

Beast Master 871

Chapter 871 Off to Bara

The next morning, the Dwarves came by while Karl and the others were eating breakfast, and joined the group for a large mug of coffee before opening a portal to Bara in the yard.

"The groups start early, and we're in the same time zone as Drodh is. Don't want you to have to go with one of the groups of rejects and leftovers. If you're going to stay in the city and keep running the Dungeon, you should be at the meeting grounds just after dawn. Unless you can find a steady group to go with, that is.

There are plenty who go in to farm the place for loot, but they normally have a full group already. It's the visiting adventurers who go with a small core group of guides that you're looking for.

Just be careful not to get scammed in the future. Some of them will try to charge an exorbitant rate, like they're not getting anything out of the dungeon, or like they could do it without the rest of the group." The oldest of the Dwarves explained.

"Alright. I made a new bow to go with my other gear, in case they preferred a ranged fighter, to go with the melee and magical type beasts. I think that I should have everything that I need." Karl agreed.

"What about healing? I'm sure there are potion shops here in town." The Dwarf replied.

"We are one of the potion shops. Not just healing and mana, but we've got all sorts of utility items as well. The anti-aging cream is a big hit. And it does actually work." Karl explained.

"Anti-aging that works?" The old Dwarf asked.

"A rejuvenation potion that brings skin and muscle tissue back to its base state, the way that it was as a Juvenile. The more that you use it, the more dramatically the body's state will change."

The Dwarf chuckled, then stopped walking toward the portal. "How about you get me some of that. The Missus might appreciate it, or she might get mad, and I'll have a bit of extra entertainment for the day."

One of the others sighed. "He only says that because he's a Totem, and she can't kick his ass. It's the rest of us who suffer when he gets her in a bad mood."

Karl reached into the crates in Remi's space and picked out a bottle of the cream, then handed it to the old Dwarf. "Either use it directly on problem areas, or dilute a bit with water to use as a body wash for all around improvement." Karl offered.

"The Missus is two hundred and ten years old. Most likely, she will need to slather it on like burn cream to have it make any difference." The old man joked.

Remi laughed in Karl's mind at the thought. Some of their customers had done just that, and it had temporarily suppressed the Rank of one of the Wrath Demons down a level due to the amount her body had regressed.

"Try it as a body wash first. The effect lasts for nearly a month on most species. If she uses it every day for a week, you'll have a much more youthful looking wife."

Then Karl snagged a small bottle of hair regrowth serum from Remi's space.

"If you take one shot glass of that, she'll have a more youthful looking husband as well." He whispered, just loud enough that the others could hear.

The old man chuckled, then took a swig straight from the potion bottle.

The bald top to his hair began to grow at a visible pace, and his beard filled in to a thick and luxurious mass, leaving loose beard hairs all around his formerly immaculate braid.

It didn't change his hair colour from snow-white, though.

The other stared in amazement as the old man looked down into the well, using it as a mirror to see the change.

"Well, now I'm not sure if she'll recognize me. But I've got to fix my beard. I can't be wandering around like this."

Karl chuckled and pointed to the house. "There are full-length mirrors in the second floor common shower room."

The dwarf turned and pocketed the potions into his inventory before anyone could try to grab them from him, then trundled back inside.

The Shaman in the group sighed and closed the portal, as it had already been open too long for courtesy.

"I guess a minute or two won't matter." He muttered, checking his watch.

They surely had better things to do today than escort Karl around, or wait for an old man to braid his beard. But, those were the minor hazards of being around the Darklight Host.

He came back surprisingly quickly, with his hair in a long braid down his back, and his beard split into three braids, a thick central one, and two smaller side braids running down his cheeks and hanging to the sides of his chest.

"Alright, now we can go. If you need more products from this shop, you can order them from the branch manager." The old man insisted, now eager to get headed back and surprise his wife.

The portal opened into absolute darkness, allowing Karl's vision to quickly switch to Thermal Imaging and Echolocation, along with Soul Sight.

The overlay of the three was almost as good as regular vision, but the colours were entirely different, and some of the moving objects here had no soul image at all.

"Do the dwarves use many Golems and Automatons?" Karl asked as they walked out of the room and into a dimly lit corridor.

"Yes, how did you know?" The old man asked.

"Soul Sight. There are moving creatures that are not living."

The Dwarves nodded. "The new ones have some improvements. We put heat pads on them so that night sight of other species can find them more easily. But we forgot for a moment that you might not have the same level of night vision that we do."

Karl smiled. "No worries. I can see without any light at all. As well as in the middle of the day, in fact. Just not quite the same."

The Dwarves nodded happily. It was good when visitors adapted quickly to the city. If they had to go buy him a night vision amulet from the tourist shops, it would be a huge waste of time, as they hadn't come in at the public platform, but a private one, mostly used for travel within the city itself.

Chapter 872 Bara Dungeon Teams

The old Dwarf stopped at a house a few blocks up and knocked on the door, then waited, while the others tried not to laugh.

The door opened and an ancient woman, bent with age, glared out at him. "Go away, we're not buying." She insisted, then slammed the door in his face.

The old man knocked again, and the woman huffed as she opened the door, then stepped away to let him inside.

"His mother-in-law. We can go to the dungeon staging area now. I will show you the public portal's location, so you know where to arrive next time, and then help you set up a group." The shaman who had cast their portals for them explained.

That revelation completely changed the way Karl understood the Dwarves' interaction. Karl had thought that was his wife at first, but if it was his mother-in-law slamming the door in his face and then relenting, not his wife not recognizing him, it became much more amusing.

"The Dungeon formed on the outer surface of the Mountain, so the staging areas are just inside the entrance, near the public portals.

That helps reduce the need for bright lights throughout the city, but you will find that most of the items closest to the entrance are overpriced, and intended for the gullible or extremely wealthy.

Not that you're likely to be short on money, being an Overlord Ranked craftsman, but the Dungeon Gate is less popular among locals as a shopping district than the deep gate, forty levels below us, which comes out on the west side of the river." The Shaman explained.

That would also explain why Karl was seeing so many other species in this area. Even if the city was primarily Dwarven, the outer regions were more hospitable to other species than the inner parts of the city, where the oppressive weight of the stone and the depths would bear down on their minds.

Karl was still at home in the city the same way he was in the mines, but he could see that many of the other species didn't like to stray too far from the light.

"This is the staging area for groups, and that building with the stepped double spiral pillars covers the Portal. If you follow me this way, I will introduce you to a few of the better group leaders." The Shaman led Karl to a group of Dwarves that were standing around with four nervous looking dragonkin.

"Thomas, good timing. Do you still have a spot left? We made a new friend in Drodh, and he's got a pass for free entry." The Shaman greeted the leader of the team, a stout Dwarven Paladin with long red hair.

"Shaman Petros. It's not often that the Council makes friends with the Demons, so this one must be special." The Paladin replied in an even tone.

"He's a Runemaster, and he can write Dwarven Mystic Runes." The Shaman replied.

The whole group turned to look at Karl, and one of the Dragonkin rumbled in amusement, a very draconic noise.

"So, he's not a Demon at all. Only a Dwarf's offspring could make Dwarven Runes work. But a true Runemaster? Council Shaman, Slate Petros, you have found exceptional luck today." The jet black haired Dragonkin girl noted with a smile.

"You don't sound surprised?" Thomas, the Paladin leading the group, asked.

The dragon Priestess winked at him. "I am a High Priestess of the Death God. There are few things that I don't know."

Karl smiled. "Is it that, or is it that Dragons gossip incessantly and Nacht already told your Bishop?"

The Priestess began to laugh, amusement dancing in her eyes.

"Nachtia, youngest niece of Nacht, of the Divine Beast Nation. Welcome, to the Dragon Isles, fellow Exile." She replied, and briefly pulsed with pure draconic power, letting Karl know that she was not, in fact, a dragonkin, but a purebred black dragon.

"Oh, so it's firsthand gossip." Karl laughed.

"You know her?" One of the other dragonkin asked, curious about the interaction.

"I know her Uncle. In fact, I was there when he met the requirements to become a Black Dragon Ancient." Karl offered.

"He's an Ancient now. Damn, I had wanted to be there for the inheritance. Who got it? Has the inheritance awakened, or are they still waiting for the God's attention?"

Karl shrugged. "I have no idea what the status of the Inheritance is now. I haven't heard about it being activated yet. But that doesn't mean it didn't happen."

The other dragonkin were getting excited about a lore drop on their reclusive companion, but Thomas was all business.

"We will take Overlord Karl with the group for this trip. Even if we weren't short a member for the day, he's got a free entry pass." The Dwarf insisted, as if that settled everything.

Shaman Petros laughed. "Yes, that does make it easier for him to find a group, does it not? Few will turn down the chance for a free group entry. But compared to the value of the trade we made, it's nothing."

Now the Dwarves were all fascinated. It was not cheap to get a ten-person group into the Overlord Ranked Dungeon, nearly equal to a ten percent tax on your gains. If your group was incompetent, it could be a losing day for you.

The Shaman nodded in satisfaction, then simply turned and left, his duty done. He had more to do today, and the group leader would show Karl the rest of what he needed to know.

"Alright, what are your skills?" The Paladin asked, wondering where Karl should be in their lineup.

"I am a Beast Master, so I have a small group of beasts with me. But I also have Golems, Bodyguard type summons, as well as ranged and melee damage skills.

It might be best to let the beasts out after we're inside, but there is a Ghostfire Thunderbird, a Blood Destruction Demonic Spider, and a Void Badger, all at Overlord Rank." Karl explained.

The dragonkin stared at him for a moment, and the Dwarves were suspiciously silent.

It was Thomas who broke the silence. "You brought a Void Badger here. To an entire mountain filled with gems and shiny objects?"

Chapter 873 But Did She Care?

Karl smiled at the Dwarf. "I know that it sounds bad, but I promise that she has been taught all about property rights, and the difference between purchasing and looting." "Did she care?" Thomas asked.

Karl shook his head. "Not particularly. But she's willing to listen, at least long enough to find out what sort of shiny objects she can purchase with the ones that she already has. You see, we made out rather well with the Bomgon Fleet, and she is not short on loot."

The Dwarves and the Dragonkin laughed at that. "A badger that has enough loot? That's like saying you know a Dryad who doesn't like flowers, or a vegetarian snake."

[I feel understood and appreciated.] Cara agreed, putting her paws over her heart as if touched by their words.

"How about this. For now, I will keep her in a separate space, and purchase the things that she wants on her behalf? Inside the dungeon, everyone will abide by the rules, though I'm told that this one assigns loot automatically at the end. So that shouldn't be an issue." Karl suggested.

Thomas nodded in agreement, then asked. "What skill advanced when she reached Overlord Rank?"

"Void Blast. Don't worry, our damage output should be more than sufficient." Karl replied.

The Paladin stared at him for a few seconds. "You're saying that your Void Badger doesn't have Void Shield, but Void Blast?"

Karl frowned. "She never had [Void Shield]. She had [Disintegration] when she was little, and then when she reached Overlord, the combination of her skills and mine advanced it to the Epic Grade skill [Void Blast] at Totem Rank.

But now that you have mentioned it, she really wants [Void Shield]. One of my other beasts has [Eternal Lightning], a holy and lightning Element barrier ability, and a void elemental version of that sounds excellent to Cara."

The Paladin sighed. "You have no idea how long I worked to get the Holy Barrier skill. It's even above consecrated ground in my skill tree. In some ways, beasts have it easy, starting out with powerful innate skills.

But no more dilly-dallying. Let's get a move on and get into the Dungeon. On a good day, it takes four hours to get through, so I'm expecting no more than six hours." Cara and Rae laughed in their spaces. Six hours to finish a dungeon? Oh, this man was in for a surprise. His little Dwarven legs were going to be working hard today.

Thomas grabbed Karl and led him to the dungeon to get their free entry, where the guard handed Karl a token. "Keep this on your person, to save time in the future. It is your dungeon pass. Just flash it and you can lead your group inside." The guard explained, then smiled at the Dwarves.

"Overlord Thomas, it seems you had some good luck today with a member calling out sick. See you after lunch." They entered the dungeon, which was an ancient Dark Elven forest, filled with the same sort of mushroom trees that had been in the dungeon where Thor first got the rare grasses he liked so much.

They were only inside a few seconds when the little butterfly sent out a pair of illusionary Dana clones, who uprooted small mushrooms, then vanished with them back into the Beast Space.

"Alright, bring out your beasts, and let's meet them. Then summon any other constructs and protectors you have. That means all of you. I know the mages should have Golems as well." Thomas insisted.

Karl brought out Hawk, Rae and Cara. Then summoned the Bodyguards, as Rae remembered that she had to be visible for people to remember that she existed. The Epic Guard came out last, and then Karl decided to try summoning Golems as well.

Rae could do it, so he could do it. He just hadn't.

{Please select basic bestial form} Karl blinked as a display with hundreds of common animals appeared in his vision. He hadn't been expecting that. But what golem form would be best?

{Dire Bear selected}

A pair of three tonne giant black bears appeared, but they were clearly constructs, not living beings. The other group members watched all the summons and constructs appear around the Beast Master after the Beasts came out, and Nachtia shook her head in dismay.

"That's just broken. You've got an entire army with you, and they're all Overlords."

Karl laughed. "No, I can make an actual army, and it's even more ridiculous. But they're not really combat troops." Thomas smiled. "I would like to see it anyhow, so it's not a surprise if you need to use it."

Karl focused on [Illusionary Domain] and created twenty clones of the Dwarf standing in two Ranks with their shields up in a protective formation. Then he extended [Eternal Lightning] over them and nodded in satisfaction.

Thomas brushed his beard a bit straighter, as he realized that Karl had even duplicated the strands that had escaped his braid.

"Is that a group barrier skill?" Thomas asked.

"Yeah, I'll put it over everyone when we're ready to start fighting. But I can't keep it active on a whole army of illusions for long. I just cast it, then let it wear off with combat. But if we're going to loot some of the ore before going, they're good for that." Karl offered.

The other Dwarves nodded. "No harm in a bit of extra looting. The ore is the only thing in here that isn't at least vaguely offensive.

Now, the first thing that we will come across is a nest of Spiderlings. They're nasty, and everything in here is Overlord Ranked. There are no weak monsters in here, only large and small ones.

Karl, you can join the mages on ranged damage duty, while two of your beasts join the melee group. If the Thunderbird can avoid flying too high, that would be best. Sometimes you can pull extra groups accidentally if you fly over their airspace."

[Use the Thor shrink on me.] Hawk insisted.

[Unobtrusive Behemoth] Shrunk Hawk to a three-metre wingspan. Still large, but in a city, that was much more manoeuvrable than a thirty-metre body.

"Oh, that is perfect. Alright, I think everyone knows their role. What attacks should we expect from the beasts, other than Miss Cara, unless she has more unexpected skills." Thomas continued.

"Lady Rae has a skill to make her incorporeal and immune to physical damage, as well as invisibility. The spider shaped Golems are hers, so they will follow her lead in combat. Also, she has [Blood Destruction], which can be used at a range, and will get messy.

Hawk will be using fire."

That simple description was enough for them to understand the basics of what was about to happen, but when Thomas moved the group to engage the Spiderlings' nest, what he found was like nothing he had ever seen before.

Rae had activated [Demonic Oppression] and the weaker Spiders were cowering in terror, avoiding attacking the area where Rae was, and visible less aggressive than any Dungeon Monster should be.

Karl fired a [Void Blast] enhanced arrow into one side, while Hawk dove and bombarded the other with fireballs, setting the webs on fire and scorching the Spiderlings.

The destruction was instant, and Karl didn't even get a chance to see how good the lingering poison effect would be.

"Well, that was different. Apparently, they're terrified of your Lady Rae." Nachtia joked.

"Everyone is terrified of her." One of the other Dragonkin muttered.

Everyone except Thomas, who only looked pleased at the clearance speed as he led them forward.

Chapter 874 Spiders and Dark Elves

The next group had a pair of Dark Elves riding on spiders, leading the group of Spiderlings. While the Elves didn't hesitate to engage, their mounts balked for a moment before obeying, giving the ranged

fighters a half second longer than usual to prepare before being engaged by the insanely agile combatants.

The Spider Riders leaped straight over the defenders and went for the ranged fighters, only for one to be bombarded with spells, while the other had its rider stripped by Hawk, who twirled in the air, adjusting to the weight, then lit the Dark Elf on fire and hurled it into the nest where the Dire Bear Golems were waiting for it.

The Elf put up a valiant fight, but against two Dire Bears and already covered in Ghostfire, it was a losing battle.

One of the Dragonkin intercepted the spider, stopping its flight, while the ranged fighters focused on killing it.

Then they could turn their attention to the Spiderlings, which were fighting the melee group and the golems.

The pure number of monsters would make it difficult for a small group to survive in here. They had over a dozen golems and summons active, and they were all fighting multiple Spiderlings at the start of the engagement.

"Ranged, pull the next group to us. This spot is more defensible, and there are groups on either side of that intersection." Thomas instructed.

"Hawk has it." The bird grabbed a dying Spiderling and hurled it off the wall across the street, letting it bounce into the group hiding around the corner.

That was something that most spells couldn't do. In general, spells were line of sight in nature, and firing them blind around a corner was possible, but difficult. Plus, if you missed, or the group didn't see you, it wouldn't engage.

In general, spells were line of sight in nature, and firing them blind around a corner was possible, but difficult. Plus, if you missed, or the group didn't see you, it wouldn't engage.

That allowed you to bombard it from out of sight, but that would take all day.

However, the dying Spiderling knew exactly where it came from, and the bombarded group ran to provide support, just as Hawk had hoped.

Thomas smiled as he saw the group of Elves with three spider riders in the back charge down the street and towards them.

"Good work, bird. There is a mage in this group. Focus him down first." The Paladin called.

Rae [Shadow Stepped] behind the group and grabbed the mage, which then exploded into a dark red mist.

Karl had to admire her restraint. She made it two whole groups before she made something explode.

The surprise attack distracted the attackers just before the Dwarven Warriors charged. They slammed into the troops, while the ranged fighters targeted the Spider Riders.

It was an efficient clearance, and the Dwarven Shaman who was doing the majority of their healing was using a long duration healing spell that was keeping everyone in top form, even when they happened to take enough damage that the [Eternal Lightning] barrier briefly broke.

The amount of damage that these Elves could do with their deep black blades that seemed to absorb the light around them was impressive. For so many fights, Karl and Thor had rarely worried about the barrier being broken. But now Karl was using the majority of his mana regeneration to keep them active, and the rest on firing arrows.

22:37

He wasn't the primary damage dealer this time, unless you counted his beasts and summons. It was a great relief for the healers, as the secondary healer was a Black Dragon Cleric, and her specialty was not healing, but adding damage buffs to others. Between that and casting Shadow magic for damage, she was still busy, but they were getting by with just the one Shamanistic healer and Karl's barriers.

They were also moving through the fights at a remarkably fast pace, as far as Karl could tell. Thomas was having Hawk pull groups directly to them to continue fighting in the same location, and Hawk could get them moving before the previous fight had even ended.

Five groups into the fight at that location, Thomas held up his hand, signalling a pause between groups. "Take a breather and keep hydrated. This isn't like those short thirty minute dungeons, we will be in here long enough to need at least one meal and a few hydration breaks." He declared.

That was wonderful news for Rae. She could be in a dungeon all day long and still have things to kill, plus inferior spider species to bully? This place was incredible.

Even Hawk approved. Spiderlings and their webs burned in a most beautiful way.

Once the water break was over, Thomas led them to another intersection, and then had Rae pull the next group. Once they had followed her into combat, Hawk could pull the ones that came after, so nobody needed to leave their station. But without other dungeon mobs in combat to lure them in, or having Hawk move into range of the Elves magic, attacking and retreating could fail to pull them away from their position.

That would not be true if Rae and her golems went on the attack, however.

"Just remember, bring them back to us. It's faster that way." The Dwarf reminded her, as Rae laughed in Karl's head.

They had only known each other for under an hour, and the Dwarf already understood her.

They had only known each other for under an hour, and the Dwarf already understood her.

Not just her, but Hawk and Cara as well. She had even caught the Paladin holding an Elf's sword arm so that Cara could use [Pilfer] before killing the unfortunate warrior.

"Why is the Void Badger so confident in battle? Is she used to fighting with your barriers active?" One of the Dragonkin mages asked.

Karl smiled. "She is, but she is like that all the time. You see, a Winged Void Badger has a racial equivalent of Limited Immunity, and an incredibly large health pool. If you can't do ten percent of her health in a strike, you can't hurt her. Plus, we managed to upgrade it, so she heals at the same rate at [Trollish Regeneration]."

The mage looked impressed.

"The Beast Master Class is truly terrifying."

Chapter 875 Clearance Speed

Rae pulled the first group to them, and Karl noticed that the formation had shifted, as had the incoming targets.

These were all Dark Elves, with a cleric and two mages behind six warriors.

At this point, everyone knew the routine. Let Rae eat the cleric while they focused on the mages.

It was a tried and true method, as the Spider Priests, as the Dwarves Called the Dark Elven Clerics, were similar to the Black Dragon Clerics, in that their specialty was buffing their allies, not in directly healing.

However, they did have an excellent life steal spell that Rae was hoping to gain by osmosis.

Now, under normal circumstances, that would be an absolutely ridiculous idea. But this was Rae, Queen of Blood Magic. If anyone could learn a skill simply by eating enough creatures that had the skill, it would be her.

Plus, it looked like these Dark Elves worshipped a Spider Goddess, so that was an extra point in her favour.

If the spell was a blessing from their God, Rae might just gain it as a form of divine blessing.

Hawk grabbed another group, while Rae patiently waited on the wall of a building for their Cleric to pass by.

The moment that it did, she pounced, tearing it apart and then eating the pieces.

"What is the spider doing?" One of the beastkin asked in a terrified, pleading tone as the pieces of Cleric seemed to simply vanish into thin air.

"She's incorporeal. Don't worry about it too much, she will be fine, and she's not taking damage." Karl replied casually.

That didn't answer the question, but Rae was close to a breakthrough. She could feel the skill that she was after, and with some practice, she knew that she would eventually get the life stealing effect right. But if she could find a few more targets, it would be much faster.

Why she actually needed the skill was a mystery. [Night Hunter] came with incredible regenerative powers in incorporeal form. Plus, Karl already knew a [Life Steal] skill that she could use, just not this particular one.

Rae was happy, though. And that was what really mattered.

Then, on one pull, the mages retreated behind a barrier and were attempting to cast a major group spell of some sort.

"Karl, reinforce the barrier. This effect uses all their mana, and it's been known to kill multiple party members if the healing over the duration isn't high enough." Thomas insisted.

Karl nodded, but didn't change the barrier.

[Cara, you're up.] [They've got like ten seconds left in the casting. Eight, six, four, NOPE! Muahaha.]

Everyone watched as the mages finished their chant and threw their hands up in the air. Then... nothing.

The mages looked just as shocked and confused as the rest of the group.

"Winged Void Badger! She can [Nullify] at the Overlord Rank." Karl shouted to the warriors in front, so they didn't leave their positions.

The Dark Elves didn't seem to understand, but the mages were exhausted. A single flick with Cara's claw took down their barrier, and then the Badger was on them, pummelling them into the dirt and pulling their robes up over their heads to stop them from being able to properly fight back.

The Dragonkin didn't seem to know how to respond to that, but the Dwarves thought it was brilliant.

"Yeah, Jersey them and sucker punch to the face. Oh, is that a Void Blast on her fist?" The healing Shaman cheered.

"Cara is known for her creative fighting style." Karl agreed.

"I swear that every badger type magical beast has the soul of a hooligan who pleased the gods trapped in them." The Black Dragon Cleric laughed.

They finished with another group of the mages in under a minute, as after the first time, Cara simply nullified their barrier and let Rae in with her Golems. The Elves had insane magical power, but the group had a Cara. Once that was factored in, the Dark Elves really did stand no chance against the dynamic duo.

"For the boss ahead, the best option is to slow them down as much as possible. What do we have for options today?" Thomas asked as they finished with the mages and took a breather for a drink and a light snack.

The mages listed the basics. [Slow], and [Paralyze]. "Well, I can have Rae wrap it up in Overlord Rank webbing, that should slow it down. Or I can create an Ice or Lightning barrier on the ground. That will make things spicy." Karl suggested.

"How about a big fat 'no' to turning the entire boss encounter into a skating rink?" The Shaman suggested.

"So, Lightning? It's a wall type spell, but nothing says that you have to extend it upwards. If we can get the boss to leap or move, I can create the sheet of Lightning under its feet.

It won't hurt group members, but Lightning has a [Stun] effect when enemies are standing in it." Karl offered.

Technically, he had two options. Thor knew [Lightning Zone] and [Blockade]. The Blockade skill covered a much larger area, though. At least it did if you only made it a few centimetres thick.

Thomas shook his head. "The reason we need to slow it is so the Warriors can keep it from flying around. Encouraging it not to land only makes things worse for us. The spider silk trap seems like a viable option, and we can try to slow or paralyze it, but the boss monsters are highly resistant to negative spell effects."

The group nodded, and the warriors worked on a plan. "Alright, Rae will wrap it, keep it near the ground. The buildings at the edge should make good anchors if you need to tie the webs off. But we suspect that the boss will cut through them fast enough, that it is all you'll be doing. Cara, nullify the more powerful spells.

Mages, no fire and nothing that will shred the webs if you can avoid it.

The warriors have a shorter attack range, so we will do what we can. But primarily, we are there as a meat shield to protect the mages from the wrath of the boss while they bring it down." Thomas announced.

"Got it. We will spread around the area, so it can't attack us all at once, and Karl can focus on restoring the barriers of whoever has its attention." The Shaman agreed.

Thomas smiled. "I have a taunt ability, which will keep it on me for a while. Just do as much damage as you can while it's distracted."

Chapter 876 Boss Down

Unlike other boss monsters that they had faced in the past, this one was not any larger than the average dark elf. It looked just like any other Elven Warrior, other than the more elaborate armour, but the sense of danger Karl got was much higher.

Thomas nodded and led the group into battle, using his [Taunt] to draw the target's attention to him. However, with the power of the boss, Karl could see that it wasn't completely devoted to attacking him, and was still positioning itself to watch the rest of the group. It simply viewed him as the largest threat.

For a moment.

Rae launched a stream of Overlord Rank webbing that stuck to the boss as it tried to fight, and then the spells began as the warriors charged into melee range.

The sticky silk webbing was much better than anyone could have hoped for. With the boss forced to deal with repeated attacks from close range, there was no chance to tear it all away, which left it essentially tethered to Rae. She took advantage of that fact to periodically pull the boss off balance, but never off its feet, so that it didn't stop attacking to tear the silk all the way off.

Then the boss exploded with power, and the web was obliterated instantly, while the boss leapt into the air and began to cast a spell.

Karl fired a volley of arrows into him as Cara interrupted his spell with [Nullify]. The boss immediately tried again, only to be interrupted once more.

It wasn't going to stand for that, and fired a hailstorm of small metal darts at Cara, who countered with a [Void Blast]. The winged void badger stuck out her tongue at the boss as she also leapt into the air and began to circle.

They were instant mortal enemies, and she loved it.

The boss tried another spell, only to be countered and blasted with a volley of spells and arrows from their ranged members.

This was definitely not the usual way of fighting the boss. But even when Thomas tried to use [Taunt] the boss only fired a single spell at him before returning his attention to Cara.

The Dark Elf shimmered, and then appeared behind Cara, who turned on him in a ball of angry, growling fur.

They were circling too fast for most of the mages to get a clear line of sight for their spells anywhere in that direction, but Rae's Golems darted in and out, stabbing the enemy while Rae waited for the right moment to ensnare him again.

Cara shifted to attack the boss's face, and Rae took the opportunity. She snared the Boss' feet and pulled him down, crashing to the ground, where he was set upon by the warriors.

"Angry badger is bloody terrifying." The Dwarven Shaman noted.

"It's as if she's everywhere at once, isn't it? And being so close like that, you can't even use a blade on her." Karl agreed.

Once the boss was on the ground, it died remarkably quickly. The warriors held its arms down, and Cara [Nullified] all its attempts to break free with its explosion of power as she held the boss's collar and beat his face with [Void Blast] enhanced slaps.

A chime sounded through the Dungeon as the boss was defeated, and Thomas smiled.

"That's one zone down. We're half done with the dungeon now. This is the first real chance to leave the instance, as if you leave before defeating the first boss, you get no loot.

If you leave now, you get half, and that's a big loss, but if things have gone wrong, at least you won't lose money for the day." He explained.

Karl mentally calculated the time, as he could see others doing. They were way ahead of schedule.

"Now, the second half is basically the same as the first, except that there is more of everything. Many new groups fall into a routine after the first half, but that is dangerous. Starting from now, we will split the melee duties into three groups. One controls the Spiderlings, one deals with the Elves, one with the Spider Riders. Do we have any preferences before I assign roles?" Thomas continued.

Rae transformed to humanoid for a moment and gave him a sharp - toothed smile. "I want the spider Priestesses. As long as you put me in that group, I am happy."

Then she transformed back into her natural state and the Paladin nodded. "Alright, we have our damage dealers for the Elves. I will join her with them, as they are the most difficult, due to their intelligence.

Karl, Hawk, Cara and Nachtia, you are on Spiderling duty. You all have the best area damage abilities. Everyone else will start with the Spider Riders, and then move to the Elves." Thomas decided.

He led the way again, with Rae using [Night Hunter] to climb through the fungi trees without attracting attention.

Every so often, an illusion would appear and cut down or pluck something to bring to the butterfly, but nobody in the group seemed to notice or care. Those items had no real value for trade, so if someone needed them, they were welcome to them.

Karl had the bear Golems block the Spiderlings as they were burnt and bombarded to death. Then, Hawk got tired of doing things normally, and decided that stacking [Hellstorm] vortexes for additional suction was a better way to collect the Spiderlings.

It worked wonderfully, as they were Overlord Ranked, but only a few kilos in weight, with no good way to anchor themselves to the ground after their webs were burnt. Unlike Rae, their legs weren't bladed, they were just chitinous limbs.

So, all the Spiderlings ended up in the fire, where Karl and Nachtia bombarded them with spells to accelerate the process.

That had their part of the battle finished well before any of the others, so Hawk moved to deal with the Spider Riders, who were fun to pull from their mounts and hurl at Rae. Karl and Nachtia turned their attention to the Elves, who had higher numbers, and the group was quickly corralled. "Excellent. Just like that. The next few groups are the same."

Chapter 877 Let Them Cook

The next few pulls went smoothly, with [Hellstorm] gathering all the Spiderlings into one spot for elimination. They were mostly a nuisance to most groups, but eliminating them from the equation freed up the whole group to deal with the Elves, and prevented the Priests from buffing the Spiderlings so they could do real damage to the adventurers.

Not that Rae let them live that long.

That was the great thing about Dungeons. You could use the same trick over and over because the next group never learned them, as long as you ended the fight before you drew their attention.

It might not be the most realistic situation in the real world, where groups would communicate. But if the Dungeon mobs did communicate, and they had a whole city of Dark Elves coming at them the moment they entered, not many groups would survive a dungeon run.

Rae naturally thought it would be fun to try, and Cara was sure that it would be hilarious to herd them all into an elaborate trap. But the rest of the group would definitely not agree with their ideas of 'fun'.

"Alright, this next group is a nightmare. As soon as you pull the first one, it triggers the others, and they will keep coming until everything is dead. It's a Guard Garrison, so mostly Dark Elven warriors, no Spiderlings. Then as soon as that ends, the boss will appear in the middle of that courtyard. Normally, we pull them here, so we have a chance to take a break before the boss. But you all look like you're in good shape today, so I say that we fight in the middle of the courtyard, and use area damage to deal with the waves of warriors.

The final boss is a Spider Priestess. So, expect self-healing, unholy spell attacks if Cara can't block them all, and under no circumstances should anyone without a shield try to take a blow from her staff. The damage is incredible, and it has a petrification effect.

It doesn't trigger through a shield, but if your armour gets touched, even a barrier effect won't stop it.

Everyone got it?" Thomas asked.

The group nodded in the affirmative, and took a short drink before following him forward.

"I will apologize for the lack of visibility in advance. I have an area attack spell, but it's hard to see through." Karl warned.

They got into position, and Thomas used [Taunt] to grab a group of warriors, starting the battle.

Then Karl activated [Apocalypse], filling the air with a flaming blizzard as Hellstorm vortexes formed at random around the group. Then, meteors began to fall from the sky, and Thomas cursed.

"Are you insane?" He shouted.

Hawk began calling even more vortexes as he added his own flaming blizzard to the mix, making it impossible to see more than ten metres.

Then Karl used Thor's [Consecrated Ground] buff to guard the group. It would reduce damage, and increase Holy attacks, if anyone had them. But most importantly, it would deal area Holy Damage to any enemies that made it past the Apocalypse.

Karl took a knee and focused on regenerating mana as he pushed the spell output upwards and Elves began to flood the training grounds.

The spell's radius was too large, and they had grabbed everything, but the Dark Elves couldn't see where they were. They were running blindly into the storm, while the adventurers did their best to attack.

Even Rae was waiting with the group, so she didn't catch friendly fire.

It was a good time to practice rapidly deploying [Blood Destruction], which did even more area damage and confused the dungeon residents as to the direction they were under attack from.

"They've figured it out." Thomas warned as the first few warriors made it past the ring of Hellstorm Vortexes.

They were in terrible shape, and under attack by the mages, but charging into combat.

Fortunately, the storm and the meteor impacts were so loud that the remaining enemies couldn't clearly hear the calls for assistance. Or, they could hear them, but couldn't determine how to get to them.

Karl could feel the number of enemies in the storm rapidly reducing after a few minutes, so either they had retreated to their spots after being unable to engage, or they were all dead.

Either one would be fine by him, and the remaining force was manageable enough, so he let the spell naturally fade as he recovered his mana and prepared for the boss fight.

"You're insane." Thomas noted as he moved to engage the last few burned and battered warriors of the Dark Elven Guard.

"It worked, didn't it? There are bodies everywhere, so we must have gotten most of them."

The group looked around at the scorched ground, craters and blood. It looked like the dungeon had seen the end of the world firsthand. But more than that, they would have to watch where they stepped, as some of those craters were deep.

Deep enough that they could hide in them during the upcoming boss fight if necessary.

Normally, you were caught out in the middle of the courtyard, and had to build any defensive fortifications you might want. But this time, there was a whole series of craters to work with.

The Shaman began setting up small stone walls around the battlefield, and Karl got the idea.

[Blockade] made clear ice walls that you could hide behind, and still keep track of the boss. So, Karl scattered them around as well, further back from the stone walls that the Shaman had created.

Now, they could move around the battlefield, and remain out of the direct line of fire.

"When it erupts with its area attack, get behind a pillar. Cara, we're counting on you for this one." Thomas insisted.

Cara gave him a thumbs up gesture with both paws, and the Dwarf smiled.

Nachtia leaned over to whisper to Karl. "So, that's why everyone fears the Void Badgers. They have opposable thumbs."

The boss suddenly appeared, and the fight was on before Thomas could even react. Karl and Rae's golems all grabbed a limb and attempted, but failed, to pin the Priestess to the ground, while Rae channelled Blood Destruction on it and Cara used the Totem Ranked [Void Blast] to disintegrate chunks of its body.

The golems were replaced every few seconds as they were destroyed by even a glancing blow from the boss Cleric's staff, but it appeared completely overwhelmed.

"Uh..."

Karl shrugged. "Just let them do it. If they need help, they'll tell us. Besides, it has something that Rae wants."

"Something Rae wants?" The Paladin asked as he watched the fight with his shield up.

"Some sort of Life Steal spell exclusive to the Spider God. She's been trying to learn it from the Priestesses all day."

The boss blasted everything away with black Unholy Light, and the group's melee team charged in.

It had shattered [Eternal Lightning] and even did severe damage to Rae and Cara after the reductions from [Void Body] that the Epic Guard shared. But Rae got what she wanted.

{New Spell Learned} [Essence Transfer] Passive Skill. Steals life force from a target's blood. Regenerates the user and reverses the effects of hostile {Time Element} skills.

Karl didn't know of too many Time Element skills, but [Slow] was one, he assumed.

The [Essence Transfer] was a very familiar skill, now that he saw it in action on Rae. It was very likely the same skill that the Blade of Champions used to empower its bearer.

Chapter 878 All The Loot

The High Priestess suffered the most brutal beat down in the recent history of the Bara Dungeon.

Not only did it not manage to get a single major skill off, it was so thoroughly overwhelmed with pure brute force that it was on the defensive for the entire battle.

"Well, ladies and gentlemen. That is the whole run through the dungeon. In double time, as it were. Our total time is only a little over three hours, half what I had expected. Normally four hours is considered a top clear speed for practiced Guild Groups, so I must say that we had an exceptionally efficient day today.

Now, there are a few standards once we get out of the Dungeon. You are not obligated to tell others what you got, and that has turned to a general taboo on asking, unless you're a vendor looking to purchase something.

But there is one more matter. The Darklight Host member has the ability to create mining illusions, and the mountain faces, as well as many of the ore nodules throughout the city, can be mined.

That is one of the primary reasons to do a full clear. If you don't then the designated miners can't work safely.

It is customary to split both the work and the reward in a pickup group if you do it at all. So, I have pickaxes in my inventory.

Today, we have a flying scout who can examine the city for anything we might have missed, like wandering Spiderlings. But I've done this a number of times now, and I am fairly certain that we got it all." Thomas' explanation caught them all off guard. They were going to mine out the dungeon? Only the crafting guilds did that, and none of them saw much benefit in spending hours gathering what was an abundant resource here in Bara City.

Karl and Little Butterfly both sent out a team of Dwarves with pickaxes, two dozen illusions each, with instructions to gather all the ore and gems. The others laughed as they saw the small army headed into the dungeon, with a few starting work only metres away, where a node of ore was growing from the ground behind a tree - sized mushroom.

"I will pile it here if we want to split it. It's just extra materials for our Guild's Grandmaster Elemental Smith." Karl offered.

The others shook their heads. "Don't worry about it. You have the Dungeon Pass, and that already saved us as much as selling those ores will gain. Keep them for your workers, we won't begrudge you that. Especially when you have so many summoned miners to gather it."

"The amount of ore varies from run to run, and it doesn't always appear at the same spots, unlike the basic dungeon features and the enemies, which always appear in the same locations." Thomas explained to Karl as the illusions spread and began piling up the ore in Cara's space with the other loot.

"That explains why a group of Dwarves didn't go straight to a specific spot for the most valuable nodules." Karl realized.

Thomas sighed. "Some stereotypes never fade, do they?" Karl laughed. "Don't think too deeply about it. I grew up in the Lithium mines, and spent most of my childhood deep underground. I know that the appeal of finding a particularly valuable vein, or a surprise inclusion."

The Dwarves all chuckled, and a few of them nodded in agreement. The Dwarves might get annoyed by being stereotyped as miners obsessed with ore and treasure, but it was still generally true.

The illusions spread quickly, and each nodule only took a minute or so to extract the surface ore from. Karl didn't order them to dig deeper to follow the vein, and the butterfly didn't know anything at all about mining, so they moved quickly through the dungeon, then vanished when the job was done.

"Alright, we're good to go. They've finished collecting the surface ore and transferred it to me. There might be more beneath the surface, but this is good enough for me to show the smithy what is available." Karl explained.

Thomas led them all out of the dungeon, and the beasts returned to their spaces. Cara wasn't actually interested in raw ore, but there wasn't a better spot to put it until they got home. Besides, it didn't take up too much space, just a small hill in one corner.

Thomas led the group out of the dungeon and to a quiet pub only a few blocks into the mountain.

The ten members of the dungeon team sat down around a large table, and Thomas ordered a round of drinks.

"Well normally this is where we go over what went wrong, and how to improve for next time, but this run was somewhat unconventional. I can't say that I expect you'll ever have another run like this one in the future, so you can just disregard all the fighting techniques that you learned today, other than the initial group placements.

However, we got a full clear, we're done in time for a proper meal and the newcomers get an afternoon to explore the city. That's all we can ask for." The Paladin insisted.

Karl smiled. "That's a good idea. I should bring things back home to Drodh. Souvenirs for the Guild members."

Thomas chuckled. "Well, don't spend too much on that special lady. International Portals aren't cheap."

Karl laughed. "Well, I don't need to worry too much about that, as I can cast the portal for myself. I just don't know too many locations within the Dragon Isles, so about the only place I can go is here or home."

"After all those other skills, you still have the ability to portal?" One of the Dragonkin asked.

"Yes. A portal is the usual option, though I could use [Recall] instead, as I'm going back home to my Guild House once I'm done here anyhow." Karl remembered.

"Portal and Recall. Whose mother did you sleep with to get that much influence?"

Karl frowned. "Recall wasn't hard to get. I got it as part of a payment from the Lared Royal Academy. I made some gifts for their graduating class.

Portal, well, that was a special circumstance."

The Dragonkin slowly nodded. "That makes sense. Lared created the Recall Stones, so it's not a big deal for them to pass out the spell. But that also means you can come back here at will. That's huge, with your free entry pass."

[He's totally jealous.] Cara laughed.

[Tell them that you made an artifact grade weapon to get the free pass.] Rae suggested.

[I think they're jealous enough. Let's make friends here. Real friends that we can adventure with.]

Chapter 879 Exploring Bara

Another round of drinks was ordered to celebrate their victory in the dungeon today, including the extra fast clearance time. That was always worth celebrating, as it meant that all went smoothly, and nobody had suffered too badly.

For Karl, it had a different meaning as well.

Looking into his inventory now that the run was over, he had a huge amount of Ore in Cara's space, a half dozen mediocre quality Overlord Ranked weapon and armour drops, and one Epic Quality Statue type item. At first, Karl wasn't sure what it was, but when he looked more closely, it was something for Shamans and Priestesses, that boosted their magic. Most classes couldn't use it at all, but Remi could, and she would be sure to appreciate it when he brought it back for her.

And if she didn't want it, Rae did. Not that she could use it, but it was a cute spider statue.

Nachtia turned to Karl as the Dragonkin among the group finished their drinking. "Want to explore the shopping district? I hear it's a bit overpriced compared to the areas deeper in the mountains, but it's still worth a look." She suggested.

Karl got to his feet with a smile. "Of course. I was also warned, but as it's my first time in the city, I need to bring back souvenirs, and that means shopping in the tourist district."

The Black Dragon chuckled. "You make it sound like going deeper into the mountain doesn't freak you out, even a little bit."

Karl shrugged. "I grew up in the mines. You get over claustrophobia fast at the bottom of the main vein."

The moment that they were out of the tavern, the other dragonkin split off, leaving Karl with Nachtia.

"I hope you didn't get the wrong idea, I'm spoken for." Karl explained cautiously.

Nachtia nodded. "Uncle Nacht told me. But honestly, I think that I freak the rest of them out a little bit. The aura of a black dragon is death, and it makes most people uncomfortable to sit too close to me.

You're a bit of an odd one, though. I suspect that it has to do with the spider and the void badger. Between the two, you're already used to strong auras, and darkness related elements.

But the other Dragonkin mostly live among other beastkin, and the black dragons don't socialize much with even their own kin. The ones on the other continent might be different, but here the Black Dragon temples only get visitors for funerals, and impending funerals."

Karl chuckled, and Rae came out to stand next to them in humanoid form.

"I think I like your God. More people should pray properly when they're about to have their funeral." Rae agreed.

The dragon blinked slowly, then shook her head. "The god of Death isn't a god of forgiveness." She offered.

Rae shook her head. "That's not what I meant. Think of all the people with a price on their head. Should they not be praying to the God of Death for at least a quick end? I read in one of the history books how the dragons would pull the scales off a traitor one at a time."

Nachtia looked offended, and Karl thumped Rae on the head. "No talking about fun ways to kill people in public."

Rae sighed, and Nachtia gave her an unimpressed look.

"They stopped using that as a punishment thousands of years ago. But now that you're out and in a form that doesn't scare everyone away, should we go shopping?" Rae smiled back at her. "We simply must go shopping. My sister is waiting for us to get back with an item that we found in the dungeon, and then we need to deliver the ore for the smithy. But this place feels fun. I can sense powerful creatures all over, even in the ocean near the mountain. Will you be hunting later, not in the Dungeon?" "You want to go hunt the magical beasts in the mountains?" Nachtia asked hopefully.

"You too? We definitely need to get together and go hunting. Are there good things?" Rae asked.

Nachtia sighed happily as her mind wandered away.

"We will have to go a fair ways. They have these Monarch and Overlord Ranked Mountain Goats here, but they're livestock, and we're not allowed to eat them, no matter how good they smell.

Dragons have an incredible sense of smell, you know. But further into the mountains, there is a massive inland desert. They have these sand rats. Don't let the name turn you off, they're delicious." She agreed.

[We're going.] Hawk demanded.

[After. We have things to do first.] Karl reminded him.

Hawk wasn't happy about it, but now that he knew that there were still mice at his level, he was willing to be patient until they could go get them. But if he was hunting with a dragon, he even had a flying buddy.

Cara only flew far enough to get snacks or attack pests. She was a lousy flight partner. But a dragon seemed like just the right sort to go for long flights.

Suddenly, Rae grabbed the dragon and pulled her into a group of stalls that were selling beads.

Karl didn't know what she might want with that, as they were clearly just glass beads with the word 'Bara' written on the larger ones at the front. Well, they were good tourist items, as they had the city name on them, but they were the cheapest of the cheap.

The girls came back with matching black beaded bracelets a few minutes later, and then Rae was dragging Nachtia off to another stall that was selling cookies in tins with the view of the mountain as seen from the ocean painted on them.

Then to a shop selling bookmarks.

Then to a shop which was selling little wooden storage boxes that were actually storage devices with a spatial magic storage spell on them.

Those were expensive, but Rae was not deterred. Storage boxes were new ways to organize her treasures, and hide the shining rocks without burying them.

Chapter 880 Nachtia

Karl just followed along behind the pair and did his best not to laugh as Rae dragged her new friend through the shopping district, even stopping to get honey garlic meatball kebabs for her when Nachtia complained that she couldn't keep up this pace forever.

Finally, Nachtia turned to Karl for assistance, and Rae relented. "Fine, we can explore the rest of the shops on this floor of the city another time." She reluctantly agreed.

"You were planning to go to every shop?" The dragon asked, horrified.

"Well, at least walk past it. You never know if they're going to have good stuff on some random side street. But you don't have to go inside all of them to know that they're not interesting. I can smell that most of them aren't." Rae explained.

"That level of dedication is terrifying."

A nearby shopkeeper chuckled, and Rae went over to see what he was selling.

"What do you call this?" She asked, unable to identify the strange scent.

"It's rotisserie roasted mutton, with garlic sauce, hot sauce and pickles, wrapped in bread, to keep the hands clean." The gruff Dwarf explained.

"Spicy meat? Can I have twenty? I think that our people in Drodh would love them as well."

The Dwarf rumbled with laughter. "Give me a few minutes and I can make that for you."

Rae placed coins from the Dungeon on the counter, and Karl wondered where they had come from. He didn't see her pull them from his storage, but he didn't recall transferring any.

Was it possible that Rae, Cara and Hawk all got a payout at the end of the Dungeon run?

He would figure it out later, but at least the shops had no problem accepting dungeon gold, and he didn't have to go for currency exchange.

[We have lots of Dwarven coins in the pile.] Cara noted, then picked up one from beneath her to twirl between her claws.

[We will save that for when we go inland to hunt. They're less likely to accept foreign coins easily.]

The trio waited patiently as the shopkeeper made twenty of the mutton wraps, and then Rae nodded to Karl.

"Okay, we can go now. Dragon, are you coming with us? We can send you back later." She offered.

"You would bring a Black Dragon Cleric home with you?" Nachtia laughed, but Rae just shrugged. "We've got a red and a green. Black brings us one closer to the full set."

Nachtia laughed, then actually considered it for a bit.

"Alright, let's find the rest of my team, and I will let them know that I'm leaving for a day or two. We aren't a long-term group, we just travelled here together for the group discount and safety in numbers." She explained.

It didn't take long for Rae to find the other Dragonkin in the crowd. For one, they were taller than the locals by at least a head, and for two, they were a different temperature. With her sight, that made it even more obvious.

"Hey, I'm going on a short trip to Drodh with the Beast Master. There are a few Dragon Clerics with his group, and I would like to see the city before returning here." Nachtia explained.

"Go ahead then. There is no shortage of clerics or mages to fill the role. Just let us know if you run into any trouble so that you're not a missing person's report when we get back home." The leader of their group agreed.

That was all the departing sentiment that they needed, Rae assumed, as she led them to the portal platform.

She had overheard others saying that it was impolite to open them just wherever in the city, you should only do it at one of the designated points. Fortunately, there was one right by the dungeon, and they could get to it before all these meat wraps got cold.

Reheating them would be no good, there were cold pickles in there, and she assumed that they would get all soggy if you cooked them.

But she didn't take the portal all the way to the designated point in Drodh. Instead, she created it in the open area by the guard station outside their gate, so they were only a few paces away from the Guild house, but outside the city, where they wouldn't startle any security person watching.

"Overlord, Lady Rae, and guest. Welcome home." The guard greeted them.

"They seem to know you very well." Nachtia noted.

"That's our Guild house on the left, right next to the city walls. Most of the guards take their smoke breaks in the garden, and there is a healing effect on the Green Dragon Altar in the yard, so relaxing here is a common pastime." Karl laughed.

The guard smiled at the Priestess. "They're a welcoming bunch, and they sell utility type accessories, as well as all sorts of potions. The Darklight Host is quite popular here in Drodh City."

The guild members were not expecting him to come back so quickly, and they were definitely not expecting him to come back with a guest. But Dana and Lotus both ran out to greet them.

"Welcome back!"

"You brought me a dragon!"

The responses were very different, and Nachtia began to laugh.

"You must be the Green Dragon Cleric I heard about. It's a pleasure to meet you, and you have quite the altar here in the yard. I can feel the magic." The Black Dragon greeted her.

"And this is my Dana Mage." Karl added, with an arm around Dana's shoulders.

"It's a pleasure to meet you as well, Miss Dana. I am called Nachtia. I believe that you know my uncle Nacht, who I was named after."

Dana smiled. "He is quite famous where we come from, and a good friend of the Archbishop of the Golden Dragon Church, so he spends more time around humans than most other dragons do."

That wasn't technically correct. But unlike Karl, who had found dozens of them hidden within the upper ranks of the Nation's leadership, most of the people did not know how many Dragons were hiding in plain sight.