

Beast Master 821

Chapter 821 Huge Flying Fish

Everyone spread out for their daily plans, with most of the team headed for the Dungeon, while the crafting apprentices all gathered on the second floor or Remi's lab in the illusionary Library city.

"Alright, let's start with the most obvious runes for crafters. These are the base..." Karl trailed off as the sound of explosions from outside caught everyone's attention.

Hawk flew out of his space to see what was going on, and found that they were facing a type of threat that he had never expected to see before.

[There are huge flying fishes. They smell so good.] Hawk immediately reported.

[I'm going to need more detail than that, buddy. How are fish making that level of explosion?] Karl asked, realizing that Hawk had gotten distracted by the possibility of a new food source.

Then an Overlord Ranked whale appeared in Hawk's space, nearly a hundred metres long, and showing signs of hundreds of magical attacks on its body.

Well, that looked like something that could cause some damage.

"There are flying whales outside. I don't know what they're attacking or why, but it sounds serious."

Moira sighed as she realized her training would be interrupted. But Karl motioned for her to sit. "All the crafters can stay here. Take these notes from Lady Remi and go over them. There are fifty pages of compound Runes to help you with successful creation there. First, make a copy for everyone, and then practice what you learned. I will be back later for a practical demonstration."

Karl stepped out of the house, and looked out to sea, where thousands of whales like the one that Hawk was currently bombarding were approaching the city.

They were attacking ships, Demons, and anything else that got in their way.

At the moment, 'why' was less important than the fact that they were almost certainly going to reach the city.

The Guard was scrambling, headed for the walls. But Drodh didn't have a wall on the ocean side, and the fleet was already in shambles. Perhaps they were counting on one of the city's powerhouses to prevent the approach into the city?

Rae appeared beside Karl in spider form, then began to sprout large opalescent wings that glowed with runes.

"That's... new." [Sister Butterfly helped me. Aren't they pretty? The runes mean flying.]

Karl sent a mental nudge to the butterfly, and a pair of massive white feathered wings appeared on his back.

They were solid illusions, but the runes were real, and effective. If Karl had thought of this in advance, he could have made himself a flying item ages ago.

Learning to use the wings, on the other hand, was not easy. He had a general idea and some magical assistance, but he was slow and awkward as he tried to gain altitude to engage the incoming whales with ranged skills.

"First day with your wings?" A guard laughed as he flew past. "As a matter of fact, yes. They're a skill, and I'm not good at it."

Then Karl realized that there was a skill to help him. One of Cara's basic racial abilities was {Rapid Flight} which was supposed to make her an agile flyer, regardless of size.

Karl activated the skill, and a hint of knowledge entered his mind, helping him use his wings properly. So, he shared it with Rae, who was already doing much better than he was.

Even before she gave up on actually flying to the battle and just used [Shadow Step] to get below one of the whales for a brutal attack.

It was a day of new experiences for Rae. Never before had she managed to obtain fish sauce for her snacks, and now they were treating her to an entire sushi feast. The city would probably want a lot of this, as the Guards were out here fighting in full force, but they hadn't called on the militia. However, one or two shouldn't be a big problem.

What would be an issue was getting some of the blood from that Totem - Ranked one that the district leaders were fighting.

Maybe if she just teleported over there with a bucket...

Hawk was much more devoted to the battle aspect of the situation, as the whales all used water magic barriers, and the blasts of the water jets that they shot out every few seconds were colliding with the barriers the City Guard had erected.

That was the noise they had heard, and with so many of the flying whales in range now, the blasts would be shaking the southwest side of the city.

Whatever strategy the Guards had come up with to deal with this massive pod of flying ocean beasts appeared to be working. Dozens had been culled by the soldiers, their bodies mostly now floating in the ocean below, and the whole group was turning south, headed along the coast instead of inland past the city.

Karl idly thought that city maintenance costs had to be absolutely insane with the frequency of attacks that he had seen since his arrival, and the loss of ships that they had suffered today. But behind him, the citizens appeared to be in the mood to celebrate as a Totem Ranked whale was dropped, and the pod completed its turn away from shore.

Rae discretely cut a massive portion of the whale's corpse away as she finished draining the blood she wanted, and then returned to her space. If they couldn't prove she was at the corpse, they were unable to prove that she stole their favourite snacks.

And this definitely seemed like a favourite snack.

Hawk, who had been assisting the guard in their focused efforts to take down more of the Monarch Ranked targets, was overjoyed with his sister's thoughtfulness. A bit of extra nutrition might be all it took him to break through to Overlord.

Thor had a very different approach to advancing. He had gained a profound understanding of Holy Magic when his [Circle of Protection] advanced to [Consecrated Ground]. So, instead of relying upon luck to obtain a stronger resource, Thor intended to push the quality of his magic until he broke through or hit a bottleneck. In the worst-case scenario, he would just be the first to ask Karl for a forced evolution.

Chapter 822 Speed Run?

Thor's idea gave Cara a great idea. If she made it to Overlord, and then forced an evolution to a form one Rank higher, wouldn't she be an instant Totem? She would win everything all at once.

[You know that getting that far ahead would be problematic for everyone. I am just entering Overlord Rank, we can't have someone shooting ahead to Totem Rank right away.

Not only that, but there are material costs to Evolution, and I don't know what they are yet. We might have to go hunt for treasures.] Karl reminded her.

That sounded pretty good to Cara. There were bound to be new things to see and test now that she was on a new continent.

She still wanted to be a Totem, though. She never did get to boop the Totem Dragon.

While the beasts were contemplating their next advancement, a massive recovery effort was being launched to bring the slain whales to land. Demons with water and gravity magic were working together to pull corpses in.

But Rae had a better method. She simply grabbed a dozen of the Monarch Ranked beasts into her space, and then directly dumped them on the dock, shocking the workers who had gathered in preparation for the work of cleaning and portioning such a massive amount of meat.

Karl landed along the shore near the dock master's warehouse where they had set up the grill during the last attack, and looked for someone with answers.

"Does this happen often?" He asked, with a gesture towards the shore.

The dockworker laughed. "Thankfully, no. Most of the time we lose at least one or two Overlords and dozens of Monarchs whose bodies can't be recovered.

This time we got off easily, and they didn't try to bombard the city before leaving.

Normally, the Sky Whales get super aggressive during mating season, so anything that happens to be nearby, whether it's a city or an unfortunate merchant caravan, gets pummelled into submission.

This pod was much smaller than the one we encountered last year. The Lord had to intervene himself to chase them off when they showed up with a Mythic Rank bull."

One of the other workers gestured to the whales Rae had dumped on shore. "These are in great shape this year too. We're going to have meat to export for months, even after the warehouses are filled. We're unfortunately short on cold storage in the city, as Demons don't really specialize in Ice Element magic, even the ones that can use water magic."

Karl nodded in understanding. "I have a spatial element treasure that will allow meat to be stored for some time without spoiling. If you don't mind, I would like to collect some of the bodies. The Lord, or whoever is in charge, can get them back from me when it's time to sell them."

The dockworker winked at him. "Do you honestly think anyone is keeping count? If you dive and grab one of the bodies that sunk, you can likely keep it for yourself, unless it's a Totem. Those ones they will care about."

That was good enough for Hawk, and he coated himself in a [Wind Barrier] to keep his flames dry as he plummeted down from the sky to scour the bottom for bodies he knew would be down there.

Even one or two more of these massive beasts would be more than enough to make an entire seafood department in his space.

Fortunately for him, there were more than one or two at the bottom, where they would be nearly impossible for the Demons to recover before other sea monsters got to them.

So, Hawk grabbed them all and set the first few Overlord Rank ones to the side, then paused as he grabbed another one in his claws, checking it for unwanted passengers.

He wasn't making that mistake again.

That's when he noticed it. An egg within the belly of the creature. He had almost been hoodwinked by the insidious oval orbs of infancy again.

Instead of falling for that trick again, he double-checked the corpse for more eggs, and then moved on with the lone egg in his claws. It felt like powerful magic, and he didn't want to leave it behind.

The Monarch Ranked bodies at the bottom of the ocean were quickly gathered, as Hawk already knew where they should be, and he deposited them on the dock next to Sister Rae's offerings.

"How did they get them back here so fast?" One of the workers grumbled. He was still in the middle of a smoke break, not expecting an eight hundred tonne beast to be hauled to shore so fast.

Honestly, even for Hawk and Rae's space, this had been pushing it. There didn't appear to be a weight limit, but the spaces were not unlimited in size, and even a few of these behemoths nearly filled them.

That posed an interesting question in Karl's mind. If he obtained such a massive beast, would the space expand to be more comfortable for it? Or would its growth be stunted by its environment? If you kept fish in a small bowl, they never grew as large as ones in the wild or in a pond.

Hawk examined the trio of Overlord Ranked bodies in his space, then made an important realization.

[I didn't need to go down there. Remi is a water creature, and she can swim.]

Remi laughed at her brother. [True, but I'm all the way over here. Though as slow as you are in the water, I might have made it down to the bodies faster.]

Annoyed, Hawk tossed the enormous egg he was carrying at her, and Remi deftly caught it in all four arms.

{This is a fascinating egg. Is it one of theirs? It smells tasty, and magical.} She asked.

Hawk circled overhead and examined it. [It's magic, but not alive. I don't know what it is.]

Karl also examined it with Soul Sight, and found that it was not an egg at all. It was egg shaped, but not an egg.

Karl felt a powerful person appear behind him, and found that the six District Overseers, the Totem Ranked leaders under the City Governor, had arrived.

"Did you find that in one of the corpses?" One of the Demons asked.

Karl shook his head. "It was on the sea floor when my beast went down to recover bodies. I'm not sure what it is, though."

"That, my young friend, is a Heart of the Ocean, an extremely rare Water Element treasure."

Chapter 823 Remi's Ocean Heart

The Guard's eyes had a faint longing look as he stared at the Heart of the Ocean in Remi's arms.

"They say that if a water element beast, monster, or demon can absorb the powers of the Heart in its entirety, they will undergo an evolution, surpassing the limits of their species."

This one is one of the weaker ones, I believe. The hearts are usually a Mythical Treasure that Kings use to help their offspring advance. I remember three hundred years ago, the Lord got one for his oldest son, who was born with the water attribute.

The boy wasn't even twenty at the time, and the Mythical Grade heart took him straight from Monarch Ranked to Totem.

The whole city watched the show. If you happen to get to the Castle Library or one of the larger bookstores, there are a number of volumes written about the spectacle it made." The Guard explained.

Fortunately for Remi, the Demon speaking was not of the Water Element, and he was already a Totem. Though, perhaps he had some hope that it would let one of the other District Overseers advance to Mythic Rank. That would certainly lead them to a huge promotion within the nation, and perhaps even a major city to rule over.

{Absorb the power in its entirety? I think that I can do that.} Remi announced.

The Totems smiled at her, and the one who had been speaking patted her on the head.

"You are an ambitious one, little Naga Queen. But Naga are Water Monsters just as much as the flying whales are. Perhaps you really could absorb it on your own without the Lord and hundreds of special potions."

Remi nodded happily as she cradled the large stone in all four arms, and tilted her head as if considering simply eating the thing. But she didn't want to do that in front of so many people, in case the attempt didn't work, and she had to spit it back out. That would just be embarrassing.

Instead, she returned to her altar and wrapped herself around the small statue of the Shaman God. The Divine Shaman statue should be good luck, and the Heart of the Ocean was an Elemental treasure, perfectly suited for a Shaman of the Water Element.

She added power to the statue for luck, and then carefully cleaned the Heart of the Ocean, before wrapping her mouth around it and swallowing the half metre egg shaped stone whole.

It moved slowly past her throat and chest cavity, then stopped at the first chamber of her long stomach, which made Remi giggle at the appearance. She looked like a pregnant human from the waist up. Not a pregnant Naga, their eggs grew in a row further down the body, but the Heart of the Ocean made a distinct round bump under her rib cage.

[A food baby.] Cara giggled as Remi moaned in pleasure at the flow of power.

The Heart of the Ocean was flooding her body with water Element magic, and she could feel the very cells of her body beginning to change.

Then knowledge began to flood her mind. The stone wasn't just a repository of water magic, Remi discovered. It was an inheritance of sorts, from a higher level Sea Monster.

{Legendary Skill Learned}

{Thousand Year Flood} Legendary Water Element Skill. Creates a massive flood, one million litres per user Rank over the course of one minute, expanding in any or all directions. This water may remain after the skill is deactivated.

Karl saw the information appear in his mind as Remi learned the new skill. That was absolutely insane. It would be like a dam had opened its floodgates all around Remi when she activated the skill.

But more terrifying, it was actual water. It would remain after the skill was ended, unless Remi willed it to vanish. Like the mightiest of raging rivers, huge areas could be flooded with that much additional water volume.

But on its own, it was neither an attack nor defensive skill. What would you call it, then? An environmental skill? A terrain advantage buff?

However, the Heart of the Ocean's power was still rising, along with Remi's aura.

{Skill Learned}

{Naga Swamp} Epic Grade area effect. Creates a swamp 10 metres in radius per Rank around the caster. The air and water are toxic to enemies, dealing constant poison damage, but beneficial to allies, increasing skill damage and reducing mana costs.

{Skill Upgraded}

{Naga Swamp 2} increased damage to enemies. Increased benefits to allies.

Remi was actually glowing with power now, radiating blue light that was fascinating the little butterfly. It had been carefully memorizing everything that it could observe from around Karl, in case it would make a good show later, but this was a new experience that it had no understanding of.

From what it could understand, the Naga Queen was undergoing an evolution of some sort, as well as breaking through to the Overlord Rank.

Remi's vision was blocked by the intense blue light emanating from her body, but after a few minutes she felt that begin to fade as the Heart of the Ocean was shrinking inside her. Its power was used up, and its legacy was imparted, leaving only the shell to be absorbed as nutrients by Remi's body.

Soon, even that was finished, and Remi looked down at herself in shock.

[I shrunk.]

Rae nodded in agreement. [Yes, you did. You're cute, though. I like the new colour scheme.]

Her underside, including the humanoid upper body bits, including the front of her hood and her serpentine head, had faded to cream white, with a rich brown back, and bronze diamond patterns on her scales.

She was exquisitely smooth, the scales supple as Rae's silk, but when Remi dragged a claw down one, she found that they were surprisingly durable. So, she checked her own status with the System interface.

{Name} Remi

{Status} Bonded Partner of Beast Master Packmaster Karl

{Age} 2

{Juvenile}

{Species} Naga Shaman Queen

{Constitution} Epic Grade

{Rank} Overlord

Chapter 824 Overlord Remi Is Cheating

Once Remi had finished admiring her scales, she transformed back into Spirit Snake form, to see if they had changed to match.

Much to her shock, her Spirit Snake form had undergone an even more massive change than her Naga body had. Gone was the small snake, with its dull blue scales. In its place was a massive sea serpent, easily fifty metres long, with scales that seemed to shimmer like ocean waves in the sunlight.

Effortlessly, she glided through her space, leaving the ground behind her to swim through the air.

[Remi is cheating! No flying without wings!] Rae complained.

It seemed so simple to Remi now, though. Swimming was swimming, and with even a bit of moisture in the air, it was no problem to swim through it. If it was raining, she might even be fast.

Hawk was unsure how to react. On one hand, it was good to have another flying sister. On the other, she was an openly, completely, absolutely, magnificently, irredeemably evil water creature. What sort of Sister could get a skill like [Thousand Year Flood] if she was not evil? He was proud of her.

In this world where strength was the primary measure of how much respect you could earn from others, the ones who would do anything to get ahead were the ones who got the strongest. If his sister was willing to embrace evil magic and let it reshape her body for an instant upgrade to such a powerful Overlord Ranked being, she was on the right path.

Hawk's body was already on the brink of advancing to Overlord Rank, he could feel the change in his mana quality beginning, but it would take days or perhaps weeks for him to finish the process.

That would give Remi a solid head start on the rest of them, unless one of the others advanced before Hawk could finish his own advancement process.

The Totems stared at Karl with curious expressions. "Something about you changed. I don't know what it is, but it feels like there is more depth to your power than there was before. Did your partner advance?"

The actual advancement shouldn't have given away anything, as the spaces were very well hidden, but Karl did gain some benefits from the beasts, so his own power level and strength would change when the beasts grew more powerful, and it seemed that Remi's advancement had been significant.

So Karl smiled at them. "The Heart of the Ocean caused an evolution. She gained an Epic Grade constitution, and a powerful new water skill."

The District Guardian smiled. "Perhaps we have our next comrade on the way? She certainly must have the potential to become a Totem now, with a fresh start at Overlord Rank. Who knows, given the power of the Heart of the Ocean, she might even make Mythic Rank eventually."

Remi felt that she should have the potential for even more than that. The transformation had made her an Overlord Ranked Juvenile. Like the butterfly who had just transformed at Overlord, or Cara who was a juvenile at Royal Rank and would make Overlord without any real effort, two Ranks shouldn't be beyond her species now.

Though her Species still said the same thing, just with an Epic Grade constitution. Whatever that meant.

Remi decided to come back out and show off, which made all the Totems pause to stare in wonder.

"That was fast. Such an incredible level of compatibility. Plus a return to youth? That's an excellent sign. Tell me, Miss Remi, do you still have the Naga Queen's Spirit Snake transformation? That is the true sign of a Queen's potential." The chatty Totem asked.

{My snake form indicates my potential?} Remi asked.

The Demon nodded. "I'm not the foremost expert on the small details, but the more impressive the Spirit Snake, the more powerful the Naga Queen will become. It's said that the Queen of Skathan has a thousand-metre-long Spirit Snake. But she's an Immortal old monster from the times before the Dragon Isles were civilized, and nobody knows her origins, so she might be part dragon."

Remi transformed and lazily glided around the dock area, attracting rapt attention from the city's Dragonkin, and other lovers of scales.

She stopped overhead, and the Totem smiled, his teeth shining white against blood-red skin. "The Spirit Snake form is young as well, but certainly not a simple snake. You have a bright future ahead of you, Miss Remi. If you run into any trouble, you can find me at the castle. My name is Domesk, and I am the District Overseer for the Stone Chapel District, where your Guild House is."

Remi changed back to Naga Queen form, and fell to the ground with a thump, as she misjudged where she would appear.

{Thank you. The city of Drodh has been very good to us so far.}

Overseer Domesk had no idea just how true that was. Rae had gathered literal tonnes of Totem Ranked meat for them, Hawk had multiple Overlord Rank whale bodies, Remi had evolved with a treasure that Hawk feared might have been an egg trying to trick him into activating a new sister, and they had an actual home of their own, with people working for them, and respect from nearly everyone.

The City of Drodh had been far better to them than an exile location had any right to be.

One of the other Overseers turned to Karl. "The beasts are bonded to you, correct? Does that mean that the Hawk and Spider will be advancing soon as well? Oh, and is that Cerro one of yours, or part of the Dragon Church?"

Karl smiled. "They're with me. I believe that the Bloodbath Spider will be advancing very soon, but the Holy Thunder Cerro is struggling a bit. He might be bloodline limited, but I have a treasure that I was saving until he reached a bottleneck he had issues with."

The Totem nodded. That was the right way to do it. Let the young grow under their own power, and then give them help only after they had done their best. If you didn't make them work for it, you ended up with spoiled brats, and there were far too many of them in the city already.

Chapter 825 Remi Showing Off

Rae agreed, she would advance soon, and if this Totem Rank flying whale blood didn't let her fly, someone was getting stabbed.

Of course, she didn't want to use too much of that. She wanted powerful blood, but she had managed to get a drop of ichor from the Undead Lord, and a few drops of the Lord's blood during the last battle when they nearly fell and were wasted on the Sprawl.

She also had an assortment of Overlord Rank Demon blood. Getting the mix right, with so many types and secondary elements among the Demons, took her hours of sampling, but eventually, she was happy with her advancement bath and began to carefully scrub and preen herself in preparation.

She had only used a tenth of the Totem Ranked Flying Whale's blood, so she had lots left for next time, and far more blood at two Ranks above herself than she had ever used before. Her normal base was of the Rank that she was hoping to advance to, and it had always smoothly pushed her through the bottleneck without issues. Rae was hoping that she might get lucky this time, and gain an extra cool ability from the blood samples, the way that she had gotten earth magic from the Hill Giants.

Hawk was naturally skeptical. What if Sister Rae ended up with water magic as well, using so much powerful water beast blood? The meat was fine, it sizzled so nicely when he roasted it, with a deep and rich flavour from the well marbled fat. But Rae took on aspects of her advancement's bath blood.

Thor was doing his best to absorb energy as they waited. He was the only one who wasn't at the peak of Monarch Rank yet, stuck just a short way from the bottleneck and seemingly unable to push himself over that last little barrier to reach the actual bottleneck.

If he could get there, he would advance, he was certain. But he was going to need some sort of treasure or assistance, and even the upgraded Holy Stones and the improved energy in his space weren't enough to push him any further.

Karl suspected that Thor might just need time. They had all been advancing so fast, and without an overwhelmingly powerful evolution like Hawk had undergone, it was simply unreasonable to think that even a Holy Thunder evolved Cerro could grow so fast.

The whales were all up on the shore now. At least the ones that the Demons thought they could recover. If they had sunk to the ocean floor before anyone got a rope around them, it was a lost cause trying to get them moved.

None of them knew that the vast majority of those bodies had been snatched up by Hawk, and there were only the weakest or most damaged left down below for marine life to gorge themselves on.

After an event like this, the fishing in the bay would be incredible for the next few months, with entire schools of sea fish coming closer to shore to feast upon the fallen whales. A single whale fall was a major event for water element sea monsters when it was at such a high Rank. But when it happened in only a few hundred metres of water, within a kilometre of shore, it was paradise for the fishermen as well.

More and more people were coming to the docks, either to purchase materials or to work, so Karl bid farewell to the District Overseers and brought everyone back to the Guild House.

The ladies were still in the Dungeon with Thor, as they no longer needed a second beast companion to assist now that Dana had reached Monarch Rank and could have her golems plus her Epic Guard help out.

How much they knew about current events was unknown, but Karl was hoping that he could surprise them with an Overlord Remi by the time that they got back.

That might be difficult, though, They had to cross a large portion of the city to get back to the house, and someone was likely to spill the news about Rae and Hawk being at the Flying Whale event.

A flying Rae was a daytime nightmare for many people, and they wouldn't forget that any time soon.

Rae was overjoyed that being Rae was still so impressive.

But right now, she was more focused on getting her advancement bath ready.

She had just finished her preparations and began her soaking procedure when the others returned to the Guild House, all eager to see Remi.

Especially Lotus.

"They said that she's a blue Ocean Spirit Snake now. A huge one. I have to see it." The little cleric demanded with her hands on her hips.

Remi giggled, then appeared in the yard in Spirit Snake form and waited for Lotus to notice her.

The Nature Cleric sensed the presence behind her, and then saw Remi's enormous eye looking in the door. A form this large really was inconvenient, but Remi was happy to take Lotus for a ride.

Lotus nimbly climbed up the Spirit Snake's head and sat down, then realized that Remi was very slippery, and didn't have protrusions to hold on to. But that could be fixed with a vine growth spell, and now she had a crude harness to hold on to. They slowly floated over the wall, and Remi waved to the people on the ground in the outer Frostfire Gate suburbs as they passed by. The demons below them laughed as they saw what most mistook as a Dragonkin child riding a Giant Spirit Snake like a mount. They had to be pretty close friends for the powerful beast to allow itself to be ridden, but it looked like a lot of fun to the wingless Demons, who had never experienced flight on their own.

The guards waved to them as Remi dipped below the wall to go through the gate, though she simply flew over the short line of people coming into the city for butcher work, or to buy Flying Whale meat.

"That was wonderful. Thank you, Remi."

Then Remi changed back, and Lotus found out that she had all new scales, and she looked much younger again. A fellow small person, at least for a Rank or two.

Chapter 826 Rae Emerges

The kitchen staff was making a celebratory dinner for everyone, and Rae's advancement was well underway, with over a third of the blood in her bath already absorbed as her power surged.

This time, there were noticeable changes to her body, not just a small change in size or coloration.

Her fuzz was vanishing, scrubbed away in the bath, revealing hard armoured chitin plates over most of her body, with deep black leathery flesh at the joints. Her legs gleamed with a metallic lustre under their coating of blood, and her formerly black eyes glowed a malevolent red.

She was growing as well, though not to an extreme extent. Her body was getting slightly longer, more elongated and less bulbous.

It was only when the bath water was gone and Rae had finished polishing herself that Karl realized she wasn't actually wet from the bath, her carapace was slightly translucent at the surface, and appeared to be dripping with blood at all times, though it was smooth and dry on the surface and the bloody effect was underneath.

{New Skills Gained}

[Racial Skill] {Blood Destruction} Blood Elemental Magic. Rapidly increases or decreases the temperature of target's bodily fluids. Once the temperature change is complete, the target explodes, dealing 50% Target Rank x Caster base damage to everything within a 10m radius.

{Demonic Oppression} passive skill. Targets with a bloodline potential lower than the Blood Destruction Demonic Spider suffer from [Oppression] reducing speed and damage by 30% within a (User Rank x 10m) radius

{Evolution Completed} [Blood Destruction Demonic Spider]

Remi pulled Lotus back into the house as she felt Rae's process completing, and waited for Karl to inform everyone.

That was not what happened, as Rae had too strong of a sense for the dramatic to allow that. Instead, she appeared incorporeal in Night Haunter form and let the lingering effect that her new passive skill had on allies alert everyone to her presence. Only when they were starting to look around for the sense of Danger did Rae appear in the middle of the shop.

Screams rang through the room, and Rae giggled, a haunting rumble that seemed to echo through the room from some distant space.

Then she changed back to her humanoid form and did a spin.

"I did it. Not just an Overlord, but a new kind of Overlord." She explained.

Karl cleared his throat. "Everyone, meet Rae Bloodbath, our Guild's newest Overlord, and now a Blood Destruction Demonic Spider."

"Two advancements in one day? That is incredible." Loros gasped as she examined Rae's humanoid form to see if there were differences.

It was a transformation spell, not a natural transformation, so it hadn't changed. But examining her spider form was just a bit too terrifying for most of the Demons.

"So, now there are two combat forces at Overlord? Well, three if we count Karl?" Wendy asked with an excited note in her voice.

Karl nodded. "That's right. The others shouldn't be too far behind. If we give it a few more weeks or a month, I think that everyone should be able to make an advancement."

At the back of the room, Loros sighed, and Karl smiled at her. "Even you. You're not far from becoming a Commander now with all the crafting work that you have done. It builds up your mana quality with every success. Give it a bit more time, and you will be able to join Wendy in making the most profitable mass production items in the shop. Well, now that the city wants us to give them the higher grade stuff."

Davis cleared his throat. "Why don't we mess with the city just a little bit? I found a large piece of Spirit Jade, the Overlord Quality version of Mana Jade.

Technically, it's a countertop that was being removed, but as nobody else knows how to turn it into a magical item, the cost was reasonable.

I put that on the Guild Store account, by the way."

Karl smiled. "So, you're saying that we can make a bunch of Overlord Ranked accessories?"

Davis smirked in response. "Exactly. And just not sell them. The agreement only said that we couldn't sell the ones that we made without going through the city. They didn't say anything about equipping our own with ridiculously overpowered gear.

Just the aura from a few pieces like that would be enough to make most of the city officials cry at the thought of what price it might fetch."

Karl nodded. "I will have to do some research into the Runes. If we're going to go all out, it should be something so insanely overpowered or ridiculous that nobody would believe it if they hadn't seen it themselves."

Karl thought about the answer. All of the ladies were casters, except for Ophelia, so if it was a noncombat sort of item, or a buff, he would only need to come up with two types.

Or perhaps even one. If he made it something that nobody would willingly turn down, they could all wear the same item, like a signature piece from the Guild.

The question was: What sort of inscription would he need to make for it to apply to everyone? He had already done the basics with skill power increase, and that would likely stay. But he needed something that would put it over the top.

An Overlord Ranked item should be somewhat Epic, even if it wasn't Epic Grade.

As everyone dispersed to their tasks, Karl took a seat on the second floor and began flipping through the [Dwarven Runecrafting] tome, looking for ideas.

The Dwarves were exceptionally practical when it came to their Rune work, so Karl was certain that he would find something that would help, even if it was a passing reference, or a combination of simple concepts to make something that would be worth bringing to the Overlord Rank.

Karl flipped through the pages, and then he realized that the Dwarves had the perfect noncombat buff for this type of item.

He could start it with Mana storage as the base, along with Skill Power. But then it could be expanded to create a complex rune for increased potential, faster growth, and divine favour. The blessing was one that the Dwarves used frequently, according to the book, but with Overlord Ranked Runes, it should make for an item that added luck and increased the growth rate of the user.

That was what they all needed the most.

Chapter 827 Random Crafting?

Karl showed his plan to the teachers who had come to study under him. "This is a bit more complex. I have four concepts all linked in a compound rune, then a detached string of modifiers to clarify the effects. But each of the strings has to be both complete as a concept, and grammatically separate from all the others, so that the effect does not bleed over. Because of this, the wording is very particular when you try to combine effects."

Moira frowned. "Is there a way around that? Where you might generate powerful effects without the need for an enormous item to hold so many characters worth of runes in such a particular format?"

Karl thought about it for a second, then an insidious thought came to his mind.

"Yes. There is a divine phrase that can help you accomplish that."

Karl wrote out three seemingly nonsensical runes, which were actually just ancient slang from the knowledge he had gained from [Runecrafting].

{Blind Box, Full Send, YOLO}

"If you inscribe that on your item, there is a chance to get a magnificently powerful item. Or you might get nothing. It really is up to your favour with the gods."

Moirra and Mash both stared at the runes, then shrugged and carefully inscribed them into a pair of wooden rings and began to empower them.

The process finished, and one set of runes changed, while the other glowed faintly gold, signifying a success.

"What does that say?" Mash asked, as his ring had worked.

Moirra wrote the runes, then mentally translated them.

"Thank you, please try again." She replied, phrasing it almost as a question.

Mash laughed, then used the [Identify] skill on his creation and wailed with agony.

"Evil, I summoned evil into the world!" He moaned.

Karl looked at the ring, his curiosity growing.

{Ring of the Narcissist} Any target of the wearer's lust or affection will appear to the wearer as a mirror image of themselves.

Karl and Moira stared at the ring for a second, then Moira burst into laughter. "I'm like ninety percent sure that the system just told you to go fuck yourself." She wheezed with tears rolling down her face.

Mash frowned as he realized that was also a valid interpretation. "What did I ever do to deserve that? Or are the runes intended to troll creators?" He asked.

Karl shrugged and wrote the runes inside a wooden ring.

He brought them up to Commander Rank with a thought and waited to see what happened.

{Ring of Affection} Gently stroking a target until they make a noise of approval improves their combat power and mental fortitude by 5 percent.

[DIBS! No, wait. Someone has to use it on me. Dibs for Lotus. She always has time for head pats.] Thor insisted.

Mash frowned. "It's another prank item."

Karl shook his head. "No, it's a Class targeted item. If you pat Thor's head, or massage Cara's wings, you can guarantee happy noises. And that's extra combat power and mental fortitude. It's actually a very effective item for a beast linked class. At home, we have a class known as Beast Rangers, an advanced Ranger Class whose pet can be a magical beast. For them, this would be perfect. They just need to hype up their pet before battle and they get a buff.

Not the biggest one that I've ever seen, but not every item randomly created will be a Legendary Treasure."

Loros interrupted their chat with a request. "Can I get some silk from Rae to make a backing plate for these bracers? They're made of flat plates because the material was cut as a countertop, and I need to maximize my usage."

Karl nodded, and a second later, Rae sent out a small stack of Overlord Rank silk cloth and a needle made with [Earth Barrier]. Without that, Loros wouldn't be able to sew the cloth at all.

The sculpting obsessed Demoness got right to work making a quilted backing out of silk and cotton, then riveted the plates on with golden pins.

The gold looked wonderful against the blue and white stone with the white backing cloth, and Loros had carved the flat plates to make one large image of Remi in Spirit Snake form around the top and bottom, with the middle left flat for runes.

Karl added durability to the set of runes so that the bracers would serve as actual armour, and not as simple jewellery. Then he carved the concept into the stone, outlining his plan first with a pencil, so he knew he had the spacing correct.

Mana storage, Skill Power, Increased Potential, Faster Growth, and Divine Favour. With subtext for durability and [Earth Barrier]'s self mending function, so it wouldn't get broken during regular use.

By the time that he had them all sketched, the runes were even smaller than the typed characters in an official document. But Karl set about carving them with his claw.

It took him until dinner to finish, but it was well worth it. The completed item was beautiful, with the delicate script and the carving of Remi around the edges. Especially as he added mana to it until the runes turned ghostly blue and began to glow.

{Bracer of Fated Encounters} Artifact Grade Armour. Stores ten times the standard amount of mana. Increases user growth rates in all aspects, with an increased chance to surpass bottlenecks to growth. Increases skill power by 30% and luck by 100.

"That, that... It can't be. No, it's simply not possible to make something like that." Moira stammered.

Dana came in to see what the fuss was about, and Karl winked at her. "I think you should get the first of these." Karl announced, then distracted her with a kiss as he fastened the bracer around her wrist.

The armour piece duplicated the moment that it equipped, creating a matched set for both wrists. Normally, armoured bracers were enchanted as part of the whole arm piece, and equipped as a pair, but this was the first time that Karl had seen an item that cloned itself and didn't need a second half made.

"What is it supposed to do? I get skill power, but the rest is all so vague." Dana asked.

"It will help you grow more powerful and not get stuck at Rank bottlenecks. I suggest wearing it all the time, just in case." Karl suggested.

Dana nodded slowly, then summoned her Golems to see what sort of changes that much more skill power would make to her newly Monarch power level.

They appeared for half a second, then Karl saw a notification.

{Skill Master 4 Activation} By Target Dana

[Golem] has been upgraded to [Greater Golem]

She must have gotten a notification as well, because she frowned, and then walked to the window to summon her new Golem in the yard.

What appeared looked like the demonic cross between a wolf and a wingless stone dragon. The three-metre tall creature was all black, with a long, scaled dragon tail. The tail's draconic appearance extended to black scales over the creature's belly to its muscular chest, and sharp stone protrusions in place of fur all the way up its spine, as well as on its lower front limbs. The head was shaped halfway between a Dragon's muzzle and a wolf's, and flames glowed within its mouth. Its eyes looked like burning pits, as if the skull was hollow of anything but flames, reminding everyone that this was no simple creature. The whole body appeared to be made of stone, but it shifted and rippled like muscle as the creature turned to look up at Dana. Then its ears perked up, and a small puff of smoke came from its mouth as it huffed happily upon finding its summoner.

It was somehow terrifying and adorable at the same time. If it had a tongue, Karl was certain it would be lolling out happily right now.

Then, it shrunk down to just over a metre tall, and made its way inside to come bump up against Dana's leg, begging to have its ears rubbed.

[It's a canine Thor.] Rae laughed.

[Definitely. Not as big, though. At least it won't be trying to pull the wagon.] Remi agreed.

Well, that might depend on the size of the wagon. Golems had stamina that never ran out, and with a three-metre tall four-legged body, a Monarch Rank Golem would be no slouch.

Chapter 828 Dana Mage Addition

Once she had finished greeting her new friend, Dana cast another spell, and the original two Golems returned in all their statuesque glory.

That made four summoned helpers for Dana now, including her Spellblade Demoness type [Epic Guard]. Not many mages at any Rank could claim to have that much additional firepower, and this new Greater Golem looked like it would be a reliable damage dealer in combat.

Moira and Mash were staring at the Greater Golem with increasing suspicion. There was no way that simply gaining an item had given her a new skill. Unless, it was actually part of the runes, and Karl had been holding out on them?

But they had read them as he wrote them, memorizing the pattern for their own attempts later. They hadn't seen anything about a [Greater Golem] spell in there.

"It's an opportune timing of another skill's activation, not directly from the bracelet. Though the extra stacks of Luck might have helped. Don't think too much about it, the process will just make your head hurt. It's my skill, and I don't even know how it determines that it's going to upgrade a skill for a group member." Karl explained.

Moira sighed. "That's just unfair. I know that support classes are a thing, but a support class that lets others upgrade a skill by a Grade? Completely overpowered. Coupled with your Runecrafting, you're basically the best friend that a newbie adventurer could hope to make."

Dana winked at the half Elven woman. "Don't I know it. I've been working with him since we were both in school, and my power has grown incredibly fast."

"Are you from the same pack, then?" Moira asked, not realizing that Dana and Karl were using a transformation spell.

"No, but we went to the same school, until we were sent out into the world with this lovely group of ladies. I suppose technically we might still be enrolled, but at this point, I don't think that there is much they're going to be willing and able to teach us there." Dana laughed.

That was a concept that they could understand. They were teachers at a rather prestigious Academy, but there were only so many secrets and powerful skills that they would teach to a random student who didn't have strong ties of loyalty both to the school and the nation.

There was a commotion outside, and Karl moved to the window to see what it could be. Certainly, nobody would be brave enough to attack them again. Not with the Gargoyles in place and an Overlord in charge.

But the answer was much less concerning. Little Butterfly had made five tiny versions of Dana's new Golem, and they were running around the yard, barking balls of fire and playing with Lotus.

"That doesn't look safe." Mash noted, deep concern apparent in his black eyes.

"It's an illusion skill. While it can cause damage, it doesn't seem likely that the caster would want to harm Lotus. But a cleric of the Green Dragon loves all forms of creatures, and these ones are new to her."

While Karl had replied absently, the words coming out of his mouth actually gave him a great idea. Little Butterfly only knew two skills. Invisibility and Illusionary Domain. If she could learn more skills, wouldn't

she be able to create even more convincing Illusions, or ones that caused significant damage to enemies?

The illusions were already solid, but any sort of damage would disperse them. Teaching Little Butterfly a barrier skill might make them more durable.

But as soon as Karl thought of the idea, he sensed the negative response from Little Butterfly. It was certain that wouldn't work.

[We will take a trip to the Library then, and I will see what you can learn to enhance your skills. Don't worry, we have lots of money now.]

That sounded wonderful to both the butterfly and to Remi, who had voraciously devoured the knowledge contained in almost all of the technical tomes in her swamp, before moving on to the ones in the Library illusion.

"What is the book that you were studying from?" Mash asked, drawing Karl's attention from the chaos in the yard.

"Oh, that's a book of Dwarven Runecrafting. A bit different from the Runesmithing skill, and written in Dwarven. But some of the concepts that they use in their sculpting translate well to other styles, so I was looking for ideas on how to string together the concepts that I wanted to use for the bracelets.

I'm going to make matched ones for the Guild Members, so I wanted them to be something that would be universally useful, no matter what the specialty of the wearer was."

The teacher sighed as she heard that it was a Guild exclusive item that he was making. But she had the pattern, there was nothing stopping her from making one herself. It might not be Overlord Ranked, but if she had one of the Royal Rank wooden pieces carved to shape, it would work just as well as a base at lower quality.

It took so long, though. Just making them for herself and her husband would be a long day's work, and that was assuming that it was successful the first time.

Just making a copy of the runes would be enough for now, and then they could work on it at their leisure after the school year started. Their time with Karl was quite limited, as the break was only two months in total, but there was so much to learn with a new trade skill and all the little tricks that came with it, but which weren't included in the basic linguistic knowledge.

That was most likely because the skill transferred at an introductory apprentice level, and they were expected to study and practice the rest on their own. But with a master present, who wouldn't dream of gaining all that knowledge in one huge transfer?

The fame, the recognition, the department funding. Oh, the things they could gain with just a bit more knowledge.

Chapter 829 Auction Collection

Over the course of the next week, thousands of merchant caravans rolled into town from nearby cities, and the cold storage warehouses were slowly emptying, while other buildings were repurposed as massive smoke houses to cure the whale meat for longer-term storage.

It would be some time before the price of whale meat recovered, but Karl thought that within the next few weeks the demand for other meats would begin to increase. Even if it was cheap and incredibly high energy, people would only want to eat the same thing for so long. The teachers were getting much better with basic Runecrafting and Alchemy, but more in the Alchemy realm. Runic Alchemy class under Remi had yielded incredible results, and the store was well stocked with potions and tinctures of all sorts, along with the apprentice made Commander Rank items. Ashbringer had made three pairs of war axes for Karl to upgrade to Overlord Rank, and today the representative from the Castle was coming to pick up their first shipment of powerful items.

The whole Guild was looking forward to his arrival, as Karl and Ashbringer had gone all out to troll him this time. All of the items that they had produced for the City this time were Overlord Ranked, but there were only ten rings, and the six axes.

The Gargoyle at the gate whistled to let them know that someone had entered, and Karl moved to the door to greet their guest. "Overlord Karl. It's a pleasure to meet you in person. I am Rock, Lord General of the Drodh City Guard." The burly bronze demon announced as soon as he saw Karl standing in the doorway.

"Lord General Rock, it's a pleasure to meet you as well. We have created a small number of items this month, but I believe that the City Governor will be pleased with them."

The General looked amused. The intent here was to resell them at auction if they were suitable, not for the Governor to profit off them, other than the small handling fee.

But when Davis placed the items on a counter, General Rock couldn't contain his eager smile.

"Are those Overlord Ranked Epic Grade weapons?" He asked, moving close to inspect them.

"Indeed. And all six are identical. They have [Life Leech], Skill Damage Increase, Sharpness and a rather sizeable damage increase." Davis explained with vague gestures to different portions of the runes, as he didn't know what they actually meant.

"Then the rings?" General Rock asked.

"The rings are all combat oriented. Titanic Strength, Injury Negation, and Agonizing Blows. I'm told that it is quite effective. The agony effect should turn even a slap to the face into the equivalent of a stun spell." Davis's smile had a somewhat evil tone to it. He had gotten Karl to inscribe that into a pair of gloves for him to wear at work, so that problematic customers could be disabled without serious injury.

He had inadvertently learned a valuable fact during testing. You could not torture a Vampire with pain spells. Their venom converted pain to pleasure in their victims, so they didn't scream when being drained. But it made the Vampires entirely immune to pain.

Mick thought it was hilarious that the ultimate method for disabling problematic customers didn't work on her at all, despite it being four Ranks above her.

"You're saying that you have three matched sets of weapons, and ten Overlord Ranked rings, all of which are combat oriented, with an innate control ability?" The General asked.

Karl nodded. "That is right. The materials we found this month were particularly good. I will try for more variety next month, but I don't think that we will be able to make Totem Ranked items for some time."

The General looked like he was going to choke on his tongue.

What Totem Ranked items?

That wasn't something that you simply sold at the auction. Plus, who would even buy it? You would have to gather the leaders of half the cities in Drodh just to get enough people for proper bidding.

No, Totem Ranked items were the sort of thing that were given to Heroes and National Guardians for great deeds in war, single-handed defence of a nation's border or other similarly insane deeds.

From what he knew, there were currently no Totem Ranked dungeons in the Dragon Isles, or anywhere else on the planet. Only a few Overlord Ranked Dungeons had opened during the wave of upheaval, and that was already problematic enough.

Once he recovered from his shock, the General began to mentally calculate the likely selling price, but came up short of a solid answer. There was no way to tell how high the price might be run up on items so rare within Drodh.

Not only that, but there were instructors from Lared here for some reason, and they would have certainly informed their superiors at home about the items being created here. If foreign bidders started to show up to the auction, the prices might get completely out of hand.

"Did you have a target price for these items?" The General asked carefully.

Karl shook his head. "Not particularly. What they sell for, they sell for. It's more of a test of the market to determine what we should make next month to keep the funding for the artisans of the Darklight Host at a suitable level."

The General sighed. That was what he was afraid of. Materials for such high-quality items had to be insanely expensive. But they might also be part of the auction, as many rare materials for advancement were.

If he knew that they were actually making countertops out of material capable of being turned into Overlord Rank items, he might die of outrage.

"Alright, I will take these to the Castle, and they will sort them for sale. However, I would be prepared for the Governor, or his representative, to come to you with a procurement request for custom items after seeing these."

Karl nodded. "We are always happy to accept custom orders."

Chapter 830 Monarchs

The next morning, Dana led the ladies to the Dungeon first thing in the morning, clearing the monsters to collect loot for the blacksmith.

So, it was the Guild Notification that told Karl something big was happening.

[Guild Member Ophelia has reached Monarch Rank]

[Guild Member Lotus has reached Monarch Rank]

[Guild Member Tessa has reached Monarch Rank]

Three advancements in one Dungeon run? That was cause for celebration. Karl was about to notify someone, then realized that everyone in the compound, other than the caretaker, was part of the Guild. They had all seen the notification, and the Kitchen staff had started to prepare a feast in their honour.

Hardly a week with the new bracers, and they were all advancing to the Monarch Rank.

But there was limited time before they got back.

"Abbie! I'm going to run and get fancy baked goods, you do the essentials and the dinner." Karl called before heading out of the house.

"Got it boss. Pick the things that take the longest to make."

At a walking pace, it was a bit over ten minutes to get back from the Dungeon. They might not be leaving immediately, but even Karl would have to hurry to the bakery if he was going to get back before the earliest part of their possible arrival window.

They also started to prepare the tea. Well, if you could still call it tea the way that Lotus liked it. She added a heavy dose of matcha and spices to milk tea, to the point that you could only vaguely tell that there was tea in the beverage.

But it was low caffeine, and Tessa had approved it, so they always had it on hand unless Lotus forgot to refill the jars when they got low.

Karl was back quickly, and began setting out cakes, each decorated with an individual name, then a fourth cake with the words "Emergency Cake for Accidents" written in icing.

That made the kitchen staff laugh just as much as the staff at the bakery had laughed while writing it.

"They said to keep them in the cold storage because the cakes were still a bit warm." Karl warned.

"Got it boss. Did you get the other stuff?"

Karl nodded. "I got the fancy cupcakes, an entire tray of baklava and a box of éclairs."

"That will do. We made a huge bag of caramel peanut popcorn this morning, for movie nights. We've also got buns baking, we already had a roast going, and now we're starting on the sides. It will be ready for lunch as planned, but they'll be back before then, so we could maybe start with the cakes?" The demon officially called One, the leader of the trio of Abbies that worked the kitchen, explained.

Karl smiled and patted her curled horns. "Good work. I knew that I could count on you in an emergency. Now we just have to wait for them to get back from their Dungeon run, and we will be good to go."

Karl walked into the front room, where a customer purchasing anti-aging cream was giving him a curious look. The kitchen wasn't soundproof, and Karl had left the door open in his hurry to get everything sorted. So, they had likely heard the last half of his conversation.

"Three of our members made Monarch Rank today." Karl explained, and the elderly Demoness smiled.

"Oh, that is a wonderful bit of luck. All on the same day. Are they all Guild Members, or will they be registering at the Castle?" She asked.

"Register?" Davis realized that Karl didn't know a moment after the lady realized that Karl wasn't local.

"Oh, I forgot that you were new here. Everyone who makes Monarch Rank is supposed to register with the Castle, so they can be properly accounted for if the Militia is called to duty. You were here for the attack on the dock, so you know that it doesn't happen often, it's more unofficial. But that's the rule, and it gives them an excuse to meet the Noble Ladies, or Gentlemen, of the Castle and the inner district." She explained.

Davis chuckled. "Well, they are all Guild Members, so they don't have to go in person, we can send a runner. But two are Priestesses of the Dragon Gods, I don't know what their rules are about fraternizing with Demons."

Karl wasn't sure about that either. However, he suspected that most of the 'rules' were more like 'guidelines' unless they directly contravened their patron's principles.

The old woman laughed. "The rules are flexible. You know old Ironjaw from Khuld is married to a War Cleric."

Karl had no idea where that was at first, then realized that it was a coastal city to the south of them by about a hundred kilometres. It was marginally smaller than Drodh, but still a massive city by Golden Dragon Nation standards, with over a hundred thousand people.

Davis smiled. "I had forgotten about that. The woman is so scary that she seems more like a Wrath Demon than he does."

"Only because you rejected her daughter's proposal." The old woman joked.

Karl chuckled, and Davis glared at him. "Don't mock my pain. That girl is even more terrifying than her mother. She killed four suitors during the competition for her betrothal. No way could I have beaten her in a fight."

The old woman scoffed. "You still don't understand Wrath Demons, do you? She would have let you win after you put up a good enough fight. After all, she wanted you to win."

Karl smiled. "It sounds like the Wrath Demons here and the Orcs from my homeland have a lot in common. Any good Orcish woman would be insulted if her intended wasn't even strong enough to put up a challenge in a fight."

Karl heard the kitchen staff snickering, and Davis stood up straighter. "Easy for you to say. You have limited invulnerability, and I am a merchant. But she's a Paladin of the Red Dragon God, and a four-metre tall Wrath Demon. Even if I won the challenge, what about every day after that?"

Karl shrugged. "Ask the sailors. They seem to have some plan, the way that they keep hitting on Ophelia."

The old lady paid Davis for her purchase. "I think that the plan in that case is to die happy. Not one that a young fellow of a wealthy family considers."