

Beast Master 761

Chapter 761 Durability Check

Overhead, the main battle was coming to a crescendo of violence, and the buildings of the Redwood sprawl and the Fool's Walk district by the river, which were closest to the combatants, were beginning to crumble under the backlash of the massive attacks that were lighting up the sky halfway to the horizon.

As the sprawl collapsed, the residents ran for the few open areas in the district, which was so heavily overbuilt that the market and a few collapsed buildings were the only places that were large enough not to have rubble land on them.

Fortunately, that put many people in the range of Lotus' healing effects, which she was working to extend over the whole market, at the expense of peak healing power.

There were only a few higher ranking guards here anyhow, and most of them were still fighting the Undead, which left a lot of wounded Ascended Rank workers, who didn't need Royal Rank healing to deal with their injuries.

Commander Rank, cast over twice as much area, would work just fine.

With one final surge of power, many buildings in the Sprawl collapsed, and the Undead Lord vanished, along with the remnants of his fleet.

Rae was greatly disappointed, as she had just gotten into a rhythm, hunting them through buildings and alleys. But battles ended when they ended, and now it was time to check in and see how Thor had done at his end of the battlefield.

That new area damage skill of his made him one of their better combatants. At least against the Undead, who were extra vulnerable to Holy Magic.

{Is everyone alright?} Karl asked as a system message, as he couldn't see most of the team.

The messages all came back in the affirmative, but both Remi and Dana detailed heavy damage to the Redwood Sprawl region, so Lotus would be staying in tree form for a while, treating noncombatants who were injured when their homes collapsed.

The Lord, looking battered and weary, returned to the Castle without a word, while from the ocean, the City Governor returned after his battle, also looking battle-scarred, but with a victorious smile.

He landed near the barbecue pit, where Thor was returning with Karl and Tessa, and where the leaders of the dock district had gathered.

"Thank you all for the excellent work defending the city from invasion. As you may have already noticed, this time we did take some significant damage, but the emergency fund is substantial after years of successful defences of the city, and we will be announcing projects to rebuild and repair the damaged buildings within the week.

The worst of the damage is in the Redwood Sprawl, which was closest to the battle overhead, and as such, many buildings there will need to be completely renovated. During that time, there will be a housing shortage, and we ask that everyone has patience with their temporarily unhomed neighbours and employees.

If you can provide them with a place to stay until their home is repaired, we ask that you do.

I will have additional information for you later, but I would like to assure you that the authorized agents of the city have made preparations for the Militia reimbursement." The Governor's speech earned a round of cheers and applause from the nearest of the combatants, and then the Dock Master cast a spell over the dock area which recorded names in a notebook in his hand.

Presumably someone would be doing that at the other sections of the docks, and it now made much more sense why nobody immediately went home to rest and recover from the battle. They were all waiting for the spell to be cast to record their participation.

Now that the important part was done, the people began to disperse. Those who had gathered at this part of the city either worked and lived close to here, or had been otherwise unable to make it to the region closest to their homes.

Such as the ones who had only come after the calls that there was a second fleet incoming. Many of them had been at work, not intending to join the militia and stand around the docks all day if it wasn't actually necessary.

So, when the call came, they just went to wherever was closest to work.

With the battle over in the city, and the offshore fleet now in full retreat, Hawk also returned to the city. Fighting opponents that kept running away and dragging things out as a delaying tactic was just annoying, even if they were evil water magic people.

The army fleet was on its way back, needing nearly two hours to make it to the city, while Hawk would be back in minutes. Once they were back, the real work of rebuilding the city could begin.

Among the soldiers were many of the more powerful Earth Magic users, and they were all employed by the city, so there was no need to do a major recruitment project for the rebuilding. The displaced residents of the Sprawl just had to wait for the soldiers to get around to their building.

Karl knew that was unlikely to be the most efficient way, but when the alternative was paying other local craftsmen, it was best to wait and see if they could get to your home anytime soon.

After you had recovered what salvageable valuables you could, of course.

Already, the Earth Element residents were hard at work all over the city, patching up the portions that they could, and ensuring that no more buildings fell in the next few days.

The rubble after the battle would be taken care of by the city, but trying to explain to a tired soldier that your building fell three days later due to structural damage would sound a lot like a scam to get a new house to them.

Especially given how old most of the buildings in the Redwood Sprawl were.

That moment of calm is when Karl finally took stock of their gains. Or, more specifically, Cara's gains.

[What in the world did you do while we were fighting? Loot the national treasury?]

[Boat presents.] Cara replied simply, as if that should explain everything.

Chapter 762 Yard Sale?

Karl led the group to where Lotus was set up, just in case Remi and her bodyguards weren't enough to quell the inevitable chaos around the healing tree.

But on the way there, they encountered an odd sight. The boardwalk along the river had the food carts pushed against the buildings, and the street was filled with merchants frantically purchasing everything that they could.

Karl's first thought was that this was a full city looting event, but the people lined up were mostly dusty civilians, and there were guards every few steps.

"What sort of event is this?" Karl asked one of the senior guards.

"It's ... A yard sale?" The guard looked confused, as if there was no word for what was a tradition in the city.

"Whenever there is large damage to the city, the merchants buy up anything of value so that it can't be stolen in the aftermath, and the locals have some funds to live on. Then they head out and sell it for profit, and donate to the city's rebuilding fund. The more that they make, the better the rebuilding process is. Most of this stuff wouldn't survive weeks out in the weather, and even if it would, the owners have no way to keep it safe until they have a new house.

An inventory only holds so much.

So, they start over with a bit of cash to their names, and nothing else." The guard finished, doing his best to explain the situation to outsiders.

Karl would have thought the logical thing would be to load it into crates in a warehouse, but these were keepsakes and valuables, and money would be needed to buy new furniture and whatever else was needed for the new houses.

Karl nodded and headed for the east side of the river.

"If you've got anything to sell, the price might not be the best, but the profits come back to the city." The guard called as Karl began to walk away.

When the Undead bodies vanished, so did their weapons and other items, so there wasn't much to be gained from the battle. But Remi had found some things she didn't particularly want.

Karl looked down the line to a man who was buying up weapons, and stepped in line.

The housewife in front of Karl pushed him forward, as did the locals in front of her.

"You've got better stuff to sell than we do, I'm certain. Plus, you were with the Healing Tree during the first time she visited us. How long will she be there today? Some of my boys were still fighting when I left." The first old woman in line asked.

Karl smiled at her, then placed the stack of ugly and oddly shaped cursed magical weapons on the table where the merchant's men were sorting items.

"Those are..." The merchant began.

"Stolen magical weapons. Royal Rank, with a few negative attributes." Karl explained.

"Well, I don't know how you did it, but that is impressive. They're all unbound, so they're fair game. I can give you a flat twenty gold a piece for them. All profit when I sell them goes straight to the city coffers."

Karl nodded and shook his hand, then gave the four hundred gold coins to Cara.

[We can spend those later.] Karl informed her.

Cara laughed and gestured to the literal hill of currency she had stolen, much of which was local.

[Good point. We can donate it to whoever you think has the best snacks, or can make good stuff for the city if you'd like. Lotus is getting famous, and I'm sure it would help if we paid off someone with a furniture factory.] Karl suggested instead.

[Oh, that is good. We can make Sister Lotus really famous in the city. They already love her.] Cara agreed.

Thor and Remi suspected that she was up to something, but Cara wasn't elaborating, so they had to guess what her plan was in making Lotus famous.

Karl suspected it was actually simple. Cara loved sweets. Lotus also loved sweets. If Lotus got famous, they got free sweets.

[No, but now that you mention it...] Cara laughed.

Great, now he was the one giving her ideas.

When they reached the tree, there was chaos everywhere, but not in a dangerous way. Local gangs were sorting out residents, passing out blankets and the relief supplies that the city had distributed via the guards, and making sure that there were no fights in the market area.

Outside of that, tensions were high, and people were clearly staying away from the edges of the area if that was not the part of the district that they lived in, but it was functional at the very least.

Many of the elderly were in rough shape with all the dust and the injuries that they had taken during the battle. Both from the aftermath of the attacks, and from the collapsing buildings.

There were also many mournful faces, as the worst of the casualties had been at the start of the battle, and much more than the minimum time had passed to resurrect even the ones whose bodies could be found intact.

The undead curse tended to raise those slain or seriously injured by Wights as zombies, so it was a priority to get everyone who had been fighting to stand within Lotus' light for at least a few minutes until everyone was sure that they were not going to turn.

Karl wasn't sure how the south side of town was dealing with that threat. He hadn't even considered it during the battle, but the locals had been pulling the severely wounded back to Lotus anyhow, so it wasn't really a concern on their portion of the docks.

"Mister, did you need help?" A young girl asked as Karl approached with the others.

Karl shook his head. "We're with the Healing Tree and the Naga Queen. We just came to make sure that they were alright."

Tessa gestured towards a clear spot near the edge of the market closest to the grass.

"Let's set up there. Little Miss, can you find us a HUGE pot, one from the restaurants? I'm a Priestess, and I can create food for everyone." She explained.

The girl smiled. "Oh, that's even better. The healing tree has food too, but she can't cook."

Well, not when she didn't have hands or arms.

Chapter 763 Cookout

Once the locals found out what Tessa wanted, slightly damaged pots were quickly procured from a collapsed restaurant, and the Naga Bodyguards rinsed them out before filling them with water for Tessa to make stew.

There wasn't any shortage of things to cook today. Not with so many buildings collapsed and their coolers inoperative.

Much of the food had been moved to other locations, but partial packs or excessively damaged items hadn't been touched. Some of those were sorted through, and the salvageable bits were brought to Tessa, along with dozens more large pots.

Karl quickly drew temporary runes on the ground to heat the pots, and Tessa got to work making dinner for ten thousand or more.

She had plenty of help, so Tessa's role was more of food creationist and executive chef, who loaded the pots, while Remi's Bodyguards used the weakest possible casting of [Tsunami] to fill them with clean water.

Rice and beans were the staple of the clergy, but today, she had added garlic and onions as well as a rich spice.

Fortunately for everyone's stomach, the beans were fresh, not dried. Half an hour later, when the rice was ready, everything else would be as well.

On a whim, Tessa made alternating pots in different flavours. That way, the people could pick from a spicy or mild dinner. Hopefully, it would suit the tastes of more people.

One pot at the end was left as plain rice and beans, the blandest possible option for those with sensitive stomachs, but imbued with a touch of holy magic from their creation.

On the other side of the market, near the collapsed buildings, grills were being set up to cook all the meat that wouldn't survive the night. It was cold now, but not for long. Cooked, or smoked into jerky, it would last longer.

With so many mouths to feed, there were bound to be long lines. But everyone was too exhausted or mentally weary to cause trouble today.

Thousands of bowls had been brought for the vegetable biryani, obtained from the same restaurants that the pots had been. For simplicity's sake, the workers just put one large scoop in each and handed them to the closest person, unless they pointed at a particular pot.

Row upon row, the citizens of Drodh were being fed, which brought everyone within the aura of Lotus' healing. The day was still a disaster for the residents of the Redwood Sprawl, but there was hope for the people to recover, and the locals were actually working together for the first time in decades. Lotus kept up her tree form all night long, and Tessa kept cooking until nearly midnight when the crowd was mostly dispersed. Then, the pots were covered, and the heat turned off so that they could be reheated in the morning.

The locals would happily sort it out themselves once the sun came up, and by afternoon the next day, the city's Governor should have plans in motion.

It was nearly dawn when Lotus changed forms and the whole group headed back to the Inn. The Laughing Dragon was already cooking breakfast as they stumbled in, but everyone was too tired to eat. Instead, they went straight to their room and collapsed to sleep.

Late that afternoon, Karl was awakened by the sound of someone knocking at their door.

"Sir? Ladies? There is an envoy from the Governor here to speak to you." Beth called, barely more than a whisper.

Karl gently swatted Dana on the backside to get her to release him, and the mage gave him a sleepy squeeze.

"Send Cara to replace you." She complained.

Cara was asleep in her space, her nest of blankets sitting on top of a hill of treasure, so Karl moved her to the bed as he got up, and Dana settled back to sleep.

Karl got dressed and followed the barmaid down the stairs to a table in the corner where a man in a bright gold and red coat was sitting.

He was most likely a Demon, Karl decided, but it was honestly hard to tell him from a human, except for the aura of his magic.

That and his eyes. Once Karl sat across from him, the eyes were a clear distinguishing mark. They had sideways slotted pupils like a goat, and the sclera was entirely red, seeming to glow faintly.

"War Champion, thank you for coming so swiftly. After yesterday, I can see why you hold such a lofty position as a Monarch. We just ran into a small issue with the distribution of rewards for the battle. It appears that you are from a foreign enough location that your Guild Bank does not have a branch with access here. Would you prefer to set up a branch account at the Castle's Guild Bank Access point, or would you like the payment directly?" The demon explained.

Karl checked his nameplate for a moment. {Exchequer Mills}. Karl knew that was a word, and he might have heard it before. But by inference, it most likely meant that this was the big boss in charge of money.

Karl smiled. "Guild Functions have not properly activated in my homeland. So, there is no official Guild Bank or other options for people like me. Only the approval of the Gods that grants us titles and status." The Demon paused, then nodded slowly. "So, you're from another continent. That makes sense. Until three months ago, the Guild Function in the Dragon Isles was completely inactive, and only recently has it come back online, including the Guild Bank terminal in the Castle, which has withstood the test of time."

Karl thought about that for a second. "If it's not too much of an imposition, do you think that you could bring me to the terminal? Perhaps it could activate the Guild Functions fully for me, and then I can make a proper decision."

The Exchequer nodded. "That is acceptable. Your Guild's team contributed greatly to the effort, and once this payment order is settled, the Governor would like to speak to someone known as the Healing Tree about continued assistance during the next week until new apartments are built in the Sprawl."

Karl smiled. "She's a Royal High Priestess of the Green Dragon. Her name is Lotus, and I'm sure that she would love to help. However, if it is possible, I would like to provide a few designs for the rebuilding. My home nation is known for its high-rise buildings, and they are much more durable than the ones which collapsed during the fighting."

Or, they could be. All the windows would have been blown out of his apartment tower during the battle, but the building itself would have been fine.

Chapter 764 So That's The Problem

The Exchequer nodded happily. They were always happy to have plans to improve the lower income sides of town. The majority of the housing there belonged to the city, and it was rented to the residents, so there wasn't much to be done except rebuild.

They were about to rise when Beth brought over juice, with plates of fried eggs and potatoes.

"Eat before you go. I'm sure you'll both be busy all day." She insisted.

Karl smiled at the Demoness, and she vanished back into the kitchen to finish helping prepare something.

"I think she's sweet on you. Normally, she yells at people to pay before their food comes out." The Demon across from Karl laughed.

"Meals are included in our room fee. They've been quite good to us here."

They ate quickly, and Karl left a few copper coins on the table to pay for the other man's meal.

"This one's on me. Let's go get some work done."

It was a short trip to the Castle, with the sun high overhead. But the guards all smiled at Karl on the way in, and no questions were asked about his identity when they simply bypassed the line of visitors, which extended all the way to the docks from the southern main gate.

Karl gave the exchequer a sympathetic smile. "You, Sir, have a very hard week ahead of you."

The Demon laughed. "My subordinates even more than myself. I just need to sign off on the orders, they are responsible for the prioritization of complaints, and the plans to rebuild the city. While we walk, how about you tell me more about the apartment buildings that you are planning to recommend?"

Karl gave a brief description of the steel frame construction with concrete floors and divider walls, which were not only massively stronger than the existing brick and shiplap floor construction of the apartments in the Redwood Sprawl.

The Demon called for an assistant, and a Dwarven girl, or young woman, came down with a notepad to copy Karl's description, then alter it with his instructions.

She instinctively understood what he meant, as the concept was the same as bracing a mine roof for a layered dig, and a Dwarven Architect knew all about that sort of thing.

They just hadn't been involved in the last round of construction of the Redwood Sprawl.

"So, how do people get up and down?" The Demon asked as they happily chatted.

"There are stairs, but mostly via the lift. There are two options, either a counterbalance and pulleys like an ore lift from the mines, or magic. I don't know which one your people are better with. But either one will let you move a whole group of people up dozens of floors with minimal effort. Well, much less effort than walking up ten flights of stairs." Karl amended.

The Dwarf smiled. "We have magical pulleys in the mines. Simple Earth Magic. We can make elevators with a counterbalance and pulleys easily enough. Just put in a switch and it's on and off. All sorted."

The safety standards would be a bit different from the Golden Dragon Nation, but with the retractable gate in the design, nobody should get squished, Karl assumed.

The demon was doing mental math as they explained the process, calculating costs. Then his eyes brightened. These buildings were expensive to make due to the labour of skilled artisans, but they would hold so many more people that the overcrowding issues would be solved for years.

The Dwarf split off to go to the city planning department as they reached the vaults, where the Guild Bank was likely to be.

The door was opened by a pair of guards, then another pair followed Karl and the Exchequer into the vault itself.

There were two stone podiums in front of them, and safety deposit boxes all along the sides of the massive vault.

But it was the System Notice that caught Karl's attention.

{City Stone of Drodh}

{Current Governor} Shin Kauai

{Actual Leader} Madam Shin Ellasbeth

Karl couldn't help laughing, and the Demon gave him a sheepish smile. "I forgot that you would be able to see that. Kindly do not mention it to anyone, it appears to be a glitch in the City Stone." He insisted.

Karl shook his head. "No, it's not a mistake. It appears that the Governor values his wife's opinion very much. Now, on the right of it should be the Guild Stone, right?"

The Demon nodded and Karl walked up to put his hand on the Guild Stone.

{Verifying}

{Darklight Host membership confirmed}

{Guild Branch Not Established. Please purchase a [Home] location of at least twenty sleeping rooms, or three hundred open acres.}

{Hidden Class Skill Unlocked} [Home] One Time Use Skill. The Packmaster may designate a target location as their permanent home, granting various bonuses as the location is improved. If the home is

deemed unsuitable, a new location may be designated every five years. Effect increases if the [Territorial] skill is known.

[Territorial] All attacks by the Packmaster have a chance to cause {Intimidation}.

Karl turned to the Demon with a sheepish look. "Well, I know the problem now. We don't have a Guild Home in the Dragon Isles. It requires that I purchase either a large portion of land or a twenty-bedroom house."

The Demon suddenly looked way too excited, and Karl began to wonder if he had just accidentally converted his reward into a house in Drodh.

Not that it was a bad thing, but he wasn't even sure that they were planning to stay in this country, much less in this city.

Well, it was no loss. It wasn't like they were short on money and needed the reward. Plus, he could turn a portion of it into a Dragon God temple, which didn't exist in this city. It would make both the Green and Red Dragon Gods happy.

"If that is the case, please accompany me to see Governor Shin. I believe that we have a solution for your group." The Exchequer announced.

They started the long walk to the Governor's Wing of the Castle, and members of the City Development department quickly joined them, asking Karl questions about their plans, in case he knew of drawbacks. What they wanted to make were massive complexes, twice the footprint of a regular high-rise building, with dozens of small apartments on each floor, including ultra-low cost inner units, which would have no external windows.

Instead, they wanted to light the hallways with magic and windows at either end of the hallway.

For a Dwarf or an Earth Element Demon, it would be great. For everyone else, it would be a claustrophobic nightmare, with interior units under twenty square metres.

Karl explained his concerns, and the group began to laugh. "Most of the buildings now have been subdivided into units smaller than that. Units under ten square metres for a family of three are quite common, in order to save money.

But going this way, we can reclaim some wasted space, and the extra height will allow us to house twice as many people, while still allowing the new homes to provide twice as much space per person.

Now, they'll likely still divide it into smaller units later, but that's not our problem after the building is constructed." The architect explained.

"How is the Earth Magic of the construction team?" Karl asked.

The Demon from the Architectural team shrugged.

"Mostly Commander Rank.

Good enough that a magical building isn't going to collapse, and the metallic support beams can be created from the ground up to the roofline to support the concrete slab that you recommended to prevent another incident like this.

The windows and balconies will be the first to go, but those are easier to fix."

Chapter 765 City Planning

Karl nodded in understanding. "I have one more recommendation, not a necessity, but something that was quite popular at home.

Building the base deep underground stabilizes the structure. But as those levels aren't really suitable for apartments, you can put in storage areas for shops on the main floor, or even an entire shopping area on the ground floor and first basement, with storage underneath. Then put common areas on the second floor, and start the apartments from the third floor.

At street level, everyone will see the shops, with more hidden behind the ones on the street. And it won't feel like they have to go across the city to get essentials."

The Exchequer snapped his fingers. "Like how I order everything to be delivered to the Castle instead of walking to the market to get them!"

The Architect facepalmed at the bit of new information about the man's laziness. Or perhaps his shut in nature.

"Yes, Exchequer. Just like that, but with only a few products available in each building, so they might have to go a few blocks."

The Demon shrugged. "Good enough. We can try that project with the dozen buildings surrounding the market. Do those first, and if the people react well, we can make more of them after."

The row behind them doesn't need all the fancy shops, they're already used to going to the market, and there's nothing wrong with putting the poor in underground apartments."

The Architect was clearly ignoring the money man's opinion, but he nodded along with the recommendations. "We will add some decoration to the lower levels as well. City beautification. The Sprawl might be the residence for low wage employees. But it doesn't have to be an eyesore."

Karl resisted the urge to point out that it was overrun with gangs, and that most of the basement levels would quickly be turned into brothels and casinos.

The multiple level basements were actually perfect for the purpose, and with the basement entrances being internal, it would move the illicit businesses' guards off the street. That made it invisible to people walking by, and should reduce problems between groups. The buildings themselves would likely turn into gang territories, but that also wasn't Karl's problem. The locals would have to sort that out on their own.

Karl was led up to the Governor's office with an increasingly large retinue of Castle workers. Not just finance people and architects, they also now had Castle Guards and a few maids with food and drinks for what was promising to be an important meeting.

The guards knocked and informed the Governor of their presence before letting the important people into the large office.

To everyone's shock, the Governor actually stood to shake Karl's hand when he entered. Then he motioned for everyone to sit.

"War Champion, I see that you have once again proven your title. Thank you for your assistance. The battle at the central docks went flawlessly." Governor Shin greeted.

"Thank you Governor."

The Exchequer passed over a note, and the Governor smiled. "It seems that your Guild Branch needs a local home in the Dragon Isles to activate the Guild Functions. Now, I know just the thing for you.

It's not the most glamorous of locations, but I believe that it is perfect for a Guild House. You see, there is a building at the Western Frostfire Gate on the south side of the city. It was once a guard barracks, as its courtyard touches the city wall. But the barracks have been moved, with a location outside the walls and one in the Stone Chapel district, closer to the Castle.

It has more than enough sleeping quarters to be counted as a Guild House, and the courtyard is large enough for your beasts to rest outdoors when you enter the city, or for deliveries to the Guild House to turn around a wagon train." The Governor explained.

"You would offer such a grand location as a War Reward?" Karl asked.

The Governor laughed. "I don't know if you've not yet noticed, or if you're just used to it. But your team are heroes to the people of the city. Doing something grand for you is good for publicity.

I had thought about giving you a Guild House in the Redwood Sprawl district, but the overcrowding on that side of the city is already too severe to make room for such a thing, and a Guild House cannot be part of a shared accommodation, no matter how large it is.

So, the Frostfire Gate would be perfect, even if it is a fair walk to the river and the major shopping areas. What do you think?"

Karl considered it for only a few seconds, while Thor sung a nonsensical song about wagons in his head. Being a wagon merchant was a great time.

Slowly, he nodded. "Even if we happen to move on to take care of tasks outside the city, it would be nice to have a home to come back to. I will gladly accept this reward on behalf of my team."

The Governor clapped his hands, and a man came forward with a folder. Governor Shin signed off on the bottom of the page, then the folder was passed to Karl. "Your team can go check it out at your leisure, then come back to adjust your Guild Functions if necessary. Now, about those housing designs."

Karl settled in for a long day of meetings, while everyone else was beginning to get out of bed at the Laughing Dragon. The Inn was incredibly busy today, mostly with soldiers who had come to greet the group. Some had fought in the streets, some had been at sea, and wanted to thank Hawk for softening the enemy fleet to make it easier to break their shields.

That had saved them many lives during the battle, and while they had fallen into a trap and had been pulled away from the defence of the city, they had still managed to fend off one of the two fleets without any major losses.

The group ate a quick lunch and headed back for the Market square, where Tessa was planning to make lunch again, and Lotus would be a tree for the day. She only had one request.

Keep the local dogs away from her roots. They had no respect at all.

If you're in the Discord, there is a map of the city of Drodh for reference.

Chapter 766 Rebuilding The Sprawl

It was nearly dark when the construction crews showed up at the market, led by Karl, who had been nominated as the spokesperson for the construction teams as they cleared the area.

Karl walked behind where Tessa was serving dinner, then lifted himself on a pillar of [Earth Barrier] stone.

"Everyone, your attention, please. Construction is to begin immediately, at the order of the Governor. The first areas to be rebuilt will be the ones surrounding the market. New high rise multipurpose buildings will be erected. There will be four in total, each of them encompassing a quarter of the circle around the market. As for the territories of the groups in the Sprawl, the Governor suggests you not cause trouble. There will be wide scale rebuilding of the Redwood Sprawl to a much higher standard, and groups that seek to stop that progress will be eliminated from the city.

These new buildings will have space designated for shops on the ground floor, as well as the basement levels. There will be a total of twenty levels of apartments above the shops, including two floors with six metre ceilings for larger species.

The housing department will be present from tomorrow to help those who lost homes in the immediate vicinity get registered for new units.

Now, some of the buildings in the area are still partially or mostly intact. Those will all be removed tonight. Please remove all property still inside, and the City Guard will provide security over your possessions until the buildings are completed."

Karl didn't know that all of the surrounding buildings had already been emptied, as they were too heavily damaged for people or business to continue staying in them.

Teams were sent from the construction crews to double-check all the surrounding buildings for personal belongings or residents, and then when the all clear signal was given, a group of Overlord Rank Earth Mages began remodelling the area.

When the Dwarves had explained their vision for the buildings, it was too good to resist. So, the strongest Earth mages in the city had agreed to work with the architects, and they would be able to create the bare structure of the buildings in a single night.

There were eight in total, working in pairs. All four of the buildings were to be identical, except for the main floor, which would make a history of the city in a circular pattern around the market.

For the next hundred years or so, until they were destroyed or renovated, it would be a visible reminder of the city's rich history, ending with the battle against the Undead that had prompted the building of the towers.

As they worked, Karl explained their reward to the rest of his team. The former barracks at the southwest Frostfire District Gate to the city. "They're really just giving us a huge house?" Ophelia asked.

Karl nodded. "Yeah. And once that is up, we will apparently be able to get Guild functions active. I don't know what that entails, but there is a Guild Bank function, so storing and transferring funds and items should be easy, and all of you are already registered as members.

We can probably also hire some workers to keep a steady stream of income, even when we move out to see the rest of the continent.

Assuming that we do keep pushing to improve our power levels at the fastest possible pace."

That was a given to everyone present. The people here were much more powerful, and Royal Rank was not as safe as they had once thought it to be.

In fact, the Royal Rank was much more likely to get called "Store Manager" than "Princess" in the city of Drodh.

It didn't take long before the rubble of the buildings was cleared, and huge pits were dug with Earth Magic to form the basement levels. Karl could see the excitement of the local casino operators and other illicit businessmen when the basement walls were constructed, revealing multiple underground levels, along with a sloped rear entry for deliveries.

Not only could they work in a secure area, but they could bring large shipments right inside the building? Someone was really thinking of them. Not just their criminal enterprises, but their legitimate businesses on the ground level that provided a veneer of legitimacy.

Layer by layer, the buildings were constructed around the enchanted central metal beams. The mages were going by the blueprints, focusing on the construction in parts so that nothing was missed or misplaced.

While one formed the various spells, the other guided them. That way, the second mage wasn't over exerting themselves as they ensured that the new layer seamlessly integrated with the ones below and didn't introduce any sort of design issues.

Every few layers, they switched. That let them recover from the heavy workload part of the construction without cutting the pace. The scale of the rebuilding was shocking. But more than that, the buildings themselves were magnificent.

"Monarch Karl, are these buildings just for flying creatures? That's a long way up." One of the Demons, a deep red man just under Karl's shoulder tall, asked.

"No, there is a magical platform inside to lift residents to their floor without walking.

We planned for the issues of getting things back to your home on upper levels, and the lift can hold a whole group of people, or a few people and a lot of shopping, or furniture as you move in."

The word quickly spread through the crowd, who mostly hadn't been paying attention to the first announcement, other than the part where they needed to get out of the way for the magical construction teams.

Technically, there were two elevator platforms. They were side by side in the building, each two metres wide and four metres deep. Some species were large, and they would need the space to get personal possessions up to their units.

Once they had new belongings, that was. The balconies appeared to be the most popular feature, though. They weren't standard practice in the city, and while these had solid exterior doors and bars on all the windows, the majority of Demons could fly. So half the residents could simply fly up to their apartment and enter from the outside for daily use.

There were even exterior doors at the ends of the hallways on each floor, for those in internal apartments without windows or balconies.

Karl had objected to some of those floor plans. However, he was informed that some species liked that, and it would keep building costs down, as they wouldn't have to build a central courtyard to create internal windows.

Away from the market, most of the designed buildings were tall and narrow, with just one hallway, and every unit would have exterior windows. It was closer to the existing design of the roads, so they didn't need to redesign the whole district to add more homes.

But these centrepiece buildings around the market square would be the crown jewels of the Redwood Sprawl when they were finished. They might not be as shiny and glamorous as the glass - sided high rises in the Golden Dragon Nation's Capital, but they were still an architectural marvel.

Chapter 767 Home Sweet Barracks

Karl's group went home before midnight as the buildings were getting close to complete. The locals could celebrate and fight about their new homes without their presence. They returned to the Inn for the evening, then made their way to the new house right after breakfast.

The first thing that Karl noticed when they got close was the dilapidated condition of the building. But a split second later, the recognition that the building was not empty slowed his approach.

That could be problematic. If a group of homeless demons had made the abandoned building their home, he would ruin his hard-earned good reputation to just throw them on the streets. But if it was a criminal organization using this building as their base, it would be even more problematic.

Perhaps this gift wasn't all that it seemed to be.

Karl walked up to the simple stone wall around the courtyard, barely shoulder-high and more of a boundary marker than a serious deterrent. Then he waited a moment to see what the response from the people inside would be.

They didn't seem to notice he was there, but Karl could clearly see with Soul Sight that they were all smaller, and mostly in the Awakened Realm.

So, most likely it was children playing. After all, if you couldn't make it to Ascended Rank as an adult, you would be chased out of the city to the outlying regions or the Black Shade slums.

Karl led the team into the courtyard, and finally the occupants noticed them.

But now that he had a clear view through the open door, Karl could tell what they were doing as well.

It was some sort of martial arts class, with tattered uniforms that didn't fit quite right, and one small but elderly Ascended Rank female trainer.

"Good morning, ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Karl." He greeted them.

A number of the kids nodded happily.

"We know you, you beat up the Undead Knight Champion." A young boy insisted.

"That's right. And as a reward, the City Governor transferred me the ownership of this building and its courtyard. It looks like you've been training hard to become Guardsmen. Or were you hoping to become ship's guards?" Karl asked.

The boy raised his fists and shadow-boxed the open air for a second as a demonstration of childish might.

"I'm going to be the next Arena Champion in Lared." He announced, determined in his path to greatness.

Lared was the capital of the nation to the south, and a major trading partner of Drodh, just across the border.

One of the girls laughed at his ambition. "But aren't all the Arena Champions Overlords? Your mom is a Satyr." "But my dad could be powerful." The boy insisted.

Karl's team tactfully ignored the fact that the boy didn't actually know who his father was, and let Karl continue with their introductions.

"So, how often do you all train your skills here in the main hall?" Karl asked.

"Pretty much every day. We come down, mop the floors, and then we start training while Teacher Jo goes to find breakfast." The boy explained.

Karl turned to Tessa. They were firmly in her territory if these kids were living here without parents.

"How about you continue your training, and we will borrow Teacher Jo for a moment?" Karl asked.

The elderly demon waved her hand for them to get back to work, and Karl led her out into the courtyard, where he could see a number of nosy neighbours watching intently.

"I would do this inside, but I don't want to worry the kids unnecessarily. I take it you all live here?" Karl began.

The diminutive Demoness nodded. "I was the housekeeper here when the guard left, and I couldn't find other work. So, I just stayed. Most of these kids have parents in the district outside the gate. Just not good ones. Once they finish their training in the morning to help them grow, they go looking for part-time jobs. It's not a permanent group. The boy you were talking to has been here three weeks, and he will be starting as a baker's apprentice in a week. A few of the others have been here for months, but it's only myself living here long term."

Karl nodded in understanding. "So, it's something like a hostel? Cheap living for young workers who just arrived in the city without backing, and right at the gate, so they don't have to go outside and then find another silver coin to get back in?" He asked.

"A silver? The fee is three silvers an entry." Teacher Jo replied, clearly confused.

"Odd. They only charged us one each at the Forest Gate, and that was the price they quoted to get back in from the Black Shade, though they didn't charge us."

The elderly violet skinned Demoness laughed, which made lightning crackle between the curved ram horns on her head and her hair stand on end.

She smoothed it back down in annoyance and shook her head in dismay.

"It depends on who is entering. A War Champion at the Monarch Rank and his friends? It might be a Silver. If you were an Overlord, they would likely waive it entirely. For children and Ascended workers, it's three silvers. For Awakened adults, it's five silver for a visitor's day pass with a tracking spell on it." She explained.

That explained why the city was so crowded when there was a suburban area outside the walls. It wasn't danger, it was economics. By Karl's math, two or three silver was a day's wages for most workers. They simply couldn't go back and forth every day.

Karl looked at Dana, who just shrugged. She didn't care about this place one way or another. Sure, they owned it. But this was the first time they had seen it. If Karl wanted to sell it, they would take the loss and consider it a goodwill gift.

Remi had a better idea.

[The whole place is full of tiny workers, right? Why don't we make them our tiny workers? We can use the main floor as a shop for Runic items and potions. Then people can come to us to buy them, and we don't need to pay someone to sell them. Well, other than the workers. But workers are cheaper than Runic Rings.]

Chapter 768 Renovation Efforts

Karl smiled at Teacher Jo. "I have a proposition for you. I am going to renovate this building as a branch Guild House. I will hire you to stay on as the caretaker, just as you have been, but now with funding to actually fix things. Then we will turn the main floor area into a shop, where we sell the items that my teammates make. You see, we're all pushing to make it to Overlord Rank, but that is going to need money and opportunities, plus countless visits to the Dungeon, unless there is a higher Rank one nearby."

The little Demon smiled. "Does that mean there's a budget for cleaning supplies? I can go get everything that we will need right away. I don't know what you're going to change, but I can make everything clean as can be by the end of the day."

Her excitement level had shot through the roof when she found out that she was going to have an actual job again, but the ladies were giving her looks that said they were concerned with her mental health.

"Sorry, I'm an Obsession Demon, and my Obsession is cleanliness. You have no idea what hell it has been being unable to afford to properly clean." She rambled.

Karl winked at Dana. "I guess that means no shoes in the house."

Teacher Jo, or Caretaker Jo, as she would be in her new role. Looked horrified at the concept of shoes outside the common areas of the house, and Karl noticed that everyone inside had left their shoes by the door, despite the poor condition of the floor.

"The city will be short on construction workers for a bit, as they have to take care of the portions of the city that collapsed in the attacks, but do what you can, and we will get started on the renovations as materials come available."

Caretaker Jo smiled. "I know people. They're outside the wall, so nobody will be likely to call on them for the repair, but we can hire them to do the renovation with Earth and Nature Magic. One of them is a Dryad, and they've got a great sense of style.

You'll just need to pay their way into the city as part of the fee."

Karl nodded. "Just give me the name and location, and I will go get them. While I do that, you can lead the ladies on a walk through, so they can see what we have to work with."

Jo wrote him a note, including a rough map of the Frostfire Gate suburbs. The location was further east, toward the ocean, but it shouldn't be too hard to find.

Karl nodded to the guard on the way out, and the man held up a hand to talk to him.

"Did you buy the old barracks?" He asked.

"The Governor gave them to my team for our efforts during the battle. We're planning to make it a combination of our Guild House and a shop." He explained.

"Oh? Not tearing it down to build something bigger and better?"

Karl shook his head. "That might break Caretaker Jo's heart. We've hired her on to keep the place up. I'll have to hire a few more professionals as well, but I'm going to get a renovation team that she recommended."

The guard nodded and smiled. "If you get back within the next three hours, come through this gate. I lived in those barracks for most of my youth. It will be good to see them back in top condition again. But I have to warn you. When an Obsession Demon says she's obsessed with cleanliness, she's not joking. That tiny psychopath used to chase us with a whip if we didn't shower after morning training."

Karl laughed. "I'm sure that the ladies in my team will be on her side. The bubble bath stock goes almost as fast as clean socks."

The guard laughed and waved farewell as Karl jogged off to go find the recommended workers.

Thirty minutes of brisk walking brought him to a beautifully decorated gothic mansion, with a carefully groomed hedge maze in the yard.

That was what he was looking for, but there should have been a sign out front that marked it as a furniture maker.

Hopefully, the place hadn't changed owners.

Karl walked up to the front gate and knocked, not entering the yard.

Half a second later, a Dryad simply appeared out of the bushes with a smile.

"Hello, how might I help you?" She asked.

"Caretaker Jo recommended your services to renovate the old barracks building. I have just been awarded the location as a combat bonus, and it needs some work to get it back to standards." Karl explained.

The Dryad nodded, and motioned for Karl to enter.

"Please come in and tell me your plans. My daughter runs the business now, and the shop entrance was moved to the back last year. But for Jo, I can likely flex my magic a little bit." She agreed.

"Well, I don't object to hiring both of you, and whoever else you think might be necessary." Karl shrugged.

The dryad gave him a curious look, and Karl took out ten gold coins, placing them on the table between them.

She smiled. "In that case, you can call me Misty, and my daughter is Rain. Do you have any magic users on your team that might be helpful?"

Karl smiled. "I have a Royal Rank Green Dragon Cleric. She might be useful. Or she might not. It depends on how long she can focus for."

Misty laughed, the branches of her hair shaking. "Alright. I will bring a Stonemith with us as well. It won't take long, but the fee isn't cheap. Though, I can see that's not going to be a problem on this job.

What are you going to be selling?" She asked.

"Alchemical potions for healing and progression. Runic jewellery, and once I can find a source for weapon blanks, Runic Weapons as well."

The Dryad paused.

"I don't think that I follow. What is a Runic Jewellery?" She asked.

Karl saw the problem. If she was going to make display cases, she needed to know what he sold.

Karl took out one of the Royal Rank rings that he had inscribed for Giant Strength and placed it on the table.

"That sort of thing. But also amulets, necklaces, bracelets. Whatever I can get from my supplier. Mostly Royal and Monarch Rank, but I might eventually make some lower grade budget items." He explained.

The Dryad was stunned into silence.

[She might need a minute.] Hawk laughed.

[Positively Shooketh. Flabbergasted. Discombobulated.] Remi agreed.

Then Remi dropped a Monarch Ranked healing potion on the table between them to see what happened.

Misty sighed. "I am going to have to hire a security expert as well. I know a mage who specializes in barriers. You should have enough magic to help him, and he's already in the city. That sort of inventory can't just be left in the open."

That was understandable. Though, Karl suspected that this renovation project was going to get extremely expensive. Just a barrier that could keep away the threats of local thieves would be costly. Unfortunately, while Karl could make Runic Barriers, he had limited experience, and Dana only knew a few basic barrier spells. Neither was up to the task of erecting permanent barriers over an entire property.

Chapter 769 Misty Rain

With the decision made, Misty led Karl into the back of the property, where the sounds of singing were coming from what looked like a carriage house with the sides boarded up by living vines.

"Rain, come out and say hello, we have a VIP customer." She announced, and the singing stopped.

A young Dryad poked her head out of the vines, and Karl knew immediately that Lotus would not be getting anything productive done.

Perhaps Cara could keep her under control, but this little creature was adorable.

"What's up mom? I just finished that project for the Davidson family." She answered.

"This lovely young Demon is going to renovate the old barracks, and he wants a full makeover for the main floor to turn it into a high-end magical goods and jewellery shop." Misty explained.

"Seriously? Where will he even get the goods for that?" The young Dryad asked, rolling her eyes. "I make them. And if you can make me pretty enough wooden items, I will buy them and enchant them too." Karl replied with a smirk.

Rain giggled. "Oh, he's good. Dryads aren't even magical beasts, and I almost got sucked in by that charm."

Then she stepped through the vines, revealing a green floral dress, but bare feet.

"Alright, we're good to go. I will lead the way, so we can get Stonemith Jones on the way."

Rain skipped happily along beside them as her mother led the way through the winding streets of the outer Frostfire Gate district.

They stopped at an unassuming fieldstone house that appeared centuries old, and in stark contrast to the newer construction all around it, which was mostly wood or brick.

"Jones? We've got a stonework job for you. The old barracks is getting a full renovation." Misty called.

A Demon with black skin that showed glowing red from various cracks in the leathery surface stuck his head out.

No, not a Demon, Karl realized. That was a transformed Magma Dragon. His soul was definitely that of a dragon.

"Stonework, you say? Alright. I think that I can take a job today. Do you have something interesting for me?" He asked.

Karl took out a Royal Rank Earth Element stone.

That was worth significantly more than he had paid for the rest of the job, but this was an Overlord Ranked dragon, and bribing him was probably the best way to get his attention.

"Oh, now that is pretty. Alright, I will come over and make those barracks the single best Guild House in the city."

And just like that, Karl had obtained all of the team members that they needed, except for the Mage who would make the barriers. Jones and Rain were singing together as they made it back to the gate beside the old barracks, and the Guard smiled at them.

"War Champion, it looks like you've found quite the assortment of workers today. I'm sure the lovely ladies of your team will be pleased." The guard greeted them.

Karl wasn't sure how he knew that the team was 'lovely ladies' at first. Then he realized that the kids had all been chased into the yard so that Jo could clean the place before the renovation team arrived.

That meant Tessa followed them out, Lotus came to play, and Dana had joined Ophelia on the porch for a drink.

Jones cleared his throat, a rumbling noise like boulders rolling downhill.

"Ladies, if you would kindly find the caretaker and clear the building, I will get to work on the stone structures." He announced.

Caretaker Jo came out as soon as she heard his voice and waved to him.

"Oh, you brought over all the big guns. How did you get this one to come help fix the building? I asked him dozens of times when he passed by, but he never agreed." She asked.

The Stonemith snorted, sending out a small puff of soot.

"You never had good stuff to offer."

There was something admirable about that strictly mercenary dedication to his ideals, Karl thought. Even though they knew each other, if you couldn't pay for his services, you weren't getting his services.

Karl could likely learn something from him before he went into business, but he didn't have the level of self awareness necessary to realize that he had an issue in that department. Fortunately, Dana did. The entire property was covered in an Overlord Ranked flood of Earth and Fire magic, that unique combination that constituted a Magma Dragon's racial powers.

As it settled in, the barracks building shifted a little until it was perfectly squared at the corners again, with no more bulging or leaning where the mortar had crumbled. Then the outer courtyard wall began to grow, returning to three metres tall, and the exterior doors crumbled to ash before being replaced with thick bronze replacements, including a black cast iron gate separating the wall from the street.

The roof tiles shifted into thick black slate over the pale grey and white fieldstone walls, and even the well in the yard was brought back to pristine condition.

How good the water was would be questionable this close to the ocean. But they were a little uphill, and the well was shallow, so it might have some groundwater flow.

Or, perhaps not. As Karl realized a few seconds later when he felt the spell on the well collapse. It didn't need groundwater, as it had been enchanted with water magic. The well was actually just an outdoor cistern.

Once the dragon was done and staring smugly at his creation, the Dryads went inside with papers in their hands. They went straight to the second and third floor to begin their work on the secondary kitchen, bedrooms and common areas. Karl could feel the Nature Magic soaking into the structure of the building as they rapidly moved through the house, using the wood as a medium to move between rooms and floors freely.

For fifteen minutes, the magic continued. Then they opened the main door and bowed politely to Karl.

"According to our contract, the work is done. All the wooden furniture has been replaced, the floors and joists have been renewed, and the roof trusses are fresh. Your home is ready for another century of occupation." Misty announced.

"That's all it takes? And here I thought that it would take days." Karl noted.

Rain giggled. "We're still Dryads, aren't we? Or have you never seen a Dryad work before?"

Karl turned to Lotus, and Misty began to laugh. "While both of us have similar Nature Magic, the Priestess leans more to healing, while our most powerful abilities are the regrowth of vegetation.

We can regrow dozens of acres of forest in a full day. Fixing the structure of one large house is nothing at all. Most of the wood is already there."

The unexpected attention on her stopped Lotus from subtly sneaking over to the younger Dryad, but Rain grabbed her hands and dragged her inside. "Kick off your shoes at the door and follow me. Let me show you the new rooms." She laughed, running through the house with Lotus in tow.

That went much more smoothly than Karl had expected, and if his senses were right, then the Overlord Ranked Mage headed their way might be the final contractor to fix their house.

If not, it was likely someone from the Castle, wondering what they were doing.

Chapter 770 Jones

Sure enough, the mage swung the gate open and stared around the compound with an impressed look. "Oh, Jones, it's you. How are you doing today?" He asked.

"Jones Junior, are you here to cast the barriers?" The Stonesmith replied.

The slender Dragonkin mage smiled. "Assuming that I can get paid." He agreed.

Remi handed Karl a Mana Jade ring, engraved with Spell Power and Mana Storage runes.

Karl quickly poured mana into it as the Mage watched in shock, then when it got to the Royal Rank limit of the item, he handed it to the Dragonkin.

"I don't suppose that will get us a proper barrier for the house?" He asked.

"I think that it might. I don't suppose that you were looking for an apprentice? I've got one just about to start looking for training in a career, and her mother's a Magic Demon. Quite the skilled young prodigy." The Mage, who looked almost human with whatever disguise spell he had activated, replied.

Karl shook his head. "I'm not sure that I'll be here enough to provide proper training for an apprentice. But I do need someone who can identify and appraise items brought for trade, so perhaps we should talk. If the student is self-motivated, the teacher doesn't need to be around every day."

Rain looked down from a third floor window, with a curious frown.

"Why is he Jones Junior, but you're not related?" She called, loud enough for Jones to hear.

Both the Stonesmith and the mage began to laugh.

It was the mage that answered her question. "You see, my name is Jacob Jones. But he also goes by Jones, as nobody can pronounce his full name, and he is much older than I am, so he is the Senior Jones, and I am Jones Junior, or Mage Jones."

That was less interesting than the young Dryad had hoped, and she pulled her head back in the window to continue showing Lotus around.

Mage Jones walked inside the main room, followed by Karl, so he could explain the situation. The others waited outside, wanting to be surprised once it was all done.

"Oh, this will work wonderfully. They even built railings to define the edges of the barriers. I will give you an access stone, so you can add employees to the list as necessary. I specialize in this, so I will make you proper jewellery cases." The Mage explained, then tied his long black hair back and out of his face.

The room looked like one of the Elven residences Karl had seen on the other continent when he was sent to the past. It was all organic curves, not planed flat. Except on the inside of the display cases. But the walls were white stone, polished smooth, and the floors were hardwood and similarly well-fitted. In the back, hidden behind a door that looked like the back storage room, was a large kitchen complete with a freezer that the Mage enchanted, and the actual storage room, which was accessed through the kitchen. It was an odd setup, but Karl suspected that it was meant for dried goods storage for the Guards, so the location actually made more sense, as it was opposite the freezer, allowing a group of cooks to work efficiently during meal prep.

Once the display cases and the kitchen were finished, Jones Junior put an Overlord Ranked barrier over the whole house, and then Karl followed him to the second floor, where he saw a large central room surrounded by small rooms.

They must have been guard dorms in the past, barely two metres wide. The doors were currently all open, revealing single beds, a desk and a dresser inside. There was one large restroom at the back of the building, and two shower rooms. So, the layout hadn't been changed since it was a dorm for the guards. But that did give them far more than the twenty required bedrooms for the Guild House standard.

The mage cast a soundproofing spell over the rooms, but not completely deadening the sound, if Karl guessed the details correctly. It would make regular noises inaudible, but those in the common area would still be able to hear if someone shouted for help.

The third floor was much more fancy, with six large bedrooms and one slightly smaller one, plus a smaller common area with a kitchenette. The smallest of the rooms on this floor was piled high with neatly organized stuff that had to be Caretaker Jo's, maintained as her own room since she was actually employed here. But the others were all immaculately clean. Her stuff would be arranged soon enough, it was just that the room had been renovated, and she needed to put it all away again.

On this floor, he cast a temperature control spell, the usual soundproofing spells, and a ventilation spell that drew air from the lower floors up and out through the chimney of the fireplace column that ran through all three floors and both kitchen areas.

There was no such thing as a modern stove here, but the fireplaces were fire magic, and had an oven above them, as well as a magic burning stone stove top that was definitely not child safe by the Golden Dragon Nation's standards.

"There we go. I will put a perimeter spell around the property as well, and that should be enough to keep unwanted visitors out when you're closed without confining your members to the house." Jones Junior explained.

"Wonderful, thank you. This is perfect." Karl agreed.

Rae stepped out of her space with an armload of cloth and a serrated smile.

The mage gave her a confused look, as he hadn't seen anyone by that description earlier. But she was putting new silk sheets on all the beds, so she must belong here.

Rae also hung new curtains, and arranged a number of rugs on the floor, which were made from the fur cloaks pilfered from the Frost Giants.

The oversized cloaks were perfect for throw rugs to dampen sound in the rooms, though the white colour would be a nightmare to keep clean.

She hoped that Caretaker Jo was not only passionate but competent about her Obsession.

Before long, she had all fresh bedding and pillows on all the beds that the Dryads had made. They weren't a solid mattress, more like an extra fluffy cushion, but they looked comfortable to sleep on, as both Rain and Lotus had flopped down on one the moment Rae had put the bedding on.

Rae gave a thumbs up from the front window when she was done, and the others came inside to see the contents of the house after the renovation. Unlike Karl, they knew what it looked like before, so their sense of awe was much higher after the hour's worth of work.

"So, you will be selling all your goods here?" Mage Jones asked.

Karl shook his head. "I intend to make some lower grade items to sell at the Royal Jewellers. The sort of items that can be spread on the mass market, instead of one-off and exclusive items for sale here. But the potions and other items will be exclusive to our shop, unless someone is going to resell them elsewhere for a higher price."