

Beast Master 1281

Chapter 1281 Building Hype

It was well past dark by the time that everyone had gotten their turn through the arena floor, but the enthusiasm hadn't dampened even a little bit.

Not even when they saw staff putting up the pricing sheets at the registration desk.

It wasn't cheap to get a fight, but far less expensive than entering a dungeon. The only part that put a damper on their enthusiasm were the operating hours, which Azov insisted on, to comply with city rules.

They had to restrict the noise from two until six in the morning. But, as most of their shops appealed to both nightlife and vampires, Karl had agreed to put a sound dampening spell on the property.

The fights would run all day and night, but the shops on the lower levels would be open various hours, depending on what they served.

The café and ice cream shop were open all day and night, while the fine dining was only open from four in the evening until two in the morning. They already had applicants for the vendor stalls on the lower concourse, mostly from small Guild Alliances who couldn't afford a full-sized shop. They had an Alliance Shop with outside access, so Karl had only saved a few of the stands for their own people, and they had planned to let the rest fill naturally.

By morning, the whole sector of the outskirts was abuzz about the "Nara Group Combat Market". That was not the official name. Tian and Geralt had put "Darklight Arena" above the entrance. But the name seemed to have stuck.

Karl went back at eight in the morning, to make sure that the arena was ready for their first open day.

The vendors would be coming at ten, so they had two hours to set up before the arena opened, and the food deliveries were already finished by the time that he got there. A quick mental scan said that none of the Green Dragon Clerics had gone home. They were all near the break room, sleeping on cots.

There were private sleeping rooms accessible from the break rooms, Opal had insisted that they were necessary for long shifts and hot days. A bit of rest when you weren't feeling well, and you could finish a shift.

But they also let the clerics stay overnight when they didn't want to go all the way back to their temple or the Alliance house, as their work contract entitled them to worker housing with the Darklight Host.

"Oh, the big boss is here. Good morning. Would you like a cookie?" A small woman asked as Karl watched for vendors at the gate.

"Certainly. Everyone likes cookies. Who might you be?" He replied.

"I am Summer, I have stall 128 rented for the week." Karl smiled. "Ah, a nature Cleric, then? Welcome. 128 is on the far side of the arena, near the pizza shop. The number is on the table and the roof."

The girl swept back her hair revealing pointed Elven ears, and nodded. "Yep. A follower of the Nature Goddess, but not the Green Dragon. Thanks for the directions, I will see you soon!"

With everyone having an inventory, not many had to bring in large boxes of stuff for their shops. A few still did, but the building had been well-designed for deliveries of all sorts, as well as accessibility by species that didn't agree with stairs.

Like Lamia.

They had no problems navigating stairs, but they didn't like them. The edges dug into their belly scales, so it was more like moving across sharp rocks than walking up a flight of stairs as a human.

"Hey boss, when does registration open?" A wrath demon called from the street. "The first four fights are already registered, and will be entering the ring at noon. Registration opens at half past eleven, when the gates open." The Demon looked at the line of people waiting along the fence, then sighed.

"It will take forever to get inside." He muttered.

Karl smiled at him. "It won't be as bad as you think once we get going. You'll see."

Once he dispelled the effect that was creating the fence, they would be able to enter from every direction, and the polite queue that had formed at the vendor entrance would be largely meaningless.

It would just put them in the first row of people to enter.

Most of the vendor stalls would be empty today, but they had nearly thirty of them by the time that the gates opened. The staff were all ready for an insane rush of customers, and the cold marble mixing slab at the ice cream shop was polished to perfection after some morning flavour combination sampling by the resident Cleric.

Cherry Cheesecake was chosen as their special favour of the day, and got a second scoop for half price. Not a big discount, but the Green Dragon Clerics insisted that was the way to win customers' hearts. With more ice cream.

"There had better be meat, that's all I'm saying." Karl heard a Werewolf Druid complaining to his friend in the street.

"Try the kebabs from the bleacher vendors. Or you can go to the Darklight Lounge and ask the lovely ladies for the full kilo porterhouse steak special. They're opening early today." Karl shouted, looking straight at them.

"Now, that's a man who knows what's important. But what kind of meat?"

Karl smiled. "Dry aged Overlord Ranked Water Buffalo."

The werewolf went a bit pale in the face. That sort of meal at a fancy restaurant was worth two days of his wages.

"Perhaps I'll start with the Kebabs."

Karl nodded. "They're locally raised, from outer district butcher shops. All excellent flavours, but much more affordable. Or you can go for a classic pepperoni pizza slice. Or the whole pie."

The werewolf's friend laughed. "He's got you down already."

And now everyone in line knew what the best meat options in the stands would be. Easy advertising.

Chapter 1282 Open The Gates

Promptly at eleven thirty, Karl waved his hand, and the high fence vanished, revealing the complex in all its glory.

The crowd surged forward, rushing toward the shops and the many entrances of the main level of the building. The ice cream shop was on this side of the building, and the shop immediately filled with customers lined up all the way out the door.

Having a bunny girl hopping around in the window with a sign advertising their daily special probably didn't hurt.

The majority of the crowd was headed in to check the vendors and then find seats in the arena. All the foods that were served in the stands were also available at one of the food vendors on the lower levels as well, so Karl wasn't worried about the staff getting too overwhelmed. But it would be a good test to see if their estimated needs were correct.

If people started to complain about not being able to get what they needed, he would know immediately after one of the constructs heard the complaint.

But so far, the consensus was one of curiosity, and excitement about the arena challenges.

The line for the arena signup was starting to get rowdy, but with the Dark Elven Kings there, it wouldn't be for long. The locals might think that they were big and bad, but the Kings were Mythic Rank Epic Golems, and even without drawing a weapon, they were more than capable of handling any of the Totem Ranked challengers who might want to fight over a spot in line.

Karl was relaxing by the ice cream shop, waiting to see if anything needed his attention, when he saw multiple flashes of black and white fur dart past him.

A bit of focus said that they were Golems, but he hadn't made any in that pattern.

Karl mentally tracked them, and then realized that the arena had deemed some of the security golems to be in ineffective forms, so it had transformed them into Void Badgers, who could effectively trap misbehaving guests, and fly lost children over the crowd.

He should have expected things like this when he introduced [Randomize] into the artifact.

That spell was a menace to society.

Cara laughed at that thought. Karl might call it a menace now, but it was incredibly useful. Useful enough that he used it on a regular basis when they needed something new and innovative.

Watching Void Badgers run along the ceilings, searching for trouble spots, caught the attention of many children. It was something so far out of the ordinary that they couldn't help but look, and the badgers were happy to wave back at them, and even accept bites of the kids' snacks.

Overall, things were going smoothly, though some of the vendors had greatly underestimated the demand for their products.

For example, the Elf who Karl had talked to earlier had only brought a thousand cookies. Now, that might sound like a lot of cookies, but thirty minutes into the day, she had already called a friend to bring her more because she was running low.

During his mental scan, Karl noticed that the first contestants were headed to the sand to start the arena matches.

[Someone, make an announcement. Most of the people on the main floor don't realize that the fights are about to start.]

{First Fights begin in five minutes} The announcement wasn't loud, but it was everywhere within the building. Karl saw many of the visitors scramble for the bleachers, as there were no assigned seats. That might have been an oversight on Karl's part. But they hadn't numbered the seats, either. So, you sat where you sat. If there were no more sitting spots, there was a large standing area around the top of the arena. The view was terrible, and you were the furthest from the action, but in theory, it was a viewing spot.

With the space expansion of the arena, even if the main floor was packed, it wouldn't be enough to fill the stands, so after things got moving, it should be alright. He hoped.

[We have our first guests at the hotel. Eight of ten suites are booked for the night.] The front desk clerk informed Karl.

[We actually had guests willing to pay that much without ever seeing the fights?]

[Royals from Kopji, Shash, Nabibun and Miss Tiffani, the Chaos Dragon's pet.]

The Totem Ranked vampire would not be happy about that description, but the Succubus probably wasn't wrong. Supreme Lady Matilda definitely treated her as a cross between a personal assistant and a favourite pet.

[You know: if these guys keep picking cool things, we don't even have to go into the arenas to get more options for Golems. We can just watch the System summon them.] Remi noted.

She was watching the cauldron in the Drodh Guild House, as the alchemists had all gathered to work on new projects today.

If they were going to a dungeon, she would come along. But until she reached Mythic Rank, that was lower priority than her experiments. They had a real chance of making a breakthrough in the next day or two, using the improved ingredients from the Tiny World.

Karl realized that she was right. He had never seen a Zararag Demonic Serpent before yesterday, but it was now in the list of his options for Golem type summons, as a serpent type magical beast.

[We could give them a discount to pick 'random magical beast' as their opponent. Like a happy hour special for Wrath Demons.] Remi suggested.

Not a bad idea, but they were so busy right now that it would only cause more fights if the pricing wasn't equal.

The first group of challengers made their way to the arena, and Karl went to stand by the ring in the staff area. That was where he saw Tiffani, along with four other vampires, preparing to meet their opponent.

That had to be Matilda's doing. If anyone could guess where exactly you had to be to get into the first group of registrations, it was her.

Though, as Karl recalled, they should have all been filled last night. And he hadn't noticed her at that time.

That might be worth investigating. If Matilda could influence the arena, there might be others who could, and that was a security risk.

Chapter 1283 Impressing Royalty

Despite Karl's suspicions, Tiffani's group had registered completely legitimately. Matilda had informed the vampire that the arena would open, and she informed one of her friends to come watch the fights last night, then to register for the morning. So, while four of the five had not been here, one had, and that was all you actually needed to register for the arena in advance.

They were no longer taking reservations for the following day, though. All battles registered today would expire after a day. If the line got too long, the fights would expire, and you would have to register again. That should take some of the risk of fighters not arriving on time for their fights, due to long wait times. But the number of them who had chosen to register in groups of five to fight a boss level monster would do even more. Five individual fights would take quite a while in the arena, but they could have twenty challengers on the floor to do four boss fights at the same time.

While the fights were prepared, Karl sat in the employee section right next to the arena, below the level of the front-row seats, and began to work on a fresh batch of accessories for the Alliance.

Even with the upgraded dungeons, they still needed a lot of gear for the Mythic Teams, and now Karl could make them even better items, personally tailored to their skills.

Dana was in the same situation, but she had been captured by Sapphire, and was currently helping write spell books for their advancement project. The other Guilds would surely come to ask them to go to a Dungeon soon, and before that could happen, the blue dragon wanted at least one or two new mage skills to pass out to the rest of her inscription team.

Karl felt the shift of mana in the area as Azov opened a portal to the hotel section, then another that brought a group of Mythic Rank people into the building.

[They are meeting with the Kopji Royals.] The front desk clerk informed Karl when she sensed his interest.

So much for the Immortal Regent's vacation. He was back to work this morning, with a slightly more entertaining view than usual.

The boardroom in the hotel also overlooked the area, so they could chat in privacy and watch the fights. But they would also have all the amenities that they could want in a meeting room. The use of the [Illusionary Domain] spell made nearly anything that they could request possible, as long as it was something that Opal's constructs could understand.

The Regent was taking full advantage of that, calling for staff to come and pour the others' favourite beverages with a thought, and causing charts to appear on the projector as he spoke.

It was a simple trick of telepathy, communicating with the hotel clerk in the room. But to the others, it was pure showmanship.

"Oh, the fights are starting. This should be interesting. All four groups chose to challenge boss monsters." Azov informed the gathered Royals, distracting them from the political issues they had come to discuss.

The Silver Dragon Prince of Kopji rolled his chair to the window, eager to find out as much as he could about this wonderful new bit of magic. Azov knew that a Silver Dragon couldn't resist, and the fights would serve as the perfect way to keep tensions in the room from getting too high. The nations all bordered each other, and all the leaders had their own pride, so any deals they made were always short term.

That might be a practical way to keep resentment from building, but for an Immortal, it became an eternal loop of renegotiating the same issues every decade.

If that old dragon and her Guild Members were going to cause him this many headaches, he was going to use them in every way possible so that he didn't have to listen to these whelps bicker for days on end.

It was the least that they could do.

The Immortal snapped his attention to the door as the silencing spell informed them all that the door had opened. That could only be done by arena staff, as it was locked from the inside. But what he found was a Dark Elven High Priestess, with a cart full of food from the restaurant on the main floor.

"Reception informed us that a luncheon had been scheduled. We used our recorded data for those who did not specify a meal from the menu." The High Priestess informed them.

"Mythic Priestesses as servers? Isn't that a bit too luxurious?" One of the Princes muttered.

The Elf smiled at him. "We have been promised that we will be allowed to terrorize those who attempt to run out on their bill until we are satisfied with their repentance." The Dragonkin Prince frowned. That wasn't possible. He certainly believed that Matilda's followers would have approved it. But it simply wasn't physically possible to satisfy a Dark Elf that you were properly repentant for stealing from them. They would torture such an unfortunate soul well beyond their natural lifespan.

Azov shrugged. The city guard would come to get them after a few days when someone reported them missing. But the Priestess was a construct, so it might not be quite as terrifying as an actual High Priestess of the Spider Goddess.

Then he remembered who was on the advisory team for this project. Between the Spider, the Badger and Karl giving them bad ideas, it might actually be more terrifying to be caught by the construct than an actual High Priestess.

"Oh, Tiffani is in the first group. It looks like they've gotten a good fight this time." The Silver Dragon announced, drawing Azov's attention to the arena. Indeed, the Vampire's group had gotten a great opponent. They were facing a Totem Ranked Obsession Demon of the species known as Oathbreaker, after a legendary hero of the species.

It was an excellent match for their agility-based team.

But what was Karl doing? Azov was sure that he was sitting by the arena, making Mythic Rank accessories in public. The man had no sense of discretion, even if only the hotel was high enough to look down into his seating section.

"Miss, I will need a cask of Dwarven Whiskey when you get a chance."

Chapter 1284 New Accessories

Karl was unaware that the Immortal Regent had noticed what he was up to.

He was fully engrossed in the fights, and had paused his work while he thought of just the right bonuses to give the new bracelet that he was making for one of Hugo's healers.

The Shaman didn't really need much, he had excellent gear already. So, it would either be a bit more to his healing bonuses with a focused item, or he would give him an additional spell effect to increase his versatility, now that so many of the groups were focusing on maximum damage output with stronger tanks and additional golems.

With the change in strategy, it lessened the healing needed, and left the healers in a bit of a bind, as they had all geared themselves for purely healing, and it left their damage lacking.

Given that he had such good healing already, Karl decided that a bit of healing bonus, and then a new spell effect for damage might be just the thing that the Shaman needed.

He had the basics. Blizzard, Chain Lightning and such. So, perhaps a damage buff?

If it was a whole group damage buff spell, that would be even better. Naga Swamp. That would be compatible with nearly every shaman, Karl assumed, and it not only increased the group's damage output, it also slowed enemies and gave a slight reduction to damage taken by the group.

For a bracelet, it would be an incredible spell if he could make it fit.

However, Remi had a better idea. She had more Totems that she never used.

[And why don't you use them if they're so good?] Karl asked.

[They don't stack with Consecrated Ground] Remi replied with a mental shrug.

Well, that was certainly a good enough reason. They always had the area spell active, as it was large enough to cover the whole fight and was both offensive and defensive.

[Totem of Elemental Wrath] Increases Elemental Damage by 10 Percent of base per caster rank.

Simple, safe and effective.

Now, it only applied to elemental type skills, so fire, lightning, and ice would be the primary beneficiaries, while the warriors' core skills, which did physical damage would not get anything. But the group could adapt to that if they were getting this large of a bonus.

Karl stared at the spell description for a moment. This was a much larger damage increase than Consecrated Ground, and it applied to all elemental damage, not just Holy damage. However, it didn't do passive damage on its own, and it didn't have that sweet 50 percent damage reduction.

Of course, Karl suspected that there were diminishing returns when you had too much damage reduction, so they could likely do without it. But it was still nice to have.

[If you give him Mana Pylon on another bracelet, he won't even miss the extra healing. He will just start to spam the big heals.] Tian suggested.

[That's a wonderful idea. If the healers have a long duration damage spell and a mana pylon, they can't be accused of slacking on either role.] Karl agreed.

[Combat floof.] Cara giggled when Tian got visions of valiantly fighting off enemies.

[Just wait, I'm getting all grown up now. Soon, I will be a formidable fighting fox.]

Cara shrugged. Full-grown, they would both be about the same size. Big enough for Tian to be an actual fighter. Though, if she remembered right, even house cats were considered fearsome when angry, and Tian was about that size now.

Even Remi thought that the idea of Tian as an aggressive animal was a bit of a stretch. Even compared to Thor, he was just too cuddly and friendly.

Thor was at least innately designed to stomp on things that couldn't be made into friends, and he had come equipped with a head shield and horns. Tian had... not.

Karl finished the first bracelet and then made another identical one before moving on to the Mana Pylon bracelets.

Those he would need a lot for, as every cleric and Shaman would want one.

The amount of extra damage that a group could do if they didn't have to worry about mana regeneration rates would definitely be far superior to anything that they had been able to accomplish before now.

Cheering in the stands caught Karl's attention just in time to see the first of the bosses vanish, and a team celebrate their first victory.

Tiffani and her team were still fighting the Oathbreaker Demon, who was moving so fast that Karl was certain half the arena couldn't even follow the fight, and were just watching the sparks fly, or the random moments when someone locked blades and everything paused for a split second.

The pure speed of the demon was truly impressive, but the crowd was more enthusiastic about a fight on the other side of the arena, where a water elemental type monster was battering a group of Dragonkin with repeated wave attacks.

The fight was a good one. But the real draw was their White Dragon Priestess. Specifically, her now soaked white robes.

She had leather armour on under them, Karl could tell. But that didn't matter to the crowd, who were enthusiastically cheering for the way that the white cloth clung to her.

There was also a good bit of cheering for the shirtless Wrath Demon Berserker that was tanking for one of the other groups, but not quite as vocal as for the white dragon.

While they fought, Karl put the finishing touches on the items, and then realized that he didn't actually have a plan for who was going to get the second set. Dana couldn't use the Shaman Totem, and she could cast Mana Pylon on her own.

Remi didn't need either of them, and their group didn't have another Shaman.

Certainly, not a Mythic Rank one.

But there was one up in the VIP box of the hotel section.

Perhaps he could build some goodwill.

Chapter 1285 Keep Them Company

{Regent Azov, would your companions mind some company? I have a set of bracelets for a Mythic Rank Shaman. Ones that aren't accounted for by the Alliance members.} Karl messaged.

He could sense the Immortal's attention shift to him. {You made two identical pairs, then realized that there was only one Mythic Shaman in the Guild Alliance?}

Karl shrugged, and watched the Immortal begin to laugh.

{I could give one of the extras to a Cleric and sell the other. Or, there might be someone else who can use them. But those foreign dignitaries might appreciate the gift. I can tell that there is a Shaman in there with you.}

{The Prince of Nabibun. Are you sure that your item is suitable for a Dwarf?} Azov asked.

{Definitely. It's got a totem effect for shamans that boosts elemental damage. Dwarves would love it. Well, any Shaman would. The mages too, but they can't use it, they need a Shaman to cast it.} Karl agreed.

{Come on up.}

Karl opened a portal to move from his seat to the hotel reception area, avoiding the crowd, then went to knock on the door of the meeting room.

The Succubus waiting inside silently opened the door for him, and Karl entered to find the group of Princes intently watching the end of the fight between Tiffani's group and the Oathbreaker.

The agility of the vampires was enough to keep from getting massacred by the demon, but it was still a close call, and an enthralling fight for those who could follow it.

The Dragon Prince of Kopji clapped happily. "Excellent. The Supreme Lady's assistant will be back with us shortly. Karl, you are in a Guild with her, right? Do you know what sort of thing she likes? Perhaps her favourite food?"

Karl knew precisely zero about the vampire. Other than what he had discovered in the few times that he had interacted with her.

[I have blood wine she will love.] Rae offered.

She dropped it out of her space onto the table in front of the dragon, forcing Karl to go with her plan.

"If I'm not mistaken, this blood wine should be a flavour that she's particularly fond of. If you're attempting to woo away the Supreme Lady's assistant, it might be a good spot to start." Karl offered.

Azov stared at the bottle for a moment, then smiled.

The wine was made with the blood of a light element beast, and the effect maintained a bit of the lingering holy element that would reduce a vampire's healing ability, allowing them to get properly drunk.

While it might actually be a favourite of Tiffani, a man offering it to her with a date proposal might come off exactly the opposite of how he intended it.

Unfortunately for the Kopji Prince, he was not aware of the intricacies of blood wine production, or its effect on Vampires, other than as a nutritious beverage.

Tiffani was in a great mood after her victory, and strutted into the room with a radiant glow that dropped instantly when she spotted Karl.

"I should have known you'd be here." She muttered.

"It is a Darklight Host built and operated facility. Congratulations on your victory, that was a truly spectacular fight." Karl agreed.

"Miss Tiffani, this is for you. It came highly recommended by your Guild member." The Prince declared, while Azov tried not to laugh.

"Did it, now?" She replied, not really paying attention until she opened the cap on the bottle.

"Oh! Now, that is unexpected. Where did you even manage to find this?" She asked in a dangerous tone.

The dragon began to realize that something had gone wrong, and immediately backtracked. "The Beast Master provided it with his recommendation." He stammered.

"He did, or a suspiciously dark-skinned woman did?" She asked.

Karl smiled at her. "Rae gave it to me to pass to him."

Tiffani stashed the bottle in her inventory. "I will pretend that you didn't know the spider was giving out the equivalent of a vampiric date rape drug."

Karl shrugged. "It's just blood wine. Rae's got plenty, so you can really let loose. I can send a case to Matilda, if you would like."

Tiffani glared at him. "Don't you dare."

Azov was openly laughing now. That insane old dragon would think it was hilarious to get the vampire blacked out drunk.

"I take it that you're not close friends?" The Kopji Prince asked.

Karl shook his head. "The first time we met, we nearly beat each other to death. Compared to that, our subsequent encounters have been positively cordial. I suspect that there might be some lingering resentment related to the nature of the Chaos Element, though."

Tiffani smiled slightly at Karl's phrasing before she addressed the Kopji Prince. "Our fates are set in opposition to each other, but we are not enemies. Thank you for the gift, and I'm certain that you didn't know the deeper implications of that particular vintage."

Then, she sighed and elegantly settled into a chair, before taking the bottle out to pour a small sample of the wine into a glass.

She carefully sipped at it, then sighed in appreciation. "That flavour is spectacular. Addictive even. But that's the catch, isn't it? I will have to ask Lady Rae where she found the recipe one day."

Rae mentally shrugged. She had given the blood and the fruit to Lotus, who had used Mystic Cooking to make her the wine.

"The Green Dragon Clerics made it for her. They probably have no idea what's special about it, as they don't drink blood wine." Karl informed her.

"The Green Dragons made it? Of course, they did. Bunch of unrepentant drug dealers." The vampire muttered.

Karl couldn't argue with that. Even Lotus happily sold drugs to the city guard, under the condition that they didn't get her in trouble by messing up at work.

Lord Bomgon's words had been "Don't let me catch you" not "Don't do it". That was basically the same as permission to Lotus.

"But that's not the reason that I came up here. I actually just finished a set of items that are specific to the Shaman Class, and Mythic Rank. I thought that they might make a wonderful gift for the visiting Shaman." Karl explained.

The Dwarven Prince from Nabibun turned to look at Karl. The cat demon appearance was vaguely familiar to him, but he couldn't place it. He must have seen him one day in Bara, or at another function.

Chapter 1286 Giving Gifts

But when Karl brought out the two crafted items, the Prince knew exactly where he knew this man from. It hadn't been long ago, he was certain that his memory was correct.

This was the man who had created an Artifact Grade axe for Lord Drodh. The Councilman Petros had shown his picture to everyone at a meeting not long after.

Which meant that in the course of little more than a year, he had made it from peak Overlord to Mythic Rank.

That was absolutely insane progress.

His attention didn't remain on Karl for long. The two bracelets were a marvel of Dwarven sculpture, but the runes that had been carved into them, glowing with faint white light, made it impossible to ignore the unique nature of them.

"Crafted items, made by Karl of the Darklight Host. And what is this spell effect bonus?" He muttered to himself as he read the system description.

[Totem of Elemental Wrath] Increases Elemental Damage by 10 Percent of base per caster rank.

"Is that base weapon damage? It must be. I wish the system would specify what stacked on weapon damage and what added to the skill effects. Never mind, though. At Mythic Rank, that's more than enough extra damage for even the most basic of skills.

This is well worth calling an epic item." The Dwarf was lost in his inspection of the items, so Karl explained the situation to the others. "The totem is a new skill, one that I haven't even had the opportunity to gift to the blue dragons yet. But the other is a Mana Pylon, excellent for long duration mana regeneration for an entire group. That spell they do have, but as with most of the new spells that I find, there are some requirements." He informed them.

"What restriction? Mana Pylon is the sort of skill that every Mythic Raiding team would want to have." The Prince of Kopji asked.

Karl was about to answer when Tiffani snorted with laughter. "It requires that you have some affinity with the natural law of mana manipulation. That's common enough among Mythic Ranked mages and Shamans, but who else can claim it?

Certainly, not many below Mythic Rank."

Karl shrugged. "She has a point. The restriction is simple, but the power level needed to meet the minimum requirements is not small."

"So, it's the ultimate mana regeneration spell, but nobody can use it? Figures." The Dragon Prince complained.

Karl shook his head. "No, there are better mana regeneration spells. I've seen them in use. But this one, it's more accessible, even if only for the most mana attuned of us."

The Royals looked startled, but Tiffani knew that Karl was talking about the spells that the other Darklight Host branches' Guild Masters had used. However, trying to explain the spectacle that was Karl's wedding to outsiders was not something that she planned or wished to do.

"When did you make these? You have been so busy lately, building this most fantastic arena. But you still found time to make new accessories?" The Kopji Prince asked.

"I completed them today while watching the fight. I had the basics of them already done, I just needed to finish them." Karl offered.

Azov considered calling him out because Karl had clearly used a spell of some sort to engrave the bracelets after he had worked out where to put the runes. The only thing that had been ready was the bracelet itself, which was made of Mythic Grade stone.

"Then you can make more?" The Prince pushed.

Azov sighed. "Just make them all gifts. I expected that this would happen when I agreed to let you come up here. We should watch these fights, though. There is a group squared up against a Seraphim Gate Guardian right now, and that's going to be messy."

Karl moved so he could see out the window, and shook his head at the mismatch. They were all Totem Rank, but the power coming off that Seraphim didn't belong to this world. It was far too potent. The moment that it unleashed a full powered attack, the battle would be over.

Or, the arena might prohibit it, as it would exceed the safety restrictions that were placed on the contestants.

No. It didn't restrict the Golem. The Golem's attacks didn't damage the barriers.

The Gate Guardian swung his spear in an idle arc, sending out a wave of holy light that sent the entire team crashing against the back wall of the arena, then directly to the infirmary.

Karl could have sworn that the Seraphim looked up at him before it vanished, but he hadn't had any hand in picking the opponents. It was definitely not his fault that the summoned Divine Being had been disturbed.

"Karl, is it normal for the Epic Golems that the arena summons to have skills and personality?" Tiffani asked.

"Yeah. They're not perfect, but they're not enraged like the Dungeon summons. Though that one might be the result of the [Epic Guard] skill, not the [Epic Golem] skill. It's difficult to tell when the results can be so similar.

Either way, they have clear minds. The demon that your group got was clearly enjoying himself." Karl agreed.

"Interesting. Perhaps we have misjudged some of the creatures that only exist inside of the dungeons. They might not naturally be as aggressive as we had expected." She pondered.

Karl suspected that some of them were actually worse when they had their senses about them and could make free decisions, but now that he had seen what was so interested in the arena, he should begin making presents for the other Royals.

If only they had more interesting classes than the basic mage and warrior templates.

"Does anyone have a particular accessory type that they would like? It is likely to replace a combat item." Karl asked.

The Prince from Shash frowned. "I am actually wearing hand me down gear from our main raid team, and it's all Totem Ranked. I'm not one of the most combat active people, I mostly relied on my bloodline to make it this far."

"Do you craft? I can make items for that as well." Karl offered.

"Well, you could call it that. I spend most of my time researching weapons designs. New, old, practical, unexpected." He explained.

Karl nodded. "In that case, I can make you exactly the right item, though it won't be a piece of gear. Just give me a few minutes."

Chapter 1287 Just Make Your Own

Karl checked the Guild House Inventory and pulled out a small dragon statue with a large base, then began to inscribe the underside with [Holy Weapon] and [Earth Manipulation] runes. The combination would allow the user of the item to make a basic Holy Weapon, the sort that the Golden Dragon Nation's army used when they had Red Dragon Clerics around. But in any shape or form that he desired.

They wouldn't be powerful as a top-tier combat weapon, but they would be good enough for practical testing when they were made by a Mythic Rank warrior.

The whole group watched with fascinated expressions as Karl worked on the item. Then, the expressions morphed to awe as he finished, and the statue was finished.

{Statue of the Curious Blademaster} Mythic Rank, Rare Grade. Creates a Holy Weapon of the user's chosen design on use. Creating a new weapon will dismiss any previously created weapons.

"Don't let the quality rating distract you, this should be precisely what you needed to create and test weapons." Karl announced, then passed the statue to the Prince.

The Prince carefully accepted the statue, and then smiled as he activated it and an oddly shaped blade appeared in his other hand.

"Perfect, absolutely flawless. It takes days to get a smith to make a weapon that matches my designs, and often, they don't understand how certain features need to be. But now, I can make them just right." He sighed.

The weapon had a rough surface near the base, and what Karl might have called a serrated edge on the third closest to the hilt. But it wasn't quite serrated, as it wasn't meant for cutting, but for catching another blade and preventing it from sliding.

That sort of weapon would take an immense amount of practice to use to its full potential, but the Prince was a Blademaster, and it was his idea for a new combat style that had designed the weapon.

If anyone could use it, it was him.

"And for the others? Any particular requests?" Karl asked.

The Kopji Prince smiled. "It's a bit odd to ask people what they want as a gift. The surprise is part of the enjoyment."

The man was a silver dragon, Karl noticed. It was only natural that he would be curious about new magics, so the thought of requesting things he already knew how to describe might feel too limiting.

"Alright, I will see if I can come up with something good for you. I think I know just the right way to approach it." Karl agreed.

If he started with a Mana Pylon inscription, he would have a base item that would be useful to the mage. But the silver dragon wouldn't just want some normal item with combat bonuses on it.

Instead, Karl decided that he would add inscriptions for luck, and knowledge acquisition. At Mythic Rank, that might give a bonus to the chance to comprehend Natural Rules.

If it did, then it would be the most valuable gift that he had given, and one that the Prince would treasure for some time, and not simply place in a pile with all the other forgotten gifts he had received over the years.

That pile couldn't be small. Silver dragons loved learning new magic, and he was Prince of one of the more powerful nations of the Dragon Isles. So, he should be quite wealthy.

Karl took a moment to decide how he was going to do the work, then sorted through the Guild House inventory to see what he could find. The form would matter as much as function here, to make it a memorable gift.

There, a Mythrill alloy sceptre. It was nearly the same silver as a dragon's scales, but with a blue undertone, that Karl hoped would give the impression that it represented both magic and knowledge.

So, he grabbed it and got to work.

The piece was crafted by Hassan Petros, their Dwarven Master Smith at the Drodh Guild House, and Karl would owe him a rather large payment for it. But with the rewards that they were getting from the dungeons these days, he wasn't short on funds.

Karl carefully carved the runes all up the shaft of the sceptre, then branched out the smaller effects and phrases over the top, which was inset with a clear crystal that rolled freely in the cage.

That was where Karl inscribed the Mana Pylon effect, carefully turning the round crystal to evenly distribute the runes.

When it was finished, the sceptre flashed with white light, and Karl nodded in satisfaction.

{Sceptre of Arcane Knowledge} Mythic Rank, Epic Grade. Activate to generate a [Mana Pylon] effect over a radius no larger than 90 metres. Increases chance of obtaining new knowledge. Improves

Comprehension Rate Increase for Natural Rules by 10 Percent. "There you go, the perfect item. Not only is it good for learning magic, it's also sturdy enough you can hit people with it if needed." Karl joked.

The silver dragon held the sceptre reverently, and began to smile. "This was the right call. I would have never thought to ask for something like this. The Mana Pylon is a wonderful effect, especially for someone with as much mana as you or me. But the improved comprehension rate for Natural Rules is a bonus I've never even heard of on an item."

Azov frowned. The young dragon had a point. He had never seen that effect on an item either, and he was significantly older, having lived through the last resurgence, and more than one before that.

It simply wasn't the sort of bonus that anyone had ever been able to add to an item, and it wasn't one that the Dungeons would grant.

He had seen items with that effect in the Immortal Realm, though. They were used on children's toys, to help them grow up into proper Immortals. Though many of the species were innately Immortal, if their minds were damaged, their body's power would bottleneck at Mythic Rank, and they would end up crippled for life, unable to grasp the true nature of reality, and therefore unable to ascend.

Chapter 1288 Favouritism

Tiffani looked at the bottle of blood wine that she had been given, then frowned at Karl.

"I sense favouritism at play here." She declared.

Not only was a bottle of blood wine significantly less valuable than what he had given the other nations' leadership, her gift was basically a gag gift.

Karl winked at her, and took out an item that Sapphire had made for the Guild Alliance.

"I didn't forget about you. Not entirely. How about this?"

{Blade of Glancing Blows} Totem Ranked, Epic Grade. Increases Agility by 250 Points, and increases Parry Chance by 25 Percent when actively defending. [Sharpness] increases damage by 10 Percent of base per Rank of the wielder.

Tiffani smiled as she took the blade. "Now this is more like it. Just right for an agility-based fighter."

She also noticed that it was not an item that had been made by Karl, but one crafted by the Blue Dragon that worked for the Darklight Host. In a way, that was better. She wouldn't have to be reminded of that insufferable man every time she went into battle.

The Kopji Prince looked down at the arena, analyzing the magic as he watched the fights, and spoke without looking up. "Is it true that you intend to do dozens more Mythic Dungeons, attempting to cause an increased difficulty effect?" He asked, clearly meaning it for Karl.

"Not dozens, but there are more that we would like to try. The system functions are slowly coming back online, and this is one of the methods that we have found to accelerate the process. The more people who can do at least one hard mode dungeon, the faster the function will fully awaken, and then everyone can get in on the fun.

The challenges aren't exactly obvious, unless you've that particular one or have been told how it works. So, I might not actually be able to cause the effect in any more of the dungeons. At best, it will likely only be a few more." Karl explained.

The dragon nodded as he watched the fights in the arena below. "That should be enough. Eventually, you will find one that is widely accessible, with a challenge that most Mythic teams can complete. And then larger numbers can try."

Karl looked to Azov, who shook his head slightly. The Immortal wasn't eager for the entire continent to be coming over for one single dungeon, where they could do a lower level difficulty, just to gain access to the System Function.

It would be better for everyone if Karl kept trying more dungeons until another one like the Apes, which could be done on many difficulty settings, was found.

Then, the swarm would at least be split between two locations, and not so overwhelming.

Instead of answering, Karl changed the topic. "Prince Kopji, you are a researcher of magic, so tell me, do you have a trade skill already?"

The silver dragon nodded, enthralled by a group fighting a baby Leviathan.

"I am an Inscriptionist. It's a common skill for Royals." He explained.

The warrior Prince from Shash chuckled. "Yes, Kopji is obsessed with having their young Royals copy out every magical tome that the Blue Dragons will let them access. It gives them the greatest chance to learn new spells, you see."

The Dwarven Prince from Nabibun chuckled. "Not so surprising though, is it? Almost all of my Royal Family are Master Smiths."

The Warrior chuckled. "Good point. The Dwarves are also a very work oriented Royal Family. Mine? Not so much. My father is a historian, I study weapons, and my wife has recently become obsessed with fashion."

All of them were suitably 'Noble' pursuits, as the men back home in the Golden Dragon Nation would have called them. Hobbies that didn't require physical labour. Not like the Dwarves and their love of the forge.

Karl smiled at the Shash Prince. "Everyone needs something to pass the time. So many here in Zilaz do nothing but fight, sleep and think about the next time that they need to go fight to pay the bills. It's good to meet others who have taken up a trade skill to enrich their lives."

The room was silent for a bit as the fights below got interesting, then the staff brought in an assortment of breakfast sandwiches in widely varying flavours.

"A new creation by the diner chefs. They wanted your opinion before they chose which ones to make next week's special at the diner. We brought enough for everyone." The Bunny explained.

"Well, that's a great way to pass time. If you would like to wait a moment, you can relay the group's decisions to the kitchen." Karl agreed.

"There is a diner under the Nara Group?" The Dwarven Prince asked.

Karl nodded. "On the other side of the arena from the main entrance. It's more of an all-night comfort food sort of place, instead of a fancy restaurant, or an ice cream shop." The Dwarf nodded. "This arena really is something else. A true masterpiece of engineering. Tell me, who did the actual construction? I know you did the rune work on it personally. But who built it?"

"Ah, that would be Geralt, our resident Master Sculptor. Originally from Bara, but he now resides at our Drodh Guild House." Karl explained.

"Hiding from his ex-wife, no doubt. That woman is a menace."

The rest of the Royals chuckled at the comment, then turned to the food on the table. "Is that a roasted duck and monster egg Benedict?" The silver dragon asked, confused.

"I think so. It certainly smells like duck. The one beside it is a spicy deep-fried tofu sandwich with what I hope is coleslaw. The kitchens are headed by Green Dragon Clerics, and they like to make all plant-based options, so they don't have to wait for someone to deliver meat." Karl explained.

The Royals nodded in understanding. Everyone knew that the Green Dragon Clerics preferred to make their own food with magic. But what shocked them was that none of these sandwiches involved rice and beans.

What they didn't know was that they were only missing because it was one of the standard breakfast side dish options, along with pancakes, waffles, spiced yams, oatmeal or shredded potatoes.

Chapter 1289 Bribe Them With Food

The sandwiches were all on individual plates, so Karl pulled a few likely looking ones his way.

The spicy tofu was bound to be a good one, and the fish were considered a local delicacy, Overlord Ranked fish caught from the lake that the city was built beside.

Whether fish and eggs made a good breakfast sandwich was what Karl needed to know.

It smelled good enough, so Karl picked it up, and tried not to laugh at the sauce dripping into the Dwarf's beard from his chosen sandwich.

Many of these were not well suited to being a sandwich, they were simply too messy to eat without cutlery. However, it didn't look like any of them were going to be rejected on flavour.

"Definitely make the Benedict a regular Benedict. It needs lots of sauce, and that's not good for a sandwich." The Dwarf noted, though he did finish eating it.

"The spicy tofu is good with less sauce. That one passes as it is." Karl added.

The Dwarf reached for another, and then laughed when he saw that it was filled with roasted meat and a fried potato patty, in an ale infused cornbread biscuit.

"Now this, I can guarantee is good before I even taste it." He joked.

"I can feel my arteries clogging just looking at it." Azov agreed.

And then he grabbed one.

"Yep, that is good. This one needs to be on the list." The Immortal agreed, while the Dwarf gave an enthusiastic thumbs up with his mouth full.

The silver dragon was much more cautious about the strange sandwich, and his curiosity turned to confusion with the first bite.

"How is that in any way breakfast food? It tastes like something that you would order at a Dwarven Pub at four in the morning." He asked.

"So, they got it exactly right? I will let the chef know that his idea for the late night breakfast special is a hit." The Bunny replied.

He just rolled his eyes as he sampled the various sandwiches. There were no bad flavours, as expected. Only a few that simply didn't make a good sandwich, as they were impossible to eat properly.

"Is this even an affordable meal in Zilaz? I know that everything is overpriced here along the shore, but this quality of food doesn't seem like the sort of casual meal that one would expect from a diner." Prince Shash noted.

Karl shrugged. "Did you get a chance to try the items the vendors sell in the stands? Premium foods are one of the great selling points of this arena complex. The official vendors all make food created with a cooking skill, so it's a step above your average restaurant.

Our people did the market research, and we're far enough from any other major markets or shopping districts that we've got virtually no competition. But that didn't stop us from going for the best.

Showing off the skills that our Guild possesses is a matter of personal pride for the members, so we couldn't slack off when we started a public venue." That made Azov chuckle. After all the warnings he had given Karl to not take his Rune Crafting to extremes and unbalance the markets with an influx of massively overpowered custom gear, he had found the most impossible workaround, where he could flex his skills for the world and somehow not have it make his Alliance obscenely wealthy.

Just incredibly famous.

Prince Kopji gestured around the room. "I must say, this, all of this, is spectacular workmanship. The level of imbued magic, even in the staff member standing at the door, is beyond anything that I've ever experienced."

"I can see how this place would be a wonderland for the Silver Dragons. It's all pure magic layered over a stone structure, and even the amount of space we have in the room is only because of layers of the [Illusionary Domain] spell.

Now, the amount of magic that is needed to keep it running is absolutely stupendous, but it's sitting on the Ley Line, and I've designed it to tap directly into the ambient mana for its functions." Karl gladly informed him.

Azov gave the Prince a curious look. "I take it that means you do not intend to return home to make your report tomorrow as planned?"

Prince Kopji shrugged. "I can write it and then open a portal to send it to my assistant."

That seemed like the much more logical answer than leaving this place and describing it to a hundred other dragons, who would all want detailed answers as much as he didn't want to be there giving them.

Letting the assistant suffer in his place was the superior option.

Fortunately, with his status as son of the ruler of Kopji, he had access to more than enough funding to maintain his room here at the arena so that he didn't have to leave it at all. Even a few hours away every night was time lost that could be used to study the magic of this artifact.

A silver dragon, like any other, could remain awake for months at a time, so he didn't actually need the bedroom, though he intended to use it and gather data from the experience. How well you could sleep in an illusion, without it being a separate realm, and with constant battles outside, was another unknown that he would put in his reports.

If the answer was positive enough, they might even send someone to talk to Sapphire about joining as a Runecrafting Apprentice. The Blue Dragons might monopolize most sorts of knowledge, but when it came to magic, the Silver Dragons were not to be underestimated. Their God often granted them insights into the true nature of spells that even the Blue Dragons would miss.

Like the fact that while the door guard appeared to be a Succubus, she did not have the distinctive magic of a Lust type Obsession Demon. Her Obsession was something more aligned to service or cleanliness.

One more oddity to put on his list. If it was possible to use magic to alter Obsession Demons' obsessions, he too could become famous overnight. Many of them were born with obsessions that they would much rather not have, but couldn't stop themselves from enjoying or constantly wanting to do.

Chapter 1290 The Call of Duty

Later in the afternoon, Dana came to visit, accompanied by a white dragon from one of the Guilds they had agreed to work with on the Dungeon Project.

"Karl, I finally found you. We have found another suitable dungeon to test. This Guild believes that there is an obvious way to make the dungeon activate a hard mode, but they haven't been able to do it for lack of powerful members." She explained.

"Oh? That does sound fun.

Gentlemen, if you will excuse me, it appears that duty calls." Karl replied.

The Princes nodded. They were all aware of the Darklight Host's attempts to improve dungeons, and that there was an agreement in place that they would help other Guilds, and not just hog the gains all to themselves.

"A full day away from duties is a luxury. Go on and finish your tasks, we will enjoy the show until Regent Azov is also forced to return home." Prince Kopji replied.

Azov tried not to laugh. They were the duty that he had to attend to today. While most of the day was spent watching the fights and testing the arena's cooking, it was also a chance for him to build strong bonds with the next generation of leadership and renew their alliances so that he didn't have to do it by force after the Princes ascended to their respective thrones.

Even now that she was awake, Supreme Lady Matilda had her hands full taking care of anomalies and attempts to enter from the Immortal Realm, so it couldn't be her in charge of keeping the peace.

Not that it would be wise to let her try.

What the Chaos Dragon thought of as 'acceptable relations' between the various Royal Families and leaders were likely to be far from peaceful, or even moderately survivable for most of the population.

Karl followed Dana and the Cleric out of the meeting room, and then stopped in the lobby to get the details of their day.

"Alright, what are we up against? And what is the rest of our group?" He asked.

The Cleric looked a bit embarrassed. "We are the group. You see, we had one mercenary member call out last minute during our last run, and the Guild's tank decided to just do it without them.

When we entered, the Dungeon gave us a message. {Improper Group Size. Increase to 5 member dungeon?} That question mark made us think that there might actually be a setting for three people

instead of four. This is known to be a dungeon that can be done with either five or ten people, but as far as I know, nobody has ever tried it with three.

The Dungeon is a Fallen Seraphim Temple, and the difficulty of the bosses is not low. When we went with four people, we had to skip one of the bosses because we didn't have the damage to be able to beat its enrage timer.

However, I am told that the two of you have exceptional damage output, and might be able to beat the bosses without a full group."

Dana smiled. "You know, this does sound fun. If three doesn't do it, I will come back tomorrow and see if it's a solo challenge."

Karl chuckled, and Dana stuck out her tongue at him. "Letting you go to a solo challenge hardly counts, does it? You'll show up with Rae, Tian and Cara, and just steamroll the place."

The Cleric laughed. "That's precisely why I wanted you two to come along with me. My Guild is sure that it's impossible, but we were all in the other dungeons that have been improved, so someone had to have done the hardest setting."

Karl gave him a curious look, and the dragon continued. "You see, that is the working theory of the blue and white dragons. In order to improve the dungeon, and unlock the higher difficulty settings, someone first has to do the hardest mode achievement for that particular dungeon. Only then will it unlock. Like with the five-level dungeon, someone must have done the fifth setting first."

Karl nodded in understanding. "Actually, there is a hidden sixth setting. It's complete overkill, and not for the faint of heart. That is what we had to do the first time to unlock the dungeon's options."

The cleric smiled. "See, my theory stands. Someone completed the highest mode challenge first. And, since you have an affinity for the Chaos Dragon, you also have an affinity for destabilizing the dungeon enough to make the options possible."

"That's sound logic. My highest grade physical skill is called the Chaos Dragon Constitution. I also use the Chaos Dragon as the foundation for my power matrix." Karl agreed.

"So, you're trying to comprehend the Fundamental Rule of Chaos?" Karl shook his head. "No, I think that I will get Mana Manipulation fully comprehended first. But Chaos is also coming along well."

"Interesting. So, you are going for Mana Manipulation, which is more common for the Silver Dragons, but your Power Matrix is that of the Chaos Dragon? I wonder if that diversification is actually helpful? Or if it limits you somehow when you get close to advancement?

But I've gotten sidetracked. Let's go to the dungeon first. There is a travel portal not far from the arena, and it will take us right to our destination." The Cleric explained.

"I take it that the dungeon is not close?" Dana asked.

The cleric shook his head. "Not this time, unfortunately. The dungeon that we won is near the Shizdushel River, over sixty kilometres from here, and on the outskirts of what could be called the Zilaz Dungeon Region. But there is a portal only a hundred metres from it."

That really was out of the way. But there were hundreds of dungeons all around the shores of Lake Naraledum, so it wasn't too surprising.

Karl nodded. "Alright, let's head to the dungeon, and then after the fight I can open a portal to take us back. Or Dana can. Either way, getting back is the easy part."

The Cleric smiled. "Perfect. I will lead the way."