

Beast Master 551

Chapter 551 Gift Returned

[Item Gained] Sword of Champions

[Artifact Grade Item]

The blade was beautiful, glowing a faint Mythril blue and covered with runes that leaked power, but it felt hollow, completely drained of Soul Energy.

Leafa had used every drop of energy that it had trying to escape the Emperor, but she hadn't managed to get away, and with her aura returned to Overlord Rank, the Emperor seemed confident that she would no longer be a threat to him.

The Haint seemed unconcerned as he set her back on her feet while he sat in the grass catching his breath and letting his regeneration regrow the missing chunks of his body.

"Oh, it's the merchant Karl and his band of merry-makers. Good to see you again." She greeted them.

"It's a pleasure to see you as well, Councilwoman. Do either of you require healing? It might be a moment before our clerics recover, but we can help."

She waved her hand dismissively. "We will be fine by then. Did you see the Oracle lately?"

"He's at the farm we were at earlier."

Leafa nodded. "Lovely. Where was that?"

Karl gestured in the right direction. "About a half hour jog that way. You'll find them easily enough with soul sight, they have a number of Royal Rank Minotaurs with them."

"You know about soul sight? That makes life easier. We should take time to catch up one day."

The Emperor was glaring at Karl, who was baffled by the Haint's strange behaviour.

She remembered him, but she appeared to have lost her short-term memory, or perhaps it had been purged by the spell she was under.

"Certainly. I am sure that you have a wealth of knowledge to pass on." Karl agreed easily.

She was one of the leaders of this nation, and while she was openly fighting with the Emperor only a few minutes ago, anyone could see that they had settled their issue.

The Emperor stared at the cloth wagon full of children.

"Is there a particular reason for the relocation?" He asked delicately.

"The damage from the recent incidents left them homeless. We were going to bring them to a group that could protect them." Karl replied with a casual shrug.

That could be a lot further now that the two Totem Rank monsters had levelled half of the countryside. But eventually, they would find a safe spot to drop everyone off.

"I will bring them with me. Once we recover the Oracle, I will bring everyone to the Fortress." The Emperor insisted.

"They might be alright at the location where the Oracle is waiting, The defenders there are strong enough to deal with most of what is left."

The Emperor nodded. "If they are strong enough to hold until the army clears the area without any additional losses, I should be able to trust them with a few more mouths to feed."

Karl smiled. "We left them over a hundred boars cleaned and dressed for butchering. They'll be at that all day, and then salting and smoking it for ages. The fields that we could save won't be much supplemental feed, but they haven't taken any casualties since they arrived."

The Emperor looked startled. "You and the local farmers held a location with zero casualties? How many people are there?"

Karl did a quick mental calculation. "After the Royal Rank farmers called for their neighbours the morning after the first attack, there have been about twenty proper fighters, plus children and some crippled that our clerics couldn't fully heal.

I don't know if you have any clerics in the area, but if you can get another Dragon Cleric to come to them, it should solve most of their issues. These ones have sworn an oath to remain with our group."

"And I presume you are also under a similar oath?"

Karl nodded. "Yes, not to abandon any of my people or go off without them."

The Emperor nodded, then turned toward the wagon, where Tessa was working to free Thor from the harness. It was all Royal Rank spider silk, so she couldn't just cut it without using a skill.

The Emperor nodded politely to her as Tessa got the hesitant Thor to move away from the wagon. He had just gotten it, and he was understandably reluctant to let his new wagon go, especially when it was full of small creatures that could scrub his scales when they stopped.

"Leafa, let's go. Say goodbye to your new friends." The Emperor demanded, returning to his borderline enraged state when he had to talk to the Haint.

Leafa waved to everyone, but didn't say anything until she passed by Karl.

"I feel like I'm supposed to come see you again one day. I will see you when I remember why." She whispered, nearly too low for even his sensitive hearing to pick up.

Then she was gone, stepping through a portal that led to the farm Karl had been at this morning. He hadn't realized that she could just open a portal instead of vanishing. That was quite the skill set, and it was a miracle that the Emperor managed to catch her in the first place.

But perhaps there was some limitation on it, or she couldn't do it after she broke their bond. The Emperor took the leads to the pulling harness for the wagon and followed her without looking back, leaving Karl and his team alone in the middle of a zone of destruction.

There were no intact structures in sight, not even the small stone shed had survived the battle of the Totems intact.

Dana activated her movement skill to step up into the sky, then turned in a slow circle as she ascended. After only half a minute, she returned to the ground and shook her head.

"If there were other survivors near us, there aren't anymore. Everything is gone. The invaders, the buildings, the crops, any survivors that were above ground. Everything." She explained.

"I suppose everyone needs an explanation. I learned while speaking with her during the battle that Miss Leafa is bonded to the Emperor with a spell, but when she broke through to Totem Rank, she escaped the bond and went on the run. What we just saw was him recapturing her.

The purple chains of that ability should be locking away some of her memories and restraining her powers. So, basically, she forgot everything after we left the Fortress. If we run into her again, she probably won't remember fighting at the farm with us. However, she's there now, and someone might say something that helps her remember." Karl explained.

"So, she's not part of the council of her own free will?" Tessa asked.

"I can't say for certain. She seems to enjoy her time on the council. But she definitely wants to break her bond to the Emperor and flee the continent as well."

"What next? Was there a reason other than the survivors that we were going this way?" Dana asked.

"The Spellblades are northeast of us. I was taking us there by the easiest route. Once we have regrouped with them, we can make our way out of the country. We have more information to pass to them, and they should have a way to pass that information back to the people in charge."

Chapter 552 Finding Friends

Tessa looked around at the situation, then sighed and rubbed Thor's head.

"On the plus side, even though we turned over the orphans without so much as a thank you, we can now get back to moving at a decent speed." Karl smiled, and Rae called out a pair of Golems.

"Yes, we can ride in style now. Ophelia, do you think you can ride without a saddle?" Karl asked.

"I think so. The Golems move pretty smoothly. But can the bodyguards keep up with Thor?"

The Naga Warriors gave her a thumbs up, while the Lamia pair nodded. They might struggle to catch the golems or Rae in a straight line, but they were pretty quick, and Thor would only be at a casual jog that he could keep up all day.

Karl mounted a Golem and took the point position, while Hawk soared overhead, scouting the area for surviving threats. Their chosen route out of the area had nothing, as the last attack had been nearly overhead, and that didn't give the Giant Boars much of a chance.

If there was anyone alive and hiding underground, Hawk was determined to ignore it so that they could actually make progress today and not just keep stopping to pet babies and build wagons.

Neither of those activities held any interest for him, but once they found the group of Dana Mages, they were guaranteed to find action. Every time he had met them in the past there was a fight of some sort, and most of them were with new species. That had to be a good sign of their interesting nature.

So, he flew to the edge of the destruction and searched for surviving Cyclops and boar teams. Dead was dead when the rest of the team arrived, and they wouldn't stop just because it was Hawk that killed some of them.

Karl could hear his plotting, but it wasn't much different from what he would have ordered anyhow.

Even at the casual jogging pace, it wouldn't take them too much longer to make their way out of the affected area. There was a chance that some of the invaders had scattered, but a few groups wouldn't be a major issue, even if Hawk didn't find them first.

[The Dana Mages are on the move again, but they're slow today. I think that something happened to them.] Hawk updated.

[Can you tell what it is?]

[I think that they have wounded members. They don't have the hiding spell up anymore, and some of them are being carried on a cloth between people.]

[How far are they?]

[About an hour if Thor runs?] Hawk guessed.

[You up for it, buddy?] Karl asked Thor, who started to run instead of answering.

The startled passengers held on for dear life as the Cerro's swaying gait turned into a ramming speed sprint. But the saddle was made for this, and the Golems had no problem keeping up, while their multi-legged body gave them a much smoother ride.

After half an hour, Thor's stamina was fading, and his sprint had faded to a run and then to a fast jog, but the Spellblade Clan was now in sight, and they should have been able to recognize Karl and the others just as easily as he recognized them.

They had even been sending scouts up every ten minutes to get a better view, so there was no way that they didn't know Karl's team was coming by now.

Once they realized that Karl was coming to them, Prince Corbin turned his clan back towards the incoming Elites, and the promise of healing from the clerics they knew were with them.

Karl didn't bother getting down from the Golem when they met, he just nodded politely to the other Royal Rank Elite and waited for an update.

"We were caught by surprise when the pair of fighting Totems appeared overhead. We were far too close to their battle, and they didn't appear to care that there were others in the area. Do you know who had the audacity to attack the Emperor?

Scratch that, can I get your clerics to heal my people? We have some severe injuries that our potions couldn't handle. We can discuss the rest later." Corbin began.

"Of course. Tessa, Lotus, would you look after the Spellblades? Remi, you can help as well if you would like."

Remi came out with a bag full of potions to test on the wounded, and Tessa did her best not to laugh at the aspiring alchemist. Even if she poisoned them with a bad concoction, there were still other healers around, or Remi could just cast a healing spell on them to cure it.

Most of the damages were internal, aftermath of the blasts from the Totem Rank battle, and without intensive treatment, they might not make it.

That sort of healing wasn't easy for most healing potions, and it was one of the reasons that the doctors had originally suggested to Remi that she work on using [Healing Splash] as an injectable healing spell.

A regular healing spell worked from the skin inward. A potion worked from the stomach out and took a while to take effect. But injected into the blood, a healing spell would be much more evenly dispersed.

That was what she tried first, with one of the most severely injured Ascended Rank Spellblades. Remi crouched over the casualty as if listening to their heartbeat, then subtly bit the victim's arm and injected [Healing Splash].

Then she fed him a blue potion and hovered over him to watch the effect, using her long lower body as a base so she could remain close enough to see all the minute changes.

[That works better than expected. We should get someone to make us needles, and then we can just stab people with healing.]

Rae laughed at the reaction people would have to a needle the size that Remi had in mind to inject them with a whole potion.

[Rae is right, I think it has to be concentrated for injectable use.] Karl agreed.

[That's easily fixed. But most importantly, look how well biting people works for healing. I'm going to bite another one.]

Her body darted toward another wounded Spellblade, a Commander, who she bit on the neck like a Vampire.

The man squeaked in horror, then the lacerations and bruising on his body began to visibly fade, starting at the bite mark.

"You're letting her do that because it's funny, aren't you? [Healing Splash] doesn't have to be injected." Prince Corbin asked Karl quietly.

"It actually works faster when injected. But yes, she could just douse them with it, or feed them the spell suspended in a potion."

The Spellblade Prince shook his head, and Karl noticed that Remi had picked up a heavily injured girl. Nobody else in the group was that small, it had to be Tamarind, formerly Tori the mage.

As she was still Ascended, she had taken heavy damage from the blast, and Remi had shown at the beast Temple that she had a thing for grabbing and relocating small people.

[Don't run away with her after she is healed.] Karl warned.

[No problem. She just needs more healing than my bite and a potion, so I'm bringing her to Lotus.]

Chapter 553 Routing

Karl and Prince Corbin went over everything that had happened to their groups since they last met, and found that the Spellblades had not had a much easier time than Karl's group had.

Despite the fact that they had gotten stuck in a Cyclops spawn, the Spellblades had just had a terrible time getting out of the wilderness.

First, they had chosen to double back on their route, so they would be further from the major population centres. But that put them only a few kilometres from the Undead spawn, so they had ended up moving camp in the middle of the night.

Then they had come across a group of Nomadic Demons who were not happy with the trespassers on their pastures.

That had led to a small fight, but fortunately no casualties.

Then, they had to divert again because there were soldiers everywhere, working to contain the Cyclops spawn, and the Spellblades weren't willing to try to pass themselves off as local as it would just lead to being conscripted for the cleanup effort.

So, while Karl had been fighting for multiple days, the Spellblades had been running constantly and spending mana to keep the barrier up and avoid detection.

Prince Corbin finished his story and leaned against his staff as he watched the healers work.

"What's your plan from here on? Are you going to travel with us, or are you looking for something in particular to help your growth?" He asked.

"I need either a holy item, or a unique skill that will help Thor, the Lightning Cerro, grow.

He has hit the limits of his natural potential, and he needs a bit of a bump to get him past the bottleneck and on to higher heights. So, I was thinking that we might stop at the Whiton Temple on our way back.

If there is anywhere on the continent that will help a beast with Holy Affinity overcome their limits, that should be the place."

Corbin seemed to understand the concept of needing resources to surpass your natural limits quite well.

"This might seem like a wild goose chase, but I remember back when the Elite Program was first starting, my second year in school I believe, there was an incident near the three-way border between Newbon, the Divine Beasts, and the Mountain Giants that involved a Holy Relic.

A bunch of the teachers were gone for nearly three weeks investigating it.

The incident was near Dunster, Northeast of here. Well, almost North from here, but that's a thousand kilometres of wilderness away.

If you go that way, you can follow the Mountain Giant border all the way to Chiptonrith Lake. It's far from a safe route, and it will put you within a few kilometres of the front lines between Newbon and the Mountain Giants, but it was supposed to be incredibly powerful."

Karl looked at the map and sighed. The area had four nations claiming territory within a hundred kilometres of it, and all four of the nations were hostile to each other.

"As good as that opportunity sounds, it is probably smarter not to go anywhere near that spot right now. With the Giants acting up, and the fact that they're going to have better weapons soon, things are going to get dicey."

Prince Corbin frowned at the reminder.

"That's another thing. I've never heard of a monster spawn monster having enough lucidity to talk to anyone, much less form battle strategies and remember trade skills.

Even species that should have some level of civilization don't attempt to build anything when they come from a spawn, they're just crazed by the Anomaly.

But somehow that Cyclops was not. Not just that, the Mountain Giants knew that it was not crazed, and they came for it.

That sounds to me like the Cyclops Forge Masters have the blessings of a Titan God protecting them. It's the only thing that makes sense to protect their minds from the Anomaly."

Karl sighed. "And if the Titan Gods are protecting them, then they are also interfering to assist the Giants in their war. With that sort of advantage, the Giants might begin to rise again, and not remain in the nations they've established.

I wonder if they found something? The Orcs mentioned that they're looking for fragments of the original Dragon Scale. It was supposed to have been buried on this continent along with the Demigod who had taken it, but nobody knows where that is.

That's why the Orcs are nomadic, they are actually working a grid pattern to search the continent for signs of the ancient grave."

Prince Corbin paled. "I think that I know what they're looking for. It's not a grave at all, but a stable anomaly. It's in the southern end of the Beastkin Nation, deep within the jungle and hidden within one of their ancient step pyramid temples.

I came across it on a mission a few years ago and reported it, but nothing came of it.

According to the teams that came after me, there is nothing in the Temple, but I clearly saw the tomb of a Titan, and felt the power of a Demigod.

Unfortunately, I could not enter. The anomaly was there, I know it was, but when I tried to enter, I simply stepped through the portal like a mirage.

It's not that far off our route, we could stop in again on our way back and try to look into the Anomaly to see what might be in there."

Karl smiled. "You don't seem enthusiastic about the idea."

Corbin shook his head. "Would you be all that eager if you knew the sort of traps that a Demigod could set on their Mausoleum?"

Karl's smile faded. "You make an excellent point. Even if we can find it, getting to any treasure that it might contain is an entirely different matter. However, if we could at least prove that the Anomaly was there and stable, we would be able to report back on its existence.

That should earn us some rewards, and perhaps even get a team of Blue Dragon Clerics sent there to research the facility. If anyone can find a way in, it would be the clerics of the God of Knowledge."

"So, is that our route, then? We will head east, avoiding the roads and towns, to head into the Beastkin territories? If we pass south of Skiple, we should have a straight shot through the plains until we get near the border and into the jungle.

It will be slow-going until we get to the river, and from there it is easy enough to find the temple. They weren't trying to hide it when it was built, it was just that they built it so long ago that everything around it changed." Corbin explained.

"I will talk to the others, but I don't see it being a problem. We can follow the river back up to the lake so that we don't risk getting lost in the jungle. I don't know how much faster it will be, but at least we will know where we're going." Karl agreed.

"Alright. As soon as my people are healed and fed, we will be ready to move. It's still a long walk out of the Newbon Empire borders, and I get the feeling that the Emperor doesn't want you to linger any more than you have to."

That might be an understatement. Especially now that he suspected Karl had something to do with Leafa breaking her bindings.

[If we see her again, I'm totally Nullifying that spell.] Cara agreed.

Chapter 554 And He Shall Deliver

The wounds weren't going to take long to repair, as there were no missing limbs or organs.

There was heavy internal damage from the blast, but for cleric healing that was one of the easier forms of damage to heal, right behind simple cuts. Even broken bones were harder to mend than soft tissue damage.

Tessa and Lotus already had everyone on their feet, though a few were still weak and exhausted, as healing used some of your own energy to do the mending.

They had been pushing hard to get away from danger, so they didn't have a lot to spare, and now with the healing, they were going to need a proper meal and a short nap before they were back in top shape.

That process was already started, and while it was a simple meal with no need for cooking, energy was energy. The part that really mattered was getting as far as possible from here by the time that it got too dark for the Spellblades to efficiently travel.

They would be headed northeast, in order to increase their distance from the incident's borders, and then they would start heading for the Beastkin Nation border.

That was going to take them most of a week, and they would have to cross from the open grasslands through a large portion of marshland before entering the jungle.

That was going to slow their progress even more than the fact that the Spellblades didn't have superhuman strength on their side, so their travelling speed was mediocre, even with magical assistance.

Ophelia could cover more ground than they did in a day, just relying on Werebear form.

"Everyone finish eating and then get some rest. You have one hour, and then we're moving out again." Corbin warned his team.

Hawk landed next to the camp and brought out chunks of boar to roast. Only Thor didn't enjoy a good chunk of ham, and with so much in his inventory, Hawk was even willing to share with the Not Dana Mages.

The fact that this one came fresh from the zone and not from his stockpile was mostly irrelevant.

Even with all the extra people to feed, a whole boar was far too much food. But they only had an hour, according to Corbin, so they began picking the prime cuts and preparing to roast them for lunch.

"What do we even do with all this extra? Unlike you, we can't just store it indefinitely in raw form." Corbin sighed.

"Either leave it here or bring it to a farmer. Grab as much as we can cook quickly, and I will have Hawk drop the rest off for a group of farmers. The ones outside the incident will still be short on meat."

Hawk mentally laughed at the idea. Hurling half a boar at someone's porch sounded like a lot of fun.

The Spellblades made a five-metre-long fire, and then arranged the strips of meat on an extendable pole intended for their tent. Narrow strips draped over the top cooked quickly and were easy to flip. Then they just needed to cool the pole and clean it after they were done.

If they had more time, that was how they would smoke and dry jerky. But nobody wanted to stay too close to a dangerous situation.

Once the meal was done, the mages lay down for a short nap, and Hawk took off with the remainder of the boar, looking for a suitable target to donate it to.

He was flying high in the clouds, as the presence of a flaming blue avian monster with the wingspan of a full-grown Roc or Phoenix would panic the locals.

He wasn't seeing many good targets at first. However, about ten kilometres north, a young boy was kneeling in the yard with his hands folded in prayer and his tusked Trollish head facing the sky. He couldn't hear him, but he could read his lips well enough even with the tusks.

[Gods, please forgive my family and end this famine. Grant us the food to make it through the winter and a strong harvest to send my sister to school.] The boy was pleading with the sky.

A sharp turn as Hawk released his claws sent the remains of the boar hurtling towards the farmhouse at well over a hundred kilometres an hour, and into the budding stalks of the corn plants in the field in front of the Trollish child.

The boy froze in shock as the animal flew over his head, then began to cheer and call for his parents to come outside as it crashed to the ground on the other side of the fence.

Hawk was laughing uncontrollably in Karl's mind as the farmers tried to determine why a gift from the heavens would be a Giant Boar, already gutted with the best cuts removed. It came from the sky, they had all seen that much. But why this boar in particular? Did they do something right to be gifted so much fresh meat? Or did they do something to anger the gods and make them take out the best cuts first?

[Was it as good as you hoped?] Karl asked the happy bird.

[All that and more. You should see the looks on their faces. They're so confused.] Hawk agreed.

[You're going to do it again, aren't you?] [As soon as I can find another boar. Forget throwing monkeys. Hurling food at people is much more fun. I saw in a book that the humans used to use it as a punishment, but the Trolls are so happy.]

Remi giggled. [That's because you threw the food to them and didn't hit them with it. The punishment was to hit them in the face with food while they couldn't run away.] That wasn't quite how the stockades worked. But they weren't entirely wrong, either.

[As long as you're enjoying yourself and you don't hurt anyone. Just make sure that you don't drop a living boar in someone's yard. They might not be prepared for a fight.] Karl warned.

[Got it. Only dead food.]

Chapter 555 Hawk The Human

Once everyone was rested and ready, the group got moving again, slower than Karl would have preferred, but moving steadily northeast out of the attack zone.

Soon, they would be crossing the major road that ran east out of Clifnal, where they were originally intending to sell their goods, but they couldn't follow that road east just yet, as it ran southeast down into the region that had been influenced by the Cyclops spawn.

Hopefully, there hadn't been too many merchants going that way in the last few days, but Karl was certain that at least a few unfortunate groups had wandered into danger, unaware that anything had changed since they left the city.

"The road should be a good spot for the night. We can also pretend to be proper merchants again, despite our lack of wagon. Why don't we stop there for the evening, and then if there is another incident, we might be able to gather more allies for the fight, which we can leave in the morning under the guise of regular business?" Karl suggested.

Prince Corbin considered that for a moment, and then nodded. "That works for me. The less suspicion that our presence draws, the better. Even if we don't have any wagons, most of the groups that meet us at night won't know that until dawn, at which point we can make up an excuse. If there is no incident, we won't need to say anything, and if there is an incident, they'll be happy to have us, and unlikely to look too deeply into our motivations."

They made it to the road an hour before dark, a proper time for a travelling group to start setting up camp. [Nobody within ten kilometres, and most of them are already set up for the night.] Hawk reported.

[Alright, you can come down and rest. Rae will take over the night watch duties in an hour or two.]

Hawk landed outside the camp, and then smirked at Karl as he took out one of the many transformation tokens that Rae had stolen from the Fortress.

In his natural form, he was a massive flaming bird, blue at the feathers, but when he focused on toning down the fire he turned back to red as the temperature dropped.

But when he activated the transformation spell, he didn't turn into a human as Karl had expected. Instead, he appeared to be one of the feathered Demons. His head looked the same, and while he had a mostly humanoid body, and feathered arms, he still had pale blue and red wings on his back.

{Ha, I am people now.} Hawk chirped, then got the most confused look on his face.

{The spell is broken.}

"I think that you need to focus more on looking like a human. You still look like yourself, but you're shaped a bit like a human." Karl explained while trying not to laugh.

Hawk transformed back into his natural form, then focused hard on what humans looked like. He hadn't seen a lot of them without clothes on, but he at least understood the difference in male and female forms. So, he focused on making himself into a Karl.

He knew that form very well.

"Oh, that version is much better. You've still got a lot of feathers, and wings, but you definitely look more human now." Karl congratulated Hawk as the transformation succeeded.

He had pale blue skin and red feathers for hair and on the large wings on his back, but otherwise, Hawk now looked human.

He smiled, and Karl noted that he didn't have teeth, but a rim of shiny red beak. That might cause some issues eating, but it was a small thing.

"I am the Karl now!" Hawk agreed.

His voice was deep, but musical, and Corbin couldn't help but laugh.

"Is that the first time you used that ability? It's an incredible one." He congratulated the proud Thunderbird.

"It's a token, see? I got it from the Emperor Troll's fancy house."

"Bethoke Fortress." Karl explained.

"Oh, those are valuable items. They let you leave with them?" Corbin asked.

Both Hawk and Karl began to laugh, and the Spellblades did their best to hide their amusement as they realized what had happened. "Oh, you borrowed them without telling anyone. I see how it is. Those spells are normally never allowed to leave the property. We have a few at the Spellblade Sect as well, so that nonhuman visitors can take on forms that can speak a language we understand."

Karl nodded. "Speaking of which, have you noticed that you can understand Trolls and Orcs much more easily than others? I noticed the other day that the System seemed to be translating Orcish and Troll to common in my mind.

I didn't notice at first, but when the guards came to investigate, I had to break up a fight because the Demons couldn't speak Orcish."

Prince Corbin froze in shock. "You speak Abyssal?"

"Pardon?"

Corbin made a vague gesture, indicating that he was trying to determine how to explain the problem. "The Demonic Guards of the Newbon Empire speak Abyssal, not Common. The Orcs speak Orcish, the Trolls speak Trollish, and they only switch to common for the benefit of humans, or when they're speaking to someone who doesn't speak any of the other languages.

Mostly, everyone speaks their own language, but they learn all the others, so they can understand each other."

Karl motioned for the others to come over. "Did you have any problems understanding people after we arrived?"

Dana shrugged. "The Demons and Satyrs have a brutal accent that is a pain to understand, but other than that, not really. The others all speak common pretty well, except the Serpents."

Corbin reached into his pocket and took out a pipe that he lit with a fire spell from his fingertip.

"So, the system doesn't translate Serpent, but it's translating the rest for you all? Do the others hear heavy accents or unfamiliar words?" He asked as he smoked.

Ophelia nodded. "Trolls and Orcs are easy to understand, and the Satyrs and Minotaurs as well, but I have a terrible time understanding the Demons' accent. They use a heavy slang, kind of like the mountain village farmers back home."

Lotus looked confused. "The demons sound funny? I thought that the Orcs all sounded like they were drunk."

One of the Commander Rank Spellblades began to laugh.

"To think that I spent an entire year learning new languages, when you five didn't even realize that you might need to."

Lotus giggled. "So, you speak Minotaur?"

The man shook his head. "The Minotaurs speak Common. But the Satyrs don't. They speak a dialect of Abyssal. The fact that you didn't even notice is just an unfair advantage."

Tessa was making notes. "So this is the advantage of having more of the system functions unlocked. Personally, I can tell when their words are being translated. It has a distinctive inflection in my mind that's the same no matter the tone."

Karl thought about that for a moment. That was not true for him. Everyone had a different way of speaking. It was only when they got mad like the Emperor had that he began to hear their dialect.

Maybe if he focused harder on what they were actually saying, he would get more detail from the translation? You could tell a lot about a human by how they spoke, so logically he should be able to tell more about other species the same way.

Chapter 556 Poor Route Choice

The novelty of being a Karl lasted about ten minutes, then Hawk returned to his space and his natural form.

Talking to people was overrated. They just kept asking him strange questions about flying, or wanted to touch his feathers.

Rae smirked as Hawk retreated to safety. [See, being here in the shadows is far superior to being out there where people who can bother you. We can't all be Thor, who people naturally want to love on and groom.]

[Have you considered not trying to jump scare people?] Cara asked.

[Considered it, rejected the thought.] Rae confirmed.

Karl chuckled at their interactions and the way that they just accepted Hawk's decision that trying to be human was overrated. But now he knew how to do it, so if he wanted to come out in places where his natural body was too large to fit, he would be capable of it.

No more forced sidelining if they were fighting indoors, though he would likely just remain in his space anyhow and cast out from there.

The fact that they could use skills while in their spaces was the ultimate advantage for the beasts. If they didn't want to interact, they didn't have to, and nobody could bother them in there.

She did come outside for the night watch, though. If there were any lost monsters or stragglers, she wanted the advantage of already being in the area when she detected them. It could save nearly a second in the process between finding them and eating them.

She was the only one from Karl's group that was on watch that night, the rest of the work was being done by the Spellblades. The first light of dawn was Rae's signal to go to bed, and Hawk's signal to start scouting. He could do it at night now, as his vision had changed with his evolution, and he no longer had any issues seeing at night. But that was Rae's turn to hunt, and he didn't want to start family strife.

[There are merchants coming. They must have started moving very early. From the south.] Hawk informed them not long after taking off.

That was not the expected direction, as the road led through the area that had been affected by the spawn in that direction. But if they had come through that way, they should have additional information about the situation. Perhaps it had been mostly cleared, and they wouldn't have to go east to get around the dangers.

"Prepare for visitors. They're coming from the south, out of the danger zone, so they might be in rough shape." Karl warned the Spellblades.

The group was jogging down the road, and Karl noticed that they also didn't have a wagon with them. They had large backpacks full of supplies, but the packs looked like they were hastily assembled, and not the sort of pack that one would choose for a long journey.

Karl stepped out to the edge of the road and raised a hand in greeting as they came into sight, hoping they would stop to give some answers.

The group was entirely made of Trolls, the slender blue skinned variety, and they had a Royal Rank shaman leading them.

Karl could feel the elemental magic lingering on him, like a scent of ozone, but not an actual smell.

The Shaman stopped in front of Karl and bowed slightly, panting hard from the run with a pack on.

"I take it that the road south of here isn't safe? We were coming across from the west and had to turn north to avoid trouble." Karl greeted him.

"You would be correct. We lost everything but what we could carry, plus two of our people. There is some sort of invasion of Cyclops and Giant Boars to the south.

The army is out dealing with them, but there are so many that it will take them ages. Is it safe to go west from here?" He replied.

"Yes, you can go west overland from here, just don't go much further south, or you'll be into it again. It runs all the way to Bethoke Fortress."

The Troll cursed. "So the city markets at Mitford are inaccessible?"

Karl frowned. "The city of Mitford was sacked. I don't know what has survived, but the whole city is in rebuilding mode, and I was told by Overlord Leafa that two of the Council members are there overseeing it.

The problem is that everything from here to there was invaded. You might make good money on what is left, but it would be safer to go west until you are past the Fortress and then turn south if you want to trade there."

The Troll sighed and looked at his ragged group of companions. All of their clothes were tattered, and their weapons were cracked and chipped from intense battle. The last thing that they wanted was another fight.

If they hadn't been Trolls and able to regenerate from the wounds that the Boars and Giants inflicted upon them, they would never have made it out. "I don't suppose that you have any cloth for sale? We might not get through the Fortress gates looking the way that we do right now."

Karl chuckled and nodded. "Yeah, I've got a bit of cloth with me. Consider it a gift in hopes of good fortune."

They still had the rough canvas that had been the cover for the wagon, and that would be enough to at least make a basic toga for each of the Trolls, which they could hold closed with their sword belts.

As he was handing over the plain grey cloth, one of the Spellblades came over with an armload of cloth. "Here, take this as well. A simple kilt in Clan McCauley tartan looks good on everyone, and trolls usually go shirtless anyhow." He offered.

The Troll Shaman turned to Karl. "What did he say? I can't understand his accent at all."

Karl chuckled. "He is offering you a bolt of his Clan's signature tartan so that you look presentable, and not like beggars in the rough canvas I have."

The Troll smiled and patted the confused man on the shoulder.

"Thank you. We will look glorious in your Clan's colours. My people will wear it with pride."

The Trolls stepped to the side so they could change from their tattered clothes into kilts with crudely cut canvas tunics.

"I thought that my accent was fairly easy to understand." The Spellblade whispered. "It is for me, but apparently not for Trolls who are used to the local Common accents. They're happy to have the tartan, though. Is there a reason you had so much of it?"

The mage chuckled and shook his head. "I have a spell to make it. I always carry one bolt of it in a spatial storage bag, just in case. I will make another once we're on the road."

"You should speak to Lotus as we walk. She would be genuinely interested in a cloth creation spell that can make fancy cloth. Or perhaps Dana, as she's also a mage." Karl suggested.

The mage shook his head. "Clan secret, I'm afraid. We're not allowed to teach it to outsiders. I've tried to convince the Elders to teach the whole Spellblade Clan, as generations of my family have lived there, but this spell only makes my family's pattern, and they said it wasn't appropriate."

Karl shrugged. "Still, if you change your mind, let one of them know. They might be able to modify the spell to make other patterns."

Chapter 557 Travel Buddies

The Trollish Merchants turned west and left as soon as they were presentable again. They weren't rushing, but they weren't waiting around for something else to find them.

That left the surrounding area clear for the Spellblade clan to finish packing up and preparing to head east through the grasslands.

First, they just needed to warn the groups coming south that there was danger ahead so that they didn't walk right into the incident unprepared.

Karl jogged over when he saw a group coming, giving them plenty of time to slow down before reaching his team.

"There has been an incident south of here. There are Cyclops and Giant boars running rampant, and the army is trying to clear them up. We met the remains of a Trollish Merchant group this morning, and they lost everything, including half their team.

I wouldn't recommend that you go any further down the road. My people are going east instead," Karl warned the lead driver.

"Do you know how far east it goes?" The driver asked.

Karl shook his head. "It goes west all the way to the Fortress before it ends, but I don't know exactly how far east or south."

Well, he did know yesterday, but it could have been partially cleared up by now.

"Alright, we will wait here for the day, then. Once we see someone coming north with news, we will know if we can move again. Thank you for the warning, traveller."

Karl nodded. "I lost my wagon as well. I was in the western end of it when the Giants appeared. Be safe out there."

The merchant wagon driver nodded, and then gestured for his team to come forward as Karl returned to his group.

"Alright, let's get a move on. The others know about the danger now, so we can let them tell anyone else who comes along." He explained.

The Spellblades looked more than a little jealous as Rae called out her Golems to take Karl and Ophelia as riders, while Hawk landed to take Dana for the day.

His flames were ethereal, not hot in this form, and Rae had made a saddle just for this purpose. Dana, on the other hand, had not been informed of the change in plans.

"Wait, am I expected to ride on Hawk?" She asked when he headbutted her to end her hesitation.

"That's the plan. You have ranged attack skills, he is the longest ranged attacker on the team. So, you're well paired. Besides, Rae just made him a fancy new saddle, and he hasn't gotten to try it out yet." Karl agreed.

"And why is it not you, who is unlikely to suffer fall damage, who is testing this theory?" "Because apparently I'm a ground attacker. I don't make the rules here, I just follow them. Do you need a hand up?"

Dana shook her head in dismay and used a movement skill to step up to Hawk's neck height, then settled into the saddle and began to tie herself into the harness.

It was fairly intuitive, and it tied around her waist and thighs as well as over her shoulders, so she could move her upper body freely, but not worry about being tossed too far back and forth.

"Well, I approve of the harness. It's solid, and made of Rae's silk. I don't have to worry about it breaking."

As soon as she had finished tying herself on, Hawk flapped his massive wings and rocketed into the air at a speed that folded Dana against his back.

[I need to warn her next time, it's not comfortable when she goes backward like that.] Hawk noted as he used [Ghostfire Body] to form a shield protecting her from the wind.

[Remember, she's not as strong as you or me. Her body isn't made for that sort of rapid manoeuvring, you need to give her time to get a grip.]

Over the next few minutes, the new pair got used to each other, and Dana's narration let Hawk know what she was capable of enduring.

Watching him dive, twirl and swoop from side to side as Dana got used to flying was making Tessa laugh constantly.

Ophelia just looked happy that it wasn't her.

The ride on the spider golems was smooth and comfortable, almost like riding on a sofa. If she had a proper cushion under her, it really would be.

The pace was casual, just a brisk walk for Thor, even though the Spellblades were doing their best to cover ground before it started to get dark, and they had to stop again.

That night found them in open grasslands, mostly unpopulated now that Hawk's presence had scared off the smaller beasts and one nomadic tribe that only had six people.

They had spotted the bird in the air and had simply changed directions to avoid coming into what it might consider its territory.

The next morning, Dana wasn't nearly as reluctant to board her transport for the day, and the group was moving right at dawn. Their goal for the night was to make it to the river. They could either follow that southeast to the Capital, or they could follow it as far as the road, then head northeast until they came to the trading route that led into the Beastkin Nation.

That would take them close to their destination at the forgotten temple.

It should take two to three more days to make it to the road along the river, then likely ten more to the temple, depending on how slow moving in the Jungle was.

Karl didn't have high hopes for the speed that the Spellblades were going to manage once they were in dense trees or the marshes that they were going to get before the borders, but with their magic, they might be just as good in soft terrain as Thor was.

However, Karl was thinking too far ahead. There wasn't much between them and the border but grasslands, marsh and one town they would use as a waypoint. But getting that far was not going to be as easy as he had hoped.

Chapter 558 Risen Ruins

The first signs that all was not well in the land of Newbon came just before dawn, when Rae spotted a portal opening, but nobody came through.

Instead, there were signs of spell casting on the other side, and then the magic in the area began to destabilize.

[Karl, get up. Something is happening.] He opened his eyes and looked in the direction Rae's attention was focused.

The spell was still ongoing, and it was doing something to the energy in the area. Karl couldn't tell what at first, but then something under the ground began to shake, and the ground itself began to glow.

Karl felt one of the Spellblades coming over to see what had attracted his attention, so he motioned for silence as he pointed into the distance.

"I think that there is an ancient ruin there, and someone is casting a spell to try to activate it. Rae spotted the portal when they opened it, and I can sense the magic they're using, but I don't know what the goal is, unless they are treasure hunters seeking an ancient artifact." Karl whispered.

The Spellblade nodded. "That might be the case. We do the same thing from the Sect Compound at home. We have a portal array, and we either send out teams or we check on known and likely opportunities.

Seers can't tell when an anomaly or trial will appear until someone finds it. So, we search using historical references. Normally, we focus on things within the Golden Dragon Nation, since those are the ones that might be a direct threat or an accessible opportunity. But there is no real reason that you couldn't focus on the historical sites of the other nations.

If that is what someone is doing, there shouldn't be any effect on the area, though. It's just a scrying spell. If they are doing something to a ruin they found, that is an entirely different matter. They might have activated an ancient Relic. Normally, we try not to do that, as so many of them are unstable and could explode or cause other issues. Even the Anomalies are some of the milder effects, as they normally only last a day or two.

Legend says that the old capital of Hitcland, a human nation east of here, was completely obliterated when someone accidentally activated the ruins it was built over. Ten million dead within seconds."

Karl frowned. "Well, we can hope that whatever they're doing doesn't cause something like that. We're still far enough away that even if it would level a city, we should be safe. Besides, I can create stone walls for defence. A bomb outside the wall is much less scary." The Spellblade nodded. "About that wall. You might want to start thinking about making it. The power in the distance seems really unstable."

[Rae, want to give me a hand? Let's build a proper wall around the camp in case that thing blows up.]

[I'm on it. Then Hawk can cover it in his Ghostfire barrier. That should stop the rest of the damage.]

That turned out to be the worst possible answer.

While they quickly managed to build the barrier, the power used to activate the skills was resonating with whatever was going on in the distance, and everything in between was beginning to shake.

Trees were falling, the ground was trembling, and the portal snapped shut with a surge of power that Karl was certain had been the caster on the other side erecting their own barriers.

"What is going on? Why are we turtled into a stone castle?" Prince Corbin called as he woke up.

"Someone opened a portal in the distance, and they were doing something that made the ground glow. It might be an ancient Relic or trial. I didn't want the camp to take a direct hit if the ground exploded instead of just shaking." Karl explained.

It was doing more than just shaking now. There was something coming up out of the ground, a simple stone construct that looked like the ruins of a city from Karl's vantage point.

Hawk was resisting the urge to go out and inspect it for now. Until the mana stabilized, and he wasn't at risk of getting blown up, it was safer to just wait and keep his barrier up around the camp.

Karl could see that there were crumbled granite walls, ruined buildings, and in the middle of the risen city, a faintly glowing purple sphere.

"Is it just me, or does that look like a trial instance entrance to anyone else?" Karl asked.

"None of us can see anything past the walls." Lotus reminded him.

Karl shrugged. "You can't see anything because Ophelia is standing in front of you. But I get your point. I'm cheating with the relay from Rae. There is a ruined city that just came up out of the ground, and a glowing something in the middle that might be a trial instance entrance.

Now, someone triggered this, so it could get messy if they realize we're here. But I still think we should have a vote on whether to steal the instance from them if that's what it is." Corbin sighed. "You're nuts. However, you're not wrong. Anyone who sees us in the area is likely to try to kill us. It might be safer to be inside the instance than outside of it."

The rest of his clan prepared to move, trusting his judgment, and Karl's team waited for Thor and the Golems to come prepare them for a trip.

"The city literally starts right outside this wall. It is less than a kilometre to the instance. We will do better moving on foot with a full retinue of guards." Karl explained.

He also didn't want to damage the ground any more than it had been, in case there were treasures there which were hiding in the dark. There was too much magic present for Rae and the others to tell if there might be treasures left behind, and that meant manually searching.

The Spellblades seemed to have the same idea, as the moment that Karl and Hawk took down the defences, they began to spread out, making a wide line to travel through the ruins, instead of following the leader on a path that they knew had no traps.

Chapter 559 What Is It?

Rae did still call her golems, and Karl added the Lamia Bodyguards to the group, but Dana left her Golems in reserve. Unlike Rae, she didn't get much situational information from hers, only a vague sense of where they were and what happened around them. They couldn't be used to search for treasures in the ruins, but they might accidentally squish them into the soft dirt.

The majority of the ruined city was still covered in the rich black topsoil and long grass that had grown over it, but the magic which had caused it to rise was slowly dissipating the excess.

The architecture was simple, with fieldstone walls crumbled by time, and piles of small round river rocks next to the remains of small houses. Many appeared to have been one room buildings, but there were signs of indoor plumbing, so they weren't completely primitive, just small homes.

"Do you think that these were the slums of town? All the small houses, and I see a lot of petrified wood piled up in the corners, but not split for firewood. I think they had bunk beds, so it might have been a military barracks as well." One of the Spellblades noted quietly.

"The quality is good, fieldstone with stone floors. Barracks or possibly traveller dorms would make sense." Corbin agreed.

That reminded Karl of something he read in a history book. Back in the ancient past, when the system was fully active, most towns were built around a dungeon entrance. Both to keep the area secure, and for the travellers and adventurers who came to visit supplied and fed.

There was a whole industry around harvesting the resources from the dungeons, but it took skilled and powerful groups of warriors.

But most dungeons were for groups of either five or ten people.

So, these small houses could be something like private hotels for them, rented to house the whole group, but not a lifelong, or likely even a long-term residence.

The slums would look empty in a place like this, as they would have been canvas tents or tin roofed shacks. Plus, there normally wasn't much left of them if the inhabitants had to evacuate.

The magic that had raised the ruins from the ground was still too strong to detect much, even for Remi, who was very well attuned to mana flows as a Shaman.

But the Lamia bodyguards did find a few 'treasures' in the dirt, which turned out to be silver chains with semi-precious stones in them.

They handed them straight to Remi, though it was Tessa who actually knew how to identify magical items properly.

However, it appeared that Remi could do it as well, though not in the same way. She had just learned to use the system to sort things that had some level of attunement.

[Inspect] Karl heard her think.

[Junk, junk, oh, shiny.]

[Necklace of Fireball] {Damaged} Charges 0/50

[Hawk, I got you a present.]

Hawk laughed when he saw what it was.

[Just put it in my space and I will see if I can make it not broken later.]

Neither of them actually knew how to fix the necklace, but it might be something obvious, like a cracked stone or a broken link. They could fix the link, and they had lots of little stones from the Giants. Giants always had stones in their pockets, and the beasts loved to collect them. Karl didn't even see them anymore, they were just pilfered by the beasts as soon as they were detected.

Along the line, one of the Spellblades found a plain metal ring, and another found a broken amulet.

There wasn't a lot of value to be found, but it was clear that whatever was in the centre of this ruined city was powerful. [I can see the thing. It's a purple sphere, glowing and floating in the air. It doesn't look like a portal.] Hawk noted.

As they rounded the corner, everyone could see the orb, and the platform that it was floating above. There were no stairs up to it, though. Perhaps it wasn't something that was meant to be touched like an instance entrance? But neither Karl nor anyone else present knew what else it could be.

Prince Corbin made a gesture to his team. "Everyone stay well back of the object until we know what it is. I need a volunteer to go forward and examine it."

Karl nodded and patted him on the shoulder. "You know I'm going. But if you want to send one of your people as well, that's fine."

Corbin raised an eyebrow in a curious gesture, questioning Karl's judgment.

"Are you certain?"

"If there are dumb things to be done, that is my job. I have the best defences, and the highest chance of survival out of anyone present. In fact, I am invulnerable to many of the attacks that could cripple others. So, I am going."

Dana was glaring at him as Karl finished speaking, but he made an excellent point. If they needed an actual person to go forward, and not a summoned creature, he was the best option. Next would be the Lamia bodyguards, or the Naga Warriors, as they were intelligent and could explain what was going on.

Karl motioned for them to join him, as they could share barriers. Three layers was better than one, especially when two of the three barrier layers would be the Monarch Ranked [Flaming Body] barriers from the Lamia.

One of the Commanders from the Spellblade Clan, an older man from Karl's perspective, but most likely only in his forties with prematurely grey hair, joined him as he moved toward the orb.

The trio extended their barriers to the Spellblade as well, adding a level of safety as they cautiously approached the plinth beneath the purple orb.

Karl stared at the runes for a moment, then gestured for the Spellblade to come forward. The inscription was not in Common, or any language that Karl could read.

[Oh, I can read that. It's the language they use in Shaman books. Let's see. Great Power awaits those who dare to embrace the power of the World Dragon. Take him into your heart and receive his blessing to know true power.] Remi read.

[But the World Dragon is in my heart? Are we not all faithful followers of the gods? He's in both the beast and Dragon pantheons.] Karl replied, not noticing that above his head, a faint purple copy of himself was forming.

Chapter 560 Purple Orb

It took a moment for the beasts to notice it as well, so the first warning that something was off came from the group behind them.

"Look up." Ophelia called, while the others froze, unsure what to do in this situation, as the apparition might be a good thing.

Karl was wondering what to do when suddenly the mage behind him simply vanished.

That brought everyone's guards up, but Karl held up a hand for them to stop. "I don't think he's injured. There is an inscription to the World Dragon on the stone, and I think that it might be System related." He warned them.

The apparition over his head was becoming more solid, but he didn't sense any danger from it, as if it was just an illusion, and not an actual spell effect.

Then, words began to appear in Karl's vision.

[System Active. Checking Compatibility.]

[Checking Qualifications]

[Checking Eligibility]

[First Advancement Trial Completed]

[Upgrade Compatible Skills Found]

Then Karl's vision went dark, and he heard Rae laughing in his mind. [Now you're both gone. But don't worry, I'm calming down the others.] She informed him in an amused tone.

[You are calming down the others?]

[Oh, ye of little faith. I have a transformation toy too, and I am much better at this than Hawk.]

Karl got a mental glimpse of her from Remi's point of view, looking very much like Morgana, the Witch Doctor, in an elaborately decorated black gothic dress and cloak with a face veil and gloves. Except Rae appeared to be larger, as all of the humans present were shorter than the mental image Karl got before his attention was drawn back to the vision in front of him. Only Ophelia's Werebear form, at well over two metres, was taller than she was.

There were ten copies of Karl standing in front of him, each wearing a slightly different set of armour. Some were carrying weapons, some were not, and one appeared to have on cleric robes over the armour, while holding a staff with an Ankh.

That one reminded him a little of Orthos, the Bronze Dragon.

A floating message appeared over the clones, and a stone room appeared, so they no longer seemed to be floating in the void.

[Class Upgrade Options] The message read.

Karl turned to the one in the robes, and activated the system overlay that he normally ignored for its lack of information on people and creatures without system access.

[Beast Cleric] A disciple of the Beast Gods. Gains access to advanced regeneration and Holy Magic.

That wasn't bad at all. But Karl had an important question.

"Do I lose the skills that I already have if I change?" He asked the void, hoping for a response.

[Class Changes affect future advancement paths.]

Hopefully, that was a 'no'.

Karl checked the other images to see what he could learn.

[Divine Hunter] gains a bonus with bow skills. Adds Holy Damage to attacks.

[Ghost Ranger] Uses Ghostfire to create smoke and mist based stealth skills. Gains a bonus on all surprise attacks.

[Beast Avatar] Allows merger with a Spirit Animal to increase the effect of known skills.

Those were all of the ranger looking options, and none of them were particularly appealing to Karl.

However, they were all supposed to be an upgrade to the Beast Master class that he already had, so perhaps they had some special skills that would make them worth it?

Karl checked the Ghost Ranger Class image closest to him and found that while the skill tree was hidden, he could at least see the Class's Core Skills.

[Ghostfire Mist] Appears as pale smoke in a cloud, engulfing a 10m radius from the caster. This mist enhances all other Ghostfire skills, and may be converted to [Ghostfire Purgatory] once the skill is known.

[Ghost Body] Ghostfire Stealth ability that allows the user to become incorporeal while within the Ghostfire Mist, passing through solid objects so long as the user's body touches the mist on both sides at once.

Well, those skills were certainly better than what Karl had been expecting. But neither of them was really his style, and they didn't help his team much unless the Emperor found out that he accidentally freed Leafa. If that was the case, a good hiding spot and a way out of prison were going to be at the top of his priority list.

There was a theme to these advanced classes, Karl noticed. They all appeared to be related to a skill that he or his team knew. The Beast Cleric should be from Eternal Lightning, Ghostfire was a new innate Skill to Hawk, and when he inspected the Beast Avatar, which could merge with a Spirit Beast, he found that its lone initial skill was [Beast Space], the core of the Beast Master's ability to bond beasts.

That one certainly wouldn't be much of an upgrade for Karl, but the ability to merge with one of the team members might be.

Then there were whatever skills were still locked away in the Skill Tree.

The next few were the same way. Not quite what he was looking for. Many of them seemed like Classes that were meant for Warriors, Rogues or Mages who had an affinity for animals. Mostly, they allowed the user to get the basic Beast Space along with a bonus that suited another class.

That left only three options for him to check. The first was [Beast Shaman] which Karl feared was going to be like the others, but actually added Shaman Magic to someone who could already use Beast Master type skills.

The Core Skills of the class were simple.

[Totems] allows the Beast Shaman to create healing, regeneration and earthquake versions of the Totem. Maximum 2 Totems, effect doubles with every Rank.

[Weather Control] The Beast Shaman may create [Thunderstorm] [Blizzard] or [Sandstorm] effects up to 10 metres per Rank in Radius around the designated point.

It was a good class, but he already had a Remi.

The Second last class option was [Beast Noble]. The description for that one was just as simple.

[The Beast Noble gains the ability of {Mental Domination}, to control beasts under their Rank for the duration of their concentration. Up to 2 Beasts per Rank difference.]

It would let him simply order Commander Rank beasts to stop attacking, or join his team, as long as he focused on the skill. That could be useful, but it felt an awful lot like a sleazy cheat ability.

So, Karl turned to the final Class option, to see if there was anything at all which might be worth choosing. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, that much was obvious. But if all the options were trash, or simply not suited to his personality, it might be an opportunity that came when he was unable to grasp it properly.

The description said that this would be his way forward, implying that whatever skills he hadn't taken from Beast Master's skill tree would be unavailable.

He had almost all the good ones, but there were still the Tier 4 offensive skills to choose from.

The final Class option was [Beast Commander]. The Class skill allowed him to bond one extra beast, and to bond new beasts when one was killed or released.

That also wasn't a bad class, in theory. For a combat soldier, it would be an incredible Class, as they might lose combat beasts in battle, and need to replace them.

But Karl had no intentions of losing any friends, beast or otherwise.

With a sigh of resignation, Karl sat down to consider his options. There had to be something to one of these classes that he was missing. Something that would make it worth taking.