

Beast Master 831

Chapter 831 So Much Cake

The ladies returned to the house a half hour later, carrying large bags from the same bakery that Karl had gone to for cupcakes.

Tessa walked in to place them in the kitchen, then began to laugh as she saw the massive spread already set out.

"It looks like we all had the same idea. But how did you know?" She asked.

"The advancements sent a Guild Message. So, everyone in the house knew that you would be in the celebration mood when you got home. We have cakes!" Abbie giggled, then gestured to the cold storage room.

Tessa stuck her head in and began to laugh. "Even a spare, just in case one of them got damaged? You really did hurry today."

Karl stepped behind the War Cleric and hugged her. "Actually, we cheated. The crêpe cake that you like, with all the layers and the custard, takes too long to make, so I bought it from the store. They're actually all different flavours.

I got the crêpe cake for you, double chocolate with chocolate mousse and chocolate chips for Lotus, and a Tiramisu for Ophelia."

Ophelia stuck her head around him to see, and Karl gave her a congratulatory hug as well.

"How did you know?" She asked.

"It's your usual order when we stop there for a snack. I got a full assortment of the fancy cupcakes as well. The feast won't be ready until lunch, so I thought we might need something extra.

Plus, the lovely ladies of the kitchen suggested that a particular someone might enjoy being allowed to eat her cake before her meal for once." Karl replied with a wink.

Ophelia smirked. "You think you're talking about Lotus, but cake before lunch sounds like a pretty good idea to me as well. Clearing the dungeon is hard work, though tomorrow should be easier, as we advanced during the last boss fight.

Now that we're all Monarchs, it will be much easier to clear it out for loot, even if the gains that we're making won't be quite as impressive as before."

Karl shrugged. "We can always go hunting. If we as the guards, I'm certain that they can recommend a good hunting ground for us that is Monarch Ranked wild beasts.

If we're lucky, it might even be something tasty."

Hawk perked up at the thought. There might be Overlord Ranked mice on this continent. Or perhaps they would be giant mice, more than a mouthful. That would be good.

While Hawk daydreamed of mice in his space, Remi came out to set the table on the second floor for a party. Someone, likely Mick, had already strung streamers around the room, giving it a festive atmosphere, and then lowered the curtains, so it wasn't as bright inside.

"Is there a song for advancement parties like there is for birthdays?" Mick asked as the cakes and snacks were brought up to the second floor.

That was an excellent question. If there was, nobody in the room knew it, but they were all intrigued by the possibility that there could be one.

While they all sat down to snack, Karl got a brilliant idea.

He already had intelligent summons, and there was no particular reason not to keep them active all the time. The Epic Guard was already active, so that the whole group would gain the benefit of [Void Body]

in case of attack. But he could also keep the bodyguards active around the house to help out with the daily tasks.

Actually, if he tried, couldn't he activate [Bodyguards] on an inscribed stone? The spell was immensely complex, but it should theoretically be possible.

Or maybe he could set it as one of the Guild House functions that were currently inactive?

{War Champion Rank Officers lack authority to set Guild Skills}

Well, that settled that.

But not all hope was lost.

Karl focused on the pattern that he would have to inscribe to create Bodyguards as a spell that could be added to an item, and quickly realized that it was simply impossible. Nearly every part of the spell book would need to be written on the stone, four thousand pages worth.

That was... not going to work, unless he inscribed a small mountain.

Well, not every plan was destined to succeed, Karl decided, as he looked over the plate full of thin cake slices.

The kitchen staff had made tiny slices of all three cakes so that you could get all the flavours, plus ice cream, without ruining your dinner. It was a brilliant plan, in theory.

But they had left the cakes on the table, and Karl knew for certain that those cakes would not last more than an hour or two.

Ophelia was the first to speak, as everyone was engrossed in their snacks.

"Now that we're getting up to the accepted power level of a common adventuring group in Drodh, why don't we take some time outside the city? The dungeon is alright, but we've been through it so many times now, and it's always the same.

Fighting in a situation that you've memorized dulls the senses, and we could use a new challenge.

I know that there is a chance that we run into Totem Ranked beasts and monsters outside the city, but those odds should be fairly low with the army out in force taking care of that Manticore pack.

They will have run off most of the strongest beasts, just so that they're not attacked from the back. But the reduction is supposed to be ninety percent. If there is just one Totem, and it cannot heal itself, the odds aren't dismal for us to take it down."

Loros and Wendy looked at her like she was crazy. Taking out Totem Rank Monsters while she was still a Monarch? Even if they had five Overlords with them, the odds wouldn't be great.

But at least there shouldn't be any Mythic Rank beasts left on this side of the nation. The damage reduction stacked, and they took 90 percent less damage than a Totem. At that point, an Overlord really only had two choices: run or die.

Chapter 832 House Party

Karl considered Ophelia's suggestion. He had been thinking the same thing, and Hawk was also eager to get out of the city limits for some time.

"Does everyone have their home location for [Recall] set to the Guild House? That would make it much easier to go on overnight hunting trips. We could go out, hunt and then just recall home so that we don't have to waste days walking back." Karl suggested.

Hawk had a better idea. He was large, and flying. He could just carry them to where a good fight was, then they could play all day, and come back in the evening. No need to sleep anywhere uncomfortable unless there was nothing good nearby.

One after another, the group members nodded. They had all set their [Recall] location here as soon as they had received the spell, and now that they were going out of the city, they even had a reason to use it.

Tessa smiled. "That sounds like a good idea. Give it a day or two of rest and recovery, and then we can head out for a trip. You should make enough items to keep the shop stocked while we are away as well.

We wouldn't want to run out and have Davis be forced to make excuses like that we were out gathering materials."

Ashbringer laughed at the thought. "That might actually be true. Many beast materials are great for crafting, and there will be many sorts that we don't have in stock right now.

If you talk to the Guard Captain at the gates, he should have a target map for sale that will point out recent complaints from town leaders about what types of monsters and magical beasts they have encountered.

They're a standard intelligence gathering stop for adventurers on their way out of town, and the price is reasonable, since the Lord wants the problems controlled as inexpensively as possible.

If that means encouraging those not in his employ to do it, then that's what he will do.

You could make quite a bit selling the monster materials as well, but I suspect that you have no real reason to need to do that when you could keep all the valuable bits for yourselves, or the Guild."

Karl smiled at the Demon. Ashbringer was an Overlord Ranked master smith, so there were certainly some wonderful creations that he could produce if he had the right materials. Most of what he was making now was limited to the Royal Rank quality by the materials that came from the Dungeon, with a few items a month made of special ordered Overlord Rank materials.

If they went out hunting, they could gather many beast materials, but Karl wasn't certain how many of them would actually be relevant to the forge, unless they could be used to make alloys.

That sort of material was usually better suited to a leather worker than a smith.

Maybe they should hire one of those as well.

But that was a concern for later, as he was already settled in a for a long day of doing nothing at all. The sign was still showing open, and the gates were never locked, but Karl wasn't expecting too much business today. Certainly, nothing that Davis couldn't handle.

But within two hours, just after they had finished the first round of lunchtime feasting, Karl realized that he had greatly underestimated the Drodh Gossip Mill.

Midafternoon was when most people were finished with their daily tasks at the Castle, and at most of the wealthier households. And that was when well-wishers started to arrive to congratulate the ladies on making it to Monarch Rank.

Many of the wealthier residents of the city saw this as a chance to meet the Darklight Host guild members without inconveniencing the shop, and the main room was slowly turning into a social gathering.

There were a few purchases being made, but mostly, it was just a social event, and after a few minutes, Karl set up benches outside, made with [Earth Barrier] so that people could sit and talk without all being crowded into the limited space of the store.

The staff was busy making snacks, and Karl sent his pair of Lamia bodyguards to work as servers.

That was a bit of a challenge, as their longer bodies were a tripping hazard in a crowded area, but the Demons were already used to watching for long bodies and tails on the ground.

Nothing would ruin a social mood faster than having someone step on your tail, or smack it with a sharp object.

As Karl had learned the hard way.

As the day moved to evening, the flow of guests continued, with as many coming in as were leaving to attend to their daily duties. But they all seemed extremely impressed with the competence of the staff at the Darklight Host Guild House.

Not only had Davis managed to take a few custom orders, but he had also sold many stock items. The food and drink were a constant flow, with nobody going thirsty, even if the servers were somewhat unconventional, being a pair of Lamia girls and a pair of large Naga warriors, all at the Overlord Rank.

Many didn't realize that they were conjurations and not high-ranking Guild members pressed into service, but the fact that not once did they complain about their duties was deeply impressive.

Even the War Champion had brought out trays of food for the outdoor tables, so that the guests of honour would not be disturbed as they socialized.

It was a unique Guild experience for many, who had expected them to be based on the strict hierarchies of the old Noble houses that had existed for thousands of years, before the Guild Functions had recently come back online.

Only when it started to get dark, and a garden party was no longer polite and proper to continue attending without stated evening plans and invitations, did the crowd finally disperse, leaving everyone exhausted.

Even Lotus was barely moving, though that could have been the crash after a day-long sugar rush.

Chapter 833 Hot Spots

The next morning, before breakfast, Karl headed to the gate to get a map of the hotspots that the Lord of Drodh was requesting adventurers to take care of.

"Lord Karl, always a pleasure to see you. What can we help you with?" The guard on duty asked.

"We were thinking of going out on a little hunting trip, now that all of the ladies have reached Monarch Rank. Was there anywhere in particular that might be a good location for us? I was told that you have a full map of the target locations." Karl explained.

"Oh, I know just the right one for you. There is an overpopulation of Magical Beasts by Qidrekh. It's about two hundred fifty kilometres from here in a straight line, but the road runs west to Nelbukh first and then north.

East of the town, you'll find a huge number of pygmy stone crushers. They're a form of Earth Element boar, and they're a proper nuisance.

Overlord Rank, but their attack power is limited. If you can get through their defences, you should be able to wipe out a few packs and collect a handy reward, plus some fresh food for that Thunderbird of yours. He looks like the sort that appreciates a well roasted boar."

Karl nodded. "How many are we talking about? A day or two to clear them out?"

The Guard laughed. "They're everywhere in the west. But they don't usually come into the populated areas. The report on the map says there are close to a thousand in the region. Normally, the Leg Regiment would be sent to deal with them, but they're dealing with an undead horde along the Bozd River right now. They're split up into dozens of units and scattered through the grasslands, in no position to change positions to deal with the boars.

No matter how good they taste."

Karl winked at the Guard. "So, you're saying the Guard wouldn't mind if I happened to drop one off here on the way back?"

"No, I don't imagine we would mind at all. The Frostfire Gate Guard detachment would gladly help you dispose of any extra Stone Crushers you might bring back."

[Ask about mice.] Hawk insisted.

"Are there any mouse or rat type species that might be a menace in need of our assistance? Hawk, the Ghostfire Thunderbird, has a particular thing for rat type species." Karl asked as he took the map of hotspots from the guard.

"Not close. There was a report of Ratmen by the Orcs up in Kud'Ug. But I don't know if those count. They're not a properly sentient species, so they're mostly treated like any other forms of vermin."

Hawk didn't know either. While they were called Ratmen, there was no guarantee of flavour. For all he knew, they might actually taste like monkey.

All the way to the northern border of the nation for a hunting expedition seemed a little excessive anyhow. Though, they could likely use the portal, couldn't they? If they could come in at the portal altar, they should be able to go to other places with one as well. Or even leave from that one, if there was a mage on duty.

[You need to get the Dana Mage a Portal spell.] Hawk realized.

[As soon as we find one, I will make sure that she gets a copy.] Karl agreed.

All of the students and apprentices had their tasks for the day already. In the case of the teachers from Lared, a simple task assigned by Karl that would take them all day to optimize and test.

He wanted them to make a noncombat enhancement using runes that would improve a given trade skill by more than thirty percent. It didn't matter which one, but Karl knew that it was not easy to make a trade skill improve with a runic item, so they would be at it for some time, trying to create an Epic Ranked combination.

"Alright, we have a target. Earth Element boars. There are about a thousand Overlord Rank and weaker monsters terrorizing the wilderness a hundred and some kilometres from here. So, we will take a day trip and go wipe them out, or at least a lot of them, and then fly back." Karl explained as everyone gathered for dinner.

Maira looked concerned. "Are you really going to challenge an Overlord Ranked Monster Pack? There is a reason that they can get so close to major cities."

Karl shrugged. "That's really the difference between scattered homesteads, and an organized Guild Raid on the herd, though. We're not defending property or family, so we're not afraid to cause extensive

terrain redecoration. If there is one thing that our Guild is good at, it's mass destruction." Tessa thought about it a second, and then nodded. Even Thor now had a wide area damage spell, even if it was primarily defensive in nature. But with the boars having limited attack power, and everyone sharing [Void Body] in combat, this battle was going to be a brutal one.

Hawk stepped out of his space to lay down in the yard, and Rae set up a full harness for him, so the entire group could sit and not rely on his abilities to keep them from falling off.

Not that Hawk would have a problem doing it, but it was a reassuring feeling to be secured.

Hawk knew the destination, and this was Overlord Ranked boar meat. Boars were his second favourite, right behind mice. So, as soon as they were all in place, he was racing into the sky, holding nothing back to get to the target as fast as possible.

All that the people of the suburbs saw was a blue streak of fire leave the city and disappear over the horizon. Those with higher power levels could identify it as an Overlord Rank flame, but none of them could do more than guess what the purpose was. Some suspected that it was actually that Ghostfire Thunderbird in a hurry, but it had been moving so fast, that they couldn't tell.

The experience was therapeutic for Hawk, who hadn't had a good excuse to really stretch his wings over a long distance in ages. He was so fast that if he hurried, most of the places they went were only a few minutes away.

Chapter 834 Stone Crushers

Flying straight towards the goal, Hawk spotted the herd only twenty minutes into his flight. But they weren't alone. Some impertinent Demons were already there.

Stealing his boar meat.

[It's only yours if you got there first and killed it. Let them have their hunt, there is plenty left for us.]
Karl reminded the easily distracted bird.

Hawk circled to the ground at the eastern edge of the herd, and let everyone down as all of the summons were brought out.

But he wasn't the first to act. That was Rae.

Suddenly, one of the boars began to spasm and twitch, then it suddenly exploded, wounding the nearby beasts and covering an area dozens of metres across in a deluge of blood.

"Really?" Karl asked as the proud spider went over to inspect her kill.

[I like it. I never got to do that before.] Rae replied, then got busy with her golems, butchering one of the wounded boars.

"Well, it looks like we're starting now. Remi, they're heavy. If you want to try out your new [Naga Swamp] spell, this is a good time for it." Karl instructed.

The boars were on alert now, and they immediately covered themselves in a thick earthen shield, then began firing Overlord Rank stone spikes at the group of invaders.

Surprisingly, the boars were not so large. Karl had forgotten that they were designated as "Pygmy" Stone Crushers, and they were only a metre and a half tall. Hawk didn't mind. He grabbed one in his beak and roasted it with his flames until it stopped wriggling, then gulped it down in a single bite.

[Pork flavoured big mice. This isn't half bad.]

Tessa mounted Thor, and Ophelia raged, expanding to the full extent of her Dire Bear form, towering over everyone else, and some of the smaller trees.

Karl moved forward with the Bodyguards by his shoulder, while the Epic Guard remained back with Dana and Lotus, protecting the healer.

Meteors were falling from the sky as a flaming storm began to form, along with dozens of [Hellstorm] tornadoes as Remi activated [Apocalypse]. Hawk wouldn't mind if the meat was a bit pre-roasted, and this was the fastest way to deal with the pack of boars, who were already beginning to panic at the presence of Rae, with her new [Demonic Oppression] aura.

They were Overlords, but they were also a prey species, and their instincts were screaming at them that they were under attack by a predator of the most dangerous sort. If they couldn't win, they would have to run. So, Remi put fire behind them, while Rae put stone walls to their sides. Now that they were unable to run, they would naturally choose to fight. When driven into a corner, even the most timid animal will fight, and the Stone Crushers were not timid animals.

Karl hacked them apart as they charged towards the only open side, and noticed that while the Overlord Rank Soul energy was coming into the Haint Claw, it was nowhere near as intense or dense as the Life Energy that was going to the blade of champions.

That was the opposite of when they were fighting intelligent beings, and vastly different from when they were fighting the undead, who had no life energy, but strong soul energy.

The curious change in the flows of energy into his body kept Karl occupied as he tried not to focus on the continual gore of a battle against angry boars with extremely durable Earth Armour hides.

[Freezing them works much better. They break into nice storage sized pieces.] Rae informed Karl, impressed with her new skill.

Karl could sense Hawk's annoyance, so he knew that her version of storage sized pieces and the bird's were not the same.

[Is the damage so good that you are still blowing up the boars?] He asked instead.

[Not really, but I'm learning many things about blood magic from this skill, and I can't do that without blowing things up. Give me maybe two hundred more, and I think I've got another skill coming.]

Well, if that was the case, they could certainly keep fighting.

However, hacking through an Overlord Ranked barrier on an Earth Element beast was not an easy feat.

They were being bombarded with skills, and taking area damage before they made it to the defenders, but still, the boars had their shields up and Karl had to put a significant amount of energy into cutting through it.

Even with the stacked damage from Rampage.

Karl was focused on keeping the tide back, when suddenly there was a living thing falling from the sky at him.

He was just about to activate [Rend] when he realized that Hawk had dropped a living Demon on the ground beside him.

[Dude...]

[Sorry, forgot to warn you. They were in the way over where I wanted to put my [Hellstorm]. The rest of their group scattered, but this one was too scared to run.]

Karl looked down at the terrified little Demon, still holding a dagger in its hand, but with both arms over its head.

Was it afraid of the boars? Or the twenty-five-metre bird that had just snatched it out of the ruins of a merchant caravan?

Both seemed like reasonable answers.

The Demon shouldn't be injured anymore, it was within range of Lotus' area healing effects, but it wasn't getting up, even when Karl and the Bodyguards pushed forward, leaving the cowering creature at the back with Lotus and Dana.

Then, there was suddenly nothing for Karl to fight. Every boar within a hundred metres was simply gone. Dozens of boars had vanished without a trace, and nobody seemed to know where they went.

Except one very smug Cara.

[Ha, advancements are fun. I should do this more often.]

{New Shared Skill Learned} [Void Blast] Totem Rank. Advanced form of [Disintegration]. Creates an area of destructive Void Energy up to a spherical area of the Caster's Rank x10 metres in diameter.

Hawk screeched in rage. [But where are the bodies?]

[Who needs bodies? When you blow them up, they leave the loot. We have plenty of bodies.]

Chapter 835 Pinata Pork

Karl wasn't sure what Cara meant by 'they leave the loot' when she had apparently used an area disintegration effect on the boars. Logically, there would be nothing left of them at all.

But when Karl looked over the grass in front of him, he found that there were actually treasures left over.

There were hundreds of gems, small items and bits of precious metals on the ground where the boars had been.

"What is all that?" Karl wondered out loud.

A squeaky voice behind them made a hopeful noise, then the Demon cleared his throat and began to talk.

"The Stone Crushers refine rocks and metals to precious materials in their stomachs. That makes them excellent hunting targets. You know, if you can actually kill them.

My team brought two Overlord Rank Warriors with us, but the intel was wrong. They said a small pack, and there are thousands of them here. We were overrun."

Hawk used a claw to open one of the boars in his space, and sure enough there were rough gems and metals, many of them strange alloys, as they weren't finished converting yet.

The beasts started throwing anything that looked like good stuff into their spaces to be sorted later, or given to Ashbringer. He seemed like the sort of guy who would appreciate a small mountain of assorted ore.

Karl leaned down and picked up a pale blue ore lump at his feet, only slightly larger than a marble.

"Well, it's better than nothing. But Cara, be nice to Brother Hawk and don't disintegrate all his snacks."

Snacks that Hawk was now reconsidering. He didn't know that they were full of stones when he was swallowing them whole.

Rae looked at Cara with new appreciation. Everyone knew that she got one advanced skill when she reached a new Rank, but that new version of [Disintegrate] was far too good.

Fortunately for Hawk's boar pile, Cara restrained herself with her next round of attacks, using [Void Blast] to blow up the heads, which weren't all that tasty anyhow.

Karl had almost forgotten about the Demon behind him when he noticed that the adventurer was picking up the loose ore and partially formed gems that the beasts had passed over when they cleaned the battlefield behind them.

If it didn't all match, or give off a powerful magical feeling, they just ignored it. But their guest had just lost his whole team and their gear, and he wasn't ashamed to load up his inventory with ore to try to at least make up for his monetary losses.

Karl switched his attacks to use [Void Blast] layered over [Rend], and found that it cut through the defensive barriers of the boars with much less effort. That skill really was ridiculously powerful, and there wasn't any elemental resistance to it the way that Earth Barriers were strong against fire and lightning.

The boars didn't understand what had happened to the rest of the pack, as they had simply vanished.

So, they charged at Karl again as soon as they had recovered. Only to be met with arcs of energy that tore through their barriers, and an advancing swamp that mired their legs and corroded their skin.

The matching bracers on all the ladies, well, all of them whose gear was visible in their combat form, were glowing with power as they drew mana to continue the assault.

That {Bracer of Fated Encounters} was putting in work, with both Dana and Tessa alternating casts between their own mana and the bracers, so that both would have time regenerate between uses.

It was a brilliant idea.

Not one that Karl actually needed. With the mana regeneration he got shared from the team, he struggled to even use as much as he recovered. The limiting factor was his stamina, not his mana.

Even now that they were beginning to close the trap around the herd of Pygmy Stone Crushers, his mana was still nearly full. Maybe he should start going a bit harder and not just herding the beasts into a tighter cluster. No, it was a good working experience for the Golems and the Bodyguards. They were creating a moving wall of attacks, pushing the Stone Crushers back toward the flames.

Except for the Greater Golem, who was running ahead, happily shaking them by their necks and tossing them in the air for Cara to vaporize the skull.

For a giant Dragon Hound, it was quite reminiscent of a young Thor. More interested in playing than anything else. Now, Thor was the responsible one, holding position with Tessa.

[There are more people coming. I think we caused a scene.] Hawk informed them from his artillery position in the sky.

[Remi, you can let the storm end once the current coverage area is clear.] Karl decided.

[That's almost all of them. Are we leaving something for the locals?] She asked.

[As long as it's the local guard and not some poachers. If they're trying to cause trouble, we will just reset the trap with them inside as well.]

Rae chuckled, and activated [Night Hunter] to become incorporeal. If these new arrivals wanted to play, she would happily play with them.

Karl waited patiently as the newcomers advanced, and found that it was not a group of locals, or town guards from Qidrekh. It was a unit from the First Leg Regiment, fifty Overlords strong.

"Gentlemen, we weren't expecting to see you here. Did you need supplies?" Karl called, with a gesture toward the rest of the Stone Crushers.

"How are your casualties? We have a shaman who can resurrect." The flag bearer of the unit called back.

"Zero casualties on our team, but we have a survivor of another group with us, and they were overrun."

The unit came to a stop in front of Karl, and the man hopped down from his two legged mount. It almost looked like the ones they used in Newbon, but somehow more demonic and serpentine.

"A member of their team found us as well. He asked that we rescue his friends. You said that you have one?"

Karl gestured to the Demon behind him, who was trying to hide behind Lotus.

A pointless effort. He would have done better trying to hide behind Dana, but they were both smaller than he was.

Dana pushed him forward, and the Flag Bearer laughed. "Oh, isn't this a prize. The survivor is a deserter?"

Chapter 836 Illusionary Army

That explained why he was trying to hide. If someone from his team hadn't informed the army and begged them to come look for survivors of the adventuring team, he likely would have never been caught.

He looked to Karl for help, but Karl just shrugged. "Sorry, man. We're not law enforcement. If you're wanted for desertion, that's a matter between you and the army."

The leader of the unit came over with handcuffs in one hand, and held them out for the Demon to put on himself. It was a fairly direct threat. Either put them on, or have them put on you, and the second option will not be fun.

While they were occupied, the rest of the squad was spreading out to eliminate the remains of the Pygmy Stone Crushers.

"Was this the whole pack, or did you scoop off a section for yourselves?" The Soldier asked.

Karl shrugged. "We killed all the ones that were with this group, other than what is here. I don't know if there were more, we are just taking a day trip from Drodh to hunt. The ladies recently made Monarch Rank, and the Dungeon in the city wasn't giving them the sort of workout that they needed anymore."

That made the guard laugh, then look over at Ophelia's massive bear form with concern.

"That is a person, right? You didn't just tame a Monarch Rank Dire Bear with gigantism?" He asked.

Karl shook his head. "No, she is a Titanic Berserker. One of her skills makes her bigger, another makes her huge, and a third turns her from a Werebear into a Dire Bear. She's a force of nature in combat, and she gets the item bonuses from her equipped weapons, even when she's in that form."

The Guard nodded in understanding. She was larger than anyone on his squad, but some of the classes got large size increases now that the System was fully activated again, and many people were gaining access to the Skill Tree.

"It looks like your team is set up to fight nearly anything. But is that a Winged Void Badger?" The soldier asked as he watched Cara flying behind the greatly reduced pack of Stone Crushers to drive them into the military unit.

"Indeed she is. She's had a big day today, she just made it to Overlord." Karl agreed.

The soldier made a sign of protection at the mention, then shook his head. "Well, if you think that you can survive that friendship, more power to you."

Cara was mildly insulted. Sure, she loved pranks, but she was never malicious. It wasn't like she was Sister Rae, who liked to make things explode for fun.

[Did you not just make a hundred boars disintegrate to see if they dropped loot?] Rae countered.

Well, she had a point. But it didn't count. They were just boars.

Between Cara and the soldiers, the rest of the boars were quickly being rounded up, but the merchant who had come with the Leg Regiment unit was greatly concerned that there were still more of them out in the wilderness somewhere.

He was hoping to recover the remains of his convoy to at least make an attempt at repairing a wagon enough to get him to his destination with some goods. But if the herd had split up between when he had seen them and now, it might not be safe to continue.

Overhead, the ghostly blue flames of Hawk flared like a second sun in the sky, and when they faded he was visibly larger than before, but otherwise identical.

That made five out of six at the Overlord Rank. Little Butterfly wasn't taking part in the battle, but Karl could feel that the creature was intrigued by the scene. Whether it wanted to fight, or if it was just

recording everything from its space for a re-enactment later, was a mystery. The thoughts of the Glasswing Illusionary Butterfly were always secretive, and it was hard to tell if it was fully sentient, or simply mimicked what was going on around it most of the time based on instinct.

The choices of plays and the illusionary space suggested that Little Butterfly was sentient, it just seemed to lack a mental voice.

However, one of the demons from the squad that had come to clear the beasts had caught her attention, and Karl could sense the Butterfly trying to learn a skill.

So, he focused on [Skill Master], linking the two of them with a better chance at learning.

Karl couldn't see what the Demon was doing, but the viewpoint from inside the space wasn't strictly limited by his location. They could see from above his head, or slightly off to one side, giving them a much wider field of view.

As the battle ended, he could sense the butterfly's satisfaction with the results, but he didn't get any messages about new skills or advancements. Perhaps it was a better understanding of its own skills that was the goal? [Illusionary Domain 2] might have been too much to ask for, as the skill was already incredibly powerful as a distraction and containment skill.

Then three dozen Demon warriors, slender obsession Demons similar to Dana's Epic Guard, but wearing Maid dresses and carrying spears instead of the Epic Guard's leather armour and a sword, appeared in front of Karl.

It was obvious that they were an illusion, as they were faintly translucent in the light.

They were also waiting for something, but Karl wasn't sure what.

No, he knew what they were waiting for. Butterfly didn't know any skills but illusions and invisibility. "Thor, Tessa, we need some spells." Karl called.

Thor gave the illusions a layer of [Eternal Lightning], while Tessa gave them [Holy Weapon] which made the illusionary spears solid. That many [Eternal Lightning] barriers severely depleted Thor's mana pool, but he regenerated quickly, and he didn't need to keep it active and sustained like he did for the actual group members.

Karl put [Disintegrate] on the spearheads, and felt an immense mental and magical draw as the illusions moved into combat. That was a single strike skill, and it needed to be refreshed every time that they attacked if he wanted it to remain active.

Fortunately, the skills that Thor and Tessa put on them were enough that the illusions could herd the Stone Crushers, even if they were doing almost no damage to them compared to active attack skills.

Without powerful Overlord Ranked skills, it would take all of them to break through the defensive abilities of the Stone Crushers. But the [Holy Weapon] spell did some damage, and they were solid enough that the illusions could gang up on the monsters if they tried to charge. The soldier beside Karl gave him a strange look. "Did you just put barriers on illusions and send them to battle?"

Karl nodded. "It's an odd tactic, I admit. But your team is doing enough damage, and we mostly needed someone to keep the Stone Crushers from running away."

Keeping that barrier up would be hard on Thor, and Karl was prepared to step up with a stronger version of [Eternal Lightning], but the Cerro was so happy with the arrangement that he didn't want to steal his moment of glory.

[Sister Butterfly, we should make them red robe soldiers next time. A Tessa Army.] Thor suggested.

That would be quite thematic, but there was something incredibly amusing about the looks the soldiers were giving the demons in Maid outfits.

Chapter 837 Hunt Successful

The soldiers of the Leg Regiment visibly deflated when the illusions vanished, and there were no more demonic battle maids for them to stare at.

No battle maids, but a lot of work cleaning, packing and storing the meat of the boars to supply the regiment now that the threat was gone. The Regiment could always use more meat, and at Overlord Rank, the Stone Crushers were highly nutritious, as well as better tasting than almost anything else in the region.

The Commander of the unit turned to Karl, who was taking time to polish his sword and absorb life energy after the battle.

There was a lot of it stored, and his body couldn't absorb it as fast as they were killing.

Or perhaps the sword was unable to transfer it that fast. Karl suspected that it was the first, as it had absorbed it without any issues. It was just the discharge rate that was slower.

"Overlord, thank you for your assistance. Were you passing by, or did this make the Guard Map in Drodh?" The soldier asked.

"It made the map. They were one of the closer major threats, and at an appropriate power level for my team, so we came here for the day." Karl explained.

"For the day?"

Karl gestured upwards at Hawk. "We got a ride. Unlike walking troops, a small team like ours can cover a remarkable amount of ground."

The team didn't look all that small with the Golems, the beasts and the Dire Bear. But then Ophelia transformed back to her Werebear form, and it began to make more sense.

Then the Naga Queen bit someone.

"What the hell?" The Commander shouted, drawing his blade.

"Relax. It's a healing spell. Injecting [Healing Splash] is much more effective for targeted cures than surface treatments, and Remi is an Overlord. See, he's perked right back up.

Maybe a bit too much. Find that young man a Wrath Demon next time you've got days off."

The Commander chuckled a bit as he began to relax, and put his blade away.

The Demon really was looking better, and his Commander wondered what was wrong with him to begin with if the general purpose healing spells weren't getting rid of it, and he needed a specialist treatment.

Karl's team backed away while the soldiers cleared the battlefield, but Cara continued cleaning up the loot for a few more minutes, ensuring that she had all the good bits of ore and gemstone.

If it wouldn't take up a beast space slot each, they should have kept a few of these things, just to produce more loot for them.

[There are more of them in the distance, only a small group. We can always find more later.] Hawk consoled her.

[Chase the ones with baby pigs away from the settlements, so they have time to grow big. We can't be running out of loot pigs.] Cara insisted.

Was all of Drodh now an open air farm in her mind?

But they had killed so many of them this time, that the Pygmy Stone Crushers might actually be an endangered species in this region.

"Were there other major threats in the region that might not be on the map? Most of my group just grew into the Monarch Rank, and combat seems to be the best way to stabilize power levels." Karl asked the leader of the military team.

The man took out his map to compare with Karl's.

They were nearly identical, other than the marks for military units and smaller villages that weren't on Karl's map. The one that the guards in Drodh handed out only had the major population centres on it, not every small farming village of fifty or a hundred people, much less the small waypoints and farming community clusters.

"Nothing much. It's all been kept under control recently, except for the larger issue at the river." The Commander noted.

The Undead Horde that the Regiment had been sent to deal with, before separating to keep the threat contained.

"Do they need assistance? We could likely fly over there tomorrow and collect some undead. With the Priestesses and Thor, we can do a rather significant amount of Holy Damage to undead hordes."

The Commander shook his head. "Please don't. We have issued an evacuation order so that we don't have secondary infections and casualties. There are strict quarantine protocols after fighting the Undead that must be followed, so we don't spread a zombie plague through the city.

The Wights aren't as bad. The ones that they turn to zombies aren't infectious. The ones out here in the wild are, and they have a number of Lich Lords with them."

That still sounded fun to Cara. [Nullify] made playing with spell casters far more enjoyable than it had any right to be.

Karl whistled to Hawk, bringing him down to ground level. The soldiers finally realized just how large the Thunderbird was, a full thirty metres long. That was more than enough to carry this handful of people. But when Remi, Cara and the bodyguards simply vanished, the Guards were baffled.

"I have a skill to create a separate space for my bonded partners. It makes travel much less of a chore." Karl explained.

The Demon nodded. "Our Regiment Commander has a similar skill. [Pocket Dimension] he calls it."

Remi and Dana both perked up at the mention, but the Commander could only see Dana. "If you're compatible with it, ask the Lared Academy. They are the sole source of tomes on the topic. But they don't often offer them to anyone below Totem Rank."

Karl smiled. "We have a couple of professors from Lared Academy at our Guild House in Drodh right now. I will ask them when we return. Perhaps I can work out a deal."

Then Karl got a great idea. Jones, the Magma Dragon, had mentioned trading for spell books. Karl could likely find something that would make it worth the Dragon's time if he had a similar sort of skill.

Or [Portal]. They could really use a portal skill.

"Alright, we will be headed back. Thor, you'll have to get your scales rubbed later, friend. Bring Tessa over here before you rest, will you?" Karl called.

Dana's Dragon Hound [Greater Golem] looked up from where it was doing the exact same thing as Thor, and the mage laughed as she dismissed the summoned beast. Those two had a lot in common.

Chapter 838 Proposal For Jones

Once they were all strapped in place, Hawk took off for the city. He had a lot of work ahead of him removing all the stones from his new snacks, and he wanted to rearrange his space a little.

It was a highly productive day for them all. Killing a small herd of Pygmy Stone Crushers had caused multiple advancements, and it had given them nearly everything that they had been looking for.

Karl gestured at the suburban area outside the gates as they approached. "I will hop off here, and you can fly straight to the house. I doubt the guards will hassle us over the fee, but if they do, just have Davis pay them from the Guild Bank."

Then he hopped off, and Little Butterfly helpfully gave him a pair of feathered wings, one black and one white, to slow his descent.

Karl landed with a solid thump on the dusty street, and Butterfly made the illusionary wings vanish.

He could sense that the Butterfly was very proud of itself. Guessing what the Karl needed was becoming easier by the day, and she had even correctly guessed that everyone would like her illusionary maids.

Karl stopped at the Magma Dragon's front door, and then lightly knocked once as he heard movement inside.

"Overlord Karl, what a surprise. Did you have something curious to trade?" The dragon, still in his demonic transformation, asked.

"Yes, in a way. I would like to propose a trade, if possible. I am willing to pay very well for a [Portal] and a Separate Space type spell. Now, I haven't prepared Skill Books in advance. But I have something nearly as good. I can directly transfer a skill that I know by touch if the target is compatible." Jones began to literally glow with excitement, and the temperature in the house increased noticeably.

"Oh, that is just as good. You see, I am compiling skills for my Inheritance. It's an important part of a Dragon's transition from Adult to Ancient."

Karl realized he knew just what Jones meant.

"I've actually had the chance to see that once before. The moment that an adult black dragon transitioned to Ancient Dragon status and passed on a legacy blessing."

Jones smiled. "It's a bit different for us. Magma Dragons aren't a Chromatic Dragon, so we're not tied to the whims of a particular Dragon God. We also don't pass on our Inheritance automatically. Instead, we tie the inheritance to a part of our body, depending on our intentions. Many choose to bind it to their heart, so it will only be passed on after their death, and won't easily transfer to anyone for whom the dragon has lingering animosity.

Others will put it on a claw or tooth and then remove it to place with their hoard. That way, whenever they pass on their inheritance, it can be acquired.

It also tends to draw adventurers to eat for a bit of entertainment, so it's not a bad option."

Karl chuckled. Cara would love that one.

She already had a hoard, but if she could start a rumour about it holding a powerful legacy so she could beat up random strangers when she was bored, it would be even better.

Maybe once she reached Mythic Rank. Because for now there was still a lot of entertainment in the world.

Jones paused, then continued. "I can access a Portal Skill Book, if you have something that can pay for it."

Karl considered the price for a moment. "How about a trade for the [Meteor Swarm] skill? It's both fire and Earth Element, and while it's not technically an Epic Grade skill, it's very close."

Jones was silent for a moment as he considered the spells that he already knew. "Alright, I will trade you."

They shook hands and Karl activated [Follow Me, Little One].

Jones smiled. "Oh, it's a System Skill. It's been some time since I had the chance to let the Gods insult me to my face."

Karl laughed. "It doesn't always insult you. Sometimes the nickname that it gives people is complimentary."

Jones nodded. "Your skill is actually very similar to the Dragons' [Inheritance of the Ancients] racial skill. We gain it when we meet the conditions to become an Ancient of our species. But I'm not a purebred Dragon, or my racial transformation would make me a human. So, the system delights in insulting me."

Jones reached out into nothing and pulled out a book with [Portal] on the title, and Jones' name at the bottom of the cover, marking him as the creator.

"Oh, you're an Inscriptionist. No wonder you wanted new Spell books."

Jones smiled in response, then gestured to where his hand had gone. "I don't suppose that you have something that could be traded for an Artifact Grade spell like [Tiny World]? It allows living things to survive inside, but you won't be able to make the most out of it yet. Well, neither can I. Only the Immortals understand the Laws Of Creation well enough. But Dragons understand the Rules earlier than most species."

"Rules?" Karl asked.

"Oh, I suppose nobody would have told you yet. You must understand the Rules of the World, fundamental aspects of how magic and life work, before you can reach the Mythic Rank. It is also the requirement for a Spell to become Artifact Grade.

If it can change a Rule without breaking it, it will be Artifact Grade. [Tiny World] does that, in creating a separate space within the world. [Portal] simply operates within the rules, and creates two openings at different points.

Do you have something that might intrigue me that much?" Jones asked.

"I have a few Epic Grade spells that you might like. [Apocalypse] combines a meteor storm with multiplying flaming tornadoes and a firestorm, with much better mana efficiency. Or [Ghostfire Body], which I believe you've seen enough to understand the basics of.

Or, as you are creating an inheritance for Dragons, what about [Iron Within] which creates metallic bones and blood to strengthen the target?

I don't know if you'll be compatible with it, but I could create a Spell Book, given enough time." Karl offered.

Jones shook his head. "I already have numerous defensive skills. Limited Invulnerability, Draconic Invincibility, Divine Draconic Might, Phylactery. It is the sort of unique attack and utility skills that might benefit my Clan's offspring that would be of the most significant value." Karl thought for a second, then tried a new idea.

{Pack Master Karl Offers Knowledge} Skill [Evolution] will be transferred to the Groundfall Runt Jones.

Karl blinked as he saw that notification. He didn't know what it meant, but if he had to guess, the System had just accused Jones of being the unwanted egg thrown out of a nest as defective.

That was a low blow, whether it was true or not. And Karl was not about to let on that he knew what the System was calling him.

Jones smiled as the skill transferred. "A one-time chance for a Dragon Whelp to advance past their bloodline limitation? That... I can't... The value of this skill is unimaginable."

Karl smiled. "I have never used it myself. I have been waiting for my beasts to reach a bottleneck that they can't surpass. Only then would I be willing to use it to help them move past their species limits in a form one Rank higher than before."

Chapter 839 A Trip With Jones

Jones smiled. "How do you feel about taking a little trip with me? Just an hour or two out to an island I own?"

Karl shrugged. "I don't see why not. It's only lunchtime now, an hour or two gives us plenty of time, and I have [Recall] set to the Guild House."

The Magma Dragon smiled. "I actually meant for you to get back. But we both know [Portal] now, don't we?"

Karl realized that he was still holding the Skill Book for Portal.

{Spell Learned} [Portal] Opens a gateway to a destination known to the caster. Mana cost and casting time increase with distance.

"Yes, you are right, we can both travel freely. Let's go to your Island. I take it you expect to be there for some time?" Karl asked.

The dragon nodded. "The first target that I intend to use [Evolution] on is myself.

You see, Overlord is the peak of my lineage, thanks to the mixed blood of a weaker Demon in my veins. But with this new chance, I should be able to reach Totem Rank. With that, they might even grant me guardianship of the Frostfire Suburbs."

Jones opened a portal, and they both stepped through onto the steaming surface of a small volcanic island.

"Oh, right. Not a Fire Demon. Never mind, you seem to be fine." Jones realized.

"I have Limited Invulnerability. I won't burn in the natural lava. At least, not while standing on the surface." Karl explained.

"Good, good. Now, let's see what I need for materials. One dragon bone of Totem Rank or higher, Overlord Rank Fire and Earth Stones. A Dark Element treasure of Epic Grade, and some skills. Alright. I have all that." Jones narrated to himself.

He piled the items on one of his hands, and then with a flash of golden light, they melted into his body. The dragon began to change, transforming back to his natural form.

Then the Magma Dragon began to leak oppressive power, and the glowing flesh under ash black scales glowed a lighter golden yellow instead of red, while a faint mist of black smoke emitted from his body. It was a true evolution, and his species was subtly changing as his body grew.

After half an hour, he had settled on a length of sixty metres, and emitted a flickering golden light under a black miasma.

{Species} Shadow Volcano Dragon

Jones read the line quietly to himself, then frowned. He was still an Overlord.

"I thought that it was supposed to increase me by a Rank?" He muttered.

Then his golden eyes lit up with annoyance.

"A form one Rank Higher. But in potential, not in current Rank. That evil bastard of a World Dragon."

Then he tossed something in his mouth and his power level began to grow, shattering through the bottleneck as the [Totemic Protection] spell began to form on his body.

He was already at the peak of Overlord, and constrained by bloodline, but now he could move on again, and reach the peak of Totem Rank before he would have to find another opportunity to increase his bloodline once more.

Jones smiled at Karl. "That skill really is priceless. The number of Demons and Dragon Hybrids who are stuck at Overlord Rank because of bloodline makes up two thirds of the Overlords in Drodh. But while they would pay immeasurable amounts for this chance, someone like the City Governor, who is bottlenecked at peak Totem..."

Jones trailed off, and Karl chuckled. "Yeah. It might be best if we don't mention this to anyone else."

Jones smiled and handed Karl a small glass orb that looked like a globe. "That is the artifact that will allow you to learn [Tiny World]. Use it and then hand it back. I need to return it to its origin source to recharge for another thousand years."

The orb granted a once in a millennia chance to learn the Space Element Artifact Grade spell? No wonder that nobody knew it. Karl activated the orb, and felt the power flowing into his body. Then through him to one of his spaces.

Little Butterfly was vibrating with excitement as the knowledge was shared with her at the same time Karl learned the spell. This was a much better version of her [Illusionary Domain], except that there was nothing at all in it. It was just a flat piece of stone with no life until it was shaped.

Somewhat like the Beast Spaces were before the beasts started to upgrade them.

She could fix that, though.

[Tiny World] creates a separate space linked to the creator. Its location may be linked to an object or spatial coordinate. Only one Tiny World may be activated by the caster at a time.

Rae cheered in Karl's mind, and he wondered what she was so excited about. She couldn't use the spell.

[It's a Dana Space!] Karl blinked slowly. She wasn't wrong. Technically, it was very close to a beast space that he could put Dana in, but not quite the same.

Cara was already making plans for the tiny world. If they were going to keep the Dana in there, it would need playing spaces, and treasures to sleep on, and some plants.

Jones watched Karl as he tried to calm down the beasts. "It seems your bonded partners are quite excited about the concept."

Karl nodded. "Yeah, they have big plans for it. As long as living creatures can exist in the Tiny World, that is."

Jones nodded. "Yes, but with some limitations. The tiny world only holds so much air. Unless you open it every few days, or keep living plants in there, they would suffocate eventually. If you keep it open just a little, it will naturally balance itself to the outside world, but that does run the risk of dangerous things or enemies gaining access."

"Well, I have to say, for a Dragon's hoard, it's a perfect spell. Cara, the Winged Void Badger also appreciates a good hoard of treasures." The dragon laughed. "Yes, they do tend to be fascinated by

shiny things and rare magic. Just be careful letting her play, as a strong enough [Nullify] spell will cause the space to collapse and dump everything out on the ground, forcing you to reactivate it and put everything back.

That only works from inside, so be cautious about similar creatures trying to get inside."

"Got it. No nullifying the space. I think that we can live with that. Now, should we go back and reveal your majestic new form to the world?"

Jones sighed and settled to the ground with a large chunk of ore in his front claws.

"Give me a week or two. I need to rest and stabilize after my advancement. We're far enough out to sea that nothing but a few sea monsters will have noticed my advancement, but there will surely be an uproar in the city when I return.

Tell Mist and Rain that I'm on vacation for a week, would you? They get worried if I don't come by for tea at least once or twice a week." He requested.

"Of course. I will see you again soon."

One more Totem Rank local would thoroughly change the power dynamics in the Castle, but Karl had no expectations that Jones would honour a demand for him to move out of his little suburban house.

Chapter 840 Portal Home

Karl focused on the front gates of the Dryad's house, and then cast [Portal]. The spell took a surprising amount of mana, more than five times what a Monarch Ranked attack spell would take. No wonder mages didn't use this spell casually, it would nearly drain a Royal Rank mage in one casting, and a Commander would struggle to use it at all without help.

The older Dryad came out as soon as the portal opened, then paused in confusion as Karl stepped out and waved at her.

"Oh, Overlord Karl! How are you liking your new Guild House?" She asked.

"It is wonderful, thank you. You did an excellent job. I actually stopped by to tell you that Jones is on vacation for the next week or two. He didn't want you to worry when he didn't join you for tea." "Oh, that is very thoughtful of him. Thank you for taking time out of your day to come all the way over here. If you see my daughter, send her back, would you? We just had an order come in, and she's over at your place having a play date with the Green Dragon Cleric. Flower? Lotus. Yes, Lotus was her name."

Karl smiled. "I will see what I can do. You might end up with both of them instead, but I will let Rain know that there is work to do at home."

Karl had only been gone an hour or so. It would not be easy to separate them if the two had just started on whatever they had planned for the rest of the day.

Karl walked back to the house instead of using [Portal] again, intending to surprise everyone. But there were surprises waiting for him as well.

The property's back wall was now lined with tall trees, and Lotus stood in tree form behind the well, with dozens of small children playing in the grass.

Rain was up in Lotus' branches, singing to the children, while the rest of the team sat on the front porch with snacks.

Even Davis was on the porch, so they must have no customers at the moment.

"Oh, are we throwing a party?" Karl asked as he walked in the gate. Davis nodded. "Yes. The kids from the elementary school a few blocks south of here got the whole afternoon off because the teacher got sick. The Dean brought her here, and all the kids followed to make sure that her illness would be cured. And well..."

That was all the explanation that they really needed. There were worried children, now there was a party. "Is the teacher well?" Karl asked instead.

"She's resting on the second floor. Apparently, she was exposed to a cursed item on the beach. It must have been washed ashore recently, but the Guards have already sent a team to look for it before anyone else is injured.

Did you get what you were looking for?" Davis replied.

"I did. I'll tell you all about it later."

Then Karl patted Dana on the shoulder and taught her [Portal]. "OH!" She gasped, then jumped into Karl's arms to kiss his face.

"Yep, he definitely found what he was after." Ophelia joked.

Karl sat down with Dana in his arms, then stole caramel popcorn out of her bowl.

"I got a new ability that will be very useful in the future. We can discuss it later. Where there the professors?" He asked.

"They're on the second floor working on the project you assigned them. They were going to come down, but they could only talk about work, so they ended up going back upstairs. Same with the kitchen staff. We have snacks in the storage room, but they're making lunch for everyone instead. The teacher should be healthy and rested again in an hour or two, and then they will likely want the kids to go back to class."

Well, at least the kids got a short break from lessons.

Dana's excitement had her fidgeting in Karl's lap, and while she was in her natural human form, he could have sworn that he heard her purring in happiness.

"Alright, spill. What did you get her?" Ophelia finally demanded, unable to wait until they went back inside to get her answers.

"Portal." Karl stated with a smirk.

"Oh, no wonder she's so happy. She's just lost in her own little world right now." Ophelia laughed.

Wendy and Loros both nodded in agreement. Dana was definitely in a world of happiness right now. Portal was the peak of convenient mage skills. A Mage that could use Portal was indispensable to any group.

But more importantly, now that she had [Portal] they could actually go back to the Golden Dragon Nation any time that they wanted. All she had to do was fill her accessories with Mana, and she should have enough to be able to get there. If that wasn't possible, then even making a two hop route, where she stopped on one of the other continents in the middle, would be fine.

Exile was now an optional state.

It was an empowering feeling. They weren't trapped anywhere, and they could explore and return freely. Their merchant trip across Newbon would have been a different experience if they could just use a portal to get from location to location. Hawk had the same idea. If they went up to his maximum altitude, they could travel hundreds of kilometres just with line of sight. You had to know where a Portal was going, but if you could see it, that had to be just as good.

It might not be the best way to use the skill, but they would be able to record every spot that they stopped, and if they were in a hurry, it would save a significant amount of time if they opened the portal high in the air above the horizon and flew through.

Just fly, portal, fly while the mana recharged. If more than Karl could use it, then they could alternate. But if Karl could use it, then someone else must be able to use it as well. Hawk was reasonably certain that was how the Karl worked.