

The First Legendary Beast Master #Chapter 81 Bloodbath Spider - Read The First Legendary Beast Master Chapter 81 Bloodbath Spider

Chapter 81 Bloodbath Spider

Karl looked down at the egg. The Bloodbath Spider was an urban legend. They were an invasive predator from a nation to the East, and survived entirely on blood, like a mosquito. But unlike the common mosquito, they grew to the size of a small car and had mandibles that could tear through steel to get to what they wanted.

They were supposed to have been hunted to extinction, but it seemed that there were still some hiding out here in the wilderness.

Karl was still admiring the soft egg when the truck made an abrupt turn, circling back the way that they had arrived from, and Jodi increased his speed.

"You know that it is an egg, right? It's not hatched." Karl reminded the playboy.

"Yeah, you say that now, but where is mother Bloodbath? They lay their eggs on the strands of their web. If Hawk came back with a spider egg on him, he broke a strand of the web as he flew over to get the other egg.

They don't lay many eggs at a time because it would overpopulate an area too quickly, so they're probably going to be very protective." He replied, beginning to panic.

"The mother can bite through the armoured roof of this truck." Daniel whispered to Karl, explaining the situation more clearly.

They had four fully trained and high-ranking Elites, but precisely zero who fancied walking home after their car was demolished by a giant spider.

Karl moved the egg back into the secondary Beast Space. If they didn't find another option, this Bloodbath Spider hatchling would do very well.

It looked like the spider and the Lightning Cerro might be his only options if they were picking today because Jodi was headed straight back to town, and he wasn't even slowing down when they got near the river, where the other options on the original list should be.

"Well, it appears that I've got two choices. How about I hold them both, and see which one I can get to hatch and bond first?" Karl offered as the town walls came back into sight.

"Two is enough." Jodi agreed.

Alice looked ready to disagree with him, but the other two looked like they were on his side with the plan to not spend any more time in the wilderness after the day that they had. They had only run into a few predators, but they were the worst possible ones to anger.

At the very least, they would wait one night before going back out again.

The Academy had given permission for the trip, and they didn't have a set schedule, so they could stay out here for a week if they needed it. As long as the answer of whether Karl could bond another monster was clear, they could take all the time that they needed.

Once they were both safely set in the secondary beast space, the two eggs seemed to be coexisting without any issues, but they couldn't be moved to Hawk's space anymore, which made Karl wonder if he was going to have to move one of them out the minute that the other one hatched and bonded.

There was one easy way to find out. Karl began to meditate and pour energy into the space, which flooded into the eggs.

They were both immature eggs, though of more powerful monsters than the Windspeed Hawk, and the change was immediately noticeable.

The embryos in the eggs began to develop at a massively increased rate as the space increased in size to accommodate them. He should probably pick one or the other well before they hatched, but both were growing so well that Karl didn't want to change anything yet.

There was always the possibility that he could have multiple beasts in the space once they were bonded. Perhaps this second space was for unbonded pets in waiting?

The first to hatch was the Cerro, with small horns smashing through the eggshell, and a sense of mingled joy and relief flooding Karl's mind as the small reptile bonded with him.

As Hawk had done, the beast began to grow rapidly out of its awkward newborn phase, but the Cerro wasn't as helpless as a baby bird, and he was screaming for food already.

Karl focused, and found that he could move the creature to Hawk's space, but he felt like a visitor there. It wasn't his space, but the small prehistoric looking beast began to happily graze on the imaginary grass that Karl had made, and its body fleshed out with the influx of energy.

So, Karl kept adding more energy to the second space with the Bloodbath Spider egg, which was still growing and maturing.

"What are you up to? We're here." Alice asked.

"I need to focus. I think that the eggs can both be hatched and bonded." Karl muttered, not opening his eyes.

"Alright, just follow me to a hotel room and you can finish your work." Alice instructed as Jodi parked the truck.

The others went to talk to the staff, while Alice led Karl to a room, then closed and bolted the door while she waited there with him.

"If that spider hatches, and you can't bond it, you will need one of us here to keep you safe. It will be weaker than you, but they're fast, and they can dig inside the skin, which makes victims panic." She explained.

Karl hadn't considered that possibility. If he couldn't bond it, he likely couldn't keep it in that space either, but he wasn't sure that either he or Hawk could handle it running wild in the hotel room. A tiny spider running loose would be a nightmare to catch, but Alice was a mage, so she likely had some way to deal with it.

Karl forged ahead and kept the progress going on the spider egg in the secondary space, growing it to the size of a baseball, with a transparent membrane that held a large black spider inside. It was almost ready to hatch, and the space had been expanded by quite a bit, though the quality of it still seemed very low compared to the first space.

In retrospect, that was the wrong course of action. But Karl had no way of knowing that until the egg hatched, and the pain hit his mind.

Chapter 82 Mistakes Were Made

The moment that the spider egg hatched, the two Beast Spaces in his mind were nearly torn apart, with a third trying to form, and the imbalance between the complete space and the incomplete one was not allowing them to find a common distribution rate to form the third space.

"I need high-energy food, whatever you can get." Karl informed Alice with a pained wince, feeling like his head was going to explode.

"What is happening?" The mage asked as she sent a message on her phone to the others.

"Both of them hatched too close together for me to equalize their living spaces. It is trying to create a third space in my mind, but the second is not ready to be split, and the first can't give up the energy that it already has. I need that energy." Karl demanded.

"It's on its way, just hold on for a few more seconds, and we will get you something." Alice explained.

The reserves for Hawk were almost all raw meat, which Karl would have a horrible time digesting, but there was some roasted chicken in there, which Karl pulled out as a stopgap measure until he could get something with more energy.

"Does it have to be meat?" Alice asked frantically.

"Anything with an Awakened energy level or better." Karl replied as the energy influx from the chicken flowed through his body.

Jodi rushed in with a bag from the truck, and began pulling out supplies until he got to the prepackaged meals.

"These are all Ascended Rank meat for the main course, and the other dishes should be decent. They're made for Commander Rank Elites on energy-intensive missions." He explained as he tore the first pack open and handed it to Karl with a spoon.

A cold ration pack was not exactly fine dining, but it was edible enough, and the energy flow was enough that the immediate pain was fading, while a sense of mental stress was settling in as a third space began to form.

Both of the hatchlings were drawing immense amounts of energy from him, and even after Karl did his best to feed them what power he could absorb, it wasn't enough.

"I need monster blood and large amounts of magical plants for the new beasts. I think that things will stabilize once they are fed and not drawing energy straight from me." Karl explained, while otherwise completely focused on feeding himself and keeping his focus well enough to stabilize the newly formed space.

Magical plants were something that they had plenty of, since the plants didn't have to be edible to humans. Daniel brought back what appeared to be an entire hay bale, while a few minutes after that, Jodi returned with a five gallon pail full of blood.

The shrub was put into the newest area, as the baby Cerro seemed to be the more placid of the two, while the Bloodbath spider took its name literally, and accidentally fell off the rim of the bucket into the blood before climbing back out to drink more carefully.

"You need to keep eating." Alice advised him as Karl began to relax.

That made him open his eyes, and look at his hand as he reached out for more food.

"What the hell? What happened to me?" He gasped as he looked at the skeletal thin arm in front of him.

"You tell us. You suddenly started to wither, and it's still ongoing, though not as fast as it was at first. You look like hell." Alice replied.

Karl dug into what looked like a set of plates from the buffet, piled high with whatever could be grabbed, and tried to form his thoughts.

"The monsters don't share a space the way that I expected them to, or rather, they can't. I didn't realize that until the third one hatched and bonded. It needed to form another mental space, and I wasn't prepared. It drew the energy it needed from me, and it looks like I barely managed to keep up.

If the beasts hadn't been hatchlings, they would have needed more energy to stabilize a space at their power level, and I would most likely be dead right now, or one of them would have broken free. There is a cap on the size, but not on the power density of the first space that I have reached. But there is a minimum requirement to properly bond a new pet, I know that now. One separate mental space, with as much or more stored energy than the creature being bonded has.

In the future, it would be best to keep going with hatchlings, unless I have time to form a space for them in advance and to stock it with massive amounts of energy. But right now, I need a lot of food for growing beasts, and to try to recover what was spent. I don't even know how long that will take. Have any of you ever seen anything like this before?" Karl explained.

Jodi frowned. "I have, but it was the result of a hostile spell, not backlash from an ability. It looks like there are dangers to overextending yourself in this way. But are the two new beasts really stable?"

Karl inspected the Beast Spaces. "Yes, they are stable, at least for now. They are going to need some time before they're ready to actually begin training, but they are stabilized."

"Then our priority is to get you back into functional shape. We will help you eat and try to regain energy tonight, and then in the morning we will determine if you need to be hospitalized until you can regain enough of the lost mass to be safely moved back to the Academy." Alice informed him with a pitying look on her face.

"I guess I had better get to work on my recovery then. What do we have for higher rank foods? I will let you know when it's too much for me to digest efficiently." Karl sighed.

"Start with this salad. It might taste awful, but it's the most potent in the group. It was prepared for us to recover quickly from injuries, so it has healing properties and a Commander Rank base." Alice offered.

Karl took the first bite, and energy flooded his system at a rate faster than anything he had ever experienced, then began to drain into all three of the Beast Spaces as fast as

he could eat. It took immense focus to keep some of that for his own body, but after a few bites, he was getting the hang of splitting the energy four ways.

The mental strain of the new spaces was diminishing as the energy influx became greater than the beast's need to draw from him in order to stabilize their early growth, but the pounding headache that Karl had was only getting worse. It felt like someone was kicking him in the skull from the inside, but he had no idea what he should do about it.

Then, after a few minutes, and three of the four salads, Karl found the reason. A new voice broke through the pain and whispered in his mind.

[This food is good. Is there more?]

Chapter 83 Thor

The placid voice was coming from the newest of the spaces in his mind, which was currently occupied by the Cerro, who was happily munching away on the plants as his body grew from its hatchling state.

[I will get you more before that runs out.] Karl agreed.

That was enough to reassure the creature, and with it the pressure on Karl's mind. At least, some of the pressure on his mind. The bond with the Bloodbath Spider was still not strong enough, and while the creature seemed happy with the situation that it was in, the bond between them still needed work until Karl could speak to it mentally and ensure that it wasn't going to escape and run rampant through the town.

Hawk had a habit of wandering out of the space anytime that he wanted, but Karl was fairly certain that he could keep the beasts in the space if he wanted to.

Once the bond was formed, they would obey his orders without too many questions, and asking that they stay inside was a simple enough request.

With the singular goal of stopping the pain in his head, Karl kept adding energy to the spaces, working to strengthen them while he rebuilt the damage that was done to his body as well as he could with the excess energy that he could spare from the process.

A few minutes later, a man in a white coat came into the room, carrying a large box full of various potions and assorted tools that Karl vaguely recognized as medical devices in his distracted state.

"He's stable, according to my skill, but he's got a long way to go. I will give him a regrowth potion, and I hope that your overseer will cover the cost. These things aren't cheap." The doctor informed the other Elites in the room.

Daniel laughed. "We were sent here directly by the Bureau of Elite Development. We can put it on the expense account, no need for a reimbursement filing."

That was the best news that the doctor had heard all day, and with that magic promise of a direct billing to the expense account, he was eager to break out all the best treatments to get the young student fully recovered from whatever mishap he had sustained.

"Might I ask what caused this? If I know, I might be able to treat it more effectively." The doctor asked.

"That's a fine question, and we really don't know the answer. He is a strange class marking, and he bonded a Windspeed Hawk type magical beast to him in order to gain power. On this outing, we wanted to see if he could add more monsters and expand his powers.

Well, it worked, and he added two, but there was some sort of backlash, it was too much mental strain, but then it started siphoning off his body as well." Alice explained.

"What two monsters?" The doctor asked.

"A Cerro, probably one of the smaller lightning adept varieties, and a Bloodbath Spider, both hatchlings." She explained.

"It is possible that the Bloodbath Spider was not getting what it needed, and it fed from the Elite's body instead. Did you find some food for it? Hatchlings are born hungry." He asked.

"We did. There is a lot of Awakened Quality blood for it and a smaller amount of Ascended because we weren't sure what it would be able to digest." Alice explained.

The doctor pulled another set of potions out and began to set up an IV drip for Karl, to make it easier to keep feeding him potions until he recovered.

"I suspect that a lot of the issue will be blood loss, and extreme dehydration. Did you say that the Cerro has lightning or Regeneration as its primary racial skill?" The doctor requested, with a notepad in his hands.

"We would assume Lightning, as they were the smaller variety at the nest, but it's freshly hatched, and we haven't seen the bonded animal's ability yet."

That was good enough for the Doctor, and he added more rapid healing medication to the bag, and an electrical insulator on the stand. One thing that he didn't want was for his expensive treatment to get shocked into uselessness if the monster broke free during treatment.

He needn't have worried so much about that particular pet. It was perfectly happy eating in the Beast Space, with little to no motivation to do anything else right now.

The Bloodbath Spider, on the other hand, was gluttoned on monster blood and bored, looking for something to do, while it was stuck in a featureless space with barely enough energy to be comfortable.

[I will add more features later, so that you can start making yourself comfortable.] Karl placated the spider.

[At least a tree to build my web in, something.] The spider complained, not understanding the intricacies of building the contents of the space.

Karl took a branch from the pile of food that they had brought into the room for him to feed his pets, and moved it into the fist sized spider's area, near the bucket of blood.

"That's a start." It sighed with relief, then set about making a nest in the branch, with stringers that ran to the bucket, so it didn't have to walk across the unnerving nothingness to get there.

An hour later, the doctor switched the medicines in the IV bag, and Karl's body began filling back out to something closer to his natural state. It wasn't a full recovery, but the Elites in the room were feeling a lot better about his chances of not only surviving this mishap but coming out better for it.

The two monsters that Karl had bonded would both grow up to be extremely powerful without any additional help, but the evidence showed that simply being bonded to Karl would help them grow to be smarter and stronger than usual in a much shorter time.

Between the Hawk, the armoured body of the Cerro, and the Bloodbath Spider, they would form a combination that very few Elites would be able to take down once they were fully grown.

Chapter 84 Physical Recovery Begins

The bond grew as Karl stabilized the spaces all through the next day, and after a few glasses of straight monster blood, they were beginning to make progress on returning his body to its normal state.

Currently, the feedback from the two new monsters wasn't great, and mostly it was them drawing from Karl and Hawk, who was also eating heavily to sustain the burden of their two rapidly growing hatchlings.

But already Karl could feel that the demand was decreasing as they grew in power, and soon it would reverse, with them beginning to strengthen his Awakened Grade physique.

The Bloodbath Spider in particular. It was born on the strong side of Awakened Rank, going by its physique, but nobody in the room really knew what its innate skill was.

It could tear apart an armoured car with its mandibles, and smoothly cut through monster flesh with the claws at the end of its legs, but pure power wasn't enough to explain its deadly reputation at its level.

Just after lunch, the best sign that the bonds were normalizing appeared. The Cerro, who insisted its name was Thor, after someone in the room had mentioned the mythical god of lightning, had settled in to sleep off a heavy meal, and Karl received a mental impression of a new power.

[Refreshing Lightning] Create a lightning barrier around the caster that damages enemies and increases healing speed.

"Thor's lightning isn't just lightning. It is a magical effect that also slightly increases healing speed. I just gained access to it, but I don't dare use it in bed and hooked up to the IV. At least not the first time." Karl informed the others.

Whoops of joy filled the small hotel room, and the weary Elites began to celebrate the fact that there didn't seem to be any lingering damage to Karl's body from the mishap.

"Now, we just need to find out what the ability of the Bloodbath Spider is, and we're set." Alice cheered.

Karl checked on the spider in his mind. It had gone from the size of a baseball to the size of a volleyball overnight, and it had consumed nearly a third of the bucket of blood that they had provided for it. But it was happily sleeping in the hammock it had made in the small branch it had been given, and wasn't ready to answer questions yet.

"Give it a bit longer. They're both sleeping it off, and I need to do some more strengthening of the spaces before they grow any more powerful.

The incredible body growth speed is great in theory, but I wasn't prepared to contain them, and I'm still worried that they will grow faster than I can keep providing a home for them. Hawk was good that way, his initial power level started low, and he grew with practice, but these two are growing powerful quickly without any training at all." He explained.

"That's fine, take all the time that you need. Should we get you more of the monster blood to drink?" Jodi asked, concern clear on his face.

"It's fine. I think that the initial lack was due to the spider, and once we got a bucket of blood in there for it, I just needed to replenish what I lost." Karl sighed.

That was completely unexpected, but they had gained valuable insights into the bonding process, and the possible side effects of bonding to something beyond your level.

The spider still hadn't made direct contact with his mind yet, though he could feel its curiosity about where it was and what Karl was. They were lone predators by nature and had only recently taken to protecting their young as their numbers dwindled. Before that, they were nomadic, and once they mated, the females would lay single eggs every few days as they travelled, spreading their clutch far and wide.

For most of the day, they all rested, moving past the excitement of the night before, and just before dinner, the doctor came to remove the IV stand and the needles from Karl's arm.

"It looks like you're healed well enough to be in the clear now. Not all Elites heal faster than normal, but you should be alright on your own, and you will just need some training to rebuild the muscle mass that you lost." The Doctor informed Karl with a professional gaze.

"Thanks Doc. I will get to that as soon as the headaches are gone, and I'm feeling less dizzy. I think it should be within a day or so. Possibly, right after dinner." Karl replied.

The doctor got back to tending to the rest of the frontier town, which Karl had learned was as much a military outpost as a town. They might not dress like it, but most of the townsfolk were low-level Elites, people who never made it past Common Grade, and who signed up to work for the Defence Department.

Like the Doctor, who could make various medicines, but nothing amazingly powerful by magical standards, they were still Elites, but doing the most dangerous sort of job by keeping the wild monsters restricted to the South and not moving into the more populated areas.

"Let me stand up, and I will see if this lightning is enough to help me recover." Karl suggested.

"Outside. Try the first time outside, in case you can't control it properly." Daniel reminded him.

The first few attempts to stand up were shaky, but Karl was feeling better by the step, and once they were out in the parking lot, he was ready to give the [Refreshing Lightning] a try.

Soft blue light crackled over his body, and Karl felt his body strengthening, while the sleeping Thor woke up for a moment to see who was under attack. Once it realized that it was just Karl healing himself, the newborn beast went back to sleep, secure in its small home and tired from the effort of growing so much.

"Impressive. The muscle mass is growing back at a notable rate, recovering from the damaged and dehydrated tissues, your skin is clearing up, and your pores are getting cleansed. You even smell faintly of ozone. It's a healing effect and a spa treatment in one." Jodi noted with glee.

"Unfortunately, I can't put it on anyone else. But I think it's going to be a fairly reliable defensive technique." Karl agreed.

Chapter 85 Physical Examination

The last thing that they needed to do to determine the usefulness of the ability was to test it. Alice raised a barrier in between them, and gestured toward it with her fist.

"With just the lightning up, give that a punch as hard as you can. It will tell us how your muscles are recovering, as well as if the lightning can already stand up to an Awakened Rank impact. If it can't, it will break around your fist when you hit the barrier." She explained.

Karl snapped a fast punch at the barrier, and frowned. His strength wasn't fully recovered, and the physical strength wasn't as high as he would have preferred, but the lightning crackled against the barrier, making it glow bright blue, and held firm.

"Well, it's an Awakened Rank ability, for certain. Karl will need to keep the lightning up as much as possible for a while, but the barrier is as good or better than that Awakened Rank training armour." Alice informed the others.

"Is it safe to touch? As in, can you sit down in a chair without scorching it?" Daniel asked.

Karl took a step back and saw the faint scorch marks where he was standing.

"I'm going with no. Even through my shoes, it's burning the ground. But it's not burning off my uniform, which is a big win for my dignity." Karl replied with a shrug.

"Yeah, best not to tempt fate. You aren't recovering as fast as the big Cerro or the Trice with their [Indestructible] innate ability, but it's still much faster than I had expected." Daniel agreed.

"I feel well enough to sit for a proper dinner now, so how about we go eat?" Karl suggested as he released the Refreshing Lightning ability.

[Eat?] A soft feminine voice hissed in his mind.

[Are you hungry for something different?] Karl asked delicately, hoping to make a good first impression on the spider.

[No, blood is life, life is power. I need a bigger nest before I lure prey.] She replied.

The spider reminded Karl of when Hawk was a baby, all about food. Always with the mice requests. Of course, if he hadn't had a massive growth spurt, those requests might not have stopped, but the focus on making the beast's situation right for comfortable eating was the same.

The group sat down to a proper dinner at a restaurant down the street, while the spider peered out of Karl's mind, content in its small nest, but intrigued by the world around them.

[They killed it and burned it? Why do they do that to the food?] The spider asked.

[For humans, it tastes better this way, and we can digest it more easily.] Karl informed her.

[Interesting. I will try some.]

Karl put a bit of steak in the Beast space, and the spider happily tore it apart before eating it in delicate bites that directly contrasted with the ferocity used to portion it.

[Not bad, it simulates the warmth of living food. Humans are strange, but smart. It is very tender, and they put something on it for flavour as well. I approve.]

Karl smiled at the response, and Alice gestured for him to share with the group.

"My new spider friend gives her compliments to the chef. She approves of making the meat hot and tender, as well as the seasoning." Karl explained.

"Does she have a name?" Alice asked.

Karl knew she was listening, so he waited while she came up with an answer.

[Even if you don't that is fine. I can help you come up with what you would like to be called later.] He soothed the spider.

[What should I be called? For I am the bringer of death, the one that all are fearful to speak of, the shadow that stalks the night and haunts the dreams of prey. I am power and stealth, what name could suit such a mighty being?]

Karl could sense the immense pride, but it was for her speech, and not for herself. She was very proud that she had come up with something good, and she had no concept of what an edgy emo teen was, so she had no idea how much she sounded like one.

"She hasn't yet picked a suitable name. If I come up with one, we will decide on it later." Karl informed the others.

[We will come up with something suitably impressive for you. But maybe it will be simple. Thor named himself after the God of Lightning, so perhaps you would like to be named after the Spider Goddess, Arachne?] Karl suggested.

There was a pause as she considered it. The spider didn't know anything about human gods.

[Is she a cool god?] She asked.

[Very cool, and the most talented of gods at weaving.] Karl agreed.

[That name is too coarse. I will be Rae, short for Arachne.] She decided.

"Change of plans. She will be called Rae, short for Arachne, the Spider Goddess." Karl explained to the group, who were all waiting, while he had a silent conversation in his mind.

"Hawk, Thor and Rae, all superb names." Daniel complimented the beasts before continuing to eat.

"Please let us know when we can meet her." Alice replied with a smile, and Karl felt the spider looking out of his mind.

[Later, not now. It is too bright and too far from my nest.]

"Maybe tonight. She isn't fond of bright places while she's still growing." Karl explained.

"Oh, that makes sense. We will meet tonight if she is up for it, and then after we have done some basic tests tomorrow we will head back to the Academy. I'm sure they're concerned about you, and Sergeant Rita is probably going to murder me for ruining her lesson plans again." Alice laughed.

Karl gave her a questioning look, and the mage continued.

"Well, you've got three pets now, right? Hawk is well versed in working with you, but he's never worked with the others, and they haven't done any survival training at all. Once they are back at the Academy, the Sergeant will want them all trained to work in a team for safety and to enhance their power." She explained.

That got Thor's attention.

[There is safety and power in numbers. Together is much better than alone.]

Chapter 86 Hyper Cerro

On the way back to the hotel, Karl called out to Thor, who immediately began to run in a circle, sniffing the other team members so that he would recognize them as friends later. Then he came to stand by Karl's feet and looked around for something to eat.

"There isn't much food out here. But there are more friends. When we get back to the Academy, I will introduce you to other trustworthy people as well." Karl explained.

The Lightning Cerro was the size of a large dog already, up from the ostrich egg size that he started from, and his horns were already beginning to grow. One on his nose, above the thick beaked mouth, and two more on the armoured frill that looked strangely like jade stone, slightly shiny, with wavy white lines through it in a pattern that spread down all its scales and thickened to pure white on its belly.

The tail ended in a large armoured ball with small studs all over it, like a living wrecking ball, but Thor was careful not to smash people with his tail as he ran around.

The townspeople looked at them like they were crazy, wandering around with a baby Lightning Cerro, but the creature was happy like a puppy and not attacking anyone, so they didn't voice their complaints about the danger of bringing monsters into town.

[Humans don't get big, do they? Just wait, I will be big enough to take care of you soon.] Thor informed him with certainty that made Hawk laugh.

Karl hadn't realized that the beasts could hear each other when they talked to him, but Hawk certainly could hear Thor.

Thor wasn't worried about Hawk, though. His scales were so hard that the average Windspeed Hawk would only pose a minimal threat to him, and they would be unable to drag him away into the sky with his size. Hawk still might not be able to lift him easily, but with Rend and Shred, the winner of a fight between them was unlikely to be Thor until he grew up.

[Humans don't have to be huge, they're smart. Haven't you been looking at all the strange things they have made? This place is like one huge web for hundreds of them.] Rae added in her gentle voice.

Thor didn't understand. Webs weren't a danger, they were just silk strings. But there were plenty of humans here, a whole herd of them that stayed in one spot, so they must be strong somehow.

Thor took in everything that there was to see, and relayed the information to the others. Rae didn't want to come out in the light, and Hawk knew that they were likely to shoot at him if he flew around town.

Jodi led them to an open field near the edge of town, a sport field for the local school, and then stopped the group.

"Let's get everyone out now. I know that Rae isn't comfortable in the light, but we're all friends here, so it should be alright." He announced, using his tone to imply that it was more of an order than a suggestion.

Hawk happily went to stand by Thor, but Rae hesitated, still uncomfortable being in the open and around anyone in the light.

Karl went over to stand in the shade of some trees at the edge of the field, and Rae relented, exiting the Beast Space to hide in the branches.

[If there is a threat, I will pull you right back into the space if you don't notice it first. Just focus on the space, and you can return to it when you are close to me.] Karl informed the skittish spider.

"Isn't she coming out?" Jodi asked, and Karl sensed Rae's smug smile even without looking at her.

"She's a Bloodbath Spider. Her body adapts coloration to her surroundings. She's in the tree, you idiot." Anise reprimanded him, speaking for the first time all day and startling everyone.

She was normally quiet and let the boisterous blonde man do all the talking, but when she did speak, her reprimand brought him to an instant stop.

"Oh, right. Yes, there she is." Jodi stammered, while Alice openly laughed at him.

[I like your friends. They're funny.] Rae giggled.

"Miss Rae, would you mind attacking a barrier spell for me, so we can see how your abilities are growing?" Alice asked politely, before making the barrier in the branches of the tree, so the spider didn't have to come out.

Rae inspected it for a moment, then her body surged with power, and she descended upon the barrier in a frenzy of violence.

As soon as she attacked, Karl understood the brilliance of the Bloodbath Spider's evolution. The energy on her front claws and mandibles adapted as soon as she first touched the barrier, and insight flowed into Karl's mind.

[Offensive Adaptation] passive ability that allows attacks to take on a more efficient form based on the target.

Alice whistled in appreciation as the blows rained down on the barrier until the spider exhausted herself and backed up to the trunk of the tree, annoyed that the barrier didn't break.

"That is impressive. Just on attack power, you would certainly be ranked as Ascended, though the actual energy level is much lower and at the bottom end of Awakened." Alice informed her.

Then the mage turned to Thor. "Would you like to try as well?"

She set up the barrier on the ground, standing as tall as herself, and Thor ran off into the distance, then coated himself in lightning before charging forward.

The beast hit the magical barrier with a bang, and rebounded, lifting himself up off the ground and hurling himself back half a metre.

Then he laughed, ran off and came at it again.

[This is awesome.] Thor cheered as he slammed into the spell again at a full run.

"Be careful, or you're going to break a horn." Karl laughed as the Lightning Cerro made for a third pass.

[Horns are hard. They will be fine, the Lightning isn't breaking.] Thor replied, then slammed into the barrier again, lighting it up and flinging himself into the air.

"How his neck is fine after that, I have no idea. I've never seen an animal seriously injure themselves in a charge, but it's not normally that violent." Daniel joked.

Thor roared in pride, and slammed into the barrier again before laughing and panting.

"We will have to work on your cardio if you're going to play with the barrier all day long." Karl informed him.

[I don't know what a cardio is, but I trust you.] Thor replied as he caught his breath and prepared to go again.

Chapter 87 Divulging Secrets

The group sat in the grass and watched Thor charge the barrier over and over, while Rae laughed at him and Hawk lazily circled in the air over the field.

Once they had realized that the monsters were with the Elites in the field, the local citizens' panic had subsided. The Elites had seen stranger things in their time than a few tame beasts, so although they were deadly, the townsfolk quickly realized that they weren't a threat.

Once it started to get dark, Rae finally came down from the tree, blending into the grass as well as she could until she was hidden behind Karl's back where he sat at the edge of the field. That let her observe the humans from much closer, while Hawk and Thor returned to their spaces to rest.

"We now know what allows the Bloodbath Spider to be so deadly. Lovely Miss Rae here can adapt her attacks to whatever she is targeting, so it's the most efficient option for destroying it." Karl was explaining to the others.

[Hey, why are you telling them that.] She protested.

[So they can come up with a way to help you make it even stronger.] Karl replied.

She had to think about that for a while, as did the other Elites.

"Can you do it, since you're bonded with her?" Alice asked.

"I can, but not as well as she can." Karl agreed. He couldn't modify his gloves or even his fingernails with the ability like she could her claws and mandibles, but the energy from Rend could be altered to some degree when it was held in a layer over them.

Alice brought up another barrier, and Karl focused for a second before throwing a full strength [Shred] at it.

The spell changed from red to golden as it hit the barrier, and the field filled with golden light as the spell was dissipated.

Pain lanced through Karl's skull, and he cradled his head in his hands.

"It looks like I'm not quite at full recovery yet. The energy draw still makes my head hurt after a single attack. Once the spaces are in better shape, I think that it should be fine. A week, maybe two." He explained.

The others sighed in resignation. They would have to explain that he was injured during a training mishap if he wouldn't be healed before they returned, and they really didn't want to have to fill out the paperwork involved in returning an injured student to the Academy.

"Why don't we give it another day here, and you can meditate with the lightning barrier up the entire time except for meals? Then we can judge whether it will take the full two weeks to completely recover." Daniel suggested.

"That's not a bad idea. I will start as soon as we get back. I understand now how to hold the barrier tight to my body so it doesn't burn things through my clothes." Karl agreed.

Daniel gestured for him to try, and then grabbed Karl's shirt and nodded in satisfaction when he didn't get shocked.

"That works for me. I will go buy a good cushion or a beanbag chair for you. If you're going to meditate that long, comfort is important." The warrior informed the group.

Karl ushered everyone into the space, against Thor's protests. He was tired, but he wasn't done with the barrier game yet.

"You can play again later. There are more mages at the Academy who can create them, and Miss Alice will be at most of my classes to make them while I work." Karl explained.

Thor was excited, but Rae wasn't much less eager to test that barrier again. She would take some time to figure out how it worked, and grow a little more, then she was certain she could find a way to destroy it. If it existed, she could eventually find a way to tear it apart to get to the good bits inside.

Maybe that was it, she might just be lacking motivation. She would ask Karl to put food inside the barrier when she was ready to try again. That should help. Or she could practice on Thor's barrier, and try to break it right before he could ram it. That would be fun too.

The fact that Alice was a Commander Rank mage made no difference to Rae. It was just a matter of time in her mind before she would be able to smash that barrier with a single strike.

Karl had two goals that night. First, he would create a nice shady set of low trees for Rae to rest and make her web in, and he would make a training field for Thor to run around. That Karl had two goals that night. First, he would create a nice shady set of low trees for Rae to rest and make her web in, and would be enough to keep the two of them happy for a little while, and the standard of having decent plant life corresponded to the level of beast space development that Hawk needed when he first advanced to Awakened Rank power.

Karl was assuming that the development of the space that was needed would be the same for all beasts at the same power level, and he would just have to keep up while they went through their initial growth phase, so the space didn't fall behind and cause him this same mental pain again.

Being unable to use the abilities that he had was a huge step backward for his personal power, even bigger than the degradation of his body that had yet to recover.

Jodi returned not long after they reached the hotel with a large beanbag chair and a smile on his face.

"This one is perfect. It is filled with glass beads. They're an electrical insulator, so the shock shouldn't travel anywhere, even if it leaks from Karl," he announced.

That wasn't quite how magical lightning worked, it would melt the beads, but nobody bothered to mention that, as a beanbag chair was precisely what they needed, and even if the lightning leaked and melted the beads, it should form a more comfortable seat for Karl tonight.

Once the recovery process was complete, Karl wouldn't have to split his energy into healing himself, and the development of the Beast Spaces would improve, but for now, the teams were more worried about avoiding a lingering injury report and light duty training modification appeal to go with the incident report that they were already going to have to do.

Chapter 88 Life Is About Balance

Karl started with the easier parts, the increase in the quality of the two spaces, and the addition of simple grass to the ground. Instead of the short grass that Hawk liked, it was longer grass. Rae liked to hide in the long grass, and Thor liked the way that it tickled his belly scales.

No judgment.

Then Karl left Thor's mostly empty, as all the other plants in the space were going to be food products. The power density of both was increased evenly at the start, but after a few hours, Karl began to experiment and found that Rae actually required much more power in her space to relieve the strain on his mind.

Her species was the more powerful of the two, and her power was growing more rapidly as well. The side effects of that could be problematic later, but the short-term benefits would be huge.

By the time that the sun came up in the morning, Karl was no longer feeling the drain of the two monsters on his mind, and he was beginning to feel an influx of energy instead. Each of the three had a different feeling to it. It was difficult to describe, but Karl likened it to the feeling of wind in his hair, grass under his feet and a comfortable blanket.

He briefly stopped for breakfast in the restaurant downstairs, which had amassed a huge amount of meat, blood and magical plants to restock his pets, then returned to his meditation. If he ever returned here, he would owe them a huge favour for helping him out with the feeding duties, as he now had weeks worth of food stored for everyone, and someone had even found him another strength stone to mix with the blood for Rae.

That was a winning combination, according to the Bloodbath Spider. The extra energy in the blood was helping her body form, which was improving the feedback, which in turn was restoring Karl's body and increasing the quality of her home.

It might not look like they were getting much done, but the three monsters were undergoing a massive strengthening. Even Hawk was getting in on it now that the other two had stabilized. The three spaces seemed to feed off each other and the monsters within. That helped the others grow as much as it did Karl, and hour by hour, they were actually getting further ahead of him on the strength scale.

It didn't feel like a problem, as long as the strength of the Beast Space held up, it didn't matter how strong his own body was. It was improving, though. He was stronger than before he had arrived, if not by much.

That news was a massive relief to the others at dinner that evening. Seeing Karl recovered and glowing with power assured them that they had made the right choice in bringing him here and letting him bond both monsters. There was a short-term setback, but now they were ahead and still gaining.

"Do you think that there will be any long-term damage?" Alice asked as Karl finished his dinner and prepared to go back to meditation.

"Not really. There will be a definite reduction in maximum growth speed, with three spaces to enhance instead of two. I will be spending most of my spare time in meditation, with little time for anything else until they are full-grown. But after that, the extra space means what I can provide will be split three ways, and it will be up to the feedback from the monsters to progress.

Until I reach the higher side of Commander Rank, that shouldn't be a big issue, as their natural growth will provide a significant portion of the strength growth we need. But after that, it's going to be a hard grind, and then I will either have to find another way to keep us growing or find a fourth partner with even higher potential to pull us all up.

I'm not even sure that will be realistic, though. You saw what happened this time. Even if I prepare, how much strain will an Overlord or Royal Rank monster cub put on my mind? They're even more intelligent than these three, or so I have heard, and their energy requirements have got to be immense."

"So, you're saying that your class will have a minimal impact on the growth of the monsters beyond their adult peak?" Alice asked.

"Not quite. It will have a much larger impact on the ones with lower innate potential, and then after that bonus from the early growth phase ends, we will be looking at years and not weeks or months to move up a rank.

I can't guarantee that it will hold true forever, but with the scaling once Hawk was full-grown, and the power difference between the levels that is described in the textbooks, I would say that making Commander would be relatively easy, but it might be pushing it to make Royal before graduation, and then Monarch by age twenty-five.

Of course, a new pet, a new technique, or even just a better understanding of how to leverage resources for growth could shorten that considerably."

Alice laughed out loud, drawing the attention of the others in the restaurant.

"Don't let the others hear you call Royal before eighteen years old a slow progression rate. Even I'm more than a little jealous, and I'm still a young maiden." She reminded him quietly.

Karl was fairly sure that neither of those words applied to Alice anymore, at least not from his perspective. But who was he to argue with her self assessment?

Daniel tapped the table to get everyone's attention. "We will be heading out in the morning. Karl has recovered enough to return to his regularly scheduled classes, and the pets are both bonded and growing smoothly. That completes the conditions of our outing, and the Colonel will not be happy if she finds out we decided to take a little vacation after the job was done."

There was no doubt about that. Colonel Valerie had a bit of a human side, but it was hidden deep under her adherence to rules and regulations.

Chapter 89 Rae Meets Dana

To say that Rae was excited about the car ride was an understatement. The Bloodbath Spider naturally wanted to travel to spread their brood and find a mate, and as they gained intelligence, that instinct turned into a form of wanderlust.

Being able to cover this much ground in one day was wonderful for the young spider, who watched everything from the safety of her growing nest within the low trees and bushes that Karl was creating in the space for her.

On the other hand, Thor had no interest at all in the scenery. He was content to munch all day long as long he was certain that he wasn't being left behind. Even compared to Rae, he still had a lot of growing to do. Most of her size would come from her long legs, with a comparatively small body, so she was going to reach full maturity before he would, but he also had a solid and durable body to form with armoured plates that needed time to solidify.

Hawk was more eager to get back and show Dana their new friends. She had two Golems now, but Karl had three pets. They weren't outnumbered anymore, and with the amount that Thor was growing, they wouldn't even be the physically smaller team for long.

It was a good thing that the Lightning Cerro was content to remain within his safe space because he wouldn't be able to wander around the balcony for long.

Karl was more worried about Dana's response to Rae. The Bloodbath Spider was a sensitive soul, and having someone be terrified of her at first sight would be a heavy blow. Not everyone was terrified of spiders, but monstrous spiders the size of a small table might be a different story.

They drove through the day, and classes were long over by the time that they made it back to the Academy. From the direction that they arrived, Karl realized that they had actually detoured around to the far side of the area by nearly fifty kilometres because there was only one road leading in and out of the Academy, and it ran alongside the railroad tracks.

Keeping the Academy isolated was best for both safety and security, but he hadn't realized how remote this region was until he was paying attention to the trip during the daytime.

"Alright, everyone will need to fill out a mission report for the morning, and this one is going to be significantly longer than usual, with the progress that was made. I will let you all rest for now, and see you all later." Alice instructed the others while looking at Karl to ensure he knew that meant him as well.

The Academy and the Government would naturally want to know all about the new pets, as well as the backlash from bonding two when his mind was only ready for one weaker pet.

Normally, he would omit the speculative parts when he made a report, but this time it seemed important enough not to skip, so he added it to his report, along with a note about how trying to bond a fully grown monster might be a disaster if it was significantly more powerful than he was.

Not to mention that fact that if it wasn't significantly stronger than him as an adult, then bonding it would be a mistake, as it would hinder his growth.

A brisk knock at his door after dinner alerted him to a visitor, and Karl let Dana in, noticing how he looked a bit panicked and exhausted.

"What happened? Did they come up with new training for you as well?" Karl asked as she flopped down on the bed.

"You could say that. The choreography and singing teachers have decided that we're not paying enough attention to them with all the cutbacks in their allotted time. They have to split the afternoons now, and they have been prohibited from issuing homework, as Jill decided my magic is more important than their department's plans.

So, they're going crazy every day to pack everything they want me to learn into the time that they have." Dana explained, staring at the ceiling.

"Have you eaten? I can grab something and bring it to the room. I have some new friends after this trip, and they could use a bit more variety in their diet." Karl suggested.

"I did. Jill brought something to the end of choreography class, and I ate before coming over. I think that she's trying to pull me out of the classes entirely, but someone senior to her isn't going for it."

Karl smiled. "In that case, would you like to meet someone? She is a lovely fuzzy Bloodbath Spider, and she likes meeting people, but not in the bright sunlight."

Dana smiled. "You bonded a spider?"

He nodded. "And a Lightning Cerro, but he's sleeping right now. Rae is growing more smoothly, and she wants out to explore the room."

Dana nodded, and Karl brought the spider out to sit on the bed next to her.

The two stared at each other for a few seconds, then Dana smiled and Rae moved closer, as if to get a better look at her.

[So, this is a juvenile female human? She's cuter than the other ones. Tell her that I say hello.] Rae instructed.

"Rae says hello. I'm not sure if you can shake hands safely, given her claws, but she's very friendly." Karl explained.

"Do you know about magic? I need to study some spells, and it was too loud in my dorm for that. It was great for focus training, with the random explosions from the neighbours rooms making it harder to keep the spell stable, but for reading, it is just distracting." Dana asked the spider.

[I know about magic. Lots of animals use magic. What is reading?]

Karl briefly explained the concept of books, written language and learning from recorded information, which shocked the young spider.

[That is great. You don't even need them to be nearby to learn from them. Books are good. I will watch her technique.]

Karl laughed. "She's still quite young, and hasn't seen enough books to learn to read yet, but she wants to watch you. I need to meditate to improve the power level in her mental space, but you two are free to work."

Rae ran out onto the balcony and disappeared into the foliage, then followed Dana to the gazebo and began admiring the hammock before creating one of her own from webbing. Bloodbath Spider web was very versatile. It could either be flimsy enough that

the smallest of disturbances would break it and alert the spider in its web, or it could be strong enough to hold a hundred kilogram monster in place despite attempts to escape.

What she used this time was the stronger kind, but without the stickiness, so that she could more easily move about and watch the reading process below her.

Karl settled in to meditate, listening to Rae's reactions as she admired the pictures in the book and contemplated what the runes would mean. Dana was narrating things to her, thinking out loud, as she worked on the assignment to improve her spell formation speed.

Rae wasn't much help, as she only knew one ability, but the moral support seemed to be helping the two of them bond.

With Rae outside, it also reduced the strain on his mind a little, as she was burning her energy and not using his to actively grow. Karl realized that this would be a great advantage to him, and he worked much harder on her space, getting it further ahead of Thor's space, in balance with the progression speed of the two species.

Chapter 90 Not Morning People

The next morning, Karl completely forgot to warn Jill about the spider on the balcony, but when she failed to return with Dana after a minute, he went in to check on them and found her wrapped up like a cocoon, and glowing with power from her hastily raised magical barrier.

"Thanks for finally coming to check on me. Now, would you kindly ask this young lady to let me go so that I can get my charge to class on time?" Jill requested.

Karl considered the look of restrained rage at being attacked for a second time by Karl's pets when she went to wake Dana up, and for a moment, he contemplated whether it might not be safer to leave her there.

But she could break out easily enough, she was just waiting for him to do it so that she didn't have to fight with the Bloodbath Spider.

"Rae, you can let her out. She is Dana's teacher, she won't hurt her, just wake her up for early morning instructions before breakfast." Karl instructed.

[That sounds like torture to me.] The spider replied suspiciously, then vanished into the Beast Space, which was now becoming much more comfortable after another night of work by Karl.

"Alright, she's definitely not a morning person. But she won't attack any more today." Karl informed the teacher, who gave him a pointed look.

"Right, the web."

Karl activated the enhanced Rend on his index finger and cut the surprisingly durable webbing down the front, releasing Jill to shake Dana awake.

[See, she's not even just vibrating the web, she's shaking her like some animal.] Rae informed Karl in an insulted tone.

"Five more minutes." The young mage complained, and Karl smiled. It was the same thing every day, but her schedule was so packed that she couldn't waste any time in the morning.

Karl walked over and gently rocked the hammock, then plucked a string by Dana's head, which she should hear vibrating next to her ear.

"Fine, I will get up." She mumbled and opened her eyes.

"How did you do that?" Jill asked in shock.

"Wise advice from the Bloodbath Spider. She knows all the best ways to operate a web." Karl explained.

Jill looked down at the mass of spiderweb on the ground, then picked it up, expecting a mass of loose strands now that it had been cut open, but the strands were stuck to each other and interwoven, creating a form of blanket.

"You know, this is actually pretty well-made, all things considered." Jill noted as she admired the soft white silk.

"Karl brought me a silk blanket? That looks comfy." Dana agreed, while Karl tried not to laugh.

"No. A certain someone thought it was appropriate to wrap me in webbing when I tried to wake you up the first time. Now, we need to go, or we will be late. Karl, we will be borrowing your shower, there isn't time to make a detour across the floor." Jill insisted.

"You cut the times awfully close. Go ahead, I will head down and eat first while I go over my day with Sergeant Rita. I'm sure she has a few questions about my mission report anyhow."

But Rita didn't lead him to the cafeteria, she led him to the staff lounge, where they could talk without the curious student ears listening in. The teachers were all privy to the official reports, so there was no point in hiding it from them.

Karl and Dana had been the talk of the staff for a while now, and once the new pet was spotted, everyone would be gossiping about it.

"Start at the beginning. There was a lot in that report and I want it play by play from the time that you left the Academy," she instructed.

Karl went over the trip, the early morning locust attack, and then got into the sighting of the Golden Dire Bear.

"So the other pet, the one named Thor in your report, is a Golden Dire Bear?" Rita asked.

"No, we left it alone. Picking a fight with it and stealing its cub seemed like a monumentally bad idea when it was ready to charge our truck, so we left and went looking for something less hostile." Karl explained.

He realized his mistake. In his report, Karl had only briefly mentioned the species of the pets, and had been referring to them by name for the rest of the document, so a cursory scan would be confusing.

"We were headed further into the trees, and away from the river, when we came across a clutch of Lightning Cerro eggs, while the herd was on the far side of the clearing. I sent Hawk to recover an egg, then brought them both back into my mental space. But it wasn't just the one egg. There was a Bloodbath Spider egg stuck in his feathers as well.

So I set about hatching them both." Karl explained.

"And of course, nobody realized that would be a terrible idea until after you were injured." She replied with an eye roll.

"Exactly. I didn't expect them to hatch that close together, and I was unprepared for the requirements that each of them must have a separate space, even though they can move to the other beasts' space.

So I had to mentally form the third one in a hurry when the Bloodbath Spider hatched, and that put a lot of strain on my mind and body.

The extra mission time was to recover enough to stabilize the bonds, and now I'm back to as good as new, or something close to it." Karl agreed.

"Can we see?" One of the teachers at the next table asked.

"Of course. Rae, do you want to come see people? Thor, if you come out to say hello, they will rub your head for you." Karl instructed.

Thor bounded out, nearly knocking one of the teachers out of his chair before stopping himself, while Rae appeared, but hid under the table on Karl's thighs.

"Oh, she's shy. Alright, we will admire her from a distance." The older mage who taught his morning accuracy training class said softly, with a gesture for the others not to scare the spider.

Thor had no such restrictions, and the large dog sized animal happily bumped against people, asking to be patted, nearly spearing a dozen people before realizing that his horns were going to be in the way if he kept charging at them headfirst for attention.

"Is this the Lightning Cerro variety? The smaller ones." One of the teachers asked.

"Yeah, he will get about two metres tall, if he's the size of his parents, so he will be big, but not elephant sized." Karl agreed.

The teacher happily rubbed at the scales on Thor's side. "He's going to be beautiful with these deep green and white scales. Have you decided what sort of training he will undergo?"

"Not yet. That's what Rita is glaring at me for, I think. And maybe the fact that there is a giant spider climbing up her leg."

That made the teachers burst into laughter, but Rae was intrigued by the Sergeant's uniform, and she wanted to find out what the buttons were made of.