

The First Legendary Beast Master #Chapter 141 Teaching Thor - Read The First Legendary Beast Master Chapter 141 Teaching Thor

Chapter 141 Teaching Thor

Sergeant Rita drummed her fingers on the table as she thought about their next course of action. "Why don't we try something different for Thor this afternoon? You suggested teaching him lightning attack skills, since he already knows Lightning Shield, or is it Refreshing Lightning?"

"Refreshing Lightning" Karl confirmed.

"So, while it might be tempting to develop him into a tank, I think that there is something to be said about the chances of him becoming a durable frontline attacker. If he could learn a few attack spells to give himself a bit of range, just enough to engage or stun the targets before he charged, it would make a world of difference." Rita continued.

Thor considered the proposal. It made sense that he should be able to use lightning to do more than defend. It was most important to defend the herd, but you still had to chase away enemies, and there was no reason not to use more than horns for that.

"There are likely other ways that we can develop Thor as well. Basic things like more regeneration or an illusion spell that would make it look like there were more of him. Training new attack methods seems like the simplest option, though." Alice suggested.

The thought of teaching Thor to make it appear that he had a whole herd with him seemed like it might actually be very well suited to him, and a great form of camouflage. Not many people would question the fact that there was a herd of Lightning Cerro moving together, as that was how they normally lived.

In comparison, one lone Cerro was much more suspicious. Especially if he was travelling with creatures of other species, or humans.

"Illusion magic might be too far out of his abilities, but having Thor with a pack of Cerro would be a great disguise when we were travelling. Maybe we can teach some of the mages an illusion spell like that, which will make the group members look like Cerro to outsiders.

Then we will have one real one to interact with others, and the rest of us will make it look natural, as if the herd was just passing through." Karl suggested.

The tutors laughed at the idea of a whole team of Elites pretending to be Cerro and hiding under illusions. It should work, but it might cause a different set of problems as

the creatures that considered the Cerro a food product would be attracted to them, in an attempt to pick off the slow and weak members.

Compared to the real thing, most of the Elites would be slow and weak members of the herd, and the result could be less than desirable.

"Why don't we start with showing him some of the magical skills, or elemental warrior attacks, to see what he might feel compatible with? There are a wide variety of lightning attacks between the mages and the warriors, so I think that if we show Thor all of them, he should be able to pick the best one.

I know that there are some mages working on lightning bolts today, so we can try that first." Rita suggested.

There were no objections, so they finished their lunch quickly, and prepared to head across the grounds to Rita's chosen location for training. But halfway across the field, one of the other training groups caught Thor's attention.

[I want to try that one.] He suggested, pulling Karl's attention to the Berserkers.

[You want to be a berserker?] Karl laughed.

[No, the smash. I wish to try the smash.]

Karl watched them getting started on their training, and saw that it was the senior year class, all Ascended Rank students, unless there was a Commander Rank among the Berserkers.

"Thor wants to smash." Karl informed the others, with a gesture toward a student who was working on her [Earthquake] skill.

"Earthquake? That seems a bit odd for him, but then the Cerro species all have that large spiked ball on their tail, don't they? They normally attack with their horns, but the tail could be suitable to activate shaking and stunning type skills. I will go talk to the professor." Rita agreed readily once she heard it was Thor's idea.

From others, it might sound insane, but from Thor himself, it might just be viable for him to learn the skill. Nobody would know the beasts better than they knew themselves, or so she assumed.

Plus, even if it didn't work, it would be fun to watch Thor thumping his tail on the ground and trying.

There was no real guidance to what he could or couldn't learn, but if he was feeling enthusiastic about it, there should be at least some chance that Thor could learn Earthquake, or a related skill.

It was physically compatible with him, as the skill was normally activated with a large blunt weapon. Either his feet or the ball on his tail filled that requirement, and his strength was far above the human standard already, even compared to the berserkers at his level.

His tail was thicker than any of their arms, and flexible like a whip, with the solid ball at the end. They would just need to convince the teacher of the class that it wouldn't mess with their students' education to have the Cerro join them in class.

Many of the Professors were very protective of the groups who had been assigned to them, and suggesting that you wanted to mess with their training routine was a fast way to get on the bad side of many of the Academy's staff members.

So, it was with a sense of nervous determination that they approached the berserker training area, with Thor out and prancing along beside them, eager to join the training, but under orders not to mess around until he had permission to join the students.

Karl gave it about five seconds after they actually reached the training area before Thor would have to either be forcibly restrained or allowed to learn, the way he was getting excited as he saw the students shaking the ground with their skills.

It was a bit like the footsteps of the larger reptilian species that caused the ground to shake with every step, and that sensation was ingrained into his genetic memory to mean that a species was impressive. So, in his mind, any berserker that could use an Earthquake skill must be impressive.

Chapter 142 Earthquake

Fortunately for them, the class was being taught by Tank, who was overjoyed to have new students to teach in his class, even if it was a Lightning Cerro.

"Come on over and join the Earthquake group. I know the skill as well, so if Thor encounters any issues, just ask me. But the ones here are all getting pretty good at it, even though it's a very advanced skill, so it shouldn't be difficult to learn from them.

Just remember that they are berserkers, so try not to get in the way of their training." The massive professor instructed.

"Got it. I'm sure that Thor will be fine, he's always been well-behaved." Karl agreed.

The berserkers gave the newcomers curious looks, as it was uncommon for anyone to visit their classes, and certainly not the juniors from other specialties, but when Thor was called out, they all changed from curious to bemused.

The Cerro wanted to learn Earthquake? Alright then, let him try.

They began their practice, with Tank guiding them to correct what they were doing wrong. The strikes sent up constant puffs of sand from the practice area, and Karl activated [Skill Master] while Thor watched intently.

For a moment, he wasn't quite sure how to adapt that to himself, but when one of the Berserkers used a spinning strike with a two-handed maul, Thor began to understand.

He turned on the spot and whipped his tail ball around, pounding it into the dirt and sending up a plume of sand, but there was no earthquake effect, just the brute strength of an Awakened Rank beast.

But everyone had to start somewhere, and after a few more strikes, Thor started to channel his lightning to his tail as he attacked, using up some of his limited mana to enhance the attack.

The first few times he tried that, it just made an armoured tail, but near the end of the class, he struck the ground, and it trembled, while Lightning spread through the sand.

"Now that's more like it. The strength wasn't quite there, but he's got the idea now." Tank congratulated them from his spot across the training grounds.

"He's a natural." One of the seniors agreed, as Thor focused and pounded the ground again, creating a bit more of an actual Earthquake effect.

"I wish I were as natural as that. I swear he's cheating." One of the students who was training Whirlwind laughed.

Karl smiled at the older boy. "I am using a skill to help him comprehend new abilities, but most of that is all him. From the look of it, he didn't just learn Earthquake, this is a lightning variant. With a bit more practice, I think he will be able to use it to both stun and destabilize his opponents."

"Well, if your skill can let him learn new abilities in a single day, I will call it a resounding success. But not only that, it's an advanced skill. Most of the class will work on that for an entire semester before they have it mastered. Now, I won't say Thor is a master of the Earthquake skill, but I will say that he did manage to activate it the first day.

I trust that I will be seeing him again in the near future?" Tank asked.

"Of course. He needs to finish mastering the skill, or at least getting it to a proficient level, with the help of your experts here. I think today proved a hypothesis for us as well. The more skilled the instructor, the faster they will be able to learn a skill. Learning from the first years was a huge flop for Rae." Karl explained.

The Berserkers all seemed to understand the concept.

"Quality in, quality out." One of them recited, as if it were part of their core curriculum.

"It's a logic we use for developing our bodies, but I suppose that it works well enough for learning skills as well. You can only get results from a good regimen." One of the other students explained.

"Then we will have to look for the very best to teach the new skills. With Thor already learning the essentials of Earthquake, I think that we might really be on to something." Rita agreed with a smile.

She ran a hand through her short black hair, a sure sign that she was thinking deeply about something, then she nodded to herself and smiled at Karl.

"How about we take you through the advanced classes tomorrow morning to see what will work best for Rae and Hawk? If they find a skill that they like, they can learn it that way." She suggested.

"That's a brilliant idea. When they see the skills in action, it should give them a much better idea of what would suit them than having us pick for them. Thor had so much fun with Earthquake that I'm certain they'll be enthusiastic about it tomorrow." Karl agreed.

[Maybe.] Rae agreed, hoping it would be better than today.

[Can't I just mess with the mages again? I haven't gotten to intercept water spells in days.] Hawk asked.

[I will see if we can get you back to your accuracy training. They're just very excited to see how well my new power works to teach you all new skills.] Karl replied.

Hawk huffed in annoyance and settled into his nest for the afternoon, while Rae laughed at his boredom, and Thor settled into the pond in his space for a little nap.

Surprisingly, Dana was not at dinner, nor did she show up at his room that night, despite the fact that the rooms on either side of her were going as crazy as usual with the training. Whatever training they had her doing must have been intense if it was still ongoing when he fell asleep, or perhaps they had just left the campus for the day to train in secret somewhere.

There were always training spots away from the eyes of the other students when you had a dedicated tutor, but they had just gotten back from an outing, and he hadn't expected the tutors to be so eager.

So, when he saw her at breakfast the next morning, looking exhausted and half asleep, Karl was both relieved and amused to see her.

"Long night?" He asked as he sat down with his breakfast.

"You have no idea. I was training until after midnight, and then I was chased out of bed bright and early this morning to go for early morning mental focus training. It's supposed to help my mana development, but after breakfast seems like a much more reasonable hour for it." She sighed.

Jill and Rita walked in together and spotted Dana and Karl finishing their meals. The two students had wary looks on their faces, but Jill was smiling.

"Relax, today won't be so bad. I'm taking Dana to meditate, and Karl gets to take the pets to choose skills they want to learn. That shouldn't be bad at all." Jill tried to assure them.

Dana gave a rueful laugh. "That's what you said yesterday, but that focus training was torture. Watching Hawk and the others pick out new skills doesn't sound bad, though. All the berserkers are talking about how much fun Thor had yesterday." Dana agreed.

"See, a nice easy training day for everyone." The little blonde mage laughed, then motioned for them to follow as she ushered Rita out of the room.

Chapter 143 Rae's Taste In Attacks

Karl followed Rita out of the cafeteria, where they met with Alice and Daniel, who were both prepared with a list of the skills that were currently being taught on the campus.

"We aren't sure what ones they will like, and I'm not certain they will know until they see them, but I thought that we might as well start with the advanced warriors. They're the most likely choice, since none of the three are straight magic users.

Hawk would be the closest to it, but he seems to have a vendetta against magical attacks, not a particular affinity for them. Though he did learn a wind barrier, didn't he? Perhaps he has an affinity for more types of ranged magic." Alice noted.

Daniel pointed toward one of the larger training buildings. "We will start there. The berserkers are in technique and theory training this morning, so Thor can join them in the afternoon for skills training. But we have a wide variety of other skills that Rae or Hawk might like.

Also, we have the drake scale potions ready for you. The drake that you gathered was an impressive one, nearly to Ascended Rank, and the potions turned out very well, with both quantity and quality coming out above average when they were finished.

We owe the Alchemy professor a favour still, but I paid for the service with a dose of the potion, so she won't be too hard on us. We can try it out over the lunch break and see how the beasts react to the concoction. It may have no effect on Rae or Hawk, but it should be great for Thor.

With harder scales, and a bit of dragon essence derived from the drakes, he might even unlock another new skill of his own." The sandy haired warrior explained.

Thor vaguely recognized that they were talking about him, but he was almost completely focused on smashing. He could always smash with his horns, but now he had learned to properly smash with his tail, and not just swat with it.

That was surely the way that things were meant to be. All sides of a Cerro could be weaponized with lightning, so it was only natural that the tail could become an even better weapon.

They walked into the viewing area of the training centre, a central area which had windows on all sides to view the various levels of training grounds, and Rita gave Karl an expectant look.

"Well, take a look around, or have Rae and Hawk do it, and let us know if there is anything here that piques their interest. There are quite a few skills being trained here right now, and it's all students in their third and fourth years. The first and second years use the facility in the afternoon." She explained.

[There. There is a good skill being used. The blue seven arenas.] Rae insisted.

"Blue seven?" Karl asked out loud, and Rita brought it up on a larger screen, as the window was on a higher level.

"I believe that skill is called [Lacerate]. It causes massive hemorrhaging from any inflicted wound. Is that something that Hawk or Rae would like?" Rita replied.

"Rae." Karl replied with a smirk that made the others roll their eyes.

"Of course it's Rae. I should have known. The skill deals a massive amount of damage as well, and against inorganic targets, it does as much damage as [Shred]. It's not one that can be taught by a skill book, though. Only a few students have the aptitude for it, and they all start out with a lesser version of it as their first class skill." She explained.

Alice led the way up to the next floor, where they could watch the skill in action directly.

"Will this be close enough, or do we need to talk to the warriors to see if they can spare some time to help Rae? There is no professor for this skill, so you would have to ask the students directly." Alice explained.

[I need to practice it to know.] Rae informed Karl, as if it should be obvious.

"She will need to practice. But I think that I have just the thing. I gathered a lot of moss on the last trip, and I have some drying in Hawk's space. I will trade them some in exchange for their time if they're interested." Karl suggested.

The beasts' attention was drawn to his remark. They could bribe the seniors with shiny gifts to teach them new things? Why hadn't they just done that from the start?

[It must be because he needed that skill. Now, we will have to watch for more good things in the future.] Hawk informed the other two.

[For sure. It's good that we stored a lot of stuff. But the berserkers are easy, they just like to smash.] Thor replied.

Karl knocked at the door between the observation area and the blue training grounds, alerting the students that someone was entering, then made his way to the number seven training ring.

"Good morning. My name is Karl, and I've got a bloodbath spider that is very interested in learning Lacerate from you." He introduced himself.

The senior class student smiled at the brazen young student.

"And why would I spare time to do that?" He asked.

Karl took out a small brick of dried moss, and the student's smile grew much wider.

"Now that's the way to do it. None of the silly haggling or pleas for charity. You said you want to teach the skill to a spider?" The student replied as he took the bundle of moss from Karl and tucked it into a pocket of his coat, which was sitting at the edge of the ring.

"Yes. Rae, come on out and say hello. I'm sorry, I forgot to ask your name, but this is Rae, and she thinks that she would be quite compatible with [Lacerate]." Karl explained as Rae stepped out into the ring.

"Damn, man, now that's a spider. Alright, I am not quite sure how well this will work, but I've taught a few of the younger guys already. Step back from the ring, and I will begin. Rae, you can stay in here, since there is a magic barrier. You can call me Jonah." He agreed.

Karl stepped back and let Jonah work, while the other students in the area watched him showing off the initial mana flow to Rae, who he wasn't sure could even sense or feel them.

Karl kept the skill active with the two of them as the targets, and the flow of knowledge into Rae's mind was immediately clear. Compared to the Nekomata, she was much more compatible with this skill, and after a half hour of simple demonstrations and exaggerated sword swings, she lunged forward with her forelegs coated in black energy.

The training target lit up with red light as her flurry of strikes hit it, and Jonah whistled in appreciation.

[Lacerate activated. Awakened Rank. Total damage score 750.] The screen in the training area declared.

One of the other warriors gave a pained cry. "Seven hundred and fifty? Dragon Gods, have you forsaken me? I have been outperformed by a spider."

Jonah laughed and shook his head. "Do you not know about the Bloodbath Spiders? She's still not even fully grown, just a young girl. Give her another year, and she will be a Commander Rank beast, hitting a thousand points without using a skill."

[I like this skill. I bet I could pop the beetle open with just one claw now. I wouldn't even have to decapitate it to get to the good parts.] Rae informed Karl.

"Rae says you're an excellent teacher, and she's very fond of this new skill." Karl informed Jonah, who shook his head, and gave Rae a thumbs up.

Sergeant Rita and Daniel came out to join Karl, both stunned by the performance.

"If I didn't know better, I would say that was a racial skill. That level of learning is incredible." Rita greeted him.

"Perhaps because it's a class skill of Jonah's? I cast the spell over the two of them so they could communicate more clearly, and Rae picked it up right away. She doesn't feel like she's mastered the skill, but she can make it activate now." Karl replied as the spider and the warrior went back to training.

Chapter 144 Lacerate

Rae and Jonah took turns working on their attacks, with Jonah stopping in between to give her pointers based on how she had activated it the last time. There was a lot involved in the advanced skill beyond just being able to make it work, and the actual bleeding effect could vary wildly based on how you did it.

It was the fine details that were the killer with advanced skills, but Rae was a natural at this, and by the end of the morning, she was nearly giving Jonah a run for top damage. Much of that was up to her Offensive Optimization combining with her new attack skill, but together, her damage was clearly into the Ascended Rank by the end of the class.

"Thank you, Jonah. I believe that she has the basics down now. I may come see you again if she wants more hints, but don't worry, I've prepared plenty of little gifts." Karl informed the older boy with a wink.

"If you gift like that all the time, there wouldn't be a student here that wouldn't gladly help you. Have a good afternoon, and I will check in with Rae the next time that I see her around." Jonah agreed.

Rae gave him a rather catlike head bump, then vanished back into her space to rest and consider ways to make the bleed effect of the new skill more effective. The training target didn't really bleed, but she could at least get an idea of how it worked based on the self-healing gel. When the skill worked better, the gel took longer to repair itself.

Karl was about to leave with the instructors when a boy's voice stopped him.

"What sort of class did you get that has a massive spider as a partner? Is that like some arachnid specialty druid?" The boy asked.

"No, my class specializes in beasts directly. There are three of them in total, and they're not summoned, like most of the Druid skills are. These are actual beasts I am raising." Karl explained.

"Wait, so that is an actual Bloodbath Spider? Not just a skill replica, but a real one, and you just taught it [Lacerate]?" The boy stammered.

More students stopped to stare at the little show, while Karl laughed. "That's exactly right. But she's really a good girl, there's no reason to worry about how skilled she is."

The students looked a bit concerned about Karl's mental health, but it was time for lunch, and that was much more important than an oddball class marking that turned vicious magical beasts into pets.

But the lunch break was not really a break for Karl and the trio. The Bureau of Elite Development had flexed their influence and gotten the drake scale potion prepared for the beasts to try, and Rita had scheduled that for their lunch break, so that Thor could still go to his afternoon Earthquake practice with the Berserkers.

"We can do this in one of the spare classrooms. The effects shouldn't be massive changes, but more of a strengthening of Thor's scales, and if the other two want to try, the effects will likely be even smaller." Rita explained.

"Well, there is no good reason why we shouldn't at least try. The potion was supposed to be safe, right? If there are no negative side effects, then there is no reason not to give it to everyone and see what sort of benefits they can glean out of it." Karl replied with a shrug.

He had never heard of any bad results from a monster eating a beneficial resource, and they would instinctively know if it was something that wouldn't agree with them. Karl fully expected that Hawk would likely turn it down, as he didn't like the taste of Drake meat, though he liked the smell. But Rae and Thor would likely at least try it.

But when Rita placed out the vials on the table in the training room, Karl was startled to see that all three had come out to see what the big deal was with this potion.

"Alright, I think that Thor should go first, as this potion is most likely to enhance his scales." Karl suggested.

Rita held up the vial, and Thor opened his mouth with his head tilted back. He had no intentions of tasting a potion made of Drakes, but he was willing to trust that it would help him. It smelled like magic, so it should be a good thing, even if it was an unfamiliar good thing.

As soon as he swallowed the potion, Thor's scaled began to glow a little more brightly under the fluorescent lights, and a sense of intimidation filled the room, as though there was a large predator present.

Now, obviously Thor wasn't much of a predator, but the Drakes were, and their magic was infusing his scales, which were now slightly metallic in their glossy shine.

The power faded, and Thor rubbed up against Sergeant Rita, begging for her to touch his scales.

"Well, they look shiny and smooth, but they're slightly rough to the touch, like a dragon's scales. They're also less flexible than they were, more like metal than hardened leather. We should have taken a sample before and after so we could compare them, but I would say that the process was an outstanding success." Sergeant Rita declared as she petted the happy Cerro.

Alice smiled and joined the short-haired Sergeant in petting Thor. "Well, now we should choose who goes next. Hawk or Rae?"

Hawk stepped out of his space, eager to get this over with so that he could go back to mentally preparing for his afternoon of harassing the mages. He hadn't done it in days, and Karl had promised him that he would get to.

"Hawk it is. Alright, here you go, buddy." Alice laughed, as Hawk took the vial in his beak and tipped it back down his throat.

The effect was as rapid as it was dramatic. The feathers on Hawk's neck began to change to flaming red as the potion poured down his throat, and then the rest of his feathers changed from mottled brown and cream to a brilliant crimson and gold.

For a moment, Karl was certain that he could see flames dancing around the Windspeed Hawk, and then the effect began to fade, and his appearance changed back to what it had been before drinking the potion.

However, the attempt was not a failure.

With a triumphant shriek, Hawk tilted his head back, and fired a ball of flame up at the ceiling.

That naturally set off the fire sprinklers, and they were doused in water, drenching the teachers while Karl activated the lightning barrier and Thor rumbled in joy about getting rain on his scales again.

Daniel rushed to the door and pulled the emergency stop lever to cut the spray of water, while Alice and Rita cursed and wiped the water from their faces.

"It's a good thing that none of us were wearing makeup today, or I would be really upset at the impromptu shower. But congratulations Hawk on gaining a new ability.

I am not convinced that the process is complete, though. For a moment, it looked like he was going to fully change appearance and become something completely new, and not just gain a new skill.

Fire breath is impressive, but I think that we can do better." Rita noted as she struggled to say professional while resisting the urge to strangle the bird for using fire skills indoors.

Chapter 145 Drake Scale Potion

Karl watched as Hawk shook the water out of his feathers, and then let out another little puff of flame, testing his new skill without setting off the alarm again.

"Do you think that he just needed more of the potion? Like multiple doses, the way that we had to double the dose when I was taking the first round of supplements? I don't feel like any of that potion went to me, it's all him, but I think it's possible that whatever change it was trying to create needs more than just one dose." Karl suggested.

Rita nodded. "That is possible. We could make another batch so that there is more, and then give him as much as he wants until the process is complete. As long as you have more drake scales, that is."

Karl smiled. "I think I will have enough of them. But for now, we can let Rae try her dose and see what happens."

Rae stepped out of the space to stand beside Hawk and inspect him for changes, then carefully took one of the vials between her mandibles and drank it down.

[This is tasty, I kind of like it.] She noted as she swallowed the tonic.

But other than that, there was no visible reaction, and she wasn't showing any other signs of change.

"Well, it appears that she likes the flavour, but that's about all that she has to say about it. Thor might get a bit more benefit from a second dose, and Hawk almost certainly will, but Rae doesn't seem to be that compatible." Karl noted.

"That's a shame. But she's been doing well today even without a supplement. I didn't expect her to pick up on a skill as complex as Lacerate within a single day. If she had also been compatible with the potion, it might have started to push you close to the Ascended Rank already, and that would cause no end of jealousy among the other students." Rita replied with a laugh.

Come to think of it, Karl was feeling a bit more fit these days. It was a small and subtle change, but the beasts were still growing, and it was improving his physique. Not as much as theirs was, but certainly more than the minimal amount of training he did would account for.

"Well, we can save the testing for the end of the semester exams. By then, I think that Thor should be mostly grown, and Rae almost certainly will be at her full adult size. Their growth rate is phenomenal, but their bodies will reach full size before they have reached full strength for their species.

If anything, I believe that we might not be training hard enough for the accelerated growth rate. Rae should be close to Commander Rank when she's full-grown, right? She's in the ascended Rank for combat power now, but I can't say by how much. That's still a huge gap from where her adult combat power would be expected to be, but she's three quarters grown." Karl explained, worried about their progression.

Rita and Alice both shook their heads.

"The growth in power comes just after they have reached full growth. There is a transition from the juvenile growth phase to the adult strengthening phase. Once she stops increasing in size, you will start seeing more power gain." Alice explained.

Rae was content with her power as it was. She had all the skills that she needed to tear apart anything she found, she just needed time to master them. The speed that she was growing was only making life difficult for her, as it was cutting down the time that she had to practice and master her skills before she reached the next milestone.

Karl sensed her annoyance and gently patted her armoured foreleg.

"I'm not trying to rush you, just making sure that I'm taking good care of you." He explained, to which Rae rolled her eyes at him.

It was a strange gesture, with the multiple sets of jet black eyes. It was difficult to tell when they shifted, as they were all one colour, but the shape seemed to adjust as she did it, and there was no doubt what the gesture meant, even without reading her mind.

"Alright, let's eat before we go to the next class. Should we drop Thor off first, or can you keep up the learning skill from a distance, so Hawk can wait for the mages to show up to class?" Rita asked.

"I think that I can do it from a distance, but I learned this morning that it's best for me to use it on both parties so that there is a link. Once I know what else Hawk is keen to learn, I will know which mage I should target.

I'm guessing most likely one of the Fire Mages, as he just gained a new fireball ability. The better that he is able to control that, the more versatile the skill will be." Karl suggested.

Hawk thought about that with a hint of amusement. The mages could split their fireballs and make them go at different speeds. The water mages would hate it when he showed off that trick. If he had Karl help him learn from the Fire Mages, then right by the end of class he could show off his new skills and torture the water mages to death with rage.

[You know, you really need to stop holding a grudge against the water attacks, just because they flow around Rend.] Karl reminded his feathered partner.

[Never. I will never forgive the water spells for daring to defeat Rend.] Hawk replied resolutely.

Karl's smile caught the attention of the others, but he just shook his head and tapped his temple with one finger, signalling that it was a conversation in his mind.

Rita shrugged, not particularly concerned about Karl's inside jokes with the beasts.

"Alright, we will drop off Thor first so that he can practice Earthquake, and then go over to get Hawk set up to improve his Fireball skills using one of the Fire Mages as an unwitting conspirator. Or a willing one, whichever works for you.

Should we find another training spot for Rae? Or is she content to practice where she is?" Rita asked.

Rae took a swipe in her spot, testing the lacerate skill, then frowned and shook her head, unsatisfied with the way that it activated.

[I am fine here. Unless they've got live targets for me. If they do, then I will come out to play.] She informed Karl as she tried the skill again.

"She's fine there for now, unless you've got live targets. From what I can tell, practical experience is the best teacher, and they can only learn so much in a controlled environment." Karl explained.

"That's true for everyone. No matter how good they think they are, the new students are always in for a shock when they head out into the real world. We will try to get you another mission soon, possibly one with other Awakened Rank students, instead of having you chaperone the other freshmen.

That should give you the enemies that you need, as the missions are usually higher risk, and they will normally have one Ascended Rank student with them, which reduces the risk if you come across a stronger monster." Rita agreed.

Karl smiled. They had already taken out one Ascended Rank beast, the Giant Beetle, which he had almost forgotten was still tied up in Rae's web.

"They will all be happy to hear that. Working together, we should be able to take on most threats that are within the mission parameters for Awakened Students."

Chapter 146 Trolling Is An Honored Profession

The berserkers were overjoyed to see Thor back again after lunch, and greeted him with a long round of head rubs and pats that had the Lightning Cerro in full happy puppy mode until the teacher came over to scold them all for not working.

Daniel decided to stay and supervise Thor while the others went to see how the mages were doing, and Karl let Hawk out of his space to fly around for a bit before meeting with the mages in their corner of the training fields.

They all knew the Hawk very well, and what it meant for their training, but the ones working on their shields were relieved to see that Thor had found a new spot to train and that he wasn't planning to exhaust them with his enthusiasm today.

Karl could have sent out Rae to tear apart their shields, but the students would never be able to keep up with the pure violence of her attacks for long. All that he would accomplish was to terrify the students before their next mission away from the school.

If they were afraid that they would run into something like Rae, that could tear through shields like butter, they would be much more hesitant to go, and good mages were essential to party safety on missions.

Letting them train with the warriors was the more humane option.

It only took Karl a moment to identify the Fire Mages among the group, and to activate Skill Master with them included in the targets.

He had to hope that it was working, as Hawk wasn't actually using any fire-based skills as he defended against the attacks, but his mind was relaying satisfaction as he observed the way that the fire mages adjusted their spells, and how they could use the same skill as both a large fireball and multiple smaller ones.

"Was he planning to practice his new skill at all?" Rita asked as they watched Hawk use nothing but Rend to deal with the attacks.

"He is, but he's taking a watch and learn approach until he's satisfied with the amount of understanding he has about fire magic. I'm actually surprised that it was fire magic. He already knows Rend, Shred and Wind Shield, so I thought if anything he would go for more air magic attacks, and not fireballs." Karl replied.

"That does seem odd. Perhaps it was related to the Elemental affinity of the drakes that were used in the potion? If they were descended from a lineage of fire magic users, then it would make sense that the potions would push him toward fire magic.

It might explain the change in feather colours as Hawk drank the potion as well. If the Fire Element was particularly strong, it might have tried to fully convert him from the wind to the fire Element.

Most magical beasts have an affinity, and I've never heard of it changing, but then wild beasts don't refine potions, so it might not happen in the wild except in very rare cases." Rita pondered.

Hawk became more confident in his new comprehension of fire abilities as the class wore on, until finally, it was time for him to show off his skills to these mages.

While his regular attacks went out in a predictable pattern, the water mages delayed their casting, and let loose their barrage of Ice Bullets toward the moving targets. Then, a massive fireball flew from Hawk's mouth, and the air filled with steam as Hawk laughed in joy.

"Dammit, did he learn fire magic just to mess with me? What did we ever do to him? I swear that bird has a vendetta against water magic users." One of the mages ranted, while Rita and Alice tried, and failed, to resist the urge to laugh.

Karl walked over and gave the boy a compassionate pat on the shoulder.

"I wish I could say that you are wrong, but you're not. Water attacks simply wrap around Rend and keep going, and it drives Hawk insane. First it was the Wind Barrier to block them, and when that wasn't enough, he took a growth opportunity and refined his progression into a way to completely counter water magic." Karl informed the downtrodden mage.

"I knew it! I told everyone that he was picking on me, but nobody believed me. They said that I just had good aim, and that's why Hawk always intercepted my attacks. But he really does have it out for me." The boy complained.

"Not you in particular. Water Magic. His vendetta is against the spell." Karl offered.

The nearby mages laughed. "That's essentially the same thing, since he's only good at one element."

Hawk chirped happily, but Karl could pick up a bit of taunting in that noise, as if asking the mage why he could only use one Element when Hawk himself could use two, plus Rend and Shred.

The class Professor blew his whistle, marking the end of the training session, and Hawk landed next to Karl, proud of himself for mastering his new fireball skill so well in one class.

But he had also learned the trick to changing it in form, and when the mage glared at Hawk, he nonchalantly tilted his head back and spit three small fireballs into the air that just hung there and hovered before dissipating.

The other mages chuckled at the bird showing off, and the boy got more sympathetic responses from his classmates.

"Sorry about your luck, man. But that's definitely one more round in favour of Hawk. Better luck tomorrow, but now that he's learned how to vaporize icicles, you're not going to have an easy time of it." One of the earth mages laughed.

"Doesn't he just swat your attacks out of the sky with Rend?" The water mage countered.

"This isn't about me. I have accepted that Hawk is far too good at this training." The Earth Mage dismissed the talk of his own failures with a smile.

Rita whistled to catch everyone's attention. "Alright, you've all had your fun. Hawk, say goodnight to your friends, it is time to pick up Thor before he harasses the Berserkers into insanity."

"You left the Cerro with the Berserkers?" One of the girls asked.

"He's learning Earthquake. He caught on pretty quickly, and he's figured out how to activate it by smashing the ground with his tail instead of needing a weapon." Karl explained, while the mages quietly laughed at the thought.

Rita led him away, with Hawk taking to the sky to float around and examine the school grounds, and the mages packed up their bags to go back to the dorm for the evening.

Rita was exactly right about the situation, and when they arrived back at the Berserker training ground, they were playing baseball. Or perhaps it was volleyball without a net. Karl wasn't quite certain what the rules were, as Thor and a group of barbarians were alternately tossing a ball to be swatted with blunt weapons and bouncing the ball back into the sky after it was hit.

The professor supervising them seemed to have given up on understanding what they were doing, but the ball appeared to be one of the ten kilogram metal training balls from the Strength warriors area.

Just the fact that they could swat that thing up into the air was impressive, even if they were using lower strength activations of their skills.

"Thor, it's time to go. Come back after the next point." Karl called out, and the Cerro made a happy bugle in return.

The next berserker caught the ball and held it instead of continuing the game, and smiled at Karl and the ladies.

"Welcome back. Just repeatedly using Earthquake was wearing on the mind, so we started a new training game. Thor is incredibly good at it, with that Lightning over his tail. His aim is impeccable." The berserker explained.

"Well, as long as you're all having fun. But it's time for dinner."

That was the magic word, and the berserkers cheered as they went to grab their bags and shirts, which had been discarded at the edge of the training grounds. Thor trotted happily back to Karl before vanishing into his space to soak in the pool, getting his new and improved scales sparkling clean again.

The mass of Holy Stones at the bottom of the pool gave him a gentle aura, like fresh laundry and sunshine, and Thor wasn't going to miss out on any chance to be clean and relaxed. It was slowly becoming a recognizable part of his presence, as the extended naps in the pond imbued every part of his body with the clean scent of Holy Magic.

Chapter 147 Their Ways

Karl was relaxing in his room, pondering the changes of the last few days, and how the progression of the beasts hadn't been quite what he had expected them to be. Somehow, with her love of the dark, he had thought that Rae would naturally pick up another stealth skill, but from experience, it was the most deadly of attacking skills that she was most in tune with, and the stealth aspect of her evolution was only a secondary facet that allowed her to get close enough to her targets to attack.

Thor using his tail to create Earthquakes hadn't been too far out of expectations, as it still activated with lightning energy. But Hawk learning fireballs just so that he could torture the water mages more effectively was completely on-brand, even if Karl had overlooked it until it happened.

The drake scale potion was the dark horse in this progression path. Hawk had reacted so strongly to it that it had to be something that was innately perfect for him. But either

they hadn't made quite what he needed, or he just needed a larger dose than he had gotten.

So, while Karl waited, he dug out the books that Rita had given him on resources, and started to sort through everything that contained fire energy or drake scales.

The first list was incredibly long, as fire mages were a well-studied topic, but there were only a few concoctions made with drake scales. The one that they had prepared for the beasts was one. A second one was designed to enhance mana capacity, with a particular benefit to clerics and other healing classes, but there was nothing that had been created with the drake scales that was intended to amplify fire magic.

They could try the second potion, to amplify his mana capacity, and make a second dose of the first potion, in case it was a quantity issue.

But as he was flipping through the book looking for anything that might have been improperly categorized, Karl noticed a bird picture that looked just like Hawk had for those moments before his feathers faded.

[Dragon Hawk] is a Commander Rank relative of the Common Windspeed Hawk species. While they are believed to be unrelated to any of the dragon species, they are known to have an aptitude for fire magic instead of the rend based claw attacks of their Windspeed kin. That aptitude for fire magic, combined with an immense level of territorial pride, has given them the name Dragon Hawk.

Karl read the blurb a handful of times as he memorized the picture. He was certain now that the textbook was wrong, there was some link between the Dragon Hawk and the actual dragons. Or at least between them and the drakes. He was definitely going to need more of the potion, in both variants, so he could see if Hawk could evolve through the use of magical resources.

The actual Dragon Hawk was the size of a normal Windspeed Hawk, so he would be much larger than the average, but if his potential grew to Commander Rank, then Hawk should see a rapid growth in power after the process completed.

It would be nice if he could contact Rita at night, but she was off-duty for the evening, and probably not as enthusiastic about being the one to arrange having potions made overnight as Karl was to ask her.

All he could do was wait and make detailed notes, including how Hawk had looked during the process, and the thesis that he really might stay as a Dragon Hawk, with increased growth potential, if he were granted more of the potion.

There were many more ingredients to the two concoctions, though the drake scales were the most expensive and rare among them. If he prepared some extras from the

strongest of the drakes in Hawk's space, it should be enough to cover for the credits he didn't have to buy the items.

The Academy was usually pretty good that way, as long as the resource was useful to multiple elites. From what Karl could tell, the drake scales were good for both warriors and mages, and even if you were more powerful, it would still have a noticeable effect.

If it was proportionate to your current power, it might be better to wait, but Karl couldn't find any notes on that topic in the textbook about resources.

Dana came by a few hours after dinner, with extra dessert and a bowl of sweetened blood for Rae.

The spider had already upgraded the hammock in behind the Gazebo when she was adapting the space for her growing body, and Dana sighed with relief as she saw the quiet spot.

"I know it's a bit of an inconvenience for you, always having me here, but I want you to know that I appreciate it." She informed Karl with a smile.

He shook his head. "It's no trouble at all. In fact, I'm happy to have you over. I think that I might have a way to make a useful potion for you as well. There is a variant of the drake scale potion that is for mana growth.

The book says it's more for healers and clerics, but it should still do you some good. I think that if I can get enough of it into Hawk, he might evolve into a Commander Rank variant of the Windspeed Hawk."

Dana stopped what she was doing to stare at him after that announcement.

"You're saying that Hawk could evolve? Like become a whole new species?" She asked.

"Well, an existing species. The Dragon Hawk is a subset of the Windspeed Hawk that is known for fire magic, and when Hawk drank the potion, he looked just like it for a moment before the effect faded. They also grow to Commander Rank, instead of capping out in low Awakened, which should help his growth rate continue as smoothly as it has been." Karl explained.

Her smile slowly grew. "That would be outstanding. Not only for Hawk, but for the others as well. They would all have more growth potential, so they could keep working together instead of having someone stuck at their level.

But if the potion is meant for healers, why do you think that it's going to be good for me or Hawk?"

Karl flipped pages until he got to the right one. He was extra aware of Dana pressed against his back as she came to read over his shoulder, but he managed to focus and point out the ingredients.

"They're all similar to the one to strengthen scales, except for these two plants, which are also used in the regular mana growth potions that we've both taken. So, it's more of an expanded version of the same thing than an entirely different concoction, I think.

The reason they give it to healers is that refined Drake parts contain traces of Dragon Magic. And Holy Magic is very compatible with Dragon Magic." He offered.

"Alright, if you have enough scales. How many did you grab?" Dana asked.

"A whole drake." Karl replied with a smirk.

"Oh my Goddess. How did you grab an entire drake without anyone noticing? There has to be thousands of usable scales on a body that size. I think that everyone in the group would love to have a little cut of that action. We might have been on defence, but we were all there for the fight." Dana replied.

"Good point. I will give the Sergeant the resources in the morning, and ask her to make enough for everyone. I will have her make some for your pair from the Bureau as well, or they will nag at us until we cave." He agreed.

Karl woke up the next morning to laughter and the sound of his name being called.

"Karl, come over here and wake up Rae." Alice was calling from the balcony.

The Bloodbath Spider was sound asleep, but the approaching mage had triggered her defence response, and she had blocked off the gazebo with silk, trapping her and Dana on the other side, where the tutor couldn't wake them up.

She had obviously tried to get in at least once before, as Karl could see the cut section, which had been patched with a messy weave of web, but she was still on the outside of the gazebo.

"Rae really isn't a morning person." Karl chuckled as he called the spider into her space, where she curled up in her nest and went back to sleep, allowing Alice access to Dana, who had been awakened by the commotion.

"Just give me a minute to get ready, and I will cut my way out." Dana laughed as she realized what was going on.

"You will actually need help with that, unless you have a slicing type spell. It's Awakened Rank durable silk. You're not going to cut it without a magical tool." Alice laughed.

Chapter 148 Bleed and Play

Once Dana was ready and gone, with much annoyed muttering from Alice, Karl finished getting ready for the morning, and briefed Sergeant Rita on his idea.

"Here is the paperwork I generated yesterday, supporting the hypothesis, and I've got the scales ready whenever you are. If we make both potions in a double dose for Hawk, I think that we can evolve him into a Dragon Hawk, and improve his basic potential to the Commander Rank.

With that, his growth should keep up with Rae and Thor, so we won't have an imbalance in the team. The better that they can work together, the more easily we will be able to do the things we need to improve our strength."

Karl was very proud of his prepared speech, and Sergeant Rita smiled back at him.

"Well, I'll buy it. But the most important part is that you're willing to donate some of those extra scales for the rest of the team, as well as the Bureau agents. When the materials come from the Academy, they don't have to account for them in their expense reports, and that always makes them happy." Rita joked.

"Just head off to class and I will get all the potions made. The Alchemy teacher will want a cut off the top as well if you want them right away." Rita replied.

Karl sighed and took out more drake scales, at least a dozen more than needed.

"Here, take care of the middle men. The faster everyone can get the potions, the better. But being an Elite really is more about who you know than what you know, isn't it?" He replied.

Sergeant Rita patted him on the back. "Welcome to the grown up world, kid. Everything in life is easier when you know the right people. The Alchemy teacher already has a good impression of you after the last batch, so they shouldn't complain about the volume this time, or push it off onto students who won't do as good of a job.

Just remember in the future, if you don't want to go through the Academy's credit exchange, it's best to keep a bit extra or a little something for a tip. Most of the teachers are good sorts, but everyone is motivated by self-interest."

Karl nodded. "And what sort of self-interest keeps you motivated?"

"Promotions, of course. I might have reached my limits as an Ascended warrior, but that doesn't mean that Sergeant will be the limits of my military career. If I do a good job this year, they will make me a warrant officer.

Big pay raise, better living quarters both here at the Academy and on base, and a bit more respect." Rita informed him sincerely.

"Got it. I won't mess up your chances at promotion." Karl replied with a wink.

"At this rate, they might send me to officer's school and make me a proper butter bar lieutenant. You see, a lot of a student's progress is attributed to the guidance of their tutors."

Karl gave her a confused look at the unfamiliar saying.

"Oh, the Lieutenant's insignia is a golden rectangle, kind of looks like a stick of butter. Hence, butter bar." She explained, which made him laugh.

"I never would have thought of it that way. Alright, let's get going and see how the kids are doing in their studies."

Hawk ignored the fact that he had been called a kid, and flew off to join the morning mages again, after having trained with the afternoon mages yesterday. Thor was also about to bound out into the open, until he realized that they had a long walk to the berserker training area, and that was five more minutes he could soak in the pond.

[You're getting soft, just lying around in the pool all day.] Karl joked.

[It's an honest living. Look at it this way, I'm freshly washed and ready to go at any time.] Thor suggested.

[Then go play with the berserkers. I am going to take Rae to find someone who is practising Lacerate.]

This time, Thor did go running off across the school grounds, bugling to catch the attention of a few students from the berserker class who were making their way to training. They waved at the charging Lightning Cerro, who happily plowed into them, but turned his head at the last second so he didn't spear anyone.

They laughed and gave him belly rubs from the ground, then grabbed his horns to pull themselves back to their feet and continued on the way to training.

Rita shook her head at their antics.

"I swear, they're all on the same mental level."

Karl shrugged. "They're enjoying life to its fullest. Well, Thor is, anyhow. I wonder if we're going to be able to find anyone for Rae to properly train with, as Lacerate is such a rare skill."

Unfortunately for them, when they reached the training area, the warrior that they had first worked with to teach Rae the skill wasn't in, and there didn't seem to be anyone else training the same skill, but there were plenty of open training dummies, which were good enough for Rae to get some more practical experience on.

Not that she minded working alone. If there was no chance of learning advanced skills from the people around her, she was happy to work alone all morning, with Karl's skill helping her comprehend what she had already been taught.

"Why don't you do some training here as well? You need to keep up your own physique and your reflexes, in case you are attacked while the team is away fighting another target. We can't let you completely slack off, just because your training skill doesn't require any movement on your part." Sergeant Rita suggested.

"Alright. I know both Rend and Shred, so I will grab a training sword and get some work in. Who knows, maybe I can improve them as well as Rae and the others." Karl agreed.

He could tell that Rae was laughing at him. There was no way that he was going to keep up with her skill progress, especially with his new ability helping her adapt. But he was welcome to try. After all, they couldn't have him dragging down the team's performance.

She might not have found a proper teacher for the day, but there was still some hope that she could learn new techniques to refine her skills. There was a Druid working on [Bleed] which was a supplementary skill that stacked on top of another attack.

Lacerate didn't need it, as it already caused a bleeding effect, but with Rae working near him, Karl had some hope that she might pick up a tip or two about how to improve her own attacks.

It was difficult to tell if it was actually working, as Rae already had a good grasp on Lacerate, thanks to her previous teacher, but her technique was improving as the morning went by, and the dummy was showing a marked improvement in the bleeding side effect of the skill along with the base damage.

Each flurry of attacks left a bit more bleeding damage than the last one, and Rae's confidence in her attack skills was skyrocketing as the hours went by. So, by the time that she retreated into her space for lunch, Karl could say for certain that the lacerate skill had been properly mastered.

Karl was sweaty with the exertion of using Shred all morning, trying to move the skill damage up toward the borderline for Ascended, which would be the next real milestone for his growth, but he still had a long way to go.

The beasts were much closer than he was, but even with the slacking on his training, Karl could tell that his physique had still made significant progress.

They didn't have to look far to know that Hawk had enjoyed his morning. The mages had already started heading to the cafeteria before they left the training grounds, and they were all cursing at the bird for having learned to torture them with fireballs in addition to his Rending Claw attacks.

Thor was equally easy to find, but that was because the Berserker training area was outdoors, and you could hear the bugling celebrations as Thor competed against his classmates to see who could create the largest sand plume with their Earthquake skill.

It seemed silly, but focusing the shockwaves took a lot of skill and practice. Throwing up a large sand plume wasn't as easy as it sounded, you had to precisely focus the shockwaves to get them to concentrate in one single spot.

It was the proper way to target a single person with [Earthquake] to knock them to the ground, instead of making a whole area shake as a disruption tactic, and those who could do it were very proud of their skills.

"Alright everyone, time for lunch. We will be back to training in the afternoon." Karl called, using the mental link to ensure that the beasts heard him.

[Fine, we're all hungry anyhow.] Thor agreed, but didn't leave until he had a chance to say goodbye to all his classmates individually.

Hawk, on the other hand, simply circled the students once, then flew over to Karl and vanished into his space to decide what he wanted out of the piles of meat that he had amassed.

The fact that nothing went bad in that space was a blessing. Hawk had the better part of a dozen different meat products in there, both raw and cooked, so that he could pick and choose what he wanted based on his mood.

Some could be discarded as nutritious growth options soon, unless Karl wanted them for himself, like the roast chickens from the cafeteria, but they were all still meat.

Chapter 149 Looking Good

After lunch, the training was more of the same, but with different partners, as the students from the practical morning classes had theory and basic education in the afternoon. Some of the Elites didn't focus too much on education beyond their skills, but for the ones who were going to be taking on professional jobs, proper advanced education was a vital part of their Academy experience.

Karl hadn't really thought about that, and while he was doing a lot of studying, it was all on plants, beasts and other relevant topics. There were no physics, advanced Literature, Social Studies or other core subjects in his education.

That wasn't entirely uncommon for the Golden Dragon Nation. If you were entering a trade or family industry, you generally would have done it at the same age, with only the brightest going on to finish school and go for university education.

But at dinner, the complaints of the alchemists about the calculations needed to get the proportions right in their new elixir projects reminded Karl that he had it good with his training regimen. Though his body was tired, at least his brain didn't hurt from trying to work out the change in relative volumes due to differing evaporation rates at a specified temperature.

Though the warriors often derided the mages as the nerds of the Elite Academy, the true nerds were in the Alchemy and magical item crafting courses.

"Look at Karl there, he doesn't need to use math at all. Just feed the Hawk, pat the Cerro." One of the Alchemists was complaining.

Karl laughed. "Hey, I do need math. I use it to calculate where a ranged attack will hit a moving object."

The mages laughed bitterly at the reminder, as that particular bit of math had become the bane of their existence today, as Hawk tormented them with his ever improving skills. If that wasn't conclusive evidence that math was evil, then they didn't know what was.

When Karl got back to his dorm room, he found a note on the door, informing him that he, along with the rest of the mission team, were being summoned the next morning for a meeting with the alchemy professor. It included an absence note for all classes the next day, and a reminder to show up promptly at nine in the morning.

That was likely confusing and concerning for the rest of the team, but Karl was more startled that they had managed to get all the potions made in a single day, when there was so much more going on around the Academy.

So, when Karl arrived at the designated meeting point the next morning, he was the only one who wasn't completely confused, as Dana was not yet there, probably finishing her morning meditation session.

Sergeant Rita addressed the group, flanked by Daniel and Alice. "Good morning everyone. I am certain that you can guess by your present company what the criteria for the morning summons was. We have one more student still on her way, and once Dana is here, we will be making the official announcement.

Ah, there she is. Dana, please take a seat and we will get started. Karl managed to collect some drake scales while you were on your mission together, and while just how he obtained them is confidential and not to be spoken of, he did donate a number of them to have potions made for everyone.

For the warriors, we have a Drake Scale potion of durability, which should increase your body's constitution and resistance to damage. For the mages, we have a Drake Scale potion of insight, which will help you with your mana.

These potions are very precious, and required a fairly steep bribe to get the alchemy professor to create personally, as the regular potion makers are not trained in such a rare concoction. They are not diluted in any way, and can be considered peak Commander Rank potion, despite only using high Awakened Rank ingredients."

That was more than enough for all the students to understand just how good of a resource this was going to be. They had all fought against the Drakes, but none of them had thought to claim scales as loot.

Thankfully for them, Karl had, and now they all got to reap the rewards of what they thought was his impartiality.

The teams from the Bureau of Elite Development passed out the stoppered vials to all the students, who held them with a reverence somewhere between that reserved for infants and live hand grenades.

Rita smiled as the last of them was handed to Rae, who was hiding in the corner of the room behind all the students.

"Bottoms up everyone. I am told the taste is a bit awful, but you do not want to accidentally spit it back up." Rita informed them.

Karl downed the potion in a single shot, noting that it tasted like burnt meat and blood. She hadn't been lying about it being an awful combination, but he could feel the power flowing into his body with the potion.

But Rita wasn't done with him, and while the others were recovering from their dosage, she slipped him a second vial, which smelled more like campfire and morning breath. Not a better option, but it marked the potion as the other variant.

He downed that as well, and then watched as the others began to absorb the energy stored in their rewards.

The first thing he noticed was that they all had their lucky dragon scale charms around their necks for the occasion, and possibly all the time, just in case.

The second thing he noticed was the way that the warriors were filling out. Being a bunch of thirteen and fourteen-year-

old kids, depending on when their birthday was, they hadn't arrived as particularly mature male specimens, but most of the warriors were now sporting short but full

beards, while the lone female warrior in the group looked much more mature and curvaceous in an athletic way than she had a few days earlier.

But the major changes weren't restricted to the warriors. Though the mage group hadn't filled out with muscles the way that the warriors had, they had changed. Their appearances seemed a bit more ageless. Less definable as early teens, and more of an eternally youthful impression. One in particular had gained slotted eyes like a drake, and Karl thought that there was a chance she either gained a new spell or heightened eyesight.

Karl was more interested in how his partners had done, but Hawk had gotten distracted by all the people doing strange things, and he still hadn't taken his, while Rae was hidden in the corner of the room making disgusted faces at the empty vial.

Thor's scales were gleaming, and had gained a bit more of a golden shimmer in the deep emerald green. If he touched them, Karl knew that they wouldn't be as smooth as they looked. They would be more like Drake scales, with the surface of a fine grit sandpaper, but from a distance, they sparkled like gems.

Then, Hawk remembered that he was supposed to be doing things other than people watching, and downed the increased dosage of his potion.

The effect began the same as before, his feathers began to turn from mottled brown to a deep red and gold. But this time, his claws turned to a translucent Onyx, and his beak turned deep bronze, while his eyes shifted shades of brown to match.

But his feathers weren't changing back. They were getting darker, toward the dark auburn of partially dried blood, with light golden undertones that would blend in well with the long dry grass of the steppes in the south.

His size remained unchanged, but Karl could feel the power coming from him as the Windspeed Hawk changed, and settled into his new form.

He would probably be called a Dragon Hawk now, but Karl got the feeling that wasn't quite what he was. The colour of his feathers wasn't so bright, while his beak and claws were the colour of an Ascended Rank Windspeed Hawk.

"Looking good, Ladies and Gentlemen." Karl congratulated his partners.

Most of the people in the room thought that he meant everyone in general, which Rae found hilarious. She was not happy about having to try that awful potion again, but the changes in the students were interesting enough that she didn't voice her displeasure yet.

Chapter 150 In The Mirror

The students looked around at the changes in each other. There was no doubt about it, most of them had left the Common Rank behind them, and they were now firmly into the Awakened Rank.

The warriors had it easy, as they could tell by their bodies, but the amount of power that the mages were feeling wasn't fading, and after Dana called up a barrier to see the changes in it, the others began to activate spells as well, allowing them to informally test the change in their powers.

"We all owe the Alchemy Master one for this. Those potions were incredible. For some of us even more than others." One of the warriors announced, while staring at Karl.

"I'm glad you liked them", he agreed, feeling a bit self-conscious about the attention on himself.

"Oh, he's not staring because you provided the scales. You should look at yourself in the mirror." Rita laughed.

Karl did not have a mirror handy, and there were none on the walls of the classroom. Fortunately, nearly half of the people in the room had a compact with them, in case their makeup needed a touch up during the day. Dana passed him one from her backpack, and Karl took a good look at himself.

Strikingly emerald eyes stared back from his familiar face, and his hair had faded from its normally dull and dark crew cut to striking blonde locks. He needed a haircut again, as it was hanging down in light waves, but the look seemed to be popular with the girls from the team.

Unlike the other warriors in the team, he had not grown any sort of beard. In fact, he didn't even seem to have any stubble at all, and he hadn't bothered to shave this morning. That was a bit odd, but he had always preferred a clean look, and if the change had eliminated his facial hair, he wouldn't be particularly heartbroken.

[Your eyes are the colour of my scales.] Thor noted.

[And his hair is the colour of the gold in my feathers.] Hawk agreed.

[You made me drink nasty tasting stuff again.] Rae complained, finally unable to hold back her grievances.

[Sorry, Rae. We did hope that it might still have some benefit to you, even if it tasted awful.]

Hawk was perched on a desk while Rita examined the changes in his feathers, as well as making notes about the changes to his claws and beak, which were more in line with the known data on the Windspeed Hawk.

There was going to be an intense discussion among the administrators about whether he was a new species, Karl was certain. But with the additional skills and now this massive change, there was no doubt that the combination of resources and Karl's abilities had allowed Hawk to completely surpass his racial limits.

Or perhaps they wouldn't see it that way until he reached Commander Rank and really became the strongest Windspeed Hawk in history, but he should be well on his way there now.

Alice rapped her knuckles on a desk to get everyone's attention. "Alright, you can all go to class and test out your new and improved skills. Remember, you cannot tell anyone about the origin of the drake scales, but you can tell them that a resource your team gathered was made into a potion for you all today."

The students cheered, and many pulled Karl, Thor or one of the tutors into a celebratory hug before they ran off to class, leaving just Karl and Dana, with four Bureau agents and Sergeant Rita.

"I suspect that you two likely got the most benefit out of this potion. It's obvious why Karl would have, especially in his appearance. But Dana, I can sense that you gained something special as well." Jill, her mage tutor, commented.

Dana smiled and took out the holy weapon that she had gotten from the church. It was now glowing with energy, and not just inert.

"The potion helped me, of course, but it also allowed me to fully attune to my casting focus. It's intended to add a bit of Holy Magic to every spell that I cast, and as Holy Magic is from the World Dragon, at least in part, the drake scale potion appears to have made me more compatible with it.

Now, I don't need to focus to use it, it will naturally channel spells for me, and it is bonded with me in the same way that the relic weapons the others received in the trial instance were." She explained, then made the golden sceptre disappear, then reappear in her hands.

Alice smiled. "Now that is impressive. Karl got lucky with his gift being a bracelet that he can wear all the time, but having to carry that around with you everywhere would have become inconvenient once you were outside the Academy.

Speaking of which, you two will be headed out again very soon. We want to see how Karl's team is doing, as there is a chance that they have reached the Ascended Rank in at least attack power.

I know that Thor is a bit behind on offence, but his scales have gained a lot of durability, so we will have to test him for the level of his physique, if that is permissible."

[She can admire my scales all day if she'd like.] Thor thought.

[I think it means to try to destroy them, or hit you with an attack and see how durable you really are.] Karl reminded him.

[Oh. Well, I suppose that could be allowed. I would like to know how tough I am, too. I feel pretty tough.] Thor replied hesitantly.

Karl nodded to the team. "I think that we can arrange something. The other two are not durable sorts, but their attack power is pretty well recognized. But for Thor, it would be best to know what his limits are going to be before we get into actual danger."

Sergeant Rita frowned, then nodded in agreement. It needed to be done, even if she would rather not have someone attack Thor.

"Alright, we will take care of that this morning before heading to class. I'm sure that Hawk is eager to test his new powers against the attacks of the mages." She suggested.

Now she was speaking his language. Hawk couldn't think of many things that he would rather be doing.