

The First Legendary Beast Master #Chapter 62 Small Group Training - Read The First Legendary Beast Master Chapter 62 Small Group Training

Chapter 62 Small Group Training

Professor Valerie led Karl and Dana out of the field and behind the gymnasium building, where she had a military sedan car parked, with a driver waiting for them.

"Climb on in, time is wasting, and I am under orders to have you back here before dark." She instructed as she settled herself into the front passenger seat.

It was obviously a sanctioned trip, as she had just been introduced as their instructor, but it seemed odd to both of them that they would be taken off school grounds on the first day by their new Professor for small group combat, or whatever she intended to teach them.

No words were spoken until they were out of sight of the Academy grounds, and then the Professor turned back to look at the students in the back seat.

"What we will be learning is not for the ears of the general population of the Academy, or for the busybodies watching the security footage. As you were informed earlier, I am from the Bureau of Elite Development, a division of the National Security Agency, and I will be teaching you the essentials of how to operate as a pair.

It is not guaranteed that you two will be working together after graduation, but the Bureau sees promise in you both, and we intend to guide your growth. There are certain things that the Academy can't or won't do for you, but I am under no such restrictions.

Have you both managed to get a grasp of the new abilities that you were taught over the weekend?" She asked.

"We have." Dana replied, somewhat stiffly.

"Excellent. Today we are going to introduce you both to some real experts. Sergeant Rita isn't bad, but she coddles the students too much in the first and second years." The Colonel insisted.

Karl considered rebuking the woman, as the Sergeant was an excellent teacher and she had put in significant effort to help him get this far, but it was probably wiser not to anger the Colonel and get Rita into trouble with her superior through no fault of her own.

The car stopped at a warehouse ten minutes away from the Academy, on the outskirts of a small town. The door opened, and the driver parked off to the side, next to a military bus.

"Follow me, and meet the rest of the teams." Valerie informed them, then straightened her uniform with a gust of wind magic and strode away.

"You get used to her." The driver whispered as Karl and Dana were getting out of the vehicle, and the smile on his face helped assure them that this wouldn't be as terrible as they had been fearing.

The Colonel led them into a side room where ten other pairs of Elites were gathered. A few of the pairs were clearly soldiers, but most were in civilian clothing.

"Welcome back, Colonel." They greeted her in unison, all giving sharp salutes that made Karl and Dana feel out of place in a room full of professionals.

"At ease everyone. Meet the new students, Karl and Dana. According to the Academy Board, Dana is slated for an abbreviated career as an entertainer, followed by an extended career using that fame for messaging, while Karl is designated as a test subject for his unique class. Someone at the top sees promise in it, and they want to exploit it."

The two students stood there stunned at the blunt revelation that their entire lives were actually being planned in that level of detail only weeks after they had started at the Academy. It was disconcerting to say the least, but from the responses of the others here, it was either not unusual, or it was not going to pan out the way that the board wanted it to.

"So, they've come to us for what? An introduction to Elite Society? Or did you have other plans?" One of the men in civilian clothing asked.

"For small group combat training. They both made it to Awakened Rank already, and there is a good chance that both of them will hit Commander Rank before they graduate." Colonel Valerie explained.

"Oh, so we're going to pull rank and drop them out of their life plan? Now that does sound fun." One of the women in military uniform laughed, and nudged the man standing beside her.

"You know they're looking at us like we're working for Central Intelligence, right?" The partner replied with a huge smile on his face that made him look much less frightening.

"Oh, yes. Introductions are in order. Everyone here is an investigator for the Bureau of Elite Development. We not only guide promising young Elites, we also ensure that the

others are living up to their duties, and solve problems when an Elite reaches a bottleneck in their growth.

The Department normally operates in pairs, so that information won't be lost if an investigator is compromised. That means they are the perfect people to teach you paired combat skills.

They will also cover a number of other subjects during the semester that we will be working here, and if I determine that more intensive study is needed, one of your regularly scheduled days may be shifted to this training centre." The Colonel informed them.

The woman standing next to Dana wrapped a friendly arm around the girl's shoulders and smiled. "Relax, she might be a bit intense, but I'm certain that you will have much more fun here than you did in that regular training class."

Dana giggled, and the woman gave her a questioning look before Valerie spoke again.

"I am not certain that we can guarantee such a high level of enjoyment. Did you know that their last mission turned into the elimination of a Goblin Tribe that was looting an abandoned town? Compared to that, I fear that our training sessions might be a bit dull.

But we do have some advantages that the other Professors do not. For example, Nala is an Inscriptionist. Once you have mastered the spells that you are working on, she will be able to make you copies of new skills to be directly learned.

Also, I have arranged for an outing in the near future to look for infant monsters with high potentials to compliment Karl's Windspeed Hawk. The Bureau of Elite Development is intensely interested in the possibility that you might be able to contract more than one monster and gain additional powers from the process."

Chapter 63 Modification

The odd collection of Elites that were called here from the Bureau of Elite Development seemed like a cheerful bunch to Karl, and even more so after they were given no real restrictions on how to deal with the two new recruits.

They were all used to working in pairs, which was so they had someone to watch their back as much as it was intended to prevent corruption, as the Colonel had suggested, so giving them a warrior and mage combo was perfect for their preferred fighting style.

"I think that what we should start with is actually more of a skills' development than tactics. Normally, we would work with students about to graduate, so they would have a half dozen skills in their repertoire, but I am assuming that you two both only have one each." One of the warriors in civilian clothing suggested.

"I have two now, thanks to Overlord Drake, and Prince Axel gave Dana a Golem spell book. Plus, she knows Fog in addition to her base magic missile already." Karl explained.

The man looked impressed, and turned to the ginger haired female soldier beside him. "It looks like they really are on the path to fame, they're meeting all the right people already."

"Don't mind Josh, he's jealous that you got to meet the Prince. You can call me Anise, and I will be helping you with your adaptation skills. One of the most important things you can do with your abilities is learning new ways to use them.

The more creative you can be with them, the more useful even the basic skills will become. For example, the Fog spell. It's not considered one of the more powerful spells, but did you know that you can condense it in just a ring to create a solid visual barrier?

That alone will give you a huge advantage in combat, as you can block off the view of your enemies while you escape. If you block a spot in an alley, it becomes much easier to run into a building without being followed. Anything pursuing you will have to guess what building you went into. Or you can cast it over the outside of a moving vehicle and make them crash." She explained.

Dana was shocked by that last suggestion.

"Do the elites get into conflicts with other people a lot?" She asked.

"We do. Most of the Elites are a different story, but the teams here don't just guide the other Elites toward more power, but away from taking the wrong paths in life. Sometimes we will be sent to deal with Elites gone rogue, drunkards and abusers.

But the same techniques can be used against intelligent monsters. For example, the Mythrill Tiger. They're smarter than most people you will meet, and if you want to lose them once they're following you, it will take a lot of effort.

The full-grown ones are on the strong side of Commander Rank, and even two on one, it can be difficult for Elites at the same rank to take them out unless they're caught in the open." Anise agreed.

Karl didn't quite understand the crossover between this conversation and his own skills. Rend and Shred seemed pretty simple, but the versatility of Fog seemed to be pretty high if you could use it to blind the target. That would take some real practice, but as long as it was possible, then there shouldn't be a problem for Dana to figure it out.

The mages took Dana off to one side of the room to explain whatever they wanted to do first, while the other half of the group gathered around Karl.

"Alright, we're going to try something different. Have you ever attempted to just hold Rend on your hands?" One of the men asked.

"Yeah, that's not a problem. I can hold it in place on the gauntlets for as long as I need." Karl agreed, and coated his hands in the Rend attack, lighting up the claws of the Gauntlet with faint violet light.

"Nice, you understand the basic concept that we're going for then. What you want to do is learn to set it in place somewhere, and not have it move. Think of it like a string, or a snare being placed." The soldier suggested.

Karl conferred with Hawk, who thought that it should be possible, but if they wanted it to stay on an object that wasn't attached to their own body, they would have to see it.

"Alright, I think I can do it." Karl agreed, and then focused on creating a Rend attack that crossed the space between two pillars, using them as anchors to keep it in place, the same way that he wrapped it around his gloves to enhance the claws.

"Oh, that is superb. Well done. Now, to see if it actually works or just looks like it does."

He tossed a metal bar against the thin beam of light, and it cleanly cut in half, clattering to the ground in two pieces.

Karl gasped in shock. "That's brutal. I can see how that would be an incredibly dangerous way to use this ability. The only problem is that if I don't watch it to keep it in place, it won't stay. Rend doesn't want to be stationary, and Shred is even more violent, I doubt that I could keep that one stable at all."

"That's fine. The more practical uses of this skill modification training are to create snares and trip lines for passing monsters and to stop them from following you. If you can learn to do multiple stationary traps, you can block a path well enough that a pursuer won't be able to just step or jump over, and you will have time to either regroup or get away."

"Alright, that is good enough for me. Not dying is always priority one." Karl agreed.

"I take it you came from the woods, where there are a lot of monsters?" One of the civilian dressed women asked.

"Nope, the mines, where we're always worried about the roof collapsing on us a kilometre underground." Karl replied with a chuckle. "So, not dying is priority one. Getting the job done is priority two."

Chapter 64 Get The Goods

The rest of the day was spent on improving the new ways that the teams had come up with to use the Rend skill. Mostly Karl worked on his control to keep a strand of it stationary, but they also worked on disguising the skill, as some monsters would recognize the Rend ability and have a trick to deal with it.

For example, some beasts with tusks could take the Rend directly and let it break against the tusk, doing little damage to their body. But if you made it look like a different skill, for example having the rend form not as a streak of energy but as a disc or a spear, it would confuse them, and they might not be able to deal with it.

Dana had done something similar during the fight, by dimming the light from her magic missiles. The small alterations to a spell could make just enough of a difference to get you through a tight spot or to get an edge on your competitors.

"Alright, everyone, you've had your fun. We will meet back here again next week at the same time." Colonel Valerie announced at precisely four in the afternoon, the usual ending time for classes.

The Saturday classes were usually a bit more flexible with their timings, but Karl was fairly certain that her personality didn't allow her to run overtime without prior written authorization. If she was off schedule, she was definitely the sort of person that would be bothered by it.

"See you two next week. Don't forget to practice, if they give you some leisure time. We will be making up a lesson plan for you." One of the mages laughed.

The Colonel hurried the students back to the car while the others changed tasks to planning for something, obviously in a rush to get them back to the Academy on schedule.

The drive was a quiet one as Karl and Dana both focused on the things that they had been learning for the day. Learning new ways to use skills was entirely different from just learning the skill. Instead of just gaining knowledge, you had to work to change the way that you thought about, imagined and solidified the spell. It was a different way of using the knowledge that you knew, a way that ran contrary to how you had been thinking about your skills.

It was more of a test of mental flexibility and creativity than anything else, and for Karl, it was draining in a way that normal training was not. Eventually, he was certain that he would get used to it, but today he was oddly exhausted and glad that tomorrow didn't have any plans but staying in to relax and practice.

When they were back on school grounds, the Colonel put back on her 'Professor Valerie' friendly facade and her expressionless professionalism turned to a polite smile that was somehow still completely devoid of emotion.

"So, what did you think of the first day of special training? Was it everything that you had hoped for?" She asked, looking at them in the rearview mirror of the car.

"It was certainly something unexpected, that's for sure. I never thought about trying to use my skills that way, but it is going to make a huge difference the next time I come up against monsters like that Goblin Tribe." Karl replied.

Hawk was in full agreement. Rend was his ability, he should be best with it, but they had weird human ideas on how to make it work that would be great for harvesting meat. Especially pigs. Pigs were stupid, and he could make them stampede in rage, so they would trip over the Rend wire, or get their tusks stuck on it, and he could attack their soft and juicy underside.

[Hawk, go have a snack. Your food daydreams are distracting.] Karl reminded his partner.

Hawk wasn't wrong, though. Plenty of creatures could be made to charge in rage, and they wouldn't be looking closely enough to notice the thin string before they ran into it. They would be too focused on what he was doing, and the trap could be set in advance.

Dana turned toward her noisy room with a soft smile on her face. "Let's see how the neighbours like me now. I've got some great ideas on how to make the Golem and Magic Missile work together, so I will be practising them late into the night."

Karl laughed at her comment. The booming noise of the neighbours practising their attack abilities could still be sporadically heard, they hadn't given up on their goal of being the next to reach Awakened Rank yet, but the stomping of a Stone Golem would be horrendous where the Magic Missiles were normally silent.

"I think that I will focus on trying to improve the actual power of my abilities. Stretching the attack out the way they want puts a lot of drain on my mental abilities, so I need to work on them first and control second." Karl replied as she waved goodnight.

But before he turned in, Karl realized that he did actually have some Academy credits after their away mission, and he didn't need to change his room, so he could spend them on some resources for Hawk.

He headed back downstairs to the supply room and waited for the clerk to answer the bell.

"Welcome back. I saw you headed off campus this morning, so I didn't expect to see you today. What can I do for you, possibly a uniform repair?" The man asked.

"Nope, my uniforms are fine. We were just doing some offsite training, not a mission. What I need is an Awakened or Ascended Rank strength stone, and some Ascended Rank monster blood if you've got it." Karl replied.

"Ah, the strengthening mixture. Be careful using too strong of a potion when you've just broken through. It's best to mix a little bit into a shot of water and see how that works out for you." The clerk warned him.

"Thanks, I will be sure to portion it out slowly if you've got the good stuff." Karl agreed.

The man opened the computer to some sort of inventory screen, and entered Karl's identification by scanning his badge, then frowned.

"You're still a bit short on credits. I can get you an Ascended Rank stone, but no blood, or both at Awakened with the credits you have."

Karl nodded. He had expected that a simple mission wouldn't get him too far, even if it was the most common of items.

"I will take the Ascended Rank stone, and I will mix it with the blood I saved from the mission. I still have a fair bit of Awakened Rank boar blood." Karl agreed.

He actually had the whole boar, so he would be able to get half a litre or more of the blood out of it, enough to last Hawk for weeks at the proportion it should be mixed with the crushed stone.

"Pleasure doing business with you. Do you want that stone ground fine or coarse? I'm assuming you aren't going to try to eat the thing intact." The clerk asked.

"Ground as fine as possible. It mixes better that way." Karl agreed.

"And there you are. Good luck with your training."

As soon as the transaction was done, the man disappeared into the back room, leaving Karl holding a small bag of powder, like some illicit drug transaction.

Chapter 65 New Foods

Karl placed the powder in his beast space and mentally formed a bowl to pour boar blood into. Hawk was already prepared, and happily drained the beast, then slowly swirled the concoction with his claws until he had the desired consistency and an even distribution.

A quick lick of the claws to clean them brought a happy trill, then he began to dip the boar meat in the bowl like he had seen Karl do with chicken at dinner.

Karl ignored the bird's antics and sat on his bed to meditate the afternoon away, continuing right through until morning as Hawk adjusted to the change in food and the feedback strengthened Karl's body and mind.

[It looks like we might not have to slow down, buddy.] Karl informed Hawk when his alarm went off for breakfast.

[I told you, we will be stronger than that Sergeant in no time.] Hawk agreed.

That was the first time that Karl recalled the bird calling her by Rank instead of just "Evil Lady" or "Not so Evil Lady". Hawk was getting smarter, he was certain, and he was beginning to remember names for people.

Fortunately for the both of them, today was the weekly day off, and they didn't have any major plans, other than continuing their basic training and meditation schedule.

But a lack of plans didn't mean they weren't going to do anything. First thing in the morning, before Karl had even gotten up to go to breakfast, the supply staff was at his door with a delivery of upgraded food products for Hawk, various meats, sausages with infused resources of some kind, and a pungent ointment that the label said should be applied to the claws to help them maintain their flexibility and not become brittle.

That gave them plenty of work to do after Karl had finished eating, as Hawk was a fairly picky eater when the food product was not meat. The sausages had been created with humans in mind, so Karl would eat them himself if necessary, but some of the order seemed to be completely plant-based.

It looked like meat cubes, but when Hawk poked them, they were just wiggly and soft, definitely not meat. Karl thought that they might be tofu of some sort, created with a magical plant to help strengthen the body, but Hawk resolutely refused to eat them.

The spicy sausages were an instant hit, and Hawk didn't care that they had visible herbs in them. The cheese sausages as well. He made a mess of himself as he tore apart the juicy cooked meat tubes, but Hawk was instantly in love with the flavour of cheese.

Karl made careful notes of the response to each food product, as well as Hawk's estimation of the absorbed energy content and any reactions that his body had to the food.

Only one caused an unusual reaction. The spicy sausages that Hawk loved gave him a stimulant boost and made him hyper, a fact that Karl noticed, but Hawk did not. They might be some sort of drug to the Windspeed Hawk, but his thoughts were as clear as always, just faster and more easily distracted.

Once Hawk had a sample of everything, Karl tried the rejects, and found that while they were edible, none of them were going to make his favourite foods list. They were all

easy to digest, which was a small blessing, and Karl spent most of an hour meditating to burn through the energy before he got up to water the plants and check for any ripe fruits or flowers that should be harvested.

He still had to use the manual for that, as most of them were only just beginning to change from when he had arrived, but a few were more prolific. The berry bushes in particular seemed to be constantly flowering and growing more fruit as they were picked, and the tea trees constantly dropped leaves that needed to be dried.

That took him nearly to lunch, but he had a small collection of fruits in the beast space now, in addition to the berries that Hawk liked to season his meat with.

'I should go do something today.' Karl mused to himself as he finished eating again and meditated away the excess energy to improve the beast space.

It was really beginning to take shape, and he had most of a clearing worth of grass forming around the single tree already. Next he was going to create a small bush. Hawk liked to fly around the balcony and dodge the branches, so a bit more scenery would be good for him, Karl thought.

[How about a lake? A bit of water would be good, so I can practice my diving for fish.] Hawk suggested.

That shouldn't be too hard, just like the grass, he only had to focus on adding the lake bed to the nothingness of the space.

[Don't you think that it's getting larger in there? I swear that it used to be much more crowded, and you didn't have as much room to fly around.] Karl asked as he began to work on the lake.

[I agree. I used to have to make small circles around the tree, but now I can fly for a few minutes before I have to turn around. Do you think that this place will get bigger as we get stronger? I could have a whole world to myself once we get powerful enough.] Hawk suggested.

Maybe that was the goal? The space was getting more powerful and larger with effort, and naturally, it would become an impressive home for the Windspeed Hawk, but asking for a whole world was on a whole other level. Awakened level was only going to take him to a kilometre or so in diameter at this rate, and the density of the world inside the space seemed to be improving in a linear way, while the size had made a jump at some point that Karl hadn't noticed until now.

That would be another item to add to his mental list of things to track.

Chapter 66 One Day Off Isn't Enough

Dana came over after lunch, intending to study and meditate in the silence of the balcony. But Hawk had other ideas. He had far too much energy after his change in diet, and he needed to burn some off, so he wanted to play.

By play, he meant practising their skill control together, since his and Karl's were too similar to be entertaining.

So, she studied new ideas and techniques between rounds, while Karl focused on expanding the 'lake' to the size of a pond from a puddle. He worked on that until mid-afternoon, when the urge to go do something crept up on him again.

"We should see if there are other things to do on the day off. They have to have some sort of entertainment that isn't working." Karl suggested.

"There are movie rooms, the games lounge, and a few other facilities that we haven't explored yet. Or we could go to the pool." Dana suggested.

The pool was technically a training area for aquatic specialists, but on the rest day, it was simply a leisure spot for everyone to hang out, swim and relax. The problem was that it meant there would be a crowd of people around, and neither of them were really the social butterfly sort.

Being the first to Awakened Rank in the first year would draw a lot of attention, and they were hoping to let the furor die down for a few more days before they went out to mingle with people who didn't have anything better to do than ask questions about their training regimen.

"How about the movie lounge? Just sit and watch a movie and eat popcorn." Karl offered.

"That sounds excellent. But even better is the fact that nobody will crowd us and ask loads of questions because there is a movie playing." Dana replied, nodding in satisfaction.

So, that was how they found themselves side by side in a dark room, eating junk food and trying not to laugh as a group of girls ahead of them in the small theatre gushed about how handsome the star of the action movie they had picked was.

According to the boy they had seen leaving when they came in, it was just starting again, for the third time that day because the girls had put it on repeat and nobody was brave enough to argue with them when it was actually a good movie.

After the movie, they took dinner to go, and ate on the balcony as they watched the sunset. Karl couldn't help but feel that they might have just been on what would pass for

a proper date, but by the time that he worked up the courage to say anything about it, Dana had fallen asleep in her chair while meditating.

Karl moved her to the hammock where she usually slept and placed her bag on the table where it would be easy to find, then turned in for the evening and forgot all about the stress of Academy life for a night.

After waking up late and rushing to get showered and fed before class, morning training still managed to go even more smoothly than usual with the innovative ways that they had come up with to modify Rend. Instead of a simple claw streak, Karl focused on expanding and stretching them as they flew, and then cut a second pattern perpendicular to the first, creating a square grid of Rending attacks that took out a whole swathe of spells at once.

It wasn't perfect, as some managed to fly through the pattern, but with a minimal energy cost, he could block five or six out of twenty spells in a volley.

"Is that even the same ability anymore? I mean, it looks the same at the start, but that's all they have in common." One of the mages complained.

"It is. It's just an extended reach version of the attack. If you notice, it's shorter range as well, as I can't stop it expanding once it has started, so it destabilizes if it flies too far, unlike the original." Karl explained.

"So, it's similar to the process that led to creating the Water Shotgun, except not as extreme of a modification. I like it." One of the other mages replied with a gesture of approval.

Even the teacher thought it was impressive, and horribly difficult to evade if it was thrown at you that way. The best that anyone could do was to block it, there would be no evasion. That would be a nightmare for the Rogues and the agile monsters, who weren't well known for their ability to take a hit.

"Alright, that's it for today. See you all here tomorrow." The instructor shouted seconds before the bell rang, giving the mages time to finish one last spell.

Karl and the mages relaxed through lunch as Hawk preened and showed off his new red feathers, the change from learning a second skill. Everyone had seen them all morning long, but they hadn't had a chance to really admire them with the Hawk flying around above them.

"You know, I have never seen a Windspeed Hawk with feathers like that. I've got my tablet with me, and the photo analysis doesn't even recognize it. It says that it's a mutation and not a strength progression for the species." One of the mages explained.

One of the others gave an excited look, eager for all types of new information. "So, you think that Hawk is on a whole new path forward now that he's learned another skill? Usually, monsters that reach maturity in the Common and Awakened Ranks will have one skill at the most, and they rarely learn another. Since learning that Shred skill changed his feathers, I think it might have been part of what he needed to break through the racial limits for a Windspeed Hawk.

At least, it certainly doesn't look like it was a detrimental change, and Shred is supposed to be much more powerful."

Karl nodded. "Hawk thinks the same thing, that he will be able to advance quickly. With my help and maybe another skill as he gets toward the top of Ascended Rank, I think that he can make Commander way before I graduate."

The mages sighed. None of them in that class would be making Commander before graduation. In fact, it was unlikely that more than a handful in their year would show that sort of potential, but Karl was already looking past the Awakened Rank and into Ascended when they had barely started their first semester.

Common Grade? What was that, he had barely even touched on it before he had left it behind. That alone was enough to let his training partners know that he was abnormal in the growth department.

They finished lunch and went their separate ways, leaving Karl to face a grumpy Sergeant Rita all by himself when he reached the training grounds for the martial arts class.

"Did you enjoy your new training regimen with the Bureau of Elite Development? A bit more exciting than the usual group training in the field?" She asked, and Karl realized that she wasn't upset at anything that he could control, she was mad that her authority as his development guidance counsellor and personal tutor had been usurped by people from higher up the government food chain.

"It was definitely different. They focus on working in pairs instead of in a bigger team, so the whole mindset is different. Really, doing both would probably be better, but there are only so many days in the week." Karl replied carefully, not wanting to volunteer to give up his leisure time.

"I am glad that you think so. Now, with your official advancement, we are changing your training partners to someone more durable. Meet Tank, he is the berserker combat instructor, and you will be helping him demonstrate the ways for unarmed and agility fighters to deal with berserkers today."

Karl decided that Rita was definitely taking out her frustrations on him. That guy was huge.

Chapter 67 Tank

"Good afternoon class, I hope that you all ate well, but not too well. Rich foods will make you sluggish." The Elite known as Tank greeted them.

"As you heard, my name is Tank, and I am a part-time teacher here at the Academy, as for most of the year I am out hunting monsters. Today's lesson will be a simple one, like the Berserker fighting style is simple.

Now, you may think that simple means easy to defeat, but you couldn't be further from the truth. I have heard that our volunteer for the day is quite durable, and he has an assistant. Karl, please call for your Windspeed Hawk, and I will begin the demonstration."

Karl stepped up to the giant Berserker, and the teacher dropped into a combat stance.

"First, go with your instinct, and guide your Hawk to assist you. It will help the others see how the usual tactics against a martial artist won't work on a Berserker." Professor Tank instructed.

Karl immediately threw a net of crossed [Rend] attacks, and stepped to the side, intending to kick the knee out from under the teacher, while Hawk went for the obvious attack to the back of his armoured head.

They had learned that the neck was well defended in the training outfits, and this man was likely too powerful for the attack to work, but if [Shred] hit the back of his helmet it might leave him dizzy.

The execution was flawless. Shred hit his helmet a split second before Karl's foot hit the teacher's knee, but that's where everything went wrong. The hit to the head triggered the Berserker's [Rage] and Karl's foot simply bounced off the huge man's leg.

Then, faster than Karl could react to even begin to dodge, one massive meaty hand had backhanded his chest, sending him flying.

Professor Tank smiled at the class, while Sergeant Rita helped Karl to his feet. He was in a daze, disoriented from bouncing across the ground.

"That, young students, is called [Unstoppable]. The reason I showed you that first is because it's an ability that can be synthesized with magical drugs, so those of you who are in the army might run across it among other nation's soldiers in the future.

Unstoppable is a basic skill of the Berserkers, most start with it. You cannot knock them over without immensely overpowering them, any part of their body is equal to their entire mass. Also, while the attack to the back of the head from the Windspeed Hawk,

Shred, I believe it used, will trigger Berserker Rage, which increases their power and movement speed multiple times.

Now, the Common Grade Berserker Students in your year aren't all that scary yet. But they will be.

Instead of what you would normally do, which is taking them down with a throw or leg sweep to put them off balance and make them stationary targets for abuse, you want to aim for vital areas, soft spots and nerve clusters. That will slow the Berserker down until the damage piles up enough that Rage wears off, and they start feeling the pain." He explained to the class.

Karl frowned. "So, basically, we dodge and avoid getting turned into paste until repeated attacks start showing their effects, but no leg sweeps and avoid hits to the head?"

Tank nodded happily, like a child receiving a present. "Just like that. Also, avoid the face and the crotch. Not because the attack won't work, but because it tends to cause an instinctual bump in the rage effect, and you might get hurt during training."

The other students laughed. Of all the bad ideas they had generated so far, punching a man three times their size in the dick was one of the fastest to be dismissed. The hits to the face were only second to be dismissed because half of them couldn't reach his face without jumping.

Karl prepared to continue, then asked one last important question. "Does the Berserker class make them huge, or are you just naturally that size?"

"It makes them more muscular, but the height is all natural. I'm not even the tallest of my brothers." Tank gloated.

Were they from some species that Karl didn't know? The people at the mines were shorter than average, as it was a benefit to be smaller in the narrow shafts, so the larger families had moved on generations ago to find more suitable work. But Karl was reasonably certain that humans weren't supposed to grow more than two metres tall, much less two and a quarter.

Karl tried again, ducking under the professor's guard to land a kidney punch, while Hawk went for his lower back and then the backs of his knees.

Karl had to tumble to the side to dodge the counterattack, but Tank was holding back on the speed that he had shown earlier when enraged by the hit to the head, and Karl managed to land a solid hit to the sternum before a kick sent him flying again, but this time he was able to twist enough to land on one knee and slide to an ungraceful stop.

"Don't underestimate a Berserker's strength. Karl here is Awakened, with the physique of an agility type magical beast, but even with that advantage a Berserker at his Rank could shatter ribs with a solid hit.

While they will usually wield weapons, that doesn't mean that their melee abilities are any less damaging than your own classes. Especially when they are in solid armour." Tank explained as Karl circled him, looking for an opening.

Tank threw an attack, and Karl blocked it with Rend. That gave him an idea. He had ranged attack powers, but he wasn't fast enough to get away from the professor to use them. However, he could wield them as a shield, as well as the way he had been using them as short ranged attacks.

The Professor threw another punch, which Karl knocked up over his head, just as Hawk hit the elbow and completely redirected the strike. Tank was Unstoppable, but those attacks would have either cut through or thrown someone his size to the ground with the amount of power that the duo had put into them.

The deflected arm left his side open to attack, and Karl quickly sliced three times, while Hawk distracted the Berserker by attacking his chest and stomach, soft areas that he had to block with the one hand that was in position.

"That's much better. I didn't think you had it in you, but that Rend really packs a punch." Tank announced with a smile.

"Now, in the advanced armour, those attacks didn't cause me anything more than a bruise which will heal in seconds, but against an attacker at your Rank, even wearing Awakened Rank armour, that last combo might well have taken an arm off before slicing open his side and making his insides become his outsides." The berserker finished.

"But most of us don't have slicing skills like Rend." One of the students complained.

"You're a Monk, right? Bring your weapon and come up here. Karl, you can take a breather while I demonstrate how to fight a berserker using pressure points."

The whole class gave the boy sympathetic looks for becoming the next volunteer, but Tank wasn't planning to wait at all, and was impatiently gesturing for the boy to come forward.

Right, Berserkers didn't feel pain. So although he had bruises from the attacks, he didn't feel them.

Chapter 68 Cocktail Hour

Karl watched carefully and Hawk rested in the Beast Space as the fights continued, with the huge professor giving each of the students a chance to try against him. Karl had

been the only one who really stood a chance, as the rest had all been training only against their own styles or had specialized in grappling and submission techniques, which wouldn't work on Tank.

But you didn't get to pick and choose your targets in a fight. There was a threat, and you had to deal with it, so this sort of training would be incredibly valuable to them later. Karl knew that there were many species of giant humanoid monsters as well. Orcs, Trolls, Ogres, Owlbears and many more.

This sort of training would work on them as well, with only a little modification.

It was hard for Karl to imagine what a troll or ogre might look like in person, but after seeing Tank, it became a bit easier. Ogres were supposed to be close to three metres tall, so they would tower over the Berserker the same way that he did over the agility warriors in this class.

That was a terrifying thought, but they also wouldn't be in armour, so there was a chance that Rend would actually cut them apart as it was intended to, as long as they weren't too much more powerful than he was.

As the day progressed, Professor Tank showed off a dozen different fighting styles, and the students began to wonder if he had taken this job just because he was a battle junkie and there weren't constant threats at a level where he would be sent out.

Fighting the students gave him a chance to let off some steam, even if he couldn't go all out. But there were other students here as well, and some of the stronger Ascended Rank seniors from the other training group of the class were enough to actually make him work for his victories, not like Karl and the first year class, who he just toyed with.

The Mixed Martial Arts instructor raised his hand to get everyone's attention. "Alright, that's it for the day. Professor Tank will be working with a different class tomorrow, but don't forget the lessons you learned today. Integrate them into your fighting style, and prepare for his return later this week."

That would be easy enough. None of them were likely to forget this day any time soon.

Karl headed back toward the dorm rooms to begin the studies that he had been assigned on monster biology, intending to spend the evening focusing on finding ways to make Hawk stronger.

But when he rounded the corner, he found Colonel Valerie standing at the door to the dormitory waiting for him with her trademark frown on her face.

"Student Karl, follow me. We have numerous things to do today before dinner." She announced as she started walking.

Karl sighed while Hawk gloated and dug into the pile of meat in the Beast Space. The new Strength Stones with the Awakened Rank Boar blood were doing great things for him, but Karl had to rely on the feedback and work while Hawk ate.

The Colonel led him toward the next building and into a private classroom, where one of the pairs from the last training day were waiting. It was a warrior and mage pair, like him and Dana. They had a large selection of pills, loaded needles and food products set out on the table waiting for him, making Karl pause at the door in concern.

"Are we not concerned about interactions between multiple treatments?" Karl asked.

"Not particularly. All of these are known to work together occasionally, and we are not sure how many, if any, of them will actually work on you." The Colonel replied with a shrug.

"You know that deadpan voice is why everyone thinks that you're a heartless bitch, right?" The other woman in the room asked, forcing Karl to nearly swallow his tongue to avoid laughing.

That definitely wouldn't go over well with the uncompromising Colonel, but despite her hard glare at her subordinate, she did relent a little and explain her idea.

"These treatments aren't as nefarious as they look. Each of them is carefully chosen to enhance an aspect that you have already shown an aptitude beyond the normal in. The pills are mental stimulants more commonly used on psychics and visualization type mages. The injections are all magical equivalents of steroids, and the foods are specially prepared combinations of materials that are intended to trigger skill understanding breakthroughs."

The other two in the room nodded in satisfaction, as if that was enough of an explanation for Karl to just accept that he was going to take over a dozen treatments all in one sitting, possibly with a short break in between for everyone to take notes.

"Alright, where do we start?" Karl asked reluctantly.

"With the mental improvement. From what we have deduced based on your reports, you meditate to improve the conditions and power stored in the mental space that Hawk inhabits, correct? So improving that mental ability should help both of you. Compared to a physical enhancement which only treats you, it is clearly the better option."

The lone man in the room nodded in agreement. "These are all well-known and tested treatments. Both of us have taken them already without side effects, though they didn't do much for me other than increase the speed that I learned new skills."

The speed with which he learned to improve his skills was a huge part of Karl's combat power, so this could actually be a big break for him, Karl decided as he picked up the first little paper with a single glowing green pill on it.

"That is a Dragonite pill. It's made with the empowered bones of long dead dragons that have crystallized. It is mostly for mages, as it gives a notable improvement in mana growth, but it also has incredible effects on intellect and mental strength." Colonel Valerie noted as the other two moved to their laptop computers to take notes.

Karl popped the pill in his mouth and was about to wash it down with water, but the pill dissolved, and his mind seemed to be flooded with golden light. Power seemed to be flowing into him at an incredible rate, and the world within the Beast Space began to grow at a visible pace.

"Well, it definitely worked. It's like a golden light in my mind, and I can see the improvement in the Beast Space already." Karl explained, so the others would know what was happening.

"Excellent. Give it a few minutes to settle and we will move on."

Hawk trilled happily as he flew around in the space, absorbing the energy until the feeling of the space returned to close to its original state.

"Now that it has settled and Hawk absorbed a lot of the excess energy, it feels like the improvement is noticeable, but not as strong as it felt at first." Karl added.

"So, it helps the Hawk as well? That is impressive. We will prepare another dose later, so that you both get the full effect." Valerie noted.

"Perhaps we should double the dose of everything that we have spares for?" The female mage suggested.

"That is a valid theory. If Karl and Hawk share everything, we are actually dosing both of them, so the increased dosage could be necessary for some of these treatments to work properly." The warrior noted, running his fingers through his short brown hair.

Chapter 69 Pills and Pokes

The Colonel took out a briefcase from a safe in the room and set out another whole array of pills, except for the one Karl had already taken.

"Dragonite is a restricted substance, and difficult to get. We don't have a second dose, and it's not something that the Academy usually has access to." She explained, then gestured for Karl to continue.

Karl took the next two pills, and a warm feeling washed over him while his thoughts seemed to become a bit more clear. It wasn't a big change, and everyone seemed disappointed, but Valerie gestured for Karl to move on to the next.

[That one smells good.] Hawk noted as Karl picked up the pills.

[Let's hope it works. I have no idea what it is supposed to do.]

The pills dissolved the same as the Dragonite pill had, and suddenly the proper method for activating his skills became clear in Karl's mind. How to make them more efficient, more powerful, faster to activate. Everything about the two skills became clear, and then the whisper of a third skill entered his mind as Hawk gained new insights into [Wind Shield].

Karl couldn't use it yet, but as Hawk's understanding improved, the feedback coming from Hawk's advancement was giving him glimpses of the method.

"That one is incredible. I understand my skills so much more clearly now, and even Hawk is having a breakthrough in understanding, despite his knowledge level already being incredibly high, as Rend is an innate skill to his species." Karl explained.

"Wonderful. That pill can be hit-and-miss. Some people don't understand much, while others make great strides. We will keep a note in your file so more will be available once you have learned more skills." The Colonel replied.

The next pill vanished with a swirl of energy into the air around him, as if his body was forcefully rejecting the pill.

"Well, that was different. Something about that one is incompatible with him, despite the effect being nearly the same as the second one you took." The mage commented as her fingers flashed over the keys, making a note of the strange energy phenomenon.

"You don't think that it's a matter of saturation, do you? Like when you eat too much and can't eat more?" Karl asked.

The other three shook their heads.

"No, we typically give this entire course at once, either the strength or mental improvement, and that has never happened before." The Colonel replied.

The next few mental improvement pills were absorbed without fanfare, or any immediately noticeable effects. That was disappointing, but the last pill in the line looked more like a gemstone, and Hawk was getting excited just looking at it.

"This is a crystallized Mana Drop from a higher ranking beast. Normally, it is for increasing mana pools in the mages, but it should also be useful for your Hawk, so we brought it with us." She added.

Karl took the object in his hand and Hawk immediately stole it, pulling it into the Beast Space where he tucked it in his nest.

[You know, I'm supposed to eat that.] Karl reminded him.

[It will be better here. I can slowly absorb all of it this way, instead of you getting a stone in your stomach.]

"Hawk says that it's better to slowly absorb it in the Beast Space to help his growth. I can feel the energy flowing into him, but it could take some time before the effects are obvious enough for me to tell what it is doing." Karl explained.

"Well, that's fine. We have a bit of time while we move onto the potions. I hope you're not afraid of needles because about half of these are injected, while the half without needles are taken orally, but the plunger type baster reduces waste on the walls of the container." Valerie explained.

"Well, I'm not the biggest fan, but if it's all for the sake of rapid growth, I'm not going to argue." Karl replied.

The mage smirked. "Make a note: Subject's mental state has improved his understanding. He now understands in advance that expletive laced inside thoughts are the key to interacting with the Colonel."

Colonel Valerie glared at her, but Karl realized that the two were actually good friends, in some strange way.

The man loaded the needles into a mechanical injector, and gestured towards Karl's chest.

"You need to take your shirt off. We will inject them into the upper arm. The other optimal spot is the buttocks, but it's a bit forward to ask you to drop your pants without warning." He joked.

Karl removed his jacket and the simple white uniform shirt and set them over the chair beside him.

"Alright, this will hurt. I'm not going to lie or sugar coat it. Just mentally prepare yourself, and we will wait for the injection to settle before we move on to the next."

Karl nodded and turned his head away before a pain shot up his arm and across his chest, feeling like his body had been set on fire.

"Here, drink this, you will need it." The mage's voice was a distant whisper, but she poured the drink into Karl's mouth as he clenched his eyes closed to keep the painful light out of his eyes as his body burned.

The drink seemed to contain some sort of energy, and the burning of his body faded as it absorbed the power. Then, the power began to flow back into his mind, and Hawk suddenly shot up in size, going from Hawk sized to larger than a turkey or a condor in a matter of seconds.

Hawk was a gangly and malnourished giant, but he was slowly filling out as the bird frantically tried to fill its ravenous belly.

"Hold up, something in that one made Hawk grow uncontrollably. He's huge and starving, but there is food for him in the space. Give it a few minutes before we do anything else." Karl explained, still holding his eyes closed, though he was unable to meditate with the pain.

"Alright, notify us when Hawk has stabilized, and we will give you the second dose." Colonel Valerie agreed.

Hawk panicked a little at that news, but Karl had already known that the Colonel wouldn't give up on a treatment that was producing results so easily.

Chapter 70 Big Hawk

It took half an hour before Hawk was settled, and the kitchen had already delivered a special order of monster meat for him to eat during the second dose by the time that the pain in Karl's body faded.

"Just keep your eyes closed. The food bowl is beside your hand, just move it into the space for Hawk. Your body has stabilized along with his, but there is one more dose of that to go." Colonel Valerie insisted.

[You ready to be a giant Hawk?] Karl laughed, while the bird trilled happily at the influx of Ascended Monster meat the kitchen had brought him. Not all of it was his preferred flavours, but at the moment Hawk didn't care what animals it had come from, as long as there was a lot of it, and it was all energy rich to make up for the energy that he was lacking.

It only took a few more minutes for the bird to demolish the food shipment and decide that he was ready for another round of the special treatments.

Karl nodded to signal that he was prepared to continue, and the pain spread through his body from the left side this time, overwhelming his mind, but the effect on Hawk wasn't as extreme. He didn't grow any more, but his body filled out with powerful muscle. Now he looked like a proper Hawk again, but larger.

He finished the meat bowl and flew up around the space in joy, then cried in despair as he realized that his nest was too small for his new body.

Karl worked to change the shape as quickly as he could under the circumstances, while Hawk made sure not to lose his precious new stone before he settled down into the tree. Satisfaction flowed from his mind as power flowed in from the stone in the nest, and then the space itself seemed to change.

It was growing, but it reached a plateau where Karl had expected the quality to improve. Only that wasn't what happened. The space seemed to split, and the growth went to a second space, separate and barren, the way that Hawk's had been when he first bonded with Karl.

[Do you think that spot is made for someone else? Like, we have improved the size of your resting spot enough that it's time to improve a home for a new friend?] Karl asked his feathered partner.

[I think so. I can't go into it, so it's not a separate bedroom for me.] Hawk replied, annoyed that not all the growth was going to his space. There was still room to fly, but he was much bigger now, so shouldn't the room to fly have expanded proportionately?

"What happened?" The warrior asked after a few minutes of Karl trying to stabilize both his mind and the new beast space.

"The mental space seems to have reached a plateau. The injection increased the size along with Hawk, but then it stopped, and split into a small second space. The quality didn't improve, I will have to do that myself with meditation, or more of the first set of pills, but this is a whole other space. I think that I might actually have the ability to add a second pet now." Karl explained.

Karl opened his eyes and noticed the smiles on the faces of the three Bureau of Elite Development workers. Their gamble had paid off, and if Karl could now add a second beast, his effective power would multiply.

The second thing that he noticed was that the table was empty, with two used multiple injectors and two empty shot glasses on it. He had assumed that he was two out of twelve injections into the process, but they had injected them six at a time, and the second shot was the second dose of everything.

"No wonder that hurt. It was like my body was on fire, but the second time faded much faster, and Hawk didn't have an explosive growth spurt, instead he filled out to proper Windspeed Hawk proportions, but over a metre tall, and with a wingspan that looks like a little over three metres." Karl explained.

Colonel Valerie gestured impatiently, and Karl called Hawk out to stand on the empty table behind him.

The mage whistled in appreciation, and Hawk preened, accidentally puncturing the steel desk with his claws.

"Well, the claws haven't gone translucent, so he's likely not at Ascended Rank yet, but he is a huge pretty boy." She cooed, then stood up to go pet Hawk's head.

"It's definitely a mutation again, like when he learned Shred, but this time it was physical growth. There is no record of this happening to a Windspeed Hawk before, but then I doubt that anyone would have been crazy enough to give a wild one that same sort of treatment just to see what happened." The warrior noted.

"Interesting. Hawk, could you please claw at this barrier for me?" The mage asked.

"Wait, the room is too small for him to fly around and attack the barrier, and it won't hold up to an Awakened Rank Rend attack if he succeeds." The warrior stopped her.

"Right, sorry. We can do actual improvement testing tomorrow after the regular classes. I'm not sure if you noticed, since time passes differently when you're absorbing that much energy or in pain, but it's been over two hours already, and it is almost dinner time." The mage agreed.

"Just enough time to finish up as planned." Colonel Valerie agreed with a gesture for the food on the tray.

Hawk delicately sniffed at them and then shook his head.

[There is no meat, I'm going to rest.] He announced, then vanished back into the Beast Space.

"He says there is no meat, so he's not interested." Karl explained as he examined the various dense squares and puddings.

"Each of them should help with the understanding of a skill. The rest of the squares were passed out to the relevant classes today with promising results, so go ahead and try them one at a time and let us know if anything happens." The Colonel agreed, looking a bit less severe for a moment.

The results really must have been good if the head of the Elite Development Department had a soft spot when they were mentioned.

Karl bit into the first one, which tasted a bit like burning rubber smelled, then waited before shaking his head. If anything happened, he couldn't tell.

One after another, he went through them until he got to the one that smelled like freshly welded steel. As soon as he bit into it, he could feel the energy, but then the flavour became familiar and a glimpse of insight on how [Slash] was an introductory and inferior

version of [Rend] filled his mind, giving him ideas on how to use lower power attacks with more energy efficiency.

"That one is Slash. I see it as an inferior Rend, but I think that I could use it, or something like it, using Rend as the base skill and then stripping away most of the benefits to use a more energy-efficient attack." Karl explained.

The warrior looked vaguely offended, while his partner chuckled.

"Well, that's one way to look at it, I suppose. If you use Rend as the basis and strip away the bleeding effect to have just the sword light, it would create something like slash." He eventually agreed.

"Now, let's see what else you can get out of this pile."

A few more were eaten with no real changes, but the last one tasted like stone dust, and Karl sensed the familiar feeling of a Golem, but the energy was so foreign to him that his body immediately rejected it.

"I think that should have given me insight into the Golem spell, but my body just rejected it straight away. The taste was familiar, like the magic of the spell activating, but my body isn't compatible with that." Karl explained.

"Interesting. All of these should taste like regular food, but none of them seem to have tasted like that to you. Perhaps it's a result of your bond with Hawk, who is more sensitive to all sorts of magical abilities and threats? I will put it in the report with a note to investigate." The mage informed them.

"That concludes the day's special programming. We will bring you a fresh uniform, then you can return to your room."