

Beast Master 1301

Chapter 1301 You Don't Eat People

Karl nodded and opened a portal into the Tiny World.

"Dana, if you could lead them through, we will start at the lake so that they can meet with some of the other residents." He offered.

They didn't have to wait that long, as Button came flying out of the portal in dragon form to crash into Dana, then spin her in circles by flapping while holding her shirt.

"Here, we have Button. Our resident foodie Forest Dragon helps with egg collecting, and likes long swims in the lake, or naps on the black stone of the mountains." Karl joked.

Button nodded happily. Yes, those were both good things, but it was breakfast time now.

{We need to go. It's shakshuka day.} She insisted.

"Alright, let's go. Here, have this until we get there." Dana replied.

She wrapped an arm under the dragon and carried the metre long, thirty kilo reptile like a baby as she fed Button a pancake.

Matron Aliah, the new matron for the Tiny World's dragons, chuckled at Dana's attempts to calm the forest dragon. It was doomed to fail in about five seconds, as you couldn't turn a forest dragon upside down without confusing their sense of direction.

At least not the young ones.

Sure enough, a few seconds later, Button was leaping out of Dana's arms to fly around her head. Then she noticed Hawk, who was in Demon Crow form, and realized that there were other flying creatures her size.

Maybe she could keep up with this one. Everyone else was too big and fast, or didn't have wings.

She was doomed to disappointment, as even in this reduced form, Hawk still had the speed that he always had, and that had only increased with his advancement to the Mythic Rank and his evolution into a Dark Flame Phoenix.

As with most forms of Phoenix, he was incredibly adept in the air, and could fly close to the speed of sound.

There was no way that the young Forest Dragon could keep up. But on the other hand, Hawk despised putting that much effort into anything that didn't end with food, so he was much more comfortable flying at her speed than anyone else.

So, not a total loss.

Hawk followed her into the portal, as he had heard the magic words 'food is ready'. There had better be meat.

The Elves were bad about making enough meat.

The rest of the dragons followed Dana and the two flying miscreants through the portal, then paused as they heard the cook cussing at Button. "Did you deliberately bring me dozens more people to cook for? You know that you're supposed to warn me." She was grumbling.

"Miss, don't be too mad at the little one. We have already eaten, she was just excited to bring her Dana Mage and the bird to see you." Patron Axel replied.

"And she brought men into the space? Now I'm going to have to get dressed in the morning." The elf added.

The dragon laughed, the glow from his red eyes flickering with amusement. "If it helps, I spend almost all my time in dragon form, so pants are definitely optional."

The other men shrugged, and Rashid smiled. "The Bronze Dragon isn't a prude. If the rules say no clothes needed, then there are no clothes needed."

The druid on cooking duty gave him a long look over. "I think that this might work out just fine."

The Bronze Dragon gave her a cautious smile. "I'm not sure that we're thinking of the same set of duties for this deployment."

She just shrugged. "You're a bit young, but I can add it to the regulations if it makes you feel better."

That made Rashid smile. He was three hundred years old, but given her middle-aged appearance, the Elf should be closer to seven hundred. Maturity wise, they should be close, but she was definitely more aggressive about relationships, when he had always focused his energies on legal analysis.

Button frowned. "Sister Cara says that if you want to find out what someone tastes like, you should just lick them."

That brought the flirting to a screeching halt.

"Pardon?" The incredulous bronze dragon asked.

"Auntie looks like she would like to eat you, but you're not allowed to eat people. I asked the badger big sister, and she said that it's alright to just taste test them if you don't use teeth." Button explained simply.

The cook winked at him. "You hear that? It's fine, just a taste."

Rashid cleared his throat and made a mental note to look into the 'creative interpretations' of legal precedent that the Chaos Badger might have been teaching the young dragon. Letting her babysit was a mistake, but he suspected that it was actually impossible to stop her.

The badger and forest dragon were the same size, and they could escape through spaces too small for others to follow them without a transformation spell or teleportation.

Bertie, one of the youngest of the red dragons present, giggled. "I am getting visions of random people being licked by a forest dragon."

The cook shook her head. "That was two weeks ago, she knows what all the species taste like now."

Axel, the new Patron assigned to the Tiny World, turned to Karl. "We really do need to have a talk about the parenting methods of the Darklight Host. Did you at least assign a responsible adult to her care?"

"Well, there are all the ones in here. But..." Karl began.

"But Ophelia the Werebear is the closest thing to a responsible adult caretaker that we have in the Guild, if you don't count Red Dragon Priestesses." Dana finished.

Karl mentally checked the space, and found that Tessa and Thor were not here today. Nor were any of the other ladies, so it must be a dungeon run day. Thor liked to wait outside for them to exit the Overlord Rank dungeon.

Axel nodded. "We were informed that there was an Overlord Ranked High Priestess here in the Darklight Host. If it weren't for the unique circumstances, she would have likely been nominated for the role of Matron.

However, with so many dragon eggs, it was deemed to be appropriate to send actual dragons for the job, so she wouldn't get bullied."

The thought made Dana laugh quietly. Bullying Tessa was not easy.

Chapter 1302 Find Your Place

"I have made you a map of the space so that you know where the major landmarks are, and where the eggs are incubating. However, these lovely ladies are the caretakers of the space, and in charge of the alchemy ingredient fields.

All the fields, actually, but most of what we grow is Alchemy ingredients." Karl explained.

"Is there formal housing? Or should we construct something?" Axel asked.

"We have a replica of the Drodh Guild House here, and that will work for a base of operations, but there is also a small city built inside the mountain. That is much larger, and suitable for an orphanage facility, as it has dragon sized entrances on the upper levels.

I don't know how all the species react to being underground, though." Karl explained.

"What was your plan if the Church didn't send people?" The red dragon asked curiously.

"To have Tessa gather them for meals and lessons, then to let them just do dragon things for the rest of the day. It's worked out alright for Button, and she's becoming a responsible member of society." Karl's explanation fell flat when everyone turned to see that the little dragon had not transformed to use cutlery, and was face deep in a bowl full of breakfast.

"Bad example. But you get my point."

Lyric laughed, and Button shrugged. She intended to keep playing in the water and didn't want to put on her dress until she was dry again.

"Why don't we go look at the housing situation, and then we can decide if we need to make more, or if it is sufficient?" Axel asked.

Karl took a bowl of breakfast, and nodded in agreement. "First, take a moment to get to know the locals, then we will head over. It's a bit of a walk, or we can fly.

Is everyone in the group a dragon? Or do we have dragonkin?" "All dragons in this group. Your Guild already had dragonkin, I believe. Or humans that were becoming dragonkin as they gained favour of their Gods. Which is really the same thing from our point of view." Axel agreed.

"Wonderful, then we can fly instead of taking the portals." Karl announced.

The dragons immediately got excited, and even Button hurried to finish her food and run into the lake to wash herself clean in anticipation of a morning flight.

If Karl was here, then Cara was here, and she would fly at an appropriate speed. Hawk too. Hawk thought that he might really enjoy flying with her, and not just because she stopped every fifteen minutes to beg for snacks.

Karl finished the surprisingly tasty combination of eggs and tomatoes over potato, and handed his plate back to the cleanup staff. "Alright, everyone ready to transform? Dana, you can hop on my back, or fly along with us." He suggested.

Dana laughed at his suggestion. While she could fly fast enough to keep up with casual dragon flight, it was exhausting to do for long. They might be headed to the housing areas, but they certainly wouldn't go straight there.

That was never how it worked.

Karl transformed, and the other dragons stared at him for a moment. "What sort of spell effect is that? I swear he's turned into an actual dragon." Bertie remarked.

{It's called Avatar. It gives me this wonderful World Dragon form. I thought that it was only proper to go as a dragon, since everyone else is.} Karl joked.

The young red dragon transformed, and then laughed when she realized that she was less than a third of Karl's size, despite being an Overlord.

Red dragons were among the larger of the chromatic dragons, but Karl's Avatar form was naturally oversized, even for a Mythic Rank dragon, though he wasn't using any skills to increase it.

Dana leapt up onto his back, and Karl locked her in place with [Eternal Lightning] so that they could fly freely without any need to hold on.

Then, the rest of the dragons transformed and Cara came out to join her partner in pranks for an outing. Now that everyone was going to be distracted by the inspection of the Tiny World, it was a perfect opportunity for them to 'explore' as well.

As they flew away, one of the dragons discretely cast a tracking spell on them, so she could find them later. A sensible measure to keep track of the most likely troublemakers within the Tiny World.

Unfortunately for her, the moment that she turned away, Cara also discretely dispelled the effect so that she could sneak off with Button to play in the mountains. The dragon sighed dramatically as she realized what had happened the moment the spell vanished, but didn't try to chase them down.

This was a restricted space, and they would come back when they got hungry.

Or bored.

{The first thing we should do is the grand tour. If you follow me, we will cross the lake, and then view the grassland region, which is mostly open, with some alchemy crops in it.} Karl began as he led a casual procession through the sky.

'Some Alchemy crops' was a massive understatement at this point, as almost the entire region was full of low grade magical plants. But they formed the basis for the most common healing potions that the shop sold, so they needed a lot.

Not the hundreds of acres that they had, but perhaps one day in the distant future they would have enough alchemists to make that many.

{Then we have the tropical forest, where you will find more alchemy ingredients, as well as a number of clusters of dragon eggs that were aligned to the nature element. Down there on your right, you will see some of our workers checking on them now.} Karl continued, while he waved down at the druids.

They waved back, pretending that they weren't confused by the group of twenty dragons that had suddenly appeared above their territory.

{Next is the swampland. This is one of our busiest regions, as there are so many rare ingredients that love the hot and humid atmosphere. There are also many dragon eggs along the shore here, next to that camp.

Finally, we have the food crops, the training areas and the Guild House before we reach the mountains.

Near the top of that flat peak is the entrance to the underground city, with more dragon eggs, and behind the ridge is a collection of hot springs for relaxation.

I will let you tour a while on your own, and then we can explore the underground city.} Karl finished.

{Is the delay so that you can find the forest dragon and undo whatever she got up to with the badger?} One of the red dragons asked.

{No, we will find them soon enough. It's just so that everyone can pick the place where they feel most comfortable, free from my pressure.} Karl explained.

That was perfect. They could pick their own spots, and the blue dragons could argue about what would be the best place to put the school, given the options of terrain and existing structures.

They might also opt to build a whole new school here, but that was up to them.

Chapter 1303 Maybe This Spot

And argue is what they did. The red dragons went straight to the replica Guild House to see if it was suitable as their base of operations, the residence for the instructors and guardians.

The blue dragons circled near the top of the airspace so they could see all of the options as they argued about the choices, and the Silver Dragon went straight for the training ground to inspect the spells that Karl had put in to make training targets and smashing poles.

To him, that was much more interesting than small things like where he would sleep, or where they would be teaching dragons that hadn't even hatched yet. The magic was right here, and it was active. The rest could be sorted out when it was actually important, like tomorrow when he got tired.

Karl circled with Dana for a few more minutes, then decided to land at the Guild House replica, where it appeared that the majority of the red dragons had agreed to move.

There was plenty of room, technically.

The only issue that might occur was that the rooms were designed as soldier's dorms, and then converted to worker spaces. So, there were only a few nice rooms up top, and then dozens of small ones on the second floor with communal showers and facilities.

"Ladies, good day. I know that this might not be the perfect housing, as it is already partially in use." Karl began.

"Oh, that's fine. From what we can tell, it's only the second floor that has units in use, and there are extras for the Patron and Matron. The rest of us are all single, and it's normal for Orphanage Matrons to live simple lives.

Well, relatively simple. There is a lot of magic in this place already." Bertie explained.

Oban, one of the two Bronze Dragons, chuckled. "That is true, everything is covered in Runes. But these rooms are far nicer than the dorms at any Dragon Temple. I believe that the Golden Dragon Nation keeps to the penitent cells model for church rooms, do they not?"

Karl frowned. "With the single bed and dresser in a stone room with a slit window?" The dragon nodded. "That's the one. We all lived in them for most of our young lives. I think that the only ones who didn't were Raist and one of the blue dragons, who grew up in Libraries instead of Orphanages.

Neither of them are Clerics, just dragons representing their aspects."

"Oh, that makes a lot of sense. For some reason, I thought that with all the wealth of the Dragon Isles, that the standards in the Churches would lean toward luxury." Karl realized.

Oban shook his head. "No, that would upset the gods. Any other dragon can gather their own hoard and live in luxury, but we're Clerics, we promised to devote our lives to our Gods and Goddesses."

Dana smiled at the Bronze Dragon. "That makes perfect sense. Too much luxury just leads to distractions from your work. I'm sure that once the hatchlings come, you will have more than enough work to keep you busy without going looking for distractions."

Oban winked at her. "We're also here to keep notes on the shenanigans that the friends of the Chaos Dragon get up to. Most of the world might not be aware, but the Bronze Dragons know all about the rich history of the Darklight Host."

Dana laughed. "And not just because you have at least one brother in the Guild."

"I will admit that Orthos has been a great source of information. Especially since his branch of the Guild came back online not long ago. Oh, I wasn't supposed to tell Karl about that."

Dana smirked at the embarrassed dragon and patted him on the shoulder.

"Relax, I'm at least seventy percent sure that Karl won't show up at his temple looking to steal one of his Guild members as a partner."

Oban looked at Karl, then back at Dana. "Seventy percent might be optimistic, but I will accept that analysis. After all, they might be from the Divine Beast Nation, but they are still Guild Members."

Karl sighed dramatically. "Oh ye of little faith. There is no need for me to go steal his Guild members when there is an entire nation full of possibly divine beasts there. If we needed another sibling for the group, I'm sure that I could find a suitable candidate without poaching from my old friend."

"You've known Orthos for some time, then? I wasn't aware you had met." Oban asked.

"Oh, get him to tell you the story sometime. I actually met him during the last resurgence, in the city of Bunga. He's taken over the position of City Lord again now that the System came back online there, so he should be easy to find." Karl suggested.

Oban nodded. "Once the restrictions on the continent lift a little more, we will send more people. There are still issues with wild dragons and off world attackers. It will need to be sorted out eventually, but with the limits from the slowly fading curse, the Church has decided to wait before they send a large force in and risk causing a revolution."

Then the Bronze Dragon paused.

"I suspect that I wasn't supposed to tell Karl that either."

"You have an entire list of taboo topics that you didn't have time to memorize, don't you?" Dana asked.

The dragon nodded. "It only arrived yesterday, I hadn't gotten an opportunity to read it before you suddenly arrived. I suspect that it's mostly on the theme of 'don't encourage ideas that will make the chaos dragon start trouble out of boredom'. Or, something similar."

Dana smiled. "That is a good general idea, but hardly needs a letter to remind everyone. However, it's not just Karl you need to be careful of. He can hear all the beasts' thoughts, and they have just as many troublesome ideas as he does."

The only one that didn't was Opal. No, Dana corrected herself. The butterfly would be an exhibitionist porn producer if nobody stopped her. She had become obsessed with Spicy Romance novels and other peoples' relationships.

Chapter 1304 Hatchling

The Red Dragons started to explore the rooms, ensuring that the second floor suites were all the same. There were some small differences, based on where they were, but only the four corner units were larger than the others. That let the red dragons choose quickly, and write their names on their chosen doors.

But they didn't get long to settle in before an emergency message from Cara interrupted them.

[One of the Swamp Dragon Eggs is hatching.]

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have our first arrival ready to appear. In the swamp section, we have an imminent hatching." Karl announced.

That got all of the dragons running for the door.

If the swamp dragon was allowed to hatch in the wild, it would take extra time to tame them again, and even longer to convince them that someone would be taking care of their needs in the future.

If they didn't want a rampaging baby dragon attacking people and livestock for food, they needed to move quickly.

Everyone transformed to fly over, just in case there were other eggs about to hatch that nobody had noticed yet, and a few of the red dragons broke off to go check on the regions that were out of sight, like the underground nest in the mountains.

Karl mentally checked the Tiny World and saw that it was just the one, but he decided not to mess with their system, in case his interference caused future issues.

{The egg isn't alone, is it?} One of the dragons asked as they raced toward the swamp.

{Of course not. There is a caretaker there, an Orcish Druid. Plus Cara and Button, who you met earlier.} Karl explained, using the draconic language while he was transformed.

That was a good start. At the very least, it was unlikely to go feral if it hatched with a caretaker around. How it would react to meeting a random Orc the moment that it woke up was a different issue.

[Ooh, I see an eye. It's almost out.] Cara narrated as Karl approached.

Dana hopped off his back, and Karl transformed back in midair, letting himself fly down to the ground level as the dragons landed all around them.

Most transformed, but a few remained in the scaled forms. To Karl, it looked like an intimidation tactic, a silent way to encourage a newborn dragon to behave and not bite anyone.

The single yellow eye was examining its surroundings through the crack in the egg, and then two small claws pulled more of the shell apart, and the whole head poked out.

The Swamp Dragon's head looked a lot like a Crocolisk, Karl thought. It was wider and longer than most dragons, with a double ridge of short spikes down the top of the snout.

Karl smiled, and Patron Axel gave him a raised eyebrow curious look.

"I was just thinking of something that the Church once told me. It turns out that they were wrong, but not in the way that they expected." Karl joked.

Cara nodded eagerly. [Nacht was wrong. We do have a baby dragon.]

The tiny creature, not much larger than Tian at less than five kilos, broke free of its containment and launched straight at Cara. It had its teeth bared, as if it had found prey, but the Badger was not concerned.

The tiny dragon crashed into her upraised paw, and then flailed helplessly as she blocked it by the nose.

The scene was comical, with a tiny dragon helplessly trying to determine how to use its body, and one amused Chaos Badger letting it run in circles, trying to escape a paw that was simply blocking the front of its nose, not even holding it.

After a few moments, Bertie took pity on the little dragon and stepped forward to pick it up.

"Calm down, little one. You can't eat her, she's too tough. Why don't you try this instead?" She cooed, then began dropping small bits of meat into the swamp dragon's mouth.

That calmed it down immediately, and the small creature quickly fell asleep once it was full.

"Hey, it sleeps like me." Button laughed as the dragon passed out in Bertie's arms with its head lolling to the side.

"Do we know when these eggs were all laid?" Axel asked.

Karl shook his head. "No, the mothers were captured by dragon hunters, and they were raising them to attack locals. These eggs were the ones that were left behind when the camp was abandoned. The mothers either didn't want them, or were already dead by the time that we arrived." "So, we need to keep a close eye on all of the locations until they do hatch. I will cast spells to determine their maturity later. However, we need to let the others know that our job has already started, and get them to pick all their training locations.

Dragons aren't like most species, training starts right away because he will be able to speak by tomorrow." Axel explained.

Karl chuckled. "If he wasn't so frustrated by Cara blocking his nose, he would be able to talk already. I met a newly hatched white dragon once, and it could speak a little right at hatching."

The dragons laughed. "I never thought about just putting a hand over their nose to keep them from charging. It's diabolical, but so effective against young dragons who haven't learned to strategize."

Cara smirked, and Bertie gave her a suspicious look.

"That badger is planning ways to steal and corrupt the baby dragons." She insisted.

Cara made a dramatic wounded gesture, standing on her hind legs to cross her paws over her heart.

"Yep, she's definitely scheming. However, 'steal' might be overstated. I don't think that she wants to take them out of the Tiny World, just recruit more troublemakers." Axel noted.

"That's the same thing, isn't it? If I have to search every tiny hiding space for a baby dragon who has had his tracking spell nullified, it might as well be stolen." Bertie complained.

Cara laughed. The young red dragon had no sense of imagination. It was much funnier to leave the tracking spell intact, then play hide and seek.

Chapter 1305 Under Attack

Karl was about to speak when the panicked messages from the Drodh branch Guild Members began.

[We're under attack. The Gargoyles will hold the yard, who is on the spells?]

[I'll push mana to the barrier. Who knows where Sapphire went?]

[I've got Sapphire. She was at the wharf market, and it's under attack as well. We can't get back quickly.]

[Call the Alliance.]

[Aren't Karl and Dana in the Tiny World? They should be able to come back.]

[Oh, Rae is here. Focus on the barrier on the yard.]

[Thor is here too. But no Tessa or the others. I think they're in a dungeon.]

"There is an emergency in Drodh. You all stay here, and I'm going to seal the Tiny World when I leave." Karl explained hurriedly.

Dana left with him, arriving in the Alliance House, and then taking the basement portal to Drodh's Guild House Library.

Karl left directly with a portal, then sealed the Tiny World. The exit was in the Zilaz Guild House, but it was safer to keep everything out until he knew what the threat was.

Moments after he arrived, another portal opened in the yard of the Guild House, and Deve led a large force of Myths from the Alliance out.

"What is happening? Oh hell." He shouted, his voice turning to a stammer as he saw the situation.

Hundreds of portals had opened all over the city, mostly in the air overhead. Supreme Lady Matilda was high overhead, engaged in combat with some sort of eldritch horror that looked like an octopus, and tens of thousands of Mythic Rank beasts had invaded the city.

Thinking fast, Karl sent out a bounty to the Zilaz mission boards.

[Mythic Rank beast invasion of Drodh ongoing. Nara Group offering cash for edible beast corpses. Buying at wholesale plus ten percent bounty, no purchase limit on beasts from the Drodh area invasion.]

He paid extra to have it ping all the registered Guild and Alliance leadership members in the entire Zilaz region.

It might cost them a fortune to buy up all the corpses, but Karl could sense Mythic presences everywhere, plus the Supreme Rank Octopus thing.

The financial cost would not be the worst part, though.

Those portals didn't lead somewhere else in the world, they led to somewhere much more powerful, most likely a world in the Immortal Realm. That wasn't something that they could easily compete with, and the Supreme Lady looked like she already had her hands full.

"Where is Azov?" Dana asked as she sent her Golems out to fight the amphibious monsters in the streets.

"He's busy. This isn't the only portal that made it through today." Someone shouted back.

Dana turned and saw Lord Drodh with a group of Totem Ranked guards fighting in their direction.

She charged out into the street, hacking her way through the froglike beasts that were spitting balls of magical water at the guards. They didn't look too scary, but at Mythic Rank, they were quickly destroying the buildings along the street.

The locals didn't have anywhere to flee, as there were attackers on every street.

A second massive octopus creature appeared from a portal overhead, and Cara began to drool. [Gigantic calamari.]

Hawk laughed. He knew that food was the true unifying force of the world. But more importantly, every single one of these invaders was a water element beast. He couldn't seem to muster that same level of rage he used to feel against water, but he certainly wasn't going to allow the water element to take over one of his homes.

His Dark Flame Phoenix form streaked through the sky, headed for the giant octopus with Cara right behind him, and Karl turned his attention to sending his golems out to reinforce the area around the Guild House.

They had the city wall on one side, with Drodh City Guards all along it. But they were at least one Rank, and mostly two ranks, beneath the invaders.

Their attacks were minimally effective to say the least.

"Captain! Tell your men to focus on defence, and I will send Golems out the gate to secure the area." He shouted at the demon standing in the observation post over the gate itself.

"Got it. We are trying to evacuate the area, but we can't do it fast enough. Jones is fighting out there as well, but I don't know how long his house can hold." The Captain shouted back.

Jones was a Totem Ranked dragon, but just like the Guards, he wasn't going to be able to hold for long.

Karl focused his mana for a moment and grew a statue sized mana crystal that he placed at the door to the workshop area. It wasn't linked to anything, but it was set to pull in mana as fast as possible, so others could use it.

Then, he added a [Mana Pylon] spell to keep the barriers and defenders full of energy.

The range was enough to reach Lord Drodh, who had joined forces with Dana's team, while Karl's had left the city walls.

[This calamari is too tough.] Cara complained. She hadn't expected it to be an immortal creature when she went to chop off some limbs to snack on. Just her and Hawk were not enough to defeat it.

Then, more portals opened outside the Guild House gate, where Karl's golems were fighting. Mythic Ranked warriors charged out in a wave of bodies, followed by a Totem Ranked mage from Deve's Guild.

"Guild Master, what is the target?" He shouted.

"Everything Mythic Ranked and amphibious. It should all be edible enough to qualify. Send as many as you can find." Deve called back.

"I've got the portal open at the arena now. There was an announcement by the referees, and we've got more people coming once the spectators gather their teams." The mage explained.

Deve smiled. That arena was working out for them in more ways than one. They'd already gotten a hundred Mythic Warriors and a few other classes, and the alert had only been out for two minutes.

Chapter 1306 Giant Calamari

All of the Mythic members of the Alliance arrived in the next minute, securing the Guild House and the three block area around it. That gave the arrivals from the Arena room to gather and stage, in case they didn't have a healer in their group. They hadn't come with a raiding team, they had come from the arena, and many of them were transients, who joined other groups to fight, and simply wanted the bounty to keep their bills paid.

That was fine by the Nara Group. They would gladly take another ten or twenty warriors per group and go out in large teams to clear entire blocks at a time with a single healer.

Instead of fighting directly, as Dana was doing, Karl was using [Earth Manipulation] to make healing totem statues that Tian was passing out in exchange for an IOU token. The warriors were happy to accept the exchange, as they would just turn in corpses to cover the bill.

Some certainly planned to run away without paying, but that would also mean that they didn't get paid for their work here, and there was a chance that the statues could be tracked.

What most didn't realize was that their IOU token could also track them down.

But the healing totem statues weren't personal, they were an area effect, and healed everything that was identified as an ally. As long as the warriors recognized that someone was not one of the invading monsters, the statues would heal them as well.

So, when they spread through the city, it created a massive net of healing effects.

The warriors, the wounded locals, even other teams. They were all pulsed with healing energy.

Karl expected the amount of mana being used by the statues to cause some sort of imbalance in the city, but the open portals that the invaders had come through were emitting energy that was much more intense.

Mana so thick that it was condensing on the windows of houses close to the portals was flooding Drodh, and Karl could feel hundreds of people breaking through bottlenecks all over the Stone Chapel district and the Frostfire Gate region outside the walls.

Not that it would help most of them during this fight, as they were breaking through the Commander and Royal Ranked bottlenecks. But if they survived the day, it would be a large change in their social status.

Overhead, a massive distortion was forming around the battle between Matilda and the Octopus. It looked like they were both trying to pull the other into another realm, but the effects were countering each other.

It felt like the world was breaking around their battles, but nobody had time to worry about it.

There were so many invaders that many had stopped trying to collect the bodies and had started simply throwing them in piles when they cleared a group.

Nobody was fighting alone, it was too dangerous to risk being surrounded or tripped by the frog creatures.

[Karl, we need fewer statues and more stabbing.] Cara complained as she failed yet again to tear through the Immortal Ranked octopus thing.

They should have enough statues to create a healing net over the district now, so Karl flew up over the Guild House, then upgraded the Gargoyles defending the property from Overlord to Mythic Rank.

It might be overkill for Drodh on a normal day, but today it was necessary to keep the house safe.

Then he used the Amulet of Destruction to increase [Avatar] to the Immortal Rank. The first level of the Immortal Rank, that was. Karl could sense that there was more than one stage to the Rank, but they weren't split by separate blessings, just some sort of understanding or power. The giant calamari, as Cara called their opponent, felt like it was one sub rank above Karl. Difficult, but not impossible, for him to fight with an Immortal Rank transformation and Epic Constitution.

The lack of Immortal Ranked skills would be a downside to fighting the octopus creature, but Karl noticed that Cara actually had an effective attack. [Void Blast] wasn't at the Immortal Rank, but the creature's resistance against the spell was so low that the damage reduction was hardly noticeable.

Hawk broke off for a moment to roast a group of frogs that were attacking locals on the ground. [Dark Fire] caused the creatures to wither in a matter of seconds, and Hawk mocked them as he tossed the bodies in his space.

[Tomorrow I will have an entire mountain of frog legs in every flavour imaginable.] The bird insisted.

[You're not wrong. There are so many of them out there already, and more are coming through the portals.] Cara agreed.

Beneath them, Karl felt their surroundings twist as an [Illusionary Domain] was formed, and then elevated to Mythic Rank as Opal's power soared.

[I was in the middle of something! How dare you interrupt?] Opal's mental voice echoed through the area, just before a glowing Elfin figure with the same gossamer wings as Opal's appeared in front of the Guild House.

It was an illusion, but enhanced with an incredibly potent barrier of some sort that made it look real even to Karl.

{New Shared Skill Gained} Reality Warp

{Reality Warp} Epic Grade Mythic Rank Illusion spell. Illusions within an [Illusionary Domain] become solid, dealing mental and physical damage to targets.

For a moment, Dana prepared to celebrate their incoming reinforcements, then the source of Opal's rage flickered through her mind for a moment before the butterfly stuffed it away.

"I've changed my mind. I'm not celebrating the group's resident busybody having a meltdown over her observation of Lotus and Ophelia's date night being interrupted." She muttered.

Opal didn't care that Dana was not impressed. She would show these obnoxious frogs what upset really looked like. The Ophelia and Lotus show was her favourite daytime entertainment, and they had

completely ruined today's episode with some nonsensical security lockdown. There wasn't even any kissing before she was pulled away.

Karl laughed as Opal's frustrations reached him. Dana could sort out Opal's habit of sneakily observing everything. The butterfly wouldn't listen to him without ordering her, and Cara would help her find ways out of even the best worded orders.

Chapter 1307 Defiant Calamari

With the added illusionary armies inside Opal's [Illusionary Domain] effect, the frog population around the Guild House was quickly being decimated. In fact, it was so effective that they were working to secure some of the portals, so that nothing else could come through. Now that they had a grasp of the situation, they could send in mages to try to collapse the interdimensional portals, effectively ending the attack.

Above the main battle, Karl was learning that it was not easy to fight an octopus. This one didn't appear to have any blind spots, and those tentacles could attack or defend at any angle.

It didn't matter that there were three of them attacking, as the creature had eight limbs, and it could fly fast enough that it wasn't helpless against Hawk's attacks.

It certainly wasn't happy about being set on fire, but with the damage reduction of the Immortal Blessing, its natural healing was slowly regenerating flesh and putting out the flames.

Unholy Corrosion made the flames immune to Holy Element healing, but regeneration was not Holy Element. In fact, Karl didn't see a single healer anywhere in this invasion.

[Your weak faction cannot defend against my Master.] The octopus informed Karl, its voice broadcast telepathically.

{My faction might be weaker than yours, but we can still defend. Look below you, we are closing the portals. Soon, your assault will be over, and the city will be feasting on frog legs.} Karl retorted, unsure if the creature spoke dragon.

The Octopus shifted colours to a mottled red that Karl took as annoyed, but there was nothing that it could do to stop the tide of the battle from turning against the invaders.

[Rampage] had increased Karl's damage enough that the Immortal Octopus' damage reduction was completely negated now, and Rae was living up to every letter of the word 'rampage'. Her battle looked more like a blender as she tore through the Redwood Sprawl, rescuing the weaker district of the city from the invaders. The Governor was with her, as the district was the furthest from where the adventurers had arrived, so very few had made it across the river yet, and the numbers of frog monsters were growing.

Karl snapped his jaws and bit the end of an errant tentacle off, causing the octopus to release a [Psychic Shriek] that had people below covering their ears, and Cara raging.

As soon as she found this thing's eyes, she was going to claw them out.

Then, a flame covered [Rend] attack completely severed one of the creature's tentacles, and the octopus bolted for the portal.

[Don't you dare! You are my Calamari.] Cara raged. The octopus flickered between a terrified beige and bright red, and Karl realized that it could understand her thoughts. At least Karl knew that it had a good reason to be irate with Cara and Hawk. They had been planning ways to cook it since before the first attack landed.

Once it was clear of the imminent attacks, the Octopus simply teleported, and vanished through the portal it had taken here. The portal closed behind it, and Hawk shrieked as he doused the area in fire.

He had plans for that thing.

However, if he couldn't have Calamari, he could at least try something new with all these frog legs.

That was brilliant. He had a nice spice rub that would go well with frog.

But first, he needed more.

Karl transformed back to his usual form so that he could fight in the streets, but went all the way to the far side of the city to assist Rae.

A few more groups had come this way, having realized that it was a treasure trove of Mythic frogs. But there were still far too many, and two thirds of the buildings had been destroyed, with civilians running for anything that seemed like it might be safe.

The death toll within Drodh was going to be horrific when the battle ended, and impossible to count, as the giant frogs could swallow most of the smaller Demons whole.

Now that he was back in his usual fighting form, Karl switched the target of the [Amulet of Destruction] to be the [Disintegration] spell cast on the Blade of Champions as a barrier. At Immortal Rank, it was unlikely to be dispelled or broken while attacking the frogs, and it would cut much more smoothly, saving him time while he worked to save who he could.

"Don't gather near the river. There are portals in the water." Karl warned as a group of demons ran past him, fleeing from a group of the Mythic frogs.

"Mister Karl! Is there a safe zone?" One of them shouted back.

"We're expanding out from the Guild House, but I came ahead to try to salvage something in the sprawl." Karl explained.

The man gave a sad shake of his head. "There isn't much left to save. Just wipe them out, and we will do our best to survive."

The most effective way to remove the frogs would be area spells, but he would level the entire city if he tried doing things that way. The damage was already excessive, and the buildings of the Redwood Sprawl weren't in great shape to begin with.

An arc of [Disintegration] cut a pair of frogs in half, giving the small group room to flee for safety as everything else turned its attention to Karl.

The frogs weren't intelligent creatures, and in the Immortal Realm, they would hardly be considered a major threat. But here in such high numbers they had essentially depopulated a city in under an hour.

To prevent others from claiming the bounty on the frogs, Karl tossed the kills into Hawk's space, so he could roast them later, and kept moving.

He didn't miss the fact that he was slowly gathering a following of wounded locals, people who had survived the first round of attacks which had levelled their homes. They had all decided that it was safer to be within sight of someone who could actually kill the frogs, even if it meant being out in the open.

Then, they came around a corner and found themselves face to face with the Governor, who also had a large following of people.

"Here, take this healing totem and guard the survivors. I will keep clearing the city." Karl instructed.

"Thank you, Guild Leader. Your friend Rae is somewhere near the wall with her army of undead." Governor Shin replied slowly, exhausted by his efforts.

"My forces are closer to the Guild House, but we've called for over a hundred Mythic Warriors from Zilaz to come and help. They're working their way here, so if you can just hold on for another half hour, they should reach you."

Chapter 1308 The Key To Advancement

With the followers now somewhat safe, Karl moved on, then called the Epic Guard and the Haint to him so that he could have support at his sides, without greatly reducing the number of fighters on the other side of town.

For a moment, the Epic Golems felt insulted that Karl hadn't called them. There were two of them as well, so they wouldn't deplete the force any more than the other two.

Then they realized that without being at Karl's side, they were free to just do as they pleased, within the scope of their orders.

"Kill the invaders, rescue the civilians."

Simple, but with so much leeway.

To a pair of Dark Elven Kings, that was practically winning the lottery. They could terrorize the civilians as much as they wanted, as long as they 'rescued' them after. And as an added bonus, they would be dismissed after the battle, so they wouldn't have to listen to anyone whine about their methods.

Though, if they could make their way across town, they could go challenge Lady Rae to a killing contest. That would be even more fun than terrorizing strangers.

While the two Dark Elves were considering whether it would be going too far to escort the civilians back to safety collared on a slave gang rope, for their own safety of course, Karl was pondering a profound insight about

advancement.

One of the first things that he had ever been told about gaining power was that people eventually got complacent, or lost motivation, and that was the end of their career.

They would end up stuck in a rut, never advancing, and burn away their potential.

But today, seeing Opal advance because she was upset that the battle had interrupted the chances of Ophelia and Lotus going on a steamy date, he was beginning to wonder if that was only half the story.

Yes, getting stuck in a rut, or losing faith in yourself could stop you from advancing. But at some point, it might actually be necessary to want and need to advance. Cara routinely advanced because it would be boring not to. Hawk often advanced out of pure frustration. Opal had just advanced out of unfettered rage.

So, as all of them were pushing the limits of their species, could that actually be the trigger, the last missing ingredient to the advancement formula?

There was a mining song about a man named Big John who had once held up a broken mine timber, propping up a collapsing mine, so his fellows could escape. A feat of heroism that should have been physically impossible.

But in the context of the system, what about it wasn't physically impossible for a normal man?

That overwhelming surge of emotion and motivation could be the key to advancing.

And if it was, then they might have actually done their children a disservice by making the academy too safe, and too well organized. Only when things went wrong, and they were pushed to their limits, could the students really reach within to get past the bottleneck.

Rae thought that Karl was absolutely right. Torturing and terrifying the students was truly the right way to go about it. Look at how well her Baby Rogue had grown under the threat of being captured the moment that she began to slack off.

That reminded her.

[Once this fight is over, open me a portal back to the Academy, I need to go see Sybil.]

Karl and Dana both laughed as the Epic Golems mentally pleaded to be allowed to go with her. One Rae was enough to terrify a baby Rogue. But the three of them together was enough to terrify the entire Academy.

They might even be able to teach the children something new while they were at it.

Karl could sense that the other teams were getting close to the river, so they would soon enter the Redwood Sprawl, or what was left of it. However, the Dark Elven Kings were faster, and they were at the north gates, fighting their way towards Rae at breakneck speed, aiming to create piles of bodies larger than what the spider and her golems managed.

That seemed impossible, as Rae had the Spectral Knights with her, and they were slaughtering the frogs in a single strike. But the Dark Elves had ranged blade techniques that could take out multiple targets at once, and they were faster to release their skills.

Karl was about to relax and order his golems forward when he sensed more disturbances overhead.

The Supreme Ranked creature that Matilda was fighting had stumbled, and a gout of black blood fell toward the ground, then vanished into Rae's space before it could be polluted by the rubble.

The two Supreme Ranked Combatants vanished in a wave of Chaotic energy, marking Matilda's temporary victory in their battle of wills.

From inside the Chaos Realm, she would have the advantage.

And she wasn't alone. Cara had shifted to go assist her.

Karl frowned. The battle between two Supreme Ranked creatures was not something that the badger should be getting involved in. The problem was that Karl couldn't easily move to the Chaos Plane to go get her.

He did have a skill for that, but it was one hundred skill points. Incredibly expensive, and possibly not worth the loss when he could use them on

{Blessing of Skill} to create new skill books.

That was two artifact grade skills, or four Epic Grade skills.

Not an easy choice.

[No need to save me. The Calamari in Chief is about to get chopped and diced.

It can fight, but it can't properly move here. It doesn't understand the rules.]

Cara explained.

[If you let it injure you, you are in big trouble.] Karl warned her.

[Got it boss. I will wait patiently.]

If Karl wasn't suspicious of her intentions before, he was now. Cara never waited patiently for anything, even when she had seen it in a vision and knew what was coming.

No, especially if she knew what was coming. Because then, the suspense was gone.

Chapter 1309 That's Enough

With their leader gone, the portals began to destabilize. But they didn't simply disappear, they were fluctuating at the other side, and they had begun dumping random creatures from the Immortal Plane out into Drodh City.

Most of them only looked around for a few seconds, then went back and closed the portal behind them.

Whatever shit show was going on here was not their problem, and they had no intentions of getting involved in someone else's mess when the whole city

smelled like Chaos and Supreme Rank blood.

It was a presence that no denizen of the Immortal Realms would mistake, as a Supreme Ranked creature was likely to be the overlord of an entire world.

Not something that they wanted to mess with. Especially if something here could make it bleed.

Others were either unable, or unwilling, to go back to where they had come from.

Some of the portals had dumped out the occupants of slave pens full of

creatures under Immortal Rank, others had opened in the open ocean, and the creatures that were capable of returning to the ocean, or who could swim and found no major threats, simply stayed.

Not everything that was powerful was sentient.

Some just wanted decent feeding grounds and fewer predators.

With Cara gone to the Chaos Plane, Karl focused on using [Nullify] to close the portals, which were no longer supported by their creator.

Transforming back into the Avatar of the World Dragon made it easier to close the portals, as the dragon body was more attuned to realm traversing magic. It also allowed him to cast [Nullify] from above, with a much better view of his targets.

Ten at a time, Karl closed the portals, and the invasion slowly began to trickle to a halt, with no new creatures appearing, and the Myths from Zilaz clearing what was left.

Karl could tell that some of them were upset that they had arrived late and didn't get as many bounties as they wanted. But after seeing the death and destruction in the city, nobody was in any mood to petition for Karl to slow down the effort to end the invasion.

There wasn't much left in the city that wasn't at least damaged, and most of the Redwood Sprawl was completely destroyed.

The Frostfire Gate region was the most intact, as that was where Karl and the others had started from. But the Palace was also mostly intact.

It had taken some visible damage, but it was a workday, so the district guardians and the City Governor would have been at the Palace when everything started.

The docks were also partially intact. That was where Sapphire had been shopping when the attack started, and the blue dragon had carefully gathered everyone that she could into a building with an [Eternal Lightning] barrier over it.

Karl was nearly finished closing the portals that had opened in the ocean when he noticed a large rock floating in the water.

Now, rocks weren't normally interesting, but they normally didn't float either.

So, he flew down to get a better view, and realized that it wasn't a rock but a huge egg.

[I bet this one is a brother!] Remi cheered.

[It had better be a brother, we're outnumbered.] Hawk agreed.

[Can it be a calm sister to teach the others how to behave?] Thor joked, then began to laugh at Rae and Cara's annoyed responses.

[Why will it be either? Is there something special about weird eggs?] Tian asked, confused.

[Oh, right! You weren't here for all of it. Collecting eggs is how Karl got most of us. And this looks like a promising egg. It came from the Immortal Realm, which means it's from something that can survive there long enough to reproduce.

If it can survive in the Immortal Realm, it isn't too weak.

If it's not weak, it should have cool skills, and that means it might be interesting enough to be one of us.] Remi explained.

Tian understood. Interesting beasts belonged with them. Where else could they grow up big and strong? But was it going to be a strong enough one to grow with them? How did you even tell from an egg?

Tian came out to inspect the huge grey thing. It didn't look like an egg, it wasn't even an oval. It was kind of lumpy.

But there was definitely something inside, and it was Mythic Rank.

If it was Mythic as a baby, it should be as strong as him or stronger. It came from a strong place, though, so it might have gotten a bump just from being in

that place.

Still, it shouldn't be too weak.

[What do we do with it? Does it just get an automatic space?] He asked.

Karl laughed at his confusion. [I have one space available to form, and I have a skill that will let me add more if I need them. I can make a space for it if we're going to keep the egg.]

Tian rolled it over. It looked like stone, but it wasn't from the earth element. Maybe nature? But not quite normal nature element. Could that be because it came from another world?

It was a very curious floating object.

Even more interesting, it seemed to pulsate when he spun it in the water.

[I think that you're making it seasick.] Thor noted.

[Are we making wagers on what it's going to be?] Cara asked as she watched the ongoing fight between Matilda and the Takoyaki Supreme. [Shouldn't it be a squid or Octopus? They're the strongest things we've seen today.] Thor pondered.

[But it appeared after the portals went crazy, so it might be from somewhere random.] Remi countered.

[It floats, so it should be from a water place, right?] Tian asked.

[I don't think that's how it works. Water creature eggs are usually hidden on

the bottom where they're hard to burn.] Hawk complained.

Dana's mind joined the conversation. [Are you picking a new sibling? Where did you even find it?]

[It's floating in the ocean. It came out of a portal, and we don't know what it is, except that it's a Mythic Rank egg.] Tian replied happily.

[So, naturally, you need to keep it and find out what is inside.]

[See, Dana gets it. Put it in a space and let's see what we win.] Cara cheered.

Chapter 1310 Get Your Bets In

Karl focused on the beast spaces to form a new one at the Mythic Rank, and filled it with mana, so that the new arrival would be comfortable when they hatched.

[Drumroll please.... DUH, DUH, DAH] Cara narrated as Karl prepared the space.

A gentle touch transferred the egg into the newly created beast space, and everyone held their breath, waiting for the notification.

{Partner Bond Accepted}

{New Beast Bonded} False Island Giant Turtle

{Name} Leo

{Rank} Mythic

{Shared Skill} [Implacable] The False Island Giant Turtle is eternal. Sleep, Confusion and Stamina Loss effects do not affect the False Island Giant Turtle.

[Ooh! That is a good one. Do you see that, Dana Mage? The Karl will no longer ever run out of stamina or get sleepy.] Opal cheered.

[There is something wrong with your brain. I am restricting your reading materials.]

The empty space began to change, with the formless void slowly turning into a large island surrounded by warm salt water. A few trees formed on the island, but the others immediately began to make offerings, placing plants that they thought Leo might like in his space.

The egg hadn't hatched yet, but the plants shifted to grow evenly spaced around the island.

[Not even hatched yet, but he's got a decent sense of decor.] Remi noted.

The egg rocked a little, as if the occupant was half asleep, and not in any hurry to escape their confinement.

Then, the thick grey shell tore, and a deep green turtle's head emerged.

Leo looked around at his domain, then nodded and began to tear a larger hole in the leathery shell of the egg with his beak.

[This is just agonizingly slow.] Remi noted.

[I am a turtle, not a Crocolisk. Why are you in such a hurry?] Leo replied, even his mental voice slow and measured, with a slight drawl.

[Do you like swamps?] Remi asked hopefully.

[Swamps are nice. Warm and earthy. Not as good as clean fresh water, though.] Remi smiled. The turtle got it.

The swamp was the best place to be, but getting muddy sucked.

Leo chuckled softly as he freed himself of the shell, then floated into the air.

[I have ways around getting muddy.]

Remi giggled, and then transformed into Spirit Snake form, which could float above the ground just as easily as the giant turtle.

[He's a crunchy Remi.] Hawk gasped.

Leo gave the bird a confused look. While they both had levitation abilities, didn't the bird also have them? His flames would keep him aloft, there was no need to flap his wings just to hover.

[He means that we're both floating water element creatures. Hawk has a personal enmity with water magic that stems from repressed childhood trauma.] Remi explained.

When she put it that way, it felt like an insult, Hawk decided.

But this new brother didn't seem half bad. He might be from the water, but he wasn't really watery.

[I'm not a water element creature, you know. I might live on islands and in the ocean, but my innate Elemental affinities are for nature and gravity, not water.] Leo explained.

Thor got excited as he heard that news. This might be another brother who appreciated a proper smashing post.

[Enough slacking. How is the battle in the city going? Let your new brother get used to his surroundings and have breakfast while you work.] Karl demanded. Cara was still engrossed in the battle between Matilda and the Seafood Special To Be, but Rae quickly got back on track and continued to clear out the last remaining beasts that had come through the portals.

The only issue was that not all of what came through appeared to be hostile. Some of them were trying to hide among the population, and some were simply fleeing the city, either by land or sea.

In the Immortal Realm, those who could not reach Immortality held no value at all, and those who were not born Immortal but reached Immortality were only viewed as being marginally better than animals in the eyes of the most powerful.

Having the misfortune to be trapped under the rule of any such creature was a nightmare that they were glad to escape. Even if they knew nothing about this world.

The aftermath of the event would have wide-ranging effects on the whole nation, but Drodh was in a terrible situation right now, with the capital city destroyed, a large portion of the population dead or missing, and now potentially dozens of powerful invasive beasts loose in the wilderness.

However, the portals were all closed now, and the fight in the city was all over except the cleanup and rescue efforts.

Karl followed his senses to help dig out people buried in the rubble, a task made easier by the fact that he was in the Redwood Sprawl, and most of the buildings had been single story wooden structures.

Even though they had collapsed on their occupants, only the most heavily injured were unable to free themselves. Remi even made a healing totem for Karl to carry so that anyone nearby would recover, and could call for help if needed.

Outside the city walls, the situation would be worse, but the recovery efforts even easier, as most of the housing was tin shacks once you got further away

from the walls.

The destroyed buildings had hidden them from the frogs, who relied more on their sense of sight and movement than their sense of smell, so those who were trapped were less likely to have been pursued.

The frogs had shown no intention of digging when there was still more food at surface level.

Karl pulled the rubble of a ruined house to one side, revealing the cellar stairs, and a group of obsession Demons cautiously stared back at him, unsure of whether he was a friend or enemy.

For about three seconds, before they realized who it was.

"Mister Karl! I knew that the Darklight Host would come to save the Sprawl!"

One of the young men cheered.

"The monsters are almost all gone, we're just searching for any that might be hiding, while we look for the wounded. If you head across the river toward the

Guild House, you'll find more supplies waiting.

There isn't much left in this region." Karl explained.

"Oh. Thank you, Guild Leader. We hid as soon as the fighting started, and then

the building collapsed, so we just waited. This attack, it's worse than anything I've seen before.

But Drodh will rebuild. I'm certain of it."