

Vile 1021

[Chapter 1021 Soul Sense Battle P2](#)

When Eren and Altair's auras clashed, it created an extremely tense atmosphere that put everyone on edge. This was because what was also clashing at this point were the soul senses of these two rankers.

The mana in the area swelled as if the eye of the storm had been summoned. It was as if the sun had dimmed a bit and the winds had shifted.

People started having trouble breathing. They also started hearing white noises in their heads as if someone was speaking something to them in an alien language.

This was the first time the name Eren Idril made a deep impression in people's psyches for standing up to Crimson Ghost as if it was no big deal. And this was because his name was already known as the founder of his city.

"Heh! Good... good... Boy... you really are something. Let me test you some more."

Altair's crimson eyes shone when he felt Eren's soul sense affect him up close. He put the rankers' code of conduct on the sidelines and decided to find out what the butcher was made of. Of course, he stopped caring about the people surrounding him.

Eren felt like his body was being roasted to perfection just by standing close to the Crimson Ghost. And this was when Altair was trying to pull punches. In addition to his soul sense, the Grandmaster used some expressions of his elemental attainments.

Eren's heartbeat became erratic, and blood rushed to his head. As a result of being exposed to Altair's soul sense, his mana core was also agitated.

"Sir Altair..."

Rufus was about to intervene in Eren and Altair's spat. But he suddenly found out that the space around him had been locked and he couldn't move. Rufus looked at Hansen in disbelief only to receive a simple command from him.

'It's just one ranker he is messing with. It's fine. Let little Altair deal with this issue.'

Eren's condition started getting worse. And it seemed no help was coming in.

Eren's green eyes shone with determination even when his mana circuits were trying to rebel against him. He started thinking about countless escape plans and soon figured out there were none.

Eren felt like his bones were about to pop from the dry heat that he could feel. The flaky skin on his body had turned red all over with green and blue veins showing prominently.

'To hell with this form of bullying. Altair... fuck you!'

When he was backed into a corner, Eren decided to play offensively for real. He poured his emotions into his soul sense and everything in his spectators' vision changed.

Bzzzt!

Lightning crackled everywhere and fire erupted from random spots. Lightning and wind shards started to form in the surrounding area before they were randomly fused.

The Wind-Fire shards started attacking anything and everything in the surroundings. Under Hansen's control of space, nobody could get hurt physically. But Sage's powers weren't enough to relieve the spectators mentally. Most of them felt like they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Some of them started cursing Eren for daring to fight against a Grandmaster.

It seemed like someone had replaced the morning sun with the red moon that could do nothing but spread its sangria illuminance around.

The spectators who weren't unconscious yet started smelling blood. They started having a metallic taste in their mouths as if they had bit their tongue. They felt like all their organs would either get crushed or punctured inside their bodies.

Some of the weak-minded Adept rankers were already brought to their knees when Eren and Altair's soul senses clashed with each other. They lost consciousness when Altair intensified the effects of his presence.

The rankers started seeing nightmares and daylight hallucinations when the butcher's soul sense started contending with Altair's presence. The Crimson Ghost wasn't expecting a development like this. Saying that he was shocked would be an understatement.

"Oh! We have a diamond in the rough here!"

Hansen commented with an expression that said "I'm impressed" looking at Eren. He had seen many prodigies in his long lifetime. And he could say that Eren had just made it into the top 100 on Hansen's list of them.

Hansen immediately retreated to his policy of not caring about Eren. He decided that he would intervene if and when Altair decides to take things too far.

"This..."

Becky and the rest were shocked as they looked at Eren from a distance. Now they realized that rank had become a misleading factor in judging one's growth after entering high ranks.

For example, technically, Eren and Steve belong to the same rank. However, the similarity between Eren and Steve ends there. Steve was having a hard time trying to keep his senses in check at this point. He could never imagine himself taking the full brunt of Altair's soul sense.

Ramy and the rest also had tense expressions on their faces. Only now did they realize how much Eren had progressed over the years. Ramy couldn't help getting excited seeing Eren standing up against a Grandmaster ranker. He was so enthused that he started cheering for him, forgetting to add the speech impediment camouflage.

"Hahahaha! GO FORTH.... EREN!"

As if responding to Ramy's call, the butcher stepped forward, holding Dicer's Left and Right in both hands. He had summoned them not to attack but to take some kind of mental respite from them.

Eren's weapon comprehension started manifesting through his soul sense. Altair smiled when he started feeling pressured by Eren for the first time.

The Crimson Ghost felt an itching sensation under his neck. As if a mosquito had bitten him. So he subconsciously scratched his skin. He was about to say something to Eren. But when he looked at the palm of his hand, he could see traces of some red liquid on them.

Altair could only draw one conclusion after seeing the tiny spot of blood on his palm. Eren's weapon comprehension had penetrated his defense.

[Chapter 1022 One Could Kill A Man But Not Sully His Pride](#)

'Impressive.'

Altair thought to himself as he watched a bloody smudge on his palm. There were only a few people in Edinnica who could hurt him. No matter how minor the injury was, the butcher was added to that list.

The weak-minded rankers started fainting. The ones away from the epicenter of this soul-sense battle found it difficult to stand on their two feet. They cursed Hansen for acting so passively in this whole matter. It was as if he didn't care about the well-being of the participants at all.

Eren was also finding it difficult to continue. Mentally, he wasn't that affected by Altair's soul sense. He could even argue that his soul sense was much more potent than Altair's.

However, Eren's physical condition wasn't the same as his mental one. His Expert-ranked body couldn't handle the pressure exerted by a Grandmaster ranker.

Altair smiled as he parted his lips to say something to Eren. However, both of them sensed an unknown interference in their duel within a fraction of a second.

Swoosh. Zoom. Slap.

Eren felt like his head had been hit by a flying vehicle as an unknown attack struck him from behind. He and Altair stopped using their soul senses because of the interference. Eren's body was thrown into the air, only to land several feet away from his position.

An insidious attack.

Someone had slapped the back of the butcher's head when he was concentrating on Altair. As a result, he almost lost consciousness and couldn't control the trajectory of his fall.

"Heh! The young generation sure is reckless. This boy didn't respect Crimson Ghost at all. So I had to teach him a lesson."

A muscular white-haired man was seen standing where Eren was previously. He was standing in front of Altair and was taller than him.

This white-haired man's presence was not as dominant as Altair's because he was a Master ranker. However, nobody would try to underestimate him because of that.

This man had a kind of demonic air about him. As a result of his ripped physique, he looked intimidating. At this point, he appeared ready for battle with his light armor.

This man was full of vitality and brutality. His presence felt wrath-inducing. It was as if this man was an active lava mountain with two legs.

The man claimed that he had attacked Eren for being disrespectful towards Altair. However, Crimson Ghost couldn't find any shred of respect in the man's eyes for him. It only highlighted one thing to Altair— this man was a hypocrite who had used his shoulders to launch an attack on Eren.

Demonmir had arrived at the scene.

The raised hand with which he had attacked Eren had purple and red lightning tongues surrounding it. It was Eren's mana defense that reacted on time and negated the majority of the impact. Otherwise, things would have been much more difficult for him.

Demonmir smirked as he looked at the fallen Eren who had his face flat on the ground. To remove the butcher's residual mana, he clenched his raised hand before putting it down.

'This demon...'

Altair looked at Demonmir with discontent in his eyes. He didn't like being used by someone like Ottoman Montmorency to further his own goals.

Plus, he didn't like that someone who was chosen by Altashia to be her partner was bullied by anyone other than him. It just didn't sit right with him.

Eren had a killer headache.

And he could only see bright spots in front of him, which made him feel like he was looking at the star-studded sky.

He could hear nothing. Or he heard so much that he started listening to the silence of the void. His sense of taste told him he was drinking wine when it was actually his own blood.

It was a huge mess inside his head. And he needed some time and healing to sort it out.

The butcher didn't even understand what had happened at first. The attack on his head had muddled his mind. At this point, he would even have difficulty calculating what was two plus two.

His mana defense layer was not the only thing that acted quickly. His soul sense was active at the time so he could sense Demonmir coming. He had tried to dodge the attack initiated by the unknown assailant but his body couldn't keep up.

Unfortunately, he already had his hands full dealing with Altair. So he couldn't mitigate the attack's repercussions on himself. Thankfully, Hansen intervened at the last moment, saving Eren's life as well as his chance to participate in the event.

Eren had already retracted his soul sense. The manifestations of his lightning, fire, and wind attainments stopped existing all of a sudden. It was as if somebody had rebooted his brain.

When the butcher opened his eyes, all he saw was dirt and the ground. His body was already suffering from the bullying Altair had inflicted on him. It was only aggravated by the unknown attack.

Eren's hazy vision soon started to return to normal and he started to understand the situation he was in. He clenched his fist and tried to get up. But his limbs couldn't handle the load and he soon kissed the earth he was trying to get away from.

Cough! Cough! Cough!

Eren started coughing up a mouthful of blood. He also started bleeding from the back of his head where the attack had been inflicted. The blunt force trauma was so severe that it just tore through his skin and made him bleed.

"Who..... aaaargh.... Who the.... I'll fucking k..."

Eren felt himself being consumed by the fires of wrath in his mind. His eyes turned red and his tribal tattoos were about to show themselves. First, it was Altair. Then this insidious attack added fuel to the fire that was already burning in his heart.

A slap from behind was infuriating. Even Eliza had not treated him with this much disrespect. The Sage could have killed him at any damn time. He would have felt less angry about his situation at that time than he felt at this point.

One could kill a man but not sully his pride as a ranker.

Sedated Perception

'Eren... listen to me. Don't say anything stupid. Don't do anything stupid. Demonmir would use that as a chance to hurt you more. Even kill you. I'm not sure how many times this Sage will be willing to intervene.'

When the butcher realized that it was Demonmir who had attacked him, he felt uncontrollable wrath building inside his heart. He felt like giving in to his anger and battling Demonmir then and there.

Alepee halted Eren from cursing his unknown assailant out loud. She also stopped Eren from tapping into the Domain of Wrath.

'Don't! You better not use your wrath mana here. Otherwise, I'd have a hard time getting you out of here. And I'm afraid we'll have to leave the land of Anfang prematurely.'

Alepee's voice sounded far away to Eren in his mind. However, he was able to hear and understand her all the same. He somehow controlled the anger building inside his heart and leashed it before it could manifest in an unforeseen way.

Instant Reset!

Eren snapped his fingers with some difficulty and activated his healing-type Ability. He was sane enough not to use it with his bloodline regeneration powers.

The mind and the hazy vision cleared. Eren got control of his body and was able to get up slowly.

The butcher had isolated everything in his vision. He couldn't see a bunch of participants that had fallen unconscious on the ground around him. He couldn't see Levine, Nina, and Jiana trying to circumvent the safety protocol just like Demonmir did. He couldn't even see his own team members who were calling out to him.

Eren narrowed his eyes to only one person.

This was the person who had attacked him. A Master ranker who wasn't like any other Master ranker he had come to meet in both his timelines. This was a man who wouldn't mind using whatever means were necessary to get what he wanted.

'So this is Demonmir.'

Eren mumbled as he looked at the white-haired Master ranker. Meanwhile, he cracked his stiff neck and rubbed the back of his head which was getting healed.

Eren had heard from Levine that he was as insidious as the word insidious could portray him to be. This was his first time learning this anecdote about him the difficult way.

'That attack... It was well planned.'

Eren controlled the anger inside his mind and stared at Demonmir fearlessly.

'That attack didn't have the usual fuckery about the rankers' code of conduct attached to it. He used my conflict with Altair as a reason to bitch-slap me from behind. And he was ready to kill me 'by accident' in front of so many people if Sage had not intervened.'

The butcher had to say that Demonmir was an opportunist... someone just like him to some extent.

[Chapter 1023 The Usurper And The Usurped P1](#)

'Try not to get angry or hateful towards Demonmir. You will only empower him if you do that.'

Alephée's voice sounded in Eren's head. The latter narrowed his eyes at Demonmir and told the homunculus to explain what she was saying.

'The demons can draw power from the emotions directed at them. I can now confirm that Demonmir can draw power from people's anger and wrath directed at him.'

The demons never shy away from infiltrating foreign worlds because of this. No matter if the world is conducive to mana or not, they can always invoke emotions from the world's denizens and use them to strengthen themselves.

And on that note, you better tell Levine not to direct her hate toward him either. She is only helping him become more powerful.'

Eren raised his eyebrows when he heard Alephée's deduction of the Demonmir. He didn't stay surprised for long though. After all, he knew his demon beast Argo had set up a concert in the city to make him an overnight sensation within the kingdom. He rose rapidly in rank when his popularity rose.

Eren also knew that not all demons could make use of such power-ups. Demonmir could use others' feelings about him as a way to improve his ranking status and put him in the same league as Argo.

Eren narrowed his eyes at Demonmir and asked Alephee another question. It was related to something they had discussed based on their conjecture in the past.

'So that confirms it, doesn't it? That he really has a Demon Prince's soul fragment.'

Alephee replied right away.

'Yes. Indeed, he has a fragment of a Demon Prince's soul. And let's just say he is strong.

The demonic side of him is sleeping. However, it is not demonic possession as the denizens of the Anfang think it is. It is a demonic takeover. The difference between the two is not something that can be ignored. It was what made them believe that Ottoman managed to wrestle control from a Demon Prince.

The difference lies in whether someone sleeps of their own choice. Or if they had been forced to sleep. The Demon Prince is letting the corrupted Ottoman take the driver's seat out of convenience. And he is no more than a puppet for the Prince.

Even the Sages of this land are not well-versed in demon magic. So they only know stuff that is either very apparent or available to them through archaic records. I guess this is how the Demon Prince managed to find a body for himself. He fooled all of them into believing he was still the same Ottoman everybody knew.'

Eren immediately took a long breath and dispersed the anger he felt towards Demonmir. Strengthening one's enemy was foolishness, no matter how valid his reason for getting angry in the first place was.

Alephee canceled Sedated Perception as soon as she found out Eren had gotten back on track. She felt relieved that he could control his emotions like this.

Demonmir smiled wickedly as he saw Eren trying to struggle to get up. He wanted to kill Eren then and there. But he knew that Hansen would not allow him to do what he wanted in this event.

However, his smile froze when he saw Eren recovering from the injury using his Ability. He got up right away like it was no big deal and stared at him with his emerald-green eyes.

Something deep within Demonmir's consciousness was stirred when he met Eren's gaze. He felt like he had done a huge taboo by attacking Eren personally. A mistake that can't be rectified.

'He... the Usurper of my domain.'

An ancient voice sounded in Demonmir's consciousness. The voice was like an endless abyss speaking in an inhuman voice. It contained a certain authority over him that couldn't be questioned.

Demonmir didn't understand what the half-slumbering soul fragment was talking about when it called Eren the usurper of his domain. That's because the soul fragment wasn't completely cooperative with

him. This new Demonmir was merely a henchman for the Demon Prince and he had already accepted his role as such.

Demonmir was only allowed to know the information he was supposed to receive from the soul fragment. It had allowed him to make staggering progress in the land of Anfang while keeping things on a need-to-know basis.

However, the corrupt ottoman could tell that the Demon Prince's soul fragment inside him had recognized Eren as his arch-nemesis. It wanted to kill him right away for usurping his domain.

The Demon Prince's voice still sounded like he wasn't completely awake. However, Demonmir wouldn't dismiss his words by labeling them sleep-talking.

For the first time since this new Ottoman existed, he felt afraid. That's because the soul fragment inside him also felt a bit agitated. And the reason for that agitation was staring right at him.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Eren started walking towards Demonmir and Demonmir's expression changed. He felt an innate fear for some reason. A fear that was integrated into the fabric of his existence was trying to take over him.

Demonmir looked at the hand that he had used to attack Eren. He felt that there was something wrong with it. For some reason, he felt like he had been dipped in a bowl of acid.

Still, Demonmir wasn't someone who would get intimidated by someone like Eren. He had killed countless enemies that stood in front of him. And he didn't think Eren would be any different.

Ottoman channeled his mana through his body and got rid of the doubts enshrouding his mind. The demon soul fragment was also telling him to confront Eren and get rid of him as soon as he could. And that's what he will do in due time.

Eren ignored the eyes that were staring at him with all kinds of emotions and stood in front of Demomir. The staring contest lasted a while before Demonmir spoke with disdain.

"That small speech you gave at your demon beast's concert– "Whatever you might have in store for me, know that what I have for you is much worse."

Was that perhaps directed at me specifically?"

[Chapter 1024 The Usurper And The Usurped P2](#)

Eren smiled before answering honestly.

"That message was mostly intended for cultists. I guess you could say it was for everyone who decided to stand against me.

As for you specifically..."

Eren caressed the area of the wound inflicted by the Demonmir. The wound had been healed. But for some reason, the butcher still felt like it had blood on it.

"I'm all bite and no bark. You will come to know my message to you eventually."

Eren didn't know what Kirin was up to or how she was planning to do exactly what he had explained to the cultists. But he knew that news of her deeds would soon spread throughout the kingdom.

"It was you who killed Nico Chains and the rest, weren't you? It has to be..."

Demonmir asked in a threatening tone. The butcher answered right away with a smug look on his face.

"And it was you who sent the Escalon guild after me and my guild members. It was under your command that a certain ambush happened. You tried to influence House Derringer to withdraw from the tripartite deal.

Apparently, I'm still a long way behind when it comes to launching offensives. Don't worry though. I am a quick learner. I'll soon balance the equation before tilting the scale in my favor."

Demonmir could see unwavering confidence in Eren's eyes. It was not a question of IF but WHEN. Suddenly, there was a nagging sensation in Ottoman's head to kill the man in front of him. It was as if the Demon Prince's soul fragment was dead set on killing Eren even at the cost of wasting a pawn like Ottoman.

'He... he is trying to steal my domain. My domain! This Prince's domain.

Unforgivable!

Kill him!

Kill him!

Kill him!

Kill him!

Kill him!'

The voice in Demonmir's face kept getting louder and louder with time. He didn't know that the Demon Prince would have a personal grudge against Eren for whatever reason. And no matter how illogical it was, the current Demonmir couldn't disobey that command.

"AAARGH!"

Demonmir cried as he felt his head would explode due to the Demon Prince's voice in his head. A transcendent-grade ax appeared in his hand all of a sudden before he swung it in Eren's direction.

Eren felt a threatening sensation coming from Demonmir. He could immediately tell that there was something wrong with the man as his eyes started diluting and his pupils started changing their color from blue to red.

Eren became wary of Demonmir's direct attack. But he wasn't scared of it even if it was launched by a Master-ranked entity. That's because the attack was only meant to look scary and did not have any direction or edge behind it.

'This demon thinks too highly of himself. I need to punish him for his blatant disrespect to me.'

Hansen thought to himself as he watched Demonmir preparing to launch an attack on Eren. But it turned out that he didn't have to intervene. Someone else already did that job for him.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Altair appeared between Eren and Demonmir and showed everybody that he had stopped playing spectator. He effortlessly parried all of Demonmir's attacks and made him stop his attacks with his soul sense.

Altair's soul sense and the interference generated by it was all Ottoman needed to calm the Demon Prince's voice inside him. The soul fragment decided to put itself to sleep when it realized that Altair was a serious threat to the current vessel. This was the same time that Altair got tired of dueling with Demonmir before launching an offense.

Swoosh. Zoom. Boom.

Altair effectively redirected all of Demonmir's attacks before launching an uppercut at him. The ranker was thrown about 20 feet in the air and hit the solid-looking defensive barrier. Demonmir soon crashed to the ground in the same manner as Eren did because of his attack.

"Wild animals are either locked in a cage or shot to death. Don't think you can do whatever you want just because you are a kingdom-approved demonic ranker."

Altair spoke in a grim tone while looking at Demonmir. He then turned around to receive Eren's strange gaze.

"I thought you hated me?"

Eren glanced doubtfully at Altair before speaking his mind. The latter also replied promptly.

"Who told you that?"

"Should I consider how you behaved with me as your way of showing care?"

"I was merely testing you. It helps when there's a conflict to act as a base for such tests."

"So you have no problem with me having multiple partners?"

"I have had nine wives. Who am I to judge you?"

Eren and Altair's banter stopped midway when the latter dropped a metaphorical bomb on him. The butcher was stunned by Altair's revelation about himself.

Altair pursed his lips and shrugged his shoulders before commenting.

"Eren, you have shown your potential very well. I completely approve of you and Altashia being together. It seems she has chosen well."

The butcher made an "I am still doubtful of you" expression at Altair before dropping his guard. He came to realize that had he not shown the kind of potential he had displayed, the Crimson Ghost would not have intervened.

Not that he needed Crimson Ghost's help at that time. Not really.

That's because Eren could feel a peculiar feeling from Demonmir when the latter launched an attack at him. This was the same feeling he had when he was surrounded by creatures of wrath in the Domain of Wrath.

'I... I felt like I could control this asshole to some extent had I used my Domain of Wrath here. What's going on?'

Eren asked Alephee in a confused manner. The latter chuckled before answering.

'Do you remember that I told you that your Domain of Wrath is a plane-bound Ability? The Demon Prince who is considered the ruler of that plane also has the same Ability. The same Demon Prince whose soul fragment currently resides within Demonmir.

I am guessing this demon has been losing his authority over the plane ever since the Domain of Wrath has been offered to you. He is calling you the usurper for the same reason.'

[Chapter 1025 Sansara World And Karma Points](#)

Hansen started to explain the rules of the competition after distractions were removed from the scene.

The Sansara world inside the Sansara array was as massive as one could imagine it to be. It had abandoned cities and resting spots that could be called safe zones. Dueling inside the safe zone was forbidden.

Various regions inside the Sansara array bore resemblance to real-life places. The weather conditions depended upon where the participants or teams had been spawned.

The participants were shocked to learn that they would all start from zero inside the Sansara world. Meaning they would all have restrictions placed on their powers that would make them no different than an F-ranker. From mana reserves to body stats, the rankers would face limitations on everything that elevated them from being mortals.

It meant that everybody summoned inside the Sansara world would be standing at the same start line. Being an Adept or an Expert didn't matter at the beginning of the event.

To level up, rankers needed to earn Karma points. And leveling up would allow them to lift the restrictions placed on them step by step. These level-ups would enable them to get rid of the world's restrictions completely.

This is where the Expert rankers who were the cream of the crop had a massive advantage over the others. They could level up more than the Adept rankers and finally show their true potential in the end.

Karma points can be earned through team-based and individual battles. They can be used to level up and get special perks in the Sasara world.

The rankers were not allowed to use their weapons and other combat-oriented artifacts inside the Sansara world. They would remain locked inside their storage spaces and be inaccessible to use.

Only the weapons, artifacts, and perks obtained through the spending of Karma points can be accessed inside the Sansara world. This was another way of equalizing the huge disparity between rankers of different backgrounds.

There were no monsters or beasts to fight in the Sansara world. There were only opponents and their teams. So Karma points can only be earned by slaying other participants.

At the beginning, high-ranking entities had to give up all their advantages. But they would be the ones dominating the event in the end. That is if they survived long enough in the game.

Just as Hansen had warned the participants at the start, the rankers entering the Sansara world could experience death after someone killed them for Karma points. The Sansara world could temporarily separate souls from their bodies. Thus, the rankers would experience a true out-of-body experience inside the event when they died inside the event.

When they were about to die, their bodies would be teleported to the nearest safe locations called Life and Death altars. And their souls would be subjected to a different test.

Passing or failing this special test would determine whether they would be able to stay inside the Sansara world or not. Of course, failing the test would mean that the rankers would get kicked out of the Sansara world and the event itself by proxy.

If the 'dead-in-the-event' participants managed to pass the special test inside the Life and Death altar, their bodies would be healed by the altar and their souls would be placed back inside. These rankers would be allowed to resume their participation in the event after accepting some penalty for their overall progress.

Passing the special test at the Life and Death altars was not easy. This test was what gave most rankers trauma in the past. So not dying was the most sensible option a ranker could follow in the Sansara world.

The Karma points would reset to zero after death. Even if a ranker passes the test and joins the contest again, they might not get the weapons and artifacts they had earned through the spending of Karma points earlier in the event.

A limit was not set on the supposed resurrection of rankers. As long as the rankers were mentally capable of passing the special test again and again, they would be allowed to be inside the event. Of course, they would also have to face the repercussions of compound penalties along with them.

The kingdom of Edinburgh didn't want to endanger its young fighting force at the cusp of a war with the kingdom of Layos. So it did everything it could to ensure the safety of the participants without compromising the practicality of the test.

This is why moderators were also sent inside the Sansara world. Their job was to ensure the proper operation of the array systems within the separate dimension. It was their responsibility to keep the maximum number of participants alive throughout the event by regularizing the teleportation of the mortally injured rankers and looking after the souls that had been separated from their natal bodies.

There was a reason these moderators were needed. There was a brief delay between the activation of the safety mechanisms that ensured the young rankers did not die even after sustaining life-threatening injuries. If the assailants did not follow discretion and make use of this small window, the mortally injured rankers' souls would permanently separate themselves from their bodies. It meant that the participants would die for real.

The participants were told to allow safety mechanisms to kick in. However, not everyone would listen to the request. Or it may be that not every ranker would be able to control their aggression in the heat of battle. Thus, moderators like Rufus were sent inside to supervise the situation.

Deaths were bound to happen at events like these no matter how many safety mechanisms were put in place. There was no assurance that the post-death experience the rankers felt during the event was going to be a temporary phenomenon or their new reality.

Unfortunately for some rankers, the Sansara world would become their final resting place, no matter what kind of background they had. It would only be their dead bodies that would enter the real world from the separate dimension.

[Chapter 1026 Balancing Individual Growth And Team Survival](#)

Death was inevitable in the Sansara world.

It had been integrated into the very nature of the test. So the moderators were only asked to minimize the number of deaths and not stop them from happening entirely. Apart from that, the moderators were prohibited from keeping tabs on the participants or helping them in any way.

This was not all. The kingdom had organized this event to recruit most of these young rankers. They preferred team players. So it was only natural that they introduced a team-based aspect to the Sansara world as well.

The captain of each team would be made to carry the team flag. To stay in the game, the rankers needed to protect the flag from being taken by other teams. In the case where the captain loses the flag in any way and does not retrieve it within a certain timeframe, everyone gets disqualified from remaining in the Sansara world.

So the effective way to get rid of an entire team was to target the captain and take the team flag from them. And the most effective way for the rankers to ensure participation was to move in teams and protect their captains.

The rankers were allowed to place security details on their captains in any way they saw fit using any perks they obtained through the spending of Karma points. Of course, they were also allowed to keep their captains hidden inside the giant Sansara world so that they do not get targeted at all.

If the team decided that their captain would stay with them, then the captain of the team would be able to fight with them. However, this would be at the cost of being exposed to increased danger.

And if the captains were made to sit on the fence, the teams would be able to move more freely and attack enemy teams with fewer complications. However, if the captain of such teams was located in the Sansara world, the fact that they were left alone would make it near impossible for all the rankers to remain disqualified.

As the event progresses, teams will have to collect a certain number of flags to remain inside. Failing to meet the minimum flag requirement would mean the disqualification of the entire team. So the teams could not play defensive all the time.

Hiding or protecting the captain were not the only options the participants had. There were various other strategies the rankers could employ. Like dividing the entire team into two groups focusing on offense or defense. Or focusing on earning Karma points as a whole to access the team-based perks the Sansara world had to offer.

No strategy is without its drawbacks. And no strategy is perfect.

It all depended on teamwork as a whole and the individual strengths of each ranker to make any strategy work for them. And each team needed to perform right from the start to maintain momentum.

The rankers would start from scratch on the first day of the event. They did not have any weapons or other perks from the Sansara world to benefit from. The restrictions placed on them would not allow them to move freely.

There were many risks and opportunities for rankers of all backgrounds and statuses when the event began. It offered equal opportunities for rankers across all the academies.

Of course, most of the Royal Ren students were not happy with the whole setup of the event. They had the most number of Expert ranking entities than other academies. But even those Expert rankers were hugely dependent on their artifacts. Their battle styles were heavily dependent on their gear. So they could only curse the event's organizers for playing "unfair".

If it was any other time, the kingdom would not have organized this kind of event. Yet it knew that if it didn't implement meritocracy at this time, it would make the upcoming war all the more difficult for itself.

The event will last for a month.

The separate dimension of the Sasara world did not have any time difference from that of the real world. But the same could not be said for the near-dead participants whose souls were subjected to go through a special test.

These souls would experience time differently depending upon the difficulty of the test. Of course, the test difficulty would increase with an increasing number of days into the event or the number of times the same ranker was subjected to the test.

Surviving the first week was the minimum requirement for graduating with distinction. It means that rankers who come out of the event alive will receive promising rewards irrespective of their position in the event as a whole.

Those who survive the event for longer than a week will receive a growing number of benefits from the kingdom. So all the rankers needed to stay in the Sansara world for as long as they could.

Towards the end of the event, the entrances to the Sage legacies would appear inside the Sansara world. The flags the teams had collected so far would then serve as array-keys for the teams to access these entrances.

Only one person per team would be allowed to access these Sage legacies. The rest of the rankers in the team were needed to protect the flags that served as the array-keys. If the enemy team managed to get

hold of even one flag from the array, the ranker who had stepped inside to claim the legacy would get kicked outside.

The rules of the event were complicated and simple to understand at the same time.

The participants needed to concentrate on their individual growth by leveling up consistently each day. However, they also needed to work in teams to ensure their survival.

As long as they could strike a balance between the two aspects of being a ranker, they could get the most out of the event. This was provided their souls and psyches did not get affected by the special test.

Plus, it was clear that the Sage legacy would only be achieved by the most talented teams. At that time, the individual strength of the ranker who had survived numerous hardships would play a role. Only the most capable ranker from the qualified teams would be allowed to receive blessings from the four Grand Dukes of the kingdom.

[Chapter 1027 Relation Between Two Abandoned Cities](#)

Day 1: A nameless abandoned city inside the Sansara World.

The sky was bright and sunny. White clouds drifted aimlessly behind the backdrop of an endless blue expanse. The ruined city consisted of worn-out buildings and empty roads.

At the center of the city was a giant water wheel construction. But there was no river to be found. It was likely that the floating river in question that powered the waterwheel had died or was no longer in a separate dimension anymore.

This ruined city seemed to be as extensive as the city of Edin, if not more. It had amphitheatres, public bathhouses, palaces, and regular residential areas. They were all connected by spacious roads and alleyways, which now looked like giant snakes and small pythons from a bird's-eye view.

Even when the city's view was nothing but ruins and desolation, it spoke volumes about its former glory. The giant runic nodes and elemental towers had stopped working a long time ago. But they still had strong residual mana signatures, as if they could be activated at any time.

The view was oddly similar to that of the city of Edin. This abandoned city was less developed than the current Edin even when it was in its prime. But it carried the same vibe as the current capital city.

A black-haired man was standing atop a seven-floor building overlooking the city's current state. He had appeared at the site out of the blue not too long ago.

This young man was drawing a comparison in his head as his emerald green eyes scanned the area for friends and foes. He felt like he was experiencing a Deja Vu.

'Hmm. Another ruined city. The same as the one in the Titus tournament. I wonder if they have a connection.'

Eren said before lighting up his Sativa smoke. He couldn't smoke earlier in the day due to being in the presence of a Sage. So the not-an-addict addict embraced his vice as soon as he found some alone time to do so.

Eren was referring to the ruined city he had found while he was at the Titus tournament. That city also felt like it was a lost page in history that had been forcefully ripped out.

The sheer size of the Sansara World was much more substantial than the ruined city at the time of the Titus tournament. And there were many differences between the two cities observed by the butcher. Still, he couldn't help but draw a comparison between the two.

Thankfully, Alephee was there to answer some of his questions.

'Yes. You can say that. The city you found in the Titus tournament and this abandoned city belong to the same era.

These ruined cities had distinct traces of other worlds. I can sense that this city established a connection with the demon realm a long time ago when it was prospering.

So I'm guessing places like these were locked inside separate dimensions. And new cities and places were created in their stead.

The city you found at the Titus tournament had a huge library. You had stolen a bunch of books from there which were filled with knowledge from other worlds that you couldn't use.

This abandoned city that you are seeing in front of you is most likely the ruins of previously constructed Edin. Apparently, they couldn't get rid of signs related to the otherworld. So just like the city you found in the Titus tournament, it was locked inside a separate dimension.'

Eren's eyebrows rose as he realized the relationship between the abandoned cities. It made sense to him that the kingdom would separate such cities from normal rankers' reach.

He also understood why Alephee was telling him about these things at this point.

Eren was just starting when he entered the Titus tournament under the disguise of Tuan Aag. He didn't have the individual power or the political pool he had at that time. He was restricted in a variety of ways. Gaining information like this wouldn't have helped him in any way.

However, Eren's consistent breakthroughs in his ranking journey allowed Alephee to also remove some of the restrictions she faced. She concluded that he was ready to start receiving such information step by step.

Eren had stolen a bunch of old books from the library during the Titus tournament. The library was destroyed after his exit and he managed to get those books out of the tournament.

However, he was disappointed that Alephee did not know how to help him translate these foreign-language books. It was either that or he wasn't fit to know the knowledge contained in them at that point in her eyes.

Eren also tried to translate the books in his free time. But he found only limited success in understanding the topics written in these books. The kingdom had done an excellent job covering all the knowledge related to otherworlds, after all. So Eren gave up translating those books.

Those stolen books were still with him. But he didn't want to draw too much attention to himself by searching for ways to decode the contents hidden within them openly. So he had left that knowledge on the sidelines.

'That certainly explains the similarities. But what do you mean by the city having a demonic connection...'

Eren was about to chat with Alephee some more when he felt a tingling sensation on the back of his right hand. He raised his hand and looked at the circle-shaped tattoo that had been imprinted on him ever since he entered the Sansara World.

This circle-shaped tattoo had six segments within it. It could be used to access the Sansara interface that was made available to all the participants currently inside the Sansara world.

Eren sensed that someone from his team was nearby through the use of a tattoo. Lightning struck and he disappeared from his place. There were many tasks and he was already short on time. The butcher needed to make a few things clear to his teammates before he embarked on his tasks.

[Chapter 1028 Eren's Plan](#)

"Steve needs to separate himself from the rest of the team."

Once the entire White Raven crew was gathered inside the abandoned city, Eren declared. They could all sense a few presences appearing here and there from time to time. However, everything within the city's borders was a safe zone. So they didn't need to worry much.

As a result of the restrictions imposed by the Sansara World, Eren and his teammates' ranking power was greatly limited. Still, nobody could complain since everyone was in the same boat.

Eren ignored the questioning gazes of his teammates and continued in a grim tone.

"Renita will accompany Steve. These two are the only ones who will explore the Sansara World defensively. They will stay hidden for the most part and make maximum use of the safe zones every chance they get.

This duo will follow the main team while maintaining a safe distance. The distance would be long enough for them to retreat if they sense the main team is getting surrounded by a lot of enemies.

And at the same time, the distance would be close enough for the main team to defend Renita and Steve if they get attacked by enemy teams."

Eren looked at Steve and Renita and pursed his lips before addressing them.

"Stay nimble on your feet, you two. Especially you, Steve. Don't try to engage with a group containing more than 4 rankers no matter how easy they might seem to you.

Renita, use your ranger-specific spells to your advantage. Your job is to defend our captain. Prioritize his safety over the rest of us. Use the main team as a decoy if you have to. But keep Steve safe from any form of ambush."

Eren's tone conveyed the seriousness of his words. Steve and Renita looked at each other and nodded. They were completely supportive of Eren's strategy.

However, not everybody was in favor of splitting the team. Becky raised her eyebrows before asking.

"And what about us?"

Eren scratched his jaw before answering the question promptly.

"The rest will play full-on offense. Attack anything that moves."

Becky sighed as if she half-expected this move from Eren. She wasn't the only one who was uncomfortable being part of the offense team. Ana looked at the butcher warily before asking in a timid voice.

"Eren, what if we find any royal scions or students from our own academy? Can we establish a co-op party with..."

Eren shook his head and cut off Ana's statement immediately.

Fuck the rankers' backgrounds and their academies. Fuck their backers and screw the general consensus about their safety.

Your attacks must be executed with the intent to kill. It doesn't matter if the safety mechanisms of the Sansara world kick in or not. It doesn't matter if they die for real or not. It doesn't matter if your rewards get affected because of your reckless battle style or not.

What matters is that you don't die here for as long as you could. That's because I'm not expecting most of you to pass the special test."

Becky snorted her nose when she heard Eren's way of showing confidence in his team.

"Says the one who isn't even willing to work with the main team. And I don't know about you but I consider myself perfectly able to clear the special test."

The butcher ignored Becky's passive-aggressive behavior and carried on.

"Even if you can clear the test, the fact remains that the team will have to battle without your absence until you join. What can you do if the team faces a wipeout during your absence even if you pass the test?"

That's why... attack and kill anything that can breathe. Everyone else that isn't on your team is your enemy. Simple as that."

Becky shook her head before voicing her second argument.

"What you say makes sense to most of us. But have you considered what would happen to Steve and Renita after the initial phase of the competition is over?"

They wouldn't be able to progress much if they always stayed on defense. That's how this competition was designed anyway."

Becky felt confident in her analysis when she spoke. That's because Renita and Steve were also worried about the same issue as well even after agreeing to Eren's arrangement.

The mage looked at everyone in her team before proceeding further.

"If you separate them from the team, they won't be able to claim as many Karma points as the rest of us. If they remain safe from conflict and ensure their safety each day, they will be able to progress at a slower rate than the rest of the aggressive participants.

When the aggressors gain an overwhelming advantage over these two, your strategy will eventually get them killed. Our captain's safety could not be ensured even if we invested all of our resources and power at that time.

I suggest..."

The butcher wasn't interested in arguing with Becky. He looked at Renita and Steve before asking them a simple question.

"This lass thinks I wouldn't take into account something as basic as that. Forget about her.

As hard as it might be for some of you to believe, I am not a fucking idiot. I wouldn't keep my team's captain or ranger weak for too long.

It is bothersome to explain every move I'll be making at this event. So I'll just skip some points entirely.

Of course, I'm not saying that my strategy is perfect. And that it doesn't have any holes in it. Despite this, it is the most effective method considering the strengths and weaknesses of our team and its members.

It all boils down to how much trust you are willing to put in me.

Does anyone here want to hear Becky's alternative strategy? Or do you guys want to follow my plan?"

Eren looked at his team members thoughtfully as he asked. Becky also did the same, wanting at least one of the members to agree with her stance.

Unfortunately for her, nobody came forward.

[Chapter 1029 Aiming To Get All Four Legacies](#)

Untamed wilderness and unnatural silence. High noon.

Daylight was compromised due to gray clouds and dense vegetation in the area. A certain black-haired young man was seen traversing this region with his legs clad in purple lightning.

'You have no idea how to keep Steve and Renita on track with the rest of you, do you?'

Alephee asked Eren when he found himself separated from his team. He had told his team members that he would hunt for perks that would be beneficial for his team. However, he needed to do one thing first before anything else— get rid of Jason.

Ivor had sneaked into the event successfully, thanks to the elven mask Eren had obtained from Shandil. Eren did not understand how an elven artifact could outperform many of the security measures

imposed by the kingdom of Edinburgh. He could only come up with one possibility for Ivor's successful infiltration— someone influential from the kingdom had defected to the kingdom of Layos.

The butcher had expected some kind of foul play from the forces of Layos anyway. He was just glad that he could make use of the loopholes they had created for him.

Jason was also inside Sansara World. He had officially joined Royal Ren and was serving as his team's captain. Ivor and Eren wouldn't have a better chance than this to get rid of Jason. Especially at the beginning of the competition where everyone's powers were restricted.

Eren sighed before replying to Alephee's question.

'That bitch is right.

Steve and Renita will not be able to level up with the rest of them and fall behind before eventually getting taken out. That is if I don't do something about it soon to counter this huge disadvantage.'

Eren admitted the flaw in his strategy right away. He had also thought about this flaw when he made his strategy. And he had no surefire way to balance it out yet. However, that didn't stop him from enforcing the strategy on his team members anyway.

'I don't know how similar this event is to the event in my previous timeline. So I have my doubts. Still, it is the same Sansara World that had been used in the previous timeline and it is the same Karma points system.

So I'm hoping there should be a perk in the Sasara World that would allow someone to share their Karma points. At least that's what I heard when I listened to the news at that time.

Once I figure out how to get that perk, I'll use it on myself and link Steve and Renita to it.

The downside is that I'll have to carry two of them while leveling up myself. That's a lot of work. Even my growth will be impacted if I do this.'

Eren didn't share this plan with anyone else on his team because he didn't want to demoralize them. Carrying oneself while leveling up in the Sansara World was not going to be easy. So carrying two of them seemed like a far-fetched plan. At least by normal standards.

Furthermore, he was basing a lot of things on his knowledge of the past timeline. He couldn't explain how he could come up with such a strategy or how he could execute it practically. So he avoided explaining it, saying "it is bothersome to explain."

'Meh! I meant it when I said no plan is flawless. I'll improvise my strategy as I move along. It is still much better than spending time coming up with the right plan and the right time.

I'll work on my plan and make it perfect. There's no time to wallow in self-doubt or idleness.'

Eren narrowed his eyes as he sped ahead using his movement technique. His goal was to locate a ranker who had sneaked into the graduation event under his plan.

The butcher knew that the negative impact on Steve and Renita's progress was not the only issue his strategy had. Things were much more complicated than that.

The main team might find it difficult to explore Sansara World safely because Renita wouldn't be there leading them. She had her hands full prioritizing Steve's well-being for better or worse. It meant that the main team would have a higher chance of getting ambushed by opponents.

A full-on offensive meant there would be no talk of non-aggression or cooperation. Meaning Eren's team would always engage in conflict every time it came across an enemy. The White Raven crew's battle potential would be seriously tested if they carried out this plan.

Furthermore, Steve was an integral part of the offense for the White Raven crew. Without him, the team's attacking potential was also liable to be severely affected.

Eren had already made it clear that he wouldn't stay with the main team. Becky was opposed to Eren's absence the most in his strategy due to their attacking potential getting halved.

The main team was supposed to launch a full-on offensive despite there being no berserker, ranger, or close combat expert assisting them. The very thought of this setup made Becky clench her fists and throw daggers at Eren with her eyes.

However, Becky's technically sound logic was not enough to sway Eren or anyone else from this plan. Eren as well as his team members counted on Eren to make things work.

Eren had to let go of loads of self-doubts and indecisions the difficult way to develop this level of confidence in himself. That process chipped away a part of him that he would never get back.

The butcher had come up with this plan for his own benefit. He needed the freedom to do what he wanted in the Sansara World. And despite the negative connotations, the plan he had come up with gave him the confidence to roam freely in the separate dimension.

Of course, he had to work twice or thrice as hard to level up even if his strategy does work. He needed to justify his seemingly reckless action with his work.

'How many Legacies are you aiming to obtain?'

Aleph asked when she felt Eren's determination. Laughing openly, he declared.

"Kekeke. All of them, of course."

[Chapter 1030 Cedrick Renar](#)

A group of royal scions from Royal Ren had gathered at an empty facility inside a safe zone. They also had their lackeys with them.

A young man, who seemed to look like Rodrick Renar, was acting as the leader of the group. His name was Cedrick Renar and he was one of the top contenders in the royal race.

Cedrick paced around while others in the group surrounded him. After some time, he spoke in a frustrated tone.

"This bastard... Eren Idril.

I had heard he was sheltering that bastard cousin of ours. And now he has also taken away my chance of getting close to Crimson Ghost.

This is at a time when I have the largest number of pieces of the royal puzzle among all of us. It is infuriating how I have allowed one man to interfere with my plans for this long."

Cedrick Renar's tone contained a suppressed rage that was directed toward Eren.

The royal scion had already started hating Eren even before he met him because he was sheltering Rodrick.

Cedrick wouldn't make the same mistake as Rehaal by targeting Rodrick as long as he was in the city of White Raven. Being a royal, he knew more about royal conspiracies than the average person. They certainly exist. However, they are often used to cover something really straightforward.

For Cedrick, it was clear that Eren had a hand to play in eliminating Rehaal. Of course, he also considered the possibility that Eren was backed by someone from the royal court from the shadows.

Rodrick also was now in possession of a substantial amount of pieces of the royal puzzle after Rehaal's death. Even Rehaal's pieces had somehow been collected by Rodrick using some unknown means.

Rodrick was becoming the dark horse in the race to win the royal succession. Thus, the real contenders in the royal race started seeing Rodrick as an obstacle in their path that they couldn't eliminate.

All of this could be linked to Eren's protection of Rodrick.

As if this was not enough, Eren had also wooed Altashia. The latter was a peerless ranker and an exceptional beauty. But she had something even more valuable for someone like Cedrick—her connection to the Crimson Ghost.

Altashia was always approached by royal scions for this reason when she was in the Royal Ren. For these contenders, she was an attractive chess piece as a means of getting closer to the Crimson Ghost.

All the royal scions' wishes to get close to such a valuable girl went up in smoke when Altair approved Eren. They saw how "endearingly" Altair treated Eren and couldn't help but be jealous of him.

Of course, the butcher wouldn't use the term endearing when it came to his interaction with Altair. But that perspective did not matter to royal scions who had nothing but thoughts of royal succession filling their empty heads.

They also saw how Altashia came to greet Eren just before he stepped into the entrance of the Sansara World. It confirmed one thing for all the wanna-be potential suitors of Altashia—she was smitten with Eren and there was nothing they could do to change that.

There was one more thing that all the royal scions refused to admit. They had all felt Eren's presence when he stood up against Altair. They all felt threatened by his soul sense overpowering their consciousness. That feeling subconsciously manifested itself as a form of newfound hate.

Cedrick suddenly turned towards a certain ranker within his group and asked.

"Morty, you must have met Eren, right? Your house Derringer is co-owning the city of White Raven. What can you tell me about him that the usual reports can't?"

Morty Derringer suddenly found himself being stared at by all the gathered rankers when Cedrick threw a metaphorical spotlight at him. He felt a bit awkward suddenly getting all the attention to himself in such a tense environment. He gulped empty air before speaking in a careful tone.

"I... I don't know much about him, your highness Cedrick. Basically... I introduced him to my clan and he took it from there.

Still, I'll tell you what my house says about him. Eren Idril... he... he is a very dangerous man."

Cedrick stopped pacing around when he heard Morty's words. He narrowed his eyes at Morty before speaking in a commanding tone.

"Explain."

Morty pondered for a bit and collected his thoughts. He took a long breath before speaking again.

"House Derringer was once approached by Demonmir not too long ago when the city of White Raven was still in its early stages. He had offered us a tremendous amount of leeway in conducting our business in the city if and when he replaced Master Levine's faction.

Demonmir's only condition was to cut ties with Eren. My House approached Grandmaster Lin Karr after that to make him use his Seer array. We only wanted to find out if betraying Eren would work in our favor or not.

Grandmaster Lin Karr couldn't find anything related to Eren for some reason. But guess what he suggested to House Derringer?"

Morty finished speaking and pursed his lips. He could remember his first meeting with Eren like it was yesterday. The butcher had made a deep impression on Morty. If possible, he wouldn't want to stand in opposition to Eren, no matter the rewards of doing so.

Cedrick didn't want to push Morty's buttons for no reason. He nodded at him before speaking in a determined tone.

"Even if Eren has the backing of rankers working in the shadows, he has come here all alone. And his powers are restricted by the Sansara World's laws. Inside this world, he is as defenseless as he can be.

I'm not sure about getting close to Altashia. I believe that ship has sailed.

However, eliminating Eren would poke holes in the tripartite alliance between House Derringer, House Montmorency, and that bastard's guild. This will ultimately get us closer to freely targeting Rodrick again.

I suggest we kill Eren here to get our hands on the pieces of the royal puzzle Rodrick has in his possession. It would only take a few months to achieve this goal. My royal brothers and sisters, we will distribute those pieces equally among ourselves when we eliminate Rodrick from the race forever.

Let's find Eren and butcher him up. We can't let one man stop us from getting what we want after all."