

Beast Master 1271

Chapter 1271 Opal's Grand Vision

The planning phase didn't take long. By the time that they had finished eating, a basic design was finished, and Opal was already working on interior design plans for the shops.

It would be glorious. Absolutely magnificent. And it would take Karl forever to finish the runes for everything that she wanted to add. Just the thought of trying to keep up with everything that the butterfly wanted to include in the restaurants was giving him a headache.

How did she actually expect him to give an illusionary cook the Mythic Cooking spell? Were they just going to make the entire building a massive runic artifact?

Transferring the skill to a living cook would be so much easier. He could even do it for three of them, so they had one for each shift and a backup. But Opal was insistent that they should have an entirely construct based service team.

Her idea of using Dark Elven Priestesses, in their gossamer spiderweb dresses, as the service staff at the fancy restaurant did seem like fun, though. Even Rae was on board with that.

And not just because the Priestesses would sacrifice troublemakers to the Spider Goddess.

Karl was reasonably sure that the other Guild Masters would be as well. Not that they were likely to object to any of his staffing ideas, as long as the staff had the skills.

After some consideration, Karl realized that he could actually do most of what Opal wanted. They had Immortal Rank elemental gems that were of both the illusion and the nature or earth affinity. So, he could inscribe them with the [Gargoyle] spell, and then use Illusions to make them look however he wanted. However, that would not work for the cooks. They would need to be a form of Epic Golem so that he could activate them with skills. The Gargoyle spell didn't allow that, and while the Gargoyles could learn to cook, they couldn't learn Mystic Cooking.

Karl zoned out while everyone else discussed how to make the actual building. Tian was on the table helping them draw plans, as he wanted to help build the physical structure. But Remi and Rae were also

out, giving suggestions on designs, while Opal's illusionary representative, who looked suspiciously like Button with rainbow hair today, argued against all changes to her vision on the interior design.

"Is this how it usually goes in your Guild?" Hugo asked Dana as he watched the chaos play out in real time.

"This is nothing. Speaking out loud is much slower than mental communication. Usually, it's this, but at five times the speed, with even the uninvolved ones throwing their opinions into the mix.

But the process remains the same. Everyone will argue to get their favourite parts included, until everyone is happy enough with the end result that it's not worth fighting over.

See, even the Immortal Regent and the King are in on it." Dana explained.

They were enthusiastic too. The Immortal Regent wanted what he called a 'traditional soda shop' as the ice cream parlour's decor. The problem was that the shop design he wanted hadn't been around for thousands of years, and only Cara and the Regent knew what it looked like. However, Cara wanted the ice cream shop to be an animal café, but filled with Vorpals, the vampiric magical beasts that could kill with a single bite.

So, nobody was taking her explanations seriously.

Fortunately, the process was not going to end any time soon, and Karl was already making progress on the combined runic artifact to create Epic Golems that had an extra skill so that they could work as cooks.

The combination of Gargoyles and illusions, so that they could have Dark Elven Priestesses doing all the serving in the fancy restaurant, was an easy one, and Karl was ready to start making that the moment he was done here.

He would need more than one of them so that he could make staff at all the shops. Assuming that they weren't just going to hire staff. But while they could make countless gargoyles appear to be whatever they wanted, they would have to make the Epic Golem specialists one at a time.

Opal was making life difficult, but her insistence that it was possible had convinced everyone else that it was the best idea. Then, they would hire school kids as interns and seasonal workers to fill the rest of the roster.

They would never be completely out of staff, and the changing faces would make things seem a bit more normal to customers, as well as giving job opportunities to the younger members of the Alliance.

Opal's interpretation of Remi's romance books said that working at a shop was a good way for girls to meet a mate. The wealthy adventurer would come in one day, see that she was actually the perfect hidden beauty, and sweep her off her feet.

Cara's interpretation was more practical. Once he was involved with one of their staff members, it would be the perfect time to poach him for the Alliance.

After all, if his wife were here, surely he wouldn't be too firmly against joining. Especially if he was a nomad who was paying for access to dungeons.

They might have mostly full Mythic teams now, but they didn't have enough spare people, and there was no team to go with Karl and the Dana Mage. Assuming that they needed one. Cara was not convinced that they did. They just needed one more of the siblings to advance, and they would be fine.

Perhaps Tian. Then they would have a Mythic Healer, and that appeared to be a non-optional part of group composition.

Tian tried not to laugh as her thoughts got him sidetracked. He was already at the bottleneck, but his tiny body was holding him back. He would ask Karl to make him large later, as he had no affinity for Thor's [Behemoth] skill. That might be enough that he would be able to advance.

[Even with your size tripled, you'd still be smaller than me.] Cara joked.

[But you were big enough to advance without problems.] Tian noted.

The fluff ball might be right, Cara thought. Mythic Rank was no big deal when you had a strong enough base.

Chapter 1272 Tian Needs Assistance

"I will retire to my workshop for a bit, so I can prepare the more intricate parts of the core spells for the new building. Please, enjoy yourselves, and I will see you at dinner." Karl informed the group.

Tian briefly considered following him, so Karl could help him advance. But if he left, who knew what design choices would be approved?

That was how Karl found himself sitting in a hammock at the beach, carving runes into elemental stones, while Button napped on him in dragon form.

He wasn't moving, and that made him fair game.

The slight motion of the hammock as Karl worked made it sway like a tree branch, perfect for a Forest Dragon to sleep.

He had already finished three stones for the shops in the new arena. Everything other than the Alliance trade house. That would have to be manned by Alliance members so that they could add and remove items from the store's inventory.

He briefly considered moving on to the hard part, but decided on finishing the plinth first. He could adapt it to make the core for the arena, with [Randomize] to choose the challengers and a full suite of Golem spells to create them. Then an application of [Chaotic Zone] to turn the whole thing into a form of instance, so the illusion wouldn't collapse when damaged. That would have to be isolated to the arena area so that it didn't interfere with the food shops. Who knew what it would do to a baking recipe.

Probably nothing good.

Once the arena plinth was finished, and all its layers assembled, Karl put a bottom cap on it, and mentally checked in on the others, to see how the planning was going.

They had a final design made, intended to look like a colosseum, with plinths surrounding a stadium shaped upper bowl. Under normal circumstances, that would be the actual arena. But in this case, it was less than a quarter of the size of the actual arena, and the design was actually a careful deception to make audience members not realize that they were in an illusion.

Only those with good spatial awareness would easily realize that the dimensions were impossible.

However, there had been alterations made to the plan. There would be far more vendor stall styled shops within the arena area itself, mobile vendors selling snacks in the stands, and a small hotel to be created with a separate illusionary domain within the upper boxes of the stadium.

In all, there would be hundreds of thousands of runes worth of work for him to do.

If Karl hadn't mastered [Earth manipulation] to such a high degree, thanks to Tian's affinity, he would have had to write them all by hand, and it would have taken months. However, as the building was designed, he could cover everything with runes once they were past the outer pillars.

That would barely be enough space for him to create everything that they wanted.

Even better, none of the guests under Immortal Rank would be able to see through the illusions to find the Rune work hidden underneath. The more mystery that he could keep around the construction technique, the better.

[Don't be so down about the work. It's going to be spectacular once we're finished.] Tian consoled him.

From the hot springs in the Tiny World, Thor nodded eagerly. [They planned all the good stuff. Look, they even found a way to use Opal's illusions to create all the staff that doesn't need to be powerful.]

That was still a lot of work for Karl, but it would save some, as the illusionary staff that couldn't take major damage could be activated as part of the illusionary domain spell and replaced as needed they were damaged, or when events called for a change of decor and uniforms.

By the time that Karl had finished with the separate spells for the arena, a full night had passed, and Button was awake again, ready for breakfast after an extremely extended nap that had taken a whole afternoon and evening.

"It's bright again? Oh, the sun is in the breakfast spot. They should be cooking soon." She realized.

Karl smiled at the confused little dragon. "One day, they're going to change the schedule, and you'll be so confused."

Button nodded in agreement. "Every time there is a special event, they mess up all the meal times. It's so annoying, but they make special foods to compensate."

Lyric came to collect Button for breakfast, but the dragon simply flew away on her, headed for the lake.

That was the Button equivalent of bath time, which meant that she had high hopes for today. If she wasn't hoping to interact with people, she wouldn't have gone for a bath first thing in the morning.

While the young Elf was trying to convince Button to stop splashing in the lake and come out to eat, Tian came to visit Karl in the hammock.

[I require assistance. We're about to start on the construction of the arena, but my body is too small to advance to Mythic Rank.] He insisted.

Karl frowned. "Is that even something that I can fix?"

Tian shrugged. [Just make me bigger. That is probably enough.]

Karl smiled as he used [Behemoth] to turn Tian into a larger Stonefur Divine Fox. He still had the distinctly rounded features of a pup, but now he was the size of a medium dog, and filled with confidence.

[Yes, this should be just what I need.] He decided, then began to channel energy from his space through his enhanced body.

Now that it could hold more, he was able to push more of the old mana out, and the circulation of Mythic Rank mana started to remake his body at a steady pace, filling him with power until he began to emit pure white light.

His chubby features became a bit more slender, forcibly evolving to the form of an adolescent Divine Fox, and his fur glowed brighter as his power level advanced.

Then, as suddenly as it started, the evolution was over, and Tian let the [Behemoth] spell fade so he could inspect his new form.

He was roughly the size of a house cat, at about three kilos in weight. Not bad at all.

He was still adorable.

And now he was ready to start the work of building their arena.

Chapter 1273 Slightly Larger Tian

One by one, the others came over to congratulate Tian on his advancement, and Karl had to try not to laugh as he noticed that Thor smelled like peach body wash and Tessa. They had definitely chased him out of bed, and he had spent thirty seconds in the shower trying to make himself presentable.

Tian strutted around on the beach, showing off his new form to the other beasts, while Dana stood behind Karl, trying not to laugh.

He might be impressively powerful, but he was still tiny and fluffy.

"I was going to come get you to start on the arena, but it looks like Tian has some celebrating to do." She noted.

Karl shook his head. "No, he came here to advance specifically because he wanted to make a better version of the arena. I don't think that he will want to hold the celebration until after he has finished showing off."

[That's right. They can celebrate me getting big when they celebrate how wonderful my arena is.] Tian announced proudly.

For him, getting more powerful was just a sign of growing up. He was still a young fox, and by the time that he was fully grown, he would naturally be more powerful than nearly any other beast in the world.

Rae thought that was a bit of an overstatement for something that was distinctly snack sized, but the Stonefur Divine Fox was an impressive species.

Now that he was Mythic, not only would his stone be higher quality, but Tian could do a better job on the small details, as well as doing them faster.

He had a whole notebook full of design sketches from the Dwarves in Drodh, as well as the design plans that they had made yesterday for the basic design of the building.

All that he had to do now was to go collect Geralt, their master sculptor. The dwarf could give him advice on how things should look, and help with shaping the magic.

He wasn't nearly as powerful as Tian was, but his skill with stone was unmatched, and the Fox wanted to learn more about how he did it.

"Alright, I will send someone to get the Master Sculptor. I'm sure that he will enjoy getting to be part of a project this grand." Karl agreed as he heard Tian's thoughts.

[He can bring more sculptors if he'd like. We can all link for the spell, and they can each work on a portion of the building.]

Karl laughed. There was no way that the Master Sculptor would go for that. If he put his hands on a piece, he wouldn't allow it to be associated with the work of his apprentices. It was all or nothing, unless he was going to attribute it all to them.

It should have been obvious that he would not allow that to happen when they were making an architectural marvel with Dwarven stone carvings over thousands of square metres of surface. But fame wasn't a concept that Tian really understood. He understood amounts of work, adoration and rewards, even quality of treats. But not fame.

Karl sent a Guild Message to Geralt, and the Sculptor immediately agreed to head over to the Alliance house for the opportunity.

They had been making accessories and statues nonstop since he arrived, but that was all dull and monotonous. Building an entire stadium sized arena, while cooperating with a Mythic Ranked earth element specialist? What could be better?

But he didn't come alone. Geralt arrived only a few minutes later with Sapphire, who had an entire array of notepads and a recording spell imbued magical item prepared.

She wasn't going to miss this.

"Oh, Tian got big. Very impressive. Looking good, Fox." The blue dragon announced.

Tian puffed up his chest, trying to look impressive, but just ended up looking even fluffier.

"Tian will be doing the majority of the work to create the actual building. I will assist with mana flow, and the Master Sculptor can shape the fine details that others would miss. Then, once the building is up, I will add the runes. Master Geralt, here are the blueprints, including the details of what sorts of shops and facilities they wanted for the arena." Karl replied.

The Dwarf spent a few minutes looking over the structural designs, then frowned. "Why are there no interior details to any of the shops? Are they to be leased out to future tenants?" He asked.

"No, the details will be filled in by miss Opal. The entire interior of the structure will be layered in hundreds of illusions, defensive spells and additional effects to serve as both an open challenge arena and a luxury shopping experience. With illusions, we can artificially expand the interior volume, and update the interiors on a whim. So, they are all left bare. It is the exterior that matters the most. That is what everyone in the city will see." Karl explained.

Geralt smiled. "I get it now. It will be a Domain spell, like the ones you use in the Guild Houses. Alright, that is easy to work with. Giving it a basic structure makes it easier to build the illusions around it, so I will do my best, as well as setting the proportions properly, so that Dwarves don't feel out of place in a stone building."

"I knew that you would understand what was important. The interior is going to be a masterpiece, so we need the actual building to be one as well. The design is ambitious, I will give it that, but I am certain that you can pull it off."

The Dwarf chuckled at the praise. The design was more than ambitious. It was pushing the limits of what could be called structurally sound. But that was likely why he had been called in, instead of just leaving it to the little Divine Fox to construct with Karl's somewhat questionable guidance.

At least Geralt had experience with architecture.

It might not be his specialty, but he had designed and built more than one stone building before, using the surfaces as an enduring testament to his sculptural skills.

Chapter 1274 Building Site

Now that everyone they needed was in place, Karl went looking for Hugo, who could open them a portal to the building site. The city of Zilaz was huge, and sprawled along the shoreline with millions of residents. If their new building wasn't in the same district, only a portal would get them there in a convenient amount of time.

Karl realized that he should have paid attention to the whole map, and not just the part around where the new facility was going, but it was a bit late for that.

Hugo knew what he wanted the moment that Karl arrived, followed by Dana, who had Tian sitting on her shoulder. The fox was getting a bit large for that, but at her level, Dana's strength was more than enough to support a cat sized companion.

"Excellent timing. I will open the portal to save us a few minutes." Hugo greeted them, then continued.

"The old building has already been removed, as it was just crude wood, and had nothing of value to save. On foot, it would take about thirty minutes to walk there in traffic, so using portals will be the best option, even though there isn't a public one near the destination."

That would be quite the commute for the people who wanted to work there, while living in the Alliance House. But Karl was sure that they could work something out.

Many of the lower ranked members were mages, and it didn't take a massive amount of power to open a portal only a few kilometres away.

Hugo opened the portal into the middle of a construction site, which had fences erected around it for safety, and to keep some of the gawking spectators away. Unfortunately, because the streets were so crowded, many of the visitors preferred to fly, so they would be able to see exactly what was going on as the building went up.

Not that they would be able to understand most of it, but the process was sure to gather a crowd.

Geralt and Tian toured the area for a few minutes, and the fox listened carefully as the Dwarf described the small changes that he wanted to make to the plans that he was holding.

They were mostly about the thickness of various areas of the stone, as well as a number of details that he wanted to add to the outside of the building.

Those were all minor concerns to Tian. As long as it was mostly the same sort of stone, it would be effortless for him.

After a bit of discussion, Tian nodded happily.

[Karl, if you can start channelling mana to me, I will form the spell.]

"Do we need to move?" Hugo asked.

"It might be best. Let's go stand at the corner of the lot, where there won't be any major construction. They will redo the landscaping after the whole building is up, so we will be out of the way until then."
Karl agreed.

Everyone not directly involved in the construction moved to the edge, while Opal sent out an illusory butterfly as her representative, so she could show the dwarf what she wanted.

There were only a few things that would matter to her plans, and they were all on the outside of the building. For the first few minutes, nothing seemed to be happening, despite the massive amount of mana that Tian was using. However, they hadn't started from the obvious points, they had started by building a foundation and basement for the building that was suitably durable for Dwarven construction.

Only when that was finished did the building start to appear.

First, some inner rooms, the foundational base for the upper arena, then the outer shops, the pillars, and the oval bowl of the arena itself.

They had everyone's attention now, as that sort of construction was impossible to ignore, even if you were trying not to notice the massive amount of mana being used.

The building was taking shape within twenty minutes of them starting, and Tian began borrowing the items that Karl had created, so he could place them within the solid stone of the building, where nobody would be able to find them. Some were still easy to access, like the illusory stones that were made for the shops. Those would need to have their settings altered fairly regularly, so Tian didn't want to bury them and make everyone go to some weird spot in the basement just to set up for a party.

Others were deliberately hidden and buried so that nobody would ever know the secrets that were involved in their creation. The plinth for the arena, the specialty stones that would make Epic Golems that had a skill which wasn't innate to their base powers.

But that wasn't the hard part.

The true difficulty would come when Opal joined the group and started to layer all the illusions so that they could make solid objects inside the Illusionary Domains.

That was a huge draw of his power, just to get the spells functional. Enough that Karl actually started to use some of the stored power in the Tiny World's Mana Crystal to supplement the building.

The rooms weren't too bad, but when Opal started in on the staff, Karl learned something very curious. The Dark Elven Priestesses were predictably challenging to create. However, when they created the Bunny Girls for the ice cream and soda shop, who had nearly the same design, they were significantly easier to make.

Opal noticed first, as she was the one creating them, and quickly altered all the back of house staff, the chefs and others who needed a skill, to be beastkin, or actual beasts.

Making most of them Bunnies, and the rest Lamia reduced the amount of mana needed by two thirds.

So, as she continued, the rest of the staff was changed as well.

The store staff that wasn't specified in the designs were all changed. Most of them were made into Werebears, which Opal found to require only slightly more effort than actual beasts, but the arena stand food vendors, who were originally planned to be dragonkin were altered to be badger kin. Those were also easy to make, but Opal didn't understand why Karl's magic stones were giving her headaches with dragonkin. They were at least as much beast as the badger kin. Not nearly as much as the Werebears, though.

But then she continued with some Dark Elves, for the additional flavours of cuteness factor, and found that they were just as easy as the Werebears.

There was no logic to what was hard to make and why.

At least not to Opal.

Chapter 1275 Specialization Has Drawbacks

Unlike Opal, Rae had immediately grasped the issue. Karl was a Beast Master, favoured of the World Dragon, friend to beasts. So, it was only natural that he would have an easy time creating Werebears, Bunnies, and other fluffy or scaly beasts. But Dragons had their own gods and their own aspects. So, making Dragonkin was more difficult.

On the other hand, making Dark Elves was easy because he was bonded to Rae, and that granted some level of favour from the Spider Goddess. If they wanted the servants of the Spider Goddess to help make her wealthy and drape the world in her silk, Rae knew that the Goddess would not disapprove. Not like those snobby Dragon Gods, who viewed their people as above such menial things as being a store clerk.

Now that Opal understood, she altered a few more of her illusions to see what worked and what gave her trouble.

Some demons were easy. Obsession Demons of all sorts, and Wrath Demons of the winged variety. Others were not. Plague Demons and Magic Demons were both a pain to even visualize.

Dwarves, Dryads and other Fae were possible, but not particularly easy. So, it was all about affinity when you were using magical items to create illusions, and not just creating them out of light and magic. That was valuable information, and reminded Opal that some of these spells would have to be made by herself in the future, unless she wanted to go through all this headache again.

She did appreciate all the hard work that Karl had put in, and she wasn't capable of making some of these spells. But once she advanced, Opal was reasonably certain that she would figure them out.

Already her understanding of the Illusionary Domain had expanded so much, just from a single building. And, they weren't even finished yet.

They still had the hotel in the upper boxes to go, and then the final details to be done on the arena plinth so that they could make sure that the protective inscription that would eject critically wounded from the arena floor and put them in the infirmary was functional.

Karl had some doubts that Opal's decision to make all the housekeeping staff for the hotel Succubi and Incubi was a great idea, but the butterfly was adamant that was how it was supposed to work. Staff was staff, Karl supposed. If they got the job done, he could overlook whatever sort of strange reading material Opal's sisters had been giving her that led to such a conclusion.

Little did Karl know, most of the cleaning staff in any hotel were Succubi.

Business travellers tended to be alone and lonely, and that was a prime feeding opportunity for the species, with built-in variety. Few stayed at a hotel for more than a few days in a row, after all.

[I wonder if Randomize will let them fight things that we've never seen before?] Opal pondered as she finished the work on the building and prepared to place the stones with the arena's final enchantments.

They only needed one more thing, a large mana crystal to store energy for the barriers, spells and arena, so that it didn't need constant attention.

But Karl had that handled, they just hadn't remembered to pick a spot for it in the design.

[Oh, I know. We made a section for judges, let's put the crystal in the wall behind them! It's shiny and purple, and it will look great as a wall ornament.] Tian offered.

Opal's proxy relayed that to Geralt, who spent a moment designing a spot for it, and then settled on putting it on top of a short pillar, so it could be displayed like a trophy, with protective spells over it.

[Alright, everything is in place. Do your thing, monster man.] Opal announced.

Now, for Karl's turn at the hard part. He had to put all the runes for the spells they needed into the stone of the building, and link them to the magical items that were embedded into the arena so that everything would work together.

He started at the centre, filling the entire bowl of the arena with runes, row on row, to make up the rest of the spells that were needed to form the effect, and then integrated them with the [Illusionary Domain] stone that Opal had created.

Then, the vendors and lower level stalls were added, along with the basement private rooms.

The stores, Karl kept completely separate, so that if something happened to the Arena, they wouldn't be affected. The only link that they kept was to the mana crystal so that everything could be charged automatically from one point.

The mana crystal itself got a direct feeding inscription, so it would charge off the ley line under Zilaz. Nobody would miss the mana, there were already hundreds of thousands of spells and people feeding off it. One arena was no big deal, and it was an incredibly powerful vein.

All day long, Karl walked through the arena, adding inscriptions to the structure. Reinforcing the stone, building the spells, and even a final hidden room, just in case curious minds wanted to explore and try to find out what the secret to the arena was.

The look on their faces when they realized that the final treasure chest was a mimic, and that touching it opened a portal to the Chaos Plane would be priceless.

That one took a lot of mana, and Karl sat down in the small windowless room at the corner of the third level of the basement as he finished.

{Item Created} Mythic Grade Artifact ⇒ Chaos Mimic

Karl chuckled as the chest rattled happily, then turned itself into Cara, who was staring intently at the box full of chaos.

She already knew that it would taste like Karl's magic, but it was a box of chaos. Karl really was beginning to learn the value of a properly considered prize. Someone was going to have a wonderful day when they came to steal this one.

As if reading her mind, the mimic turned itself into a radiantly glowing silver sword, lying on a pile of gold and gems.

Perfect. Let them break into the Arena's 'treasure room'. It would serve them right.

Chapter 1276 Final Details

Karl watched the artifact and Cara interact for a moment, then got to his feet and poked the badger with his boot. "It's time to go back upstairs. Once I check all the spell activations, we will be ready to start bringing the building online. Which reminds me, we are going to need to either hire a nature Cleric, or send someone to get supplies for the shops. I can't cast the spells to create food. I created all the chefs, but they don't have anything to cook." He explained.

Cara gave him a happy thumbs up. She knew just where to find them, and Rae could abduct one of them for the job.

[You mean hire.] Karl corrected.

[Same thing, really. Give them Mystic Cooking and cute elf girls, and they won't even want to leave.] Cara replied.

That gave Karl a wonderful idea.

{Miss Sapphire, I don't suppose that any of your friends might know a few young Green Dragon Clerics looking for work? I can offer them Mystic Cooking and steady employment that involves Bunnies.} Karl messaged the Blue Dragon.

{You didn't have enough blue dragons, so now you want to be swarmed with green, is that it?} She replied.

{I just realized that I can't create the spell that makes food, so we need Kitchen Managers that can keep the arena's various vendors stocked with ingredients. But there are dozens of Bunny Girls and other beastkin here, created by Opal with illusions, so they never have to leave.} Karl explained.

{Alright, I will find you some acolytes to operate your kitchens. The Green Dragon's followers won't resist an offer to teach them better cooking skills. Even if it means working a day job.}

Karl finished his walk through of the arena, then returned to where Hugo and the others were waiting, now accompanied by the Immortal Regent, Sapphire, and four young men in the robes of Green Dragon Clerics.

"Are these our volunteers?" Karl asked.

"Indeed. They were on the top of the work listings in the church. They have all the advanced food creation spells, and they have kitchen experience. Furthermore, they also know the city, so they can order the ingredients they can't make." Sapphire explained.

The men nodded eagerly, and Karl patted them both on the shoulder to transfer them the [Mystic Cooking] skill. "Now, wait here, and I will bring the whole arena online, so you can meet your full-time coworkers. The other employees will be hired in the next few days from among the Guild Alliance members." Karl explained.

The clerics looked confused, but then the stored mana surged, and the appearance of the arena shimmered, revealing the storefronts that had appeared empty inside until that moment.

The illusionary staff began to scurry about, getting everything ready for customers, and the clerics paused.

"Are those High Priestesses of the Spider Goddess?" One of them asked in a shaky voice.

"Yes. They are the primary staff at the fine dining establishment." The Nature Cleric gave him a serious look. "You do realize that most of the world is terrified of them, right?"

Karl frowned. "I thought that everyone liked sexy elves?"

The Cleric looked at him like he was crazy. "Sure, but not High Priestesses. They're better known for sacrificing their lovers to the Spider Goddess than for being wonderful people."

"But what a way to go." One of the other clerics muttered.

A particularly tall High Priestess strolled over, smiling at the clerics. "So, you are our supply managers, are you. I approve. Why don't you come along with me, and I will show you the kitchen?"

One of the clerics squeaked out an agreement, while the others raised their hands. "I will go check on the other shops, to make sure that they have what they need." A dark-haired Cleric declared, then ran off to the other side of the building.

"Well, that didn't go as planned. But the actual chefs aren't Elves. That didn't work out for us. They should be alright with Lamia and Werebear chefs to protect them." Karl whispered to Sapphire.

"You are evil." She whispered back.

Giggling came from the other side of the building, and Sapphire frowned. "He must have found the bunnies you promised."

"They run the ice cream shop. Lord Azov, we made it just the way that you envisioned, I think. There is a Werebear in the kitchen to protect the bunnies from unruly customers, but they are a Mythic Rank illusion, they can protect themselves from most things. Including overly zealous Green Dragon Clerics." Karl offered.

"How long until the shops are operational?" Azov asked eagerly.

"Probably tomorrow. They still need to bring in supplies for everything, and we will need to test the arena to ensure that there are no issues. I am certain that the safety measures are good, but the opponent creation has a random option if you don't specify or bring your own. And that could be problematic." Karl elaborated.

"You used Randomize and Chaotic Zone on the same artifact?" Azov asked.

"Technically, the building isn't an artifact. My interface shows it as an Epic Grade magical item, the size of an extended city block. But yes."

Spectators were beginning to fly over the arena, and Sapphire laughed as the first of them ran face-first into the barrier spell over the arena.

You couldn't just fly in from the outside.

Not just because that would be horrifically unsafe while a battle was ongoing, but because the interior dimensions didn't match, and the distortion effect could cause someone to crash.

But from the outside, everything inside would look distorted through the barrier, as if it were smaller than life. Not that most people would realize that until the stands were full.

"Is that a combat arena? Or some sort of training ground?" A Wrath Demon called from overhead.

"It's a combat arena, with built-in magical opponents. Do you want to help us with beta testing?" Karl called back.

The Demon was Totem Rank, that should be near the limit of the Arena's safe operating limit, and a good test for the spells.

"Can it even put up a fight?" He asked dubiously.

"If you walk in through the competitor's entrance, talk to the receptionist, and they will have someone escort you to the arena. Tell them Karl sent you." They already knew, as the whole arena was linked to him, but it would make the interaction feel more natural.

Chapter 1277 First Guests

The wrath demon landed and jogged into the building, while a few others gave him envious glares from overhead.

"The restaurants and vendors aren't stocked yet, but if you want to go watch the fight, you can go in now." Karl offered.

What better way to stress test the system than to fill it with excited Demons and Dragons?

They got about twenty volunteers, followed by Karl's group. The staging area for the competitors was a longer process than passing into the stands when there was no lineup, so they were all seated near the barrier wall in the front row when the Demon came out with shining golden armour over freshly oiled black skin.

Their first competitor had gone all out for this showing. The oil would make it difficult to grab him, as well as reflecting the light to make him look impressive, and the armour was not just functional, but his best ornamental items.

"The math doesn't math." One of the spectators, a Red Dragon, noted.

"Illusionary Domain. The interior is ten times larger than the outside. I thought that it would be better if we could split the fighting floor into four decent sized combat arenas. But today, it's all one, so they've got plenty of room to fight." Karl explained.

"What is he going to fight?" The dragon asked.

Karl shrugged. "I don't know if he picked a random target, asked for the hardest opponent that he could get, or had something specific in mind. All are options when you check in for a magical opponent."

"And it can create Totem Ranked opponents?" The dragon asked.

Karl nodded. "Indeed. Not just that, it can create simulated Dungeon bosses."

And that was exactly what their first competitor got. A Dark Elven King strolled onto the sand of the arena floor and raised his hand. "Our challenger has chosen to fight the strongest Totem Ranked, non-Epic Grade Demon that we can give him. On the west side, we have the challenger Albionall, hailing from the Ledu district of Zilaz, standing an impressive three hundred forty centimetres tall.

On the east side, we have our Arena's Champion, Wrathbringer."

A massive black demon appeared, nearly five metres tall, and holding an axe in each hand. The summoned creature was smirking at the challenger, who was looking more than a little concerned about his life choices.

While the Wrathbringer wasn't technically a boss monster, he had the distinct marking on his name that announced he was an Elite Monster, the sort of creature that was added as a secondary boss, or head of a particularly difficult group in a Dungeon. The sort of opponent that you normally needed more than one team member to deal with.

But after the shock wore off, determination grew in the challenging Demon. He wouldn't allow some new arena to show him up with a summoned Golem.

Technically, a Greater Golem.

"That thing is going to beat him to death." The red dragon predicted.

"It's a peak Totem Ranked elite mob. One on one, how many of us could beat it? I think that this arena is going to be my new favourite place. Will it be open to the public?" One of the other wrath demons asked.

Karl nodded. "Not every day, but the shops will be, and the stands will be open to the public unless the arena is booked for a private event." "What sort of shops?" The red dragon asked.

"There is a fancy restaurant, a café, and an ice cream shop, plus an Alliance vendor with outside access on the main floor. Then, there will be food vendors inside, and walking the stands on busy days. We also have vendor booths set up inside, though I don't know what all will be sold there. We haven't worked out the details or picked vendors yet. Most likely it will be open to merchants from outside the Alliance selling souvenirs, merchandise and memorabilia. Nothing too expensive, and probably some more specialty food stalls. When you come to watch fights, snacks are essential."

The dragon nodded slowly, while the demons shrugged guiltily. The Cat Demon wasn't wrong. His new arena was definitely going to cause more than one of them to miss meals, so having food and snacks available would be essential to their well-being.

{Fight!} The referee announced, then leapt up to the edge of the arena floor, where a seat was placed for him.

The two demons clashed, and then everyone winced as Wrathbringer kicked his opponent squarely between the legs.

"That is just evil. Who programmed this thing?" One of the men asked.

"That's the best part. Nobody. It's just a modified Greater Golem spell, letting the conjured creature do what it wants within the rules of the arena. If you pick the sort of opponent who would willingly kick you in the dick, you have to watch out for cheap shots." Karl replied.

At least Wrathbringer had the common courtesy to let his opponent get back to their feet before he continued the fight.

Not that the delay was going to change the outcome. The challenger was hopelessly outmatched, and the big demon was just toying with him, wearing him down until his will to fight broke.

Fortunately, the demon realized what Wrathbringer was doing before he was completely exhausted, and forced the battle until the construct had to knock him out or take a serious injury himself.

The challenger vanished from the arena, while the spectators looked concerned.

"Don't worry, he's been moved to the infirmary with [Teleport]. He's being healed up now, and he will be fine in just a minute. But we don't repair damaged items as part of the entry fee, so be aware that there might be additional costs associated with fighting in the arena." Karl informed them.

The spectators shrugged. Fixing their gear was an every week event anyhow, and it wasn't a major cost at their rank.

The Red Dragon got to his feet, and smiled at Karl. "Since we're here, I don't suppose you'd mind a few more beta testers?"

"Go ahead, no charge tonight."

Chapter 1278 They Have Snacks

The red dragon went down to the competitor's area, and came out only a few minutes later, looking determined.

The referee leapt back onto the sand to start the fight. "Welcome our next challenger, Porthos the Pirate!"

The dragon glared at him, and the Elf shrugged. "Parthenos, follower of the God of War, Red Dragon of the Holy Paladin Order, native of Kopji.

And his randomly chosen opponent, the mighty Zararag Demon Serpent."

The snake was fifteen metres long, with massive fangs, and radiated unholy energy. It was a Totem Ranked magical beast, and certainly not going to be an easy opponent, even if it wasn't at the level of a Wrathbringer Demon.

Its scales shimmered as it moved, adjusting to the sand the same way that a chameleon would, but not anywhere near the level of disguise that Rae could muster.

With sword and shield, the red dragon faced down the demonic serpent. But Karl's mind wandered, checking on their new staff, and making sure that nothing horrible had happened to their new clerics.

One was happily flirting with the bunnies while creating ice cream mix and soda syrup for the shop. Another was much more professionally going over the ingredients that the cook wanted for the restaurant's opening night. The Priestesses were looking at him like they might ravage him and then sacrifice him to the Spider Goddess, but Karl knew that the restrictions of the arena wouldn't let them actually do it.

Sacrifice him, that was.

Karl hadn't anticipated the Priestesses terrorizing the cleric in other ways, as he had never actually dealt with one outside the Dungeon, where their behaviour was unnaturally aggressive.

Here, they seemed to be genuinely enjoying his terror. It reminded Karl of Rae, in a way. All the dark joy, thirty percent of the violent intentions.

"What is that above us? A VIP box?" One of the spectators asked, pointing across the arena.

"Oh, right. That's the hotel. There are a dozen rooms on the top floor for VIP guests. It's fully staffed, and designed to the peak of luxury hotel standards. I thought that it might be nice for important foreign guests to be able to stay within the arena instead of having to brave the crowds." Everyone subtly turned to look at Azov, who shrugged. "I'm actually staying at his Alliance Compound right now."

Karl smiled at the Immortal. "We will ensure that you've got a priority spot in the hotel if you want it, though I'm not sure how often you have time to come watch arena fights."

Azov rolled his eyes. "I'm surprised that I have the time today. If you didn't cause so much chaos, someone would have come to beg for my assistance by now, I'm certain of it."

The red dragon and the Zararag Demon Serpent were deadlocked at the moment, but the serpent was showing a lot of damage, while the Paladin was able to heal themselves. A battle of attrition might not be the most fun to watch, but the spectators didn't seem to mind all that much. They were still cheering him on, and arguing over who might land the next hit.

Movement at the steps caught Karl's attention, and a catgirl carrying a tray came out of the vendor area.

"Sir, our first batch of snacks is ready. Would you like me to distribute them?" She asked.

Karl nodded. "Certainly. I think that everyone could use some refreshments. What do we have?"

"Popcorn, veggie dogs and beer, all courtesy of the Green Dragon Clerics." She explained.

The spectators turned to look her way as they caught the scent. "Whatever it is, it smells amazing. Did they say that the cleric made vegetarian hotdogs?" One of the demons asked.

"Vegetarian Chili Dogs. As I understand, they are bean-based, and spicy. They are made with a Royal Ranked skill, so they're not just cheap junk food. Would you like one?" The vendor asked.

Karl could feel the magic coming off the popcorn as well, so it wasn't just plain. Not that a Green Dragon Cleric would ever serve such a mundane snack if they had another option. Everyone took one of each, and another vendor came out to ensure everyone got a sample. The popcorn was caramel flavoured with nuts, the beer was refreshing and slightly fruity. A sour lager of some sort. But the chili dog was the real winner.

"This is what they'll be serving in the stands?" One of the demons asked.

The second catgirl nodded. "Yes, Sir. We are currently debating portion sizes. There was a concern that we might have put too much chili on them to make them easily edible in the stands. But there are burritos as well, plus pizza, and kebabs. The kebabs and burritos aren't going to be ready today, as we're waiting on a meat order. However, we've already obtained cheese for the pizza."

Dana smirked. "We should probably open the gates and let some more people in. I can hear them from here."

Karl nodded. "I will do that, and we can let them come see the fights. Assuming we have more challengers. The clerics will need to be informed."

The catgirl gave Karl a thumbs up. "Already done. We all know what the others know, and they have started preparing more bleacher vendor snacks."

Sapphire smirked. "We should have warned them that they would have to work from the very first day. But if they've gotten to making food for the stands, they should have the ice cream shop ready."

That's one fully stocked shop, but they'll be working half the night to stock the rest of the storage rooms."

"It's not nearly as fun if we warn them. But you're right, they definitely started with the ice cream machines. That shop only takes a few minutes to get ready, as they only serve a handful of products, and you brought me powerful enough clerics. But once they've got the first load finished, they won't have to work nearly as hard. Just a little time every day to keep up with sales." Karl replied.

The blue dragon snickered at his naive outlook. This place was about to become one of the most popular spots in the city. Forget easy days, she was going to have to bring them more clerics in a few days just to keep up with sales and not work the first group to death.

Chapter 1279 Let Them Try

Karl went down to the street, accompanied by a pair of Dark Elven Clerics, who were hoping that there might be a fight when he opened the fence to start letting people in.

Their restaurant wasn't going to be ready today, as they were waiting on ingredients that the clerics couldn't make. So, they were bored.

They could let themselves go idle, and save the arena some mana. But there was still so much more to see and do that their actual jobs were a minor concern at the moment.

It was the same for the café, which only had a very limited menu until the butcher could come by.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I can tell that you're eager to find out what is going on inside, so we will give you a sneak peek. Only the arena area is ready right now, but we will be doing samples of the vendor snacks, and by the time that you leave, the ice cream shop should have their first batch of product ready." Karl called, raising his voice to be heard over the speculation.

"Ice cream shop?" One of the obsession demons asked, confused.

"This location is now home to the Nara Group's newest multi use facility. On the lower floors we have shops and vendor stalls, but above it all is the crown jewel, a magically enhanced combat arena, open to public challenges against magical opponents up to Totem Rank." Karl declared.

Shocked gasps filled the street, and a number of Mythic Rank warriors pushed forward.

"Is that true? The arena will be open to public challenges?" One demanded.

"It is. Not for free, naturally. But we can accommodate up to four challenges at a time if we limit the arena size. Difficulty can be increased up to Epic Grade and Totem Ranked. However, it is not just for the most powerful. Any Rank that can pay the fee will be allowed to challenge on the open days." Karl explained.

That meant mostly Overlords and Totems, they assumed. But the costs of operating the facility were incredibly low, thanks to the magic involved. Karl could actually make it affordable for Royal and Monarch Ranked fighters. Unfortunately, the audience wouldn't care to come and watch them, so keeping it Overlord Ranked and up except on special occasions would be better for business.

"Please follow me inside, and take a seat in the stands. There is a fight ongoing now that was given free use of the full space, but after that, I am willing to split the space if we have many challengers."

The Myth raised his hand. "You said Epic Grade. Do you mean that we can send people to fight a Dungeon Boss?"

Karl nodded happily, and the Dark Elves giggled. These strangers were funny. Of course, the Gods would approve of watching random strangers get beat up by Dungeon bosses let loose in the arena. Why wouldn't the arena allow it?

They didn't understand what went into actually making that possible, they just assumed that if they existed, and the King was the referee, then it was only natural.

Karl stepped back from the gate, and hundreds of visitors followed him in, much to the dismay of the two Clerics, who had just finished stocking the popcorn.

They didn't have to cook it, there was summoned staff for that. But they did have to make another sack of popcorn.

The popcorn serving bags were actually part of the illusionary domain spell, and would automatically refresh every day. While that might be an issue, as you couldn't take them out of the venue, it did save them time getting everything ready, and eliminated most of the packaging waste.

Until they replaced them with actual bags. If they ever did.

Karl wasn't particularly concerned with the details, they could hire more people if it became an issue that there was no take out packaging in the arena.

Though, now that he thought of it, they should get some for the shops.

In his mind, Tian laughed. [We've already taken care of it. One of the Earth Magic spells that we had you copy was to make stone and glass takeout containers for the restaurants. I couldn't think of anything better.]

Karl wasn't sure how people would react to getting their sundae in an actual glass container, but Tian assured him that it was fine. Most of the ice cream was in some sort of cone or a waffle bowl, which was not only made in the restaurant, but edible.

It was the café and the fine dining location that would go through more of them. The ice cream shop was just going to go through a lot of their thin stone cups for milkshakes.

[They'll become collectibles. They even have the shop logo on them.] Cara assured him smugly.

That was quite likely true. People loved to steal branded cups and plates from famous locations, so if they just gave them reusable cups to start with, it would cut out the middle man.

The newly arrived guests were finally arriving at the stands, as most of them had stopped to put their name in line for the arena. They had been given strict warnings that if they left the building, even just stepped out onto the street, their name would be removed from the list, but it was otherwise first come, first served for the day.

The fight between the Demonic Snake and the red dragon had finally ended, and the arena had been split into four sections, with three new referees appearing to mediate.

"Number one, number two and number three. Please report to staging to confirm your opponent. The team with ticket number four, please report to staging to confirm your opponent." The Dark Elven King announced.

That should be fun. Someone must have picked a Dungeon boss.

The other spectators seemed to think so as well, and the buzz was growing as the group of three stepped onto the sand. One warrior, one mage and one shaman, all on the strong side of Totem Rank.

So, they thought that they could show off? Hopefully, they had chosen a suitable opponent.

Chapter 1280 Could Be Anything

The trio strutted around the arena for a moment, and then their referee jumped down to start the fight. "This ring has chosen an Epic Grade, Totem Ranked random boss challenge. May the luck of the gods be with you." He declared.

Azov turned to Dana and smirked. "Oh, they are so screwed."

The Mythic Warrior sitting in the row behind them, one of the new arrivals, cleared his throat to get their attention.

"What makes you say that, Regent?" He asked.

"They don't understand that the random boss isn't just from Zilaz, or just from the Totem Ranked Dungeons that they have been in. It could be anything that was considered a viable Epic Grade opponent by the System." He offered.

That didn't really concern the Warrior. Not until the opponent appeared, that was.

"Today, their opponent will be a minor member of the Titan Clan, an Epic Grade Totem Ranked Frost Giant Clan Chief."

"Oh!" Dana gasped as she saw the opponent. "I see now. It's not just dungeon bosses, but anything with an Epic Grade constitution. I have been limiting my summons far too much." Karl agreed as he recognized the Frost Giant from the battlefield.

That one had perished in the explosion when they blew up the array in the crater, but the face was immediately recognizable to Karl.

Only, it was much larger now. Far larger than a Frost Giant had any right to be.

"So that is what a Totem Ranked Frost Giant looks like. That's honestly pretty terrifying." One of the spectators noted.

And it only got scarier. The moment that the referee retreated, the Frost Giant used [Blizzard] and [Ice Storm] at the same, then created a two-handed sword of ice and charged into combat.

The group was not prepared.

But in the other rings, things were going much more normally, with each of them fighting a relatively well-matched opponent. Only 'relatively' because someone had gotten a Beholder Beast, and he was currently running for his life.

But they were at the same power level.

One of the arenas quickly managed to defeat their target, and another group confidently strolled into the arena.

"Oh, we're getting a great show today." Someone cheered behind Karl.

However, when the referee smirked at them as he went to start the fight, Karl knew that would not be the case.

"Group five has requested the strongest non dungeon monster that has recently been seen in the Zilaz region." He declared.

"Oh, they're fucked." Dana muttered.

Rae came out of her space with popcorn as a duplicate of her spider form appeared in the arena.

"I personally think that it will be quite entertaining." She countered.

"You know what that thing is?" One of the spectators asked.

"A blood destruction demonic spider. Notably, a clone of me. See, it's got my same markings." Rae explained.

The Demon looked confused for a moment, then saw that there was a swirling red marking on the spider's back that appeared on her human form's neck.

"Wait, that was an option?" One of the women waiting in line gasped.

"As long as the arena is familiar with them." Karl informed her.

"Oh, I see potential here. I can come here and call out a clone of my husband, then beat him until I'm not mad anymore." The crowd roared with laughter at the thought, then a few wondered if public humiliation was against the arena rules. Hopefully, it was. If not, then countless jilted lovers would eventually realize the hack.

The fight started, and one challenger flew across the ring as Rae vanished, while another slid three metres backward with sparks flying from his blade as he parried.

The wounded man vanished from the arena before anyone could heal him, leaving the others to fight without him.

That was when the spectators noticed that the man who had been lost was their cleric.

"Always eat the healer first." Dana laughed, repeating words of wisdom that Rae had once told her.

"Not as much fun to watch as I expected, I can't even see the opponent." A Dragonkin Warrior complained.

"Then you would be completely useless in that fight." His friend informed him.

"You can?" The Dragonkin countered.

"I am a Tiger-kin. All cat species have lesser spirit sight."

Rae made a mental note of that. Cats could see her. Even more interesting was that the clone was operating on pure instinct. It was smart, but it didn't come with any of her memories, just her skills. Or some of them, anyhow. It hadn't summoned Golems, so it might only have her innate racial abilities from her various advancements.

But it was definitely operating on instinct, and only using its advanced mind to plan combat strategy, as the Blood Destruction Spider had already started making webs in preparation to cocoon her prey once they were down.

Which was the only reason they were still alive.

Karl noticed a few spider type beastkin wearing the distinctive black masks of Nerud mercenaries as they studied the fight. The insect and spider type beastkin weren't considered good-looking people, so they usually covered their faces when they left Nerud.

They clearly hadn't expected to see such a powerful servant of their goddess in the arena, and there were determined to find a flaw in its instinctive fighting style. Challenging powerful spider monsters was a point of pride for the beastkin in Nerud. This one might not be the best option to start with, though.

They were all Overlord Ranked, not a threat to Rae. But even against an average Blood Destruction Spider, they would be in trouble.

And this one wasn't even using its strongest ability.

[Blood Destruction] would cause the targets to explode, and it had been born hungry.

The group facing the Frost Giant was the next to finish their fight, though only by a few seconds before the other arena slots were done.

The process was smooth, and the new fighters were in just after the arena slots reset, ready to go.

[We are attracting more people. They can hear the cheering and fights in the arena from the street.] A Dark Elven High Priestess informed Karl.

He had closed the fence, so they should stay outside, but there were deliveries coming, and if the street was blocked with curious locals, it would just slow things down.

[Inform the Clerics that we will need plenty of snacks, then let everyone on the street know that the arena will open to the public tomorrow at noon, but they can come watch for a while tonight.]