

Beast Master 771

Chapter 771 Moving In

When Karl went back outside, there was some confusion among the children about what was happening now. The building had a new owner, and they had fully renovated it, so it wasn't suitable for their morning martial arts training, anymore, and it certainly wasn't going to remain an ultra-low cost hostel.

Karl smiled at them. "The goal is to get you all gainfully employed. Until then, Caretaker Jo will continue your early morning practice either on the second floor, or in the yard. There are enough rooms for now, and with our help, I think that we can get you good placements."

Many things in life were not about what you know, but who you know. Now that they knew Karl, he could ask around for people who needed apprentices in jobs suitable for their young residents.

Jo had a hard time of it, as she was not powerful and not respected. But still, she had managed to maintain a steady flow of apprentices through the hostel.

Karl was standing in the yard when a familiar face entered through the open gate and smiled at him.

"Monarch! Thank goodness you're here. This is nice, you did a beautiful job renovating. I know that we're just business associates, but I was hoping to ask you a favour." Loros asked, her usually vibrant white skin looking pale and dirty.

"You look like you've had a rough day. What happened?" Karl asked.

"The landlord, the guy who runs the furniture shop beneath me, offended someone he shouldn't have, and they trashed the place. I managed to save my materials, but my apartment is completely destroyed, and there are no hotel rooms anywhere in town.

Before deciding to sleep on the street until I can rebuild my cart, I thought that I might come and see if you had some spare rooms in your new house.

I think that half the town already knows that your team got the old barracks as a reward.

They're making jokes about it because the place totally isn't worth as much as your reward would be." Loros explained.

Karl chuckled. "Well, we have it now, and it's all renovated with the help of all these good people. I think that we might be able to work something out more long term. I want to turn this place into a shop for the goods that my friends make. So, if you would like to stay here and make your jewellery, I can sell it downstairs after it is upgraded. We will hire a few more staff as well, but we've got a caretaker already."

Loros' eyes lit up in joy. This place was nice, definitely in better condition than her old apartment, even before the debt collectors had smashed down the divider wall, thinking that her space was a hidden room where the furniture store owner was hiding what he owed them.

"I will take you up on that. I'm carrying everything I own already." She replied with a sad smile and turned toward the door.

Caretaker Jo ran outside with her arms wide and a look of panic.

Loros was covered in plaster dust, stone dust, dirt and alley grime from her day, and the cleanliness obsessed Demon was not ready to let her into the freshly renovated building.

"She can't get clean if you don't let her in." Karl reminded Jo.

For a few seconds, Caretaker Jo hesitated, then she pointed at the well. "There is a place to wash." She realized.

"The upgrade used fire magic and broke the water spell. I will have to fix it later."

Lotus laughed and pointed at the back of the house. "The emergency exit leads to the bathroom window. Or we can just have Remi carry her through the house." She suggested.

Remi appeared in the main room, and leaned out to grab the sculptor.

"I will make sure that she's clean before she comes back out. Rae put towels and bath robes in the showers. Then she can pick a room and get settled in."

Karl looked around the yard, and noticed a small building against the city walls.

"What is that?" He asked.

"The old stables. It's been converted into a storage room. Did you want something done with it?" Jones asked.

"I was thinking that it would make a good stone sculpting workshop. I can see already that Jo will cry if we let Loros carve Mana Jade in the house." Karl joked.

The transformed Magma Dragon renovated the building in a matter of seconds, and then Misty went in to add work benches and tables to the space for various crafting. It would be easy enough to store bulk stone on one side, and there would be room for a half dozen artisans to work in comfort.

Rain stuck her head in the crafting space and nodded in satisfaction. That was a good space.

Not as good as her own workshop, but good.

[I will let Loros know when she's out of her shower, so she doesn't set up right away.] Remi informed Karl happily.

Karl wasn't sure why she was in such a good mood until he realized that the second floor had a communal bath for the guards, as well as the rows of showers. It was huge, and even in Naga Queen form, she would have room to soak.

Normally, she took baths with Cara in snake form. But while that form was great for bathing, it did rely on Cara to scrub her down, thanks to the lack of arms, and the mediocre scrubbing that [Minor Water Control] gave her.

So, things were all but settled for the day before lunch. All that was left was finding sales people who could appraise trade items, which meant old enough to have a System interface, and some skills in either Appraisal or training in magical item valuation.

Usually, that sort of ability was related to a chosen trade skill, and it took time to master, which was the point of an apprenticeship.

Oh, and a cook. They would need someone in the kitchen to take care of this group as well. He couldn't expect the clerics to be cooking for everyone every day when they were at home.

They might still be asked to make most of the ingredients, though.

Chapter 772 Hiring

The gossip mill turned out to be their strongest ally in the search for employees.

Out of curiosity, Mage Jones' daughter came to see what they were up to, and before she had even finished talking to her father, a small group of people arrived together with hopeful expressions.

"How can I help you today?" Karl asked, motioning them to come in off the street.

"We heard that you might be looking for workers." The man who led the group into the compound explained, bowing slightly and flaring his large black feathered wings that perfectly matched his long hair.

"That was fast. How did word spread already?" Karl asked.

"You're talking in the yard next to a guard station." The man replied simply.

He had an excellent point. They weren't being secretive about their activities, and Karl had openly told the Guard what they were planning, so he should have expected them to pass the word on. Especially with so many people out of work until their employer rebuilt.

Assuming the previous employers did rebuild instead of trying for something that they thought might be more successful.

"What position are you looking for?" Karl asked.

"I have the Merchant class, which is good for all sorts of trade and sales jobs. But I was hoping that you might have a managerial position available. I have references that can be verified and a stable history in the city." Karl looked at the boring beige colour of the man's name in the System interface.

"Alright, Davis. I think that we can have an interview." Karl agreed, then took out the Sword of Champions and three green Mana Jade rings. Only two of which were activated, though all three were carved with runes.

"Please give me a valuation for all of these items."

The Merchant laughed. "We have two hundred gold coins, two hundred gold coins, fifteen gold coins? Why is that? Oh, that one isn't active, it's just carved. And then...

That's not a number. That can't be a valuation. I have no idea how to value that blade. It appears to be worth more than my skills are capable of determining.

However, if I were purchasing it, I would value it as a Monarch Rank Epic blade, which is Eleven hundred Gold wholesale purchase, and nineteen hundred gold for resale."

Karl smiled and put all the items back in storage. "So, you have a System Skill that tells you the real value. That is very convenient."

Davis smiled. "Yes and no. It only works with System linked items. For common items, it's a separate skill for valuation, and it just gives me a condition and quality. I reference that against recent sales prices in the city to come up with a number.

That can be a bit unreliable in a hot market, but I have a lot of experience."

"Please wait for the rest of the team to come out. They will give me their opinion before a final decision is made."

Then Karl turned to the others waiting behind him.

They were all similarly violet skinned with curled horns and short tails extending from their skirts. The outfits looked like they were uniforms from some shop, so they must have worked together.

"And who might you all be? I can see that you all worked together." Karl asked.

The tallest of the young women stepped forward. "We were the kitchen staff at the Abalone Grill. It was next to the market in the Sprawl. The boss got a new spot in the towers, but he decided that he's not going for a restaurant this time, but a seafood wet market.

So, we're all out of work. But we have practice with a full menu, including baked goods."

Karl whistled, and Lotus stuck her head out a window, unable to resist knowing what was going on.

"Hey Lotus, come down here and talk to these chefs. If they're good, they can work in our kitchen."

Lotus quickly grabbed the applicants and pulled them around the back of the house, where she could make ingredients for them in the kitchen to test their skills.

Hopefully, a practical test was part of the usual hiring process for cooks, and they wouldn't be offended.

From the sounds in the kitchen, Lotus didn't have any major problems with their applicants. So, Karl began preparing for the evening.

The others were still busy inside, but Karl decided to just go ahead and give the Appraiser the job. If things didn't work out, they could always fire him later. But he appeared to be quite competent at his job.

"Davis, do you have somewhere to stay tonight, or will you be moving into the house?" Karl asked.

Davis smiled. "My grandmother lives at the Castle, and I am currently caring for her in the evenings, as her age is catching up to her. Thank you for your consideration, and I may wish to stay here if business is especially hectic some days, but I do not require full-time lodging."

Karl nodded. "Let us know if anything we have can help your grandmother. You will find that we can offer generous employee discounts. If you can be back by nine tomorrow morning, we will be starting to stock the shop."

Davis bowed and flared his wings for balance, an act that made Cara want to know what they felt like. Hawk was sure that feathers felt like feathers, but the motions were the part he was interested in. Being humanoid was hard, but the appraiser was good at being a human with wings.

Davis left for the Castle with a powerful flap of his wings, and a few minutes later, Karl turned to the mage and his daughter.

"So, Miss Jones. I hear that you're interested in becoming a Runesmith or similar form of Artisan." Karl began.

The girl nodded happily. "Yes, Sir. I've always loved working with magic. I'm already a Commander Rank mage, but I haven't taken an official trade skill yet. I have been looking for one that was just right. But you can enhance jewellery and weapons, like an Inscriptionist can do paper scrolls and books. That is wonderful.

I love magic, and I really love new magic. Nobody else I know can do what you do. I even bought one of your rings from Royal Jewellers and tried to replicate it, but no matter how I write it, it simply doesn't work."

Karl laughed as her face turned bitter and sad at the end.

"That's because you need the appropriate skill for the ability to work. It's the difference between copying the pages of a Skill Book and actually making a Skill Book." Karl explained.

"You can make skill books?" She asked, startled.

"Well, yes. But that's a whole different topic. I have a skill to let me make them of skills I can use. But that's not new magic, is it? I can teach you that if you would like, but I don't need an apprentice Skill Book Maker. Well, not full-time, but I would happily sell skill books if you made them."

Mage Jones, the girl's father, laughed quietly. "The Governor would box your ears. All skill books have to be sold through the city Library. It's a security measure to keep people from selling forbidden dark magic in the city."

Senior Jones, the Magma dragon, winked at Karl. "If you happen to have an interesting one, I might be willing to purchase it outside the city."

Karl smiled. "I will keep you in mind if I happen to have a good one. There is a Ghostfire Thunderbird among my friends, and he knows some lovely fire skills. I am a bit short on Earth Element skills, though."

The Magma Dragon shrugged. "Come talk to me after you're settled. I'm sure we can work something out."

Chapter 773 Wendy Jones

Jones Junior thought about the future for his daughter, then patted her on the head.

"Why don't you see if he can get you started on an appropriate trade? If the apprenticeship doesn't work out, then we can find you another job. But I think that you might be happy here." He suggested.

Wendy Jones nodded happily and extended her hand to Karl, her red eyes sparkling with excitement.

Like her father, she could almost pass for human, if it wasn't for her eyes. But Karl could see that she did have a tail, as it swished under her skirt when she was excited. Her father had said that her mother was a magic demon, so Karl had expected feathers or wings. However, it was possible that she had a feathered tail.

That might be a bit impolite to ask about if she kept it tucked.

Besides, if he really wanted to know, Lotus would find out soon enough. There wasn't much that the Green Dragon Cleric was shy about asking, and finding out if a new friend had a feathered tail was well down the list of things that might cause her to hesitate.

Karl smiled at her as he shook her hand, then activated [Follow Me, Little One].

Wendy got an odd look on her face as he transferred the [Apprentice Runesmith] skill to her, then threw herself into Karl's arms and began planting kisses on his cheek, much to her father's dismay.

And Dana's annoyance as well, Karl realized as he gently removed the young Demoness and placed her back on her feet.

"I taught her the Apprentice level of the necessary trade skill. It's one of my talents. She just got a bit excited." He apologized sincerely, looking towards Dana.

She sighed and nodded, while Mage Jones looked confused.

"You granted a skill with a touch?" He asked.

Karl nodded. "As I said, it's a unique skill for my class. She is my apprentice now, so she got the necessary skills.

Starting tomorrow, I will begin teaching her the basics of Runecrafting, and the other craftspeople here will help her with her sculpting skills.

I should likely build a forge as well. But that's not a big deal, I can do that myself when we need it."

The Mage nodded politely, accepting the arrangement. Karl might be an outsider, but those rings he sold were an untapped market. Now that his daughter was going to learn the art of making them, her future was nearly guaranteed.

"I should get everyone settled in before we lose the whole day. Thank you all for coming on such short notice to upgrade our new home." Karl announced, with a slight bow, towards the two remaining craftsmen.

Mage Jones hugged his daughter, then waved goodbye on his way out.

The Magma Dragon simply nodded to Karl and walked out the gates beside the compound. The house was close enough to the wall that he wouldn't even need to pay an entry fee to get Karl's attention if the Beast Master forgot about bringing him books.

But he had young whelps in his extended family as well. Perhaps one of them might be a good fit? If nothing else, he could send one of the oddballs to the Beast Master. If he could tame a Bloodbath Spider, he could deal with an unruly crossbreed Dragon.

"You can really do many wonderful things. What sort of class is Beast Master?" Wendy asked once they were alone in the courtyard with Dana.

Dana wrapped her arm around the new apprentice. "He can bond with magical beasts, and most of his skills are based on training them. Tell me, what did the System Message say to you when he granted you a skill?"

Wendy blushed and whispered in Dana's ear, but not quietly enough that Karl couldn't hear her.

"It said that he was offering me the Apprentice Runesmithing skill, and then it called me a fragile Wendy doll. Or Fragile Doll, Wendy."

Dana frowned. "That's an odd one. Tell me what is your family like?"

Wendy shrugged. "Pretty good. I have four older brothers who live at home. They're all training to be mages with our father. They buy me gifts at random, the maids are all very nice to me when they bring my food and pick my clothes. Sometimes father even has them take me for sweets in the city."

Dana resisted the urge to facepalm. The new apprentice likely never had a chance to have her own opinions. She had become Karl's apprentice simply because she was told that she would like it, and never questioned her father's wisdom.

If she was going to be a creative crafter, someone would have to teach her to have a backbone. And that someone couldn't be Karl. He would just pat her head and tell her she was doing a fantastic job on her work.

Karl could see that Dana was planning something, but he didn't know what. So, he went with relevant questions.

"Do you like painting and sculpting?" He asked.

Wendy nodded rapidly. "I love to carve things. I make wooden toys with wind magic all the time. Here, look."

She took out a small wooden carving of a dragon, which was detailed down to the scratches on the creature's scales.

Her eyes were begging for acceptance, and Dana patted her head. "That is beautiful. You have a natural talent for sculpting. I think that you will get along well with Loros, our jeweller.

But first, I should ask, what did the System classify you as? I know that Obsession Demons have some peculiarities."

Wendy shook her head at Dana. "It actually calls me a Magic Demon. My father is part, and my mother is full-blooded, so I'm a Magic Demon by default."

Dana led Wendy inside, and Karl followed them after taking a few seconds to carve a water creation rune inside the well, and then charge it, so it would fill the open cistern to the level of the rune.

That way they would have plenty available for washing, if someone should get excessively dirty while working. Or for thirsty trainees, who would likely end up doing their morning workouts in the courtyard.

Once inside, he looked around the main room and began planning where to put everything.

He had a whole stack of items to finish from Loros, but Mana Jade was only one option. Many creatures preferred wood or other materials instead of stone, thanks to their nature.

"Lotus, how is the cooking coming?" He called to the back room. "Lunch is almost ready. Did you need something?" She called back.

"After lunch, I would like you to make some wood with good mana transfer ability for our two sculptors to work on. You can make a few rough weapon blanks as well. I will put out an ad for weapon makers later." Karl explained.

"Oh, like you were doing in the lab with the blue dragon clerics? That should be fun. We can make all sorts of wild things with two sculptors." Lotus agreed, then returned to her kitchen work.

Things were coming together well for this new branch of the Darklight Host. Once they had a base stock and a few more people, they could finally start making daily visits to the Dungeon to get everyone up to the Monarch Rank.

Chapter 774 Work Referrals

Lunch was sent up to the second floor with a dumbwaiter lift, and Tessa set all the dishes out on the table for examination before they started to eat. This was the employment test for their new team of four chefs, and none of them had been to the restaurant where they formerly worked.

Sure, they had experience. But what if the food there was terrible?

It actually smelled wonderful, and Lotus surely would have stopped them if they were making mistakes, so Karl wasn't too concerned as he took his seat and waited for everyone.

"What is the order?" Wendy whispered as she noticed there were no assigned seats.

"Everyone just sits wherever they want. If you're speaking with someone when a meal starts, it makes sense to sit together. Or if you want to spend more time around someone, move to be near them." Karl replied with a shrug.

That was how he ended up with Dana on one side of him, and Wendy on the other, with Cara taking the chair beside Wendy, much to the young Demoness' confusion.

Once everyone was seated, Wendy turned to Cara and introduced herself. "Hello, my name is Wendy Jones. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Cara replied with a bow, and motioned for Karl to respond.

"That is Cara, our resident Winged Void Badger. She can be a bit of a prankster, but she's really a sweet person. Unfortunately, she cannot speak any of the common languages due to her form." Karl explained.

Cara nodded in satisfaction. That was a good description.

Wendy smiled, and slid her hands up the side of her head. Then, she removed the black wig that she was wearing, revealing a pair of short, flesh toned horns on her bald head as her skin tone changed slightly, and her features became more demonic.

Oni Demon, Karl realized. That was what her father was, and likely hiding his horns with a spell, the same as Wendy had been. Wendy put the wig on Cara's head, and the Void Badger shifted to a humanoid form similar to Wendy's.

"There, now you can speak at dinner." The young mage announced proudly.

Cara giggled and carefully picked up the utensils, something that she had never tried before. Her first attempt was a failure, and all the food fell off before she could eat it. The second went slightly better, but Cara was already out of patience, and carefully rearranged the wig on Wendy's head before digging in to her meal face first with her front paws on the table.

"I guess she's not big on talking." Wendy giggled.

Cara giggled and carefully picked up the utensils, something that she had never tried before. Her first attempt was a failure, and all the food fell off before she could eat it. The second went slightly better, but Cara was already out of patience, and carefully rearranged the wig on Wendy's head before digging in to her meal face first with her front paws on the table.

"I guess she's not big on talking." Wendy giggled.

"I think she just got frustrated with the fork. I will work with her to learn a humanoid transformation ability later if she wants it." Karl suggested.

Cara waved off his concern. Badgers were much better than humans.

The kids who had been boarding at the house under Caretaker Jo's supervision were completely stunned by the quality of the meal. They had taken turns cooking before, and it was rarely what anyone would consider good, and often considering it edible was questionable.

But this meal, it had all the richness of a high-class restaurant meal.

Karl watched them wolfing down the meal with satisfaction. With a proper reference, they should be able to find work quickly, and staying here would no longer be a stain on their applications.

But in the aftermath of the attack, there would be countless people shifting homes and looking for work, so it really was a great opportunity for them in the middle of a disaster.

It would be hard to judge people on the neighbourhood that they were staying in when a large portion of the city was destroyed, after all.

After lunch, Caretaker Jo took out a piece of paper, then shook her head and ran out to the guard station to go get something.

While the guards had been rather disdainful to her the first time that they had spoken about the Caretaker, this time they seemed much more accommodating. They handed her a new piece of paper, and the Caretaker came back in with it in her hands.

"I have the day's new job listings. I know we're a bit late, but this one just updated for tomorrow's jobs." She explained.

She began drawing circles around various jobs, and then writing notes for different residents.

"Here, take this. I know that they have been looking for workers for a while, and they lost three during the battle. Then for you, and you." One after another, she made job notes for all her charges and sent them out into the city with their referrals to go apply for work.

Karl noticed that the letters had his name and the Darklight Host Guild on them as a home reference, as they were staying with him, while the work history was individualized to the residents.

That left the house somewhat empty, with just six new people in addition to Karl's team, while the house was designed for close to sixty, an entire guard unit.

"What do you think the chances that they find permanent employment are?" Karl asked the Caretaker.

"I would say pretty good. I have a skill that tells me what the best way to take care of people and keep my place clean are. Finding them work does both." Jo explained.

Karl laughed quietly. That was a rather unique way to use an Obsession Magic skill.

"Well, I suppose that we will find out soon enough whether they have found work. Then we will have to find them a place to live." Karl agreed.

Caretaker Jo shook her head. "If they find work at these places, they should be given rooms in the new towers and the buildings that will be going up behind them today.

The towers are empty concrete, but they all have Systems, so they've got their bedding and other essentials with them until they can get their first pay and get settled in."

It would be strange having the house so empty already, but once they started hiring crafters and sales staff, they would have a decent portion of the second floor full.

"Well, if they don't, we might be able to hire one or two as general sales people, with Davis as the appraiser." Karl agreed.

Thor nodded in satisfaction. A larger pack was better.

Chapter 775 Inventory Plan

Over the course of the next three hours, messengers came one after another, each of them informing either Karl or Lotus personally that their boarder had been hired.

Obviously, they were mostly hired out of respect for one of the two, and even the ones for Karl mentioned Lotus in some way. Mostly a message requesting that she return occasionally to the park as a healing tree.

Lotus had no problem with that, and she would happily go be a tree there every so often, just to keep the people in good health.

If she didn't, they would start looking for her at home, and that would be even more time-consuming than spending a day a week as a Tree of Life.

During that time, Karl had begun to enchant rings with various simple runes, focusing on the Royal Rank items. But there was one effect conspicuously missing.

"No Giant Strength rings?" Loros asked, knowing that was what Karl put on the ones that he had sold to Jeweller Magos.

Karl shook his head. "If I only sell them to the Royal Jeweller, then the majority of the buyers, the warrior classes, will have to go to them, and we can keep a flow of money coming and our business relationship strong.

You see, if something happens and our personal reputation takes a hit, selling specific items to other vendors will maintain our funding even during times of hardship.

If they take a hit and have to close, we can simply nominate a replacement and elevate them with the sale of the rings."

Wendy laughed at his analysis.

"You have a rather cruel outlook on business. Trade wars within the city are all but unheard of. Most businesses here last for entire generations." She explained.

While they talked, Lotus took a number of items out of her inventory and placed them on top of the new cabinets.

"You can enchant these as well. I think that the police and the debt collectors will love them." She insisted.

Karl looked at the assortment of clubs, batons and baseball bats, plus a few gnarled mage staves for Karl to upgrade.

Karl quickly carved runes for stunning on the clubs and bats, making them a nonlethal weapon with exceptional durability. Then Karl decided what to do with the staves. Something simple would be best. [Fireball. Fireball solves everything.] Hawk insisted.

He even had a whole pile of lower grade Fire Element stones that could be carved with the spell.

Karl carved the stones, then made the staves Royal Rank magical items with extra spell power and mana storage. The wood that Lotus made was exceptionally well suited to such mana storage, and dozens of fireballs could be cast at Commander Rank before it was depleted.

That should make them a valuable item on the market.

Karl set one on the top shelf of a display case, and locked the others underneath. At the moment, Davis and Karl were the only ones who could operate the barriers, so there was no chance that they would be stolen without breaking the Overlord Rank barriers.

With the bats and batons put on display, the cases were still sparse, but looked somewhat complete, except for the one closest to the kitchen wall.

However, Remi had plans for that one. She had all sorts of potions, and if she put one of each on display, then loaded the bottom of the case with extras, they would have a diverse selection of potion effects available. Most of them were actually failed attempts to make something else, but some of them were truly miraculous. Like the anti aging cream that actually reversed aging. If you used it as a full-body lotion, the skin and muscles of the user, even the hair, would revert to a youthful state.

However, if it was overused, you could accidentally weaken someone's body back down an entire Rank until it naturally recovered.

For an elderly monster, Demon or magical beast, regular use could theoretically stop aging and keep them in their prime indefinitely.

That hadn't been tested yet, but Remi had been doing it on plants to keep them in their sprouting state indefinitely, increasing the number of sprouts she could harvest for materials.

Compared to Remi's fully stocked swamp, the selection of materials for their future sculpting work was not great, but Lotus had created dozens more pieces of wood for the crafters. "Alright, Loros, can you show Wendy around the workshop? You will have to share tools until I can get a new set made, but the two of you can make some base items this afternoon, and then I will work to teach Wendy more about Runecrafting tomorrow." Karl explained.

Loros gave Karl a wounded look. "You know, my carving isn't actually a trade skill, just an obsession." She spoke softly.

Karl smiled. "So, you would like to become a Runecrafter as well?"

I don't see why not.

We will all sign a proper work contract so that you don't both run off with the knowledge, and then we can get started in the morning, using the items that you have made today.

No matter what it was that you made, we can find a Runic inscription that will go well with it. But use the magical wood first, as it's less expensive, and Sister Lotus can make more if you run out."

The actual carving was the fun part for them both, and it gave them something to do for the day, while Karl and the team made sure that they had everything that they needed.

Rae was hanging curtains over the windows on the main floor, as she had finished the upper levels already. All the beds had new linens, pillows and blankets. The top floor rooms had new rugs, and she had even distributed some of Remi's soaps to the common showers on the second floor.

Tessa looked around their new residence in satisfaction. "I will go get a few more necessities from the city. Ophelia, come with me for a bit." Ophelia nodded, sure that the War Cleric had something secret in mind, and the pair left the house, headed for the city core.

Lotus headed back to the kitchen and loaded up supplies, then called in Karl to stock the freezer with some meat so they had options for meals.

Now, all that was left to do was wait to remember all of the small details that they had inevitably forgotten.

Chapter 776 Remi's Business Savvy

Later that night, Tessa and Ophelia returned with Ice Cream and cake. They had gone out to collect sweets and other goods to celebrate the establishment of their group as a proper Guild. They were now officially, and somewhat permanently, united as a force in a way that anyone who cared to look could see. But more than that, the house belonged to the Guild as a whole. They weren't sharing someone's private residence, or sleeping in a military assigned dorm.

This was their home, and as soon as they could create an official Guild Stone, they should even be able to activate a few more restricted system functions, available only to official Guilds.

They might not be able to have a movie night here in the city of Drodh, but they could still hold a proper party, with good Rum, better snacks, and piles of soft pillows on the floor.

With Tessa's encouragement, Rae placed a large soft rug and masses of pillows around one of the unused rooms on the third floor, then draped the walls with colourful bolts of silk. There were bookshelves, which were currently empty, but once it was fully stocked, it would be a great spot for quiet relaxation.

For tonight, it would be the site of their house-warming party.

Loros was much more introverted in a large group, when she had been quite eager to tell Karl about her sculpting while they were alone. But Wendy only got more energetic when there were more people around, and Karl got the feeling that she hadn't been allowed to do many interesting things or meet many new people at home.

Her father must have had strong rules for her. Because for the first time in her life, she was getting to try many of the snacks that they had brought back to the house.

But she was still young, and not long after dark, she was beginning to nod off.

The little demon had been unofficially adopted for the evening by Cara, who was happy remaining on the pillows for the night instead of going to a proper bed, the way that Karl did with Dana, who also fell asleep early.

The rest of the group split along fairly predictable lines. Ophelia took Lotus, Thor went to bed with Tessa, and Loros locked herself in one of the second floor rooms mumbling about statues as she fell asleep.

The next morning, Karl was up early and enjoying a few morning moments with Dana before everyone got up, and they had to start the day.

But other than Loros, who was in the workshop at the crack of dawn, carving something, the rest were in no hurry to wake up.

None of the boarders had come back, they had all found full-time employment on the first day after they had a proper reference letter. That would hopefully be good for their future, but it did present a small problem for Karl. They had hired Davis, the fallen angel, to be their appraiser. But they had not hired anyone to actually work in the shop, clean the floors, greet customers and all the other tasks that would be needed.

Not that the shop was large, but they could use a second person, so that Davis wasn't fully responsible for everything.

The black winged demon came in promptly at nine in the morning, just as everyone was beginning to eat breakfast.

"Come on up to the second floor after you look around. We won't be opening so early. Nobody even knows it's a shop yet." Karl called down to their new employee.

Then he sent Wendy down with breakfast for Loros, who would likely forget to eat if she wasn't reminded.

During their conversations last night, she had mentioned it was a common problem for Obsession Demons. If they weren't so poor that they couldn't afford to do their task continually, they would hyperfixate to the point that they would only eat when they became painfully hungry.

Davis came up with a sheet of paper in his hands and a smile on his face.

"Sir, I have valued the items in the shop, and I must say that some of them are extraordinary. Are you certain that they are all for sale, and not part of the store display?" He asked.

"Which ones struck you as especially valuable?" Karl asked, already having a good idea of the answer.

"The staves for one. Those are worth nearly a thousand gold pieces each, and wouldn't normally go on the market openly. They would be auctioned individually.

But that anti-aging cream."

He paused as the ladies began to laugh.

"It's an accidental windfall. You see, Remi, our Naga Queen Alchemist, was trying to make a new form of healing potion with substitute ingredients. That was the result."

Davis sighed. "Might I make a recommendation? Repackage it in fifty millilitre containers. At that point, my skills would value it at five gold a container. Right now, it's in one litre potion flasks, and that is just excessive. I know that ladies pay a lot for skincare, but paying more than a new house and domestic staff for a single bottle of it is extreme."

Karl was going to point out that the staff was worth far more than the skin care lotion, but that was a once-in-a-lifetime sort of purchase that could be passed down in the family. Not a regular use consumable.

Remi nodded in understanding and gave him a thumbs up gesture, unsure whether he understood serpent.

Almost everyone on this continent had an active System, and they would get translation functions. So, Remi tried her luck after her next bite of breakfast.

Davis gave her a strange look as the Naga Queen simply placed a fried egg in her mouth and tilted her head back to swallow it, but it was not the worst form of table manners he had seen. Just a species quirk.

{What about my healing potions? Are they fine?} Remi asked.

Davis nodded. "Yes. Not many will need such a high-grade potion, but we are on the more expensive side of town, and some of the more powerful species need at least one such potion as a backup for severe injuries.

The question is how you wish to price them.

The official price is high, but there are numerous Alchemists in town, so the price of Ascended and Commander Rank healing potions has been driven down."

Remi considered it. {How much have they been driven down? As I recall, the guard said we could each get like four gold from the Dungeon every day.} Davis nodded. "Commander Rank super healing potions sell at two for a gold coin. But Monarch Rank potions of any sort are rarely on the market, and Royal Rank potions are usually custom-made. I see that you do have a number of Commander Rank healing potions and mana recovery potions available, which are the mainstay of an Alchemist's shop anywhere."

Remi smiled. {Yes, I thought so. We can put the really good ones away. Sell the others, and when someone makes a big order or an important someone comes in, we can give the Monarch ones as a gift.}

Davis smiled. That Naga really knew how to bribe an official.

With her in charge of making the potions for the shop, they might not even need to worry about the magical item stock, they would get rich just off the potions.

Chapter 777 Open For Business

Karl looked over the price list, and it all looked good to him. So, he headed down to the workshop to start his training with Wendy and Loros. They could make a shop open sign as well, and then he would see who came into the shop.

Being right at the gate had advantages, the word of their operation would spread through town on its own without any advertisement needed.

Loros was way ahead of him, and not only did she have a sign made, she had already varnished it, and it was mostly dry.

The sign simply said {Darklight Host Guild House} but it had hanging placards beneath it with a ring, a sword and staff and a potion bottle.

Karl carefully took the nearly dry sign and hung it on the outside of the wall to finish drying in the sun. That should be clear enough for everyone, and while he would have picked a different name, it looked like he didn't have an option about what Guild he was in.

Karl looked at his System interface again as he returned to the workshop.

[Name] Karl

[Class] Beast Master Packmaster

[Rank] Monarch

[Constitution] Void Iron Body

[Bonded Beasts] 5

[Guild] Darklight Host

[Titles] {Hidden}

[Skill Points] 64

{Class Skills}

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

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

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

[Follow Me Little One] Directly teach a known skill to a compatible target.

[Home] One Time Use Skill. The Packmaster may designate a target location as their permanent home, granting various bonuses as the location is improved. Home Location may be periodically moved, but never deactivated.

{Available Skills}

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

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

(20 Points) [Pack Affinity] The Packmaster has an affinity for all skills that any of his bonded beasts have an affinity for, and may learn them as normal.

(50 Points) [Dominating Power] The Pack Master's Aura gains a {Mental Domination} effect at will, requiring weaker minds to submit to his will. Hypnosis type ability.

{Previous Class Skills} [Expand to View]

Karl focused on the last two skills, which had appeared up the skill tree past [Follow Me, Little One]. Pack Affinity would definitely help him in the future, as it would let him use every skill that any of his beasts knew.

But the last, [Dominating Power] was a pure Pack Leader type ability. Like the largest member of a pack of predators, they could simply force the weaker members to back down.

Karl had gotten fairly good at doing that in normal situations, but having a hypnosis ability that would force others to back down would be incredibly broken in combat. Could you even call it combat at that point? He wasn't clear what the difference between that and the [Intimidation] effect of [Territorial] was, but Territorial sounded more like it was a fear skill, instead of a paralysis ability. He was a few points short on being able to get both Pack Affinity and one more skill, but Karl wasn't in a hurry for any of the others.

Only [Pack Affinity] would be a change outside of combat, as well as in battle.

It was awfully cheap, for a Pack Master skill, though. There had to be a catch, as he already had the skills to simply teach himself anything his beasts knew.

Or, perhaps that was too easy of a standard, and he should have been looking at becoming a walking skill Library?

For now, Karl selected [Pack Affinity] and made a mental note to check his points again soon to pick another skill.

{Pack Affinity Learned}

Then, a flood of knowledge hit him like a physical force, making him stagger as he walked across the yard.

"Mister Karl, are you alright?" Loros asked, running out of the workshop.

She had been waiting for him to come back and teach her the Runesmith skill, so she had noticed the moment that he staggered, and the trickle of black blood that briefly flowed from his nose before vanishing.

"I am alright. Just an information overload when I changed one of my skills. Now, let's get to work, shall we?" Karl replied, before placing a hand on her head, and transferring the [Apprentice Runesmith] skill.

She dragged Karl into the workshop with surprising strength for someone so small, and began to show off her morning work.

She had made some truly beautiful items out of the wood that Lotus had left for them. A few rings with nature scenes, a bracelet with carvings of a naval battle, and then an eye cover, which was currently missing the string to attach it.

"An eye cover? Healing magic is a thing that exists, you can grow them back." Karl asked curiously.

Loros laughed. "They're not for missing eyes. They're for night watch. You see, you keep one eye in the dark all the time, and it gets more sensitive.

So, when the sun goes down, you swap the patch to the other side, and you look out from the eye that wasn't dimmed by daylight.

It's an old sailor trick that works on dozens of species."

That was actually pretty fascinating. Many people in the mines would complain of headaches from the brightness when they were outside during the day on their day off, so it might be the same in that situation. He had just never realized it.

Wendy looked excited about the new information. "What do you do for night watch instead, Master Karl?" She asked.

Karl shrugged. "I have echolocation and thermal vision. I just ignore the light input from my eyes and focus on the other optical inputs when it's dark."

Loros sighed. "That's cheating."

But Wendy shrugged. "I have excellent night vision, but not that good. I still need at least a little light."

Chapter 778 Minimum Standards

Karl began the lesson. "Now that you both have the crafting skill. I will go over the basics with you. We are going to make rings that can store mana and increase Skill Power. Those will be the staple of our shop, so I want you both to learn how to make them right away." He wrote the rune on the chalkboard on the wall, including notes about stroke order and direction with depth changes, then gestured to the pile of wooden rings. "As Miss Loros got an early start, I will demonstrate one before you both make plain rings to practice on." He added.

Loros gestured to the side of the table, where dozens of ring blanks in various sizes were already made. They had only been roughly shaped into circles, and Karl realized that she had cored the same stick to make two different ring sizes from the same disc.

Very efficient use of materials.

Karl carefully carved the inside of the ring with the runes for Mana Storage and Increased Skill Power, then placed it between them. "See how the string of Runes is placed? Evenly spacing them around the ring creates a more even activation with less chance of overloading a material that is being enchanted to near its magical limits. Now, this wood is capable of taking a Royal Rank charge, and neither of you can manage that, so slight errors in spacing won't be a major issue.

For the first attempt, you will do them on the outside, not the inside of the ring. Trust me, it's much easier to carve the outside perfectly.

Just draw them on with a pencil first, then carve the runes." After a few minutes of examination, both Apprentices were satisfied with their understanding of the process, and they began working on the runes.

It was slow, even on the outside of the simple ring blanks, but speed would come with practice, and they needed to get the runes perfect in both shape and depth.

Surprisingly, they both got it right on their first tries. Perhaps that was the advantage of having skilled sculptors as apprentices?

"Now, focus on your skill and begin enchanting the rings. Wendy, you're more powerful, so you can go all the way to Commander Rank. The practice will help you both grow your magical strength." Karl instructed.

Loros didn't seem upset about the difference, even though Wendy was still a child. She had long since accepted that her bloodline had limitations, and unless she could break them, she would never be moving past Ascended Rank.

Slowly, the colour of the runes changed as they upgraded the rings. Silver Ascended Rank from Loros, and Golden Commander Rank runes from Wendy.

"Perfect. Now, give them a light buffing and put them to let them bond with you. The first item you officially make as an apprentice should be for your own advancement." Karl insisted.

A second later, both of them were wearing a simple wooden ring on their hand, and staring at it with great pride.

"Perfect. Now, you understand the basic concept, so we will up the difficulty a little. I want you to take one of the ring blanks, polish it, then carve a design that will go around the runes before you enchant it. That is the standard that others will want for even a basic purchase. It can be scrollwork on the edges, a full design with the runes carved into the back, or you can even cut and polish some of these flakes of mana jade from yesterday's work as semi-precious stones and make it a decorative ring for those who prefer not to wear metal bands."

That would keep them busy for an hour or two, Karl decided as he went back into the house.

The shelves had been slightly rearranged, and a small selection of items obtained from the Giant Wars had been added to a cabinet on the right as you came in the door. It was a bit of a grab bag of randomness, as opposed to the more uniform crafted items, and it would catch the attention of customers on their way in or out.

Most of the team was inspecting the new shop, while Davis created a basic pricing guide for the items that were in the shop by quality and Rank. That way, if someone else was making a sale, they didn't have to go to him to get a price to tell the customers. The rear area of the shop, by the kitchen entrance, was separated by a divider wall the same height as the cabinets, giving them somewhere to work, and a place for the shop safe.

That was an item that Karl hadn't thought of, and the place marked for it was empty.

But after a moment's thought, he realized that this issue had already been solved when Mage Jones had enchanted the building. The safe was just tucked under one of the cabinets, and when Karl focused on it, he could see that it was linked to the {Darklight Host Guild Bank, Drodh Branch}.

"The safe is over here. I will add you all as users, so you can use it for transactions." Karl explained, when he realized that nobody else knew where it was.

"Oh, alright. That works as well. Now, were you going to designate this location as an official store belonging to the Guild Branch?" Davis asked.

Karl focused on his System Interface.

Sure enough, there were Guild Options there, and one of them was the Guild House.

Karl chose his current location, and a message came up in his interface.

{Guild Branch Location Selected. Please add Guild Members to the Branch.}

Karl frowned, and looked through the Guild member's menu.

{Grand War Champion} Karl

That was the only name registered to this branch of the Darklight Host. The rest of his core group were members of the Guild, but not assigned to a Guild House or location.

Karl chose the rest of the group, then sent Guild invites to Davis, Loros and Wendy.

The Appraiser looked startled. "Sir, are you certain? Guild slots are limited. You don't need to add a mere employee such as myself."

Karl smiled at Davis' expression. "I am certain. The manager and chief appraiser is a trusted position, and even if the branch doesn't hold much clout in the city, you deserve the status."

{Guild Skill} Inactive

{Guild Bonus} Inactive

{Guild Perks} 50 Luck for all members

It wasn't much, but Karl assumed that it would grow.

Chapter 779 First Sales

As soon as he was formally inducted, Davis changed his visible title.

{Davis} Chief Appraiser of the Darklight Host Drodh Branch

{Darklight Host}

That was a pretty cool option.

The others had accepted his invitation and changed their titles as well, and now Karl could see that all of their names had a faint gold outline, marking them as Guild Members, though none of them showed a secondary title with their names, only {Darklight Host} as a guild tag.

No, there was one who had rejected the application. Caretaker Jo did not join. Her name looked the same as always, and when Karl gave her a curious look, she just shook her head. It seemed she was happy as an employee of the house. Then, it occurred to Karl that there were actual drawbacks to being a Guild Member. He was a War Champion, but how had he gotten that title? During a Guild on Guild war for control of a city. The membership would also paint a target on their backs if the Guild Members were out and about in the city, where someone might have a grudge against them as a group.

They also didn't currently have an Overlord Rank leader, as most powerful groups in Drodh City would. There were hundreds, or possibly over a thousand, Overlords in the city. With Karl only being a Monarch, they were the most minor of minor powers in the city.

But with a whole house full of valuables.

They did have the advantage of being right next to a guard station, but that didn't mean much if the guards didn't intervene in Guild Battles.

In Bunga, the guards had sheltered in place, protecting civilians while the battle raged.

The city of Drodh appeared to be mostly stable, as far as Karl could tell. There were some issues between the various factions, but no wide scale battles between them, thanks to the presence of the Governor and his forces.

Karl was thinking about the repercussions of his actions when a soft chime sounded, notifying them that someone had entered the yard.

A pair of elderly Demons, both Overlords with powerful builds, and near three metres tall, came down the stone path and through the open front doors of the shop.

"Oh, now this is interesting. It appears that the sign wasn't overstating their inventory." One of the old men chuckled.

Davis smiled and made a welcoming gesture.

"Please, do come in and take a look around. We've just finished setting up for our first day." He explained.

The ladies retreated to the kitchen, leaving only Karl and Davis to deal with customers.

They looked briefly at the assorted items in the case by the door, then one of the two froze in place as he looked at the staff in the long case on the right of the door.

"That is magnificent. It's everything that a fire mage could wish for in one spot, and Royal Rank as well.

But that's a bit more than I was planning to spend this year."

That made both Karl and the Demon's friend laugh. "That's more than you were planning to spend this decade, you miser. But look at these. There are Mana Jade rings for mages, very similar to the ones that Royal Jeweller is selling for warriors." The other man joked.

They came over and looked at the small selection of green jade rings, then the one who had been called a Miser by his friend clicked his tongue.

"If they were a bit higher quality, perhaps." He sighed.

"Sir, on your left, we have a selection of Monarch Ranked items of similar enchantments." Davis offered.

Both rushed over, and let out a longing sigh as they saw the white and red Mana Jade accessories, including a matching pair of bracelets with mana storage and skill power on them.

Then above that were matching rings with agility and skill damage on them, the combat half of the set.

Skill Damage was specific, but stronger, while Skill Power was comprehensive, but a much smaller percentage.

"When do these go to auction?" The Demon asked.

"They're not being auctioned, good sir. They are available for direct purchase here. If you would like them, we can offer a discount on the matched pair. Only twenty-four hundred gold coins."

That was a generous twenty percent above what Davis had put on the sheet, but this was part of the negotiation process as well.

The elderly Demon gave him a shrewd look, then returned a longing gaze to the jewellery.

"Are there more items like this?" He asked.

Davis nodded, and took out one of the more interesting items Karl had made.

It was similar in function, but it had an inscription for mana regeneration, skill activation speed and skill damage instead. It was a purely combat oriented piece of Jewellery, and the mage simply stared at it for a full minute without speaking.

"These were all created by the same person. Carved by one, imbued with power by another. That means you should know who the creator is, right?" The shrewd Demon asked Davis.

"That is confidential, Sir. But if you would like to place a custom order, we should be able to obtain it within a month's time, if the crafter is able to fill your request." The Appraiser agreed.

The demon shook his head. "No, this should be more than sufficient. I will give you five thousand gold for all five pieces."

Davis winced as if the offer caused him actual pain. "Sir, that is very near our wholesale price. Perhaps a little leeway could be found?"

The Demon sighed, then reluctantly nodded. "And two hundred for the house commission."

Davis smiled and shook the man's hand, then took the five pieces of Jade jewellery out of the case.

"Thank you very much for your patronage."

The demon beamed in pride, while his more miserly partner frowned at him.

"A little hesitation, and he just snaps up everything in the shop." The demon grumbled, then paused when Davis put another ring and bracelet pair in the display case, identical to the last one.

"There were more?"

Davis nodded. "Yes, Sir. They simply didn't fit in the display."

More like he didn't want to crowd the display and give an appearance of abundance, which would drive down the price.

"I will take the pair." He insisted, then placed a bag of coins on the counter.

"Thank you for your patronage. Should you have any custom orders, please do return."

Chapter 780 Wealth Unimaginable

Davis stared at the sacks of gold coins on the counter in awe.

"This is absolutely insane. We're not even fully open yet, and the shop is already rolling in cash." He stammered.

Tessa looked at the bags. "You don't need to verify and count that?"

Davis shook his head and smiled. "I awakened the Merchant Class. I can tell how much money is in a bag with a glance, and whether any of the coins are forgeries at a level lower than my own.

But those two are from the Castle, I've seen them around dozens of times and I know where they live."

That was good enough for Tessa.

A few minutes later, a curious guardsman came in the front gate, and waved as he stepped in to look around the new shop next to his duty station.

He looked around at the expensive magical jewellery, then stopped at the 'box of random stuff', as Cara was calling the loot drop case, and inspected a few items.

"I don't suppose that you have any loose gems, do you? My wedding band lost its stone, and I would like to have a jeweller fix it before my wife notices." He asked.

None of the items had a suitable stone in them, and there was no obvious junk in the shop.

Karl nodded. "Indeed I do. They're not part of the usual stock, but I can have our team repair your ring as well and get it back to you before your shift ends, if you're just starting." The Guard smiled. "It used to have a small emerald in it. Well, a fake emerald. An Earth Stone. If you've got something that shade and perfectly round, I would appreciate it." {Loros, please come to the shop for a repair request.} Karl sent a System Message.

She came running, and the Guard relayed the information. Then Karl held out a selection of the smallest green Earth Stones that he could find. The Giants didn't usually keep bits of stone that small.

"That colour is perfect. How much?" He asked. Karl looked to Davis, who sent him a subtle message. {That's an Awakened Grade stone, and it's flawed. Even if you had Loros cut it, a silver coin would be all it's worth for the effort.}

Karl patted the Guard on the shoulder with his empty hand. "Don't worry about it. This one's on the house. Wedding rings are important, and it's not a powerful magic stone."

Building goodwill with their neighbours in the city guard was never the wrong answer.

Loros had the stone polished out to the right size and mounted, with the ring repaired and returned to its owner half an hour later. Just in time for them to get another customer, an elegantly dressed Overlord Ranked Demoness with a kind smile and an aura that shouted 'I come from money'.

Davis had just stepped to the back to grab a drink, so Karl bowed to the customer and smiled.

"Good morning. Is there anything in particular that you are looking for?" The woman gave him a genuine smile in return and looked around the shop.

"I have heard from a little bird that you do not just sell magical items, but you can custom craft them." She began.

Well, that narrowed down the suspects.

Then Davis stepped out of the back and bowed deeply. "Madam Shin, it is an honour to have you in our shop. Thank you for your kindness to my mother."

{She's the Governor's wife.} Davis informed the others, using the Guild exclusive function of the messages.

Madam Shin turned her smile on the black winged fallen angel. "Little Davis, I didn't know that you were working here. I was having tea with Midwife Musa yesterday, and she told me that the man who took over this place was the one that made her a custom fertility charm.

I was hoping to have something made for my anniversary."

Davis bowed. "She is quite right. This is Karl, and he is the one with the skill you are looking for."

She turned back to Karl with a smile. "How powerful of an item can you make? My husband and I are known to be somewhat extravagant in our gifts."

Karl smirked as he realized that she was fully intending to one up whatever the Governor managed to come up with as an anniversary gift.

"I cannot make items above my own Rank. But with sufficient materials and a bit of time, our team should be able to craft you most types of gifts up to the Monarch Rank. We have sculptors and a Nature Priestess on staff, but unfortunately no Blacksmith at this time."

The Demoness clapped happily.

"Oh, I know what I want. The Drodh Clan traditionally made all their armour from enchanted wood over a padded cloth base. I have pictures if you are unfamiliar. My anniversary is in two weeks, would it be possible to rush through a set of replica armour at the Monarch Rank by then? The Ceremonial Armour should be all black, but with either red or gold details."

Karl nodded. Monarch Ranked Runes were red, so that would work perfectly.

Loros crept into the room with a curtsy to the Governor's wife, who hadn't noticed her yet.

"I know the design very well. I think that we can do it if Lady Rae helps." She whispered.

Madam Shin looked down at the shorter Demoness. "Who is Lady Rae? I don't recognize the name, but I may be able to influence her to assist if she is local."

Karl chuckled. "Lady Rae is a Monarch-Ranked Bloodbath Spider, and a member of my group. I am certain that she will gladly assist with this project."

Karl took the stack of pictures for the armour, then realized he had a small issue. "I don't suppose that you have your husband's measurements, do you? Especially if it is a ceremonial piece, and he is

intending to put it on display without bonding the item, it would be best if we made it to his dimensions." He explained.

He had met the man once, so they could get it close, but not perfect.

"I will leave you Seven for the next few hours. They are often used as my husband's body double."

She snapped her fingers, and a large Demon who looked a lot like her husband, but who was only a Royal Ranked Demon stepped inside, wearing a butler's suit.

Rae came down the stairs. "Yes, that is perfect. We will have the armour perfectly fitted. It will be beautiful."

Madam Shin nodded her head at Rae.

"You are a magnificent example of your species, are you not? I have never met one who chose to appear in humanoid form before."

Rae was startled. "You have met one of my people before?"

Madam Shin laughed. "Oh, yes. When I was young, I travelled here by carriage from Shatharb City, a two-month ceremonial journey across three nations for my wedding ceremony. In the wilderness of Lared Territory, we were attacked by a Bloodbath Spider, who was displeased with our presence in her territory while she was mating.

Though only Royal Rank, she took down four Overlord Ranked Guards and almost all of my ladies' maids before she managed to escape."

Rae was shocked. Someone had managed to put on a greater show than she had? How much experience did you need to amass before you could kill Overlords as a Royal?

"She sounds like an example for all young ladies. After all, if we allow a mating ritual to be interrupted, the menfolk might start getting rebellious ideas." Rae agreed.

Madam Shin nodded in agreement. "Precisely. A well-trained husband is essential to a peaceful life. You can't have him thinking that your authority is something that can be challenged."

Davis did his best not to choke as he refrained from responding to that, but Karl just laughed.

"It seems that you two have very similar opinions on dating. There is fresh tea, if you would like to watch while Lady Rae fits the base layer."

That got enthusiastic approval from Madam Shin, and Rae led the Lady plus her guards to the second floor while Lotus made tea for everyone. Royal Rank Nature Priestess Calming Tea should be enough to impress even the most picky of guests.

Of course, they would likely need to start stocking it after this, but Lotus didn't mind, even if she had to make a hundred kilos of it for resale. She was going to stock the pantry with a few dozen varieties anyhow.