

Beast Master 1261

Chapter 1261: How To Improve The Dungeon

Callisto, the head chef of the Alliance House, poked her head out of the Kitchen.

“Don’t go sending everyone away just yet. We’ve already started making the evening feast, and it’s prepared for everyone.” She warned.

Dinner quickly turned into multiple courses of dessert, which turned into a party in the amphitheatre illusion, which turned into two dozen Myths passed out drunk on stone benches when the sun came up.

Not that you could see the sun inside the compound.

Karl was still up early, as his body had easily cleansed the liquor from his system, and he had a mission.

To get started on the Arena Plinth before they headed out to the Dungeon.

Once he was started, he would have more motivation to finish, and he could hopefully get through it in one day, with minimal delay.

The inner cores were the simplest of parts, as they were just the [Illusionary Domain] spell, along with [Earth Manipulation] to make solid structures, and [Eternal Lightning] to form the barrier to protect the spectators.

Those three things would easily fit on the innermost layer of the plinth.

However, Karl realized just as he was about to start that it wasn’t the best way to do things.

He should put the simplest and easiest to understand spells on the outside, where others would actually see them, and then the detailed spells could be hidden within the layers of stone when the item was completed, and few would question just how much more had gone into the creation of the arena.

Keeping the users and curious minds in the dark about the obscure magic needed for the construct to actually work might devalue the arena in the short term, but make it nearly impossible for others to replicate in the long term, which would make it an exclusive product of the Darklight Host.

Short-term loss for long-term gains.

Unfortunately, that was as far as he managed to make it before the team for the morning's dungeon arrived.

"Karl, good to see that you're awake. I think that you'll like this one. It's just as short as the Ape Dungeon, But there might be a few familiar faces for you, coming from Drodh.

Our Dungeon is a Wrath Demon Dungeon.

Heavy on the fire damage, and the final boss is a named Elite, a Wrath Demon known as Carnage.

We believe that is actually a species of Wrath Demons, as the appearance is slightly different than any other species we've encountered. However, the combat mechanics are simple.

Don't stand in the fire, and don't get hacked into tiny little pieces.

That last bit is the hard part.

The Wrath Demons tend to ignore the efforts of the Tanks, and it is possible for them to randomly turn and attack other members.

For that reason, we like to fight from in front of them, as attacking their backs seems to insult them and draw excessive amounts of attention away from the tanks." The Guild Master, a distinguished looking Dwarf, informed Karl with a smile.

"Rae is going to love this dungeon. How are the enemy numbers?" Karl asked.

“Small, but extremely powerful. Each of the pulls is strong enough to be a boss in its own right, but most are only two or three Demons.” The Dwarf explained.

Karl frowned. “So, the dungeon is small number, high damage. The trick might be another of the ‘take no damage’ sorts. Or, it could be the killing speed. In fact, it might even be just making the Wrath Demons’ God happy and letting one single group member solo the boss.”

The Dwarf glared at Karl. “And in what world is that realistic?”

Behind Karl, Dana laughed. “It’s perfectly reasonable in Karl’s brain. He’s got all the fear of a Chaos Badger and the instinctive need to stab things of a Bloodbath Spider.”

The Guild Master smiled at her. “That explains so many things. You have no idea.”

A Wrath Demon Berserker walked over and patted him on the back.

“The Monster Man might not be wrong. If I thought that I could take the boss, I would totally ask to solo it. If there is an achievement for creating the happiest Dungeon Boss ever, that would definitely do it.” He suggested.

“I can’t believe that we’re actually considering letting the group sit and wait while someone solos the boss.”

“Just the final boss. If the first boss doesn’t trigger anything, we will let him solo the final boss. Then, if it doesn’t give us a hard mode, at the very least we will get to watch a good show.” The Berserker joked.

“Who is our last member?” Karl asked.

“There should be a healer around here somewhere. He might be in the kitchen.”

Karl frowned. "They're serving breakfast as a buffet, all the food is in here. Or is it a taste of Obsession Demon that he's after? Because he should be warned that her obsession is cooking, not anything lewd."

Callisto laughed from the entry to the kitchen. "There is no healer in here. I think he was abducted by the fluff lovers."

The dwarf looked confused, but Karl knew just where he was.

"I will go get him, it might take gentle force to get him back." Karl explained.

At the bottom of the second level basement stairs, Karl stopped. Their missing healer was still in the garden, along with Lotus, Ophelia, and the Gargoyles.

He was a Werebear Shaman, and the trio was in deep conversation about the benefits of fur versus feathers, with the Gargoyles as their audience.

The guardian beasts had both, and viewed them equally. But the distinction was an important one to Lotus, who must have found him alone at some point and sucked him into her whirlwind of excited energy.

"Lotus, Ophelia, good morning. Are you almost done with our healer? We were going to go do a dungeon this morning."

The Werebear waved to Karl.

"We're almost done. We've already finished eating, and we were on the way back when the topic changed." He explained.

That meant that they had been in either Drodh or the Tiny World, as both portals were in this room. Most likely the Tiny World, unless the Shaman had business in Drodh.

He couldn't go to either without an escort. The warding spells and Gargoyles would have stopped a stranger from just wandering through.

Chapter 1262: Easy Money

With the interruption by Karl, the conversation about fluff versus feathers was quickly derailed, and the healer was brought back upstairs to prepare for their departure.

"Don't look so excited to be going to work." The Guild Master joked as the annoyed Werebear came upstairs with Karl.

Lotus and Ophelia were right behind, but they headed for their room to get prepared for an outing into the Overlord Rank Dungeon.

"We were having a good conversation. But it is time. Has everyone been briefed on the dungeon?" The healer asked.

"Indeed." The Dwarf got to his feet just as a pair of blue dragons ran into the room.

"Wait, before they go, I don't suppose that the Darklight Host's experts have the new Golem Spells ready for the Library?" One of them panted, out of shape from spending his life in the Library.

Dana smirked as she realized it was the same one who had been beside her in the crowd the day before. He was a mage, and an Inscriptionist.

The perfect victim.

Her thoughts made Karl smile. The beasts were turning the Dana Mage into one of them already.

Even Thor agreed it was best to make the dragons do all the writing.

Karl gave the mage a benevolent smile, and then placed a hand on his head, as if he was blessing the dragon.

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Greater Golem] will be transferred to the hapless Librarian Duke.

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Epic Golem] will be transferred to the hapless Librarian Duke.

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Golem Duplication] will be transferred to the hapless Librarian Duke.

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Refreshing Lightning Barrier] will be transferred to the hapless Librarian Duke.

"There you go. I didn't have an opportunity to write them out, but you can do it for the Library.

We've signed an agreement with the Blue Dragons already, the standard ten percent royalties on all future copies of the books that we donated, so I do hope that you will work hard for our benefit.

The last one they already have, but it's very restrictive, mostly Blue Dragon exclusive. Consider it a delivery fee paid for your service in writing the hard copies." Karl announced, as the dragon simply stood and stared at him in stunned silence.

Golem Duplication and Epic Golem were also likely to have massive restrictions on them as well, but Karl would let the dragons find that out for themselves once they had the copies made.

He had given them the knowledge. After that, it was no longer his problem.

"Now, should we head out?"

"You broke the dragon." The Dwarven Guild Leader joked.

Dana smirked. "That happens fairly often, actually. He will recover. Oh, I think he's in the class advancement screen. That's why he's not moving at all."

That made the Dwarf stop. Nobody wanted to miss the event when a high-ranking mage advanced. The new class could be something exceptional, and if Karl really had taught him Golem related skills, then it might be a Golem Specialist class that had been unlocked, and that would be a huge benefit to his Guild.

Assuming that they had similar luck in activating it on more mages.

After nearly five minutes, the blue dragon was back in reality with a huge smile on his face.

"I got the Library Guardian class!" He announced proudly.

The room went silent as everyone simply stared at him, questioning the life choices that had led the dragon to this point.

"What? No, it's actually spectacular. It's blue dragon exclusive, and it gives me a bunch of Golem and defensive barrier exclusive buffs, as well as the option to get the Gargoyle spell further up the skill tree.

It's not just good in the Library, I will also be very strong in combat, so I'm not slacking off on my duties to the Guild." He insisted.

His excitement made the gathered Alliance Members laugh, and one of the maids brought him over a celebratory cupcake with a lit candle on top.

He looked like he was going to question the choice, but eventually blew out the candle and ate the cupcake, before his eyes went wide in shock at the flavour and energy content.

The cupcakes were all made with Mystic Cooking, and were an Overlord Ranked recovery item, created by Lotus.

The dwarf pointed out the door. "We need to get going, or we will never leave at this rate. The dragons can ask their questions after we return. Don't forget to make copies of those books for your partner, so they can copy them."

Dana laughed as she made her escape. That dragon had countless reports to write. Not only had he gotten all the skills, he had unlocked a rare class. The Librarians would have a field day with all that data, especially coming from one of their own, and not secondhand.

But they had fulfilled their promise, and had given the Blue Dragons all the Golem spells to copy and distribute.

The berserker laughed as they left the Alliance House. "The look on the dragon's face when he got that new Golem Spell. Priceless. I need a recording skill so that I can keep those memories for later."

Dana winked at him. "Supreme Lady Matilda has one that makes a painting of a moment in time that's almost photo realistic. I'm sure that the spell you want does exist. The real question is if a Berserker can use it."

That made him chuckle. "Perhaps if I convince myself it's for making battle videos and not for laughing at confused dragons? Fighting happens way more often than someone manages to startle a dragon at our Rank."

Their healer, the Werebear Shaman, huffed in amusement. "It's not difficult to startle and shock the young ones, though. There is a young Forest Dragon living at the Darklight Host house, and she is curious about everything."

The big berserker shook his wings in a shrug. "The young of every species are curious. But Forest Dragons are odd ones. They're a bit too Fae, and it makes them want to play all day long.

Not like the Chromatic Dragons, who have the guidance of their patron deity to keep them on track."

That was an excellent description of Button. But it was also a good description of Lotus, and she had the guidance of the Green Dragon. Karl thought that it was more of an affinity for the Nature Gods' than a lack of direction that made them flaky.

"Alright, we will have to take the portal platform, the dungeon is across town. No need to walk the whole distance." The Dwarf declared.

Zilaz had formed around the Dungeons near the shore of the lake, and the urban sprawl was very real. It was nearly thirty kilometres to the Dungeon for the day.

Chapter 1263: Wrath Dungeon

The moment that Karl stepped into the dungeon, he knew that this was going to be a good day, despite being pulled away from his work.

The Demons all turned to look at him, not lost in rage and contained by the Dungeon, just waiting in circles drawn on the stone floor of the ruins that the dungeon was set in.

"That's not right." The Dwarf muttered.

"What's not right? The dungeon is full, they're ready and waiting. Looks like we're in the right spot." Karl replied.

"That's just it. Why are they looking at us? They shouldn't know that we're here."

The dungeon entrance was on a platform that used to be a large building, and looked down over the rest of the dungeon. So, Karl used the opportunity to search for a trigger to the odd behaviour.

The answer was clear.

The moment that he met the eyes of the final boss, a massive red Demon with tattered wings and black plate armour on, the creature made a slashing motion across his neck, staring intently at Karl.

[Oh, it is so on.] Cara laughed.

"That's not supposed to happen." The Berserker laughed, but Karl could see that he was excited about the possibilities.

"Well, I think we know how to challenge the dungeon difficulty. When we get to the final boss, I will duel him." Karl explained.

Then, the rest of the dungeon reverted to normal, with the demons appearing oblivious to their presence.

All except Carnage, who was eagerly watching their every move.

"That is just unnerving." The Dwarf complained as they reached the first boss.

The boss was acting normally, but Carnage was still staring at them.

"I think I have an idea. Fight the boss as normal, but I will only send my Golems. Carnage will appreciate the fight more without spoilers." Karl offered.

"Do you think that a Mythic Dungeon is so easy that you can just step out?" The Berserker asked.

Karl shrugged and swapped his Epic Golems for a pair of Demonic Apes. They were well-matched to the boss in fighting style, and they would keep it from turning on the others.

The Golems clashed with the axe wielding Wrath Demon, and blood flew.

The boss was unexpectedly fast, and he was actually winning two on one before the rest of the team showed up, and Dana's Golems with [Auto Parry] came to rescue the apes.

The Wrath Demon Berserker was actually the best matched of them for the boss fight, other than Dana's Golems.

Everything else that would have been an option was too weak or incapable of properly defending. Even the Dark Elven Kings would have been batted around the Dungeon by the pure force of those swings.

Then Karl remembered that he had other options.

The Naga King was just as large as the boss, but had four arms and four swords, with exceptional combat skills.

[Make sure that you put this boss thing in the arena.] Rae insisted.

She really wanted to try fighting one of these alone. She could phase in and out of reality, so most targets weren't a real challenge, but the burns on her forelimb chitin said that the flames on that Demon's weapon didn't care whether she was corporeal or not.

Anything that could actually hit her when she was going all out was an excellent target to train against.

Dana just shook her head in dismay. Karl had planned to give the arena random targets if the challenger didn't specify. What would the average fighter do if they suddenly came up against of these things?

It hit so hard that even with auto-parry, her Golems needed healing.

The Shaman was the only one of them that was in a truly great mood. He normally had to work himself to the bone to keep up with this dungeon. It might be short, but it was already one of the hardest Mythic Dungeons.

But today, not only were they taking far less damage, the group had [Greater Consecrated Ground] active, reducing damage taken, and Tian was healing the group, trying to figure out the trick to making them heal everyone when they hit the target.

He really wanted that skill.

And he didn't care if his sisters said that he was lazy for having healing automatically trigger when they attacked.

"I hope that your plan works. Because if it was the fastest kill time, we might have just blown our chance." The berserker grumbled as the boss fight ended.

The shaman laughed. "No, even with Karl standing off to the side, we are still nearly ten minutes ahead of our usual time. If we were going for a time record, it would certainly be a record for recent attempts at the dungeon.

Those golems do a horrific amount of damage. The Naga Kings that he replaced the Apes with are doing three times what either of you are, and that's mostly on volume of attacks.

Every mage in the Guild is going to go broke trying to get a copy of that from the Blue Dragons."

"Well, at the very least, we might get to do it this way again. So, there is a chance that we will be able to beat this time."

Dana shook her head. "Both of us have huge damage bonuses to our Golems. Even if you had the same number of them, only an advanced class would stand a chance of keeping up. But look at how happy the healer is."

That made the Wrath Demon Berserker chuckle. "I can't argue with that. Normally, he's sweating and swearing before the end of the boss fight."

While they were talking, Carnage, the final boss of the dungeon, thumped the butt of his axe on the ground and made an impatient gesture.

"Dammit, you really did break the dungeon, didn't you? Or maybe that's how it's supposed to go, but the rest of us hadn't activated the System Function to enable dungeon difficulty settings?" The Shaman asked.

Remi nodded happily in her space as she looked up from her potion of the day.

[I think that he's right. They're a few functions behind on the activation progress. Give it like two more months, and this will start happening all over the place.

Immortal Azov will be so mad.

But at least he won't be able to blame it all on us once it starts happening for Guilds that aren't affiliated with our mission.] She joked.

Chapter 1264: Happy Carnage

"Let's get a move on, then. No need to keep the boss waiting. Once we finish the last of the others, I will engage the Demon without my Golems.

That's how Wrath Demons duel in Drodh, so I am going to assume that it's traditional enough for the Dungeon." Karl offered.

The berserker nodded. "That is one tradition that hasn't changed. Even the Immortal Regent respects it, and that's why summoning spells aren't allowed in personal duels."

Rae led the way through the rest of the regular demons, practicing her killing skills on the various sorts of Wrath Demons. There were dozens of different options, though only four were in this dungeon.

It was still enough to make Rae happy.

Carnage smiled and hefted his axe over his shoulder as Karl strode onto the open floor of the ruined building that the dungeon's final boss had claimed.

"Are you up for a challenge?" He asked the boss, not actually expecting a response.

The massive Demon smiled and nodded, then flexed his wings, showing off his physique.

Karl used [Behemoth] to increase his size and took out the Sword of Champions, then equipped the Haint Claw.

The rest of the team remained at the edge of the room, spectators for their fight.

So fast that Karl could barely track his movement, Carnage attacked, and the Berserker cursed. The boss was not supposed to be that fast.

Not even close to it.

But sparks flew when the massive axe met the blade of the Sword of Champions. Karl slid backward a few metres, then hurled [Void Blasts] at the Demon as he charged back in, meeting the demon's twirling axe with measured attacks intended to probe for weak spots.

Carnage laughed as he burst into flame, activating a defensive barrier around himself.

Then, Karl used [Naga Swamp] to turn the battlefield into knee-deep muck, which would slow down the surprisingly nimble Demon much more than it affected him.

It also caused a light fog of steam to form where the flame barrier met swamp water.

Over and over, the two tested each other's defences, twirling and charging through the fog as skills lit the area in red and black, punctuated with the golden sparks of mythic weapons colliding.

"Something is wrong. Can he even win against that?" The Dwarf asked as Karl and the Demon fought to a stalemate.

"Give it time. The longer they fight, the larger the advantage that Karl will gain." Dana whispered back.

Then, Karl used [Greater Consecrated Ground] beneath the swamp waters, where the Demon would feel it but couldn't see it, and began trying to use [Blood Destruction] against the Demonic champion.

It was a huge mana burn, but it might be the edge that he needed.

Carnage laughed as he smashed the ground with his axe, shattering [Consecrated Ground] and a large portion of the dungeon floor.

Swamp Water poured into the chasm, and Remi whistled in appreciation.

That was one way to do it. She had never even considered the possibility that you could simply destroy so much of the ground that there would be no water left in the swamp.

Each of the strikes that made it through only did limited damage, but Carnage had very little healing within the dungeon.

Minute by minute, his attacks were slowing. Then he finally stumbled, and a strike from Karl cut deep into his throat. That fully activated the Haint Claw, and the tether of stolen soul essence was visibly draining the Demon, which seemed to deflate until it was first a lithe fighter, then an emaciated form, skin loose over bone.

A final strike took the Demon's head, and the Dungeon lights flashed bright red, then white.

{Challenge Successful.}

{Select Another Challenger or Complete Trial?}

The others stared at the message from the Dungeon.

What sort of nonsense was that? After all that they had just seen, who would legitimately think that they had a chance to win that fight? Even without the beasts, Karl was a monster.

The others couldn't know, but Dana was well aware that the combination of [Rampage], [Pack Tactics], [Greater Bestial Champion] and [Predation] combined to form an unassailable advantage in combat.

[Rampage 2] Every time an enemy is damaged by the Beast Master or a bonded beast, increase the damage done by the Beast Master and all bonded beasts for one minute.

[Pack Tactics] damage and healing done by bonded beasts and the Packmaster is increased by 10 Percent Per Rank.

[Greater Bestial Champion] doubles the applied effect of all applied buffs cast by the Champion on himself or his bonded partners.

Karl sighed in relief as he stepped to the edge of the area and let his spells expire.

The moment they were gone, the dungeon repaired, and Carnage reappeared in the middle of the destroyed building, ready for another challenge.

[Buff me up.] Dana instructed, as she watched the Demon's movements.

[Are you sure?] Rae asked excitedly.

She really wanted to see the Dana Mage in action, going all out. But she didn't often get such good chances. Mostly, she just acted like a normal mage and fought from a distance with spells.

Dana nodded, and Karl stacked her full of fresh buffs.

"I will go next. Worst-case scenario, I will retreat, and the challenge will be lost." Dana informed the team.

They all looked as startled as Rae had been, though for a different reason.

"If you're sure. Remember, it will reset if you use your Golems. That's the rules to a Wrath Demon challenge." The Berserker reminded her.

“No worries. I’ve got this. Karl might be strong, but I actually know how to fight.”

Karl laughed. She wasn’t even joking. She had multiple combat style skills, increased agility and speed, [Auto Parry], and blade attacks. Her usual fighting style was barely a tenth of her actual skills, though it would be most of her potential damage.

The Berserker smiled.

“Alright, you go first, and I will go next if you win. This dungeon might actually be the most fun one now. But it will have every warrior in the Guild begging for new gear.”

Once they actually fought Carnage, the begging might not even be of the dignified sort, either.

Chapter 1265: Dana Unleashed

Dana stepped into the challenge area, and the massive Demon gave her a skeptical look. The little fox woman didn’t look like much of an opponent.

But he didn’t hold back as he went for the attack.

This time he didn’t go for the brute force start. Instead, he aimed to swat her entirely out of the arena, using her smaller size to his advantage.

But while he was fast, Dana didn’t rely on her physique to move.

Her new blade sang as it met the Demon’s axe, and Dana flipped into the air, twirling like a dancer as she waved her free hand and a wave of petals tore into Carnage.

The Demon roared in rage as he realized that he had been tricked.

Damnably fox.

He aimed for Dana's landing spot, his axe cleaving an arc through the air that left a flaming rift behind it. But Dana didn't land, she reversed her momentum and danced away from the attacks in midair.

Then she activated [Blade Flurry] and dozens of magical blades tore into Carnage's flesh.

"I thought that you were the scary one." The dwarf mumbled as he watched Dana play hide and seek with the Demon.

Carnage attacked, and Dana either danced out of the way of his blade, or used [Teleport] to avoid area attacks and come at him from a different angle.

Karl shook his head. "Nope, I'm just the loud one in the front. Her class is amazing. Probably better suited to duels than mine is, even if I hadn't buffed her abilities before the fight."

[Eternal Lightning] shattered under the weight of a particularly brutal fire blast, and Dana replaced it with one of her own barrier spells.

Outside interference during the fight would be a loss, but she had more than enough skills to finish what she started.

To the eyes of the others, she was a blur of white fur and Sakura pink energy attacks as she used [Petal Wind], one of her advanced movement skills, to move instantly between dozens of spots and launch attacks before moving out of the way of the Demon's counterattacks.

Carnage was bleeding heavily from every part of his body, and Dana was looking exhausted from the massive amount of mana that she was burning.

She hadn't been putting enough effort into endurance training, she realized. The average fight was too easy, she had never needed to go all out in melee combat.

Not a single time since she advanced.

Another flaming strike sent her crashing to the ground, but Dana was moving again before the next hit could land, and three more long wounds flashed into existence on Carnage's legs, nearly toppling the massive Demon.

Then a parry sent Carnage's axe wide and Dana darted forward.

The axe was abandoned, and the Demon grabbed the mage, intending to rip her apart. But it was too late, and blood bloomed from his chest as a stream of petals erupted from the tip of Dana's blade and slid through a narrow crack in his armour.

Blood burst from his mouth as the attack cut through his heart, and the Demon collapsed, still clutching Dana in a death grip.

{Challenge Successful.}

{Select Another Challenger or Complete Trial?}

Dana limped over to the edge of the battlefield, and slumped to the ground as Tian started healing her, and Cara slid a pillow under her head.

"Well, that sucked. I need to work on my cardio. You have no idea how exhausting it is to move that fast for that long." She grumbled.

"But you won, and that's two in a row. Not only that, but you managed it faster than Karl. By quite a bit." The Berserker informed her.

Dana smiled. "Well, that's something, anyhow. Are you going next?"

Rae mentally frowned. If he went next, she probably wouldn't get to go. Wrath Demon on Wrath Demon was a pretty even match, but the boss had an Epic Constitution like Karl, according to his nameplate. Just like the Epic Golems.

The Berserker wasn't stronger, wasn't faster, and most likely wasn't smarter either.

Dana tried not to laugh at the Spider's derogatory opinion of the Berserker's skills. The man had his own pride and skills. This was a good opportunity for him to practice his duelling.

The Berserker stepped onto the floor, and a fresh version of Carnage appeared with an even more excited smile than the last two fights.

"Don't you get the feeling that it is the same boss over and over? Like, not a new copy, but the same one resurrected with memories and all." Dana asked.

Karl frowned as he examined the eager look on the Demon's face.

"That is definitely the same boss. Look at his arm. There is a wound still healing from the last fight. He's just being refreshed by the dungeon between fights." Karl agreed.

The Shaman cursed quietly. "And that means that every fight gets harder, as the default boss learns more tricks from the previous opponents. He won't fall for the same trick twice, and he's had the whole dungeon to study our combat styles.

Karl didn't go into combat at all during the dungeon, he just let his beasts and golems do it. Dana didn't go anything close to all out during the rest of the dungeon, she didn't have to.

But now? Against a Berserker who has already used all his best skills more than once while Carnage was watching?"

[He's screwed either way. Carnage has two hundred kilos of muscle on him, and he's faster.] Rae added silently.

Plus, they were both Berserkers.

Carnage made the first move, and the two axes met with a vicious bang. The berserker slid backward with the force, just as Karl had, but he wasn't quite fast enough to recover, and the next three strikes put him further off balance as he retreated and tried to get back on the offensive.

[Stomp] paused Carnage's advance long enough for the berserker to recover, and for a moment, they were evenly matched.

But then, the tables turned in Carnage's favour.

A misstep put the Berserker too close, and his axe went wide of Carnage's back.

The boss dropped his weapon and grabbed the berserker's head, then bashed his horns into the other Demon's forehead.

That was it, he was out cold.

Unlike most bosses, Carnage simply stopped fighting at that point, and the System sent them a message.

{Challenge Failed.}

{Distributing Bonus Rewards.}

Chapter 1266: Embrace The Title

The Shaman gave a toothy Werebear smile as Carnage vanished, and the Berserker picked himself up off the floor.

"Totally didn't expect that to end with a loss by headbutt knockout."

The berserker sighed as he dusted himself off. "I didn't see that one coming either. That wasn't the sort of fight that I had expected, but I learned a few things about how to handle an axe.

Fighting someone with your own style and body type, but better than you, is a brilliant learning experience. Still, fighting a dungeon boss one on one is just crazy talk.

I still can't believe that both of you managed to do it and win."

Karl patted him on the shoulder. "Don't take it too personally, we're a different breed."

"Speaking of which, what did you get for winning?" The Dwarf leading the team asked.

Karl sorted through his inventory. "Let's see, a couple of Mythic Rank Rare items, a bunch of fire element gems and materials, and one reward chest."

The team waited impatiently as Karl took the oversized chest out of his inventory.

With a dramatic flourish, he flipped the lid open, and a System Message appeared in his vision.

{Title Gained} Mythic Duellist

Inside the chest was a pair of Epic Grade, Immortal Rank gloves.

{Carnage's Challenge Glove} Epic Grade, Immortal Rank. Increases strength and agility by 150 Percent of base. Increases Skill Damage by 100 Percent of base as Fire Damage.

The other team members stared at the gloves in shock. Only three bonuses on an Immortal Rank, Epic Grade item? That shouldn't be right.

Though... One hundred percent of base damage as fire was as good as an average skill, and the strength bonus was absolutely ungodly.

Karl slid the soft leather gloves on, and then flexed his fingers, wondering how to test the change.

He was already immensely strong, but he didn't know how much the increase would be in practical terms.

Dana giggled as she opened the box and found that she had received an identical set of soft black gloves. Apparently it wasn't a random reward, but a quest reward for accomplishing the feat. Even if you didn't want to show the title, you could show off your skill just by wearing the gloves.

While she wasn't as strong as Karl, and didn't usually need huge amounts of strength or agility in combat, the bonus to skill damage was still worth it.

She could see the fiery aura on her Golems' swords.

"What do we tell the others? This isn't exactly a hard mode. It gives a reward, but we won't know if it's repeatable until we come back. For all we know, beating Carnage in a duel once might be the only extra bonus you can get from the Dungeon." Dana reminded them.

"But isn't that already impressive? It's a guaranteed Immortal Rank item if you can beat him. And not a weak item. Most of the challengers will be Warriors because they're the ones who practice as duellists the most." The Shaman countered.

"Oh, there is a title as well." Dana added, then activated it.

"Mythic Duellist? Damn, now that's a flex. Just seeing that on your name should cut down the chances of being harassed in the street by eighty percent."

"But the twenty percent who will try are the ones who fancy themselves as good fighters." Dana sighed.

Karl winked at her. "It's a good opportunity, isn't it? Most of the people will leave you alone, and you will know that if you have to beat someone, they truly deserved it."

"Well, if nothing else, we can report a success to the other Guilds. It might be a bit before most of them have the gear to challenge the boss for the prize, but I'm sure that there will be plenty of contestants with big egos once the word spreads." The Shaman suggested.

Dana smirked. "In that case, Karl, put on your title. Nobody will be shocked if you gained something good from this dungeon, and it won't draw extra attention to me before everyone knows what the title means."

They might technically be at the same power level, but shoving Karl out in front to deal with the aftermath of all the chaos that he caused was so much better than doing the public relations herself.

Karl nodded and turned on the {Mythic Duellist} title, while Dana turned hers off.

"Let's head out. I'm sure that the others will be eagerly waiting for us to come home.

Or eating cookies with the green dragon cleric.

Could go either way."

The laughing attracted the reporters as they stepped out of the dungeon, and Karl sighed.

"Really? Are you just following us around at this point?" He asked.

The Obsession Demon nodded happily. "Yep! The King and the Immortal Regent are still at your house. So, if you're headed out with a bunch of strangers, it has to be for something good, right?

Is it another dungeon with difficulty settings?

Please say that it's another dungeon with bonus loot. That will be the story of the week."

Karl laughed and took his gloves off so that they could see the stats by inspecting it.

"It's not a harder dungeon, it's a quest to challenge the final boss to a solo duel. If you can beat Carnage one on one, you will get an Immortal Rank item and a new title." Karl informed her.

"HA! I knew that it would be good. I am totally getting that promotion." The reporter cheered, while the other few who had been in the area just smiled indulgently.

The fact that the gloves were a Rank above the Dungeon, and the fact that they had the boss' name on them, was a pretty solid sign that he wasn't lying to them. So, there was one more important question left.

"How do you activate the quest?" One of the others asked.

"Just challenge Carnage to a duel, either when you enter, or when you reach the final boss. Then, only send one person into the boss fight area. If you do, it should activate the event."

Chapter 1267: The Relaxed Alliance

Now that he knew where they were going, Karl opened a portal to the entrance of the Alliance Compound, and left the reporters to their day.

"Success?" Azov greeted them from the front steps of the Darklight Host house within the compound.

"Success. Though not quite how we expected it. The dungeon wanted us to challenge the final boss, a Wrath Demon named Carnage, to a duel." Karl agreed.

That made the old man laugh.

"Oh, that should be priceless. Not many are going to be able to complete that challenge, but as soon as someone does, it's going to become the must-have accomplishment before the next round of challenges.

To think that it would just openly give you a title to show off. And 'Mythic Duellist' at that. What greater sort of title could the System give you in a city where everyone values the Myths who have the power to fight for their Guild's Dungeons?" Azov chortled.

"People don't give the System nearly enough credit for its sense of humour." Dana joked.

"How did it go for the rest of you? Can it be done by more than one member?" He asked.

Dana nodded. "I got the title as well, and the reward is exactly the same, not even adjusted for class or anything. But the next round failed, and that was the end of the challenge string."

"So, teams can send multiple challengers in together, to all try to get the title. But the first one must win to give the others a chance? Interesting."

Raj looked up from the paperwork he was doing with a smile. "It will cause no end of tensions between Guilds as well. It's more cost-effective if you send four challengers with a healer.

However, if any of them fail, whoever was supposed to go after doesn't get the chance.

Did you at least get regular dungeon loot from it?"

Karl nodded. "Yeah. Nothing special, but a few Mythic items at Rare Grade. About as good as you'd normally expect from the dungeon, but with one more item from the challenge."

"So, one that will be popular, but not one that we will be rushing to do every week. Got it."

Karl looked around at the mostly empty house, then at the Guild Leader. "Might I ask, what brings you here? Everyone else should have been rushing off to go do a harder difficulty dungeon again today, to build up their funding."

Raj laughed. "My team was too impatient. The daily timer resets at midnight, so we went at one in the morning instead of going to bed last night. I just got out of bed and thought I would come over to pay my respects to the King."

And to grab breakfast from the Mystic Cooking crew, Karl noted.

"How did that go?"

Raj smiled. "Five for five on Epic Grade items on difficulty two, and our Ranger got a new bow. The bias toward weapons is still just as strong as everyone thought it would be. But that's probably for the best, since we've got so many Totems who still need weapons, and Lady Rae made most of them new armour already."

"That's a definite improvement, and all that you could really hope for from a Mythic Dungeon. Epic items every run on a daily access instance is perfect." Karl agreed.

"And difficulty two is just enough to get the loot, without making the dungeon too much more difficult to clear. At that setting, we can just use our regular teams."

That was the best-case scenario for them. Trying to reassemble all new mythic raiding teams specific to each dungeon, just so they could get slightly better loot than a lower setting, was far too difficult, and the rewards that were normally needed to recruit a new talent of greater skill than the ones that they had were insanely high.

That was why they had the Overlord and Totem Ranked teams in the first place. They were the minor league teams, building loyalty as they built their strength.

The three who had been with Karl laughed at the banter.

"Your Alliance really is quite carefree, isn't it? In ours, it is rare that anyone even hosts a multiple Guild event, but the Nara Group just casually comes over for breakfast." The Shaman joked.

"We can pretend it's because the King and the Immortal Regent are here. But in truth, it's for the food. We have a few chefs with a rare cooking skill in the Alliance, but they're not enough to make all the best stuff for everyone.

Once you get used to their cooking, it is nearly impossible to go back to eating takeaway from the street vendors again.

At least not for every meal." Karl laughed.

"You said that you have a lot to do today, what is it that you do as a trade skill? Or is it guild matters that need settling?" The Dwarven Warrior who had accompanied them on the dungeon run asked.

"Oh, I suppose it's not common knowledge outside the Alliance. I am a Runemaster, I make equipment and accessories for the Alliance members. But I have only just advanced to Mythic Rank, so I have a rather large backlog of work." Karl explained, then held up one of the Totem Ranked statues he had made, so the Dwarf would understand.

"That craftsmanship." He muttered.

"Oh, the statue itself is made by our team in Drodh. This one in particular is by our Dwarven Master Sculptor. I only added the runes to turn it into a healing and fertility charm for one of the Alliance members." He explained.

Raj gave him a suspicious look. Who needed the fertility charm, and why didn't he hear about it? If it was the midwife, or the matchmaker, it was fine. But if someone was hoping to cause surprise pregnancies, he would make sure it was never delivered.

Karl saw the suspicion and laughed. "It's for one of Hugo's clerics. I'm sure that she won't be using it for anything too shady."

Probably.

Chapter 1268: The Less Disruptive Route

Their conversation was derailed by the scent of the kitchen staff setting up the lunch buffet for all their expected guests, and Karl smiled at the three outsiders.

"Perhaps you would like to stay for a proper meal, and not just snacks? There's always enough." He offered.

"Certainly, that would be excellent. However, I should warn you that there is a naked elf in your kitchen." Raj agreed.

"Working or getting food?"

That made the warrior pause. What sort of question was that? Did the Darklight Host often have naked elves? Where could he get nudist Elves? And wasn't it unsafe to cook naked?

"I think she was just getting food, she left through the side door."

Karl nodded. "She's likely on meal duty at the lake. The Elves only get dressed when they've got company, and they tend to forget that the kitchen door is usually open."

Azov patted Raj on the shoulder. "It's a hippie thing. They're all druids and Nature Clerics."

That made Raj nod in understanding. His Guild House was not ready for that level of culture shock.

"Are you really alright with the Darklight Host deliberately trying to alter dozens of dungeons?" He asked the Immortal Regent, deflecting the conversation from the trap that was nudist elves.

Azov shrugged. "It's likely to be less disruptive than having them keep the secret to themselves and going out to do all those different dungeons until they find a new favourite."

Raj frowned. "I can actually see them doing it, too. Just letting the rest of us think that we have the only improved dungeon, but actually searching the entire lake region for one that they like better."

Karl winked at the Immortal Regent. "I have at least three votes for doing that anyhow. There are way more dungeons than just the twenty that we have agreements about."

"And how do you think that you'll be able to sneak into them once the word starts to spread that you've been on a mission to improve dungeons?" Azov asked, clearly curious.

"I have a skill that should let me hide my name when I enter. Then I can release the rest of the team inside for privacy, and we can raid." Karl decided, making up the plan on the fly.

Most of the dungeons charged on the way out anyhow, so if he just used [Night Hunter] or a similar skill, he could walk right in without anyone noticing.

The King of Sholaha turned to his ancestor, the Immortal Regent, with a concerned look.

"Grandfather, I sense it. The disturbance that you were trying to teach me about the other day. Someone is definitely plotting to cause chaos." He insisted.

Dana giggled, and the King turned to look at her.

"What? You only now realized it? The moment that the Immortal Regent made the mistake of mentioning going into every single dungeon to see what happened, Karl and Cara started planning it, while Rae began to make a list of new species she hasn't killed yet.

That's just how they are.

They don't mean any harm by it, but you can't suggest causing chaos without them at least considering it for a few minutes." She explained.

The King sighed. "The Darklight Host will always be the Darklight Host, won't they? Well, I suppose there is no harm in considering it. As long as they don't get too out of hand.

But that's beside the point. Once the word gets out, nobody is going to let them pay their way into a dungeon without taking at least one member of the host Guild with them.

They won't dare risk missing out on the bonus if it happens."

Dana nodded. "That's the spirit. If you think too hard about the possibilities, you'll just drive yourself to drinking. Instead, it's better to just go with the flow and let common sense sort everything out on its own."

Azov snorted and shook his head. Common sense was allergic to Chaos Badgers.

It certainly wasn't the other way around. The badgers had a great affinity for Common Sense. They just chose to trample all over it for their own personal amusement.

Karl was beginning to get the feeling that the King and the Immortal Regent were staying around for more reasons than just to see which of the Dungeons might have been upgraded.

Karl strongly suspected that they were hoping for a much stronger Dungeon, where the King might gain a special opportunity.

He was a strong Myth, and not a young man. But he still needed a bit more understanding of the Fundamental Rules before he could make a try for the Immortal Rank.

Karl could feel the missing aspect in his power.

The more attuned that he became to the Natural Laws, the more obvious the differences between Myths were. The primary difference in their power was not a lack of mana capacity, or a lack of energy transfer capability.

It was the quality of their energy.

And that quality was mostly determined by their understanding of the world, as it directly pertained to their powers.

That thought might not have occurred to him, but after meeting with the Immortals from the other branches of the Darklight Host, Karl realized that even with the changes in the System, and the many ways that they could classify their power growth, the essential aspects of equivalently powerful people were the same.

However, trying to force an opportunity to understand a Fundamental Rule wasn't so easy.

There were instances where it could be gained as a reward, but even then, it wasn't guaranteed to be a large bonus, and it would be better when you were close to the final stages, instead of near the start of the journey.

But before Karl could make a suggestion on that topic, Hugo came over with a notepad in his hand and an excited look on his face.

"Karl, I have an idea! I just found the perfect spot to set up a trial tower, and the Alliance can charge for entry!" He announced, holding up a map of the city.

Now that sounded like a lucrative business venture. And it would give Karl a chance to practice the additional spells for his mobile arena obelisk.

Chapter 1269: Profitable Business Venture

Karl smiled at the excited mage. "Oh? That does sound like a properly profitable business venture. Where did you find that will be suitable to build a trial tower?"

The oversized mage pointed at a spot near the edge of town. "It's right next to the night market, and the old building there is slated to be torn down. I figured that it would be a good chance to set up a shop, as it's close to the market and the transient adventurer lodging areas.

But instead of putting up a large restaurant, why don't we put up a Trial Tower?"

[A trial tower with a restaurant at the bottom!] Cara suggested.

[Both is good.] Thor agreed.

They just needed to train more cooks, and that was easy.

Karl nodded. "I think that we can work with that. It will be a huge attraction here in Zilaz, and we can staff it with Alliance members who aren't part of the Dungeon teams. Perhaps even build some businesses operated by the Alliance into the main floor.

Turn it into a one-stop shop for all things Nara Group.

Well, except for the items that the Regent has restricted. We can keep the equipment shop private."

Azov chuckled. "I can see it now. Candy, coffee, fast food, clothing and a trial tower, all in one spot. Somewhere to sit and wait while your friends are in the trial, likely overpriced and designed to keep them in as long as possible."

Karl shrugged. "Hugo really is a brilliant businessman.

But I did need the practice on the spells for the trial tower before I make the mobile Arena. That one is going to be the real workhorse of combat related noncombat items."

Azov frowned. "You know, creating an expanded space arena might actually be a better option than a trial tower. There aren't enough places in the city that people can go to just fight out their differences.

You have just the right combination of skills to make it actually work, without needing a massive amount of land, which is horrifically expensive here along the Zilaz shores."

Raj looked shocked. "I can't believe that everyone is actually going along with his wild idea. I completely expected someone to come up with a valid reason why it would actually be a terrible idea."

Azov shrugged. "It's to our advantage to keep the new skills spreading through the population, and to give the big egos somewhere to vent. There are combat arenas in town, but most are very limited in amenities.

If it's one made with Runecrafting, it won't suffer from any of those space and durability limits, and it won't need a ranking member to be constantly present to keep it operational.

That's the biggest part.

When you have a pair of Totem Ranked Warriors that want to slug it out, where do they even go? You need a Myth to uphold the barrier on the arena just to make it safe.

If not, they have to leave the city, and with so many warriors, that also means finding someone that can open a Portal."

"Alright. I think that we can find the staff for everything, and I will work out an arena facility. With Opal's help, we can make it much larger inside than it appears, so they will have enough room to fight."

Opal considered the options. She had a decent grasp of the Rule of Space. She didn't really have space related magic, other than [Illusionary Domain], but she could show Karl how to make it work.

For a moment, Opal wondered if you could actually create the [Tiny World] spell on a Runecraft item, but quickly gave up. You would need spatial magic to make it work because the surface area needed to write out the spell would be hundreds of thousands of pages, even in the tiniest of fonts.

That was a shame. As great as an illusionary arena was, creating a whole pocket dimension for them to fight in would be so much cooler.

If they could actually manage it, the structure would be considered one of the wonders of the world. Fighters from all over the Dragon Isles would come to see the magnificence that was a nation sized fighting arena.

But for now, just making a stadium sized space for them to fight was good enough.

"I'm thinking a hundred metres by fifty metres. That should be large enough for any sort of fight, and it would give room for as many spectators as we're likely to get.

If the fights are lower ranking, we can split the space with barriers, and I will put in the Golem spells, so that customers can challenge a random opponent, or at least one that isn't also a customer." Karl explained.

"Will that fit in the space we have?" Hugo asked, with a glance up the stairs to where they usually held meetings.

Karl nodded. "No problem. Mythic Rank comes with some advantages, including an increased range for the Illusionary Domain. Do you think that we should have food vendors in the stands? Maybe a gambling stand?"

The King cleared his throat. "Gambling on blood sports is not officially sanctioned in Sholaha. We might not enforce informal bets, but you can't just install a gambling house for the arena fights."

Cara sighed dramatically, and Azov laughed.

"We're not going to change the rule just so you can use foresight to scam people out of their money either, little badger." He informed her in his most serious tone.

Cara simply stared at him for a few seconds, until the Immortal shook his head.

"I said no, and I meant no. You can wait as long as you want, you won't see me changing my mind."

Cara held up a half-eaten cookie as an offering, and Hugo began to laugh.

"Should we bring Deve over? The Immortal Regent could likely use a break from badger related shenanigans."

[I noticed that he only said we can't bet on the blood sports. Does that mean we can have the rest of a casino in the arena?] Opal asked.

[Do you think anyone would trust that?] Thor countered.

He had a point. In an Illusionary Domain, nobody would trust a card table or a roulette wheel.

For very good reason.

Chapter 1270 Plan Approved

The King frowned. "Why do I get the feeling that there is a negotiation going on that I'm not privy to?"

Karl shrugged. "Just discussing business ideas. It had occurred to us that while a Casino wasn't explicitly banned, nobody would actually trust a Casino in an illusionary domain." The King huffed in annoyance. "If they were smart, they wouldn't trust any sort of gambling associated with the Darklight Host. But you have a point about an illusionary casino. That's just too obvious.

The arena itself is a brilliant idea, though. Will you be starting on it soon?"

Hugo shrugged. The property was ready, and they could have a new one constructed within a week, even if they weren't planning to use magic to create the interior.

"I think that we will start on it in the next few days. I know that everyone is eager for us to do a dungeon a day, but it should still only take a day or two for me to design the layout of the runes needed to create the arena, then a few more days to actually build it." Karl agreed.

Lotus cheered. "It needs a new sweets shop with the good coffee."

"Done. I'll even give it bunny girl servers just for you." Karl agreed.

Azov frowned. That was just cheating. If he was going to make the staff with illusions, they could tailor them to the shop, and not worry about them being bullied for their power level.

Not every customer was reasonable, and keeping a bodyguard on duty at an ice cream shop wasn't practical. So, it was difficult to find staff from many of the more adorable species who were willing to work customer service jobs.

The look on some random bully's face when he was slapped down by a Mythic Rank construct selling cupcakes would be the highlight of the next week's newsreels.

"If you need assistance, let me know. I will help you with the necessary permits and clearances for a multiple use facility." Azov insisted.

Dana's shocked expression made the Immortal Regent laugh.

"What? It's not always practical to come here for dinner, but I can send staff to a shop to get sweets for me easily enough. I've got a permanent portal open from the government buildings in the Capital to City Hall in Zilaz." He explained.

The Guild Leaders and Lotus all gathered at the table with the King and the Immortal Regent, ready to make plans for the facility.

"In order to make the arena large enough, we're going to need a pretty significant building on the main floor. I recommend using the full block. We can put the bakery next to the fancy restaurant, then the café and sweets shop on the other side. But that leaves us a lot of space.

Does anyone else have a shop that they want to open?" Karl asked.

Deve shrugged. "We could put an Alliance Shop on the other side of the building. You know, like a pawn shop that buys and sells dungeon loot. The property is near the edge of town, so the closest customers will be people who have come to upgrade their gear. If we have it available, they can trade their loot for things that they actually need on the way past.

It certainly won't be as profitable as opening a Darklight Host Guild Shop, but my Guild Members have been considering taking up some trade skills as well.

Alchemy is the most popular request because potions are an ongoing cost for the Guild."

Remi rolled her eyes. The hard part of alchemy wasn't finding a skilled alchemist. It was finding a supply of the necessary materials to make all the potions that you needed for an alchemy shop. Even just keeping a Guild Alliance stocked took a huge amount of land.

She had her newly expanded space, plus all the stuff that she stocked in the Tiny World, and there were some plants that still didn't grow fast enough to keep up with demand.

Especially at the higher levels. If she was making Royal and Monarch Ranked potions, the ingredients would grow at an insane speed in her space. But for Totem and Mythic Rank materials, some of the plants would need half a year or more to grow, even with the extra energy density of her space.

And forget some of the rare stuff. There was a ginseng that she wanted for a rare recipe she had deduced, but it took a thousand years in the Immortal Realm to grow. She didn't have that kind of patience.

However, if they were going to turn out mass-produced lower rank potions, and keep their teams stocked with cleansing and emergency healing potions, that was also possible.

Remi had an idea for just the right sort of potions to offer at a shop.

Long duration buffs.

Instead of a conventional potion, she could use [Runic Alchemy] to enhance the ingredients to give a bonus that would last for an hour or two. They could sell those to people entering the dungeons, as they would take anything that might give them an edge.

They might not use their emergency potions often, but they would use combat bonuses every day.

And they didn't take expensive or difficult to obtain ingredients.

Karl smiled at the Regent. "I think that an Alliance shop for buying and selling random goods would work wonderfully. We could sell low-grade utility potions and herbs that we can mass produce as well. Nothing that would violate our agreement, just small bonuses to keep customers coming back."

Azov nodded. "That sounds good to me." He quickly sent a message with a jade communication ornament, and then turned his attention back to the planning conversation.

"The approvals will be here by the end of the day. The Mayor won't give you any trouble about the new business. Just remember how politics work." He added.

Karl nodded, and Deve smiled. "One hand washes the others. Don't worry, Immortal Regent. We won't be trying to price gouge the Mayor's office or restrict his access."

"I'm glad that we're all on the same page. The arena might have limited functionality for Mythic Rank fighters, but the Mayor is quite looking forward to having somewhere to send disputes between his workers."