

Beast Master 601

Chapter 601 The Perfect Gift

Karl stared at the small platform and tried to determine what might be just the right thing to combine to make a new skill.

His first thought was [Skill Master] [Evolution] and [Skill Merger]. Those three together had to create some sort of fun effect for new people.

[You know, trying to combine Bone Crusher and Disintegration to make the perfect slap skill is still an option.] Cara reminded him.

[No, SPICY TORNADO!] Hawk insisted.

Rae sounded like she had put more thought into her answer. [If you combine your new Iron Within skill with Limited Invulnerability and Ghostfire Body you could make something awesome.] She suggested.

Karl focused on the three skills using Skill Merger to see if he could get an idea of what might happen.

[Lord of Destruction] Totem Rank Transformation Skill. Ignores most damage types, incorporeal, Deals fire damage to both physical and metaphysical targets. {Currently Unavailable}

Cara was practically drooling in her space.

[I want it. I can be a Totem, I'm certain of it.]

[Perhaps we should go with something more realistic? A skill that we might be able to actually combine is what we need here.]

Next, Karl moved on to his first idea. Skill Master, Evolution and Skill Merger. When combined, the three made a skill called [Randomize].

[Randomize] May the odds be occasionally in your favour. Creation of this skill book requires ground pulp of ten different Commander Rank or higher plants and ten different elemental stones, set in the blood of the writer.

That was not a description at all. But at least he knew how to make it.

[Oh, this is the right skill. I need some of your blood anyhow. How fast did you regenerate?] Rae asked.

[Fast enough. Have you picked the other blood types that you wanted for your bath?] Karl asked.

[We're a bit limited. I have a lot of Monarch Rank Cyclops, I'll get a bunch of yours to go with that for the Earthy side. Then I've got some Royal Rank Drake, and five drops of Totem Rank Troll blood from that little fuss with Leafa. But I also got a bunch from Monarch Rank whack a mole lady.

It doesn't smell great, but I think if I add some other stuff it should be alright.]

She sounded dubious about that. Everyone knew Rae wouldn't take the bath if it was going to make her smell bad, no matter how many cool skills the zombie summoner had.

[Well, you can work on that tonight after the trial. First, we need a core for the temple.]

[I will get the plants.] Thor insisted.

[I have lots of stones from the trial, I will pick ten that we have a lot of.] Remi added.

[Let me stab you.] Rae insisted.

[You can't leave the space in the trial. I will give you the blood.]

Karl deactivated [Void Body] and [Limited Invulnerability] so that he would actually bleed, but left [Trollish Regeneration] active so that he could continually funnel blood to Rae.

With the Haint Claw on his left hand, and a bowl set under his right hand, Karl was ready to start.

With the claw, he punctured the large vein in his wrist and let it bleed down the claw into the bowl, where Rae claimed it for the pool in her space.

The Haint Claw seemed happy with the arrangement, as did Rae, who had already portioned some off for Remi to make the ink mixture for the skill book.

The problem was that Karl didn't bleed quickly, even with a major artery punctured, and the blood was thick and metallic. [Don't worry, I don't need too much. It would make me smell like Void Badger. I have a plan for this time. It's all about the compound blend. Once I get the scent right, I'll know it.]

You see, Karl smells like Cara and Metal. Cyclops blood smells like fire and Earth. Then I have this nice splash of Troll to put in with a strong plant and healing energy refreshing scent.

Trust the process.]

Karl let the process go on for another five minutes while Remi finished the ink for the book, and then Rae finally decided she had enough blood.

[Alright, that should do. I will work on it after we finish here, so it doesn't get stale before my bath.]

Karl took out a clipboard and set it on a nearby stone, then settled in for a long writing session.

The [Randomize] skill book was incredibly long, and utter gibberish, unlike most of the books, where Karl had actually understood what he was doing as he wrote it.

The hours seemed to flow from one into another, but the sun never moved from its spot high in the sky, no matter how long Karl wrote for.

Finally, the book was finished. It bound itself into a golden tome covered in dragon scales, with a spine that looked like the clay tile roof of the oldest buildings. Currently, flat slate tiles were in fashion, and the clay tiles were rarely used.

[Book of Randomize] Cannot be learned.

[Use Now?] Y/N

"No. You are going in the obelisk." Karl informed the system, just to be one hundred percent clear, that he didn't want to randomize himself.

With that sorted, he placed the book in the hollow, and stepped back as a powerful barrier formed over the stone.

[Monarch Rank, Epic Grade Core Detected] The system informed him.

The stones of the temple began to move, and Karl jumped down to a spot on the Temple that was already completed. The top of the building was rearranging itself, creating a completed temple. The closer to complete that it became, the more powerful the magic surrounding it grew. Then it faded to a steady thrum, and between one breath and another, Karl found himself back outside, holding a small golden loop in the shape of a dragon.

[It's a crown! You got your own crown, that is awesome.] Remi cheered.

The Archbishop stared at the loop in Karl's hands, then at the trial building, which was giving off an incredibly powerful aura.

"Welcome back. I can see that you succeeded, though I do wonder what sort of trial did it give you?" The aging Cleric asked.

"It wanted me to make a core item for a new Temple under construction. I take it that the time flow isn't the same on the outside? Because I was there for at least a half a day, and you're still standing here." Karl replied.

"Yes. You have been gone about five seconds, and you are the first one back." The Archbishop replied vaguely, more concerned with the trial building.

Then something seemed to sink into his mind. "Did you say that it asked you to make a new core item for a Temple? What did you make it?"

Karl shrugged. "A skill book called Randomize. It's a combination of my skill learning abilities and Evolution. It can't be learned, only used. But the trial accepted it as the core of the Temple, so it must have passed the power verification."

The elderly representative from the Green Dragon smiled as he took a few steps, Karl's way, using a walking stick to remain upright.

"I doubt it was about power. The trial knew what your Rank was as soon as you entered. I believe that you passed the vibe check." The Red Dragon High Priest chuckled as his counterpart continued to the trial ground, while the Archbishop shook his head in dismay.

"You're not going to try that skill, are you?" The Archbishop asked the Green Dragon Cleric.

"Of course I am. If I don't then the first one to find out if the new Monarch made a core for the Trial will be a Blue Dragon, and they always get to do the fun stuff." The old man grumbled.

They really didn't ever change, Karl decided.

Chapter 602 Randomized Trial

They were both giving him concerned looks, but neither of the Priests was trying to stop him from going in to verify if Karl's trial really had made a new core for the temple. It certainly felt like it.

Nacht walked over in human form and nodded politely at the others as they watched the old man totter his way to the temple.

"Where's he going?" The Ancient Dragon asked.

"I may have created a new core for the temple during my trial, and he wants to go try it." Karl informed him with a wink.

The Dragon sighed. "And what might that core be? Please say you didn't put a weapon at the core of a trial temple."

"A skill book for the skill Randomize."

"Is that skill usable by clerics?" The Dragon replied.

Karl shrugged. "I don't see why not. It's just a combination of Skill Master and Evolution, which are both training and advancement type skills. It's not a skill that anyone can learn, but it's a book that everyone should be able to use. At least everyone with an affinity for the System."

Lord Nacht chuckled, and a cold aura of death magic surrounded him.

"I will pray to my goddess to send him back alive. That is the best we can hope for."

Karl put his hands over his heart and faked his best wounded expression. "You make it sound like I did something sinister. I assure you, that skill is not intended to cause damage to anyone, it's just for helping system users advance." He pleaded.

The Black Dragon and the two remaining clerics all gave Karl identical knowing smiles. "That assumes you didn't let a Nature Cleric use them. There is nothing that they can't use improperly, and if that thing gives him the chance to evolve into a butterfly, I can't guarantee that he won't take it, even if it's got a one-week lifespan." The Archbishop replied.

He made a most excellent point. But more concerning, Karl's Nature Priestess was still in there. Who knew what Lotus would do if the trial updated and let her pick random options.

Perhaps this was not as well thought through as Karl had believed. When it was a theoretical solution for a problem in a trial, there was no reason to think about real-world consequences.

He hadn't expected his trial to have any effect on reality, and there was a chance that it still wouldn't. But the faint trial energy was significantly stronger now than it had been when he entered.

Not long after the High Priest vanished into the trial, the first person exited the doors. That was when Karl knew that he was in trouble.

For the person who came back out was a small gnomish girl in a pretty green dress, and Karl didn't know which of the Nature Clerics it was likely to be. The little girl was Royal Rank, which narrowed it down to Lotus and the old man. But then the girl took out a walking stick and took a few steps before stopping and staring up at everyone.

"I got short." She announced in a squeaky voice, then froze and cast a spell that created a mirror out of water.

"What did you do to me?" The little girl shouted, running over to Karl and pounding on his legs before yelping in pain and holding her hand.

"Sorry, I'm quite sturdy. You should be careful of that until you grow up. You didn't happen to say yes when it asked if you wanted to randomize, did you?" Karl asked.

Lord Nacht burst into silent laughter, doubled over and holding his sides in what was clearly magical silence. But the Red Dragon High Priest had a look on his face like a deer in the headlights. He was frozen, unable to believe what he was seeing.

"What do you mean, did I randomize? Of course, I did. I wanted the random skill. Now, what did you do to me?" The Cleric complained.

"Randomize doesn't grant you a random skill. At least not always." Karl began, then double-checked to ensure the gnome was still a Royal Rank Cleric.

Fortunately, that part hadn't changed, and even in a new body, they were still a High Priest, no make that Priestess of the Nature God.

"Randomize randomly changes something about you if you don't have a fully operational system interface, and presents you a random option if you do. At least, I think that's how it works. I haven't been brave enough to choose the random option on my own, though I have been given a few random rewards." The gnome glared up at him. "And what am I supposed to do with this? I can't even reach the counter anymore."

Karl shrugged. "No offence, but when she gets back out, Royal High Priestess Lotus might be able to help you with that. She also struggles with counter heights. That is, of course, assuming that she didn't turn herself into something strange."

The next ones out were a few of the new acolytes, and with his system interface active, Karl could see that they were all now clerics and Common Rank. The transformed Nature Cleric gestured to them as they stood around, confused as to what they should be doing.

"Come over and make your report. Don't dally."

One of the boys laughed. "You talk just like the High Priest, but we're real clerics now, we don't take orders from a little girl."

Light flashed, and the boy jumped as a [Smite] spell hit him on the backside.

"I am the High Priest. Now, what did you see in the trial. Don't keep me waiting, I have better things to be doing."

The Red Robed cleric made a 'get on with it' gesture, and the confused Acolytes began describing various trials where they had to accomplish a task and then got a reward. They were all quite normal, as were the rewards, which sounded a lot like the default skill for the different aspect gods.

Karl turned to Lord Nacht. "At least it sounds like nothing strange happened with the kids."

Nacht winked at him. "It's supposed to be a standardized test of their healing ability to prove that they're up to entry standards. It was the same test for Common Grade acolytes for a century. Only the higher Ranks, who have chosen a god to devote themselves to, got individual trials.

I don't see it in their information, but I suspect that they have already been sorted by patron deity, and they just don't know it yet."

Chapter 603 Times Are Changing

The Archbishop rubbed his temples as he took in the news.

Things were changing too fast lately, and it was giving him headaches. He was already well over a hundred years old, and this was not in the plans for his retirement years.

Why had the trial asked for a new core? Why now? Why a Monarch Ranked Elite who wasn't even a cleric?

None of it made any sense at all, but the fact remained that the Temple had been renewed, and the level of power that it possessed now made it a truly magnificent relic.

What he hadn't realized yet, as he was a naturally awakened Cleric of the World Dragon, was that the System was now fully active within the temple, and that it was fully capable of handling system users up to Monarch Rank.

That lack of knowledge would be corrected much sooner than he would have preferred.

There was another group of people coming, these ones in the white robes of visitors looking for an advancement test.

They were led by a cleric in a doctor's coat, so they must have come from the hospital for the test before their discharge back to regular duties.

One of the Elites waved at Karl, then did a double take. Not only for the fact Karl radiated power, but that the Archbishop and someone terrifying were there as well, just casually chatting with him.

Karl looked over and saw James, who had entered the Academy at the same time Karl had, and who specialized in avoidance tanking with a two-handed blade. Or at least he had in the first year when Karl had seen him last.

Now, he had a huge scar down his face that was freshly healed, and the soul aura around one of his arms was weak, so it was likely reattached or regrown in the last few months.

The small group stopped and bowed politely with their hands over their chest, fingers spread in the sign of the dragon. The Archbishop smiled at the group.

"Good morning, young friends. Are you here for a rank confirmation?"

The doctor answered for them. "Yes, Your Eminence. These young faithful have reached the Ascended Rank, and they would like the confirmation before they return to battle. I'm sure you're aware of the change in policy. As new Ascended, they would be reassigned to a Commander led group for their next mission, instead of serving in the lines with the other Awakened."

Karl chuckled, and everyone turned to look at him.

"My apologies, I didn't mean to interrupt. But the Ascended with a Commander led team also have the chance to be assigned to the Hill Giant front instead of serving along the Frost Giant front with the artillery.

The weather is significantly better."

The Archbishop smirked at Karl and chuckled, then nodded at the newcomers.

"In that case, you have my best wishes for success, and a warmer deployment."

The doctor led everyone into the trial as the first round began to return, along with Ophelia, the first of Karl's team other than Karl to return.

"Well, that was different. It didn't test me in any way that I could tell. I entered, Cara poked me with a stick and I chased her around for a couple of minutes, then I was back here."

Lord Nacht began to laugh. "Oh, it tested you alright. The Void Badger is out here, and has been out here. I think the trial tested your suitability to advancement as a Berserker. She poked you with a stick, and you raged, then chased her around for messing with the trial, right?" The black dragon asked.

Ophelia nodded, then turned to stare at the temple.

"What an evil test. But it gave me a thing."

She held up a small purple stone carved to look like a panda. "Well, that's a mark of success in a Royal Rank trial, so there is no doubt that the trial approves of you. Congratulations, Princess Ophelia." Nacht replied.

The Archbishop smiled at her, while the doctor looked confused.

"That is the strangest test I have ever heard of. Did you upgrade the testing for personality?" He asked the Archbishop.

The old man shook his head. "No. For some reason, the trial asked this Monarch for a new core. The changes seem to be the result of that."

Another Cleric arrived with a group of applicants, all in suits that said they were businessmen, not the soldier sort of Elites. They all bowed deeply to the Archbishop, who gestured for them to go ahead. There was one Commander with this group, or very close to it by Karl's estimation.

Now that he had Soul Sight, there wasn't much question. He could just look at them and tell the answer without having to wonder if they were hiding their power or waiting for them to use a skill at full power. He was good at guessing before, as were most beasts, but now it was almost as clear as if Rank were part of their basic visible information.

Tessa and Lotus both came out with small trinkets in their hands before the second group reached the door, followed closely by Dana, who was wearing a new set of mage robes with loose fitting pants underneath for ease of movement in combat. She quickly changed back to her usual hoodie and pants, but not before Karl was certain that it was one of her Class Skills, as it was Royal Rank armour, though probably not Epic Grade like Bestial Raiment.

They all held up small stone trinkets, and the bystanders quietly cheered them on.

More Royals was a huge thing, but with the Archbishop here, some measure of decorum was necessary.

"I know what you did." Tessa announced, staring at Karl.

"I have no idea what you mean? I've been standing right here since my trial ended. I have witnesses."

She put her hands on her hips in a gesture that made the old Red Dragon Priest laugh. It was the same one that Orphanage Matrons used when the kids were in trouble.

"Oh, and when you were in the trial, you didn't happen to completely ignore the detailed instruction text and give it a skill book designed to troll users with random outcomes instead?" She demanded.

"Instructions? There were no instructions. Just the incomplete temple."

Now she had the attention of all the other Clerics.

"When I entered the trial, you were standing at the top of an unfinished temple. Then a voice announced that the trial was to find the perfect Holy Relic to reactivate the system in the Temple. I went up and tried to talk to you, but we couldn't interact. I had suggestions, but you couldn't hear them, but I could hear you. Even the inside thoughts you shared with your beasts.

I know that you put a custom-made skill book designed to create random options in the core, then finished the temple." Tessa explained.

Lotus frowned. "You got to see all that? It made me plant trees. Not even fun trees, just the same one over and over. I filled a whole clear-cut with trees. It's much prettier now, but I could have used a few more varieties."

Dana just shrugged. "I only had to duel myself."

Chapter 604 The Answers You Seek

The Archbishop nodded as Dana confirmed Karl's words. "A Skill for Randomization is how he described it as well. Though, he didn't mention that the skill was designed to troll users."

"Give them a random option from the System. It's a thing, I swear it." Karl corrected him quietly.

The last of the first group came out just after that, and the answers were all different, but all quite mundane. But now that they knew what was likely to happen, the Clerics were much more interested in what the others would say.

Oddly, the Commander from the final group was the next out after the last of the first group, and he looked just as confused as everyone else.

"What did you see, friend?" The Archbishop asked.

"It gave me the option to advance my class. A random Class Upgrade, it called it. I am a Paladin now, see?"

He held up his arm, showing off the mark of a glowing shield with a lightning bolt on it, the sign of a Paladin.

Nacht rapidly shifted to dragon form and picked the man up, holding him in front of one massive golden eyeball for closer inspection.

"The first advancement trial. He really did change classes at Commander Rank. How fascinating."

Then he dropped the Paladin and began to wander away, pacing as he was lost in his thoughts.

The baffled Commander dusted himself as he got back to his feet, but nobody else was concerned about his state. The fact that the trial temple had advanced his class was much more important in the grand scheme of things than a bit of dirt on his backside, or a bruised Ego.

In fact, he was so overjoyed about the situation that he wasn't even made about being accosted by the dragon. He had advanced from being a basic warrior to a Paladin, and he had a whole selection of new skills to choose from, on top of what he already knew.

That was the greatest thing that he could have possibly hoped for, and he got it just from showing up here to have his rank verified.

"I think that I missed something. Can someone explain what is going on and why I have such a great opportunity?" The Commander asked once it was clear that nobody intended to explain.

Karl gestured toward the temple. "It asked me for a strange thing when I was in there earlier, and because the system is so much more active for me than for others, it began to activate the old system functions within the temple.

One of the functions that these temples used to have was to allow those who had reached sufficient level to choose an advanced class, as they would have worked their way through all the skills that their starting class had.

So, you are a Commander, and you should have learned all the skills of a Warrior, which means that now you are ready to be a Paladin.

If you check your system interface, you should have at least a few Skill Points available that you can use to choose Paladin skills. It's an instant learning function, and you will become quite the formidable combatant once you have chosen some of the new options."

The Commander's eyes went blank as he searched through his interface, and a smile slowly grew as he discovered all that he could potentially learn now that he had advanced.

"Alright. I have a number of new defensive abilities, plus [Holy Light] an area damage and protection type combination skill. Man, it's good to be a Paladin. I even got [Lay on Hands] healing as a Class skill. It's not one of the remarkable heals of the white clerics, but it's much better than nothing." The Commander cheered as he finished using up his points.

"Excellent. Now, when the others come out, we will be able to check if they also can now access their skill tree. We know that you can, as it upgraded your Class. But for those who were partially awakened by the Serum, we don't have enough data yet." Nacht explained, as he transformed back to human after his walk around the area.

The Archbishop nodded happily. "Yes. This is a wonderful day, and I am greatly looking forward to seeing what else the Elites will manage with a bit of assistance.

At first, the randomness appeared to be a drawback, but perhaps it's not. If it's just the best way to give the users an option, then the church can count it as a boon."

Karl shushed Tessa, who was about to remind the Archbishop that Karl actually had no idea what he was doing at the time, so he could hardly be given credit for a positive outcome.

The old man was happy, and that was all that really mattered.

Slowly, the rest of the Elites who had gone into the trial began to come back out again, and the clerics on duty got to work taking their reports while Karl tried to determine just how long it was polite to remain here before they ran away once more.

Fortunately, the Clerics had that covered for him. "Monarch Karl. If you would like to return to your apartment, we can bring the Acolytes by later in the day, perhaps a few hours after lunch? That should be enough time to get to know them this afternoon, and then you can begin training them after your visit with the doctors tomorrow.

Just routine diagnosis, making sure that you are not suffering from your extended time in the field." The Red Dragon cleric suggested as they waited for the rest of the trial takers to finish.

"Yes, that would be perfect. I will go prepare for their arrival, and then once we meet I can develop a training regimen based on their specialties. I have high hopes for our options here." Karl agreed, then gestured for everyone to follow him back to the apartment. With some luck, they could cook a proper meal and get a nap in before they had to meet new people, and that would make the day nearly perfect. It wasn't often that they had the time to get a proper nap during the day, and certainly not while they were travelling.

But such lofty hopes were dashed the moment that they got back to the building and realized that there were dozens of other messages waiting for them from all over the city, and not all the messages could simply be ignored.

The ones that were just looking for them to join some business venture could be put aside for now, as they had many more important things to do.

But there were also the ones that were from other Elites looking for a meet and greet, which could be anything from just saying hello to looking for team members for larger missions, resource gathering or even a rapid response team.

Those could not be set aside so easily without looking like a complete jerk. But they weren't only for Karl. There were requests for the entire team waiting for them, and he simply got the majority of them, as this was his apartment.

Ophelia smirked as she looked at the small handful of messages she had received, compared to everyone else. "It's good to be the low-key one. I only get a few people messaging me, and none of them are super long portfolio binders." She joked.

Then she opened the first message that had been left, written on red paper and sealed in an envelope, showing that it was hand-delivered and not relayed to the concierge.

She read a few lines, skimmed through the rest with a disgusted look, and then handed the letter back to the receptionist.

"Kindly burn that. The words alone should be enough to have it declared a biohazard."

Chapter 605 Skittles Sacrifices

Once they were back in the apartment, Lotus made a grabby hands gesture towards Karl. "Turn over the good meat. There are plenty of cooking implements in this apartment, and I want to make us something. I will put a proper stew on for dinner as well, as we're not going to be going anywhere, so it will have time to simmer."

"Don't go saying anything that will raise flags. We want to actually get through a meal without major interruptions here." Dana laughed.

Lotus stuck out her tongue at the mage, and took out a slow cooker, then frowned and looked around the kitchen again.

"All of this is for bachelors or newlyweds. None of the pots and utensils are large enough for our whole group." She realized.

"If the travel utensils aren't suitable for use on the stove, you can send the ingredients down to the main kitchen and tell them what you want. That should work well enough. They might not be nature clerics, but they are professional chefs. I'm sure that they have most of the spices that you want them to use." Karl suggested.

"Oh, that's a great idea. There's a directory on the phone here. Dial 0 for the concierge and...

Hello, can I get a kitchen worker up to Monarch Karl's unit? I would like to have dinner prepared with some of the Royal Rank ingredients that we brought back, but the kitchen isn't stocked for as large of a group as we are expecting.

Yes. That would be wonderful, thank you."

Then she turned to give everyone a thumbs up.

"Done and done. They will be here in ten minutes to collect the special ingredients, and they will have the meal ready for whatever time we pick. I also got them to bring up a cart full of snacks for while we wait." She explained.

"Who knew that Lotus was secretly organized?" Tessa joked.

"When it's about food, I am excellent at organization. There is nothing more natural than not wanting to miss a meal."

As promised, the snacks soon arrived, and Karl loaded a large roast on the cart for the kitchen, and then a second one in case someone else had a special event.

Even in a building like this, high-ranking beast meat was not easy to get, so if they could incorporate a little of the boar meat into their menu meals for the next few days, it would buy Karl a lot of goodwill with the other residents.

He had a sneaking suspicion that he was going to need that soon once the beasts started to settle in. With their skills, it would be nearly impossible to keep them out of an apartment if they wanted to enter, and restraint was not a word commonly found in their vocabulary.

"Do you have a large amount of that meat available? We might be interested in making regular purchases. Assuming you can maintain it at this level of freshness, that is." The chef suggested.

"Food doesn't go bad in System storage, so it will remain that fresh indefinitely. I have a limited amount of the Royal Rank, but I can spare at least a tonne of Commander Rank boar meat." Karl agreed.

Lotus giggled, while Dana silently mouthed the words 'Hawk, you glutton' towards Karl, knowing that the bird could see her.

Each of the boars weighed more than that, even deboned and prepared for cooking. But the bones were valuable as well. Not just as a resource, but to render down to make soup stock.

There was one in the roast today, and Hawk would not mourn the loss of the bones. They were too crunchy and tasteless.

That gave Karl plenty of time to finish the messages before their lunch was ready, so he could send the responses with the delivery worker and relax for a while before the kids arrived.

However, the time that they got to themselves before the kids arrived turned out to be even less than Karl had expected. They had only just finished eating lunch when the phone rang to inform them that their new trainees were on the way up with an old friend.

That sounded promising, and Karl wondered who they had sent. He was hoping for one of the Mackenzie brothers, or perhaps one of his teachers from the Academy.

However, the long beard and deeply stoned eyes that smiled back at Karl from the other side of the door were none of those people.

"Doctor Skittles, welcome. I don't know how you got assigned to escort the trainees here, but it's good to see you again." Karl greeted the Nature Priest from the wounded veterans' hospital.

"I had hoped that name wouldn't stick. But I was the one in charge of ensuring the selected trainees were mentally suited to the task at hand. I know that your team isn't for the faint of heart, and if you release an aura of killing intent, it might break the will of many of the youngsters.

We wouldn't want that, and I suspect that you wouldn't appreciate having someone pee on your floor in terror." The old doctor joked.

There were five children behind him, though Karl felt a bit odd thinking that. They were only really three years younger than he was, a year from undergoing the awakening injection themselves. They did look determined, so at least someone had warned them about what was coming.

But more than that, they looked awestruck. The building was extremely luxurious, and the room was filled with people more powerful than anyone they were likely to have met so far in their lives.

"I should inform you that this experiment will be treated as an actual scientific experiment, and not just a game. There will be someone monitoring your progress while you are in the Capital, and the participants have been selected to have no connection to any of you." Doctor Skittles added.

"Well, that's not out of the realm of expectations. I thought that we would have to make daily reports, but if they're going to have someone watching us train, then we can skip that step.

Will you be the one today?" Karl replied.

"Indeed. There shouldn't be too much to report today, it's just a meet and greet." He shrugged.

Karl took out a handful of jewellery and smiled at him. "Oh, I wouldn't count on that. It's a shame that I couldn't learn Randomize to cast on them, but I think that there is a chance one or two of them might be able to awaken their Class by equipping a System imbued item."

Chapter 606 Acolytes

Karl motioned for the acolytes to come forward with his empty hand, and then offered each of them one of the many Giant Strength rings that he had acquired.

"Do I want to know where you got so many of those?" Doctor Xander, better known as Skittles, asked.

"Probably not. But if you're doing the psych evaluations tomorrow, it might come up anyhow. Oh boy, do we have fun stories for you."

The doctor sighed, and the kids took the rings from Karl, holding them curiously, as they had no idea what such a crude metal band was supposed to be for.

Four of them were nearly identical, to the point Karl thought that they might be siblings with the same straight black hair, but there was one blonde girl in the group, and she was clearly the feral child of the group.

The first thing that she did when she got the giant ring was to bite it and then slide it over her hand like a bracelet.

She gave her arm a happy shake, then her eyes went wide as the ring equipped, and it moved to her left ring finger.

She made an inarticulate squeaky happy noise, and Skittles turned around to see what was going on.

"Sybil, where did you come from, and where is John?" He demanded, while also signing along with his words.

"Is Sybil deaf?" Karl asked.

"Yes, and she definitely isn't supposed to be here. She's two years younger than the others, and she's supposed to be on security restrictions after stabbing another child at the orphanage." Skittles explained.

Rae stepped out of her space and stared at the small blonde child.

"I want this one. She's got potential." The spider announced.

"You're just saying that because her first instincts are to bite and stab." Karl retorted.

"Well, yes. But I think that she will make a pretty good rogue. See, she already picked her class, or got it assigned."

Karl checked her with the system interface, and realized that yes, her name was in the odd yellow that was assigned to Rogues.

Karl considered his options for a moment, and then realized he had the perfect skill for a deaf Rogue.

Echolocation.

If he gave her an additional sensory skill, she would be able to see in the dark, detect most hidden targets, and she wouldn't be distracted by noises, as she couldn't hear them anyhow.

"Alright, I have prepared a plan for the development path of the young Rogue Class Elite. The other four of you, please introduce yourselves and try to get the ring to fit and adapt to you, the way that Sybil did." Karl instructed.

"I am going to look for John. We're short one of the original students, and he was with us at the doors." Skittles whispered.

If she had attacked someone to steal his spot, the feral child might not be a good person, but from what Karl could tell, she was an incredible Rogue. Nobody had even noticed the switch.

If they had, they surely would have snitched on her to the doctor. It wasn't like she would hear them telling him.

The next to succeed was a boy standing near the door. His eyes went vague as the ring fell to the ground, and then he began to do a little happy dance.

His name had turned the light blue of a Mage in Karl's interface, so he couldn't actually equip the ring. But it had still worked to activate his system skills.

Karl picked up the ring and patted the boy on the back.

"I will introduce you to your new tutor. This is Princess Dana. She is a Murim Battlemage, and she will be helping you with your basic magical skills starting tomorrow."

"Thank you, Your Majesty. Princess, I will be in your care." The boy replied politely.

The next two advanced at the same time, and a new pair of warriors was born.

"I am Aaron, and this is my sister, Jaime. Thank you so much, we both get to be warriors like our dad was." The boy replied.

"Sorry for your loss." Karl replied.

"Oh, he's not dead. He was resurrected, or reincarnated? Reborn into a new body, and he lost his status as an Elite. But before that, he taught us all sorts of fighting skills, just in case we were successful with the injection." Aaron explained.

That would have made him one of the early test subjects that had been pulled from the army to beta test the injection. The kids were a couple of years too old for him to have been a regular injection student.

Well, unless he had kids in middle school, but that seemed even less likely.

"And I am Joan. I don't know if this thing works for me, but the red lady says that I need to be here to keep the children under control." The last student explained.

Tessa smiled. "I will be here as well. But we will get you all trained up. Here, why don't you try to wear this instead?"

The Red Dragon God wouldn't let the clerics wear strength items either, perhaps viewing it as unfair, or likely to distract them from other duties. But the simple necklace that Tessa gave Joan equipped immediately, and the girl's name appeared in white over her head in Karl's overlay.

"That's five out of five without having to do anything strange. Now we just need to know what happened to John and wait for Skittles." Karl announced, then pocketed the two rings that couldn't be used.

Sybil was watching him carefully, and made a series of hand gestures to answer, but Karl didn't speak sign language. Fortunately, Lotus did. "She knocked him out and stuffed him through the access door for the fire suppression system on our floor." Lotus translated.

"Please go get the lost student. We can take on a sixth if Skittles allows it."

Lotus ran out to the hallway, then right back in. "Skittles found him. There is a stretcher, and another cleric, and some guys with guns and uniforms."

Karl watched as Sybil ducked below the height of the sofa and then scurried across the living room to hide under a large reclining chair. If he didn't have thermal imaging, she would have seemed to simply vanish, and she was incredibly quiet.

Even Rae was impressed, though she did go to sit on the chair so that nobody tried to search under it. That was her new student, and she was keeping the crazy one.

Chapter 607 Feral Rogue

The guards came in with their hands on their weapons, looking for Sybil.

"Sir, do you know where the young offender is? She escaped custody, and has seriously injured another student." The guard asked.

"She's around here somewhere. Why don't you let me take custody of her? I will get her behaviour straightened out by morning, and you won't have any more troubles with her in the future." Karl suggested.

"You would like to personally take on the duty of caring for a troubled Orphan? My apologies, Your Majesty, but do you know how much effort such an undertaking will involve?"

Karl nodded. "I understand. I will explain the situation to the doctor. Besides, she has awakened as a young Elite now, so it is only right that we take charge of her punishment."

The guard saluted. "Doctor Xander will return soon. He is seeing to the treatment of the wounded child. He sustained a major head injury from a dislodged fire extinguisher."

Skittles came in, and the guards left, which confused the doctor.

"I told them that I would take care of our feral Rogue. Technically, I'm going to let Rae train her, but if a Bloodbath Spider Queen can't keep her out of trouble, I doubt anyone can." Karl explained.

"She fractured the boy's skull with that fire extinguisher strike. Now, I'm impressed that she could even lift it at her age, but she is dangerous."

The other four nodded in agreement.

Karl shrugged. "We are Elites. We're meant to be dangerous. Besides, all of you are Elites now as well. We can start everyone else's training tomorrow, but I will keep Sybil here for the night so we can calm her down and explain how things are going to work."

The warrior laughed quietly at the thought of their troublesome peer finally meeting serious discipline, while Owen the mage was more concerned with the way that Dana was floating half a metre off the ground, showing off her skills.

Only Joan, the one that Tessa suspected was awakening as a Red Dragon Cleric, was looking around to try to find the lost Rogue.

That was also good training for her, as the Red Dragon Clerics were often battle tacticians with the army, and they would need to have good analytical skills as well as keen senses.

"Now, before you all go, I want to ask you what skill you would most like to learn. I have some connections, and I might be able to help you learn that skill right from the start." Karl asked the students.

"[Slash]" The two warriors replied in unison.

"Do you not already have that? It should be the basic warrior skill that you got when you awakened." Karl reminded them.

"We already have a skill? It just told us that we were warriors." Aaron replied.

"Think or say the word status, then go through your menus to see what you have. Slash or Cleave should be your starting skill. Then you will have a Skill Tree showing you the skills that you will be able to learn in the near future."

Then Karl turned to Owen, the mage.

"I would like to learn Lightning spells. My starting skill is Magic Missile, and I am totally asking to use the training room at the Cathedral when we get home."

Karl nodded. "That should be possible, but we will have to work on your mana and stamina so that you can use it as well as Lightning Magic deserves to be used."

Joan, the young cleric acolyte, smiled. "I would like to learn protection magic to keep these idiots from hurting themselves."

Karl nodded. "We know just the thing."

Rae stood up and pulled the startled rogue out from under the chair. Then she turned her to face Lotus, who could explain the situation in sign language, but left the girl hanging upside down.

Once Lotus asked the question, Sybil started to smile and gesture frantically, seemingly overjoyed that someone had asked her.

"She would like to learn flaming sword skills so that she can burn every bully in the world to ash." Lotus translated.

Or perhaps that wasn't joy. She might really just be crazy.

But now both Hawk and Rae were impressed with her dedication to all the right things in life.

Now that he thought about it, an extra stabby tiny creature with a fire obsession was practically made to be a new friend to the beasts. Even Cara would like this one, they were both feral creatures.

Rae set her down and Sybil immediately tried to escape out the door, but was dragged back by a collar of silk around her neck.

Lotus smirked at the girl as she attached the web to the ceiling, and then borrowed a notebook and pen out of Karl's inventory.

"Is she going to be alright?" Skittles asked, growing concerned about the short-term survival of the girl.

"She will be fine. Rae has good reading skills, so they'll be able to communicate even if she doesn't know sign language."

[I wonder if we can teach them to mind speak. That would be good.] Cara suggested.

That was part of their bond, but there might be some similar function in the System that they just hadn't uncovered yet.

[I will look into it.]

Jaime, the formerly silent half of the warrior pair, raised their hand and spoke in a surprisingly high voice. "Who will be our warrior trainer, Sir? They told us that you work with beasts, but none of us got a class like that."

Karl had originally thought that they were twin brothers, but apparently Jaime was just tomboyish with the same haircut Aaron had.

"I will help with it, but the Lovely Princess Ophelia here is a Berserker. If anyone knows about melee combat, it is her."

Ophelia smiled and waved, while the Warriors nodded happily. Then Karl continued. "I also have Thor, who is actually a Monarch Ranked Divine Thunder Cerro, but with a bit of effort, he can transform into a humanoid form to help you learn defensive tactics, while Ophelia teaches you offensive skills.

Between them, you will become the sort of well-rounded Warriors that your father would be proud to know."

He also had Remi to help Dana with the aspiring Lightning Mage, so it was only Sybil and Joan who didn't have two specialty teachers.

That was still better than Karl had expected. You never knew what you would get from a system assigned class, but Karl was slowly discovering that there was a core set that appeared more often than others.

Chapter 608 Rae's Training Regimen

Doctor Skittles smiled at Karl and gestured to the four children who weren't in hiding.

"Should we head out for the evening? I will see you all tomorrow morning along with some of the other doctors, and the students can return at any time you are free." He suggested.

"That works for us. I assure you that Miss Sybil will be alive and better behaved by morning." Karl agreed.

The doctor nodded, then gestured for the kids to follow him out. They all waved happily, knowing that they would not only be back, but that they had the greatest ever story to brag about with their friends tonight. In fact, they intended to practice their new skills until lights out, or until the clerics forced them to go to bed, whichever came second.

Once the door was closed, Tessa turned to Rae. "Why don't I try talking to her about what was going through her head that made her think it was alright to attack another student?" Sybil glared at her and began gesturing frantically in Lotus' direction.

"I can read sign language as well." Tessa replied, gesturing along with her words.

Maybe it was an oversight in Karl's education that he didn't. Or it might just be a cleric thing.

While Tessa and the young Rogue had a silent conversation, Lotus came over to translate for everyone else.

"She says that she actually won the draw, but the bullies beat her up and stole the winning stick, so when the teachers came to see who had been chosen to go, John had her stick. That's why she ambushed him and took her spot back.

Oh, that's interesting. According to Skittles, she was previously in protective custody because she killed her foster brother." Lotus quietly narrated.

Dana and Ophelia gave Karl dubious looks, but he was more interested in watching the interaction, even if he needed translation to learn what they were saying.

"Tessa told her that she's considered an Elite now, and that sort of behaviour will get her drugged to limit her powers while she is locked up for life.

It looks like she understands, and now that she's becoming more certain that she will get to stay, she's not speaking with so much anger." Lotus continued.

[We need to teach her Shadow Step. If she had that, nobody would have noticed the bully going missing.] Rae suggested.

[She's a Rogue, she will get to it eventually. Did you want to teach her stealth skills first after we have helped her senses?] Karl replied.

[That should be good. Her starting skill is [Backstab], so she needs a way to get behind the enemies.]

[Alright, I will work on teaching her [Silent Movement] and [Echolocation], assuming that she can learn both.] Karl agreed.

"Are you really going to train her? The girl likely belongs in prison." Ophelia asked, with her back turned to Sybil and Tessa.

"She likely does, but yes. I intend to train her into a proper Rogue Class Elite, and then she can take over duties that will make her childhood bullying seem like a happy memory. Besides, training is the only way that anything is going to change for her, and she's just going to get worse if we don't do something.

So, if we've got a tiny psychopath on our hands, why not train her up and set her loose on someone else?

I am certain that she would be just as happy on the Frost Giant front as she is in her dorm at the orphanage."

Karl had forgotten that she could see him, but he didn't miss the panic as she read his lips.

It had never occurred to her that Elites might be sent somewhere terrible. She hadn't thought about it past the part where they had the power to get away from the bullies. So, her responses to Tessa were becoming increasingly concerned that she might immediately be sent off to war now that she was an Elite.

Tessa was patiently explaining that there were requirements, and that she still had to learn to behave before she was sent off to the Academy so that she could gain more power after their group got her started.

It was a strange situation, but even Remi was getting in on the excitement, and she had found some shadow element items from the giants, both plants and magical stones that she could grind into potions.

[I still need more books. Tell the delivery person that I need books.] Remi reminded Karl.

[Alright, I will have them send up some related Alchemy and Shamanistic magic books for you after they deliver dinner. Does anyone else need anything?]

[I will let you know after my bath.] Rae replied, while the others just ignored the question, as they didn't need anything that a human could deliver them.

Instead of wasting more time, Karl took a seat at the table and started to write out the [Echolocation] skill, which he wasn't certain would be compatible with the girl at all. Then he went on to [Silent Movement] his lone personal stealth skill.

He didn't actually use it much, but he suspected that Rae could use it as a passive, as she was uncannily silent as she moved around the house.

Being the only thing around which was not making noise would make it easy for Rae, or a Rogue, to spot any other movement in the dark by using an Echolocation type skill. Tessa looked up from their conversation. "Alright, I think that we've got things sorted well enough. Were you going to teach her a skill tonight?" Karl nodded. "At least one. Likely two. Then Rae has training planned for her tonight. Our new friend might be up past her bedtime, but we won't start the training until after dinner."

What would happen if a Common Rank Elite ate a whole bowl of stew made from Royal Rank ingredients was a mystery. Higher Rank ingredients were great for growth, but the Academy simply didn't have anything with that big of a power gap available. Karl hoped that having a constantly open Commander Rank dungeon might help with that, though. Elites could repeat it, though not immediately. So, they could farm resources, which should include at least some edible ingredients and potions from the rewards.

Growth Potions, the sort that enhanced an ability or physical status, were normally only beneficial once, so after the dungeon repeating group members had used them, they would become a tradable resource for others.

"Alright, Sybil, come over here and try to read these books. If they work, you will get good things." Karl instructed, after making sure she was looking at him.

Chapter 609 Sybil

Sybil came over to inspect the books that Karl had set on the table in front of him, not quite understanding why they were important. She had gotten so used to nobody caring what she was up to that she had long since stopped paying attention to gossip, so she only picked up what was in her textbooks, and the details of how Elites advanced were not part of the core coursework.

The methods were common knowledge, but she had missed out on a lot of that, and until today, hadn't cared.

But she liked to study, so she flipped the [Silent Movement] book open without hesitation, then looked around in confusion as it vanished, wondering if some trick was being played on her.

"It's a skill that lets you move without making a sound. I know you can't tell the difference, but it's an essential skill for a Rogue, and it goes well with the other skill that we have prepared for you." Karl explained.

She quickly grabbed the second book and flipped it open, then stared around the room as it took effect.

Then, she snapped her fingers, and watched the world change as the readings from [Echolocation] came in from all directions, and not just forward. It appeared in front of her eyes, like a second layer of vision, and it didn't seem to matter to the skill that her ears didn't work.

She made a series of hand gestures, and the clerics began to laugh. Karl waited for someone to explain, and Sybil took out a small notepad and pen.

[This is absolute bullshit. Now I can SEE SOUND, and I'm still deaf?]

Karl did his best not to laugh at her suffering. "Well, I don't know a spell that will allow you to hear again, but this is magic, I guess you don't need to hear to be able to use it. When the lights go out, now you're not deaf and blind, you can function in perfect darkness, or even blindfolded.

For a Rogue, an Elite who is likely to take on infiltration and stealth roles in the future, this is one of the most important passive abilities that you can have." Karl explained.

Sybil reluctantly nodded, then began to write again. [What else were you going to teach me? This was really fast.]

Karl gestured to Rae, who had an evil grin on her face.

"You already know the skill [Backstab], so I am going to teach you how to [Shadow Step]. With that skill, you can move through darkness to appear in any other shadowed place that is large enough. My Karl will use his skills to help you learn, and I will start with exposure therapy to help your body understand."

Karl focused on the pair with [Skill Master] to help them learn faster, and then smiled as Rae turned out the living room lights and began to move rapidly back and forth between the living room and spare room until Sybil pleaded for mercy as the dizziness overwhelmed her.

The spider turned her tiny charge to face her and patted Sybil on the head. "Now, you just need to focus on the feeling of moving through the shadows. When you understand it, you will be able to escape, and my training will be complete."

She started bouncing back and forth again after gagging the Rogue with a strip of silk cloth, and Ophelia turned to Karl in concern. "How long are we going to let the spider torture a middle schooler?" She asked.

"Technically, I think she's in her last year of primary school. Skittles said she was younger than the others by a couple of years. But I have Skill Master at Rank Four now, and there are few skills that Rae is better at than Shadow Step. She loves that skill.

I give it two hours at the most, and the newest Elite will manage to escape."

An hour in, everyone was researching their training methods for the next day, and the doorbell rang, with room service delivering the stew that Lotus had requested for dinner.

Ironically, that was the trigger for the great escape.

Sybil vanished from Rae's arms and appeared under the food cart, then made a run for safety down the hall, only for Rae to grab her a half second later and drag her back inside.

"Not bad. Only one hour and you're getting the hang of the skill. Now, sit down and eat. You're going to need the energy for training tomorrow." Karl instructed as Sybil realized she couldn't Shadow Step away when she was being held by the ankle.

[I have a potion for her. Put it in a cup, I want to see what it does.] Remi informed Karl as Rae set the Rogue down at the table.

[Wait for tomorrow. I want to know everything that she's capable of before we start feeding her new supplements. Tonight, we will focus on skills. You can make potions for all the Acolytes if you would like, and then we can test them all at once.] Karl suggested.

[Oh, that's a good idea. Everyone at the same time will be much better entertainment, and then if strange things happen, the others won't be able to refuse. I knew you were the Karl for a reason.] Remi agreed.

What exactly she thought the job of a Karl was remained a mystery, but he felt like it had become a middle management job, and less of an Elite powerhouse position.

But if nothing else, Remi would have potions for all five of their Acolytes the next day during training, and once she found time for a new beauty routine, Rae should advance, and possibly pick up new skills that she could leverage to take back her top spot.

Having Rae at the Monarch Rank would motivate Remi and Cara to advance as well, even if the power of the separate spaces advancing wasn't enough to immediately force them to break through.

In short, tomorrow was going to be a very busy day for Karl and the team.

But before that, he should likely rescue the young Rogue from whatever had happened to her now. She was turning red in the face and squeaking, but she appeared to be breathing well enough, so she hadn't choked on her soup.

[I think it's an energy overload. We're all used to the condensed power of the boar meat, but she's never had anything like it before. Maybe take her to the training grounds in the basement to burn some of the excess off before something bad happens.] Thor offered.

[Right, good call. You have to be careful with giving humans good things.]

Chapter 610 Morning Prep Work

Rae grabbed her trainee, along with their soup, and vanished. Karl could feel them directly beneath him, so she must have gone to the training areas, but why she had decided to bring the food was a cause for concern.

It was too much energy for a Common Rank Elite to handle, so if she was intending for Sybil to eat more of it, she would have to intensely train her skills. It was still early in the evening, but she wouldn't be able to burn off that much energy quickly with the amount of energy that she could currently handle.

However, Karl did have Skill Master active on them, so if Rae was going to combat train her, maybe Sybil could learn some new skills that she could overload with energy.

"You know, there is a good chance that Rae will kill her accidentally." Lotus quietly reminded them.

Karl nodded, "That is possible, but I think that as long as she can burn off all that excess energy, there is a good chance that Rae can actually force her to advance tonight.

Rae has an advancement bath coming, so she will want to get as much training as possible done before she goes to bed for the evening. It wouldn't be surprised if we find a Rogue dangling from the ceiling in the morning, though. Rae likes it when her prey stays where she puts it."

The ladies chuckled at that, but Karl was right. Rae would definitely cocoon a flight risk so that Sybil remained where she was put until morning.

"Should we get ready for bed, or do we wait up until Rae comes back with our new charge?" Dana asked.

[I've got it handled.]

"Let's sleep first. We have a long day coming tomorrow."

Karl retired to bed with Dana, while Ophelia transformed back into Werebear form and slung Lotus over her shoulder.

Tessa chuckled as the Bear claimed her teddy, while Lotus made half-hearted complaints about how a Werebear was too warm to sleep with when you had temperature control.

Karl also woke up far too warm the next morning, with Dana's warm body on one side and Cara curled up against the other.

"Is this going to be a new thing?" He whispered to the Void Badger.

[It is my duty to keep your relationship wholesome until Brother Thor manages to find a girlfriend.]

Karl smiled and petted her head, which made Cara stretch out in the bed and wake Dana.

She rolled on top of Karl, then rolled back when Cara licked her face.

"What was that for. Good morning, Cara. I'm awake now."

Karl looked into his space, and found that Rae was still in the middle of her bath preparations.

She had the base ready now, but Remi had made her a potion to work into her body before she began, and Rae wanted to finish that before she added the Totem blood.

[It opens the pores and exfoliates loose outer layers. It was an error during my research, but it works really well as a body scrub for Rae.] Remi explained.

The Bloodbath Spider was lost in her preparations, oblivious to the fact that it was already morning, and that everyone was getting up for the day.

Karl carried Dana to the shower while Cara polished her fur, and then he let his senses wander to the others to make sure everyone was doing well.

Thor was in human form with Sybil in the kitchen with Tessa, while Lotus was making a lot of noise in bed, possibly trying to escape from the grip of a gently snoring Ophelia.

Hawk was in his space, as was Remi, so Karl worked through his morning routine and then realized he was actually short on normal clothing for a casual day.

He decided to go for the uniform suit without the coat or tie, and made a mental list of items to request from the delivery service.

{Mister Karl, good morning. We're just about done making breakfast.} Sybil greeted him in sign language as he reached the main room, with Dana and Cara behind him.

"You look like you slept well." Sybil gave him a rueful smile. {Lady Rae tied me to a hammock, and I couldn't Shadow Step out of it, so I didn't really have a choice. I was stuck there until Mister Thor came to rescue me this morning.}

Karl chuckled as Tessa translated. Rae's webs didn't have knots, so there was no way for an escape artist to untie themselves, and a Common Rank Elite wouldn't be able to break the silk.

Thor smiled at Karl. "When are the hatchlings coming?"

"As soon as we finish with our morning meetings, we can call for them. Have you come up with a training program for the warriors?"

Thor nodded. "I have the perfect thing, and Sister Remi made me potions to help. It's going to be very productive. If they're good warriors, they might even show progress in just one day."

Tessa smiled at the transformed Cerro. "I've already called the doctors to finish our evaluations. But are you sure that you'll be alright staying in human form? I believe that those items are usage limited."

Thor shrugged. "It's not a big problem. Sister Rae will learn the spell soon, and I can just stay like this for a while. My pond is comfortable even without my scales."

[Thor secretly likes wearing armour.] Cara added in Karl's mind.

That was valuable information to have. When he had time, Karl knew that he would have to study more so that he could keep useful spells like that one available for the team. Or one that would allow them to shrink.

If they were able to reduce themselves to Cara sized or smaller the way that Remi could, there would be little reason for any of them except Rae, who wanted to jump scare people, to transform.

The trick was to convince Thor, who valued power and the ability to protect, that being small was a good thing. He had even made his human form the largest out of all of them.

Plus, a sheepdog sized Thor would be adorable.