

## Beast Master 561

Chapter 561 Classy Karl

As he considered his options, Karl scrolled through his System interface.

[Available Skill Points] 51

Now that was something that Karl could work with.

Many of the class options were related to skills that he had. If he added another combat skill, there was a chance that he would get another option.

{50pts} [Rampage] Every time an enemy is damaged by the Beast Master or a bonded beast, increase the damage done by the Beast Master or the bonded beast for one minute.

That was the best option that he had, and even if it didn't trigger a new class option, it was still a skill that he wanted to have.

Plus, if he did pick a class skill, this would be his last chance to get it.

[Rampage] Learned.

[New Advanced Class Option Available]

That was the best possible news.

Karl turned to face the new image, and smiled as he saw the name.

[Beast Master Packmaster]

It was so similar in name that it had to be close to the path he wanted. The only question was whether it was a good class or not.

[The Packmaster gains an increased percentage of base stats from bonded beasts.]

The description sounded great, but wasn't all that helpful, so Karl moved on to the skills.

[Pack Tactics] Damage and healing done by bonded beasts and the Packmaster increased by 10 Percent Per Rank.

It was hard to argue with flat stat bonuses, but that wasn't the only class ability that the Packmaster got.

[Bestial Champion] The Packmaster gains a bonus to speed, strength and Luck stats when his pack is threatened.

Two passive skills for one class, and both of them were useful ones to Karl's mind. They suited the way that he fought, and the role that he served within the group.

Actually choosing to change his class, even if there weren't many options left, was a strange thing to Karl. So, before he decided, he checked his skills.

[Attack Skills] Tier 4 Skill Chosen {MAX}

[Core Skills] None Available

[Defensive Skills] Available Skills: {Barrier} {Refresh}

Karl knew there would be Tier 3 versions of those defensive skills available after he bought them. But he had limited time to choose an option from this Class menu. Like the Trials, he might turn out to be this event's Lotus, ejected for just playing around instead of making a choice. He definitely did not want that to happen.

Karl took a deep breath and placed his hand on the Packmaster image. "I choose Beast Master Packmaster" He stated.

[Class Change Processing]

[Upgrade Complete: Previous Class Skill Upgrades Locked]

[New Skill Tree Unlocked]

{Packmaster Skill Tree}

(50 Points) [Follow Me Little One] Directly teach a known skill to a compatible target.

(50 Points)[Pack First] Removes the usage and targeting limits on {Evolution} but adds an increasing materials cost every time it is used on a bonded beast.

(50 Points) [Territorial] All attacks by the Packmaster have a chance to cause {Intimidation}

What sort of names were those?

Karl was definitely making up new names to tell others when he used [Follow Me Little One] in the future.

If he was using it to teach a new skill to a juvenile beast he was recruiting, that was one thing. But if he was teaching a skill to one of the other Elites, how embarrassing would it be to use that phrase out loud?

However, there didn't seem to be many restrictions on the skill, other than that the target had to be compatible. Maybe he could get around writing the spell books and just directly transfer knowledge to the target he wanted to have it?

That would be incredibly useful. It also wouldn't lead to anyone wanting him to sit and write books for hours or days on end. He could just transfer the skill, say it took a lot of energy, and call it a day.

Of course, it really might be draining to do. He wouldn't know until he tried.

[Exit in 5 seconds]

Karl found himself standing right back where he started, next to a stunned Spellblade, who was staring silently at the purple orb.

Karl whistled and motioned for everyone to come forward. This wasn't a thing that they could afford to waste, and once someone else realized that it was here, all hell was going to break loose.

Forget the stable dungeon, this thing was as good an active set of system stones.

"Did you see that?" The older Spellblade whispered.

"Likely not quite the same as you did. I saw a Class Upgrade opportunity." Karl replied.

"Class upgrade? I watched the end of the world. An abridged version of the events that led to the destruction of the original System. Did you know that the World Dragon's scale actually created a system just for this world? Like, a unique one, not the same as the one that was being used on other worlds.

That's why the system collapsed when the World Dragon Scale was lost. The System Stones are an attempt to recreate the original effect, not the source of the original System." He explained.

So, it hadn't tried to awaken the System for him, it had just shown him a history lesson? Actually, that could be more valuable than anything else because if he knew the full and true history, there was a chance that he might be able to track down holy Relics that would help them bring the System back to a fully online state.

"Karl, what is going on?" Corbin asked.

"No time for a chat. Everyone needs to focus on the power of the World Dragon and their sense of Piety." Karl replied.

"Seriously? It's a religious artifact? That's not what the spider lady said."

Karl shrugged. "It's a System artifact, but it's activated with loyalty to the World Dragon, as far as I can tell. If you can read them, the words on the plaque will explain it."

The first one to vanish was Lotus, and she wasn't even near the orb. She was still twenty metres away, and flying.

That took Karl a moment to process.

She had convinced Rae to toss her in the air and catch her while they waited, and she had been in midair when Karl finished his explanation.

Tessa vanished a few seconds later, along with a couple of the Spellblades, including Tamarind.

"From what I can tell, the most faithful, or the ones who have had divine intervention in their lives, have the easiest time. But, with luck, we might all be able to get in and out before whoever raised this place returns." Karl informed Corbin, who nodded and began to focus on the orb with his hands folded.

Dana and Ophelia vanished a few seconds later, then the Spellblades began to vanish from existence, leaving Karl, one mage and Rae standing around to guard the site.

[Are you having fun in human shape?] Karl asked.

[It's better than expected. People don't ask me stupid questions like they do to Hawk. I wonder what species I seem like to other people? Can they tell that I'm a spider? I could usually tell with the ones in the Fortress, just by smell.]

[We will have to test it out later. Those tokens can be used more than once, right?] Karl replied.

[Yeah. Not forever, but more than once.]

## Chapter 562 Classy Everyone

Rae inspected Karl for changes, as she could feel that he had new skills active on the team.

"You know, you're getting wider instead of taller." She noted.

"I'm still not fully grown. Humans aren't fully grown until like twenty years old. The men get all their height early, then they fill out with muscle." Karl explained.

"Yeah, but look at you, and then the other human men. They're all so skinny. Hardly thicker than the women, just bigger. Male Bloodbath Spiders are much smaller, they don't usually get much larger than Cara. But the more beard you get, the wider you are."

Karl smiled, "Are you suspecting that I'm not human?"

Rae shrugged, then admired the way her modified body moved and did it again for effect.

"Nobody would mistake you for one in the dark. You don't smell like a human. You just smell like Karl."

Karl thought about it for a few seconds, then shrugged, mimicking Rae's movement.

"That's just how people from my town are shaped. I'm taller than almost all the men in my home town, but most of them are almost as wide as they are tall. It's an advantage in the mines, so all the tall people must have moved away years ago."

Rae gave a twirl, then turned back to Karl. "Humans come in so many varieties, but I kind of like this body. I need to learn this skill before the token wears out. With [Ghost Beast] and these lovely black

robes, I can sneak up and terrify people at will. They are much less likely to notice a small woman than a glorious Bloodbath Spider, no matter how good my hiding skills are."

Karl chuckled, as Rae's human form was a hundred and ninety centimetres tall, but incredibly slender with a nearly flat chest and just enough of a curve to the figure to make it undeniably feminine.

Her skin was also as impossibly black as the shell of her chitin in spider form, a colour he had never seen on a human before. But with the glowing red eyes that her human form had, it looked good on her.

"Well, I must say, you had a much easier time with it than Hawk did."

Rae smiled at him, a row of sharp teeth with serrated edges, and flexed her fingers, which looked to have polished nails, until you realized the red was the same metallic chitin as Rae's spider legs.

When you added it all up, she was clearly not human, but a humanoid monster.

Hawk came out to explore, now that the magic was stabilized. He raced off into the distance with a streak of blue and red fire, twirling in joy at being able to spread his wings again.

Since everyone else was coming out, Remi also came out to explore.

There weren't much in the area except broken rocks, but there might be good rocks with them. Cara and Thor were resting in their spaces, waiting for a reason to be doing stuff. Unlike some of the others, Cara didn't really collect rocks, and she had already scanned the area for cool stuff, but found nothing.

It shouldn't take long before the others started to come back out, and by then Hawk should have a good scouting report for them, so they could move on safely.

The first one out was Corbin, who had a beaming smile on his face, which turned to confusion as he realized he was the first one to finish the process.

"The others are likely taking their time, or they're incompatible with the System, and they are watching a historical video. I spent a lot of time choosing because I had many options." Karl explained.

"Ah, that makes sense. I had one option, ironically named the Spellblade class. I took a while to examine it, then check myself for changes to the System afterwards. I have more features active now, and even an inventory option. I don't suppose that you have access to that same function and simply never mentioned it." Corbin replied.

Karl nodded. "Mine is different from others, as according to the Bronze Dragon Orthos, I am actually more akin to a crafting class. So I get the option for bulk storage boxes. Most people get some sort of slot system to put their items in."

Corbin smiled back at him, and Karl noticed that some of the hairs in his blonde beard were turning grey. Not from age, but at a visible rate as his beard grew from carefully groomed to chest length.

That was a new one. Karl hadn't heard of a class option having a physical effect on appearance before. But Prince Corbin, despite being in his mid-twenties, was well on his way to having a very scholarly long white beard.

The next one out was Dana, who winked at Karl, and then gently flipped into the air at a slow and elegant speed that defied gravity and physics, before sending a kick at the sky that sent out an attack very similar to Rend.

"The System called the class a Murim Battlemage. I gained a whole set of martial arts that combine with sword skills, and a cool new ability." Dana explained.

The sort of flexibility that it took for the moves she had already shown was already impressive to Karl, but then she summoned a whole array of blades over her head that attacked a stone that she tossed to them.

The rock was sliced and swatted in an intricate dance that had the stone suspended in the air, leaving even Corbin startled at the intricacy of the movements.

"That's a fantastic skill. With the combined skills of those blades, they should be able to completely control the movement of a target. But against large groups, they will be a deadly distraction as well." Corbin noted.

Then, Ophelia came out, looking somewhat disappointed.

"No suitable options?" Karl asked.

"Options? I was hoping for something awesome, but it only gave me two options. The first was a Feral Berserker, which looked like a slight upgrade to the Bear Totem Berserker. The second was a Titanic Berserker, which seemed like just another Berserker but bigger.

It had better base skills, so I went for that one. I probably shouldn't feel let down, but I guess I got my hopes too high." She sighed.

"Why not show us anyhow? Now that you have it, how is the Skill tree?" Karl suggested.

"It's very berserker. Lots of blunt weapon and sword attacks, defensive buffs and strength buffs.

The base skills are passive strength increase of thirty percent per Rank and [Titanic Growth] that increases my size, strength and durability by twenty percent per Rank."

"Well, how about raging and getting all buffed up in Werebear form, then test the new buff to see what you're working with?" Karl requested, intrigued to see if the bonuses stacked or multiplied the growth.

Ophelia activated [Berserk Terror] which brought her Werebear form to close to four metres tall. Then she activated [Titanic Growth] and suddenly Karl was looking at the knee armour of the single largest beastkin he had ever seen.

"That's definitely a multiplication effect." He noted.

"So that's what a seven-metre tall Werebear looks like. Forget being hit on by the Orcs, you'll have to fend off Hill Giant suitors at this rate." Rae laughed, startling everyone with the hauntingly musical tone of her human voice.

Ophelia's rumbling growl shook the air, and Rae's laugh turned hysterical. She hadn't expected such a great chance to pick on the others during her first attempt to interact as a human.

#### Chapter 563 Rae Speaks

"I liked her better when she made jokes about my luck with romance in private." Ophelia grumbled as she returned to her regular size.

"Don't feel bad, Bear lady. Look at how many times Thor has struck out so far, and he's the most likeable person that I know." Rae offered.

"That is surprisingly wholesome and helpful. Thank you, Rae." "But when you find one that you like, I can help you tie him up so that he can't escape."

"And there's the Rae that we were all expecting. I will keep it in mind, though. Who knows, maybe the secret to finding true love is just to make sure that they can't run away."

Ophelia winked at Dana as she finished the sentence, but Rae missed the gesture, and thought that the Werebear was only talking about the finer points of web crafting.

The two clerics came out not long after, looking very excited, but otherwise the same as when they went in.

"I got to learn all about trees and magic and my Dragon, and the Goddess." Lotus began.

Tessa nodded. "I also got a vision of the past, but first it told me that there were no valid upgrade routes available."

Lotus pointed at her childhood friend. "That! It told me that too, then it got to the important stuff. What were we supposed to be upgrading?"

Karl laughed, and Rae bonked the little cleric on the head. "It was an opportunity for System users to upgrade their class. And possibly for non system users to gain one. We will see once more people come out. The rest of the Spellblades are really taking their time."

Karl nodded in agreement with Rae's assessment. "That they are. They must be having difficulty deciding. Corbin only got one option, and it was just what he wanted, but some of the others might have more options than just the one upgrade path. Or, if some of them have no class, but have the option, they might be able to awaken. How many of your Spellblades were recruited before the Divine Injection was widespread?" Corbin shrugged. "Most of them. Not the four Ascended ones, they're all younger. Tamarind and Muffin both have, or had, classes, and chose to train with the Spellblade Clan. The other two had aptitude for magic, but not for the injection."

The older ones are all classically trained mages, and spent their lives in the Clan working on their skills."

Rae looked curious as she moved to stand in front of the Spellblade. "Do you think that the little one you call Muffin hates men because you refuse to use her name, or was she like that before?"

Corbin laughed. "She was like that before. Being called Muffin instead of Rose is a punishment she had to accept for her bad behaviour to remain as my Disciple."

She won't be free of it until she reaches the Commander Rank. That was our deal."

Rae giggled, then pulled out a small white stone on a pendant.

"I think we can make her a Commander. She is a wind creature, so we just have to feed her a wind pendant, and once she digests it, she should advance." The transformed spider insisted.

"It doesn't work like that for humans." Corbin began.

"Are you sure? I don't think that sticking it in any of the other holes would work better." Rae complained.

"No, that's not what I meant. Don't go sticking amulets in any of her holes. In fact, I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that. What I meant was that a human can't digest the stone directly. It needs to be made into a potion or tincture to be used on them in a way that they can absorb."

Rae frowned. "That's stupid. Why are humans so complex? If I gave this stone to a small wind bird or spider, it would directly evolve."

The Spellblade sighed and shrugged. "I don't know why human bodies are the way that they are. But we can't really evolve, and we don't use resources the same way as beasts. Maybe it's just because we're too different."

Rae handed the stone to Remi. "Can you grind that to paste to feed to the mage?"

Remi laughed. {There are other ingredients needed. I can see that it would be useful to the Dana Mage, so it should be useful to the Muffin Mage the same way.}

Neither beast had noticed that the mage in question had left the trial, and was now standing less than ten metres from them.

"What did the Naga say? Why is everyone laughing? I don't speak Serpent." She asked.

"They were discussing various ways to make a Wind Elemental Stone work to advance your rank to Commander so you could get your name back." Karl explained.

"And how did that become amusing? I would certainly pay whatever I could to get that concoction, but how is it funny?" She asked.

"It's a translation issue. It only makes sense if you speak Serpent." Karl informed her with his best attempt at a straight face.

{Or Hawk.} Remi added, then she got sidetracked and began to sing in Karl's mind.

[Do you know the Muffin Mage, the Muffin Mage...]

[Yes, I know the Muffin Mage] Hawk sang along with her, while Rae rolled her eyes at their antics.

"What did you get from the orb?" Karl asked, distracting himself from the two singing beasts in his mind.

"I got an upgraded class. Spellblade." Rose replied proudly.

Lotus perked up at the promise of a gossip session. "Oh, you match. I wonder how many more will get the advanced class, just because they already had all the necessary skills? Does it give cool new abilities?" "I match with who? Corbin? That's unfortunate. But yes, it does give a number of new combat abilities. Did your Dana get the same class?" She asked.

Dana shook her head. "No, it gave me Murim Battlemage. Similar in effect to the Spellblade Class, but more focused on martial arts. I don't know why it thought that I needed a more close combat fighting style as a mage, but the skills that come with the class are incredible." Rose was about to answer, but Corbin raised a hand to stop her. "The others are coming out now. Take notes of what they have gained and let's get out of here the moment that all of us have returned."

## Chapter 564 Upgraded Clan

The other Ascended Rank Spellblades came out excited about the official status upgrade and the class marking on their arms that came with the System designation of Mage, but only a few of the older Commanders could say the same thing.

They were the ones who had already been exposed to the system during their travels, and had some minor level of benefit from it, though not a whole class designation and marking.

Nearly all of the ones who had been successful had gotten Mage as a class, but unlike the members of Karl's group, they were not sent to an upgrade scene, but a class creation menu, where they could have chosen other options.

Just to be different, one of them chose Warlock as his class, but the rest all chose Mage so that it didn't affect their progression or standing within the Spellblade Clan.

The Clans had thousands of years of history, and if their choice prevented them from advancing within the Clan, or stuck at Commander Rank until their new Class caught up to their existing skills, they would have a hard life.

It wasn't the huge win that Corbin had been hoping for, but to the newly awakened mages, it was still incredible.

They now had access to the inventory, the status sheet and even to Skill Trees that would allow them to earn access to new spells that were incredibly difficult to learn on their own, or in some cases completely forgotten before today.

One of the higher level Mage Spells in the tree was [Portal]. If they could make it to the peak of the Mage Skill tree, they would be able to simply open portals on their own, and not rely on arrays.

From the way they described it, Karl learned that some of the more powerful leaders of nations were permanently linked to arrays, and some skilled mages carried an array token with them, but under the Monarch Rank, it was extremely rare to have that sort of access.

"Leader Corbin, do we have time to go through the Skill Tree now? Or should we move first?" One of the stronger Commanders asked.

"Move first, and we can check your new spells later. What did you see that has you so excited?" Corbin asked.

"I have eighty Skill Points. My past achievements appear to have been rewarded, and I will be able to choose a number of additional spells. Does anyone know how many points it takes to get them all?" He replied.

Corbin turned to Karl, who frowned as he did the math.

"I got some of the more expensive ones free from trials, but if I had to buy them all, it would have taken me nearly three hundred points. However, if I had taken the Offensive Skill Tree option, it would have been a fifth of that, but I wouldn't have had access to the most powerful skills my Class has to offer.

The Beast Master can choose between Offensive, Defensive and Progression paths. It calls Progression balance, but really the skills it grants are to core growth." Karl replied.

The mage nodded. "Mage class is the same way, in that you can specialize in an element for a discount or in Arcane to get access to everything, but without the discount. I refrained from choosing before asking anyone."

The others laughed and nodded in agreement. They had all done the same thing, waiting for a second opinion before they chose.

The last of the mages, an older Commander, came out and gave Corbin a thumbs up.

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"I have finished my history lesson. Are we moving out?" He asked.

"Yes. Many have class skills to choose, and it's not safe to do that here. But first, I must send a message." Corbin explained.

He took a small platinum strip out of his pocket, and Karl noted the ornate golden inlay in the design of the World Dragon on the front.

It glowed with power as Corbin sent a message, and then he nodded. "The right people know what happened here now. Let's move. That was a one-time use token to contact the Archbishop, but the other Totems will have sensed it. The ones here for certain, but possibly even the ones in the Beast Nation and the Mountain Giant territories. They monitor magical communications all the time, but they shouldn't know what I said. They will, however, likely know where the message started and finished."

Before he had even finished his sentence, the air was beginning to shimmer with magic.

"Take your people and run. Put up the barrier to hide them. Ladies, you can go with them if you'd like. I will play the fool and distract whoever shows up first." Karl insisted.

Corbin nodded and put the stealth barrier over his Clan, who began to run out of the Ruins to the East.

Karl noticed that they seemed pale blue and ghostly when they were hidden, where before they were simply invisible. That had to be the effect of Hawk increasing his sensory abilities and sharing them with Karl.

Soul Sight, Leafa had called it.

It wasn't visible when you could see the person, but with their body hidden, the soul became visible.

The Spellblades got a thirty-second head start before the first Portal opened, quickly followed by a second, third and fourth.

"Wow, did we pick the wrong day to be standing right here." Tessa muttered as the portals finished forming.

Karl smiled at her. "Should we hide Lotus in a basement or something so she can resurrect the pieces of us later?"

"Not funny. It's most likely a good idea, but not funny." Tessa agreed.

Lotus giggled and patted her on the shoulder. "There are no basements in these buildings. I can feel the roots of the plants. Just try not to get squished, and maybe ask Lady Rae and Cara to wait out of sight so they're not tempted to start a fight."

Rae looked offended. "And why would I do that?"

"To get Totem Rank blood."

"Point taken. But if there is a chance..."

"We will get you some."

Rae smiled, then vanished back into her space, followed by Cara and Hawk, who was making preparations to grab as many people as possible and fly away. He was exceedingly fast in this new body, and they should be able to make it to safety if a fight broke out.

Two ladies per claw, Karl on his back. That should be everyone, and he could still fly with that much weight. Even four friends were lighter than a Giant Boar.

## Chapter 565 Nacht

The first to step out of a portal was a massive Black Dragon at the Totem Rank. That wasn't the leader of the Divine Beast Nation, as they had the only Mythic Rank creature on the continent, but this was likely the spokesperson for that Dragon.

{Humans. Beast Master. I thank you for your succinct communication style, it made it quite worthwhile to intercept.} The Dragon began, speaking in Serpent.

Karl noticed that he no longer needed Remi to translate, he could just understand what the Dragon was saying, even while it was speaking another language.

"While it wasn't directly our intention to make your life easier, I will accept your good intentions. I take it that you are aware of the nature of this place?" He replied.

The Dragon nodded his head, then paused while three more Totems stepped through their portals to form a semicircle in front of Karl, facing the orb with him between them and the prize.

That was not the positioning that Karl had hoped for, but he hadn't had time to move.

The Archbishop stood between the Dragon and a Totem Rank Naga in plate armour, while an enormous Mountain Giant stood at the far end of the group.

That would be the General, who was the other Totem Ranked leader of the Newbon Empire, Karl assumed, as well as the leader of the Mountain Giants, whose title Karl didn't know.

The Dragon turned to the others. {Welcome to my new toy, everyone.}

The General hissed in annoyance. {Your toy? This is clearly my Relic. Not only is it in the middle of my territory, my people are here first.}

The Archbishop chuckled at the combative pair. "Your people? I believe you mean my people. There are two Clerics of the Dragon Gods here already, as well as a pair of Elites."

That math didn't math, and Karl began to wonder which one of them was not being counted. Was it Ophelia in Werebear form? Or was it him? The dragon had greeted him separately.

The Mountain Giant chuckled grimly. "You have a lot of brave talk for a man whose army can't even hold its own borders."

Karl could sense that things were about to go downhill very fast. None of these people liked each other, and he already knew the sort of damage that even a casual fight between Totems could do.

Leafa and the Emperor weren't actually trying to kill each other, but their strikes destroyed multiple square kilometres with every blow. Of course, they likely wouldn't resort to that here. It would risk the Relic, and that was what everyone had come for.

The Naga General was the one that decided to go for answers first, instead of bickering with his rivals.

"You, Karl. The Emperor told me about you. Is it true what it says in the message? This place can awaken classes and advanced classes?" He demanded.

The Archbishop looked like he was ready to burst with excitement, as this could be just the sort of thing that the Golden Dragon Nation needed to push the Elite Program to a new level.

Even a short period of study might bring huge gains.

Karl nodded. "It helped me. But not everyone. It shows the clerics a vision from their patron deity."

It would be better if he didn't throw the others under the bus.

If it was unclear what Dana and Ophelia had gained, or if they had even had the chance to make an attempt before the leaders arrived, they might escape the attention of the Totems.

The Totems seemed more concerned with defending against each other than anything that Karl was saying, and for a few seconds, it looked like they might be at a stalemate.

Then the General opened another portal, and brought through a whole group of soldiers. One of them was Colonel Lu, the wounded Royal Rank Minotaur Colonel that Karl had brought to the farm the first night.

Karl waved to him, and the old Minotaur gave him a thin smile. It didn't take a genius to guess that everyone here under Totem Rank had a low chance of survival.

"Find out how to work that." The General demanded.

"Focus on your devotion and loyalty to the World Dragon. Those are the instructions on the plinth." Karl added helpfully.

The Black dragon tilted its head a little to read the inscription, then nodded.

He would let the soldiers try first, and then if it actually did something, he would take action for the Divine Beasts. If this was an active System activation point, it naturally belonged to the Dragons, the heirs to the Dragon Gods.

At least, that was his opinion.

The Giant seemed to be thinking the same thing, and he opened a portal of his own to call through a handful of soldiers, fresh from battle and still treating their wounds.

"Praise the gods and request access to the System. The inferior beings have found an access point." He demanded.

That was odd phrasing. He made it sound like his people were not the ones who had found it. But who, other than the Giants, was going around and destabilizing anomalies in search for relics and trials?

Could it be that he simply hadn't received the update from his own people before he sensed Prince Corbin's message?

It was taking a while as the monsters tried to understand the method. Then Colonel Lu seemed to have a flash of inspiration, and as he closed his eyes he smiled, then vanished.

"Well, there is one success. Let's see how his luck is." Karl noted.

"Luck?" The General asked.

Karl shrugged. "Aren't all things System related affected by luck? Only the lucky few could activate it, even ten thousand years ago. It was a large portion of the population, but not even close to everyone. Plus, everyone who has entered so far got a different opportunity or vision."

The massive Naga General frowned as he considered the options. The Giants weren't having any luck with the Relic, and everyone was pretending that they hadn't noticed the small portal that led to the border between the Golden Dragon Nation and the Hill Giants. Nobody had come through that one, but it was close enough that Karl knew they didn't have to. They just had to focus on the orb, and they might be able to activate it.

What Karl really wanted to know was if the Giants were going to be able to activate it, as they didn't follow the World Dragon. This wasn't an anomaly that just anyone could enter, and the requirement might make it difficult for them.

But if that portal to the border led to the location the students were fighting at, there might be dozens of advanced classes gained today.

Then, three more of the soldiers, two Orcs and a Troll, all vanished.

That made it nearly half of the monsters, and no Giants so far. "Are you going to get in on this game?" Karl asked the massive black Dragon, whose casually stretched wing was shading his entire group.

"Young people are always in such a hurry. There will be time, or I can make time." The dragon replied.

"Then you should probably make sure that Misty doesn't wander away." Karl agreed.

The dragon chuckled, and puffed out a cloud of darkness that gave everyone present a chill down their spines.

Black Dragons breathed Death, a literal cloud of underworld energy which made life impossible within its radius. It was a sign of favour from the Goddess of Death, and at Totem Rank, even the slightest of contact would put most targets beyond the reach of even Lotus' resurrection magic.

## Chapter 566 Success Factors

The rest of the monsters managed to make it in over the next minute, but only one of the Giants, a Commander Rank female, had vanished so far.

That was not the success that their Totem Rank leader had expected, and the frustration was visible in both his expression and his posture.

That was making the other Giants nervous that they would be punished for failure, and the more nervous they were, the less likely they were to succeed.

The one who had the easiest time of anyone was Lotus, as she fully and immediately embraced any opportunity that the Gods granted, without even taking a second to wonder what it was.

It was an opportunity, and that meant it was something new. There were few things that Nature Clerics loved more than something new.

Even Tessa had taken a few seconds to mentally prepare herself.

That was when the first of the Newbon Empire Soldiers to enter came back out with a huge smile on his face.

"Colonel Lu, report." The Totem Rank General insisted.

"The orb brought me to a space controlled by the system. Then it insulted me for being so slow to awaken a Class ability, and sent repeated messages denigrating my level of motivation to better myself."

Karl did his best not to laugh as the aging Minotaur went through the list of grievances that the System had with a man well past his middle years finally awakening a Class ability.

"Then it awarded me the Warrior Class and said that was all I deserved." The Colonel finished.

"So, it did grant you access to the System? That is wonderful news." The General cheered.

"Yes, General. It appears that I now have access to the System."

The Giant growled, and the General's hand went to his sword, while the Black Dragon huffed in annoyance. Then, the massive creature reached a forelimb into a distorted area of space and pulled out a five-metre wide basket full of blankets and eggs. He whispered something that Karl couldn't make out, and a few seconds later, all of the eggs in the basket vanished.

So that was his play. He wasn't trying to awaken a Class for existing Dragons, but for the next generation. That way, the Dragons would have System users for thousands of years, even if the resurgence began to fade instead of growing stronger.

The frustration of the Giants was building as their group continued to fail to get any more members into the trial, right up to the moment that the lone female Giant to enter returned.

"What did you find?" The Giant demanded as she came back out in shining silver plate armour.

"It is a trial set by the World Dragon. We must request his permission to enter. However, I have made great gains today. I was awarded the Class of Knight, and access to a Skill Tree of new abilities."

The leader of the Giants nodded in satisfaction, then gestured to the remainder of his force.

They had all been listening intently, and once they changed their strategy, it didn't take long before another Giant managed to enter, then a third.

But by then, most of the Newbon Empire group had started to emerge from the trial.

Karl was listening to them giving their reports of being assigned the fighter class, with only one Shaman and a Blood Mage among them. That last one was a slender demon man with red skin, and Karl assumed that it was likely an exclusive only available to his species.

Behind him, he felt a growth of power, and saw that Lotus' eyes were glowing green. She had moved behind Tessa, and was facing away from the Totems, likely hoping that they would mistake whatever she was doing for a healing spell.

But when the power peaked, the Black Dragon turned to face her, focused directly on the Nature Priestess for a moment before looking back to the purple orb, where his clutch of eggs should be finishing their trials.

Karl suspected that Lotus had been letting her dragon patron see through her eyes, but the Black Dragon Totem looked somehow smug as he waited now, and Karl suspected that there was more going on here than he was comprehending.

If it was possible for the offspring of the Divine Dragons to use their link to their Clerics to access a trial like this, they might be using it to grow their own powers.

As Karl understood what Tessa had told him about the situation, the Dragons they were paired with weren't necessarily dragons from this world, only adherents to the same God. So, they might have never seen a Holy Relic of the World Dragon before.

Given the personality of the Green Dragons, they wouldn't pass up the chance to go in and play, even if it meant just watching a historical movie.

By the time that the second Giant came out, all of the Newbon army troops were out, and they were just waiting to see what happened with the Dragons.

They might get a class, or they might not. The Black Dragon had sent eggs into the trial, and while Dragons were sentient for a while before they hatched, legends said that most species couldn't awaken a system until puberty.

That was deemed to be a safety measure by the gods, so that small children didn't wreak havoc in the cities. But whether it applied to dragons or not, nobody knew.

The first one of the dragons out was Lotus' Green Dragon companion, if Karl's guess about what the glowing eyes meant was correct.

Then, a small white dragon hatchling emerged from the trial, and landed in the basket all of the eggs had arrived in.

It was adorable, no larger than a full-grown house cat. For a moment, even Karl was enraptured by its cuteness, until Thor broke him from his distraction.

[Do you think that they would let us borrow one? Scaled creatures grow up very fast in your care. I'm sure the little ones wouldn't mind.] He suggested.

[Oh, you need to learn the skill. If you already had the head pat for a skill ability, they would definitely give you a hatchling to raise.] Remi added.

Karl sighed. [That's fifty skill points. I have one left.]

[Boo this man! I joke, we know that you needed to get Rampage before you changed classes.] Remi amended.

The Dragon stared down at Karl. {You look like you've got something on your mind.}

Karl shrugged. "I was just thinking that I've gotten rather good at raising scaled friends, and they grow up exceptionally strong and healthy in my care."

{You can't have a baby dragon.}

"He can't have a baby dragon."

"Please don't give him a baby dragon."

The black dragon, the General and the Archbishop all spoke at the same time, then paused as they realized that they were all on the same side of what they had expected to be an argument.

"Are you certain? I swear, I'm superb with scale rubs, and I have a supplemental Nature Cleric to assist." Karl joked.

The Black Dragon huffed in amusement as another pair of hatchlings came out and began chattering with the white dragon whelp to find out what was going on. It was an interesting offer, but they quickly realized that the big dragons wouldn't allow it before they were fully trained and grown enough to travel alone.

## Chapter 567 Baby Dragons

The rest of the dragons came out over the next minute, all excited about their new class assignment and the opportunities that they would have in the future. A dozen baby dragons with class skills put the Divine Beast Nation way ahead of the others, even if half the Academy had gotten a new class through the portal the Archbishop had opened.

"Hey, Amalgarystica, before you leave, do you think that you could demonstrate your [Druid Lord] class skill for us?" Karl asked the baby green dragon, by name.

The System interface gave names that were colour coded by class, and most of them were destined to be clerics or warriors, but that one had been a deep emerald green that had intrigued Karl enough to check its status.

The tiny green creature flew out of the nest, circled Karl twice, then landed on Lotus' shoulder facing him.

{How did you know that I'm a Druid Lord?} She asked.

"It's visible to other System users. I've never seen the class before, so I'm quite curious what the class skill for a Green Dragon who is also a Druid Lord will be." Karl explained.

"Oh, that makes sense. Here."

The black dragon began to laugh as a ten-metre tall, Commander Rank construct made entirely of vines appeared in the ruins.

It had a few larger than usual leaves, approximating modesty, but it was shaped so similarly to Lotus that the dragon couldn't help but make comparisons.

It even looked like it had the same undercut hairstyle.

"That is incredible. You are a natural artist." Lotus exclaimed as she gently petted the Dragon's head.

The Black Dragon glared at them. {What did I just say? You cannot have a baby dragon.}

Karl raised his hands in surrender. "I am not trying to steal a dragon. I just wanted to know what the class skill was.

That construct is spectacular. It is giving off a healing aura, slowly repairing the buildings, and regrowing the plants in the area, all at once.

For a Commander Rank class skill, it is incredibly overpowered."

The massive dragon looked smug on the little one's behalf. {Did you expect less of a disciple of the Nature Goddess?}

"My apologies, my world was too small. I was judging a Dragon's potential by human standards."

{Your words are polite, but you still have the baby dragon.}

Karl reached over to tickle the little dragon under its chin, which made it giggle as it took flight, returning to the mobile nest before it got in trouble for making new friends as well.

"Don't worry, Lotus. We will find another chance to interact with baby dragons. I am certain of it." Karl whispered.

The basket of dragon whelps vanished once the last one was back inside, and that seemed to be the trigger for tensions between the factions ramping up.

Now that the little ones were gone, all of the Totems seemed to be focused on taking the Relic for themselves.

Normally, they wouldn't directly fight with each other. There were political alliances to consider, and the wrath of the Mythic Rank Black Dragon that quietly ruled the continent. But that didn't mean that they weren't going to find a way to fight over it.

{How should we settle this? Champions or a wager?} The black dragon asked his counterparts.

"Like hell. There is no way I will gamble with you." The Totem Rank Mountain Giant complained.

The Archbishop shrugged. "What sort of wager did you have in mind? Or we can do Champions if you like. Three of us have a Royal Rank representative here."

Colonel Lu snorted in annoyance. He already knew that no Royal Rank opponent would be able to take Karl out. Even if he didn't call out his beasts, he was a beast himself in combat.

The Mountain Giant looked at Karl and the Royal Rank options in the Newbon Army team. He didn't know much about Karl, but he had heard rumours about an Elite to be aware of on the Hill Giant lines not long ago.

That could be him. But the leader didn't recall all the details.

{I suggest that we wager on which nation obtains the next Totem.} The Dragon suggested with a sly smile.

The Archbishop shrugged. That was a reasonable sort of bet. It was hard to tell which Overlord would actually grow enough to reach the bottleneck, and nearly impossible to guess which would break it first.

The Mountain Giant smirked at the Dragon. He had a successor who was very close to the bottleneck. He had a very good chance of winning.

"I would take that bet." The Giant agreed.

The General was about to say something, when he noticed that Karl's entire team, except Karl and Dana, who had her mask up, had turned away to poorly hide their laughter.

He glared at them for a moment, trying to understand what he was missing, then glanced at the dragon, who hadn't lost the smug smile. They knew what had happened with Overlord Leafa. They had to, or they wouldn't be so smug. "Pick another wager. That one is no good." He insisted.

The Archbishop looked startled, while the Giant was confused. You didn't have to bet on your own Nation, it could be one of the human nations you bet on as well, or even an enemy nation.

Why would the bet be no good? The phrasing didn't make sense.

The Archbishop looked at the others. "Then another wager? Something different from the usual, perhaps?" The Mountain Giant smirked. "How about we test it by preparedness?"

The word seemed to translate strangely in Karl's head, and the system hung up on the word for a moment, as if unsure what meaning to assign to it.

"How so?" The General asked.

The dragon tilted its head. {Why not make it a best of three? Other than ourselves, we will wager on which warrior here has the best thing?}

The other Totems considered that for a moment. The Archbishop looked dubious about his chance of winning, while the General seemed indifferent. But the Giant looked suspiciously at the Dragon. "Is this not just an excuse to have our subordinates take out their best items so you can have them killed and looted later?"

[It had better be.] Rae agreed.

[Right? We are short on good things.] Cara added.

{The Beast Master thinks it is a good idea.} The Dragon laughed.

Colonel Lu, the Minotaur, snorted a challenge. "That's because he fully intends to kill everyone else for their loot the moment that you all leave. And he can probably do it, too."

"Are you becoming a coward in your old age?" The General asked.

"He can summon Monarch Ranked bodyguards and personally one hit kill a Royal Ranked Cyclops. I am no coward, but I am telling you now that I can't win that fight." The Minotaur complained.

"Really?" The Archbishop asked. That was not in the official records of Karl's abilities.

The dragon held up a claw to stop Karl from answering. {Why don't we wager on that? Bring us a Monarch Rank Giant, and we will see if the Beast Master can one hit kill above his Rank. I trust the soldier that he can do it to one of his Rank. So, we can wager on one Rank higher. If he succeeds, I will have one of my clerics bring the Giant back to life. Then, if we have more than one correct wager, we will make another wager for the winners.}

## Chapter 568 Insulting Wagers

The Totem Rank Giant roared at the Dragon. "Are you looking down on my people? Do you think that I am just going to bring one of my people here to be amusement for the Dragons?"

{We could let them fight.} The Dragon suggested.

"And if he really can kill a Monarch in one hit? What is the difference?" The Giant complained.

Karl was beginning to suspect that this part of the negotiations was actually the most time-consuming portion of the settlement of disputes. They all had different ways of doing things, and the Black Dragon served the Death God, so his suggestion was obviously going to always be to kill someone unless there was something more amusing available.

Sure, the Black Dragons upheld the balance of life and death, but where that balance lay was a bit of a murky topic, and one or two dead wouldn't sway things too far.

The Archbishop was a healing Cleric aligned with the World Dragon, so he would naturally choose peace in most situations, which meant either a challenge or a nonviolent wager.

Karl didn't know much about the personality of the others, but they both seemed fairly hot headed. The Black Dragon tapped the ground with a massive onyx claw. {Why don't you bring out your strongest Monarch, and we will pit him against the Beast Master? That should be fair, right? No matter what skills he has, it shouldn't overcome your strongest Monarch.}

[We're totally going to get to loot someone.] Rae cheered.

"No. Pick another challenge." The Giant insisted.

The Archbishop tapped his staff on the ground to stop their bickering. "I have an even easier suggestion. Why not something less personal? There have been dozens of anomalies in Newbon lately. This one isn't the sort that we can wager on easily. But if we send a team to one of the others, we can have them race." The other Totems considered that for a bit. It would be a good way to solve things, but that would involve moving, and none of them trusted the others enough to leave here until the matter was settled.

There were already teams here from three of the four arguing nations. But if the Totems left, it would be a bloodbath for control and not a civilized contest.

[How about a slap fight?] Cara suggested.

Karl chuckled a little, and the Totems all turned to see what was so funny.

"Sorry, one of my friends suggested a slap fight." Karl chuckled.

The Mountain Giant's smile spread wide and he nodded happily.

"That's a wonderful idea. We have contestants here. Do Newbon and the Golden Dragon Nation have a Monarch Rank contestant? We can do best two of three from Commander to Monarch."

The General nodded. "I can get a contestant here. Standard elimination style?" The Giant nodded, and the Archbishop turned to Karl. "Is your team up to this? Or should we bring someone?"

Karl turned to Ophelia, who smiled. "We're up for this contest. It should be fun."

The four Totems silently consulted each other, then nodded.

"This challenge is acceptable." The leader of the Giants agreed.

Karl looked up at the black dragon, then checked his nameplate using the system interface. It was a white name, denoting a cleric, and simply said [Lord Nacht].

"Lord Nacht, will you be calling contestants?" He inquired, curious to see who the Divine Beasts would send.

{No. The Divine Beast Nation and the Chromatic Dragons will wager on the Golden Dragon Nation being the winner of this contest. You have beasts and the favour of the World Dragon. It is close enough for us.}

The Archbishop sighed, then nodded. "Agreed. If we win, we will share."

"Bring out your third competitor." The General insisted, as he opened a portal and brought a Monarch Rank gorilla bodied centaur to them.

That thing barely had a neck, and the body looked like it was a rhino, not a horse. It would be like trying to slap out Thor.

Karl had Remi call one of her Bodyguards, and then gestured to Ophelia.

"I do hope that skills aren't prohibited, other than attack skills." He asked.

"Of course not. Skills are what makes it fun. But no attack skills and no barriers. Alright, we have our contestants. Which of the Giants will you choose?" The General replied.

Three Mountain Giants stepped forward, and the black dragon rumbled happily. Then his body seemed to melt and shrink as he transformed into a black robed humanoid that looked eerily like Rae in human form, except male. It was even the same 190 centimetres tall.

"I will referee this match. Starting with the Commanders, we will draw lots for the first match, short straw goes last. The contestants will trade slaps until one is knocked out or forfeits. Then we will have a recovery period before the winner faces the final contestant. If the final contestant wins, the first loser may challenge." He explained.

Karl patted Ophelia on the shoulder and activated [Haste], [Trollish Regeneration] and [Terrorize] as the extra growth from [Brutality] didn't stack with her [Berserk Terror] and [Titanic Berserker] skills.

She stepped up to the Black Dragon along with the Commander Rank giant and a burly Bison type Minotaur.

"We're having a slap fight with a girl?" The Giant chuckled.

"It's my specialty." Ophelia joked.

The dragon held out his hand with three sticks, and the contestants pulled.

The Minotaur had a shorter stick with a red stripe on the bottom, giving him the pass, so Ophelia and the Giant would face off first. Her stick had a number one on the bottom, while his had a number two, marking the order of attack.

"Contestants, prepare yourself. The Golden Dragon Nation has drawn the first strike." The dragon announced.

The Giant did a short stretching routine and then Ophelia raged, activating Berserk Terror, Titanic Berserker and Dire Bear Form all at once, turning her into a seven-metre tall Dire Bear, towering over the five-metre tall Mountain Giant.

One massive paw flashed out, and the Giant was thrown from his feet to land in the dirt, unconscious.

Ophelia rumbled with laughter as the groggy Giant got to his feet, facing the wrong way and staggering away from the contest.

His friends turned him around so he was facing the fight, and stood him in place in front of Ophelia.

As his vision cleared, a look of grim determination took over the confusion, and he lined up his swing for his turn.

The massive palm of the giant caught Ophelia on the cheek, and blood flew from her mouth as her head snapped to the side, but Trollish Regeneration had her back in peak form by the time she had stabilized herself and turned forward again.

She nodded at the Dragon, and the Giant braced himself for the strike.

"Second strike, contestants ready? On your time." The dragon announced.

Ophelia lined up the strike and smacked the Giant again.

This time, there was a sickening crunch as the Giant spun and fell limp to the ground.

"That is a win for the Golden Dragon Nation." The Dragon announced.

The other Giants rolled their comrade over, only to find he was out cold with a broken jaw and numerous missing teeth.

The Archbishop of the Golden Dragon Church waved them away with a gust of wind, and cast a healing spell on the fallen contestant.

"He will wake up soon. He is fully healed."

Chapter 569 Small Victories

The Minotaur looked terrified as he took his position, but the black dragon didn't hesitate.

"Challenger three has the first strike. Whenever you are ready."

The Minotaur nodded, and swung a mighty blow at Ophelia that nearly rocked her off her feet. He was certainly stronger than the Giant, she realized. He also had an extremely thick neck, so he wasn't likely to get whiplash.

So, she wasn't expecting much when she put her all into the first swing. However, when her paw made contact, the Minotaur fell with his legs still extended, knocked out cold at the moment of impact.

"Oh, poor call on my part. Who knew he would have a glass jaw?" The Newbon General sighed, while the other soldiers rushed to help him up off the ground.

The Archbishop healed him, and the Black Dragon smiled under his hood.

"That makes one round to the Golden Dragon Nation. I have to say, a Titanic Bear Totem Berserker was not what I was expecting for the first round of our betting. But the next round should be even better. I have prepared a platform for the contestants, as even with skills active, the Royal Rank combatants are very different sizes."

The three Royals came forward, and Karl immediately noticed that the Minotaur had been swapped out for a boar man of some sort. He wasn't quite a Giant, but at four metres, he was still nearly a head taller than Karl's enlarged form.

The Giant, on the other hand, was well over six metres tall. Both of the other contestants would need to stand on a stage for their head to be the proper height for a slap.

The dragon held out his hand, and they drew lots. The Giant got the draw this time, and Karl had the number two stick, meaning the Boar Man would strike first.

The Giant smirked at Karl as he faced down the muscular monster.

"When you are ready." The dragon announced.

The monster was incredibly fast, and the sound of the slap echoed through the ruins as Karl was tossed into the low stone of a ruined wall.

Karl stood up and brushed himself off, knocking stone dust off his armour. The strike was less than ten percent of his health, and he had taken no damage, but [Void Body] didn't negate the momentum, and the Boar Man's arm weighed half as much as his entire body.

"Good hit." Karl congratulated him, stopping the Boar Man's victory celebration.

"You got up?" The big man asked, thoroughly confused.

"Of course. Did you think I would volunteer if I couldn't take a hit?"

The Boar snorted and took his place for the return blow.

[Oh, this should be fun. I wonder how much additional strength Karl got from his new skill.] Thor cheered.

[The Packmaster gains an increased percentage of base stats from bonded beasts.] That was all that the system had to say about it, and Karl didn't understand the base and modifier system for stats that it had, so he had no practical reference for just how strong he was now with all his buffs active.

However, with the fifty percent damage increase from Pack Tactics, his new class skill, he would be hitting with plenty of force.

Karl checked that Haste was active, then snapped an attack at the Boar.

There was a booming crack, then the sound of flesh on flesh before the boar man was sent flying and pain radiated up Karl's arm.

Without the barrier up and with only his own skills to protect himself, Karl had dealt himself enough damage with the strike to nearly break his arm, even after the reduction by Void Body.

[That is fast. Stupidly fast. Who has ever heard of a supersonic pimp slap? You didn't even need the skill.] Cara exclaimed, eager to see if she could do that as well.

Even the Totem Rank masters were staring at Karl in shock.

"Did he just?" The Giant asked.

The General nodded. "He did."

The black dragon pointed at the body of the boar man. "If you would be so kind, Archbishop. His soul is beginning to detach."

That shook the leader of the Golden Dragon Nation from his stupor, and he quickly resurrected the fallen monster.

But that left the Giants in a dilemma. If Karl hit a Mountain Giant like that, the result was likely to be the same. They could tell that he didn't use an attack skill, he had just increased his own stats to the point that he could move an arm at supersonic speed.

It had obviously damaged him, but the way that Karl was rubbing his arm, he would recover soon enough.

The General knew that Karl had Trollish Regeneration, either as a skill or as part of his racial traits. It still wasn't one hundred percent clear whether he had been part troll all along. Looking at his build, the General suspected that he was actually part Dwarf. His build was a bit too sturdy for human, and the musculature wasn't quite right. Likely a quarter blooded if he had to guess.

Enough that his family would have been considered human for some time, but they had likely been matching with mixed blood humans for generations.

Most species were like that. Many of them could interbreed with humans, so there was always a chance of other bloodlines. Generally, those ones were considered weak and were a genetic dead end, but sometimes a lineage would continue among humans.

Karl shook the numbness from his fingers and waited for the Giant to prepare for his turn.

That put the Totem Rank Giant in a tight spot.

If he forfeited this match, Karl would win, making it 2-0 for the Golden Dragon Nation and giving them the overall win in the contest. But if he let them compete, there was a chance one of his Giants would be slapped to death. The proud Mountain Giants would never accept that. It would do irreparable damage to their pride to be slapped to death by a human. Unlike the monster species, they weren't so forgiving.

Losing a Giant's dignity versus the slim chance that they could maintain this trial was a difficult bet. If Karl had gone first, there would have been no question, the Giant would have gone. However, with such slim odds, it might be better to cut their losses and find a way to get more of their people to the trial in secret.

The Giants were categorically incapable of holding a poker face, and even the groggy and freshly resurrected Boar Man could see that the Totem Rank Mountain Giant was trying to formulate a plot to get out of this agreement.

To the other leaders, it was no surprise. This happened nearly every time they agreed on something. One of them would back out of the deal, or have one of their allies serve as a proxy to act on their behalf.

"The Giants withdraw from this round. Congratulations to the Golden Dragon Nation on your small victory here today." The leader finally agreed.

"Thank you for your kind words." The Archbishop replied with so much fake kindness that even Karl felt a little nauseous. The Giants immediately opened a portal and left, while the General turned to the transformed Black Dragon with a smile. "So, I know that the humans are going to send as many people as they can before this trial fades, but how much will it cost to buy some of your spots?" The General asked.

The dragon's face was hidden in magical shadow under his hood, but his voice was amused.

"Now, I suppose that we can work something out."

#### Chapter 570 Sharing Toys

The leaders appeared to be making plans for what they were going to do next. They couldn't just hang around here forever. They had far too much work to do for that, and the General had been stationed on the Mountain Giant border specifically to keep them from causing trouble with their Overlords.

"Shall we retire to dinner and let our subordinates take care of the rest?" Nacht, the black dragon Totem, asked.

"Yes, dinner sounds wonderful. Prince Karl, kindly wait here for someone to relieve you." The Archbishop replied.

The General nodded. "I will have someone come to take over, but unfortunately, I am needed on the line."

The Giants' leader said nothing, and simply left with his people.

The General turned to his people and gave them a polite nod. "I will send reinforcements here within the next five minutes. You just need to make sure that nothing happens while they're attempting to awaken their System interface."

"Understood, General."

This all appeared to be part of the ritual, pretending that they didn't know that there was going to be an imminent attack at the lower levels and that the deal they had made actually held any weight.

The Black Dragon opened a portal with a wave of his hand, and left with the Archbishop. Then the General left, and a unit of a hundred Commander Rank soldiers, and fifty Ascended and Awakened Rank support staff rushed through, only to realize that they had no orders other than be here.

Karl cleared his throat. "Listen up. Every new arrival is to follow the directions on the plinth to give thanks to the World Dragon for the opportunity to gain access to the System. Once you have accomplished that task, you will be stationed here for guard duty of the orb.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND?"

"Sir, yes sir!" They responded in unison, then swarmed the Orb.

Colonel Lu chuckled at their response. Karl wasn't even part of their army, but they were so used to just following orders that they naturally assumed anyone giving them orders had the right to.

It only took a few seconds before the first of them had vanished, and the rest were gone within two minutes.

This unit was all younger soldiers, likely a frontline shock troop unit that the General happened to have stationed near his camp.

The old Minotaur rubbed the shoulder of his freshly regrown arm, distinguishable by the lack of tattoos and scars, then smiled at Lotus.

"Well, Little Cleric. I told you I would love to try your food again, and it looks like I'm going to get a chance sooner than expected. It appears that your merchant group on a pilgrimage routine is a bit far gone to salvage, though."

Lotus laughed and winked at him. "Never underestimate our shamelessness. We fully intend to continue with the act as soon as we are done here. We're headed for the Jungles and then to Whiton Temple. That much hasn't changed. We will just have to leave someone else to help you with the mess here."

The old Minotaur smiled at her, then reorganized his troops to surround the plinth.

[Everyone, I believe it's time to come out and be sociable. Hawk, you can scout the area in case they're forming up in the distance.]

The beasts appeared in the ruins, and Hawk made a quiet screech along with a 'come along' gesture to Dana that said he intended to have a rider for the scouting mission.

Tessa hopped up on Thor's back with her spear ready, leaving Ophelia and Lotus to wait with Karl. Or roll around in the dirt playing with Cara.

"How are we going to handle this? There will definitely be a challenge for the orb soon." Colonel Lu asked.

"If it's Orcs, I say that we let them. Same with the Nomadic Demons if they're brave enough to approach. If the Giants challenge, I will deal with their leader.

The Lamia pair will guard my flanks, while the trio of Naga Warriors are with Remi, the Naga Queen. Remi and Tessa will work together as a pair, and Lotus heals.

Ophelia and Cara are Berserkers, so just stay out of their way."

One of the Demons, a slender woman who almost looked like she should be undead, with her skin the colour of a drowning victim, gestured at Cara.

"That is a Winged Void Badger, isn't it? You cow brains should stay well away from her. Those things are a menace to society." She taunted the Colonel.

"You have no idea. She's got a Monarch Rank attack skill. I've already seen it in action."

[That was fast. The Giants are back. Two Monarchs, ten Royals, and five hundred troops, almost all Commanders.]

"The Giants are back. Five kilometres from here, just over a hill." Karl informed the Minotaur Colonel.

"Oh, did they send enough to make it fun?"

Karl patted him on the shoulder. "Did you ever doubt it? There are five hundred Commander Rank soldiers out there."

"That doesn't sound fun at all. They outnumber us five to one, even after the others come back. What did they send for a leadership squad? They normally have a five Giant officer squad for a full Regiment of soldiers." Colonel Lu asked.

"Two Monarchs, ten Royals." The Minotaur sighed. "I will inform my people. With the few who got a Class, we might stand a chance using our new skills."

"You're too pessimistic. I will take one Monarch, Remi and her bodyguards will take the other. The rest of my team will focus on the Command squad."

Remember, they don't know that half the team is summoned. What they see are six Monarchs, eight Royals, including your team, and a handful of soldiers.

They're not going to be hasty when we have the advantage in visible Monarchs. If they hesitate long enough, we will have another hundred soldiers, and then whatever other reinforcements we get."

"When you put it that way, it doesn't sound so bad. They certainly can't allow any of those Monarch Rank Naga Warriors or Cara loose in their Commander Rank back lines. It would be a massacre."

As Karl had expected, the Giants paused as they came into sight of the orb and saw the defending team.

Some of them would be hidden from sight, but the Giants could get a good enough estimate to slow them down. From a distance, it was much harder to guess relative power level, especially with mixed species. If they were all Giants, you could guess by their size. Though, Hawk had better senses than that. But when it was a dozen different species, you had to guess how they compared to their own species, and then the humans would be a wild guess.

It wasn't like humans normally got bigger as they got more powerful.

"How long do we have?" One of the younger Minotaurs asked.

"If they charge, we have three minutes. It's hard to say how long they will plan for now that they have an estimate of our power levels. Expect them to spread out their formation first, so they can see how we respond. Once they have started to shift positions, the attack is imminent."