

Beast Master 911

Chapter 911 Somebody Call 911

Even though Remi had created the swamp to spite Hawk and his giant anti water user fireball, the Demons were not the least bit upset about the battlefield conditions. It confused the skeletons, slowed their reinforcements, and if you knocked one backward into it, the creature took longer than usual to get back up, giving the warrior time to catch his or her breath.

[That spell takes too long. I want to do it again now. Karl, I need a thing like Remi has for more mana.] Hawk complained.

A piece of Jewellery with enough mana storage to let him double cast that spell was an absurd request. Even three items wouldn't be enough to fully replace his mana. But he could get back enough to not slow down his other attacks while he regenerated for a while.

[I will work on something for you once we're done with the undead. You might have more ideas with some practice.] Karl agreed.

He had a point, Hawk thought. The new fireball had just been invented, there might be room to improve it. Remi broke his concentration with a new idea. [You know, if I aimed {Thousand Year Flood} straight down, and then flew around the battlefield to clean up, that should make it rain about 3 centimetres a second for a hundred metres around me. I could be a rain goddess for the withered crops.]

Hawk snorted. [For one, you can't fly very fast, you'd flood everything. But more importantly, this is clearly just bullying.]

Karl chuckled. [You two cut it out. No fire versus water arguments in battle. Besides, you're both still losing to Rae in kills.]

Hawk paused. That couldn't be right, could it? NO! She really was beating him, even after his huge fireball. It definitely took too long to recover from.

The reminder got both of them back to work, creating [Hellstorm] vortexes to pull the undead together for faster clearance rates, while the rest of the group tried not to laugh at their renewed motivation and rivalry after Hawk's new spell.

They would ask about it later, but watching the bestial siblings clearly trying to one-up each other was highly entertaining for those who could see it from their position.

Karl found himself too far from the battle again and switched to his bow, which caught the attention of the demons.

"Now that is shiny. Where did you get that?" The one on Karl's right asked as he hurled a fire bolt over the front rank of defenders and into the swamped skeletons.

"My guild made it. It's a custom piece, obviously, but we have Overlords for smithy, Alchemy and Runecrafting." Karl explained as he fired volleys of [Void Blast] arrows into the swamp.

"How are you not out of mana?" The same Demon asked.

Karl smiled and shook the bow. "It's got a reduced mana cost for the arrows. They're actually quite efficient to cast, and I made accessories for mana regeneration."

The Demon fired a few more shots as he considered the description. "I will have to talk to the Commander. I bet that he could get approval to buy a few like it for the Squad Leaders. Now, the rest of us might not make enough in a year to even consider buying that, but the army is a bit more generous with those in leadership."

That was certainly going to be true if they were willing to purchase Epic Grade Overlord Ranked weapons. That was a very generous benefit by any army's standards, even if they were well worth the cost.

"You know, those arrows are particularly effective. Is there more than just the void spell on that arrow?" The other Demon asked.

"The void blast is layered on top of a Poison Arrow made solid with [Blessed Item]. As it was made specifically for me, I went a bit overboard. But the arrows get a bonus against anything sensitive to holy damage.

With me adjusting the void blast to larger radius with lower initial output, the blast causes holy damage to multiple undead at a time. I'm quite proud of this one, even if I didn't make the base bow that the Runes were added to. That was done by our Guild's Grandmaster Smith."

The demons near Karl all chuckled. "Now you're making us all jealous. But against the undead, a holy explosion is just ridiculously good. Even a little bit of holy damage would be a huge damage increase. Plus, their damage ignore doesn't work on holy damage."

Karl nodded in understanding. "I will talk to the two Commanders after the battle, and see if they can get approval for a number of items that will add holy damage to attacks. Wait, I have a temporary solution."

Karl focused for a second to cast [Talisman] with runes for bonus holy damage on it. Then he folded it in half and stuck it in the armour of the demon on his right.

"Try that." He instructed.

The next fire bolt exploded with a flash of golden light on impact, and the nearby skeletons were more charred than usual. So, Karl made a half dozen more and gave them to everyone standing nearby, including Remi.

There was no need to give them to the golems and bodyguards, they already got enough bonuses. Shining golden blades made short work of the undead, even if the overall effect was a bit like an outdoor concert in the middle of the day, with all the flashing lights.

Karl made a mental note that the holy damage runes were not stealth-friendly.

The swamp was rapidly being cleared with even a half dozen holy damage talismans, and Karl realized just how much difference being properly equipped to fight the undead made. The Demons had absolutely zero affinity with holy magic. The only chance they had at it was becoming a cleric to another species' god. And even that was somewhat sketchy.

So, what had been a stalemate between unholy magic element users was completely overturned with just a few added Holy Magic spells. And that gave Karl a great idea. It wouldn't take much to make a cloak pin or brooch that gave them some holy damage, or converted a portion of their damage to the Holy element. That would absolutely annihilate the undead hordes. It was simply not something that had been available to them, not a new idea. Making items with holy damage, that were compatible with Demonic users, wasn't something that most clerics could or would do. It would normally reject them.

But Karl's talismans had been fine, so he hadn't realized there might be a conflict yet.

Chapter 912 Pulled The Boss

Dana looked over at the spectacle in Karl's section of the battlefield with concern. There was a lot of flashing golden light over there, and they were beginning to pull undead from other regions toward themselves.

"What is he doing over there?" Tessa shouted so the flying mage could hear her.

"I have no clue. If I had to hazard a guess, I would say he invented holy hand grenades. It's just explosions of holy light constantly." Dana called back.

Thor laughed at the thought. Holy Hand Grenades sounded like a lot of fun.

Tessa shook her head in dismay. "Well, if that's an item and not a skill, I will insist that he shares it. But we're almost done with the undead in our zone, and the unholy magic from the portal is beginning to wane."

As soon as the words were out of her mouth, Tessa had a premonition. The magic wasn't just to keep the army powered, it was a built-in failsafe.

[Everyone, we have a mission timer on this battle. We need every undead eliminated before that mana from the portal runs out. It's a trap.] She informed the group.

If she were wrong, then she would apologize for alarming them.

Well, if anyone asked her to. Remi and Rae were currently making bets on who could kill a massive number of Undead the fastest. Giving them a timer was just a motivation to compete with each other.

Even Thor joined the fun. [Karl, bring up a Bulwark, I'm sweeping your direction.]

Karl saw what Thor was thinking as the behemoth charged through the undead with a wide wall of magical ice in front of him.

Karl created his own wall of ice, then charged toward the massive beast and his red robed rider.

Tessa was standing on Thor's back, brunette hair flying in the wind, having escaped her usual braid, and marshalling the demonic armies to follow behind them.

The barrier would fail on impact, and some of the Undead were likely to be alive after.

Karl coated the entire wall in front of him with [Void Blast] set to detonate on impact. The idea was simple, the undead would be crushed between the two walls, and the spell would detonate like a bullet down a barrel.

It wouldn't harm the barriers, but it wouldn't bypass them either, creating a magical pressure cooker for the Skeleton Knights.

The explosion rang through the grasslands as if a massive cannon had been fired, and skeletal remains were thrown hundreds of metres in the air in the narrow space between the two walls as Karl and Thor collided.

Then both barriers collapsed from the secondary damage of the flying weapons and the skills of the Skeleton Knights, who had the cognitive ability to realize what was happening to them.

Karl laughed as he hacked his way through the undead survivors, while holy spears rained down around him. Glowing with red holy energy and standing on the back of a rampaging behemoth, Tessa really did look like a war goddess unleashed.

It wasn't hard to see why the myriad armies of the world were inspired to follow the Red Dragon clerics into battle.

Karl used [Gravity Slam] aimed straight ahead to hurl a wave of Skeleton Knights away for an unengaged unit to deal with, and Thor realized that he had missed a grand opportunity to delegate responsibilities.

Ophelia rumbled in amusement, then set her head on top of Karl's for a moment as she passed by.

Dana descended to talk to him as they finished the last of the nearby enemies.

"What did you do over in the swamp spell? It looked like holy magic grenades." She asked.

"I actually used [Talisman] to put holy damage on the demons. It created a flash of light on every strike." Dana nodded, losing interest if it was just some extra damage. But Tessa was intrigued. Holy Magic buffs worked on the Demons, and they exploded with light on contact? That sounded like the spells were actually creating mutual rejection with the Demon's attacks, but not enough that the Talisman failed.

Karl saluted the ladies with his blade, then crouched and leapt into the air, using [Swim Through Air] to keep him aloft while he surveyed the battlefield. The undead were almost defeated, with only a few more pockets left. "Hey, tell the others to stay away from the bodies if they're not in battle. We suspect that the mana flow has a trap embedded when it ends, and the army might explode or something." Karl shouted down at the Demon Commanders.

They all passed along the warning, and Remi quickly led the golems and other summons to a clear space where they could attack from a distance.

The power from the attack's origin was waning fast, and while they might be able to clear out the last of the Skeleton Knights in time, it would be a very close call. Then the power through the portal suddenly surged, and another portal opened over the battlefield, almost directly in front of Karl.

He moved out of the way, but the portal followed him, as well as the three Totems that they had on the battlefield.

Delilah shouted at the rest. {They've targeted us. Expect four powerful undead to come through. Karl, just hold on, and we will come rescue you when we're done.}

Karl gave her a salute, but returned to the ground where the beasts could join the fight.

"Don't worry Priestess. I can hold my own."

The dragon was skeptical of his answer, but there wasn't much that she could do to change the situation, as her own opponent, a massive bone dragon, similar to the one she had killed the day before, flew through the portal.

Fortunately, Karl had thought far enough ahead to give them his [Limited Invulnerability] buff before the battle began, and it hadn't expired yet. With that on their side, they should have the edge on the Totem Ranked undead that were sent to attack them now that they were wearied by the battle.

Chapter 913 Karl vs Vampire

Karl stared at the undead that had come to face him. The vampiress was tall and statuesque, bone white with long raven hair and not a stitch of clothing on. [They have found your kryptonite and just directly sent you a naked woman.] Rae laughed hysterically as she moved into position.

[Laugh all you want. Just make sure that you're ready to move when the time comes.]

The Vampire circled Karl, looking increasingly perplexed as whatever mental skill she was trying to use had no effect on him.

Then she seemed to vanish, moving so fast that only instinct put Karl's blade in place to parry the first attack. But not the second, third or fourth.

The vampire's claws smoked from contact with the holy energy of [Eternal Lightning], but Karl's barrier was nearly gone, and he hadn't even landed a strike.

The Undead smirked, and Karl winked at her, confusing the Totem Ranked undead even more.

Then he centred [Void Blast] on himself.

The explosion of black energy sent her flying backward into Rae's zombie spiders, which were rapidly torn apart by the enraged undead.

Even Rae wasn't safe from the fallout, and suffered a shattered forelimb for a few seconds before it mended itself.

[That thing is too fast. Even I can't attack fast enough to get a clean strike.] Rae complained.

She was also incorporeal and invisible, so if she couldn't land a strike, not many others would be able to.

Fortunately, they didn't actually need to hit the vampire. Cara retreated to her space where she could get a full overview of the battlefield and prepared for her counterattack. Setting off [Void Blast] in a shotgun pattern should be able to hit, no matter how fast the target was.

Rae had the same idea, and sprayed out a net of sticky silk to slow down and locate the target.

Vampire claws flashed with some sort of attack skill that created a minefield of rend attacks around her. Not moving, they just rotated into existence like claw strikes, then vanished.

Karl had never thought of using Rend that way. He sent it out in a wave, but he could likely create hundreds of attacks in a split second. The damage would be low, but a hit would be nearly guaranteed.

The undead Totem looked at Rae, obviously able to see her, even in [Night Hunter] incorporeal form, then returned her attention to Karl.

"You are a tricky little blood bag." She hissed.

"And you got a bit too excited about sucking me, showing up without clothes and all."

The vampire vanished and Karl felt her power approaching, so he detonated [Void Blast] around himself again, a split second before claws tore through his forearm.

He was slammed to the ground on his back, and the claws moved to both sides of his chest.

Karl grabbed her wrists, trapping her hands as the vampire's claws ripped into his chest and [Void Blast] flayed her skin.

In the battle of strength, they were closely matched. Karl couldn't throw her off without leverage, and she was unable to push her claws into any vital organs, so their battle was one of regeneration.

Even with attacks raining down on her, and Rae repeatedly stabbing her in the back with poisoned daggers, the Vampire's wounds closed in a split second, while Karl's chest was covered in black mist as [Void Body] regenerated him.

"Why don't you die?" The vampire demanded.

"That's my line. You showed up for naked wrestling in a [Consecrated Ground] zone. Just turn to ash already." Karl replied.

Pain wracked his body as the Vampire blasted him with repeated attacks, shattering the remains of his armour. Most of his body had lingering black mist over it now as [Void Body] regenerated him, and Karl spat blood as the Vampire smiled.

"Good try, but that's not going to be enough for you to win." Karl added [Ghostfire Body] to the next [Void Blast] and the vampire briefly lit with ethereal fire before it was snuffed out. But Karl could feel the Haint Claw draw a bit of vitality before that happened.

That seemed to be the answer. Just a little more stolen at a time. Karl equipped the Haint Claw to his hands and lit them with Ghostfire as he continually channelled [Void Blast], which was the only skill he had that bypassed the Totem Rank damage reduction ability.

From fifty metres away, Rae stared at their battle in annoyance. The unstable energy of their battle now made it unsafe for her to approach and attack. The last time she did, she got two of her legs vaporized before she even made it to them.

She wasn't even attacking with ranged skills anymore, as whatever the Vampire was doing destabilized all attacks that came near them. So her attacks joined the general miasma of power, and they were damaging Karl as well.

But with [Void Body], [Consecrated Ground], [Behemoth's Vitality] and [Impenetrable Bulwark] active, Karl had an absolutely ridiculous amount of damage reduction and regeneration.

Quick math said fifty percent, plus numbers damage reduction. With three times [Void Body]'s usual regeneration.

Rae leaned over to whisper to Dana, who had already realized none of their attacks were reaching the stationary battle of wills.

"Do you think we're flirting wrong? Is that why we don't have mates?"

"Do you think that showing up naked and pinning them to the ground while you try to kill them is a seduction technique?" Dana countered.

Rae shrugged. "I can't rule it out."

Flames were slowly climbing up the vampire's arms as the Haint Claw stole more power and its regeneration rate slowed. But the chaotic energy whipping around the area was getting worse as well, and nothing else dared to come near them.

All of the surrounding plant life was destroyed, and Rae wasn't sure if the combatants even realized that they were floating in place, as the ground had been obliterated beneath them while the energy flows were too thick to let them fall.

The real question was, who was losing faster? The vampire against the fire, or Karl, whose body was slowly becoming more energy than flesh.

Chapter 914 Chaotic Fluctuations

One after another, the Totems finished their fights and came over, starting with Priestess Delilah, who transformed into a dark haired human woman in the same red high Priestess Robes that Tessa wore.

Dana frowned at her, while Tessa nodded politely. But the dragon didn't move forward, just waited and watched.

Then the two Demons came to stand with her, and Dana needed answers.

"Is nobody going to help him? Surely, one of you can get close, you're all Totems." She demanded.

"We would if we could. You can try it yourself, we can't get within five paces of them, there is an invisible divine barrier there. The Gods are letting them battle it out on their own terms. The conjured creatures and constructs from his bonded beasts appear to have no issue, but I had to increase my altitude when I came over here, to avoid running into the barrier.

Any spell we cast, like yours, will just get added to the mess." The Priestess explained.

Dana glared at the suspended battle of wills, and Tessa sighed. "If this had happened just a bit earlier, when there was still a battle going on around us, it might have been different. He gets a stacking bonus to damage from the whole group. But right now, there is only one target and the number of attacks that they can use against it is limited. Probably only Karl and Cara, wherever she went, could even stand a chance of doing real damage to that vampire.

But what sort of vampire is that? Ten minutes in [Consecrated Ground] should have killed almost any undead, and she's taking the full force of a Totem Ranked Void blast continually, plus the flames." Tessa pondered.

Priestess Delilah shook her head, not knowing the answer. But Commander Daleth had an idea.

But what sort of vampire is that? Ten minutes in [Consecrated Ground] should have killed almost any undead, and she's taking the full force of a Totem Ranked Void blast continually, plus the flames." Tessa pondered.

Priestess Delilah shook her head, not knowing the answer. But Commander Daleth had an idea.

"I think that she might be one of the Council of Ancients. There aren't many Totem Ranked Vampires. Those species with Totem Ranked bloodline potential can usually heal from the virus, so they just remain dead instead of turning. That suggests that she might have reached Totem Rank during the last System Resurgence, ten thousand years ago.

At that age, and Totem Ranked, she could be considered virtually immortal. The sun doesn't appear to be harming her at all, though not much light is passing through to them now. Plus, that level of regeneration. Vampires get stronger with age, just like our friend Thor here. Only, where he takes less damage for every day, they regenerate a bit faster every day.

The fact that she is showing damage long enough for us to see it is testament to how much damage is being done, but neither of them should be able to keep this up forever. The rate they're expending energy has to be faster than their regeneration." He explained.

07:01

Remi nodded in agreement. {The Karl is drawing from our spaces as he fights. Sister butterfly has insane mana regeneration, and the rest of us are putting at least a little in for him to use, but he's still drawing more than we're putting in. But he's going to run out of body before he runs out of mana.}

Remi wasn't actually concerned that Karl would die. Void Body turned you into black mist when damaged, and she hadn't seen a limit to it yet. So, it was possible it could turn a whole Karl into mist and then let him reform.

Besides, even if that thing did kill him, she still had a whole ball of his shed fur in her pouch for Lotus to resurrect him from. That had to count as a body part.

So, as the two oblivious combatants fought for dominance, the rest of the army was left watching in horror as the entangled energies became even more wildly imbalanced.

Then, it began to rain black droplets of power from the miasma onto the two, as if they were the centre of gravity. Karl thought his vision was fading at first, until Cara informed him that it was just black energy condensing on them, then suddenly everything seemed to vanish, and he found himself in the void.

"Well, I don't feel dead." Karl muttered to himself.

"Indeed, you don't look dead either," a musical voice agreed, and Karl turned to face the Vampiress, only to find that he couldn't use skills at all, or even do more than rotate on the spot.

She swatted ineffectually at him, just a little too far apart for their fingertips to touch if Karl reached out in her direction.

"Do you think we broke something?" Karl wondered.

"I think that we intrigued something. Something terrible."

They stared silently at each other for a moment before a third presence joined them. An impossibly large black dragon, easily two hundred metres long without counting its tail, with a wingspan twice that distance. The dragon stared at them from a distance, then transformed into a black robed human and walked across the void to inspect them more closely.

[Matilda] {Supreme Lady of the Darklight Host, Cyhosasa Branch Location}

Crap. Not a black dragon. A Supreme Rank Chaos Dragon.

It took the vampire a little longer to figure out who it was, but when she did, she went from unnaturally white to roughly the colour of fine porcelain.

"A new branch of the Darklight Host has opened, has it? And they are willing to go to war for the Guild? Interesting. Very interesting. And you brought me such an adorable new pet. I think I will keep her this time."

The Vampire's nameplate still wasn't visible, but that didn't seem to bother the dragon.

"Supreme Lady Matilda, my apologies if our battle disturbed your afternoon. It wasn't our intention." The vampire began.

"Now, Tiffani, is there any need for such formalities?" The dragon replied with a smile.

"Yes, Supreme Lady. I believe that you might have misinterpreted the situation. I did not enter your territory, and we had an agreement that you would not come for me if I stayed away." Tiffani, the Totem Ranked Vampire, replied.

"But you did, didn't you? I sensed the instant that you entered the Chaos Plane. This is my territory as much as Cyhosasa is."

Chapter 915 Supreme Lady Matilda

Karl cleared his throat. "Sorry to interrupt, but how did we get here? I don't recall having an ability to enter the Chaos Plane, or any other plane for that matter."

The dragon seemed amused at the question. "You don't. Your little spat with the lovely Tiffani created a Chaos Plane anomaly. Void Magic and Death Magic, condensed until they liquified. What else did you expect?"

"Not this?" Karl replied with a shrug.

The vampire nodded. If anything, she would have expected the underworld, or perhaps the Netherworld, or one of the other Lower Planes. But opening a planar anomaly was not anywhere on the list of expected outcomes of their contest to begin with.

However, she didn't have any intentions of going home with that insane dragon. The Supreme Lady could keep that cockroach of an immortal annoyance instead.

"If you show me something interesting, perhaps I could show you how to go home." Matilda suggested.

Karl smirked and removed Cara from her space to hold her out toward the dragon. The Supreme Lady looked confused as she approached and stared at Cara.

Who booped her with her nose, then licked her cheek.

The dragon froze in place as both Karl and Cara burst into laughter. Tiffani gasped in horror, and turned to stare at him.

"You are literally insane. Did I disintegrate something important in your brain? I might be facing a horrible future, but you... you are so fucked!

[Satisfying. Spicy, a bit sweet.] Cara agreed.

Matilda was still staring at Karl and Cara, who was now flying around the Chaos Plane on her own, while Karl was completely unable to move.

"Oh, I see now. You are right, that is interesting. You found a way to have a Winged Void Badger blessed by the Laughing God." Matilda muttered, then cast a spell that created a small mirror in the air on her right.

The scene in the mirror changed rapidly, then came into focus, looking at a small burrow full of baby Void Badgers. An incorporeal black mist surged with power, and the area was obliterated, except for a black ball where the mother badger protected her young.

Then the scene cut and Cara was standing on Karl's shoulder as he swatted away the attack of the four armed Titan at the Golden Dragon Capital, then it showed her being attacked by Orcs and meeting Karl, who lured her in with food. Finally, it showed a flash of her looting an unknown species of insectoid warrior in a dungeon, followed by the moment that she licked the bone dragon.

"So, that's how it is."

[It's my history... in no particular order. But some of those things haven't happened yet.] Cara cheered as she flew over to land on the dragon.

The scenes kept playing, but Matilda turned the mirror so only the two of them could see it.

A few minutes later, the mirror vanished, and Supreme Lady Matilda sighed.

"It's a shame I had to miss so many of the good parts in person. Well, time to go."

Then she simply vanished, along with Tiffani.

Cara flew around for a moment, enjoying her time in the Chaos Plane. This was a good place, and she could really feel the wind in her fur. It was like a refreshing blow-dryer after a bubble bath, even if Karl didn't feel any wind in the realm at all. It was like it didn't touch him.

Or maybe it just hadn't started yet for him. It was better not to think too deeply about such things.

Then the Void around Karl seemed to twist, and he was ejected back out, only to find himself locked back in battle with Tiffani.

Their eyes met in shock, and the vampire turned to mist, fleeing their engagement. The world twisted, and a flash of the memory of the events in the void returned to Karl's mind. Again, Karl found himself back in battle with Tiffani, who looked even more panicked this time.

[Everything is Chaotic.] Cara explained in a sage voice from inside her space.

The loop repeated for a third time, and Tiffani looked resigned as time restarted, then she again turned into mist and tried to run. But this time the black layer was a bit thinner, and when she pulled away from Karl, she simply vanished, leaving behind nothing but the scent of Chaos Dragon and her own fear.

Memories slammed into Karl's mind, and he realized that Rae and the others hadn't experienced any of that. For them, nothing had happened but the deadlock, then the vampire being extracted by the Chaos Dragon.

Whether they had been able to sense the presence of the Supreme Rank Dragon at all was questionable, but Karl and Cara could still smell her presence, like a waft of perfume after she had left the room.

Karl caught his breath as his body finished healing, and then realized he was both naked and human again.

A quick transformation and a fresh set of armour had him ready to go, but Priestess Delilah had some questions.

"What exactly was that? I thought I felt a Chaos Dragon take the Vampire away, and why did you turn human when your armour broke?" She demanded.

"I didn't turn human when my armour broke. Somewhere at the end, my transformation spell must have been dispelled. My natural state is much less furry. A chaos dragon did intervene. Apparently, something that we did alerted Supreme Lady Matilda, and she claimed the vampire as her own." Karl explained.

"Cyhosasa is involved with Bomgon?" Commander Ligo asked, horrified.

Karl shook his head. "No, the vampire was definitely from Bomgon, but she had some sort of deal where she agreed that the Supreme Lady would never see her again, and once she did, the Chaos Dragon simply took her.

There was some overlap of time there, I don't know what sort of skill that was."

Priestess Delilah nodded. "That's understandable. Everything becomes chaotic around her. The entire nation of Cyhosasa tends to be in a state of flux when she's in a bad mood. Time flow, mana levels, everything. New cities and dungeons have been known to appear out of nowhere when she is mad at someone."

Chaos, indeed.

Karl checked his mind and found that Cara was safely in her space, reclined on her pile of treasure, reminiscing about whatever she had seen in that mirror. Her thoughts were oddly closed to Karl, but whatever she saw had pleased the badger.

Chapter 916 But Did You Die?

Commander Ligo joined the conversation. "So, just to be certain. There is no chance that Cyhosasa is working with Bomgon, correct?"

Karl nodded. "That is correct. It was personal between the dragon and the vampire. There was no indication of alliance, military or otherwise, between the two nations. But how did the other fights go?"

The Demon shrugged. "The extra damage reduction your team granted us made all the difference.

My apologies for not coming to your aid, but Void and Death together create Chaos, and the energy around your fight made it unsafe for anyone else to attempt to use skills or approach the area.

But more importantly, in all that mess, were you bitten? Vampire toxin isn't always recognized as a negative state by healing spells and regeneration,"

Karl thought back through the battle. "No, I don't believe that I was bitten. Clawed quite a bit, hit with every offensive skill that she could think of. But not bitten.

"That is excellent news. It saves us an extra step in the post fight quarantine and monitoring stage. If there was any risk of high-ranking vampire bites, someone would have to monitor you all night, in case you died and returned as an Overlord Ranked Vampire.

That would be bad." Commander Ligo explained.

"Oh?" Dana asked.

"Imagine him, with all his skills. But faster, and driven mad by bloodlust. It takes newly turned vampires months or even years before most of them are sane enough that they can be released from captivity for more than suicide missions.

Even the Bomgon armies only use new vampires as shock troops, and that's a massive waste, as they're so powerful once they sober up from the bloodlust." The Demon explained.

Dana chuckled. "I can't imagine Mick, our Vampiric shop clerk, as a bloodthirsty monster."

That made the big demon chuckle. "It only happens to turned vampires, not trueborn living vampires, children born with the virus from infected parents. Is she still alive, or is she once dead already?"

"Still alive. Kind of? Vampires are a bit odd." Dana hesitantly answered.

"If there is doubt, she's alive. But their hearts beat very slowly, and they're primarily sustained by blood and magic. They get extra creepy when they're dead. More powerful, but definitely creepier."

Karl chuckled at the thought of Mick being called creepy. Maybe there was someone who saw her that way, but he just couldn't. Not when Rae had her dressed in a frilly ruffled Lolita dress and carrying a parasol at work.

Thor agreed with Commander Ligo. That crazy naked woman was way creepier than any other vampire he had seen.

But now that the battle was over, the hard part could begin. There was a load of cleanup to be done, and the majority of the farmland around the village was completely obliterated. Even with all the powerful creatures they had here, there would be no salvaging most of the crops.

"I will join the Thunderbird, and we will scorch this region clear of all signs of the undead, then, if the dancing tree likes to fly, I will take her up to restore the soil while Priestess Tessa makes potatoes for them to plant.

They will grow well enough in this soil, and they can grow year round here, so the farmers don't starve." Priestess Delilah insisted.

"Oh, she loves to fly. I'm sure that she will be overjoyed to help you." Tessa agreed. The red dragon smiled gently. It was a given that the Green Dragon Priestess would be on board with a flight on the back of a Totem Ranked Red Dragon.

Fortunately, most of the battle had been skeletons, so there wasn't much toxic blood to deal with, and only the portions where the zombies had been engaged needed to be intensively purged, while Thor and Karl were tasked with using [Bulwark] to make piles out of the skeleton bones.

Those would be burned to ash to reduce the amount of undead corruption that could be spread by their presence.

Rae and Remi had already stolen a lot of the hand bones for making arts and crafts, as well as some rare potions, but the rest could be burned. Nobody needed huge undead leg bones anyhow.

Within an hour, the battlefield was cleaned, and Lotus was ready for her flight. Delilah came prepared, and she even had a custom saddle made, with an adjustable belt to hold the rider on during hard manoeuvring. It might have been even more fancy than the ones that Rae made.

They made slow and lazy circles in the sky as Lotus rained nature magic down on the region, bringing life back to the scorched and barren ground. But Lotus was better at nature magic than the Red Dragon had been expecting, and she caused the potato plants to appear and sprout all through the fields before she was finished.

As an added benefit, that also took Lotus much longer than just seeding the fields. A whole extra hour in the sky, riding on a dragon.

Entire fields would be ready to start harvesting in a few months, about the time that the villagers would be running out of the supplies that Tessa had left for them today.

It would change the stews for a while, but at least they would still have plenty to eat.

Tessa spent most of that time working with Thor on rebuilding the damaged road sections, as [Bulwark] had proven to be such an effective earth moving tool when attached to a behemoth.

Thor could push massive piles of dirt and gravel with ease, and a little work to build up the road above the level of the fields would make it much less muddy than before. Everything drained to the dry moat around the village anyhow.

Chief Snakebite came out to greet Karl when he approached the village after finishing the cleanup.

"Excellent work, Overlord. We have a long house for your people, so you can sleep. I remember that you've been up since yesterday already."

Karl patted him on the shoulder. "Thank you. I'm sure everyone will be grateful for the rest. If you talk to one of the Battalion Leaders, they'll let you know what their night watch practice is.

But first, I think we should probably eat. If I tell the ladies to go to bed hungry, I will be sleeping in a pig barn."

Chapter 917 Battle Report

The Long House was like a military barracks, set up for a hundred people to sleep in, with a large open space in the centre, set up for a cooking fire.

Karl woke up the next morning to the usual sounds of his group in camp. Dana mumbling to herself as she shifted in his arms. Thor and Tessa preparing breakfast, Lotus trying to escape from Ophelia, and now Nachtia, laughing at the little Priestess' dilemma.

The black dragon waved at Karl as he sat up in bed. "O really isn't a morning person, is she?"

Everyone awake shook their heads in solidarity.

"If she didn't have Lotus with her, she would sleep at least three more hours a day. But they're basically a bonded pair at this point, so she puts up with the early morning wake-up calls." Karl explained quietly.

Ophelia opened one eye, then ruffled Lotus' hair before tucking the little cleric back underneath her. "You're all too loud. We were up for two days and a night. Let me sleep."

Tessa chuckled. "Well, it's almost noon. If we don't have breakfast now, it'll be lunch."

They had slept from late afternoon until nearly noon the next day, and she was hungry.

The Orcs had brought them supplies at some point, as there was a basket of eggs by the door. But Thor had given her a large whale steak to fry, and there was a massive skillet full of what smelled like bacon grease, garlic and chopped potatoes.

Once that was frying, the smell was enough to rouse Ophelia from her slumber, and everyone got prepared for their day's activities.

Priestess Delilah came inside, transformed into a middle-aged woman with hair as bright red as her robes, and a stern face that spoke of countless years dealing with children.

"Do you mind if I join you? There are some things to discuss this morning while the army is preoccupied." The red dragon asked.

"There's always enough for more visitors. Sit where you like." Tessa agreed.

Delilah picked a spot beside Nachtia, as she was alone on a bed, and got right to business.

"It seems that your premonition was right. The energy flows were a trap, and the arrival of the last wave of Totems was not a coincidence.

We have reports of twelve other attacks, all much smaller than the one that we endured, but all of them ended with either an undead plague curse or a group of Totems arriving on the scene the moment that the energy flow from the battlefields ended.

Unlike the others, it appears that we managed to attract an entire staging area to one spot. That might not sound like a good thing, but I would contend that it was. We had three totems here, plus a strong support Overlord, to help deal with six Necromancer Lords.

The Bomgon nation took a heavy blow last night, with the loss of an entire Totem Ranked Necromantic Coven, and two ancients. Well, three if we consider the Vampire to be lost to them, though she is confirmed to be alive."

Karl gave her a curious look. "She has been confirmed alive already?"

Delilah nodded. "Supreme Lady Matilda took her shopping in the late hours of last night. The Vampire has been imprisoned with magical cuffs that suppress her ability to transform, as well as some of her abilities. So, she is no longer considered to be a threat.

But more than that, the number of Totems that will support the Lord of the Undead is limited. There might be hundreds of them spread through the undead nation, but most have their own goals, and their own territories.

Getting them to move everything to the border for a foreign invasion under someone else's control takes more than a simple command. Especially now that they have taken a large number of losses.

Of course, it's the same for the Demons, is it not? There is a Totem Ranked Chief in town, but they wouldn't and couldn't send the chiefs of every single village to the border, no matter how bad the attacks got."

That made perfect sense. Even if they were creating an undead army, you couldn't take the leaders from every village in the entire nation into the army. Even conscription usually only took a portion of the Nobles, then conscripted kids from the families to fill the ranks of officers.

Tessa started to dish out breakfast as it was ready. "So, are we expecting more attacks today? How did the other battles go?"

Delilah sighed. "Well enough. The Bomgon army inflicted three Totem Ranked losses upon the Bomgon Army for every Totem they lost, not counting our group. But some villages suffered extensive damage

before the attackers were repelled. At the moment, the Lord is more concerned about what caused this recent bit of aggression. There are some obvious clues, but Lord Bomgon hasn't officially said anything or made any demands."

That did sound strange. You didn't usually start a large-scale invasion without some sort of motivation or demands. Unless they were getting overpopulated and needed more space, in which case the answer was that they were just planning to fight until they either gained enough land or lost enough troops.

"Well, if there is no clear reason or target, all we can really do is wait for them to attack again. That's nearly the worst situation for the border villages, just waiting to see if they'll be wiped out one day. But I suppose it's worse for the army." Karl replied.

Delilah nodded. "Exactly. They're spreading out again so that they don't leave too large of a region exposed to attack, but it's just a guessing game where the attacks will land, unless we get some sort of divine inspiration."

Beside her, Nachtia chuckled. "I suspect that we won't need much divine inspiration to guess that they will attack us again. After yesterday's battle, both the Red and Black Dragons were pleased with our performance. The undead army won't stand for that.

So, I suspect that wherever we go, we will be attacked again soon. The only thing that would stop it would be to go to a city too large and heavily defended for them to launch another full-scale attack on us."

Chapter 918 The Nature Of The Dragon Isles

That was the same thing that was on everyone's mind. They were going to be targeted again after eliminating nine Totem Ranked undead and Necromancers in the course of a single battle. The loss of an army was a significant blow, but the loss of its assigned leaders was worse. Under normal circumstances, they should be able to escape, and the leaders of an army rarely fought to the death, unless they had a sure way to resurrect, like the ones who fought at the battle in Drodh City.

However, things were still calm after the finished breakfast, and the village was beginning to get back to their routine, with the Orcs going out to check on the newly revamped fields to see what they had coming for crops and what it needed.

Most of the outlying fields were fine, as they were past the battlefield, but those who worked the inner fields had countless notes to take about the current state of the land. Especially as all the field boundaries had changed with Thor and Karl bulldozing up the undead bodies.

Chief Snakebite motioned for them to join him on the porch of his house, where he had a large book set out.

"Thank you all for the help. If you would like to continue your battles against the undead, I got a notice this morning that the city of Bhakh has been recruiting adventurers into a force to clear the border region around Ekh-Bhor, in preparation for a retaliatory invasion." The giant Orc suggested.

Karl looked to the others for a decision. The point of the trip was to build experience, which should help their growth, and please the gods.

Both of those things would be likely to happen if they joined this expedition.

But there was always a chance when you joined a larger ongoing plan that someone would try to use you as cannon fodder. For that reason alone, showing up at random places to join border defence forces was a superior method of support.

Delilah shrugged. "If you can all advance one more time, you could probably come out of the dead zone and visit the rest of the dragon isles. Karl would most likely be alright travelling alone as an Overlord, but he's as much a beast as the ones bonded to him."

Dana gave her a confused look. "What do you mean the dead zone?"

Delilah laughed softly as she realized that they didn't know the nickname.

"The region around the undead horde, and the whole southeastern isle in general, is known as the dead zone on the other islands. It's where those without potential go to die, never able to reach immortality. For example, I'm from Northern Kopji, near the Cyhosasa straights. There are no lesser demon species there. No Orcs, no lesser trolls, and the only thing elevating most of the dragonkin above slavery is the law prohibiting the practice. If you can't make Overlord Rank by adulthood, your life is somewhere between forfeit and worthless. I was the runt of my clutch, slow to grow, and I am the last of us still

lingering at Totem Ranked. That is why I was chosen to be moved when the church needed dragons for its deployment.

Now, my attitude and accomplishments have often pleased the Goddess. But among my peers, I am seen as an underachiever at my age.

That might diminish your respect for me, but the Red Dragon doesn't care about personal pride.

Then there is Sholaha. I heard that the Dwarves of Bara have gone there to fill an order for Karl. Something about blood. They should have it at your Guild House soon. The Dark Dwarves hold a combat tournament along the shores of Naraledum Lake, and it doesn't even start until Overlord Rank, which is the amateur fighters. The pros are all Totem and Mythic Ranked."

Karl was intrigued. "What do they fight for? What sort of prizes would intrigue enough people to come fight in such a battle?" The dragon laughed. "They fight for the right to levy fees on the Zilaz Dungeon. The winning Mythic and Totem Ranked fighter split half the income from the dungeon entry fees, with the city taking the rest. It probably sounds outlandish to you, coming from this region, but it's really not unexpected if you have lived long enough to see the change.

The problem here in Drodh is somewhat of their own making, after all. They went on a rampage to eliminate all the most powerful monsters and beasts. That dropped the latent mana level in the region, and now they are weakening themselves with their supposed safety.

We have tried to talk sense to the Lord of Drodh in the past, but he likes things just how they are, and this is his territory, so we let it go."

Dana sighed. "So, that's how it is. But now that the system is back, aren't things going to be tossed on their heads?"

The dragon smiled at her. "Unlike humans, who have zero innate power, and unlimited potential for growth, almost every other species will hit a cap within the system where they cannot progress any further, no matter what they do. Chromatic Dragons need variable amounts of time, but they can reach Demigod status, in theory. Though, I am not certain the world could support a Demigod at this point. We need higher quality mana to keep growing.

But other than humans and dragons, everyone else will hit a genetic dead end. Even the Elves and Dwarves will reach their limits somewhere within the realms of the Immortals. Few in the past did make it into the realm of Peak Immortals, but there has never been a Supreme-Ranked Dwarf or Elf. Once upon a time, the two species both had Legendary Heroes, but that was a gift from the System, and they skipped the Supreme Rank entirely on their way by.

But you're not here for history. What I'm saying is that from a logistical standpoint, it makes sense for you all to try to get to Overlord Ranked within the next few years. I can see that the ladies are still new to the Monarch Rank, but your power is growing. Earn enough rewards from the System and you'll make it there.

It's not like you're short on time. With a fully active system, your aging process should slow dramatically once you're in your later twenties, or the species equivalent of the human end of early adulthood."

Chapter 919 Wait How Long?

Lotus sighed at the thought of needing to make it through a whole Rank to keep travelling. That was a long time.

But she was pretty comfortable in Drodh, and they were all Darklight. Host. Guild members now, so there was no reason that she couldn't just stay there forever if she didn't make it to Overlord Rank quickly.

The downside would be that if everyone else did, then she would miss out on too much fun stuff.

If it was just Karl, she could get Rae and Remi to bring her back fun stuff. But losing her cuddle bear to separate adventures was simply unacceptable.

Delilah noticed her dilemma right away.

"Let me guess, you're trying to balance the amount of actual work involved versus the amount of fun that you will miss out on if you don't do the work in a timely manner?" The dragon asked.

Lotus gave her a suspicious look, but nodded in agreement.

Delilah consoled the little Cleric. "Well, as they say, nature is all about balance, right? You just need to convince the other ladies to do fun stuff in between jobs so that you don't get too bored. I would likely just accept that you're going to lose the Beast Master eventually.

His growth rate is destined to be spectacular, and he will hit Totem Rank long before any of you are Overlords."

Dana patted Lotus on the shoulder, "Relax, it's depressing for all of us. At least your bed doesn't get cold when he goes out to do other things."

Ophelia chuckled at the comment, and Dana shrugged. She had just accepted it at this point. Even if her and Karl weren't on the same sleeping schedule, if he was gone entirely, then all of her usual sleeping partners were gone as well.

"What are you going to do next?" Ophelia asked the Totem - Ranked Red Dragon.

"There is another battle coming that I feel the calling to. Bagaandormen is a coastal city right on the border. Close to a hundred thousand Demons and Orcs. The Goddess says I need to be there for their next battle." She replied.

Tessa stared meaningfully at Karl, who chuckled in response.

"Well, I suppose that we could all go to the city with you. It will make the red and black both happy if we're there to fight."

The dragon shrugged. "You can if you like. It is also a port town, so if you need some foreign items that you didn't find in Drodh, they might be here."

Karl looked up at the sky, which was becoming overcast as a storm rolled in from the

east.

"Perhaps I should move most of the group to a dry spot, and then I can follow you on Hawk." He suggested.

"Or, I can just open a portal. I'm assuming that you've never been there before, but I learned to use the Portal spell centuries ago."

With a wave of her hand, a portal opened, showing a large city far beneath the scene. A minor technical difficulty for their wingless members.

Karl opened the [Tiny World] entrance to let the others enter, and then walked through, letting himself walk through the sky as Hawk blinked to his space, then back out to appear under Karl's feet.

Delilah transformed as she stepped through the portal, and shook her head in amusement at Karl standing on top of the Thunderbird.

{I might have forgotten that you don't have wings.} She informed him as they circled towards the city.

"That's fine. I can fly without them. But the others can't, so I opened a separate space for them to rest in."

The reminder brought her attention back to the spell. {Is there enough space to really relax in your spell? Or is it more of a stasis item?}

"There is room. Is there not a good hotel here?" Karl asked.

Delilah shook her head. {Even when the city isn't under attack, it's impossible to find a decent room. I suggest that we land outside the city and let the others out, then leave again before dark.}

Karl gestured down toward the army units stationed outside the city. "Why don't we go join them? I can have a proper resting spot, suitable for a High Priestess, made in no time at all."

She was dubious about that, but led Karl down to the army camps to make the introductions. She shifted into human form the moment that she landed on the east side of the city, furthest into Drodh territory, and Karl let the rest of the team out of the [Tiny World] while they waited for an officer to approach from the military camps. "Avatar Delilah. What brings you here today?" The Demon asked politely, as he spread his black leathery wings in a slight bow.

"I sensed war coming. I also brought ones favoured by the War God. Might we rest in your camp tonight?" She asked.

The Demon suddenly went stiff, and reluctantly shook his head. "My apologies, Priestess. The camps are on lockdown. There was an infection outbreak, and it is suspected to have been brought by infiltrators from the city. We can help you set up near the camp, but not allow you in until protocols are finished."

Karl shrugged. "That is fine. We will set up in the trees over there, if you're not planning to cut them for firewood right away."

The Demon chuckled. "We've got more than enough fire magic for that. We will make sure that the patrols keep an eye on your location, so no spies or intruders attempt to attack your camp!"

Karl was about to thank the man when Rae simply vanished with a swoop of her cloak, using it as a shadow to shadow step into the tree line, where she could set up a fort.

Then, they could upgrade the fort with [Illusionary Domain] upgrades, and some runic traps. As long as Remi and the butterfly worked with her, it would be the greatest fort that they had ever made.

But the butterfly had an even better idea. Instead of making the illusion inside the fort, she would make it outside the fort, so that those who tried to get to them would have to go through hundreds of metres of fake forest, without knowing where the forest had stopped being real.

Chapter 920 Greatest Fort Ever

Karl smiled as the three of them got to work on the new camp, and Rae encompassed five large trees with her construction plans for the fortress, which was now more of a silk palace than a tree fort.

"Alright, Lady Rae is ready to show us her masterpiece." Karl announced as she finished with the fort.

He ignored the extra distance as he led the group inside, but noticed that Delilah was intrigued by all the illusionary elements. They were at Overlord Rank, but it was rare that anyone saw through them, even if they had a level advantage.

Then they got to the silk fortress, which had two levels, multiple bedrooms, and even a slide around the outside to get to the ground.

"You keep that sort of equipment with you? That's a bit excessive." The dragon laughed.

"On the contrary, Lady Rae made this with her own silk over the last five minutes. It's a fully custom design, with an improvised security system in place. I will add some runic wards around the perimeter to keep away pests, and then we should be able to sleep in peace."

Butterfly passed control of the [Illusionary Domain] to Karl, as her energy was limited, and he led everyone inside, where Rae was waiting for them.

"Lady Delilah, welcome. Oh, I don't think that Nachtia has seen one of my forts, either. First up, we have the seating area. The floor is stretchy and warm, but I also made hanging chairs. Over there, we have a kitchen, or will when Lotus makes counters out of the branches. Then we have showers, using water creating magical items.

Upstairs we have a full set of bedrooms, plus one extra, as we always seem to pick up more people the longer that we stay in one place.

I remember a few occasions when our group size doubled by the time we were ready to move on." Rae welcomed them.

The dragons explored the tent, and then returned to the main floor, where Lotus had altered the branches into countertops so she could make dinner.

"Hammocks in every room, sticky mesh on the windows to keep pests out but let fresh air in. Excellent work on the fort. Your team really does live in luxury when you're on the road." Delilah congratulated Rac.

Rae gave her a toothy smile. "We do our best. Do you think that this army will be as fun as the last one? There are a lot more strong creatures here. Maybe we can get more trophies this time.

Skeletons and zombies don't make for decent trophies, and the Necromancers don't look nearly as impressive dead as they were alive. Fighting giants at least left big, impressive corpses."

The dragons chuckled at her annoyance. The undead generally weren't as impressive to look at dead as they were alive. They just kind of crumbled when the magic animating them vanished. Even the Necromancers withered to something close to a mummy once the magic sustaining their life force was stripped away.

For most of them had used the dark arts to extend their lives, and without that magic, they were nothing more than decrepit husks.

Lotus made them lunch, and then they had a dilemma. What to do with the rest of the day?

Rae grabbed the two dragons. "Do you want to explore the separate space? Hawk is there flying around now, and you could stretch your wings without bothering anyone. Or have a nice bath in the lake in dragon form."

Nachtia looked intrigued. "A bath in dragon form? That's not something that comes up very often. But how large is this space that it has a dragon sized bath tub?"

Karl chuckled and opened the entrance far enough for them to step through, and not. just enough to keep the air fresh inside the space.

"That's..." Delilah began.

"A [Tiny World] spell, yes."

The Totem Ranked Dragon stepped through the entrance, and then turned to look around in wonder. The entrance had put her at the entrance to the replica Guild House, where Remi was currently working

on potions. Hawk was soaring overhead, enjoying the gusts off the mountains, where the artificial sun's heat created an up draft.

The two dragons transformed to soar around the space for a few minutes, then Delilah dove into the lake, vanishing from view for a few minutes before surfacing.

(Oh, that is lovely. The lake is much deeper than I thought it was going to be, and the depths are cold.)

{There are actual fish in the lake.} Nachtia gasped as she dove in after the larger red dragon.

Not many of them, but there were actual fish in the lake. They were introduced by Lotus, as part of the effort to balance the ecosystems of the Tiny World.

It had been coming along remarkably well, and with the day/night cycle of the artificial sun, the plants were growing in well to replace the illusionary ones that Karl had created to fill the space.

It was almost to the point now that they could keep a full group living in it indefinitely without having to open the exit at all, but Karl kept it cracked anyhow, just to be on the safe side. It was better to know that the air was good than to risk it becoming imbalanced without a good cause.

Once they finished playing in the lake, the dragons stretched out on a rock ledge on the mountain at the edge of the space and simply enjoyed the sun. As far as ways to enjoy a down day went, that was close to the best, and there was nobody here who would bother or interrupt them.

No threats to deal with, nobody begging for favours. Just peaceful relaxation in the

sun.

While most of the team relaxed in the Tiny World, Karl sat in the fort and kept watch with Cara.

Well, technically neither of them was doing a good job of keeping watch. Cara was snacking on trail mix from the Guild Storage, and Karl was reading a book on magical item creation. But they were at least inside the fort, where they would hear and sense if anyone approached the illusionary domain outside.