energy.

She would just need to target the other components toward the changes she wanted to make.

Karl caught a massive fist in his own, then bit down on an Ape's head. He shuddered at the feeling of crunching bone, and decided that using skills was probably better than brute force.

He didn't share Rae's opinion about the flavour of Demonic Apes.

[Gravity Slam] sent a shockwave out in front of him, knocking the apes off balance, and giving the Greater Golems in the form of Lightning Cerro a chance to knock them to the ground where they could be mercilessly tormented as they tried to get back up.

Then, Deve was with them, and the rest of the group began to push forward, keeping the fight clear of the extra monsters.

{The Enrage effect is getting strong. We need to keep pushing forward. Once these are dead, push forward and engage the next group.} Deve instructed as he went to join Dana's Golems.

{Got it. They're almost down. Surprisingly durable things.} Karl agreed.

With [Bestial Regeneration] and their earth magic, the Demonic Apes were becoming hard to kill, even when outnumbered four to one by Golems and constructs.

Chapter 1237: Stacking Enrage

Karl quickly finished the Apes, then gathered the next enraged group with [Flaming Vortex] before hitting them with [Dispel].

For a half second, the enrage effect vanished, and Karl thought that this might not be bad.

Then, it was back, and stronger than before it was dispelled.

[Ooh, that made them mad. Super Spicy Apes.] Cara giggled.

They weren't even affected by the Spicy Tornado anymore, Hawk realized. It was still damaging them, but they were immune to the pulling effect, and not at all disoriented.

They must be Super Spicy.

Karl bombarded them with [Void Blast] as he approached, then increased the mana that he was putting into [Apocalypse], hoping to wear them down enough that their regeneration would be fully occupied with the area damage.

If the background damage was that high, it would be much easier to take them out.

{Fundamental Rule Comprehension Increased} Fire ⇒ 5 Percent

Karl put a bit more mana into the barriers around his Golems, keeping [Eternal Lightning] active, so that the debuff that the Apes were causing didn't linger.

It was only around for half a second when the barrier was active, but [Eternal Lightning] continually cleansed.

For added bonus, he cast [Consecrated Ground] and found that it had a huge bonus against the Demonic Apes, nearly as much as against Undead. Now, he could really get to work.

He just had to change tactics.

Instead of Void Blast, he switched to Holy Blast, and found that coating his claws in holy energy made his attacks cause increased bleeding from [Lacerate] and [Hemotoxic Strikes].

Karl tore the throat out of one of the Demonic Apes, and the Greater Golems teamed up to stomp on its head as it fell.

With the added Holy damage, this was going much faster than the last one, and he might actually have them down before the rest of the group had finished their work.

A sudden impact on the hind legs of his draconic form reminded Karl that he had to pay attention to more Apes than just the ones that he was fighting. But before he could react, a Dire Bear Golem had launched itself over his back and knocked the errant Demonic Ape to the ground, locked in a death grip.

With the Ape immobile, locked in combat with the Dire Bear, the Spectral Knights moved in to stab it to death from every angle at once.

Brutal, but effective.

The apes fell, and Rae immediately pulled the corpses into her space to drain them of blood.

It wasn't any better than the first ones had been, but it was still Mythic blood, and every bit would count, as she didn't have any Immortal blood available.

[You totally jinxed it.] Hawk informed her.

[Are we that lucky?] Cara asked.

[Maybe? This is a pretty fun fight. All *boom* *pow* *smash*.] Tian agreed from his perch on Lars' shoulder.

[Can you all stop trying to influence the dungeon into making the last boss Immortal?] Dana pleaded.

[Sorry, but NO.] Rae informed her in a smug tone.

Deve caught up to Karl just as the last of the Demonic Apes fell, and glared at Cara, who was flying overhead.

{Have I mentioned yet that I really hate you?} He asked the badger, who nodded happily in agreement, then tossed him a large meat bun.

The Druid caught it in his mouth and swallowed in one bite, without stopping his running commentary on how Badgers were invented to make his life difficult.

But the extra monsters had stopped coming, and the only thing left in front of them was one massive Demonic Ape, glowing with bright red energy, and slathering with rage.

[We will have to do this faster next time.] Cara noted as she watched the insane ape stomp around the clearing.

The enrage timer looked like it was much too fast for a casual fight.

{Golems forward. Engage the boss and let's see what it's got.} Deve sighed.

The moment that the Golems entered the area, spikes of earth erupted from the ground, forcing them all to dodge, and bright golden armour surrounded the final boss, before it doubled in size from its already impressive four metre stature.

"Goddess, that thing is massive. What in the world are we supposed to do with that? Sic a dragon on it? Karl, you're up." Lars joked.

Dana laughed and sent her Golems to join the fight while flying overhead.

But being off the ground didn't save her from the area spell.

The spikes launched themselves into the air as the next wave passed under her, but from her vantage, she could see how the spell worked.

"It's a ring of earth spikes that comes out from him. There are gaps in it, but the spell rotates, so you will have to adjust to where they are." She shouted down to the team members on the ground.

That was all well and good, Deve decided. But how were they supposed to damage that thing?

The Golems were already in combat with it, and its health was only slightly ticking down, then mostly healing. But with every bit of damage it took, the enrage effect increased.

Tian nimbly hopped to the side as Lars was forced to roll to avoid being impaled from beneath by the wave of spikes, and momentarily wished that he had time to inspect those spikes.

There had to be secrets to new Earth Magic in that spell.

"He's getting ready for something big!" Dana warned as the red light on the boss surged.

Then, the light turned completely black, before vanishing into the boss.

Its armour went from gold to black, its eyes glowed with red malevolence, and Deve cursed as he saw the decoration around its name change.

[Immortal Rank Demonic Ape blood.] Rae sighed happily.

[Cara, I'm going to trim your claws and lock you in a plain white room.] Dana grumbled.

[This is not my fault. I just wanted to make it more interesting.] Cara complained.

How could their beloved Dana Mage threaten her with something that vile? What would she do in a boring white room if she couldn't even claw it apart?

Chapter 1238: Manipulated Flags

{Well, now we know what level six difficulty looks like.} Karl sighed, then recast [Avatar] using the [Amulet of Destruction]

{Amulet of Destruction} Immortal Rank. Epic Grade. Increases the effect of one spell per minute by one Rank in the Mortal Ranks, or one Sub-Rank for Immortals.

Now, he was an Immortal-Ranked Avatar, and his attacks would do full damage to the boss.

Not his skills, but his actual physical attacks should.

But there was one thing that he hadn't thought about when he cast the spell.

With [Behemoth] and [Brutality] active, his size was more than tripled, and an Immortal Rank Dragon was already a hundred metres long without buffs.

He took up half the clearing on his own and nobody could fight with him in the way.

Karl reversed the effect using [Unobtrusive Behemoth], and shrunk himself to a svelte sixty metres long, which was still massive, but somewhat more manageable than the three hundred metres long that he had been.

Then, he slammed into the Demonic Ape and pulled its attention away from the group.

The waves of Earth Spikes started ten metres from the boss, which would be tight for Deve alone. But with the Golems, the Druid had chosen to drop his Bear form for this fight, and embrace his ranged abilities.

The few that he had.

It was a whole new experience for him, dancing around the spikes coming from the boss, and not standing so close that the effects targeted at the ranged attackers didn't matter to him.

However, it was nice that he wasn't going to finish a dungeon with sore muscles.

Healing and regeneration were great for fixing the body, but somehow, they never quite took out that lingering ache from being repeatedly injured.

With Cara using [Nullify] to disrupt the boss, it wasn't doing much damage, but the area attack wouldn't collapse to her efforts, and the Demonic Ape was hardly taking any damage from them.

It was taking damage, though.

Karl roared as a blow hit him on the sensitive spot at his elbow, then doused the Ape in Ghostfire in retaliation.

That only made the beast more insensibly angry, but the enrage effect was already gone, after peaking when the boss reached Immortal Rank.

Trying to keep the boss in one spot simply wasn't happening, Karl realized. It was intent on not letting him trap its arms or get a good grip, so it was darting in and out with its strikes.

That made it difficult for even the Epic Golems to efficiently target their attacks. But given the circumstances, and the constant barrage of earth spikes, nobody was going to be simply going all out on attack anyhow.

Karl watched with trepidation as the boss' health reached halfway on the meter below its name, then sighed in relief when nothing happened.

They might be at one level above peak difficulty, thanks to Cara, but the boss was still manageable with the five of them, and a lot of bleeding damage.

An absolutely insane amount of bleeding damage, really. Especially after you added all the ongoing damage from the Myceloid King Epic Golems.

Their spore attacks were continually damaging the Ape, who either didn't understand how to stop the damage, or lacked the ability. So, with every passing minute, its health was falling faster, and the fact that their skills were reduced by ninety percent was slowly beginning to not matter.

After all, even if you needed ten times as many attacks to kill the boss, two hundred stacks of continual damage added up.

As they continued to attack, Deve quickly adapted, and began adding poison damage to his attacks. It wasn't an often used skill because the damage normally wasn't worth the energy.

But when the boss was taking fifteen minutes of constant combat to die, it would probably be his highest total damage skill for the fight.

At ten percent health, the boss began to pulse with red energy, restarting its enrage timer. But by then, it was losing a percent every few seconds, and there wasn't much that it could do but try to get past Karl to fight the weaker members.

{Dungeon Complete} Calculating rewards.

{Rewards Granted}

Deve smiled as he saw an item appear in his inventory.

{Maul of Brutality} Rare Grade, Immortal Rank. Deals 385 Percent Base Weapon Damage as physical damage on impact. Improves user strength by 80 Percent of base.

Now, normally a Rare Grade drop wasn't much of anything. But when it was Immortal Rank? The base weapon damage was more than the combined damage of the Totem Ranked Epic Grade weapon that he was using right now.

And every strike did four times that much.

Since all his melee skills were based on adjusted weapon damage, he had effectively quadrupled his damage output with a single drop.

Absolutely broken.

However, the badger looked much too smug. She had definitely gotten something good.

And she still owed him for this latest chaos.

Dana winked at Karl as she checked her inventory, then took out a new sword, glimmering white and scattering snowflakes as she held it.

{Blade of Icy Touch} Epic Grade, Immortal Rank. Deals 300 Percent Base Weapon Damage as added Ice Damage on attack. [Icy Touch] effect slows targeted enemies by 50 percent on failed resistance check, stacking up to three times.

Karl whistled in appreciation as he read the description. Even if the enemy had reductions to movement impairing skills, that thing was likely to still freeze them.

[But why an evil weapon? It's because the apes are Demonic, isn't it?] Hawk complained.

[Teach her Frozen Apocalypse.] Remi agreed.

Karl chuckled and activated [Follow Me, Little One].

{Champion Karl offers knowledge.} Skill [Frozen Apocalypse] will be transferred to his lovely Dana Mage.

Hawk squawked in annoyance. His sister was turning the Dana Mage against fire. Fortunately, the Dana Mage already knew the real and proper version of [Apocalypse].

Cara returned to her space before Deve could yell at her, and Lars laughed at the expression on the Druid's face.

"You have a fated relationship with the Badger species, my friend. They exist simply to troll you for their own amusement." The white dragon joked.

Chapter 1239: BOOK

Karl checked his inventory, and found that the dungeon had given him a skill book and a pile of Immortal Rank elemental gems.

[Book of Mana Pylon] Epic Grade Skill Book. Creates a Mana Pylon that refreshes five percent of the user's mana per second for all group members within User Rank x 10 metres.

"What did you get?" Deve asked Karl when the Beast Master returned to his usual Demon Cat form.

"I got a skill book. The Blue Dragons are going to lose their minds over this one." Karl joked.

Deve nodded. "That they are. Nothing says happy blue dragons like a new skill book for them to copy and teach others. Is it a combat skill?"

Karl shook his head. "Not exactly. It's this."

Karl used the book and then activated [Mana Pylon] which immediately flooded the area with energy.

"That is just excessive. How much mana does that thing give?" Lars gasped as the first pulse hit him, and his mana level jumped, then jumped again a second later to nearly full.

"Five percent of my mana per second for all group members. And I have a lot of mana."

The white dragon did a quick mental calculation. Karl had to have at least five times as much mana as he did, if that pulse was five percent of his total. How was that even fair? He wasn't even a spell caster.

"Alright, we should likely warn the others that this dungeon has seen a small change. I don't know if it's going to be stuck at level six difficulty for everyone, just us, or if that's a one-time bonus.

If we unlocked a difficulty setting for the dungeon, that would be perfect. But if we just increased the difficulty level to an insane level, there might not be enough Immortals on the continent to make a proper raiding team for it." Deve noted.

Cara was laughing hysterically as she lay on her back atop her mountain of loot.

She had a badger plushie in her hands that Karl didn't recognize.

Then, he noticed that it was a magical item. An Immortal Rank, indestructible plushie shaped like Cara.

That might not have been what Karl expected to be on the rewards list, but it was the perfect reward for causing chaos in the dungeon.

An indestructible toy to cuddle with while she napped and prepared for the next time she caused Chaos.

Lars held up an Immortal Rank, Rare Grade amulet, his reward for the dungeon, and Abel shrugged before taking out an Epic Grade leather bodysuit that Karl would have paid good money to see him wear in public.

Cara roared with laughter. It was cut like a women's swimsuit. If he did try to wear it, he would be dangling out both sides of the crotch.

"I think it gave me someone else's reward. Or perhaps it's calling me broke? Because this will make some real money when I put it up for sale."

The other group members chuckled. The items that the dungeons gave were always a bit random, but usually, they were somewhat related to your class. In a way, getting a gender-specific item you couldn't use was like getting an item not for your class, only more annoying because you could use the bonuses if you could wear it properly.

Karl took a handful of Immortal Rank Elemental Gems out of his inventory, and one Totem Ranked, Epic Grade sword, which was better than what Abel was using.

"Want to trade? I will buy it from you." He offered.

Abel did quick mental math, then handed over the skimpy leather armour piece.

"You have a deal."

Karl traded him, then handed the item to Dana, who handed it to Rae.

The spider cheered as she examined the piece, and began mentally calculating what she would need to do to make an item with similar bonuses using her crafting skills.

The Warrior shook his head in dismay as the Immortal Ranked armour piece was passed from hand to hand like it was a second string trash drop nobody really wanted. That wasn't actually the case, but it did look like it from his point of view.

However, he got paid, and got an upgrade. Not as large as some of the others, but still an upgrade.

Deve led the group out of the dungeon, where the Alliance's guards were eagerly waiting for them to come out and add their loot record to the notes.

Karl checked the trash loot that he had gotten, which was all Common and Uncommon Grade Totem Rank, and added the amount to the list. The others did the same, and the Guards nodded happily, then paused when they saw the five out of place items on the list.

"Immortal Ranked items?" The Monarch Ranked warrior guarding the record book asked.

"It's a long story. The Chaos Badger managed to change the dungeon difficulty." Deve informed him.

Cara giggled. She might have been the one to pick, but it was definitely not her fault that the hard mode was triggered.

That was all on Karl and Dana.

Word of the enhanced dungeon had spread quickly, and there was considerable debate between Raj and Hugo whether it was something to do with Dana's Class that was triggering the anomalies.

This was the second time that it had happened while she was in a dungeon, and she was the only member that had been present both times that it had happened.

So, there was a logical chance that it was her presence that was causing the anomalies related to Dungeon Difficulty.

And if they could prove it, they might be able to make a fortune increasing the difficulty level of other easy Mythic Dungeons with lousy loot.

The amount that other Alliances would pay for the chance to make some of the worst Mythic Dungeons actually pay out reliably in Mythic Items would be immense. But if they could increase the difficulty as high as this one, those who could survive would soon become leaders of the Zilaz region.

And that was the moment when Deve truly understood what the Immortal Regent had meant about the Darklight Host being a disruptive force on the level that they would change the entire financial dynamic of the continent if they were left unsupervised.

Perhaps it was best that they didn't mention this good fortune to anyone outside the Guild Alliance.

Chapter 1240: Wealth Incoming

Deve led everyone back to the Alliance House, and then to his Guild House, where the other Guild Leaders were waiting to greet them.

And so was nearly every other Mythic member of the Alliance.

Annabelle grabbed Dana and spun her happily. "Is it true that you improved the loot in the dungeon? That is wonderful, we're going to be so rich."

Dana laughed at the excited mage. "I don't think I can take credit for this one, but yes. The difficulty level in the dungeon improved, and we got much better than usual loot, because of the insane increase in difficulty.

You see, the moment that the announcement to choose the level came up, Cara, the Chaos Badger, decided to choose for us, and maxed out the settings."

"Settings?" Annabelle asked, while the others waited patiently for the details to come out.

"We set a kill time record for the first boss, and it let us choose to set the difficulty level afterward. The options were level one through five, so if it happens again, there might be a new option when groups enter." Dana explained.

Hugo looked at the scowl on Deve's face, and then at Dana.

"Let me guess, the Badger picked six. There is no way that the badger picked any of the provided numbers unless it told her no first." He guessed.

"Exactly."

The Myths chuckled, and a few came over to console Deve.

"It's like you're a magnet for Badger related chaos in this world. Now it is following you to work as well. I would say that things will get better for you when the kids grow up, but with Cara around, that's probably not true." One of the members joked.

Deve sighed, then turned to find the source of suspicious giggling, a common sound in his house.

Cara had his toddler on her back, and they were flying around the kitchen while the little one ate a cupcake.

He had hidden those in a latched cabinet to keep the kids out of them before dinner. But he had forgotten that if he brought the Chaos Badger into his house, it would immediately begin to plot with his children to overthrow any attempts at ordered eating.

Even his wife wasn't capable of keeping those two in line when they were together.

If he didn't know better, he would swear that they actually spoke the same language, but the little one hadn't started speaking yet.

Karl saw what the Druid was looking at, and shook his head in dismay. They didn't have to speak the same language. Cara was using her foresight abilities to find out what the little girl wanted and then picking the option that seemed like the most fun.

Eventually, Deve's wife opened the door and chased them both outside, which panicked some of the Guild Members.

But Cara would never let the little one fall off her back.

Though, she would happily deposit a toddler at the top of the slide in the yard and let her leave cupcake icing streaks all the way down.

[Clean that up when you're done.] Karl warned.

[Got it boss. I wonder if I can teach her to fly. It would be better if she could fly.] Cara replied.

From Cara's point of view, anyhow. But the girl was badger kin, not a Void Badger. Her species didn't have wings.

Karl smiled at the other Myths. "Now that the chaos is outside, why don't we get back to business? What we know is that level six, the regular groups are on an enrage timer, and the peak appears to be Immortal Rank.

We only reached that point on the last boss.

But, if the next group to do it is too slow, they might reach that point during the pulls in between.

Also, with all the extra Totem Ranked mobs, there were a lot of trash drops at the end of the run, but not items that could really be called trash by normal standards. They're all good crafting materials, at the very least.

What I would like to know is what the scaling is.

If you only improve the difficulty by one or two levels, do you just get a minor enrage? Do you only get a few extra mobs and no enrage? And how is the loot."

Hugo nodded in understanding. "There aren't any other groups waiting to enter today, so we won't know for a while whether it affected everyone or just the ones who triggered it, like the Overlord Ranked dungeon change."

Annabelle smiled. "Well, I suppose that we could push up our run? We might only go once a week most of the time, but it will let us in every day. We could send another team today, and then when Deve's regular team goes back in the day after, they'll know for sure, as they'll have three of five from the original group."

Raj chuckled. "Or our group can go early, and we will see if the change is for everyone. Then we can go again tomorrow with one of the members of this team."

The mage smiled at him and Raj shrugged. "Now that our crafting Guild has Myths at their helm, I have an item request, but I'm a bit short on cash."

Karl sighed dramatically. He knew that there would be requests for even better gear. That wasn't even a question.

"Weapon or shield?" He asked.

"Shield. Or a defensive accessory. You already got me a new weapon and armour, I don't need to upgrade that soon. But just a little more defence for the tank is never a bad thing." Raj suggested.

The man made a good point. If they were going to be cranking up the difficulty, it was never a bad thing for the tank to have even more damage absorption.

He was the one taking all the beating, so making his life easier also made the healers' lives easier by extension.

"Plus, the Monthly Mythic Raid is coming up soon." Raj added.

Dana's fox ears perked up straight at the comment, and Annabelle laughed.

"Just like the Totems have a monthly access Dungeon, the Myths do too. The issue is that it is a forty-person raid, and there simply aren't any Alliances with forty Myths.

Few have more than one team, and we've got three.

That is already considered extremely powerful as an Alliance, so the monthly Mythic Raid is more of an exercise in politics so that we can arrange a whole team." She explained.

Given the strong personalities involved, and the difficulty of splitting loot in a way that would keep everyone happy, Dana knew that there would certainly be issues.

Not just the first time, but every single month.