

Beast Master 881

Chapter 881 Another Branch

Lotus circled the transformed black dragon, and then grabbed Nachtia by the hand to drag her into the back yard. "Look at the altar that Karl made. Isn't it pretty?" She asked.

"It looks like you grew a tree totem, and then he enhanced it with runes? This is quite the piece of work. Just living near it will help you advance, and that's not to mention the extra favour from the Gods that you will get for having a healing totem active in your house." Nachtia agreed.

"It's also good for the grass. So much softer on the feet than when we moved in. How long are you staying? Did you come to try the coffee?" Lotus inquired eagerly.

"Coffee? Dwarven Coffee is a harsh thing, but the Demons must make something different if you're so excited about it." Nachtia asked.

"Oh, it's so good. We will have to go to the boardwalk and see all the things. Why don't I take you on a tour of the city? We can grab Thor and Tessa and make it a full outing." "I take it that the one known as Thor is the Red Dragon Cleric's bonded knight?" Nachtia replied with a smile as she followed Lotus back to the front of the house.

"Sort of. Technically, he's one of Karl's bonded partners, and was a Lightning Cerro before he evolved to become an Overlord. But they're together a lot." Lotus winked as she finished the sentence, and the black dragon smirked.

Whether he was someone else's bonded partner or not, it did sound like he was certain to become the Red Dragon Cleric's knight.

Inside, everyone had gathered in the shop, which had no customers at the moment. "These are all my people." Lotus explained, then went around the group, introducing everyone to Nachtia.

When they got to Thor and Tessa, Nachtia smiled at the protective way that he was standing by her shoulder, then examined him more closely.

"Some sort of behemoth? An Impenetrable Bulwark Behemoth, I believe. I have felt that skill before, but an Overlord and still so young. Not even three years old yet, but very soon. You have a bright future ahead of you, Mister Thor. Take good care of your cleric." She greeted him.

Thor smiled at her. "Have you met our Cara yet?"

Nachtia nodded, confused by the sudden change of topics, but Cara knew what he meant. [Turns out, all black dragons taste the same.]

Karl rescued her before someone gave too many details. "The Winged Void Badger has a thing for dragons. She likes to bop them on the nose and tease them, so they'll chase her around."

Nachtia giggled softly, a noise that had a haunting echo, as if coming from another realm and not a small transformed dragonkin body.

But the noise made Tessa laugh as well.

"It seems your god still approves of small, fearless things." She joked.

"Indeed. I wonder if she could convince Karl to tour the northern Island with me? There are so many out of control monster and beast zones that the God wants the black clerics to bring back into balance, but they're all Overlord and Totem Ranked, and finding Totem Ranked assistants is such a pain.

However, I did notice that Karl has some truly powerful skills that might level the battlefield." The black dragon cleric suggested.

The others looked concerned, but Karl considered that for a bit. If he could get even a few Totem Ranked beast kills, Rae would have more variety for her next advancement, and they would have food above their own Rank again. That had been a huge factor in their rapid advancement in the past. If they could keep eating food with complex and dense power in it, their bodies would more easily adapt to the next Rank when they reached the bottleneck, Karl theorized. It wasn't completely certain, but the evidence all pointed towards it working.

"I think that there should be a chance for us to do it. Just perhaps not right away. Unless I leave a few of my bonded partners here, I am still needed around the Guild House for the crafting at least a day or two every week.

Though, Davis could put them in the branch's Guild Bank and I would be able to do the Runecrafting wherever I was, if we weren't in danger."

Nachtia considered that. "You still have to be close enough to another branch to get access, though. Is there a branch of your Guild on the north island?"

Karl shrugged. "There was a thing, and I was assigned by the System to the Darklight Host Guild. So, I don't know if there are any other branches active. When I try to search for other Guild members or branches, I don't see anything."

She understood the issue right away. "A Legendary Guild. Unless they are granted entry by the Gods, there is no way for anyone but a branch manager to recruit members. So, it's quite likely that there are no more active branches right now, unless a member from the last resurgence is still alive."

Karl nodded. "There is a bronze dragon, who was young at the time. But he's on another continent entirely, and the Guild System hasn't awakened there."

Nachtia frowned. "Well, I might be able to check. I'm from Marres, on the north coast of the North Continent. Definitely too far for the Guild Bank function to work. If I use the Guild function to search for the Darklight Host near my home location..."

She paused, and then her eyes went wide.

"Uh, you have Guild members on the North Island. In the nation of Cyhosasa there is a branch of the Darklight Host. But I'm not sure that you want to meet them. There are only two listed members of the branch, and one of them is Supreme Lady Matilda."

Karl shrugged. "I have no idea who that is."

Nachtia rolled her eyes. "A Hundred-thousand-year-old Supreme Rank Chaos Dragon? Any clue now? Oh, right, you didn't grow up on this continent. You know how parents tell children horror stories before bed to make them behave? She's the one who created most of them, just for fun.

She's insane, unpredictable, definitely not safe. She doesn't even run the country, even though she existed before it was formed. She just hangs out in the capital, causing chaos every so often when she gets bored."

[...]

[Yes, Cara. We will go visit the dragon one day.]

The Black Dragon misinterpreted his hesitation and continued. "Don't worry about her attacking. She's not malicious in that way, and I'm sure she won't take offence to someone else being in the Guild."

Karl smiled and shook his head. "I was thinking that Cara might have found a new friend. She also enjoys causing chaos for personal amusement."

Chapter 882 History Lesson

The black dragon cleric sighed as she heard the news.

"Of course that crazy old dragon would get along with Cara. Maybe that's all that the Supreme Lady needs? Going too long without a real friend might be why she gets bored so easily and causes incidents."

"I had no idea that the power level on this continent was so insanely exaggerated, though. I don't even fully understand where Supreme Rank would fit in the power structure." Karl explained.

Nachtia shrugged. "Well, you have the Totems, Mythical beings, Immortals at various stages, and then those who are simply too powerful to be called mere Immortals are called Supreme.

Honestly, I don't think that they truly belong in this world. They have the power to leave at will, to go to another Realm. But for some reason, she does not. There have been countless theories on why that is, but many of the Dragon Avatars, our leaders, theorize that she is an anchor for this world. The reason

that the world's magic can recover from the loss of the System's power might be because the Supreme Lady and a few other truly powerful beings remained in this world, creating a link to other Realms, and leaking their intensely magical auras over thousands of years.

I remember in my history lessons, she was asked to help recover the fragments of the World Dragon's scale, and she refused. Then she told the Orcs that it was hidden on another continent, and half the bloody species just up and left to go look for it.

One day, they just got on ships and vanished, it left Drodh and the other Orcish nations nearly depopulated."

Karl felt the butterfly perk up in her space. This was a huge lore drop, and it would make a great play.

Davis brought out a map, so the others could see where Nachtia was talking about. Once he could see it on the map, Karl realized that he could indeed detect a Guild Branch there, but it was simply labelled {Out Of Range}.

He couldn't communicate with it from here.

Remi laughed as Nachtia finished her story. "She just tricked an entire species into going on a ten thousand year long treasure hunt? That is epic. I'm not normally the sort for practical jokes, but to send them all hunting for something that doesn't exist and keep them at it? Glorious."

Nachtia chuckled. "Oh, it exists. They just haven't managed to find it. According to the Black Dragon's history books, it looks like this."

She took out a small holy book, similar to the prayer books that Tessa and Lotus carried, and flipped it open.

On the page was a hand drawn dragon scale, chipped and cracked. It was small, not a major armour scale, and somehow familiar.

[I think we have that.] Karl noted as he stared at the drawing.

[It's in a box in Hawk's space.] Remi agreed.

Hawk thought about it for a few seconds. He remembered that thing from somewhere.

The disappointing broken thing that he had stolen from the Totems. Where did he put that?

He flipped through boxes of treasures, and then found what he was looking for. A small golden scale, buried among assorted flawed gems and water element items.

Hawk's equivalent of a trash pile.

He brought it out and dusted it off, now that he knew it was simply ancient and not junk.

It was a bit shinier than he remembered as well, while the other stuff in the box was dimmer.

Did it need energy to reform? He could feed it all the water element magic that Remi didn't claim.

Remi mentally rolled her eyes at him. Water Element magic was useful, and the items were valuable for trading. Plenty of people wanted them, but Hawk wanted to hoard them to limit the amount of water magic in the world.

[Be careful, or you'll make your space water element, just with all the items you are hoarding.] She teased.

[Karl, Remi is cursing at me again.]

Karl did his best not to let on that he knew where the broken scale was, or laugh at the internal thoughts of the beasts. He didn't want to look like a crazy man in front of their new friend.

"Well, if they do manage to find the shard of the World Dragon's Scale, things will certainly begin to change in a hurry." Dana joked as she looked at the picture.

"They certainly would. It's said that once the shard is revealed and returns to its full potential, the entire world will enjoy the limitless potential of the System.

The problem is trying to keep it intact until then. More than a few groups, especially the stronger monsters, would prefer to see it destroyed, so that the weaker species can't use the System to usurp their power.

The humans have some mages among them, but out at the gate I saw a Slasher, a form of lesser Wrath Demon. Without the System, they can't make it over low Royal Rank. That one is an Overlord. The whole power balance of the world would change if the system collapsed entirely." Nachtia explained.

"And that would anger the Death God, as they have carefully balanced everything as it is now, and changing that balance so drastically would cause mass death." Karl realized.

The black dragon smiled. "You get it. The Death God likes things as they are. That's why I want to go on a hunting trip through the wild lands. To bring things back to a balanced state. But with Totem Ranked creatures out there, it's not a solo adventure."

Dana frowned at the cleric. She was really pushing to take Karl out on an adventure, but it was on that would not be safe for anyone under Overlord Rank. They simply didn't have the ability to properly defend themselves if a Totem Ranked beast attacked, and Karl would need to have all his focus on the battle, not on keeping his friends alive.

Why couldn't it have been a male dragon? This gender selective magnetism that Karl had was beginning to get on her nerves. What she needed was a fast way to get to Overlord Rank. If she could catch up in power, there would be no good reason to leave her behind.

Chapter 883 He Brought Treats

"Well, Nachtia, why don't we borrow you for a ladies' day on the town? We can show you around all the highlight spots and then come back for dinner and get you settled in?" Dana suggested.

"Oh, that is a great idea. How many do we have? I know that Sister Lotus will be up for a trip." "I think that we can get Tessa and Ophelia as well. I'm not sure about the others." Dana paused and caught caretaker Jo's eye. The old woman smiled and nodded, then sent Mara forward in her maid uniform.

From the workshop Ashbringer called out. "Take Wendy and Loros as well. They need a break."

Davis smiled. "In that case, you might as well take Mick. It's cloudy enough that with a parasol, she shouldn't have too much trouble outdoors."

Nachtia looked confused for a second, then realized that the girl in the black and white dress was a vampire.

Karl turned toward the kitchen. "Ladies, do you want to join them?" A hand appeared in the door and waved him away. "We're watching the pastries. We will tour the city on our day off."

Dana turned Nachtia by the shoulders, and Karl waved goodbye as the cleric was escorted out of the property.

"Well, it looks like you hit a hidden trap." Ashbringer joked once he was sure the ladies were out of earshot.

"Oh, I don't think that one was very well hidden. Bringing back not only a dragon, but a female dragon cleric, was bound to cause an explosion. It actually went better than expected. I think they're going to get along well together." Karl replied.

"Despite her being a black dragon? Yeah. If she would get along well with any Guild, it would be this one. Where did you meet a black dragon? I thought that you were going to see the Dwarves and their dungeon?" The demon asked.

"Oh, I did. I joined the group that she was with for a trip. That dungeon is crazy, it's a whole city, and it takes half the day to clear it. But with the team, we did pretty well. The group of dragonkin that she was with weren't big on hanging out with Nachtia, so we ended up shopping together.

Oh crap, Rae has a whole stack of meat wraps. Where did she go?"

{She's with the group, but she left the rest for us. Here.} Remi greeted them with snacks in all her hands.

"You're a lifesaver, Remi. I totally forgot about the food until everyone had already run away. Apparently these are a specialty of the Dwarven city, and we got enough for everyone, including the apprentices, so I'll go pass them all out." Karl explained.

Remi handed him a wrap and shook her head. {I'll deliver them all. We're on a break from the potion lab anyhow. You have to let their brains rest, or they get cranky.} She explained.

Davis shook his head in dismay. "They're only demons, you can't work them day and night." Remi nodded in agreement, but didn't seem at all repentant about working her apprentices until their brains overloaded. In her mind, that was the most efficient way. Like building muscles, you had to train to failure, right?

At least they were properly appreciative when she brought them snacks.

The ladies were gone for most of the day, and returned fully caffeinated before venturing into the Library for a girls' movie night. That let Karl get some much-needed rest while they bonded, and Nachtia made new friends among the Clergy.

He was up right at dawn, thanks to the quiet evening, and went for an early breakfast before heading to the workshop to see what needed to be done.

Karl took the chance to make a number of items that were waiting for Rune work, according to the list that had been left on the table in the sculpting area. But before he got too involved in the process, he dropped all the rough ore that the illusions had mined from the dungeon, along with the weapon drops. He put the spider totem statue in Remi's space, next to the other Shaman Statue.

This one was the more powerful of the two, but Karl wasn't sure if the Spider Shaman totem would be well suited to Remi or not.

"The weapons are all mediocre, but they're Overlord Ranked. I say we let the Guild Members pick anything they want, and then you can sort the rest. The first quarter of the ore is piled in the corner, I will put the rest in the bulk storage of the Guild Bank. It's just too much to put in the forge." Karl explained as Ashbringer came in behind him.

"Did you just take all the ore from the run?" The demon asked.

"Nobody wanted it, and I mined it with illusions, and the Butterfly's help. I also got a free entry pass to the Dungeon, so the whole group got to enter free of charge. That was apparently worth more than their share of the ore." Ashbringer nodded. "I have heard that the dungeon there is prohibitively expensive to enter, but now that I see what you can recover in a single run, plus presumably some coin, it is more than worth it.

Going with more groups that don't want the ore will keep the guild stocked forever. Even this portion will take me months to finish working, and it's all Overlord Ranked crafting materials.

Wait, are there gems in there?" Karl nodded. "I didn't sort anything, we just shovelled it into a space, and then I dumped it out for you. There are a lot of Overlord Ranked rough gems in the ore pile. But you can pass them to the crafters to carve into either elemental stones or cute statues.

Tell them not to upgrade those ones, I will do that. No need to waste the expensive materials on Commander Rank Runes."

Ashbringer laughed and began to sort the pile into five different piles by ore type.

"This is a wonderful start. There is even Mythril in here. It's a core component in Elven steel, but the Dwarves make entire Totem Rank and higher weapons out of it. Just what I've found here is enough for two pure Mythril blades. It's basically the perfect material for making Artifact Grade items." Ashbringer praised as he worked.

Karl looked up from carving runes into an [Easy Childbirth] charm, which was highly requested on the list of items to be made. If that many people wanted the same type of charm, surely someone wanted an Overlord Ranked one, which was pushing the limits of the Monarch Ranked wood that Lotus had been making for them to carve.

Chapter 884 New Ore, New Possibilities

Ashbringer was in such a good mood that the flames on his head were dancing as he worked to sort the ores.

The happy singing was enough to bring the off-duty guards who were having a smoke break on the bench over to see what was going on in the workshop. If they didn't want to be disturbed, they closed the door. But today it was wide open, and Ashbringer was clearly singing, which he never did.

"Oh, someone got a whole shipment of ore in. That's quite the haul, Ashy." One of the guards joked.

Ashbringer winked at the female wrath Demoness and went back to sorting the pile.

"Overlord Karl went to the dungeon in Bara and managed to convince a group to give him the whole ore haul from their run. I've got enough loot here to keep the ladies dripping with priceless treasures for years to come."

The Guard laughed at his response. "Since when have you ever paid any attention to the ladies? The only ladies you even talk to are the sculptors who work here with you, and they're all too young for you."

It was clear that she was attempting to flirt, but Ashbringer was still more interested in his new pile of ore, and the Guard was second, or possibly third, on his priority list. That was no change for him, though. The ladies had always come well behind the forge on his list of priorities.

"So, does that mean that we can commission some Overlord Ranked metal items now? Assuming that we can afford them, that is." One of the other guards asked.

Ashbringer nodded. "Custom orders are welcome. Master Crafted, Runecraftred, both. Prices will vary, but we can make you anything you like."

The Guard smiled, and Karl knew that they would have a wealthy merchant or District Overseer by to see them soon. The guards' equipment came from the city, and didn't belong to them until their contract terms were over. The weapons and armour were worth years of their salary, so if they quit the

guard early, they had to repay the cost of the bonded items. It was great for retention, and gave the city a good reason to put a bounty on former guards who ran off with their gear.

They were both getting settled in for the day's work when the stomping of multiple boots caught Karl's attention. That was a lot of customers at once, and Karl assumed that it was most likely some local merchant group coming to look for a custom order.

So, he finished the [Flooding Canals] Overlord Ranked charm statue he was working on and went out to greet them.

Only, it was not a local merchant, but Shaman Petros and a whole group of Dwarves.

"Lord Petros, it's a pleasure to have you here at my Guild House again. Please come in, what can I help you with today?" Karl greeted them.

"What is that in your hand?" The shaman asked, staring intently at the statue Karl had not set down when he finished.

"Oh, the statue has a spell effect for flooded canals. We had some requests from farmers for help with water shortages in the irrigation system for the rice fields. This will create a steady flood of water when activated, and should be enough to fill a whole county's canal system."

It would create a whole minute worth of flow from a kilometre wide river, as it was based on the [Thousand Year Flood] skill. But spread out over an hour, so it didn't actually flood the entire region.

Shaman Petros held out his hand, and Karl passed him the statue, which was shaped like a smiling Remi, but made from white and red mana jade at the Monarch Rank.

"This is incredible. That has to be based on Shamanistic water magic, right?" He asked.

"Yes. A spell that I learned from the Naga Shaman Queen in my team." Karl agreed.

Petros passed back the statue, and looked around the courtyard.

"You know, I didn't fully appreciate the subtle magic here the first time. The runic altar is obvious, but the increased mana level inside the house, the cistern well that never runs dry, the Ghostfire Forge. The art of the Runecrafter is truly incredible.

But we actually came here today to see if you can assist us with something more akin to your class skills." He asked.

Karl nodded and led the group up to the third floor common area sofas, where they could sit and talk.

The kitchen staff brought up a bottle of Rum, glasses and a large bowl of mixed nuts and pretzels. Karl assumed this was a traditional Dwarven snack, as he didn't even know that they stocked it at the Guild House.

Once they had the first drink in them, the Dwarves were ready for business.

"What we have is a dilemma. I don't even know if you can help us with it, but one of the Dwarven Mythical Rank Paladins wishes to join his family with that of the Kirin Clan through marriage. However, the Mythical Beasts have no respect for paper contracts like marriage, and want something more tangible as proof of lifelong commitment." The Shaman explained.

Karl thought about it. "What rank are Dwarves when they get their class, and what Rank are newborn Kirin?"

Shaman Petros gave Karl a strange look, wondering why he was missing basic knowledge about the world.

"Dwarves are born as Common Rank beings, and grow quickly as they mature. But most are still Common or Awakened when they awaken their class. Kirin are born as Overlords."

Karl sighed. "Well, then my first plan isn't going to work, the power difference is too great."

Petros waited for him to explain.

"I was thinking of a bond between youngsters, much like my beasts with myself. But you can't be more than a Rank apart, or it will tear apart the mind of the host Beast Master. Well, it might be possible for the Kirin to be the host, but I don't think my skills are compatible that way, as even by the largest stretch of the phrasing, Dwarves aren't a magical beast."

That made the dwarves laugh.

"Well, not when young." One of the men, a Berserker with blue paint stripes on his face, joked.

"Is there a Ranger among the eligible candidates? An advancement to Beast Ranger class is possible, and then they could be bonded at the same Rank." Karl offered.

The Shaman looked confused. "And how would that be equal, and not just subjugation of the Kirin Clan?"

Karl smiled. "If the bonded beast attacks the space, they can cause massive mental trauma to the bonded partner. They can also read each other's thoughts, there are no secrets. So infidelity would not only be impossible, but the Kirin could kill the Ranger if they tried. It also isn't a bond that can be broken. Till death do they part."

If Karl combined the [Beast Space] ability with [Follow Me, Little One] and [Skill Master] he should be able to make a skill book equivalent to the System Tokens that let the beasts pick their partners.

Chapter 885 Kirin Bond

Shaman Petros considered the option, then nodded. "We do have a Ranger type among the candidates, though not the actual Ranger Class. If we bring both candidates here to you, would you be able to do the bonding?"

That would make things much easier.

Karl nodded. "I can do it as a blessing if both partners are here and willing. But you must understand that both parties must be wholeheartedly in favour of the bonding for it to work."

Petros nodded, and then one of the men left the room.

"He will go get them from the teleportation platform." Petros explained.

"Oh? So quickly. Were they already together, or is this akin to a blind date?"

The Dwarf chuckled at Karl's question. "You'll understand when they get here."

As they waited, the topic turned to the Darklight Host, and the items they sold at the shop, then to the dungeon at Bara, and how soon Karl was likely to be back again.

Thomas was a good friend of the Totem Ranked Shaman, and had a high opinion of his skills, and the Dwarf was looking forward to working with him again.

A few minutes later, a black bearded Dwarven man followed the older Dwarf up the stairs, accompanied by the sound of hooves as a small winged horse with one horn in the middle of its head twined around his feet like a cat, trying to be as close as possible to him at all times, even if it made him trip.

"These are our candidates." Petros chuckled, as the Dwarf gave the small creature an indulgent look, then petted its head.

He was a Monarch, and the Kirin was an Overlord, but that should be close enough for the new skill to work.

[Chosen Partner] Epic Grade. Allows an unbonded magical beast to choose a compatible target to bond with through a Beast Space.

The younger Dwarven man smiled at Karl. "So, how does this work? What do I need to do?"

Karl winked at him. "You just need to mentally prepare yourself for what comes next. You see, my skills are all beast related. So, the activation goes to Lilly."

The Kirin looked up as her name was called, then went back to bumping the Dwarf for attention.

How wise it was to bond someone with a stage five clinger of a magical beast girlfriend, Karl did not know. But if things took a Yandere twist, 'Till Death Do Us Part' might be sooner than expected.

"Alright, Lilly. Once I teach you this skill, you use it on your chosen life partner. It's one-time use, so be certain that you want to be together forever." Karl explained.

The beast nodded, and Karl transferred the [Chosen Partner] skill.

Lilly tackled the unprepared Dwarf with a headbutt that sent him rolling across the floor as she vanished into the newly forming Beast Space.

Karl knew that he would be in the Class Selection menu now, and the headbutt wasn't actually necessary to enter the space.

"Are you sure this is the right way? He looks pained." Shaman Petros whispered.

"It's right. But she's more powerful, and highly excited. Once he finishes the class advancement he should be able to hear all her thoughts, and he might be able to now, which would be distracting while he was trying to select a class."

It took a few minutes before the Monarch Ranked Dwarf was finished, and Karl saw the class colour of his name in the System interface change to the deeper green hue of the Beast Ranger.

He didn't look like he was adapting well, though. He was holding his head, and his eyes were closed while he mumbled to himself.

Karl was beginning to get concerned for him when he got a message from Lilly.

{Make him teach me to transform. I want to go shopping, and see the city, and go in the cute clothing stores that say no pets allowed, and try ice cream, and play in the sprinklers, and give hugs, and sleep in a bed and}

{Maximum Character Count exceeded}

Karl smiled. "Gentlemen, I know what the problem is. Lilly, please come out and stand by me. I will teach you a humanoid transformation."

The Kirin appeared in all of her white winged glory, and Karl patted her head to transfer [Humanoid Transformation].

She immediately turned into a ginger haired Dwarven girl, no more than ten in human equivalent years. She was wearing a simple linen dress when she transformed, and did a happy twirl, then grabbed her new partner's hand and tried dragging him down the stairs.

"Let's go, I want to see all the things." She demanded.

He briefly resisted, as it would be impolite to just leave in what was essentially an engagement party. "Go, have fun. Take care of your new partner before she talks your ears off." Karl insisted, then shooed them down the stairs as Lilly talked constantly about all the things she needed to see today.

"Why do I feel like we did something mean to him?" The Berserker asked.

"Well, nobody could have known that Lilly was a chatterbox when she couldn't speak in her natural form." Karl replied with a shrug.

"We knew that they were fond of each other, but we might have underestimated it. Ah, no big deal, we can explain to the Kirin Clan what happened, and that they are bonded partners now. That should be enough to satisfy their conditions. It's not like Lilly would give him up even if her father demanded it now." Petros joked.

"I get the feeling that he was in no way prepared for what he signed up for." One of the other Dwarves joked. Karl nodded. "There is no way that he was ready for her actual personality. She's way more excitable than anyone would have guessed, and it sounds like she has never gotten to see much of the world.

Now that she has a humanoid transformation, he will have to take good care of her. But they should make a good pair. With her power, she will drag him up to Overlord in no time at all, and even to Totem Rank. The stronger of the two pulls the weaker up until they hit their limits, and her limits are very high."

Chapter 886 They'll Need Time

Karl almost felt sorry for Lilly's new partner. But what he would get in return for his efforts to please the overly excited Kirin would be well worth the effort.

"Well, that went more smoothly than expected. How about we have a proper meal?" Karl suggested.

Shaman Petros smiled. "We brought ale, and we have no need to rush right back."

"Plus, we can't go back without Danny and Lilly anyhow." The Barbarian reminded them.

"So, you're staying overnight? We've got plenty of guest rooms."

The Dwarves chuckled. It was likely to be late at night by the time that those two returned, so they might as well plan to take at least a day off.

Wendy and Loros came out of their rooms, and paused when they heard the Dwarves in the common rooms on the third floor. It was rare to hear anyone up there at all, and even more uncommon for Karl to bring guests upstairs.

But they went down to the kitchen to fetch breakfast, and to send Mara for a trip up the dumb waiter, a game that the little lizardfolk girl loved. It was just a shame that she couldn't travel with her cleaning tools all the time.

Someone had to activate the lift from the outside.

The others slowly came out of the Library, which caused great confusion among the gathered Dwarves. They understood architecture on an instinctual level, and there was no way that many people comfortably slept in one room at the corner of the building.

"It's an Illusionary Domain, larger than it appears. They had a ladies night last night, so most of them likely slept in the theatre. The plays are solid illusions, so they are quite realistic, every bit as good as going to a regular theatre run by mages." Karl explained, as Lotus belatedly tried to smooth her ruffled hair.

"Good morning, Gentlemen. Was there anything more that you needed at the moment? We will be headed down to the Kitchen." Tessa asked as she followed them out.

"We're quite well for now, thank you. But if you can inform your kitchen that there will be additional guests for the day, and that they're Dwarves, we would appreciate it." Petros informed them.

A Totem Ranked guest could basically get anything they wanted from most households, so the staff would surely make a meal that was suited to a Dwarven stomach. Meat and potatoes, none of the crunchy green stuff.

While the others ate, Karl thought of a proper gift to give them, in honour of the visit. That was normally what you did when guests with powerful positions came to see you. [There is a book you can give them. I made copies of the Dwarven Runecrafting book to give to the apprentices, before I knew that only a Dwarf could use them properly.] Remi suggested.

[Brilliant. Thank you, Remi.]

Karl took out one of the four copies of the book and placed it on the low table between the sofas.

"Here, I think that you might know someone who would be able to make good use of that. A present from me to you." Karl explained as Shaman Petros leaned forward to pick the book up.

The Totem stared at the book in shock, then reverently flipped the cover open and realized that it was a freshly made transcription, not an ancient tome. But the contents were shocking.

"This is Dwarven Runecrafting. Where did you find this? The art has been lost since before the end of the last System Resurgence." He whispered.

"The dragons had a copy, and they traded it to me. My friend Remi made copies, then realized that only a Dwarf or someone with at least a little Dwarven Lineage, could make use of the contents.

You see, most of it is in Dwarven, and while the standard Runes work for everyone, the Dwarven parts will only work for those deemed worthy." Karl informed the overwhelmed Shaman.

The book was suddenly pulled from his hands, though Karl noticed that the strike was to Petros' hands, and not the book, which was held with great delicacy by the old Dwarf on his left.

"It really is a Dwarven Tome. A primer, the introduction to the skill, but it contains the start of everything. Who would have thought that there would be such a fundamental instructional tome left, when most of the relics we have are masters notebooks?"

Karl chuckled. "You know, in the opening pages, the author repeatedly wonders why he is making an introductory tome for things children should know. But he wrote it anyhow, specifically because he worried that one day the Masters might become too exclusive, and a tragedy would cause the basic skills to be lost along with them."

The old Dwarf smiled. "It would be funny if it weren't so true. You see, I am a Master Smith, and two thirds of what the ancient tomes say a Dwarven Smith should be able to do, I cannot. Because the skills were lost in the ten thousand years without the system.

Now, with this book, there is a chance to recover some of them.

But what is this language? Was ancient Dwarven really that informal? No, he must be writing this for his juniors, so he's treating the reader as a brand-new apprentice."

The others gathered around and chuckled at the nuances that Karl had missed due to his lack of skill with the language.

Shaman Petros chuckled as he watched them get excited. "You know, it's a good thing you chose this as a gift. If you had put it up for sale, I'm not sure anyone could have afforded it."

Karl nodded. "And that's why it was a gift. Some things should not have price tags put on them. But, you should know that there are sections on Stone Totems, a bit about the Golem Master's profession, and Runic Alchemy in there as well. If one of them is your trade skill, the book could be useful to all of you."

Chapter 887 Lost Art

Petros shrugged. "I never did take up a trade skill. I got too caught up in learning new Shamanistic Magic, and never had time for anything else. Over a century, I spent just looking for new spells and studying beasts with elemental abilities."

Karl nodded. "Learning skills from the beasts is how my class advances. Almost all my skills come from them, and the oddball skills that many of them use were generally obtained with my help. It's a good way to learn."

Karl considered helping him out with a skill, but decided it would wait until the next time that they met.

A little favour every time would stack up quickly, and make him a reliable friend of the Dwarves.

But having the Dwarves here did give him an idea. He could add another expanded space on the main floor, using the entrance to the supply closet in the back corner of the showroom.

Then, he wouldn't have to take guests into the living quarters, and they could redecorate with a flap of Little Butterfly's wings. Two Illusionary spaces in one house seemed pretty luxurious, but if the second one was only a small one, to make a sitting room out of a closet, he didn't think it would be a problem.

As their power and fame increased, they were sure to receive even more powerful visitors. But those powerful visitors would mean that the powerful residents of Drodh would be obliged to come and visit as well.

Something that Karl was certain would happen within the next few hours.

Once Domesk realized that a Totem Ranked Dwarf had come to his district and hadn't stopped in to say hello, he would surely come to visit the Darklight Host as well.

For today, they would host on the third floor in the common area, but after that, Karl would have to create an entertaining space for others, as the Library was the private domain of the Guild members.

The Dwarves were completely lost in the new knowledge to the point that they had to be reminded twice that lunch was ready on the second floor, as the third floor sitting room did not have a proper table.

"You seem to have broken the Dwarves. What did you give them?" Dana asked as the visitors were still engrossed in their work conversation even as the food was being brought out.

"A copy of the Introduction to Dwarven Runecrafting. We don't know if anyone has the skills to fully use it, but they've got the introduction now, and they should be able to bring back some of their lost racial crafting skills." Karl explained.

"That should do it. Is that what they're waiting for? Someone to finish reading?"

Karl shook his head. "They asked me to bond a Ranger to a Kirin, a form of flying unicorn. As it turns out, the young Kirin is quite adorable, and like Lotus, easily excited by new things. So, the Dwarves are waiting for their friend to finish touring the city.

I expect that they'll be staying the night, as the new Beast Ranger will almost certainly return exhausted."

Lotus laughed, and Nachtia smirked. "If the Kirin has half the energy that Lotus does, the Ranger is going to need a refreshing spell to get through the day. By the time that we got back, I was running almost entirely on sugar and caffeine. I didn't even make it through the whole show."

Lotus made a pouting face. "And yet, you wouldn't transform back into a dragon, even though you were sleepy."

"You are a dragon cleric, why would you need me to be in dragon form? Plus, you know my Uncle, I'm sure you've seen a black dragon." Nachtia asked.

Karl chuckled. "It's a Lotus thing. Dragons are just one more species to cuddle with as she sleeps. Winged Void Badgers, Werebears, Bloodbath Spiders, they're all appropriate nap partners for her"

Nachtia chuckled. "You know, despite being an Overlord, I'm not that old yet. My dragon form isn't fully grown."

Lotus shrugged. "I have a bestial transformation, and it turns me into a metre long green dragon whelp. It's so cute. I will show you after lunch."

Everyone returned to their work for the day after lunch, and the ladies went to the Dungeon with Nachtia so that she could transform for Lotus. An Overlord Ranked Black Dragon was pure overkill in the Royal Ranked Dungeon, but that didn't bother any of them.

A dungeon run was still experience and income. Plus, it was important to Lotus that she got to see the dragon.

Karl spent the afternoon helping the Dwarves with the knowledge that he had, filling in theoretical portions for the ones who had related skills.

Fortunately for the Dwarven envoys, their wait was shorter than expected, and the Ranger returned alone just before dinner.

"Lilly fell asleep in the middle of the boardwalk, so I moved her to the separate space. I think that she's out for the night now, but I'm not sure if I can handle that again in a few hours." He whispered, as if afraid that he would wake her up.

Karl gave the man a consoling pat on the shoulder. "Now that she's seen most of the things, she should calm down, Everything is new to her, and she couldn't talk to explain it to anyone before, so you got months of pent-up frustration all at once. Just let her rest, and tomorrow will be slightly calmer.

Also, you don't need to whisper. The amount of noise outside won't wake her up unless she's on guard against threats. If she's exhausted, she will be relying on you to do that for her, and it will be the intensity of your thoughts that is most likely to get her attention."

The Ranger sighed and flopped down into a chair. "I know that I'm still a young man, but I suddenly feel old today. That amount of energy is unholy."

Petros stroked his beard with a mischievous glint in his eye. "Just wait until she thinks that someone is trying to steal your attention and affection away from her. You'll find that this is nothing at all."

Chapter 888 Mission

After dinner, the Dwarves returned home, and Karl began catching up on some of the most requested items.

Not things that customers had paid to have custom-made for them, but ones that they had inquired about, to see if they might be in stock some time soon.

That was how Davis was guiding the shop's stock. First, replenish what they sold, then try to bring in the things that customers had asked about, to see if they sold well too. The fact that it was all Commander Rank items now, with a few Royal Rank utility items from Dora, wasn't a big deal to them. The more powerful items might have caught the attention of passing merchants and the super wealthy, but the Commander Rank items comprised the vast majority of what people needed out of combat.

If you were getting a charm made to repel dust in the house, it didn't need to clean the entire block, just the kitchen.

The next morning, Karl was just getting started on the first item of the day, an Overlord Ranked Mana Storage trinket, when Nachtia and Tessa came back from the gate together.

"There is a new mission on the day's sheet." Tessa informed the room.

"Oh, something caught the attention of the Red Dragon?" Dana asked, looking up from a magical theory book.

"Apparently. The black dragon as well. I found Nachtia there when I got the urge to go get a mission sheet from the guards." Tessa agreed.

That was interesting, so Karl motioned for her to put it on the table, where everyone could see it.

Most of the missions were lower grade monster suppression missions, and a few bandit bounties. But the new one was a border mission. A few hundred kilometres northwest of Gazdri, in the northwest corner of the nation, there were reports of undead raids coming in from Bomgon.

Now, the Undead came in many varieties, from the shambling zombie and skeleton hordes, to intelligent forces like the Lich Lords and the Wights.

The sheet didn't specify, but if it intrigued both the black and red dragon, it was certainly organized with intelligence, and the threat level was considerable enough to cause mass destruction.

"Should we go over? I can open a portal to Gazdri, and then we can either get a wagon, or I can bring the group over." Karl offered.

Nachtia looked confused. "If you aren't using a wagon, how would we all get there? I could transform and fly with someone small. But the rest of you won't fit on the Thunderbird."

Karl winked at her. "I have a way to cheat. But it's a small secret."

Nachtia's full attention was now on him, and Lotus giggled as she realized that Karl had mastered the art of dragon baiting. They loved secrets and new information. It didn't matter what dragon species, they all shared that one common trait. It was practically etched into their bloodline.

"You have my word that I won't leak the information." Nachtia swore.

"Alright, everyone, please step through the portal, and I will bring us to the battle. Dana, would you mind giving her the grand tour? Rae did name this the Dana Space, after all."

Dana laughed and stepped through the entrance to the [Tiny World].

Nachtia was right behind her, and Karl smiled as he watched the dragon transform and begin flying around the separate space, examining everything.

Then Karl gathered the remainder of the team, Remi included for a change, and went to Gazdri.

The Guild could function without them for a bit. They had enough workers to take care of everything, and Remi had taught her apprentices enough to make the common potions, even if they couldn't make the powerful healing potions that were one of the bestsellers.

When they had downtime in the evening, she could just make some and refill the stock in the Guild Bank. They weren't even leaving Drodh, and Karl could easily access it from where he was standing in Gazdri.

Karl called out Hawk, and then used Remi's [Swims Through Air] racial ability to get up to his back.

[You too? First my sister, now the Karl swims in air?] Hawk sighed.

[But you're still flying us to battle. Let's go see what was so interesting that it attracted both clerics.]

Hawk raced off to the northwest, following the directions from the Guards' map.

If it was big enough that Tessa noticed, they shouldn't have any problems finding the battle.

Twenty minutes later, they had located the most likely source of the threat. There was an entire army of skeletons, led by a Lich Lord and a large group of Death Knights.

A small force of defenders had gathered, and there was a single Totem among them to face the Lich Lord, but Karl had a good feeling about this one. If they worked it right, he might manage to get the over rank kill.

It was only a ninety percent damage reduction, and they had a Cara.

Karl landed at the back of the army of Orcs and Demons, then opened the exit to lead everyone out of the separate space.

To others, it looked like he was just summoning them out of a portal, and the defenders began to perk up when they realized he had brought another Overlord, and

a half dozen Monarchs.

Then the beasts came out of their spaces, and things started to look up for the defence

team.

Karl went to the Totem, who was most likely the nearest city Governor, and nodded in greeting.

"What does the total force look like? We only got the basics from the Drodh City Guard's notice." He asked.

"This is what we're at this morning. There were eight points of attack yesterday, but most started after noon. Standard strategy says that they're testing the border to find vulnerabilities to spread the blight and claim more territory."

Karl smiled. "Well then, I suppose that I should take a team and go kick some teeth in. Did you want assistance with that Lich Lord? I can lend you a Cara. She can Nullify

magical attacks."

The Totem looked at him strangely. "You didn't even look at my nameplate, did you?" Karl belatedly checked it. {Prince Steven, thirty-fourth heir of Drodh} Cleric

Oh. Not a combat specialist.

Chapter 889 Lich Lordling

Karl shrugged. "In that case, you do the healing thing. I brought you a healing tree as well. A Monarch Ranked Green Dragon Cleric with the Epic healing ability [Tree of Life]."

Then he turned to the group. "Cara, Rae, you're with me. Everyone else, spread through the defenders in pairs. Watch each other's backs and let's make the Dragon Gods proud."

Thor bugled happily, and the defenders cheered. Tessa hopped up on his back, and Thor began to expand as he cancelled his shrinking abilities and activated his area holy damage spells.

With [Behemoth] and [Brutality] both active, Thor was even larger than Ophelia's Titanic Dire Bear form. The pair of them towered over the battlefield, dwarfing even the largest of the Wrath Demon Clan's warriors. Then Thor activated [Bestial Raiment], the trusty armour skill that Karl used for daily fashion, and his already near impenetrable scales were covered in thick plates and layers of chain mail.

Against any other army, that sight alone might have been enough to break their morale, but the Undead knew no fear, and they continued their charge unabated.

Tessa wielded her spear, but she was using it as a conductor's wand. She directed the armies nearby to spread and let Thor through, while she enchanted weapons and granted the defenders Holy Armour.

That made the Demons laugh, while the Orcs cheered for a warrior with a sense of humour.

The Lich Lord was floating above his armies, driving them forward, so Karl did the same and stepped up into the air.

Any Totem could walk on the mana flows, but Karl was still an Overlord, and the sight caught the Lich Lord off-guard.

Karl smiled at the undead mage as he took out his bow and fired a [Poison Arrow] coated in [Void Blast] and [Nullify] at the undead leader.

A wave of the mage's hand brought up a black misty barrier, and the Lich Lord turned away toward the undead closest to the Orcs.

But the arrow punched through the barrier, sacrificing [Nullify] in the process. Then [Void Blast] exploded as the arrow touched his barriers, and the Death Knights below him were thrown to the ground.

"No ignoring me. I will continue to poke you until you take this seriously." Karl warned.

[Rae, take out the knights first. They're probably a power support system.]

Cara was giving the Lich Lord a strange look. [I have his box. It smells like him. See?]

She dumped a bone covered coffin on the ground for a second, and the Lich Lord's eyes flared with magic and rage before she took it back. [Well, it's not ignoring us anymore.] Karl ignored Cara's smugness, and fired off a volley of arrows toward the Lich Lord.

Magic exploded in the air as the undead leader realized that Karl could bypass only a single layer of barrier. Throwing multiple spells at the arrow stopped them with ease, but Karl was happy to keep attacking, and he only had to fire one arrow for every two spells.

The whole battlefield began to change as Remi activated [Apocalypse] at the same time Hawk used [Firestorm] and [Hellstorm] on the undead horde, creating an extra layer of fiery blizzard to go with the multiplying tornadoes.

The stronger undead hacked at the blizzards with skills, collapsing them, but the orderly charge was no more. {I am going to rip your very essence from your body.} The Lich Lord's voice echoed in Karl's mind.

Karl smiled and equipped the Haint Claw. "Funny, I was thinking the same thing. I wonder how much of a benefit I will get from the soul of a Lich Lord?" He asked as he hung the Blade of Champions from his hip in the sword hanger created by the [Bestial Raiment] armour spell.

Inky black explosions rocked the air around the Lich Lord as Cara split [Void Blast] into a dozen smaller explosions all around the Lich, and the ground under them shook from the aftershocks.

[Void Blast] had directly become a Totem Ranked spell when Cara advanced, and didn't suffer from the damage reduction that a Totem would normally enjoy against an Overlord Ranked opponent. But a Lich Lord was not an average magic user, and even with Cara's attempts to [Nullify] his defences, he was still throwing up defensive spells as fast as Cara and Karl could launch attacks.

Rae was already finished with the ten Death Knights who were closest to the Lich Lord, and their bodies were in her space, just in case the Lich Lord tried to resurrect them.

She wasn't clear on what they could do, but it must be some sort of Necromancer, to be leading an undead army.

While the three-way battle between Karl, Cara and the Lich Lord filled the sky with explosions and flashes of light, Thor was on a rampage through the skeletons. [Consecrated Ground] was even more effective against the Skeletons than it had been against the Wights, and the ones closest to him were effectively crippled before he even charged into them.

On his back, Tessa held her spear high with a Darklight Host flag attached to it, periodically pointing into the crowd to [Smite] a large group of skeletons who were giving the defenders trouble.

Nachtia and Hawk were flying overhead, bombarding the undead army through the storm, while Remi approached with her bodyguards and Karl's, as well as a group of Lizardmen who weren't bothered by the terrain of her [Naga Swamp].

Even the butterfly was in on the fun, creating armies of demonic warriors that charged at the skeletons, causing them to turn away from the real enemy, only to have the illusions vanish an instant before contact.

Then, she disguised the vortexes as stone pillars, and made the battlefield look like a ruined city. The Skeletons couldn't understand that the pillars were still flaming vortexes with an illusion over them, and they stopped avoiding them. That led to them being sucked in, and the vortexes spawned their reduced power clones. They attacked the new ones, but ignored the ones hidden as stone pillars, which made the butterfly laugh hysterically. Stupid skeletons were great entertainment.

Chapter 890 Imbalanced Skillset

Karl began to draw on the mana storage totem that he had been making when he left for the battle, letting his own mana regenerate so that he didn't reduce any of the beasts' supply.

Cara had no such issue, she was much more mana efficient with her innate skill than Karl was, and the butterfly had made her invisible, so the Undead had to guess where the explosions were coming from as she flew around the battlefield.

Among the group, only Rae was in a bad mood. Skeletons had no bodily fluids at all, so she couldn't make them blow up. Smashing them into tiny bits was a small consolation when she had been looking forward to using [Blood Destruction] on a large scale.

Maybe next time they would find nice juicy zombies.

No, that would smell terrible. There was bound to be something better than skeletons among the Undead hordes. At least her [Demonic Oppression] skill muted the magic of the constructs, slowing them and reducing the power of their attack skills.

Most of them were Royal Rank, with scattered Monarchs among them. Only a very few were Overlords, and those were mostly the Death Knights leading groups. But that made her new [Entangling Vines] skill, obtained from the Orcish Druids, much more fun. She could throw down a large net of web, then raise vines to tear apart the trapped skeletons while she stabbed the strong ones.

The Lich Lord was beginning to weaken, and some of the spells had managed to disintegrate portions of its robe.

That was when Karl summoned his Golems.

{Please Choose a Form}

{Ghostfire Thunderbird Chosen}

The dull imitations of Hawk might not have any of his skills, but Karl coated them in [Ghostfire Body] without any issue, and they began to dive bomb the Lich Lord, who was already struggling to avoid annihilation.

The sudden change in tactics was too much for the Undead, and a single arrow made it through its barriers, exploding within the bone cage of its chest. That created a link back to the Haint Claw, and the battle between Karl and the Lich Lord turned into a tug of war for its soul.

Karl focused all his attention on the Haint Claw, working to tear the soul from the undead, while the Lich Lord took blow after blow from Cara and the Golems.

The Golems didn't do much but distract it, but that was all they needed to do. Each slip cost it a bit more of its power, until the bone construct of the Lich Lord's body collapsed and the ghostly image of a Pirate Lord appeared in the air.

{No, I will not allow this.} The Lich Lord roared, and then charged Karl, slamming into his body in an attempt to merge and possess him.

That was the moment that the Lich Lord learned what true terror was. A glowing golden scale floated in the void of Karl's mental space, and the centuries old Undead Lord felt its very essence destabilizing. Then, a ghostly butterfly appeared from one of the linked mental spaces, and gently brushed against him.

As if attacked by a vampire, the Lich Lord felt its essence being drained at a rapid pace. But without a body, it had no way to defend. Of all the magic that it had learned, spirit combat was only a tiny fraction of a percent. But the butterfly happily fed on magical power, and that was all that a Lich Lord was, once robbed of its body.

Within seconds, the totality of its power was siphoned away and flooded Little Butterfly's space, leaving only a tortured fragment of a soul that was being constantly drawn into the Haint Claw.

{Noooo! Please, I cannot die. Not like this.} The Lich Lord pleaded.

Then, it was gone.

{Skill Advanced}

{Skill Master4} ⇒ {Skill Master 5} Requirements met. All functions unlocked. Skills may upgrade to 1 Rank and 2 Grades above their base.

Karl didn't have the time to think too much about that, as the battle was far from over, and the death of the Lich Lord had not stopped the Skeleton Horde, only left them aimlessly rampaging.

Not that the Orcs and Wrath Demons minded. With the extra area damage, the skeleton horde had already been weakened, and the warriors were smashing through them with ease, while Tessa's [Holy Armour] was refreshed every half minute or so, and absorbed the majority of the [Slash] skills that the Skeletons were using.

It was the only skill that the average Skeleton knew.

While it wasn't much, in large numbers, it would allow them to cut through entire villages with ease. But with the bodies of the Skeletons weakened by the fires of Remi and Hawk's area skills, any of the Orcish warriors or Wrath Demons could smash through a skeleton every few seconds.

Plus, Lotus and the Totem Ranked Prince were moving forward with the battle, keeping area healing effects active on the majority of the defenders at all times. Without the guidance of the Death Knights and the Lich Lord, it was devastatingly effective as a tactic.

The Skeletons just attacked whatever was closest.

Karl took a moment to catch his breath and watch the battle. Tessa definitely needed a new spear, with bonuses to [Smite] or another ranged spell on it. The tactic of fighting from Thor's back was far too

effective for her to stop now. Especially when Thor was so happy stomping on Skeletons as [Consecrated Ground] crumbled them into dust.

The battle was quickly coming to an end, and the [Hellstorm] spells had been stopped to minimize property damage. Unlike the flaming blizzard effects, neither Hawk nor Remi had learned how to make the flaming vortexes stop damaging everything that they touched. They didn't even have the decency to spare buildings caught in their range.

As the last of the Skeletons fell, Lotus transformed into [Beast Form] and flew up to Nachtia as a tiny green dragon.

{Ohmygod, she is even more adorable than I remember. How can a dragon be so cute?} The black dragon rumbled.

Karl landed next to Prince Steven, and gave the Royal a polite nod. "Your Highness, the battlefield is clear. Do you have any updates on other battles nearby?" He asked.

The Demon tried not to let his shock show. He had just defeated a Totem Ranked Lich Lord, was that not enough of a feat for one day?