

Beast Master 801

Chapter 801 Gargoyles

The next morning, Karl woke up to a tail in his face as Dana got ready for the morning.

"You seem to enjoy cat form quite a bit." He joked. "It's actually quite convenient. People don't look at me strangely in this shape, at least not here in Drodh. But more importantly, this form is significantly stronger than my actual body. That's useful not only in combat, but just doing daily tasks.

Besides, now I have a tail." She laughed.

Karl couldn't really complain, as he rarely changed back from a transformed state. That was likely putting a damper on their intimate moments in the past, but now that she was also transformed, Dana seemed much less concerned about keeping her emotions hidden.

That could be because she had far too many tells in this form, from the ears and the tail to the purring, but it was a refreshing change.

"Big plans for the day?" He asked as Dana shimmied into a pair of soft silk pants and tied the back above her tail.

"We're going to steal Thor and go to the Dungeon today. You've got things to do, and people will definitely be coming to kiss ass today. None of us wanted to hang around for it, but the Dungeon is a five-person instance." Dana explained.

"Stop at the tree in the backyard and see if you can push yourself to Monarch Rank first. If you can, the Dungeon will go even more smoothly, and you'll get a chance to get used to a new power level." Karl suggested.

"Oh, that is a great idea. How is the butterfly doing?" Dana asked hesitantly.

"Thriving. I can sense that the butterfly's illusions are playing tag with Cara in the library room, or rather the city outside the Library room. Energy levels, both mana and stamina are up, and the power level is beginning to stabilize now after a rapid growth spurt.

I think that the species is just really poorly adapted to living in the modern world, and it needed some special conditions to make it past emergence." Karl explained.

"That is wonderful. So, we're not going to lose our Library."

Karl laughed. "No, we're not going to lose our Library. At least not any time soon."

Dana headed down the stairs to give the great news to Lotus, who was certain to be stressing out about the fate of the butterfly by now, as well as the illusions that came with it.

She didn't need to worry so much. Lotus was already in the Library, buried in a pile of super fluffy white puppies that constantly licked her face and begged for her attention. Dragging her away to do a dungeon run might be difficult. Maybe they should take Rae and Thor with them and let Lotus play.

Before they left, Dana went to the Altar and pulled a huge amount of mana from the tree, flushing the energy from her body, and integrating the new power. The effect was akin to dousing herself in acid.

Every part of her body burned as the mana was forcefully integrated, despite not matching what her body was used to, and her maximum power cap soared. But not far enough.

When the mana was fully integrated into her body, she had only managed to retain it near the peak of Royal Rank, and the majority of the quality had been lost in conversion. She wasn't quite close enough to the peak of Royal Rank, so she went to the Dungeon with a renewed determination.

Karl saw Davis coming down the street from the yard when he went to check on the damaged workshop, and then noticed that there was already a lineup of people outside.

One of whom was the Overlord Ranked mage who did the barriers.

"Oh, Mage Jones, please come in. Everyone, the shop will be open in the next few minutes, please be patient as we repair the damage from yesterday's excitement." Karl announced.

The mage came in, and clasped Karl's hand with a huge smile.

"Congratulations, Overlord. I will fix up the workshop right away, but Davis mentioned that you would like a forge added?" He asked.

"Yes, please. We would like to start adding metal accessories and items to our selection, and that needs a forge. We can do the forge fire enchantments ourselves, but the stone structure of the forge needs a better trained hand." Karl explained.

With a wave of his hand, Davis repaired the roof of the workshop. Then, the building began to slowly grow towards the road, stretching out another four metres.

"There you go. I didn't enchant the forge itself, but all the essential parts are there. I put a more robust barrier over the building as well, so that if there are any crafting mishaps, or another battle, it will not be damaged again. At least not by a single strike."

Karl noticed as the tree altar in the back pulsed, and the mage stood up a bit straighter.

"Well, that is fascinating. You have activated some sort of automated healing ward for the property?" Mage Jones asked, looking around for the source.

"In the backyard. It automatically activates when someone injured enters the property, but it's just a Shamanistic Healing Totem spell at the Overlord Rank imbued into a Nature Dragon Altar."

The mage smiled and nodded in understanding. "Still, it will make you a tourist hotspot. You should start selling basic cures and potions at a stall in the yard."

Karl laughed. "We already need a blacksmith, unless Davis found one. Now I guess we need an Alchemist as well. This house is slowly filling with apprentices." The mage shrugged. "That's just the nature of a Guild House. You could always make some Gargoyles to keep them under control."

Karl wasn't quite sure what he meant, until the mage took out a Skill Book with a sly smile.

"Oh, I do believe that we have a trade to make. Was there something in particular that you were interested in?" Karl asked.

The mage nodded. "In fact, I had something very specific in mind. You see, I am best with Earth and barrier spells.

The Gargoyle spell is Earth Magic, and quite handy for home defence, but it can't leave the property. It is limited in distance from the spot where it is created.

What I could use is a versatile spell of similar output."

Karl nodded. "Do you know the Golem spell?"

Jones shook his head. "It's been difficult to get my hands on. Do you happen to have a copy?"

"In a manner of speaking."

Karl took out a small stone from Remi's swamp. Not a magical stone, just a stone, and held it out to the mage. "Swallow that, and it should activate the skill if you're compatible."

The demonic mage was highly suspicious about this method, but once he swallowed the stone, and Karl activated [Follow Me, Little One] his eyes lit up in joy.

Then, a single sand Golem, four metres tall and Overlord Rank, appeared in front of him.

Jones handed over the [Gargoyle] Skill Book, and walked in circles around his new summon.

"That is a wonderful ability that you have, even if your method tastes like swamp water."

Karl laughed. "It's an acquired taste, I would assume. Congratulations on your new assistant."

Chapter 802 Gargoyles Everywhere

Karl focused on the [Gargoyle] spell, and did his best to understand how it worked before he cast it for the first time, in case it was like the Golem spell, and the appearance would be fixed in future castings.

What he found was that you had to target a specific spot to form the Gargoyle on, and it would appear as a statue in that position until activated.

Karl decided that the obvious choice would be two either on the wall by the gate or near the stairs to the porch, and four smaller ones on the corners of the roof.

That was where the Golden Dragon Nation's buildings often had gargoyles, though those were just decorative, and the ones on the roof were primarily water outlets.

Karl focused, and realized that he could actually make many more of them than just those few. So, he put them at all four corners of the property as well, standing on the wall. Ten Gargoyles should be enough to handle most problems that the property might face, and they could see everything with their placement.

With the placement decided, Karl focused on creating the statues, using the images of Gargoyles that he had seen on buildings before as a reference, but making them as lifelike as possible, so they wouldn't be hampered by poor design if they should activate.

Tiger bodies, feathered wings, long front claws, and a furry head with a Draconic muzzle.

Karl formed them with an immense surge of power that nearly dropped him to his knees and drained a significant amount of mana from the team, once they realized they were needed to assist.

Perhaps ten was too many to create all at once.

Mage Jones gasped, and Karl straightened his back before opening his eyes again.

"That is... Did you make them actual Gargoyles, as in the species? I swear that one just blinked at me."
The Demon muttered.

Karl frowned. "Was that not the point of the spell, to make Gargoyles to protect the property?"

Mage Jones stared at Karl in mutual confusion, then Karl noticed that the statue at the gate had just lost interest in them and looked away to supervise the road.

So, they weren't statues, they were stone Golems of a sort.

"It is supposed to make stone statues that fill the purpose of property guardians. It's only called the Gargoyle spell because that is what the actual species lives to do." The Mage finally explained.

"I think they're quite handsome, though." Karl noted.

They were definitely not statues, Jones decided. They were mostly stationary, but they shifted subtly, turned their heads to watch pedestrians, and periodically blinked.

The Demon walked up to one of the Golems, and leaned forward to inspect it closely. For those few moments, it appeared to be a statue, but as soon as he turned away, Karl saw that the statue rolled its eyes at the Demon.

Quite a few people entering from the Western Frostfire Gate turned to look at the Golems that were stationed all around the property, an unintentional show of force by Karl, who viewed them as a defensive spell, not as ten Overlord Rank combatants on guard as everyone else saw them.

{Home Upgrade Made} Defensive Garrison

Mage Jones turned to the line of people at the gate, who were all now staring raptly at the Gargoyles, and sighed.

"I should get going. Good luck with your business ventures."

"I will see you again. Let me know if you need a custom order, I will help you out."

Mage Jones took flight to leave the property, and Karl nodded to the Golems, who opened the gates for him.

Seconds after they entered, the healing effect pulsed, causing confusion in the crowd.

"Don't let it hold up your business. It's set to aid those who have injuries or illnesses. A little customer service." Karl explained.

Then he went into the expanded workshop and began carving the runes to activate the forge with Ghostfire.

So, he didn't notice the most important fact about the lineup of guests that Davis immediately did. None of these people were locals. They were all merchants and ship captains. The word had spread about this shop full of treasures, and even in the Dragon Isles, where magic was at its strongest, there were precious few sources of Royal and Monarch Rank magical items.

The number of people who could and would create them for sale in any given nation could normally be counted on the fingers of one hand, yet this Rakshasa had opened a shop full of magical items instead of putting them up for auction.

Which begged the question, what was he holding in reserve for after his workmanship had a better reputation?

Most of these people didn't know that he had been a Monarch yesterday, only that he had been selling Royal and Monarch Ranked items. The facts about the shopkeeper were vague, except for the fact that he was a War Champion with a golden trimmed tabard and the power to wipe out an enemy guild in minutes.

Karl was putting the finishing touches on the new forge when he felt eyes on his back. Not hostile, just curious and intent on him.

"How can I help? The crafters are working inside today, so there is nobody here to take requests unless you need me directly." Karl asked.

The slender demon with flaming hair gestured at the forge.

"The forge fire is pretty." His voice was soft, enraptured by the blue flames. In his space, Hawk was just as fascinated by the Demon as it was by the forge. This was the first creature he had met that was also on fire.

And, it was an Overlord. Overlord Rank fire was on par with Hawk's in some ways, though Ghostfire was a grade above regular flames.

"I don't suppose that you're looking for work, are you? We are in need of a smith for magical metal items." Karl asked.

"To work this forge?" The demon asked.

Karl nodded, and it smiled.

"I think that we could work something out. I wasn't intending to stay here and work, I was going to go inland to the volcanic mountains. But this forge, I like it."

Chapter 803 Ashbringer

Karl looked at the Demon's name tag. {Ashbringer} Grandmaster Elemental Smith (Fire Element)

Karl smiled, and Hawk cheered. This one was just right.

"If you want to work here, we can offer you half the profit on all items you make that I upgrade and eighty percent on what you make, with the house taking the other twenty for operations." Karl offered.

"What is it that you do that you think you could upgrade a Grandmaster's weapons?" The Demon asked, slightly offended.

"I am a Runemaster." Karl replied simply.

The Demon looked at the carvings on the wall around the forge, and understanding turned its expression to a smile.

"So, you can do that to weapons? That is a powerful skill."

"Not just that. I can add skills to the item, stat buffs, and even mana storage." Karl elaborated.

"Do you have materials?" Ashbringer asked.

"My team is in the Dungeon now, collecting as much as they can to smelt for raw materials."

That was good enough for Ashbringer, who gestured to the forge.

"May I test it first?"

Karl nodded. "Go ahead. Let me know if you need anything and I will have it added to the workstation."

But the smith simply began taking out items from its inventory, and set up a workstation complete with tables, benches and a leather padded stool.

Karl stepped back and let him work as the Demon put a chunk of glowing green metal in the forge and whistled happily as he activated the runes to bring up the heat. It took seconds before the metal bar was turning red with heat, and the smith brought it out to hammer it into shape on his own anvil, ignoring the one that had been made along with the forge.

The magic of the Demonic Grandmaster seemed to make the blade shape itself, smoothly turning into a sailor's cutlass in a matter of minutes. Then Ashbringer held it up to Karl.

"Let me see what you can do, and then I will decide if this is a worthy partnership."

Karl nodded and etched runes for increased Skill Damage, Sharpness, Lethal Poison and [Flaming Body] to the weapon, then brought them all the way to the Overlord Rank, where they turned ghostly blue against the rapidly cooling green metal.

That was different. When he had done it to the tree, it had turned the runes bright green. Could it be a difference in Element that was making them change? Or perhaps the nature of the shrine would only accept green runes?

The effect was almost like Ghostfire leaking from inside the blade, though Karl hadn't used the [Ghostfire] skill. Ashbringer cast [Appraisal] on the blade, and stared at it in silence for a moment.

[Blade of Searing Agony] Adds 35% Skill Damage, Ignores 45% of target Armour Value, Deals 20% weapon damage as Poison Damage per second until cured. Adds 200% of Skill Damage as Fire Damage. Applies [Agony] effect to target.

Two hundred percent of Skill damage was significantly more than the poison damage, but the combination of being poisoned and in agony would reduce the enemy's ability to fight back.

"That is a thing of beauty." Ashbringer whispered, while staring at the blade like a lover.

"I am glad that you like it. I don't think we would sell something like that in the shop. Custom order or auction only. But we do sell Royal and some Monarch Ranked items directly." Karl explained.

Ashbringer winked at Karl. "Never sell an item that you can't counter. Wise plan. Besides, every crafter knows that selling masterpieces is idiocy. You only make enough of them for yourself and those with life bonds to you."

"Did you want to keep working, or meet the rest of the crafting team? It's just the shopkeepers and a pair of sculptors here right now. My travel companions are at the Dungeon."

The sword was reluctantly put in the Demon's inventory, and Karl led him in to face the chaos. Only, the chaos he found was much worse than expected.

The Gargoyles from the front door were inside, glaring at the customers. The customers were arguing with each other over prices at rates far higher than posted, and Mick was hiding behind Davis, who looked lost as he shouted at the customers to calm down, or he would kick them all out.

The entrance of two more Overlords calmed the crowd, especially as one was the rumoured Shopkeeper. "Sir, might you have any more stock? The Appraiser has told us there are only fifty pieces in inventory." One of the merchants pleaded.

Karl blinked slowly. Fifty pieces? There should be hundreds.

Davis sent a System Message. {I sold all the Commander Rank stock and a good portion of the Royal Rank stock in bulk before I realized that they were all looking to buy it for export. Now, we have a supply shortage.}

Karl sighed. "There is a bit more upstairs. In fairness, what is on the shelves will be first come, first served. Then I will split the remainder between you evenly, so nobody has to leave empty-handed."

Ashbringer nodded in satisfaction. He liked how this man did business.

One wealthy merchant was gloating, as he was the next in line when the gate opened, and he didn't even bat an eye when Davis rang up the sales total to a whopping eighty-four thousand gold pieces.

He bought everything that was left. Not a single ring was left for the others when he exited the shop.

Karl led their new smith upstairs to see what the others had made so far.

"We've got thirty of the Monarch Rank rings ready for runes, with simple carvings. Then Wendy has got a hundred more Commander Rank rings made and inscribed. Who might this gentleman be?" Loros asked.

"This is Ashbringer, potentially our new Smith, should he decide to join the team."

They all shook hands, and Ashbringer sat down to admire the handiwork of the two sculptors.

"This is beautiful. Obsession Demons really do have the advantage when it comes to artistry. I am half fire Elemental, and half Wrath Demon. A Grandmaster Smith, but such artistry is beyond my expertise."

Loros shrugged. "If you make the base items, we will happily carve them. But if you're making mostly weapons, they don't need all the pretty, just the functional runes. I am still behind, as you can't make Runic Items above your own Rank. But my sculpting skills are top-notch."

Karl sat down and quickly inscribed dozens of different abilities onto the Monarch Rank rings, which was a much easier task now that the quality of his mana flow had changed. Rings weren't their only offerings for the remaining shoppers. Remi had two massive cauldrons of potions going, and was stirring both at the same time with her lower pair of arms, while chopping and measuring ingredients with her upper arms.

It was quite the sight, and the Naga Queen was utterly focused on her work.

She finished the vats just as Karl finished the rings, and began pouring them into small vials, instead of full-sized potion bottles.

[Minor Healing and Recovery potions. They have a quarter the effect, but take a tenth the volume.]

Ah, that made sense. With time and volume limited, she was making as many as possible to use up the small mountain of bottles that she had made with Hawk's help.

As she finished, she loaded them into crates, then came out to carry them downstairs.

"Let's watch the chaos from the stairwell." Ashbringer whispered, then ushered the two sculptors forward. This should be fun.

Chapter 804 Bulk Sales

Karl set the rings in the display cases, while Remi placed the crates of potions behind the counter.

"We have a hundred Commander Rank rings with Giant Strength and Skill Damage buffs, thirty Monarch Ranked Rings with Mana Storage, Skill Power, and mana regeneration, and five hundred each of the lesser healing and recovery potions, both at Monarch Rank." He announced as everything was placed.

Those potions were the mainstay of every adventuring group, the emergency assistants needed to prevail in a hard-fought battle. So, all the merchants assumed that Karl had gone so far as to clear out their Guild Bank storage to provide the items for them today.

The lesser potions weren't expensive, two silver coins each, even at the Monarch Rank. But that was still two hundred more gold, and a sense of satisfaction for the merchants who would get a whole box full of potion vials.

The ingredients also all grew in Remi's swamp at a rapid rate, so she could do this every day and not run out of them. It would just keep the weeds down.

There were still some arguments, but after a bit of back and forth, the deal was struck, and the items split between the ten merchants in the shop who didn't back down from the threats of their peers.

A few more were still present, but had decided it was best not to compete today, and let the others have the win.

They could try again next trip.

As they left, The Gargoyles informed Karl that they were putting on a show of being sad and defeated so that anyone watching along the road would know that they weren't the ones who had gotten the valuable loot.

It was a cunning plan. Leave, put on a show, but also let the spies who might be gathering intelligence to sell to pirate groups know that the others would have something good on board their ship this trip.

That would keep them away from the ships of the unsuccessful merchants, who would still have an entire boat load of goods from other shops aboard to sell.

As the last of the customers left, Davis went out and placed a "Closed for Restock" sign on the gate, but only closed one side, in case someone with a custom order or other request wanted to enter.

"Who is the other Overlord that I sense?" Ashbringer asked curiously.

"Oh, my class is Beast Master, I have a number of bonded Magical Beasts.

One of them created a magical library area with an Illusion Domain spell, that's the other Overlord. Then there is a Monarch-Ranked Void Badger around here somewhere, plus a Divine Thunder Cerro and a Bloodbath Spider with the dungeon team. Plus Hawk, the Ghostfire Thunderbird, who is currently on the roof.

There is one other non beast member of the group upstairs in the Library, would you like to meet her?" Karl replied.

The Demonic smith smiled and nodded, then followed Karl up to the third floor.

Lotus was in the middle of the room, buried in puppies create by the butterfly's illusions. She didn't even look up until Ashbringer began to laugh.

"A Green Dragon Cleric? Oh, this will be a fun place. Hello, high priestess." He greeted Lotus.

"Hello, strange man with his head on fire. Would you like to have a seat? There are puppies."

Ashbringer sat on a cushion, and a few of the fluffy creatures climbed onto his legs. His joy was immense, but he looked somewhat shocked.

"So, this is what it's like. Real ones are terrified of me, because of the fire. It never got better, even now that I'm no longer a child who can't control his flames, and these pups are not afraid at all." He muttered.

"Just avoid squishing them. Little Butterfly didn't put much magic in them, so they're very fragile." Lotus warned.

Ashbringer nodded. "If you damage an illusion too much, it breaks. I understand. But they feel so real, it's incredible. The power of a Domain ability can't be underestimated."

The others came upstairs while the new smith was playing with puppies, and Karl did the introductions, then remembered to remind Davis that they didn't need a smith anymore unless Ashbringer wanted an apprentice.

As happy as he was, Karl couldn't see him turning down the job.

"Is there anything else before I head home for the day? The shop is closed, and now that the ladies are back, I can close the gate on my way out." The Fallen Angel asked politely.

Ashbringer brought out the sword he had made earlier. "Bring this to the Auction on behalf of the Darklight Host. Standard registry for the next sale."

Davis put the sword in his inventory and bowed. "Of course, Overlord. The auction is next week, the day before Matriarch's Day."

Ashbringer nodded, and Karl frowned. "You know, I have no idea what day it is. I haven't seen a calendar in ages."

Ashbringer shrugged, and brought one out. "Most nations use their own, which is a nightmare. I don't have a local calendar either, but I have a Dragon Calendar, which the Priestesses should know."

He had been marking off days, and Karl rapidly flipped through the pages when he realized what one they were on.

"Every single one of us missed our birthdays." He realized.

Tessa looked at the current date on the calendar and nodded. "You're right. We got so caught up in other stuff, that we forgot. However, I'm not claiming that one. So it doesn't count."

Loros giggled. "You know, you don't actually avoid getting older if you just pretend your birthday never happened."

"But it's a big one. I've just turned twenty." Tessa explained, which made Ashbringer laugh.

"I remember my hundredth birthday, I didn't want to acknowledge it at all. I was still a young Demon, how could I be more than a century old? Now, I only feel young when I am near the forge. But at least I still look the part." He joked.

Lotus nodded. "That is true. You don't look any older than I am."

Ashbringer frowned at the comment. "Aren't you like twelve?"

"Hey! I'm nineteen. I'm just short. With a baby face."

The demon shrugged. "I'm bad with Dragonkin ages. I thought that you were at least a few years younger than the Cat Demons."

Karl smiled. "I should likely warn you, now that you're one of us. These forms are a transformation spell. Not our actual appearance."

Ashbringer looked intrigued, so both Karl and Dana changed forms, while Ophelia chose to remain as a Werebear. The bear was her, and she was the bear. The human form had become secondary in her mind. When it was a permanent passive activation, what was the difference?

Ashbringer nodded when he saw Dana's form, then looked confused as he sniffed at Karl.

"You look mostly human. I think. But you don't smell like one. Not at all."

"I have a special constitution. I don't know if that counts as a change of species, but my bones are Void Iron, and my blood is metallic." Karl explained.

"That doesn't sound very human to me. But I don't have a name for the species either, so I guess you're just a Karl." Ashbringer was surprisingly casual about the revelation, but Loros was poking at Karl's arm, reminding him that he hadn't told any of the others.

"Interesting. It's like a hybrid Demon. No special name, just a unique existence. If I had to guess, I would say you're more Elemental than human. Your whole presence feels like Void Iron." She agreed.

"That's settled then. I'm a Karl. And I will be in mostly Cat Demon form."

Then, Karl shifted back a half second before Dana did the same and settled down on his crossed legs to occupy his lap before stealing a puppy.

Chapter 805 Visitor Friendly

For the next three days, the shop remained closed, and all of the crafters worked on building a new stock for the store.

A few times a day, locals would come to sit on the benches along the wall, letting the magic of the Altar in the backyard heal them of whatever illness they had contracted. As the shop was closed, it would be rude for them to simply walk around the back of the house to find the source of the magic, but it was commonly known that if you were unwell and went to sit in the yard, you would be healed.

On the second afternoon, Lotus went to the market square in the Redwood Sprawl, and spent the afternoon as a Healing Tree, while Tessa cooked a free meal for the needy, and a group of City Guards watched over them.

The guards had learned that anywhere in the Darklight Host property was just as good for the healing effect. So, if they stepped inside the gate and out of sight during the lunch break of their shift, it would eliminate all the sore and stiff muscles that they had accumulated.

Soon, the Guard Commanders would stop them from doing it while on duty. But for now, they could at least get a refreshing break while they were stationed at the gate.

Lotus had even grown a picnic bench out of wood for them to sit at, right in the corner by the gate, where their boss wouldn't be able to see them, but they would only be two steps from their station.

Warriors at Monarch and Overlord Rank could easily hop the wall, and the wards wouldn't keep them from leaving, even in the event of an emergency.

Each day, Dana, Tessa and Ophelia went to the dungeon with Rae and Thor, bringing back loot for the smithy.

On the fourth morning, the ache in Dana's body had subsided enough that she was willing to try the altar again. She could feel the restrained pressure of having hit the bottleneck now, a different sensation than the feeling of being at the peak, which she had mistaken for it before.

The Overlord Rank mana from the altar flooded her body, pushing the Royal Rank energy out, the same as last time. But this time, when she began trying to integrate it with her body, she felt something change. A subtle shift that made it easier to integrate the energy, and the relief that came with not needing to reduce the density and quality nearly as much as she had to the first time.

Her rank broke through to Monarch, and her mana capacity soared, refilled and refreshed by the healing magic emitted by the totem, even as she depleted its stored mana.

Tessa pulled her into a hug, and Thor gave her an envious look. He still couldn't feel the bottleneck to the Overlord Rank, but he was hoping to get ahead again and be the first of his siblings to advance.

Well, the second. But Little Butterfly didn't count. The Butterfly started at Overlord.

That change had immensely improved the quality of life in the spaces, with the higher quality of mana, which was even recharging Thor's pond. Previously, the Holy Stones were of too low quality to do more than just make the water comfortable. But now, they were actively glowing with Holy Power again, and the golden stones were beginning to turn to a pure white. Thor liked the colour change, it contrasted well with his scales.

Sister Remi was getting incredibly close to advancing, with her Alchemy work improving her mana quality faster than even escorting the herd through the Dungeon improved Thor's own power.

It was possible that she might be the next one to advance, but Sister Rae hid her power as easily as she hid her body, so it might not be so easy.

The only one he was sure about was Cara, who spent most of her days playing in the illusionary city. She was still growing larger, but her power wasn't growing as fast as the others.

Karl wasn't too concerned. Soon enough, they would either hit the bottleneck or be forced to advance. Simply being on the Dragon Isles was increasing the mana density of his spaces at a rapid rate, and now that both Karl and the Butterfly were Overlords, the quality change was immense.

A new space was beginning to form, but Karl was deliberately keeping it fairly small, as he could force the majority of the energy into the other spaces for now. Once they advanced, he would have to even them, but a tiny Overlord Space was still considered to be the superior state by the System. So, it was no mental strain to leave it the way that it was. He just hoped that everyone would progress smoothly.

With their bloodlines changed so much, or being so unknown, it was impossible to tell.

That day, the group was back much earlier than usual, and in a great mood. "The Dana's Golems are very strong now, and her Guardian got a new attack skill." Rae explained.

"Oh, that is wonderful. More Monarchs definitely makes the fight easier."

Rae piled the trash loot in the corner of the forge, where Ashbringer was working with Karl's Guardian. The Guardian was smelting all the Common Grade magical items into blocks of metal alloy, while the Demon was using his magic to make an ever-growing pile of identical blades from them. He made three

styles. Shortsword, broadsword and cutlass. Then, when he took a break, he brought them all up to the second floor, where someone would upgrade them.

Usually, it was Karl, but the alloy was only good to the Royal Rank, so upgrading them to the Commander Rank to sell in bulk to the trade caravans was a viable option as well.

So far, they had nearly two hundred such weapons made by Wendy, along with a huge pile of rings, bracelets, and wooden earrings.

Loros worked mostly with the Mana Jade for Karl to upgrade, but her stock was running low, and the material wasn't always available in town, as it was imported.

Karl's writing speed had immensely increased since he started doing Runecrafting.

Unfortunately, not in common.

But he could scribe a runic power passage on both sides of a sword in under fifteen seconds now.

As the weapons were stopping two full Ranks below him, he didn't even need to put effort in to complete them. But the shining silver mixed alloy with the glowing purple runes would quickly become a trademark of their shop.

Especially with Ashbringer putting the Darklight Host mismatched wings symbol, one demonic and one feathered, on the root of each blade.

"I think that we've got enough of the bulk merchandise. I am going to switch to higher grade alloys." The Demon suddenly announced.

"Alright. I am fine with that. Do you need me to send someone to get you more ore?" Karl asked.

Ashbringer shook his head. "The various alloys of the Uncommon and Rare items that were discarded are good enough for my work. But you should make a full set of accessories for everyone, including the staff. It would impress the customers."

Karl looked at the Monarch Ranked Mana Jade and nodded. "I can do that. It will only take a few minutes to tailor an existing themed set to everyone's skills. Is there anything in particular you would like?" Ashbringer considered it for a few seconds. "Skill Power and Strength should be good enough for most of them, but if you can add agility to the larger pieces, that would help my speed."

Karl made an approving gesture, then looked at the items that had been created. There was a thick golden chain that the Smith had made last night, and that would work out very well with a Fire Gem in it, inscribed with a skill.

He wasn't a mage, but surely Karl could grant him an ability that he would be able to use.

He had quite an affinity with the forge, so Karl decided that giving him a [Ghostfire Body] spell. That would be perfect.

Chapter 806 Gifts and a Show

That night, Karl stared at the pile of jewellery in his storage as everyone gathered for dinner.

The kitchen staff set out the meals, then joined them at the table. That was Karl's cue to start his presentation.

"I have made a set of jewels for everyone on the team. I would say matching, but all they have in common is their materials. Starting at the end on my left, we have all three Abbies. For you, I opted not to make rings, as you would have to take them off to work anyhow. Instead, I made bracelets that you can tuck under your clothes, earrings and an amulet. All of them have Skill Power, reduced energy cost and stamina regeneration on them."

He passed over the bags, then moved to Mick and Davis. "For the front of the house, I made two rings, two bracelets and an amulet. I know how Davis feels about earrings."

The Fallen Angel laughed. He always kept his hair pulled back because he hated the feeling of anything touching his ears.

"Similar to the others, they have Skill Power and reduced energy cost, but they also have increased strength on them, which will help you both while moving goods at work and if you are attacked. You're both capable enough of defending yourselves.

Then, Loros and Wendy, this set is identical to the set for the kitchen staff. I know that you like to work far too many hours a day, so the stamina regeneration in place of strength seemed like the best option.

Now, Ashbringer, I have a different item for you, as your powers are at the point where a little more Skill Power won't make a huge difference in your work. So, I have made you similar rings, with this necklace.

The fire Elemental Gem is inscribed with the [Ghostfire Body] Skill."

The big demon actually teared up a little as he took the bag and put the necklace on. His hair went from red to blue flames, and his eyes flickered to a striking azure, the colour of tropical seas.

Before Karl continued, he transferred the [Recall] skill to everyone in the room, then gave [Teleport] to Dana and Rae, who were the only ones that could use it.

"For the ladies, we have more practical items. Lotus, all of your items have lowered energy cost, increased healing and increased agility with mana storage. I heard how you keep trying to catch the wild Nekomata in town and failing."

Lotus giggled as she took the bag, and winked at him.

"I will catch one soon."

"Ophelia, I have put Skill Damage, Strength and Life on Hit on all of these items for you. And you have no idea how hard it was to get life on hit to work on a ring."

The berserker chuckled and put on the items, which vanished under the fur of her Werebear form. Apparently, the transformation hid equipped accessories, so they weren't damaged.

"Tessa, I thought about going with a layout similar to Lotus, but instead of increased healing, I went with increased Skill Power. Not as effective as a targeted buff, but more versatile, like the assistance of a Red Dragon Cleric."

Tessa equipped the white and red items proudly, while Dana waited impatiently.

"For Dana, I chose Reduced Energy Cost, Increased Skill Damage, Increased Skill Power, and mana storage, but I made a special amulet."

Karl passed it over, and Dana laughed as she realized that someone had carved her cat form in mage robes on the large, flat Wind Stone. The necklace didn't have any skill buffs at all on it. But what it did have was an immense amount of mana storage and regeneration. Just hanging it around her neck made her skin tingle with the amount of incoming mana. With this item on, she could spam full power skills through an entire battle.

The mood in the house was considerably improved that evening, and everyone went to the auditorium for Little Butterfly to put on a play for them.

Cara and the butterfly had been carefully picking out the next show options over the last few days, they had settled on a grand comedy.

Beasts of the Dragon Isles, by High Priest Gregory Stormchaser.

Ashbringer looked over at Karl as everyone arranged their cushions for the show.

"Is there a reason that we're watching an illusionary nature documentary?" He whispered.

"It is twelve hundred pages and fully illustrated. Plus, I think that guy got attacked by nearly every known species. I swear, he has the worst luck I've ever seen on a Nature Cleric."

They only played the first two hours before everyone was ready to head to bed, but Karl could sense the butterfly's satisfaction. That show was fun to put on.

It still didn't talk at all, except through its illusions, and Karl couldn't sense clear thoughts from it. At least not in the conventional sense. It was almost like the butterfly was always asleep, and the Illusionary world was its dream reality.

Much different from the other beasts, but Karl had realized that there was potential to the [Illusionary Domain] spell beyond making a hidden city for them to relax in. He could use it to make solid illusionary tools, mock up dress plans for Rae, or even just create a mannequin for her to work with that was identical to the real person.

But their peaceful days ended rapidly the next morning when Karl had the Gargoyles open the gates and change the sign to open. Within minutes, a flood of merchants had descended upon the shop again, looking for anything that they could get.

Today, they had a plan for them.

"Bulk sales of Royal and Monarch Rank items other than weapons will be limited today, unless you have made prior arrangements. No more than five per customer. However, we have a large selection of Commander Rank jewellery available.

Plus, we have a large assortment of potions, medicinal products and the next auction will have a few of our Ranking items available." Davis announced.

"Isn't that tomorrow?" One of the merchant vessel Captains asked.

"Indeed it is. You will know our pieces when you see them." Davis agreed.

"Now, who would like a selection of Royal Rank blades? All crafted by a grandmaster and artfully upgraded by a true Runemaster." Davis announced.

Not particularly powerful, but good for City Guards and mercenary guards.

Chapter 807 Bone Bear

Once the store had sold out again, and a new "Limited Stock" sign had been made, indicating that they only had whatever leftover jewellery hadn't been chosen by the morning rush and what the team had made that morning, things began to calm down in the shop, and Davis prepared to go home early.

He would be off the next day, as Matriarch's day was a City Holiday, and most shops that weren't food or present related would not operate at all.

Karl planned to open the shop for a while, but not stock more than the basics, just in case someone needed a last minute "Please Get Me Out of the Doghouse" gift.

From what Karl understood, the day was mostly an exchange of chocolates from the women to their desired men, and then a date night where they would take the lead.

Mick could watch the shop for the rest of the day, as most of the items were not high ticket items, and Davis needed to drop off the latest Overlord Rank creation by Karl and Ashbringer at the Auction, which started early the next morning.

Remi had reserved a few boxes of potions for regular sales, and the girls had put out a dozen wooden rings for both mage and warrior types, but that was about all that was left in the shop for the rest of the day.

Those were going quickly to the steady stream of regular customers from the city, especially the potions. Everyone wanted to be at their best for the holiday, so an emergency healing potion as well as a recovery potion were a great insurance measure.

Just having them with you could turn a minor disaster into a touching memory.

Then, just before Karl was going to have the Gargoyles close the gate, a middle-aged mage in the same uniform as the Academy man who had custom ordered wands entered the shop.

"Good Sir, might you know where to find the Darklight Host Guild House?" He asked.

"You're standing in it. What can we help you with?" Karl replied with a smile that must have shown too much tooth, as the man looked concerned, and he was some sort of partially skeletal monster species, not a Demon as far as Karl could tell.

Upon closer look, Karl realized that it was actually just a bone protrusion that covered half his face like a mask, with a horn at the top. He wasn't undead.

"The Governor of Lared City would like to invite you to the Academy to give lessons on Runecrafting. You see, we have it as a course, but nobody actually has the skill. So, what we can teach students is limited." The mage asked.

Karl frowned. "My time is rather limited, and I have a lot to do here. Attending an Academy hundreds of kilometres from home for an extended period of time simply isn't feasible."

The mage sighed. "I was afraid that you would say that. I don't suppose that you would have a skill book to teach the art, would you?"

Karl shook his head. "But I can make one for [Apprentice Runesmithing]. That's a primer to the art, and far more people can use it. However, it will take a significant amount of time to create."

But Remi had other ideas as she appeared beside him.

"Didn't your school year just end? Does that mean you're on a break? Why don't you send the teacher here, and we can teach them the skill, then they can teach others? Even if it's just introductory, it would be something. They would be able to at least make the items work." She offered.

The mage considered that for a few seconds, his eyes flickering left and right as he paid attention to something else, possibly reading System Messages.

"Alright. If you can provide introductory skills to our instructors, it would be appreciated. Two juniors, one for armour and one for practical applications, will be here in just a moment." He explained.

Karl shrugged. "Alright. Can you explain the courses? If they're too similar, it would be the same subset skill. You see, the subset skill which I taught my apprentices is Runesmithing. That's not the same as a Rune Priest, a Runic Alchemist, or a Runic Architect." Remi did her best not to laugh as Karl started making up classes.

Then she realized that if he mixed skills, he probably could make those different specialties with the Runes, and the students would be somewhat limited by their initial path.

Remi personally tended towards Runic Alchemist, as she was short on books to discover all the recipes she wanted, so she just imbued something close to what she actually wanted to create with Runes, using Karl's [Runecrafter] skill.

Just as the beasts could share skills that Karl was compatible with, the opposite was also true. And once he learned the [Pack Affinity] skill, it became much easier to share skills from Karl back to herself.

Karl just didn't know many skills and spells that didn't come from them.

She should tell someone that Rae now knew how to [Teleport]. That was probably important information for them to have. But she could remind them of that new function later, they were doing a thing now.

"You know Runic Alchemy? I thought that you were just a Rune maker?" The man asked.

"Technically, Remi here has mastered Runic Alchemy. I have no Alchemical skills, I am purely a Rune Master. But she has become quite adept with Alchemy, and creates the potions for our shop." Karl explained.

Remi handed the man a potion, and he stared at it in confusion, then cast a spell on it to examine it more closely.

"Indeed, it does have clusters of empowered Runes in the solution. That is incredible. What is the potion for?"

{Reversing receding hairlines.} Remi replied happily.

The Mage looked offended, then intrigued. "Really? It can reverse receding hairlines? How powerful is it?" He asked.

Remi shrugged. {Monarch Rank. It's not fully tested, though.}

"How much is this potion?" He asked curiously.

{The materials cost six silver, so it sells for a gold coin.} Remi explained.

The man nodded and handed her a coin, then downed the potion.

Slowly, hair grew on the top of his head, and all over the side of his face not covered by a bone plate, then down his arms.

{Wait, was that supposed to happen? I swear, it wasn't supposed to add hair in new places, but I don't have any hair to test it on.} Remi mused.

The mage looked confused, then understanding lit his eyes and he smiled. He took out a small mirror and began to examine himself, lowering his hood and opening his robes to show that he was almost completely furred.

"That is magnificent. My species starts out completely furry, except our mask bone. But as we age, we lose it until we're completely hairless. I look like a young Bone Bear again."

Karl would have never guessed that the man's species was called Bone Bear, given the hairless state that he arrived in.

Remi was pleased with her work, though. {Just don't do anything unethical in dating groups.}

Chapter 808 Professional Students

The Mage was still admiring his fur in the mirror when a Portal opened on the street, and a small group of mages entered the courtyard with cautious glances at the Gargoyles.

They had tried to travel straight into the yard, but the deterrent force of the Gargoyle spell had forced them to relocate, and now all of the statues were glaring at them. The ones from the back of the house had even come to the front to see who the audacious intruders were.

Once they were assured that these people were just rude enough to want to show up in the middle of someone's lawn, the Gargoyles returned to their posts. That let the mages relax a little, but left them with profound questions about who had done the enchantments on this Guild house and their level of paranoia. A dozen Gargoyles for such a small property was overkill. Even the most contested of Noble Houses would either have two at the gate or four on the corners of the roof, so they could watch the whole perimeter.

"Department head... who are you? Where is Department Head Nalek?" One of the new arrivals asked.

"I am Nalek, you idiot. Look at my name with your interface. The Naga Queen here produced a new hair regrowth formula so powerful that it works even for a Bone Bear.

But that's not the important part. The Rune Master here is unwilling to travel, but was willing to take teachers as apprentices for the break so that he could teach them the basics of one of the Runic Arts." Nalek insisted.

The four new arrivals took down their hoods, revealing long blonde hair and extended pointy ears that could only be Elven, or a similar Fae species.

They didn't have the beauty that Karl associated with the Elves, but it seemed rude to mention that, especially if they were actually another species that regularly got slandered as ugly elves.

"I am Moira, and this is my partner, Mash. That is Dala, and her Guardian, Derek. What arts might you be able to teach? We were chosen because we don't yet have a trade skill." The self-appointed leader of the new arrivals asked.

"I can offer Runesmithing, Runic Alchemy or, if you're compatible, Rune Priest. Runic Architecture is also an option, but more strongly attuned to Dwarven construction."

The four all gave identical disgusted looks, and Karl became quite certain they were at least part Elf.

Then, he realized that all his Elven knowledge came from one trip to an Elven village, and the children's stories of the Golden Dragon Nation, which had neither Elves nor Dwarves living there in the modern era. So, it might just be a regional issue.

Moira and Dala nodded to each other, the Moira spoke again.

"I will choose Runesmithing, while Dala will take Runic Alchemy."

Karl nodded. "And the other two? Mash and Derek, was it?"

Dala frowned. "They will do what we tell them to do."

Ophelia smirked, and Tessa turned away to laugh. That was quite the relationship they had. Or perhaps they had all misunderstood, and it wasn't four teachers, but two and their assistants? The phrasing of the introduction sounded like they might be married. Mash smiled at Karl and shrugged. "I have been Instructor Moira's Research Partner for over a century now. The same is true for Derek, though he is officially Lady Dala's Guardian, appointed by her family."

Dala sighed, and chose to elaborate. "We teach in the ladies' academy. There are no male teachers in our faculty. Nalek is the department head in charge of Runic Studies, but he primarily works on the male side of the Academy. Will that be an issue?"

Karl shook his head. "Both of my existing apprentices are female, but I don't discriminate. If you're all here to learn, I will ensure that you learn. Now, I suppose that I should make an employment and non-compete contract."

The five instructors immediately began to panic, and Nalek took out a stack of papers. "Overlord, if you would not mind, we do have a standardized employment contract with us."

It seemed that the Cat Demons had a reputation in the neighbouring nations as well.

Karl set the contract out on the table, and memories of doing paperwork at the mines came rushing back to him. He might not know many fancy things, but he was pretty good at reading legalese when it came to contracts.

Karl read through the contract, and took out a pen to strike a few clauses that were blatantly in favour of the Academy, including a seemingly unlimited requirement for him to make "Demonstration materials" for their future students.

He also struck out their attempt to claim a portion of his profits after he had taken them as employees. No way was he going to pay continual royalties in perpetuity to a couple of mages who would only work for him for a month or two.

Then he struck out the requirement that he teach them the "Full Extent of his skills". That simply wasn't going to happen.

Finally, as a cheeky little addendum, he added a clause that the mine had loved to put in employment clauses. Their personal non-compete clause.

[Should the contracted use knowledge, tools or materials provided by the contractor to act against the Contractor in the future, the Contractor reserves the right to take any and all appropriate punitive or legal actions to nullify the threat to their operations or mitigate losses in profit.]

In practice, the mine operators used the clause to disappear troublemakers without legal repercussions. But Karl could use it to keep them from trying to set up Rune crafted item shops to compete with him.

[Or to remove their heads to take back the knowledge.] Rae added.

Karl turned over the edited contract so that the Mages could look it over. They looked moderately annoyed at the clauses he had removed, but not surprised.

Eventually, Dala made a single stroke of her pen, and held up the contract for Karl to inspect.

She had removed 'or' from between punitive and legal actions.

That greatly changed the meaning of the phrase, but Karl smiled and nodded in agreement. The contract still didn't state what nation's laws the actions would be taken under, and he was certain that he could find one who approved of any definition he wanted to assign to the words 'legal action' if there were issues in the future.

Chapter 809 Misinformation Causes Delays

The four teachers signed the document, then Karl put his signature on the pages, and the paper altered, removing the struck clauses, and adding his own in the same writing as the magical contract took effect.

Nalek patted them on the shoulder, then turned to the door. "I will open a portal to bring you back two days before classes start. Now, I will let you all get to work."

Karl examined the mages, who were all Monarchs. "The Academy really went all out this time. I will admit that you're a bit old to be proper apprentices, and you've already spent a lot of time researching your chosen subject. Or at least, I hope that you have." Karl began.

Derek laughed quietly, and Dala glared at Karl. "I honestly don't know how much they expect you to be able to teach me."

Karl focused on Remi's [Alchemy] skill and [Runecrafting], merging them to create a [Runic Alchemy] skill.

Then he transferred the [Apprentice Runic Alchemy] skill to the two half Elves.

They were shocked into silence, so Karl took the opportunity to transfer [Apprentice Runesmithing] to the other two. If everyone was shocked silent at once, he shouldn't have to repeat himself.

"Remind me again why I thought it was a good idea to agree to this?" Karl whispered to Dana, who laughed at him.

"I have no idea. Maybe you thought they would send you cute young apprentices?"

Remi nodded in agreement. {Cute apprentices are best.}

"Alright, now that you have the basic skills, we can get started on your training. Lady Remi will be teaching the Runic Alchemy introduction. Please let me know if you have issues with the System translation of her lessons, as she only speaks Serpent. I will take care of the Runesmithing lessons for the day, as Overlord Ashbringer has created a wealth of blades for them to learn the basics on. The dungeon trash is good to Royal Rank, so not to the maximum of your powers. But we can ease you into that as you learn the principles."

A huge portion of what Karl knew about enchanting weapons actually came from the Dwarven Runecrafting book, and not the skill. So, while Runesmithing would teach them the language, and how the skill worked, the intricacies of compound Runes were not included.

As researchers, they should understand some of that already. They would have seen it on relics.

Ashbringer brought a whole bundle of weapons up to the second floor, and Karl created a floor to ceiling chalkboard with [Earth Barrier]. "Alright, we will start with the six most common runic strings that are used, and then we will start on the lesson of compounding." Karl began.

Moira sighed, and took out a piece of chalk.

She wrote a set of runes on the board while Karl watched.

"See, I know all this." She insisted.

"You got the stroke order wrong here, here, here, here and here. These two runes are missing a stroke, and this one is at the wrong angle. It means a powerful erection, not a powerful skill.

Now, while that is a fun rune, it's not what we're hoping for in a weapon." Karl explained.

Moira stared at him in shock, and Karl gestured to a blade. "If you think I'm lying, go ahead and try. But if you mess it up, you have to help Ashbringer hammer the incorrect inscriptions back out of the blade. That too is part of the art of Runesmithing."

The proud instructor began the work, doing them exactly as she had written them on the board, while Mash watched over her shoulder.

Moira smiled smugly as she inserted power into the runes, then gasped in horror as she realized there was an ever-growing bulge in the pants of the man beside her.

Karl smirked as he began to speak. "Wonderful. You now have a sharp-edged reproductive assistant toy. If you had gotten the runes a bit more correct, it would have a range longer than contact. Mash, if you could move back a step, the effect should fade.

Now, are you ready to listen to me and to the knowledge of the language that the skill inserted into your brain? You should know how to do this correctly, just think about the skill."

Mash came forward and paused for a moment with a look of intense concentration on his face. Then he wrote the basic runes on the board, very nearly correct.

"Close. Only a few errors here and here. Practice those on the board, and then we can move on to compounding them together with basic modifiers for distance, strength and duration.

Once you have mastered that, we will start on the effects of varying engraving depths on the outcome." Loros and Wendy tried their hardest not to laugh as they worked. They had known nothing coming in, so they didn't have to unlearn decades of bad habits and incorrect knowledge to understand what Karl was teaching them.

Compared to that, these newbies were going to have a very hard time.

Meanwhile, in the illusionary city, where Remi had taken her students to work, things were going much more smoothly. They weren't trying to unlearn bad habits, they were treating the art as new Alchemy recipes that used Runes as an ingredient. It had only taken Remi one demonstration potion for Dala to

understand her skill, and now the Alchemy teacher was fully engrossed in the lessons on adding runes to a simplified potion mixture to make functional replacements for missing ingredients.

The advantage of the city was that there was no sun. It was always the same twilight, no matter the hour of the day. So, the students would never notice when night came, and she could simply work them until they dropped.

If potions filled every bit of their brain, they should begin to learn at something resembling a reasonable pace. She just had to keep them from distractions.

It was a brilliant plan.

Well, almost brilliant, Remi realized once she started to get hungry. She would still have to take breaks to let them eat, and that would give them back their sense of time.

Chapter 810 Matriarch's Day

While the teaching did slow down progress, Karl still had enough time to do some work before the end of the shift, and then everyone would be free to do as they liked the next day.

Matriarch's day was one of the biggest holidays in the city of Drodh, and everyone slept in, knowing that the shop would be closed for the day.

The teachers from Lared Academy were the first to get motivated, and started right into working on what they had learned the day before, ensuring that it was memorized and that their previous wealth of slightly incorrect knowledge wasn't hindering their future progress.

The next was Lotus, and once Lotus was up, everyone was up. Mostly because she went knocking on their doors to see who wanted to come with her to get chocolate.

Dana had informed Karl that they had already chosen chocolate gifts for Matriarch's day during their trips to the dungeon. But now that the day was upon them, the chocolates would be on sale, and the city was decorated for a festival.

"Give us ten minutes." Karl called when he heard Lotus coming to his door.

"No, it's time to go!" She complained.

"We really aren't suitable for going outside right now. Let us shower and we will join you." Karl retorted, while Dana laughed quietly and turned on the shower in the ensuite.

Once the shower was over, they both transformed back into [Bestial Form] and Dana picked out a powder blue Hanfu dress that Rae had made, while Karl went for a black silk shirt, unbuttoned halfway down the chest the way that the Casino Guard's had been. With white pants and pocket square to contrast with his fur, Karl thought that it looked quite stylish. Until Dana took one look at it and laughed.

"I keep expecting you to use a sleazy pickup line on me when I see that outfit." She giggled.

"Oh? Perhaps you would change your mind after a few drinks? You and me, back in my bedroom?" Karl replied in a rumbling drawl that triggered every amorous instinct in Dana's transformed body.

"That's cheating. No abusing species triggers. Plus, we're already in your bedroom, and Lotus is waiting for us to get dressed." Dana retorted.

"You sound like you're already dressed. I am waiting for you to stop flirting." Lotus shouted through the door.

Karl left his outfit unchanged and stepped out to the main room.

Lotus took one look at him and looped a large gold chain around his neck. Then another one before she nodded in satisfaction.

"Now the look is complete." Tessa smirked when she saw Karl with Dana on his arm, but Ophelia gave them an enthusiastic thumbs up.

Thor came out of his space in a fancy black and gold suit that Rae had tailored for him, complete with a gold embroidered cape, which was a bit overkill for a city as warm as Drodh.

But he did look very Noble.

They headed out into the street, and Lotus looked down at their feet. "Hey, why aren't you wearing shoes?" She asked.

Karl shrugged. "They're not comfortable with these feet, but I have [Eternal Lightning] active anyhow, so I'm not going to pick up a nail or anything."

Karl smirked at Ashbringer, who was also not wearing shoes, as he had hooves. Well, he might have shoes, the horseshoe type, but Karl didn't see them, and it didn't sound like metal on cobblestone streets when he walked.

The Smith had Loros on one arm and Wendy on the other, while Mick was opposite Lotus on Ophelia's arms.

The guards shook their heads in dismay as they saw the Darklight Host leaving the house. That guild was a source of envy for the entire guard detachment.

With powerful Overlords, skilled crafters, rare skills and all the beauties they could want. In fact, they had so many that the Werebear was claiming some, and she was one of the beauties herself. They might be demons, but everyone knew bears gave the best hugs.

The coffee shop on the next block had hot chocolate and chocolate croissants on special for the holiday, so that was their first stop of the day.

Each table had a list of the day's events on it, in case customers weren't aware.

[Noon - Address by the Lord

1230 - Castle Gates open for public tours

1400 - Fool's Walk Debutante Parade

1600 - VIP Garden Party at Castle

2100 - Fireworks show begins]

Karl gestured to the sheet. "Are so many people invited that the VIP garden party is noteworthy?"

The server laughed. "Most of us like to go to watch all the celebrities enter."

One of her coworkers giggled. "She means the Guard Captains in their formal best. Anyone Overlord Ranked and higher is invited with a plus one. So, if you gentlemen would like to choose a date, you could attend and enjoy the Castle life for a night."

Karl shook his head. "I believe that we have plans for the evening. But we will go watch the fireworks. Is there a best spot? Or just fly up and pick a good angle?"

The server looked at them curiously. Karl definitely did not have wings. But if the Overlord said he could fly, she would accept it as truth.

"Oh, should we have someone enter the parade? We've got young ones." Lotus suggested.

The staff began to laugh. "Priestess, you misunderstand. There are more women than men in the city. The debutante parade is for single young men to show off in an attempt to find a mate. I don't think that you have anyone qualified."

Loros nodded happily. "It sounds like it will be great eye candy. We should get some drinks and go watch after we tour past the Castle. There will be a big party on the docks as well, with roast meat and rum."

Karl had a summon premonition of a drunk healing tree, then decided that maybe the docks were a great idea.

"We should at least listen to the Lord's Address, as most of us haven't heard it before. The holiday is for his wife, so he has to have something touching to say." He suggested.

"See you on the way back, coffee lady!" Lotus cheered as they got ready to leave.

"See you soon, Priestess. Next time, you should try the peppermint Hot Chocolate with whipped cream. It's a holiday favourite."