

Beast Master 1361

Chapter 1361 Watch and Learn

The thought of using magic in new ways was wonderful to Rue, but it also

caught the attention of a certain someone who had been lingering outside their door.

"Librarian Barry, welcome. Would you like to join us?" Karl asked as he sensed the dragon about to knock.

The blue dragon stared in wonder at the open field that Karl had turned the apartment into.

"That would be lovely. I see that you already started with the showing off your power portion of the lesson." The blue dragon replied, unashamed of being caught eavesdropping.

Then, a second dragon appeared at the end of the hall, and Crown Prince Lukas followed the Librarian into the room.

"Oh, this is wonderful, isn't it? The illusions feel so real. I can even smell the flowers in the clearing. Avatar, I do hope you won't mind if I sit in on the training session?" He asked.

"Of course not. It's not secret knowledge, even if it is private tutoring." Karl agreed.

"Now Rue, Cara just used a spell on you, did you notice?"

Rue frowned at Karl's words. She didn't feel any different, and she hadn't felt any magic.

But when she looked down, her pockets were turned inside out.

"The pocket thing is for dramatics. The [Pilfer] spell is a most wonderful bit of sorcery, which I will teach you soon.

When others are looking to make trouble for you, they will often seek to plant evidence, or steal a valuable item that has been left in your care. But with the pilfer spell, you can discretely remove it from them, and place it in your storage.

If the incriminating evidence is not found where they say it will be, it doesn't take long for others to realize that the whole thing was a setup.

Now, Sister Cara is a master at placing items in other's pockets as well, but that is not a skill that I would ask a Princess to learn. Nor is it one that would be officially approved by any Royal Court. So, the next thing that you are going to need is a confidant.

If you have one person that you can trust implicitly, they can take care of the dirty work for you."

Crown Prince Lukas chuckled as Karl finished his speech, and Rue turned to him with eager eyes.

"Is what he says true? Do you have a person like that?" She pleaded.

Lukas smiled and patted her on the head. "Of course I do. You know Nyx."

Rue frowned. "I thought that Nyx was your consort? Like, your mistress, but without the fake promises or the intention to marry."

Lukas' face went suspiciously blank, while Librarian Barry began to laugh.

"Princess, Nyx is not a lady of the court. Nyx is an Incubus with a fondness for bold and dramatic makeup." The blue dragon explained softly.

Princess Rue just shrugged. "Is there a difference? My mother was an Elf."

Cara walked over to whisper in her ear. [All Incubi are boys. The females of the species are called a Succubus.]

"NYX IS A BOY? No! He's too cute. Not possible." She blurted out, which finally cracked Prince Lukas' composure.

"Oh, this is priceless. I'm going to have to tell him later." Lukas began, before noticing the gleam in Rue's eye.

She was definitely thinking something age inappropriate.

But really, Princess Rue was mentally calculating where she went wrong. Sure, she'd never seen Nyx in a dress. But his hair was spectacular, his accessories perfect, and he moved with a level of catlike grace that she had been trying for years to emulate so that she didn't embarrass herself during her posture and grace lessons.

Being an incubus was an unfair advantage.

"But where do I find someone like that?" She asked after giving up on trying to understand how a mere boy had managed to surpass her skills.

Karl patted her shoulder gently. "It's not easy to find the perfect person. That level of trust is the hardest thing in the world to truly obtain. However, if you don't have a person like that, you can cheat.

You either get someone to swear a binding oath, sign a blood contract, or gain leverage over them that they value more than their life.

Alternately, you can do like I do and just summon one, should you gain the skill."

Then, he called out the Epic Guard, who stretched gracefully as she examined the room.

"Is that a Ghostwood Treant?" Librarian Lukas asked.

"It's a Guardian, a summoned creature. But she patterned herself after a Haint. They don't look exactly the same, she looks more like a Treant and less spectral, but I have never met a Ghostwood Treant, so you might be correct." Karl agreed.

"You met a Haint? No, sorry. Please continue your lesson. I will ask my questions after." Barry apologized, as he added the question to his notepad. Princess Rue's eyes went vacant as she examined the spells in her class tree.

"Okay, if I go far enough up the tree, there is a summoned Void Companion that I can call on. If I keep that active all the time, it can work as my assistant while I

look for my own Nyx." She decided.

Karl nodded, but Lukas had practical questions.

"How many skill points will it take to get to that Companion?" He asked.

Rue frowned as she counted. "About a hundred if I go straight there? It's halfway up the tree. But there are other good things I want, like the [Void Step] and [Void Shield] spells that aren't on that branch."

"So, it will be some time before you have it. Perhaps it would be better for us to focus on finding you a suitable person. Normally, they will work as your personal maid, as Princesses don't usually have business assistants or butlers.

Not that we could allow a Butler into your room unattended once you were grown." Lukas added.

Finding friends was already difficult, Rue thought. And now she needed a bestie

that wouldn't ever betray her.

She had a long way to go.

Chapter 1362 Training Scenarios

Karl changed the scene around them and created a room full of illusionary Nobles, then smiled at Rue.

"You won't always have that person with you, even if you find one. So, we will start training you in how to do it alone. Prince Lukas, do you mind standing in for our lesson? I need a substitute King to be the target of today's lesson." He asked.

Prince Lukas smiled, and walked to the throne that was set at the head of the table.

Karl nodded. "For this lesson, I will first teach you the requisite skill, then your job is to recover the cursed item before it reaches Prince Lukas. How sharp are your senses?"

Rue shrugged. "Almost as good as a dragon's?"

"Oh right, I meant how are your abilities to detect magic and curses? We will work on those other senses later as well. But I need to know what you can sense, so I don't make it too easy.

Obviously, the three Myths in the room will notice the item very quickly, as I'm making it something you should find on your own. We will work up in difficulty later." Karl explained.

"Oh, in that case, I can feel the ripples in the mana when I'm standing near a magical item. But I can't smell it or anything, like some dragons can!"

Karl smiled. "Perfect. That's a skill that most Elves have. They're quite attuned to nature and magic. So, I will make this one easier for you, until you

understand the process.

The goal is to eliminate the item without making a fuss.

Sometimes you want the traitor to be exposed. Sometimes, you just want to foil them without anyone noticing. Ruining an opportunity will cause them to scramble and make mistakes. Mistakes that will get them into the sort of trouble that they can't lie their way out of."

{Champion Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Pilfer] will be transferred to the Terrified Pushover Rue.

{Matching Skill Found in Skill Tree} Skill [Void Grab] activated.

Rue smiled as she read the description of the spell, which had been available on her skill tree before. It was just what it sounded like, the ability to relocate an item with Void Magic from someone else's person to her inventory.

She could also use it to grab items from across the room to bring them into her hand, like a form of [Telekinesis]. The only real restriction seemed to be that she had to be touching the person to move an item in their possession to her inventory.

Using it to grab things that were just out of reach seemed way more useful. The illusionary Nobles began to mingle, and Cara pushed Rue forward into the crowd to begin her training.

The room might all be strangers to her, but Rue had been well-trained, and shared a polite greeting with the few people who chose to speak with her, and then smoothly moved along, searching for whatever item Karl had prepared.

It was a shiny stone with [Mana Suppression] on it, that was standing in for a cursed or toxic threat.

It should be something that she could detect, and it was definitely one that the others had, as Lukas had looked directly at it when Karl cast the spell, and Barry was scribbling frantically in his notebook.

The first guest came up to present Lukas with a gift, and the Crown Prince chuckled as he realized what Karl had done.

He had given Rue a timer to work on.

Eventually, everyone would have to present their welcoming gifts to the Crown Prince. It had to be done before dinner, so the head of every family or group would be approaching him soon, and handing him their gift, for him to place on the table behind him.

Rue circled the room, making small talk as she looked for the item.

It didn't take long before she felt the dip in ambient mana around the item, but now that she knew where it was, she had to find a way to discretely get rid of

it.

The only advantage that she had was that it was in a box.

She had some shiny rocks in her pockets, treasures she had been collecting to polish later. But Void Grab wouldn't let her swap the items. The best she could do was rely on them to be a decoy if she should be caught.

Using her height to her advantage, Rue simply stepped in front of the guest with the cursed item, and let him run into her back.

He had been on his way to the Prince, with the box in his hands, and nearly dropped it before a second guest caught Princess Rue's hands and kept them all upright.

"My apologies, Princess, I was distracted and didn't see you down there." The man stammered as Rue activated [Void Grab] and straightened her clothes. With luck, others would think that the spell was one for her appearance, and nobody would notice her attempt to rob the nobleman.

"Not entirely your fault, Sir. I was entranced by a most lovely necklace and was not paying attention to my surroundings." Rue countered.

That was a suitable excuse for a young Princess, and the Nobleman smiled indulgently before handing her a polished Amethyst. Inexpensive, but pretty. "As a fellow lover of precious gems, this is my gift to you." He insisted.

Rue curtsied and took the stone in both hands, then placed it in the small pouch that hung around her neck.

There was no good place for a coin purse in most ladies' fashion, or any pockets. So, the necklace bags were a common accessory here in Nar, allowing the wearer to carry a collection of trinkets without filling their inventory.

"Thank you, it is beautiful."

Then Rue moved away, looking for a way to get rid of the cursed item before it

was discovered missing and someone searched for it.

[Finding] and other similar spells would trace the former contents of a

container, even if it was in someone's inventory. But they had a very limited

range, unless cast by someone highly skilled.

There, the perfect spot.

An empty appetizer tray sitting on a table.

Rue brushed by it and slid the item under a soiled napkin, then took a snack off

the next tray just as the staff took the empty tray away.

Within seconds, the item was out of the room, and Karl ended the scenario.

"Excellent work, Princess. Actually bumping into him was a bit clumsy, and caused a larger disturbance than necessary, but it wouldn't have raised immediate suspicions, as you never touched the box, and didn't place a hand on the carrier." Karl congratulated her.

"It seems that she has a natural affinity for quick thinking. Disposing of it with

the dishes was a brilliant move. They won't be washed until after an event, so if the finding is cast, it will only detect the item in a pile of dishes and not

implicate anyone directly." Prince Lukas added.

"And that search effort would let everyone see that the item is not what it appears, as it would be in the open." Librarian Barry noted.

That hadn't been part of Rue's calculations. She just wanted wasn't going to argue against being given credit.

gone. But she

Chapter 1363 Turn Up The Difficulty

"Now that you've shown us that you understand the basics of protecting the Prince from dangerous items, I will increase the difficulty a little. This time, use magic to cause a distraction, and then destroy the item. Void Blast will do the job, but if you have other ideas, you don't need to use magic." Karl instructed.

The scene changed to a garden party, and Librarian Barry took a seat beside the Crown Prince.

"This magic is wonderful for education. To think, he can make entire scenarios with a thought, including the guests. It is so far beyond the basic training methods that we use for the kids that I can't wait to see what the challenge on tomorrow's day off looks like." The Librarian whispered.

"Challenge?" Prince Lukas asked.

"I guess you weren't paying attention. The children are gathering for a 'study session' tomorrow, with Princess Rue. You know how that always turns into a contest. But if Lord Karl is going to lead the session, It should be something like this, should it not?" The Librarian asked.

"Right, a fully illusionary training area, instead of the standard training grounds games. That does sound like it will be a lot of fun." Lukas agreed.

Rue snapped her fingers and waved at Cara. "Right, we have visitors tomorrow. What am I going to do? We usually plan these things weeks in advance so that we have enough entertainment ready for them. I haven't even thought of anything.

I've never even hosted one before."

Cara booped her on the nose. "Relax. It's a study session. I will have the Karl make us something fun to do, and I have the rewards ready for them."

Then she frowned. She was going to grab snacks from the Alliance House, but they were thousands of years in the past right now, and she couldn't even access the Tiny World.

That really limited her options.

If she had taken up cooking like Hawk had, she might have had a chance to make some snacks of her own, but that sounded like too much work when she could just ask the Karl to make a construct that could bake.

Or, she might be able to share the skill.

No, it was one that Karl compounded for Hawk, not one that he had himself. She couldn't borrow it. She would have to work with what she had, or put him to work later, when they didn't have so many people watching them.

Karl gestured to the garden party. "I will take care of the party planning. For now, you have a scenario to solve. Remember, you can use magic as a distraction, but the item needs to be destroyed without anyone realizing what you've done."

Rue sighed, less eager to go back to training when there was a chance to make friends on her mind. But she giggled when she realized that all the people here were people she knew.

Karl had duplicated the guests at breakfast for this garden party, and now she just needed to know who had the target item.

"Will you have her work on different items later?" Prince Lukas asked.

Karl nodded. "Indeed. It's only day one of her training, so I'm going with simple to find threats. It's the technique that matters most. We will work on intelligence gathering and identifying threats later."

Librarian Barry shrugged. "I can work with her on those topics as well. It is part of the advanced curriculum."

Rue made her way through the crowd, more comfortable now that the faces were familiar ones.

"You are evil." Prince Lukas whispered as he realized who had the item that Rue needed to discretely destroy.

"It keeps things interesting. Besides, if you make it too obvious, what is she going to learn?" Karl replied quietly as the Princess made polite small talk. Then she found the item, and it was on one of the girls who had always been nice to her.

Presumably, the target of the cursed item was going to be someone that she didn't like, but this was a training mission, and she had to destroy it anyhow. If she justified it as thinking that others were already suspecting her, it wouldn't seem as bad in her mind.

Yes, that was the way.

"Lovely party, isn't it?" Rue asked as she stepped beside her target.

"It really is. Do you think that Lady Cara will be here? She's so funny." The girl asked.

"Hopefully. Oh, did you know, she taught me a trick with void magic today." Rue replied.

Then she snapped her fingers and cast two spells in rapid succession. [Void Grab] and [Void Blast]. The Void Blast was targeted at the glass one of the boys who liked to bully her was carrying, and gentle enough that it only cracked the glass, so he had a half second of horror as the glass shattered and dumped sticky fruit punch all down his arm.

Rue put her best innocent look on while the boy turned to glare at her. But being in a crowd, it was impossible to pinpoint the source of the magic from a distance, and her friend was also laughing along.

Then, Rue focused hard to cast two simultaneous spells again.

[Void Blast] to destroy the item, and [Void Grab] to pull a fresh glass of punch

from a server's tray.

"How utterly unfortunate. My apologies, I just learned the spell, and my targeting seems to be rather inaccurate. Please, accept a fresh glass in apology." She offered.

The boy simply glared at her, then stomped away, and Karl ended the scenario. "Spectacular work. I hadn't known that you had it in you. But it seems that once we get through the shy exterior, there is a skilled illusionist hiding underneath." Prince Lukas nodded. "If I hadn't known what was going on, I wouldn't have even noticed that you had taken and destroyed the item. The distraction was nearly perfect.

A bit more work on your timing and power levels, and you'll be an expert."

Chapter 1364 Creative Truth

Time passed quickly with Karl creating new scenarios for them to replay, and before anyone knew it, the servants were delivering lunch to the room, while looking completely baffled at the fact that they were plunged into a dark dungeon that didn't belong anywhere within this Palace, much less on the upper levels.

"Your Highness? Do you... need rescue?" The maid asked hesitantly.

Prince Lukas laughed and unlocked the cell door with a simple spell.

"You can deliver the food in here. It will give Princess Rue extra motivation to finish her training." He replied.

"The scene is an illusion I have created for her training. Princess Rue is currently working on a stealth exercise." Karl added.

Sneaking around the Palace was a time-honoured tradition, done by both Royals and Servants alike. So, the staff simply left the meal and departed, ready to spread the gossip of the elaborate training setup that the Avatar of the World Dragon had created.

The Shadow Dragons weren't masters of illusion, so the sight of a whole

Illusionary Domain just for training a young Princess was a luxury that very few of them would ever get to experience in person.

Unaware that there was food waiting for her to finish her exercise, Princess Rue silently moved through the corridors of the dungeon simulation, avoiding the guards on her way to the cell where the others were waiting.

Once she was here without being detected, the mission was complete, so she would know that there was lunch waiting.

But until then, it was just the frustration of being repeatedly forced to restart because one of the guards had noticed her.

Finally, she made it around the final corner, and saw the covered dishes waiting in the cell with the spectators, including Cara, who was snacking on grapes and smirking at her.

"So hungry." She whispered, eyeing the food.

But the job wasn't finished until she got in the door, and Rue managed it just in time, before a guard came around the corner.

"Good work. You've learned to sneak past guards, an essential skill for all Royals.

Honestly, I'm surprised that you hadn't mastered it yet. Karl greeted her.

"But you get in trouble if you get caught sneaking past the guards." Rue complained.

"That's the point of learning not to get caught." Prince Lukas laughed. "She's too wholesome to live." Cara agreed.

"You pick on me now, but I swear, I'll learn all the tricks and become unstoppable." Rue insisted.

"That's the whole point of the training. Now, drink this, and eat your lunch." Cara insisted.

Before Rue could respond, Cara poured a growth potion down her throat, and then silenced her complaints with one of the Royal Rank plums she had stored for her own snacks.

She didn't want to overdo it, and cause Rue's body to misunderstand the nature of power at every Rank, after all.

Immediately, Rue's rank soared. The combination of the Mana Attunement potion that she had taken earlier, and the growth potion that Cara fed her now, plus the bonus mana from a high-level fruit, caused her internal energy to spike, and she pushed right past the Commander Rank bottleneck and kept going.

Librarian Barry smiled. "Well, that looks like it's much more pleasant than the forcible mana overload that is usually used to break bottlenecks."

"Right? Just a mouthful of mana rich fruit and away you go!" Cara joked.

The actual process was the same as what they had learned to do in the Dragon Isles. They were still overloading her body with mana of a suitable rank. It was just the method that changed. Forcing mana in from the outside, or forcing your body to take more mana than it could accept, were painful processes. But your body naturally ignored most pains from digestion.

"What sort of terrifyingly effective magic is that?" Librarian Barry asked.

"Chaos Element magic. It's related to the [Mana Suppression] spell, but works in the opposite direction" Karl explained.

Cara smirked, as she knew that he was lying, but telling the blue dragon that it was an Alchemy Recipe that someone could replicate, and not a spell that very few could ever hope to use would only cause more trouble, and possibly mess up the timeline.

"That's a shame. If we could have someone learn it, we would be so far ahead of where we are now. Just getting the children off to a good start with an advancement would help build their confidence." Lukas replied with a sigh.

Librarian Barry rolled his eyes. "Forget that, can you imagine how happy everyone would be to have that in the Libraries?"

Karl could definitely imagine that. And it was why he wasn't volunteering to give it to them. By the time that the next resurgence rolled around, there were only a few dozen viable spell books in the blue dragon Libraries.

What had happened in the meantime, he didn't know. But it was most likely down to transcription errors after the System faded, and there was no way to verify if they had gotten it perfect.

Without the Inscriptionist skill, it was just someone copying a book, and the magical meaning behind it was lost.

So, it might be possible to study the books and still learn the skill, but it wasn't a skill book in the true sense of the word. Even with the best efforts of the blue dragons, and their innate magic, you couldn't expect a written tome to last more than a thousand years, and it was at least five times that long between resurgences.

Even the calendar was mostly lost to time during the low tide of the ley lines.

"We might not be able to give you this skill, but I'm sure that we can work out something for you to teach to the others before we go. We're not going to be here forever, so someone will have to take up the teaching position once we've returned home." Karl suggested.

Barry smiled. "I knew that the Emissary of the Chaos Dragon would be a reasonable man when it mattered most."

Lukas didn't look convinced that this was the important time to be reasonable.

Karl was clearly hiding much more regarding both his mission and his skills. But the Librarian was happy, and that was an improvement over him yelling at everyone who made noise in the Library.

Chapter 1365 Rue-mors

Moments later, on the other side of the Palace, panic shook the quiet murmurs of the Royal wing's staff.

"Did you hear? Princess Rue advanced a Rank today. I heard that the Emissary has a technique that will help her break through again within a month, and then she will be ahead of nearly all the other children at her age." One of the cleaning staff whispered to the woman working next to her.

"He gave her Void Magic as well. I heard that he might be grooming her as a future Concubine to the next King" The other woman, a young Sand Dragon, replied.

"Do you really think so?"

"I heard that the Crown Prince and the Librarian are both in the suite with her and the Emissary for a training session. What else could she be training for?"

Both women fell silent as soft footsteps came around the corner, and a procession of Royal Guards approached.

"Your Majesty." They whispered, bowing as the Queen and her escorts passed. The Queen scowled at the two gossips, but held her rage in until she was in her suite.

"Did you hear that? Already the rumours are started. One measly breakthrough, and already the staff are talking about her like she's a legitimate Royal. Someone get me the Seer, I need a new reading." She demanded.

Her guards, having anticipated this demand, rushed out, and escorted the waiting Seer in.

The woman was a white dragon, stooped with age, and blinded by the curse of her class. Seers could foretell the future and read the past, but never see the present. Their eyes were permanently fogged.

"Your Majesty. What would you like for me to find you today?" The Seer asked politely, facing an empty wall.

"I wish for you to tell me the future of the Princess named Rue." The Queen replied irritably.

The seer smiled gently as she bowed, and then turned to face the Queen's voice.

"Of course. Now that the curse is lifted, her future will have changed. Every decision made ripples through time, changing outcomes." She began.

Then, she paused as she was lost in a vision.

The Princess stood transformed, a Void Dragon coming into her own as a young adult. Beside her stood a massive Shadow Dragon, wearing the crown of a King, as he placed an onyx studded crown upon her head.

For a moment, the Seer was about to deactivate her skill and tell the Queen what she had seen, but something at the edge of her perception caught her attention.

The city outside the palace was celebrating, chanting her name. But that was of little consequence. Such events happened even for birthdays.

No, what had caught her attention wasn't the crowd, it was a lone woman, glaring up at the Palace, wearing a stained dress that spoke of faded glory.

The Queen herself stood deposed, wearing rags pieced together from old Royal castoffs, her power level crippled, despite being a mighty adult Shadow Dragon.

Then, the scene changed, moving back in time as the Seer focused on the Queen.

"I have warned you, time and time again. But you never listened, even after you were stripped of your throne and demoted to concubine. Now look what you've brought upon yourself." The King was telling her, immense sadness in his tone.

Abruptly, an outside force slammed into her vision, as if a wall of interference had stopped her from seeing more of the future, and the Seer collapsed on the floor.

"Seer, are you alright? What of the future? Tell me, what did you see?" The Queen demanded.

The Seer slowly shook off the pain of being forcefully ejected from a vision, and moved to a seated position on the floor, still unable to stand.

"Your Highness, I have seen the future of the girl. Her future has diverged from her past. By the time she is a mature woman, she will have the power to assume the form of a Void Dragon. On the day of her greatest glory, she will stand beside the King with pride.

But beyond that, the future is murky. Something is blocking my sight, I could not see the path that led her there, only the end of the journey." The Seer answered, speaking softly.

"What of that Emissary? Is he part of her future?" The Queen asked.

The Seer shook her head. "By the time that she reaches her peak, he will be gone. He was not in the vision."

The Seer carefully considered her next words. What she said would determine the fate of the Queen, and perhaps of the Kingdom. A simple warning, if heeded, was all that it would take.

But she chose to remain silent.

The Queen knew now that the dragonkin Princess was destined for greatness. It was up to her free will to make the right decisions.

If she did not, she was the only one to blame for her own downfall.

The Queen gestured for her servants to help the Seer to her feet, and then stared at the old dragon for a few minutes, trying to interpret what she had said.

Why a Seer would never spell things out in simple terms was something that frustrated her to no end, but she assumed that it was simply that only certain aspects of fate were certain, and the rest was too variable to speak with determination before a Queen.

She wasn't interested in vague promises and possibilities, only what was definitely going to happen with the choices that had been made.

So, she had gotten what she wanted, even if it was far from what she had hoped for.

"Seer, I will let you rest. I can see that this vision has taken much out of you, and your health has always been frail. I appreciate you coming to see me on

such short notice." The Queen informed her.

The Seer smiled gently, and curtsied. It wasn't like she had a choice in the matter. She lived within the Palace, and the Queen's Royal Guards had pulled her out of bed to attend to the matter only minutes before the Queen returned to her room.

At least this visit had been a short one, and she could return to her afternoon nap.

Perhaps even look in on the Emissary that the Queen spoke of and see what happened to him that he wasn't around to witness his student's coronation.

Chapter 1366 Dodge and Deflect

With lunch finished, Princess Rue was back at her training, and quickly adapting to her Commander Rank advancement.

As shocked as she was at her new power level, which was easily twice what it had been this morning, that was nothing compared to the absolute disbelief that filled the minds of their two spectators.

Rue was young, and trusting. When Karl said that it was normal she should advance at this rate with his guidance, she believed him.

But the Librarian was not a young dragon, and he knew perfectly well that it was the furthest thing from a normal rate of advancement. Even the Crown Prince couldn't help but to compare it to his own advancement rate, and see his status as a prodigy about to crumble before his eyes.

"Is she really going to make it to another advancement today?" He pondered as Rue devoted herself to practicing her new attack spells and targeting.

Karl had set up a replica of the mage training from the Academy, with a replica Hawk as the defender, blocking her attempts to hit the targets. Simply hitting the target was too easy for her already, but she was not having much luck trying to get past the defender.

Altering the speed of the spell's travel and targeting without making it obvious were not skills that she had mastered.

In Karl's mind, it wasn't really important to focus on this part of her training, as she would have plenty of time after he left to master the techniques. But he planned to make it the contest for tomorrow with the other kids, and for that reason alone, she needed to be the best at it.

Everyone knew that she was just starting, so they would have very low expectations for her. Being able to even keep up with the others would be a huge win for her reputation.

But her stamina also needed work, the same as any other new mage, and when she had to sit to take a break, Librarian Barry was immediately on Karl with questions.

"Alright, now I need to know. What other skills do you have for teaching? Can you just force your student to learn anything that you want? Are there restrictions? Can you do it for anyone?" He began, his words flowing together without time for Karl to answer.

Karl spent a few seconds wondering how he could even explain this in a way that would make sense.

"The skills I can teach are limited to ones that I know, or a compound of skills that I know. But the more complex the skill, the more extreme the restrictions. For example, Mana Suppression is an Artifact Grade skill.

The only people who could possibly learn it would have to already possess a significant understanding of the Fundamental Rule of Mana Manipulation, they would need an affinity for both high and low mana environments, and possibly other restrictions that aren't as obvious.

But if I just wanted to teach someone how to use a Lightning Bolt, then most mages, shamans and blue dragons should be able to learn it. Even warrior class blue dragons have a chance to learn Lightning Bolt.

I suspect that if they could, it might even open a Mystic Knight type class for them, as they would be on the path of mixing blades and magic!" Karl explained. "And what is the source of this strange ability?" The Librarian asked.

"The same as the rest of my skills, I suppose. I have become the Avatar of the World Dragon, so I will just say that the System is the reason." Karl replied with a shrug.

Librarian Barry smiled. "So, they're from your Skill Tree, not a fortuitous encounter. That is a good sign, it means that there might be another who might have a similarly useful skill for training young dragons."

Karl hadn't thought about it that way. He was certainly the only one in his own time that had these particular skills, at least to public knowledge.

But this time was much further into a resurgence, so there might actually be a few others who had a similar skill set within the Dragon Isles.

Prince Lukas frowned, the black orbs of his eyes narrowing in suspicion. "What I gather from this discussion is that you plan to secretly teach the Princess more skills that will help her growth, and guide her toward whatever goal you were sent her for

Karl shook his head. "You're only half right. I will teach her more secret skills, but it's not toward a goal that I was sent here for, but one that she set for herself."

"And what goal might that be?"

Karl smiled at the annoyed Shadow Dragon. "That's a secret too. Perhaps you can get her to tell you, but it's not my secret to share."

Lukas gave him a sad smile. "With how poorly our brothers behave, I highly doubt that she trusts me enough to open up about anything resembling her deepest secrets. But that's fine, I will figure it out given a bit of time.

I do enjoy a good puzzle.

More importantly, is it possible to teach someone to make this training ground? That magic is entirely too useful, and it's a shame that it's not available for more of the noble young dragons."

Karl shrugged. "It's not impossible that someone will learn it, but who has enough affinity for illusion magic to make the Domain? If they can do that, then the other spells that go with it are not impossible.

However, it's not that challenging to modify the [Gargoyle] spell to create a flying defender to protect targets. Surely, someone here knows that spell."

Librarian Barry smiled. "I know the Gargoyle spell. I often use them to watch over the Library in my absence, and the ones stationed around the ceiling are quite real."

Karl nodded. "Then you can use a standard training ground with durable targets for the purpose. Originally, I had a Dragonhawk serve as the defender. They're especially enthusiastic about the job if you have a water mage in the group."

Chapter 1367 Learning To Be Social

After a full day of practice, Princess Rue was feeling quite confident with her skills when the next morning came around, and it was time to meet the Nobles she had invited over in the dining room.

This was a mission that Cara had set for her.

The transformed badger would not be there to help her through the awkward parts, or to serve as a Mythic Ranked deterrent factor, so the Princess would have to make a good impression all by herself.

"Good morning everyone." She greeted her age mates as everyone gathered at the table.

"Good morning Princess!" They chorused back, then looked around for Cara. "Miss Cara won't be dining with us this morning. She is busy preparing something with Emissary Karl" Rue explained.

A few of the children looked sad to hear that the strange girl wouldn't be with them. Cara had so many fun ideas that she had instantly made friends with the most curious of the young dragons.

So, not seeing her for the morning was a real loss, even if they were likely to see her later while they were visiting Rue.

"Did you make plans for the morning?" One of the boys asked, unsure if Rue could come up with something decent on her own.

"Emissary Karl agreed to use help set up a special area for us using his illusions. It's going to be fabulous, I'm certain. I was hoping to keep the details a secret, so it doesn't ruin the surprise, but you won't need to bring anything special." Rue insisted.

"Oh, that should be fun. The staff have been talking about his Illusionary Domain all night. Do you think that he will teach it to you?" The boy replied.

Rue shrugged. "I'm not sure if I'll be compatible with it. My class specializes in Void Magic, and illusions are different. But if I am, I definitely want that spell." "Is it that cool?" One of the girls asked.

"You have no idea. It's like a whole separate space. It's not just a little spell that changes the look of a room. You'll see, it's wonderful,"

The kids chatted as they ate, and then everyone followed Rue through the castle, unsure where they were going. Everyone knew that Rue had been moved to stay with Emissary Karl, but most of the kids didn't know where he was staying.

"Oh, you got the good spots over the Library. It's always empty up here, so it's no fun to play in. But the rooms are so big." One of the boys commented.

Rue smiled. "Yeah, it's a really nice room. Librarian Barry loves that it's so close to the Library, so he can come to watch the training. The Emissary knows so much cool magic that it's impossible to send the blue dragon away."

The other kids giggled at the thought of the dignified Librarian pouting about not getting to see a new spell. That would be quite the sight.

Then, the door to the suite opened, and the kids found themselves looking out over a massive garden space with floating targets, an aerial obstacle course, and tables full of snacks guarded by foxkin maids.

"This is... Holy Goddess, it is... I don't know the word for this, but awesome doesn't even begin to cover it. Where even are we?" One of the boys, a Commander Ranked Shadow Dragon whelp from a Noble family, gasped.

"Right? Ooh, they've got the good lemon cakes." Rue replied.

Karl laughed, as they had just finished breakfast, but the little dragons all had an insatiable sweet tooth.

Normally, the older Dragons would keep it in check by not allowing them to have sweets except at certain times, but Karl had simply asked the kitchen to load them up for the day, and promised that he would make them work off the sugar rush before sending them back home at the end of the morning.

Most of the kids had family events on their day off, so they couldn't stay all day. But Karl knew that some of them would surely want to.

Rue grabbed a sweet, and then spun to face the other dragons.

"Welcome, everyone. This is today's party spot. Master Karl, what did you prepare? Do we get to do skill targeting?" Rue asked, with a gesture toward the flying targets.

"Indeed. But I have increased the difficulty." Karl joked, then summoned a clone of Hawk as he was now.

But reduced to Commander Rank, so he wasn't more powerful than most of the kids.

"This will be the goalie. He will try to stop your skills from hitting the targets. Your goal is to hit as many as possible without moving from behind the line of stone in the garden." Karl explained.

Cara demonstrated by hurling a dozen balls of [Disintegrate] toward multiple targets. The Dark Fire Phoenix countered them with a wave of flame that destroyed them all in one shot as it circled overhead.

"I do hope that everyone wants to play. Even the Warriors can get in on the action. It doesn't matter what skill you use, only that it can reach."

For most of the kids, that meant [Slash]. It would be near their maximum range, but they could do it.

"Don't worry, I have games to play on the ground afterward, so it's not all the same classes who have the advantage." Karl joked.

He gestured to one of the foxkin maids, who drew an elegant rapier and gracefully leapt into a large stone circle in the garden that would work as a combat arena.

One of the warriors scoffed. "You think that a Commander Rank beastkin is a match for us? Don't you underestimate us too much?"

Karl smiled. "You can play over there first if you'd like. Fastest to land a strike on the maid wins, and everyone who manages it gets an extra slice of cake."

Now he was speaking their language.

The kids were torn between the two options, but a number of the warriors ran straight to the combat arenas, as they struggled to reach twenty metres with their [Slash] skill, and didn't want to embarrass themselves.

Rue gave Karl a grateful smile. He had thought of everything for her. Next time she hosted an event, she would definitely remember this.

Chapter 1368 The Real Challenges

The ringing of blades caught the attention of most of the dragons, who went to watch the two warriors fighting the maids.

The young dragons had skills, and had been training all their young lives to be the best that they could be. But the maids were made with the [Gargoyle] spell, and were not only more agile than the kids, but faster and in some cases, smarter.

Landing a blow on them was not going to be easy.

Skirts twirled as they parried and dodged, easily swatting away skills and landing strikes on the guests with their blunted blades.

Karl had placed healing totems in the garden, so the bruises vanished within seconds. But the proud dragons did not forget the pain of being hit by the beastkin dressed as the lowest servants.

"Are those real beastkin?" One of the boys, a Sand Dragon Mage, asked as he watched them fight.

"Yes and no. They're Gargoyles. So, they're real and solid, but I didn't invite them here, I summoned them." Karl explained.

The boy's eyes lit up with joy as he watched the fights.

"The head tutor of the Royal Family knows the Gargoyle spell, but he never does cool things like this for us. I don't think that they'll manage to land a hit, though."

Karl patted him on the head. "Just wait. They'll figure out the combat style soon enough, and then they'll manage to get a strike in."

Then a sound of frustration drew both of their attention to the other side of the illusionary garden.

Only a few mages had gone straight to the ranged targets, and quickly discovered that the Phoenix was a merciless goalkeeper. It looped around the grounds, and they thought that would give them a large opening, but it did not.

It just gave them more travel time, as the Phoenix intercepted with ranged fireballs.

Rue joined the mages, and then the young Sand Dragon who had been talking with Karl.

With four of them, they could time their spells together to make the phoenix work harder. Rue was the first to sneak a spell past him by double casting [Void Blast], and letting the fireball destroy the first one, while the second continued to the target.

"Ooh, score one for Princess Rue. That was a great trick" One of the girls cheered.

She tried the same trick, but the Phoenix squawked and used an explosive fireball to wipe them both out.

"GAH! Did it learn already? I totally thought we had figured the trick out." She complained.

Just as the kids in the mage class at the Academy had done, they worked on multiple castings, speed variations, oscillating travel speeds, and even curved routes by the mages with the skill to manage it.

Slowly, they were managing to land more strikes on the targets as they learned the ways around the defender.

But they were also rapidly increasing their spell control skills.

From a table in the corner of the garden, Librarian Barry watched in awe as the mages improved their skills by more in one hour than they had in the last semester of tutoring.

Competing really was the best way.

Unfortunately for the boys sparring, it was not so easy for them to win. The extra cake slices were well guarded, and the first boys had given up when they got tired, allowing a new pair to take over.

One of them was a Rogue, and he was getting much closer than either of the boys before him. His agility was enough that he could keep up with the maids, but Karl knew that was not the only way to win this challenge.

You only had to land a single strike, not win the fight.

The first to figure it out was a girl in the third group of warriors, who started her sparring session just as Princess Rue sat down with the others to take a break from casting.

She fought with a pair of scimitars, which others thought might give her an advantage. Except that the maid was still much faster than she was, and highly skilled.

A cross block stopped the maid's blade, and the girl flicked a kick in her direction, making the maid jump over her foot.

Then, she did what nobody else expected, and rotated her blades over her head as she dove forward. Like a tackle ball player, the warrior girl crashed into the maid. Both parties dropped their blades, and the slender beastkin was knocked to the ground.

Laughing, the maid rolled out from under her attacker and lifted the girl to her feet.

"We have a hit. Now, go grab your bonus slice of cake before it gets stale." The other warriors groaned in disappointment. Why hadn't they thought of that?

"Mister Karl, what are those hoops in the air? Is that for skill targeting too?" One of the boys asked.

"Oh, that's a flight course. Agility training to help build wing muscles. Do you not have them here?" Karl asked.

Cara loved the flight course.

"How does it work?" The boy asked, not seeing any obvious start or finish lines.

"You go through them in any order you want, but you have to go through all the rings. Some you can fly straight through. Some you will have to tuck your wings for. And, they're set at different angles, so you need to be able to bank quickly to make good time."

The boy immediately transformed into a Shadow Dragon whelp just under two metres long, and frantically flapped into the air.

Unlike Button, who spent most of her time going back and forth between wings and feet, the dragons here lived in the city and spent most of their time in human form, learning essential skills.

Compared to the wild forest dragon, their flight skills were incredibly underdeveloped.

As evidenced by the fact that he managed to hit his head on the first ring he tried to fly through.

Flight came naturally to the dragons, they could do it from the moment that they hatched, but they were clumsy and awkward until they had enough practice, and the dragons here had forgotten that. They had become too civilized, and didn't spend much time showing their scales or building flight muscles.

That would change soon, Karl hoped. Baby Dragons should be baby dragons, not human students.

Chapter 1369 Garden Races

The garden quickly devolved into chaos as the dragons spread out between the three challenges, and the sitting areas of the garden, where they could relax and sip on juice as they watched their friends compete.

The fact that the challenges were actually hard was a real change from their usual competitions. It wasn't just brute strength that determined the victor, and they weren't fighting each other, but competing to see who was the best without interfering with each other.

Mostly.

The obstacle course participants had quickly realized that they could use midair collisions to slow each other's times, and the mages had learned to target each other's skills, if they thought that the phoenix wouldn't be able to intercept the spells.

By the time that lunch came around, and the very confused Palace Maids brought in the meals, everyone was dirty, exhausted, and either laughing or extremely bitter about a recent loss.

The kids had gained a new respect for Rue's skills, as she had done well in the ranged targeting skills, and had managed to land a hit on one of the maids. Not even all of the warriors had managed that, so for a mage to have landed a strike without the maids beating her up was a great achievement.

It had really helped her reputation among her peers, and even those who weren't here today would soon learn that she wasn't quite the pushover that she had always been.

Rue thought that it was a bit unfortunate that none of her bully brothers were here to see her doing well, but she knew that they would have caused problems for everyone else, as they were older and liked to bully anyone who wasn't as strong as them.

None of the kids in Rue's age group liked them. But that was also true of nearly everyone else in the Palace.

They were generally a menace. Too high ranking as Princes for most to do anything to stop them, and too unlikely to have any future influence for those above them actually care about them unless they caused trouble for someone who actually mattered.

And that was bad news for the boys.

Because after today's showing, and the favour that she was getting from Karl, Princess Rue was beginning to matter.

No longer was she the useless dragonkin Princess without a class. She had skills, she had shown growth potential, and her bloodline would lead to strong dragons with better affinity to nature magic.

Many of the Shadow Dragons valued the Royal connection, but the nature magic affiliated felt even more strongly about it because they could get that connection and not lose out on the nature affinity, thanks to her Elven mother. With more than half dragon in their ancestry, most of the children would be born as full dragons, inheriting the dragon genes from both sides of the family. But the ones who became dragonkin would still be powerful.

Rue hadn't considered any of that. What she was more concerned about was the fact that she might actually have friends. Real friends.

Everyone had a great time hanging out today, and they had talked and laughed for hours.

It was better than anything she had dared to hope for.

Now, they would all split off after lunch, going about the rest of their day, but it looked like Karl would let her keep playing here in the illusion for the afternoon, as Librarian Barry had been hiding in the corner taking notes all morning.

After over four hours, he would have quite the list of things to ask Karl, and that meant that the Illusionary Domain would remain the same for some time.

"What are you going to do this afternoon with your day off?" One of the girls asked Rue as she waited for everyone to finish eating.

"I think that I will work on my sparring skills. The maids in here are excellent opponents, and I want to practice combining my spells and sword work." Rue decided.

The girl frowned. "I wonder if my mom will let me... no, we have to see Grandma this week, mom was busy last week."

Rue nodded in understanding. "I don't know how much practice I will actually get. Dad is always busy with the older kids or the Queen. But we usually do a family dinner on the day off."

The other kids nodded in agreement. The Royal Family dinner was locally legendary, both for the number of guests at a 'family' dinner, and for the drama that inevitably came out of it.

Karl smiled as he watched the excited kids chatter about their afternoon plans. He was doing well with Rue, and she was integrating well into the crowd.

An excellent sign.

So, as they planned for their afternoon, Karl planned ways to get the dragonkin Princess to advance again and pondered whether to get Librarian Barry to help him scheme on how to build her political influence.

Then, he realized that there was a better option.

If he just told the Crown Prince that he was grooming her to be married off and become queen in one of the neighbouring nations, he should jump at the chance.

He was one of the few siblings that she liked, and he was set to become King. So, a strong bond with her would seem like the perfect opportunity for him to extend his influence. Hopefully, Karl wouldn't have to guide the process all the way to her coronation to be considered successful.

Probably not.

As soon as he got things on the right track, Misty would likely call him back.

After a few minutes, servants came to start collecting the kids, who had all found various reasons to delay their departure, including a few who "wanted to work off the extra sugar" from lunch with one more sparring round or a lap around the obstacle course.

"Why are there tiny dragons everywhere?" Dakkarian, the Avatar of the Black Dragon, asked as he stepped into the room.

"I knocked, but nobody answered." He added.

"Oh, sorry. We can't hear outside with this particular domain in place. There should have been a staff member at the door to let you in." Karl replied. Dakkarian nodded, and waited for an actual answer.

"They are having too much fun, and looking for reasons not to leave. I set up a flight agility training course, and it's become incredibly popular." Karl added.

The Black Dragon ducked as a wayward Shadow Dragon whelp nearly clipped his head, then laughed as the boy managed to clip the hoop with his feet, which sent him careening to the ground.

"Alright, I admit it. They need the training."

Chapter 1370 Send Them Home

Librarian Barry smiled at the Black Dragon's words. "That's what I've been saying. Emissary Karl should extend his generosity to the rest of the Palace and start training young dragons in essential skills using these most wonderful skills of his."

The echo of a divine voice rang through Dakkarian's mind, and the Avatar smiled.

"I think I understand more clearly now. You really must not be allowed to have a baby dragon. After a month together, it would be riding on your shoulder like a cat, just so it didn't miss anything." He joked.

Cara smirked, then climbed up Karl's back to sit on his shoulder, using the large feathered wings of his Tengu form for balance.

"Like that, but with scales." Dakkarian agreed.

"That combo is a bit terrifying, even without considering that the Tengu form is just a disguise. Chaos and Pranks together at Mythic Rank are just overkill." Librarian Barry agreed.

"Avatar Karl, is there a chance that this can be enchanted as a permanent feature of the Castle when you leave? The other children would love a chance to train on such exceptional grounds." Dakkarian asked.

Karl shrugged. "I don't see the harm in it. Making an Illusionary Domain enchantment isn't all that difficult, and I could place the spell on room with all the essential functions.

This one is actually cast on the whole suite, and the rooftop outside, so that there more room for the children to fly. But you can only access it from the door to my suite."

"You can really do it?" Barry asked.

"Of course. I won't even need an Illusion Stone for something this simple. I can just carve the runes into the stone of a room and recreate the effect."

Karl paused as he remembered that they were not aware of his trade skill. He had forgotten for a moment that he was in the past, and not at home.

The Blue Dragon was almost nose to nose with him again, drawn in by the possibility of Karl escaping without explaining his secret knowledge.

Then Cara licked his face.

"Ah, right. Sorry. Personal space. What skill do you have that allows you to do that?" He asked.

"Runecrafting."

Both dragons, and nearly all the staff in the room froze, then turned to stare at him.

"You're a Rune Lord?" Barry whispered reverently.

[I should have told them that it was me. I wouldn't mind having dragons worship me.] Cara sighed.

[You'd still make me do the work for you.] Karl reminded her.

[Not if they were going to look at me that way. The last time I saw that look, Lotus was giving it to a slice of cake.]

Karl's smile confused the older dragons. Was he messing with them? Or was he laughing at their reaction?

"Just pick a room and I will make a copy of this training space in it for the kids." Karl informed them.

He could make it on a statue if he wanted, but that wouldn't be nearly as impressive to most people as altering an actual room in the Castle. An artifact could be restricted or hidden away. But a physical room would become a part of castle lore.

"He agreed too easily." Dakkarian noted.

"Which means that this room isn't the extent of his skills, but something that he threw together on short notice for the kids to come play in." Barry agreed. Cara smirked, and one of the foxkin maids came over to give the crestfallen blue dragon a commiserating pat on the shoulder.

"It's not the end of the world, friend. You'll get to see many more wonderful uses of this skill in the future." She consoled him.

Barry smiled. "Like Gargoyles that display empathy? That's a new one. They're usually nearly inanimate unless someone threatens their space."

The maid winked at him. "Ask the Karl about what he does for real combat trials. We're just guardians of the garden who will play with the kids."

Dakkarian frowned. "There is something wrong with your Gargoyle spell. I swear that they're not supposed to encourage people to dig into your secrets. But I've never seen them speak before, either. So perhaps they're always like this?"

Karl shook his head. "No, I modified the spell to activate it within the Illusionary Domain, then used [Reality Warp] to make them more lifelike. And you know how Foxes are."

The Librarian sighed dejectedly as he realized that was another spell that he was unlikely to ever be able to learn. Having Karl around seemed determined to frustrate him. Every question he asked only left him with two more questions that needed answers.

"What does [Reality Warp] do?" He asked, knowing that the answer was only going to annoy him more than it satisfied his curiosity.

"It's not as extreme as the name sounds. It makes illusions solid at the rank that they were cast. So, if I use a Mythic Illusion to make an army of Winged Void Badgers, I can turn them into solid Void Badgers with the spell.

They're still illusions, so they will only have skills if they're within an Illusionary Domain that I control. But they will otherwise be solid creatures." Karl elaborated.

Both dragons were silent as they considered the implications of that. It was true that an illusion was greatly limited. Given autonomy, it took exceptional affinity or multiple enchantments on an item for the illusion to simulate a skill effect.

But inside the Illusionary Domain, the skill would become real because the illusion demanded it.

The bar was much lower. It just relied on the Illusionary Domain remaining intact.

While they were preparing questions, Cara flew off Karl's shoulder and darted through the obstacle course, passing multiple dragons on the way, and turning one particularly hapless dragon around, causing him to fly back through the same hoops he had just completed.

Then he stopped, confused when he realized he was back where he started.

"I should have put lights on them, so they knew what ones they had done. But that doesn't work with multiple racers." Karl sighed.

"Just one more reason for everyone to watch. Every race needs a good referee."

Dakkarian agreed. "But how do we make them stop racing? You know we're all going to get yelled at when thirty parents have to come personally collect their kids who are pretending they can't hear the staff."