

## Vile 1141

### [Chapter 1141 Sara Stark](#)

Going back in time.

The first week of the graduation event.

Eren was still far away from entering the E-Rank inside the Sansara World.

The Edinnica Arena was hosting many big and small spectral screens. The audience had a variety of options because of them. Of course, the screens were showing the battle scenes taking place between the participants.

The first week of the event started great. Every participant could be seen doing their best to survive in the Sansara World. Whether they fought in their teams or battled solo, earning Karma points became paramount for any conflict for all the parties involved in the conflicts.

The mortals were also mixed within the audience. A special zone was created for them so that they could watch the event without getting affected by random mana fluctuations.

The mortals were allowed entry inside the Edinnica Arena only after the participants were sent into the Sansara World. Otherwise, most of them would have to forfeit their lives just by being present near a highly charged environment.

The mortals were both excited and terrified by the violence they saw unfolding inside the Sansara World. They already knew that rankers were a different breed. However, scenes like these made them understand how true their assumptions really were.

The establishments cared deeply for their mortal populace because they knew they would receive a consistent supply of rankers from them. They knew events like these inspire some mortals to take rankers' path, ensuring that a new batch of rankers always gets created in every generation.

Every generation of rankers was like cogs needed to keep the establishments' machinery working. This was the reason why they spent so much of their resources on keeping the academies running.

Life-and-death events like these were woven into rankers' societal fabric. They enabled the establishments to recruit and manage the best rankers of their generation.

The rankers didn't see the mortals as their equals after breaking into the Novice rank. And it was a natural feeling most rankers would experience. These feelings would grow the more they progressed ahead in their ranking journeys. However, the rankers wouldn't go out of their way to harm the mortals.

Rankers and mortals were like oil and water. They wouldn't mix. However, they remained neutral to each other's existence for the most part.

Anfang Alliance made the establishments ensure that the rankers stayed away from the mortals' matters. That's because a single high-ranking entity would cause great harm to the mortal population if they were allowed to.

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One of the audience booths- dedicated to the mortal populace. Edinnica Arena.

Mortals were provided special entry and arrangements inside the capital city for the event. As a result, a huge crowd of mortals gathered inside the stadium. There were special array systems in place for the mortal populace. One could use compact array dials that were part of the array systems to control the spectral screens available for them.

A blind girl was listening to the commentary of the event intently. She was fascinated by hearing what was taking place inside the Sansara World. However, she zeroed in on a particular detail after hearing a name.

'Eren Idril... I have heard this name before. isn't this person Katalina's guild master?'

The blind girl mumbled to herself. Her name was Sara Stark.

Sara's shoulder-length peach-colored hair cascaded her cute and beautiful face as she stared blankly in front of her. A mini spectral screen was right in front of her. However, it was obvious that she wasn't looking at the screen.

Sara Stark had grayish-blue eyes that didn't make her seem like she was blind. She had clear skin that had a pinkish hue. With her gorgeous face and apt feminine curves, Sara Stark was quite a beauty.

Sadly, Sara Stark had become blind at the age of 12 when she tried testing her compatibility with a certain technique. This technique was supposed to make her step into the Novice rank. However, the technique backfired and she ended up losing her sight.

In the land of Anfang where magic and magic-related potions were a norm even among mortals. It was just that mortals had their own way of employing mana. Therefore, defects like blindness were almost unheard of. So whenever such mortals made their appearances, they would be treated differently than the others.

Blindness was not the only turmoil Sara had.

Occasionally, she had to suffer tremendous amounts of pain in her eyes and head at night. This was another side effect of practicing a defective ranking technique.

The episodes of pain would be intermittent. Sometimes Sara would experience three weeks of no-pain nights. And sometimes she would have to face that pain every week. These episodes of pain made her blindness worse.

Usually, people like Sara couldn't be treated with means of magic available to mortals and low-level rankers. Also, these people were unable to become rankers due to the existing defects in the mana circuits.

All mana-related treatments came with some kind of risk factor for mortals no matter how carefully they were administered. People with such disabilities were unable to magically get rid of their problems for the most part because of this.

Thus, there was a perception among mortals. That those mortals with such defects were hated by the mana. As such, they silently condemned the existence of people with such defects.

Nobody mistreated Sara Stark because of her blindness. There was no reason to. They just maintained a safe distance from her. So that her bad luck doesn't rub off on them. After all, they didn't want to anger the World Will by interacting with someone it had seemingly cursed.

Sara and her parents visited a lot of Novice and Ace healers so that they could cure her of her blindness or relieve her of the episodes of pain. However, for some reason, they were unable to help her. The family didn't have sufficient funds or guts to seek a higher-ranked entity's help in their minuscule matter.

In the end, even Sara started believing that she was indeed cursed by the World Will of Anfang. However, Sara didn't let her situation get the better of her. She eventually made peace with her pain and suffering.

If Eren was present at the audience booth, he would have recognized Sara Stark right away. After all, this was the girl he had cared for in his past timeline.

#### [Chapter 1142 Reva Rain's Demonic Activities](#)

'Yes... He is the same man.

Katalina told me about this person so many times when we last talked. City of White Raven's founder... Eren Elijah Idril.'

Sara Stark, like some mortals, was not used to following what happened in the rankers' world. That's why she was unable to recall that the name Eren Idril was associated with the city of White Raven right away.

However, Sara eventually remembered Eren's name.

Sara couldn't help feeling surprised by realizing that Eren was just as young as her. And still, he had managed to establish a city for himself. He was a successful ranker while she had remained a helpless mortal.

'Just amazing. He is even more amazing than what Kat told me about him.'

Sara still considered Katalina as her friend despite the difference in the realities between them. After all, Katalina had ceased to be mortal. She had turned into a successful ranker at this point. At least in Sara's and her parents' eyes, she had achieved an exceptional form of success.

Katalina Reich was an abandoned orphan living in the same city in which Sara and her family used to live. She spent her childhood doing random chores for anyone that offered her something to eat.

Sara's family was relatively rich for mortals. It adopted Katalina as their daughter so that she could serve as the caretaker for the blind Sara.

Initially, Katalina treated Sara as her master and considered herself her slave. And Sara's family was okay with that distinction too.

Katalina, however, was considered her sister by Sara Stark as much as a friend. Sara eventually learned that Katalina had a talent for harnessing mana. The blind girl took it upon herself to help Katalina become a ranker by investing money and other resources in her.

With Sara's help, Katalina Reich managed to break into the Novice rank. And her journey as a ranker began from there.

Katalina had a very humble beginning.

She had seen the unflattering face of a society that was usually shown to those who didn't have anything in their wallets. Or someone who was not privileged enough to have a wallet in the first place. This was the reason why Katalina was always hungry to make more money even after she became a ranker.

Katalina joined the Titus tournament to secure money for herself. The girl never forgot her benefactor though. She wanted to help Sara get rid of her blindness and intermittent pain. Maybe walk on the path of a ranker too. With enough money, Katalina could hire a high-ranking healer or alchemist who knew how to treat Sara's condition.

Katalina eventually came to meet Sara and her adopted family after winning the Titus tournament. She thanked the family by providing them with loads of Eddies. She also took Sara to see a high-ranking healer who could heal her.

Unfortunately, the healer was not able to get rid of Sara's condition for some reason despite the various methods he tried on her. He asked Sara to provide him with the ranking technique she had practiced when she was a child. However, Sara and Katalina were both shocked to find out that the scroll used in the ranking technique had disappeared from the household.

To avoid being a bother to Katalina who had become a ranker, Sara told her friend that she had gotten used to staying blind. She also said that episodes of pain were not the issue anymore.

Sara appreciated Katalina's efforts to help her. However, Katalina could only pause her goals to help Sara after finding out that the problem wasn't financial. There was no immediate fix to Sara's problem. Katalina returned back to Eren and joined the White Raven Guild.

The orphaned girl maintained contact with Sara though, making the blind see the world of rankers through her descriptions.

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The Paladin of Pain—Reva Rain was a demonic ranker.

She was used to harnessing the emotions of pain experienced by other living beings. This was why she liked torturing her targets. She also tortured Eren after realizing that the guy had a high pain tolerance. The demonic part inside her considered Eren to be a challenge it wanted to overcome.

However, feelings of pain and suffering were not limited to the rankers' world alone.

Reva Rain could also harness the feelings of pain and suffering she induced on mortals. This was the reason she distributed so many defective ranking techniques among mortals.

Mortals practicing Reva's defective techniques would have various types of illness or physical symptoms. Some would become completely blind while others would turn mute or deaf. However, they all had one thing in common. All of them experienced intermittent episodes of pain.

Due to her fear of being apprehended by establishments or even the Anfang Alliance, Reva Rain did these things very secretly. She did not want any of the defective ranking techniques' origins to get traced back to her. Therefore, she used her minions in the Escalon guild to do such dirty jobs.

Reva Rain also needed to perform a demonic ritual to taste the fruits of her supposed labor. She needed the body parts of the living beings, affected by the emotions of pain she had made them feel, to complete the demonic ritual.

The demonic ritual to harness the emotions of pain was how Reva Rain had progressed so rapidly in her ranking status. And since she only targeted mortals for the most part, her demonic activities weren't discovered by anyone.

Of course, Sara was suffering from the same defective ranking technique that Reva Rain had distributed. And since the technique's origins were demonic, no healer, potion seller, or alchemist could cure her or help her relieve the pain.

In Eren's past timeline, he was sent to kill Sara Stark by Reva Rain so that she could harness the emotions of pain. The Paladin of Pain had a lot of errand runners like Eren under her belt to do this job.

The butcher in his past timeline was jaded because of his circumstances. He did not know why Reva Rain would need to torture or kill mortals. However, he did not care to ask. He knew that he would only receive more torture done to him in the form of an answer to his question.

Eren and Sara's meeting in the past timeline was not romantic under any circumstances. The guy had come to kill her so that his boss at that time could use her organs for her demonic activities.

However, something prevented Eren from killing Sara. That's because the blind girl offered him some food at their first meeting. A kind gesture that shouldn't be seen as a huge favor. And yet, it was enough for the butcher to not listen to the orders that Reva Rain had dished out to him.

#### [Chapter 1143 The Story Of A Benign Butcher](#)

There was a reason why Eren was so proficient at torturing people.

Reva Rain's demonic ritual required her to torture mortals before killing them. The sudden spikes in the emotion of pain and suffering made her ritual more effective for her, allowing her to progress by leaps and bounds in her elemental attainments.

Reva Rain was also able to strengthen her Ability by torturing mortals. So it was imperative for her that she inflicted more pain, asking her henchmen to do the same.

Torturing mortals was a delicate job.

Mortals' bodies weren't strong enough to sustain the same level of torture as rankers. They could die easily, making the demonic ritual useless or less effective.

The Paladin of Pain was taking huge risks by distributing defective ranking techniques among mortals. That's why she didn't like it when mortals died without allowing her to extract their worth from them.

Under Reva Rain's tutelage, Eren had to learn many ways of torturing mortals without killing them right away. He often had to employ non-magical ways to agitate the victims' pain receptors.

He also had to become creative with mortals' anatomy to make them suffer more without them losing their minds. This was imperative because mindless people wouldn't be able to register the same amount of pain as sane ones do.

Renar, Fiona, and others had experienced Eren's torture methods firsthand. It could be said that they had a permanent scar on their psyches because of that.

The Paladin of Pain made effective use of Eren by assigning tasks like these. She would force him to suffer through torture sessions for the silliest of mistakes. Sometimes she would torture him for made-up reasons as well. She would always tell him that she was torturing him so he could torture his targets more effectively. So that he could do his job better.

Eventually, Eren learned to dissect mortals' bodies while keeping them alive for a short amount of time. His victims would be made to stand up as he dissects them. Their bodies would be suspended inside a spatial array that kept them levitating, preventing them from moving their muscles for precise cuts. He would then often pull organs from their bodies before placing them in his raised hands.

In his past timeline, the butcher used to kill in this way because it made his job as a torture specialist easier. It was done so that he could torture more without the organs spilling on the floor.

After all, the spatial array in which the victims' bodies were suspended also had a cleaning mechanism integrated into it. The array would burn anything that fell out of victims' bodies, releasing a smoke of cooked meat.

To prevent this odor from entering his nostrils, Eren would carve out victims' organs and place them over their raised hands and shoulders. It could be said that what he did as nothing but a job in the past timeline became his habit in the current timeline.

Eren's mastery of butchering mortals and rankers grew because of Reva's shady assignments. The hacking of body parts had become his daily routine, turning him callous about everything that was related to blood and gore.

The butcher had to say that being part of the Escalon guild was the most brutal and bloody chapter of his life in his past timeline. It made him live a life of quiet desperation.

During his tenure in the Escalon guild, Eren's hands remained bloody from innocent mortal blood. And since he was diligent in his efforts despite his hate towards Reva Rain, he mastered the art of torture and slaughter.

Eren was Reva Rain's top-performing henchman. Reva's victims, who suffered through the butcher's torture, would feel the most amount of pain. As a result, Reva was able to extract pure forms of feelings from them for her demonic ritual.

Eren was one of the most crucial pawns Reva had in the past timeline. And all he received as a reward was torture and more torture.

Eren's psyche was deeply impacted after butchering rankers and mortals alike.

Killing opponents and rankers is one thing. But killing them in such a way that they would suffer more before dying was another. Experiences like these changed Eren as a person. They made him even more insensitive toward people's lives in general.

This was why Eren preferred neat and efficient kills on this timeline. As much as possible, he tried to break away from his habits. A silent way of proving to himself that he was a different person.

The butcher provided easy deaths for opponents who asked for the same from him through their words or actions. Meeshah was just one of the victims on the list.

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Even Reva Rain had to acknowledge Eren's skills at butchering and torturing people. She would often call him Benign Butcher, which sounded like a mockery because it highlighted his helplessness in front of her.

Of course, Eren could see that Reva Rain was not a normal ranker by any stretch of the imagination because of her activities like these.

However, he assumed her to be a cultist in secret. And employing cultists in the shadows was a norm for shady guilds like the Escalon Guild.

Eren was not aware of the Anfang Alliance or Reva's identity as a demonic ranker. Therefore, he could never use that information as leverage against her.

Eren also learned to sustain pain and suffering as much as he was capable of inflicting them. His pain tolerance kept reaching new heights, thanks to Reva Rain's consistent 'training sessions.'

"Those who inflict pain must have the courage to bear it as well."

The Paladin of Pain was the original speaker of that sentence.

Reva Rain would often whisper those words into Eren's ears while "educating" him. As a result, that sentence just stayed with the butcher, getting played in his mind like a broken record.

The Paladin of Pain was used to cover her tracks flawlessly. As a result, Anfang Alliance or establishments were unaware of her activities. After watching her clear the kill site in a precise manner, the butcher also learned to do the same.

#### [Chapter 1144 A Stark Contrast](#)

Reva Rain deeply affected Eren's personality as a ranker.

She was his mentor in the art of inflicting pain and misery on others. She also showed him with her actions that staying low was paramount when it came to conducting operations like these.

Reva taught him many things and made him realize even more. The lessons she imparted to him were bone-deep— something he wouldn't be able to forget even in the current timeline.

Experiences can be classified as good or bad. However, the knowledge gained from those experiences will always hold some value. It depends upon the individual how they apply the knowledge gained.

Eren couldn't use what Reva Rain taught him to its fullest potential in the last timeline. However, the skills he had developed back then had become his assets in the current timeline.

The mocking tag of the Benign Butcher could not be used to describe Eren's actions in the current timeline anymore. And due to his deeds in the current timeline, it was changed into something entirely different– the Osan Woods' Butcher.

It was as if Eren had shed skin to become the same type of monster he was in his past. However, the way he applied the knowledge and experiences he gained from the previous timeline was a class apart.

This was the reason Eren strongly objected to Nina joining the Escalon guild. The guild had two faces– one for public consumption and the other for performing shady activities like these.

Nina might not have been made to do the same things as him if she had joined. However, the butcher didn't want her to venture anywhere near the darkness the guild was used to nurturing in its backyard. The kind of darkness that once surrounded him.

Escalon guild and its most successful guild member Reva Rain had more or less walked on the same path they had in Eren's previous timeline. As a result, Sara Stark was blind in this timeline as well. However, the Paladin of Pain was yet to harvest the emotions of pain she had influenced Sara to nurture.

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With the baggage of his bitter experiences weighing on his mind, Eren saw the world around him in lifeless shades. His vices had become his only true companion in his past timeline.

The butcher had entered the city meant for mortals by disguising himself as a mortal as well. After all, Reva Rain was very particular about covering her tracks.

The butcher had forgotten what the words kindness and compassion meant when he was working for the Escalon guild. That's why he wasn't mentally ready to meet someone like Sara Stark.

And by sparing Sara, he became what Reva mocked him to be– a benign butcher.

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Eren saw something very lively within Sara, which shocked and fascinated him at the same time. She was the other side of the feminine he thought had ceased to exist in the land of Anfang– gentle and nurturing. A stark contrast to Sienna.

Despite the constant episodes of pain, the girl was optimistic about life. She was cheerful despite the blindness that prevented her from seeing the world around her.

Sara's heart was full of something Eren didn't have– hope.

When Eren saw the world in lifeless shades, Sara managed to fill in the colors that she could not see with her own eyes. There was a part of Eren that wanted to finish Reva Rain's assignment because Sara's existence bothered him. However, there was also a part of him that wanted to gain something from the blind girl– the same hope she seemed to have in abundance.



It could be said that the butcher was trying to make sense of his existence. Or that he was just selfish to have what Sara had. Either way, Eren's meeting with Sara was a turning point for him.

Eren decided to spend some time with Sara to see how she was able to stay so positive. He stayed in her city and met with her several times. By the time a month had passed, the two had gotten to know each other in more detail.

Eren started liking spending time with Sara because it represented a life away from all the bloodshed and carnage he was forced to unleash by his employer. His subconscious mind started associating her with calm and peace he had never experienced in the past timeline.

Sara was easy to talk to. It was as if she had her own form of magic that made her effortless around people. She would speak less and listen more when she needed to. And she would lead the conversation in the right direction when she had to.

The blind girl didn't have to fill the silence with empty words and pleasantries. She would just get up and ask Eren to change the venue of their meetings on a whim. "Walks are free therapy," she believed.

Sara would be able to smile for the most mundane of reasons. Or it was just that she didn't need a reason to smile. The girl was happy because she could breathe. A rare form of optimism that isn't found in everybody.

Eren had a feeling that the blind girl could see through him just fine. Because she never asked him questions he would find difficult to answer.

It seemed to Eren that Sara was okay with Eren being suspicious. She took joy in the fact that she had company.

Eren teased Sara for being so trusting of random strangers. However, he couldn't help but be influenced by her positivity.

The two would talk for hours on end before scheduling their next meeting. Eren found it strange that he would be able to maintain a healthy, back-and-forth conversation with a mortal despite the different lives they lived. It was as if the common grounds to talk about would appear on their own when he was in Sara's company— a phenomenon he had never experienced.

The talks led to Sara Stark teaching Eren how to dance. She also taught him how to cook, making a fine chef out of him. She would often marvel at how he was so agile when it came to handling knives.

#### [Chapter 1145 Death— A Much-Needed Respite](#)

A respite.

That's how Eren labeled the time he got to spend with Sara.

The butcher was able to keep Sara's status a secret from Reva Rain. The latter had a steady supply of mortals she could use in her demonic rituals. So she didn't see the need to micromanage her henchmen.

Eren would take time to meet Sara whenever he found a window from his daily activities. This carried on for a few years.

The two eventually became intimate with each other. A steady progression of their bond.

Of course, the contract he was forced to sign with Sienna made things a bit difficult for him and Sara. However, the blind girl got over it eventually, trusting Eren's words instead of getting intimidated by the restrictions placed on him.

It was the first time in a long while that Eren felt that he should do something about someone else. Thus, he ran through the same process Katalina had to go through in the current timeline. And just like Katalina, he eventually found out that there was no cure for Sara's condition.

In both timelines, Sara took the news of the healers' inability to cure her positively. She asked Eren to stop struggling, telling him she was fine with whatever cards she had been dealt with.

Eren found it difficult to let go of Sara's problems for his own reasons. He knew at the time that it was Reva Rain's defective technique that was the reason behind Sara's condition.

Eren couldn't tell anything about what he knew to Sara or anyone else for that matter. And he never even bothered to request a cure from the Paladin of Pain.

With a copy of the defective technique as a reference, he spent his time finding a cure for Sara in silence. A task that did not yield any fruit.

Still, things between Eren and Sara were going well. And the couple stayed happy taking simple joys out of life.

Until one day.

One of Reva's henchmen found Sara.

In no time, he recognized that Sara was suffering from a defective ranking technique. Unlike the benign butcher, the man did what he was asked to do, killing Sara after torturing her.

Eren was sure that Reva had somehow gotten to know about his little escapades— his life away from the bloody job of organ harvesting. The Paladin of Pain sent the guy to finish what Eren couldn't.

Eren's lifeless shades came back to him instantly when he heard about what had happened to Sara. He was too shocked to act or respond for a few days. Those days were a blur for the butcher. However, he could remember the day when he snapped out of his self-induced misery on his own.

Eren's wrath knew no bounds.

The butcher found the guy before killing him in the most horrific way possible. He also suffered the consequences of hurting his own guild member, damaging his mana core in the process.

The damaged mana core meant that Eren wouldn't be able to become a high-ranking entity in his life. In spite of his diligent efforts, it capped his potential, obscuring his already gloomy future.

However, the butcher didn't care about his future at the time of killing Sara's killer. He knew that his future was already too dark without Sara's presence in it. He did not have anything to look forward to anymore.

Of course, Eren also knew that Reva Rain was Sara's real killer. She just didn't see the need to paint her own hands in Sara's blood, treating her like the ordinary mortal she was.

No matter how hurt he was, Eren was a realist. He knew he wouldn't be able to do anything against Reva Rain no matter what he did. He also didn't confront Reva about it, denying her the pleasure of gloating in his face.

In Escalon Guild's eyes, Eren held even less value than he already had because of his damaged mana core. It didn't care about the butcher or the guy he had killed due to some personal dispute.

Ultimately, Escalon guild allowed Eren to end his contract with it, giving him the freedom he didn't need. By this time, Reva was also done with a mentally and physically exhausted Eren. She didn't bother retaining him when he applied for contract termination.

In a way, Sara helped Eren free himself from Reva Rain's control. The fact that he couldn't or didn't want to do anything with his freedom was a different matter altogether.

No other establishment would hire Eren when he was at his lowest. So he was forced to become a mercenary for hire. And since nobody wanted to form a team with him, he was forced to do solo missions.

In the past timeline, Eren accepted solo missions one after another and drowned in his vices until one of the missions claimed his life. This was the reason why he didn't see death as something bad in his past life. He was able to see it as a much-needed respite from the life he had to live.

Sara's untimely death was a tragic chapter in Eren's past life. Of course, he wanted to do something about it in the current timeline—rewrite it anew. However, he was unable to locate the blind girl.

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Katalina had become a ranker in the past timeline as well. And since the past timeline did not have the White Raven guild, she had to join a very strict establishment to secure ranking resources for herself.

Katalina became very busy with the assignments she had been given by the establishment. She stayed away from Sara during the time the latter was dating Eren.

As a result, Eren was not able to recognize Katalina's connection with Sara when the two met in the Titus tournament. That and the fact that he ignored Katalina's talks for the most part.

Eren tried to find Sara in the current timeline as well. However, he found out that she and her family were not at the same place they were in the past timeline.

There were various obvious and less obvious reasons for Sara's family to have been shifted to a different location on the current timeline. They could all be linked to the butterfly effect Eren had generated by introducing various changes to the current timeline.

#### [Chapter 1146 Cognitively Dissonant](#)

The Osan Woods' Butcher fiasco had caused unrest throughout the kingdom of Edinburgh.

Many cultist organizations used the butcher as a metaphorical scapegoat to conduct their activities, putting the consequences in his name. Sara's family also suffered from the unrest that was created in the butcher's name. It moved to a completely different location without telling anyone.

Sara only kept contact with Katalina from her pre-shift life. And since the latter had her own life as a ranker, Sara stayed low-key in her new place with her parents.

Sara learned that there was a Rank-0 artifact available inside the capital city of Edin. It could pair up with a range of array disks and use them as inputs to render a visual image directly inside Sara's head.

The artifact had multiple functions. All of them were attuned to helping blind mortals "see" the world around them.

Sara wouldn't have been able to buy the Rank-0 because it could only be bought using Extols as currency. And as a mortal, Sara and her family were used to dealing with Eddies. In Edin, the conversion from Eddies to Extols was horrendous.

However, Sara had received a huge sum of Extols from Katalina. Of course, to Katalina, it didn't seem like that much of a big deal. But to Sara and her family, the sum was enough to overcome her handicap.

Sara discovered that there was a graduation event taking place in Edin's capital city. So she decided to check it out with a couple of cousins she had.

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"Why are you only following Eren Idril's battles, Sara?"

One of Sara's cousins asked while staring at her spectral screen. She snatched the array dial from her hands and switched to a different battle POV.

"Hmm... this is much better. Look, this is His Highness Cedrick Renar."

Sara's cousin then took out the second array dial and paired it up with the first dial. She then placed both of them back in Sara's hands.

The function of the Rank-0 artifact that Sara had recently bought was activated. It converted the spectral screen's feed into special kinds of visual signals and sent them directly into Sara's frontal cortex. It allowed her to "see" the battle between Cedrick Renar and his opponents.

Sara felt like she was imagining a battle taking place between Cedrick and his opponents. Her mortal brain couldn't visually render all the information it was provided with.

As a result, the imagery would become blurry and less detail-oriented from time to time. It was a completely different experience from the ability to actually see events with one's eyes.

However, Sara didn't complain. She was happy with the fact that she could visually observe the world around her with the help of her most recent and most expensive purchase. Only Katalina knew how much Sara had thanked her for it.

Sara had decided that she would travel to the city of White Raven to meet with Katalina Reich to surprise her. It was just that she needed to make a bunch of travel arrangements for a safe and secure

journey. After all, the sheer distance between her current location and the city of White Raven wasn't a small thing for her.

Sara was not happy with her cousin's behavior. She scrunched her nose before changing the feed on the spectral screen, switching it back to Eren's battle with other participants.

Sara activated another function on the array disk and looked at her cousin before responding with a hint of irritation in her voice.

"Tch. You always do this, Sasan. Don't make me watch something I have no interest in. And don't make decisions for yourself because you are bereft of critical thinking."

Sasan Stark felt wronged by Sara's behavior. However, he couldn't say anything back to Sara because he did not understand what "bereft of critical thinking" actually entailed. Or it was just that he did not know how to make a comeback after being labeled that way.

Sara had a peculiar personality trait. She had a knack for verbally berating people without hurting them.

Eren had experienced this better than anybody in the past timeline. She would often call him "cognitively dissonant" whenever he said something or did something she did not particularly approve of.

The butcher never got to know that Sara was actually calling him stupid all that time whenever she metaphorically slapped the "cognitively dissonant" label on his forehead. One could say that the blind girl had her own way of having fun.

Sara took a special interest in Eren's battle for some reason. A reason she couldn't explain herself to. She watched the butcher's moves keenly despite the brutality it generated everywhere around him.

She didn't feel scared or repulsed by witnessing something like that. Instead, she felt that there was some form of harmony in his moves. It was as if she was seeing someone do their daily chore with such effortless grace that the chore stopped looking like a chore.

Being blind for so long, Sara interpreted people's actions with a different perspective than other mortals and rankers. Through her focus on obvious details, she was able to observe something most others could not.

Sara could immediately tell that Eren was a special person because of the way he moved and performed inside the Sansara World. She also felt that she was becoming biased toward Eren because of the links he shared with Katalna.

'Should... should I ask Expert Eren if he could give me a lift to the city of White Raven?'

Sara thought to herself as she watched Eren chop off the limbs of another ranker. He allowed the safety mechanism of the Sansara World to activate on his body, allowing him to escape the death penalty he could have dished out anytime he wanted.

Sara decided she would try to meet Eren if possible and see what kind of ranker he was in person. She thought of asking him for a favor only if he was accommodating enough.

In the next moment, however, Sara got even more irritated. That's because Eren's battle feed was disconnected from all the spectral screens midway. And the viewers who were consuming his feed could not understand the reason behind it.

#### [Chapter 1147 Roth Riverine Meets Arthur Renar](#)

Start of the second week of the graduation event.

A facility inside the Edinnica Arena - away from the audience. 4.30 PM.

The hall was grand and spacious. Cheerings and screams could be heard coming from outside the spectrally protected windows. It indicated that the graduation event still received plenty of responses from its viewers despite the frequent disturbances in the live feed.

Two men were sitting on opposite sides of a large study table. One was a middle-aged man who had just broken into the Grandmaster rank. The other was an old man who seemed to be in his 70s.

The middle-aged man was none other than Edinburgh's legitimate Duke— Arthur Renar.

This was the guy who was tricked by Eliza into making an artificial demon beast for herself. He wasn't able to gain the power of being a half-blood. However, he had managed to break into the A-Rank, courtesy of the resources and support provided to him by Layla for his contribution.

The old man sitting in front of him was an Earl from House Riverine— Roth Riverine. It seemed like both of them were arguing.

"Arthur... you bastard. Let me talk to Sage Hansen. You have no right to stop me."

Roth Riverine spoke angrily. Of course, his anger was directed at Arthur. The latter narrowed his eyes at the old man before speaking up in a threatening tone.

"Old Roth, has old age finally crippled your thinking? Do you know who you are talking to?"

Arthur released his Grandmaster aura all at once and created a suffocating atmosphere inside the grand hall. The hall's security measures were activated, which prevented Arthur's aura from leaking outside or damaging the interior of the hall.

Roth started coughing frantically when he was exposed to Arthur's aura. Duke's breakthrough had not yet been stabilized. So he could not express his A-Ranked powers the way he wanted them to. However, whatever he could muster with his current status was enough to intimidate an old man like Roth Riverine who was only a quasi Master ranker.

Arthur looked at Roth with irritation on his face when the latter started coughing. He retracted his aura and summoned a glass full of green liquid before offering it to the old man.

"Alright. Alright. Don't die on me yet, Uncle Rothy. Here, drink this."

Old Roth almost snatched the glass from Arthur while looking at him angrily. The quasi Master ranker was obviously not scared of Arthur despite the latter's pressure tactics.

The old man saw Arthur in his birthday suit when he was a child. Of course, he wasn't scared of the Duke despite the latter getting so much ahead of him in terms of ranking status.

Old Roth drank all the contents of the glass in one gulp and stabilized his condition. He channeled his mana through his body to revitalize himself before speaking to Arthur in a grim tone.

"Listen to me, you spoiled brat. My grandson Ken can't be seen in Sansara World's video feed. The last feed of him showed that he was being chased by a group of participants. There's been no news about him since then.

Has he been kicked out of the event or is he still participating? I just want to know what has happened to him. Let me talk to Sage...."

Arthur interrupted Roth's speech midway through before he could finish it.

"That's not possible, old man. Sage Hansen is busy with his own affairs."

Crack.

The earthen glass in which the medicinal green liquid was poured broke in Roth's grip. He was obviously angry at Arthur for interrupting him once again.

"Listen to me, you ignorant brat. There's definitely something brewing inside the Sansara event. Otherwise, why would so many participants try to target Ken's team? Especially the way they were doing it.

They gain nothing from House Riverine's anger directed at them for pulling off such a stunt. It's almost as if they don't care about what would happen to them even if they manage to pass their graduation with flying colors.

I think... I think..."

Arthur smirked at Roth before confirming his doubts.

"That's right, Uncle Rothy. The kingdom of Layos is up to no good. Don't worry though. We have things under control. Our moderators will take care of the..."

Zoom. Slam. Break.

Old Roth slammed his hands on the study table and almost broke it. Fortunately, security measures inside the hall kicked in, preventing Roth's force from getting transferred to the wooden table.

Old Roth got up from his seat and pointed at Arthur before speaking with clear agitation and anger on his face.

"I don't care about the politics between the two sides, damn it. My only goal is to ensure the safety of my grandson. He is as dense as anyone gets. So much so that anybody can use him for their benefit. And he'll happily get comfortable seeing a smile on their faces.

I... I am worried about his well-being."

One had to say that Ken had a caring family.

It recognized Ken as the potential clan leader of the House of Riverine despite his many personality flaws. This was all due to the kind of diligence and determination he had shown to his clan members through his accomplishments.

No branch of the Riverine family opposed Ken's succession. It's safe to say that the hero was used to winning people's hearts right from his base.

Arthur sighed after seeing Roth become emotionally unstable in front of him. If there was any other quasi Master-ranked entity in front of him, Arthur would have booked them for treason against royalty for their behavior. However, he could not do that with Roth. The old man may have changed his diapers when he was a child.

"Please calm down, Uncle Roth. I have sent my son inside the Sansara World as well. Do you see me worried about him despite the enemy's sorry attempt at defaming us?"

Arthur disappeared from his seat and appeared beside old Roth. He personally pulled up another chair and made the old man take a seat. He then resumed sitting in his own chair before speaking up with a tone of confidence.

"Relax. Everything is under control."

Unbeknownst to Duke Arthur, everything was not under his control.

#### [Chapter 1148 Tough Love](#)

"Fuck your control, Arthur."

Old Roth spoke while holding onto the Riverine emblem hanging from his neck as a necklace ornament. He ran his fingers through his ripe white hair and looked at Arthur seriously before commenting.

"I don't know how you can stay calm after sending your own son into a rigged event like this. But things don't stay under control just because you think they are under your control."

Sometimes, life sends wild cards— the kind that you can't defend against.

I suggest we both talk to Sage Lehan about it. Let us tap into any additional footage from Sansara World if we can. There's no harm in doing that, right?"

Arthur had creases on his face talking to Roth. Technically, the Duke shouldn't have any problem listening to the Earl's request. However, there was a catch.

Arthur Renar had turned his son Jason into a demonic ranker. He knew that Jason wouldn't hesitate to use his powers against anyone if he saw the need to. The Duke already had people from his side working in the background to prevent the leak of information about Jason's demonic powers to the outside world.

By getting Sage Lehan involved in the matter, Arthur did not want to ruin his existing setup. Sage Lehan had slipped into short seclusion until the end of the event. In his place, Arthur took command of managing the event in the background.



Arthur reclined in his chair and looked up, trying to look pensive in front of the old man. He spoke after supposedly taking a lot of things into consideration.

"Uncle Roth... the thing is... Sage Lehan has slipped into seclusion. We really shouldn't disturb someone like him unless there's a catastrophe unleashed on the city of Edin.

So let's forget about Sage Lehan.

In regards to watching footage that has not been made public from Sansara World. Sure. I can have people doing just that. I'll tell my men to be on the lookout for Ken as well.

Is that enough? Or do you want me to do something else for you as well?"

Arthur's reply was simple and logical. He spoke the truth but in a way that wouldn't divulge anything about what he was up to. Nevertheless, Roth just knew the man in front of him too well to not see his machinations.

Old Roth met Arthur's eyes before speaking up in a grim tone.

"Brat, you always think you are in control of the situation until it comes back to bite you in the ass. Don't think I don't know what you were up to in the Osan Woods. Isen has also defected to the kingdom of Layos because of you."

Arthur's eyes shone when he heard Roth's words. His gaze suddenly had a certain sharpness to it. However, Roth Riverine didn't care about the Grandmaster's changed temperament. He took a deep breath before continuing.

"I am worried about Ken. So you should do the same about Jason as well. I will not say anything about your legitimate heirs. But Jason is a diamond in the rough. He has potential... just like Ken.

Don't get me wrong. I am not against us making political decisions. And I know you like to play hide-and-seek games like these the most.

But I hope we can keep our family members out of it. Our policies and our politics have nothing to do with them.

We shouldn't use our own family members as test subjects. Don't you agree?"

Old Roth got up from his seat and bowed in front of Arthur to show respect. He then started walking towards the exit with a stoic expression on his face.

Arthur was not ready for the old man to get so sentimental that he would bow in front of him. This was the first time that Earl Roth Riverine had shown him respect. But for some reason, Arthur could not take joy at the moment.

"Old Roth..."

Arthur got up from his seat and tried to stop Roth in his tracks. However, the quasi Master ranker shook his head before speaking up.

"It's fine, boy. I am fine. Do what you think is right. I just hope that you don't regret the decisions you have made so far.

Rankers' lives are long and arduous. However, we get to see our families grow for much longer. And just like mortals, we try to live through our future generations.

Jason is the finest son you could have asked for. Stop using him as a chess piece and allow him to step out of your shadow. Otherwise..."

Old Roth stopped midway through his speech and sighed. In the next moment, a subtle mana pulse was generated before Roth disappeared from his position, leaving Arthur to his devices.

Arthur remained silent for a while. He had to say that Roth's words had stirred his mind a bit. And when the old man called Jason to be his chess piece, the Duke felt extremely guilty.

Arthur started pacing around in the grand hall as he thought of many things at once. As he listened to the distant cheers and sounds of crackers from the Edinnica Arena, he concluded.

'The old man is probably overthinking things. I am sure the moderators will be able to do their job just fine. After all, they have been told to secure the lives of the participants like Ken and Jason at all costs.

What's more? Rufus is there as the chief moderator. He alone is enough to get rid of any nuisance the participants are not able to handle.'

Arthur nodded to himself as he counted on various countermeasures put in place at the start of the event. His face then suddenly showed a bit of cruelty in his eyes as he continued to speak in his head.

'Besides... I don't know much about Ken. But nobody can touch my son. My name alone is enough protection for him. Even the kingdom of Layos will think twice before targeting him. Plus, he is capable. He can also count on the demonic powers to become his trump card.

I will not shelter Jason like the rest of my useless kids. Adversities like these will turn him into a better ranker. So it's a form of tough love.

I... I am only doing this for Jason.'

#### [Chapter 1149 Jaime And Polyjuice Potion](#)

Arthur liked to stay in control.

He had sufficient royal rights and ranking status to ensure this control. And the way he had taken countermeasures against Jason's planned or accidental revelation of demonic origins was also commendable.

However, Arthur underestimated Layos' infiltration into the event. It wasn't just participants. Almost half of the moderators sided with the kingdom of Layos. It included sleeper cells, people who were influenced or bought, and lastly, people who were not what they claimed to be-- deep assets.

Arthur's assumptions about the event were based on the premise that the kingdom of Edinburgh was infallible when it came to high-ranking entities. And it was true for the most part. However, the quantity was not everything-- especially when it came to the game of double-crossing someone.

There was someone from the kingdom of Layos who had defected to the kingdom of Layos' side. Or it was just that they wanted to harm the kingdom just so that they could get away from the restrictions placed on them.

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An isolated facility that was located at the top of a tower.

Sansara World's broadcasting was controlled here.

This facility was huge and dome-shaped. Clear blue skies could be seen through the translucent domain. The honey-comb pattern of the dome was nothing but various POVs of Sansara World getting shown in spectral form.

The operators working inside this highly secure facility could control the content of the feed generated inside Sansara World. These operators were supposed to work for as long as the graduation event was running.

Of course, Arthur was supposed to have been controlling this facility from within by employing his men to do the job. He had used his rights as a Duke to appoint his own men inside the broadcasting control tower just before the start of the event. This was supposed to allow Duke to control the information flow of the events happening in Sansara World however he wanted.

However, Arthur lacked his loyal hound. Oliver was used to keeping a close eye on Arthur's men until he was alive and active. But ever since the loyal hound died in Eren's hands, there was nobody to keep Arthur's private forces in check.

Furthermore, Arthur was busy with his own ranking practice before and after breaking into the Grandmaster rank. As a result, he was not aware that he had been raising snakes in his backyard.

Some of Arthur's men were also compromised. Rondo's deception was not an isolated incident. Arthur had another sleeper cell serving under him. Someone who had not shown his true colors until he saw the need to.

"Aaaaaaargh!"

Another scream. Another kill. A thick stench of death.

The broadcasting control room started reeking of blood and gore. The rankers operating on various arrays started getting attacked by unknown assailants who had infiltrated the control tower through some unknown means.

The odd thing about this ambush was that no security measures inside the control tower were triggered. Basically, it was an insider job. Someone from Arthur's men had allowed the infiltrators to get inside the highly secure tower.

"Jaime! You fucking backstabbing son of a bitch."

Linda cursed the golden-haired man in front of him. Her face expressed a mix of shock and anger. She could not digest Jaime's betrayal well. As a result, she too was caught off guard when Jaime showed his true nature to her.

If Eren was here, he would have recognized Lins right away despite her bloody face, missing arm, and overall sorry state. After all, it was her that guided him when it came to the element of time.

Linda had served under Jaime for quite some time. She had served as Jaime's team member even before the latter decided to join the Lionhearts Academy for Adventurers as a professor.

Linda served as an assistant professor in LA when Eren was in his first year. As her ranking status improved, she was promoted. She had been slow to climb the ladder of authority in LA. However, her progress had been steady and without major bottlenecks.

Jaime was Arthur's first man sent into Osan Woods to investigate the OWB case. Inside Osan Woods, he led his team to find anything and everything about the butcher. Of course, he had used Isaac Osan's death as an excuse to investigate the site. Therefore, officially, it was an academic investigation conducted by professors to learn more about their students' deaths.

Jaime was the one who had ordered Linda, Ronald, and Verna to do a grid search inside Osan Woods to find out more about the butcher. In a way, Eren had found out about the deeper conspiracy behind Reen's creation thanks to Arthur's team. That's because he luckily managed to eavesdrop on their conversation.

The same Jaime— who had been serving Arthur for so long and so diligently— had decided to kill his men who were loyal to him. To Linda, it felt like stuff from nightmares.

Ronald, Verna, and a bunch of other rankers who were truly working for Arthur were all dead. Jaime and his men had killed them in a surprise attack. Linda only survived the surprise attack because the side effect of uncalled-for time dilution took place just before the surprise attack, allowing her to take countermeasures against it.

Jaime looked at Linda with a hint of pity in his eyes. It was as if he was truly sorry for what had happened between them.

Jaime looked as dashing as he was in Eren's first academic year. His golden hair, blue eyes, and chiseled face gave him a distinct personality. Out of habit, he took out a bottle of potion and was about to drink it.

However, he stopped midway and raised the potion bottle in front of his face. He thought for a bit and pursed his lips before crushing the bottle in his hand and evaporating the contents within it with his red flames.

"\*Sigh. I guess I don't need to use this anymore."

#### [Chapter 1150 Linda's Knight In Shining Armor?](#)

Jaime's looks started changing right after he crushed the bottle of Polyjuice potion.

His golden hair turned light brown and his eyes turned black. His ears were elongated, indicating his original lineage. His facial structure and the color of his skin changed as well.

When the revert to his original appearance was complete, Jaime's mana signature was completely changed. Instead of having a scholarly vibe around him, this man exuded the presence of a warrior.

The elven masks were not the only tools of infiltration the kingdom of Layos had employed. The elves had used their superior skills of the potioning arts to concoct Polyjuice potions for their deep assets inside the enemy kingdom.

With Polyjuice potions, rankers could assume the identity of others. To make the potion, they needed victims' bodies whose identities would be used by the users.

Layos' Polyjuice potions existed even before the eleven masks were created. It was just that the potions required consistent consumption from their users. They also gave some side effects to the users, preventing Layos from using the potion on a much larger scale.

To avoid the side effects of the Polyjuice potions, eleven masks were invented. Masks provided users with a reliable way to change their identities for an extended period without experiencing any major side effects. As a result, Layos created the eleven masks en masse and used them on a much larger scale than the Polyjuice potions.

By the time the eleven masks arrived, the deep asset known as Jaime had already gotten used to using Polyjuice potion. Plus, switching to the eleven mask midway meant some changes in his mana signature, which he didn't want to make apparent to anyone belonging to LA.

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"I'm afraid Jaime Lancaster is a made-up name, Linda. I'm surprised nobody found it weird when they first heard my name here in this kingdom.

My real name is Adam. Now that it has come to this, you should at least know my name before... you know."

The man who Linda knew as Jaime spoke in a calm and caring tone. He was standing only a few meters away from Linda, holding a weird-shaped weapon in his right hand.

Adam Loyroost AKA Jaime took a careful step towards a seemingly surprised Linda as he spoke up in a tone coated in sadness.

"I wish things had stayed the same, dear. In all honesty, I would prefer to remain an inactive deep asset. But... you know how it is when it comes to wars.

The parties directly involved in the war don't want to come to the table to talk. And those who come on their behalf end up worsening the situation for everyone."

By this time, Adam's men were almost done dealing with Arthur's men who were supposed to control the outflow of information in the Duke's favor.

Adam looked at Ronald and Verna's bodies and took another deep sigh. It was as if he was not responsible for their deaths at all.

Linda was too shocked to speak for a while after seeing Adam's transformation. She couldn't believe that the man she had worked under for so long was actually a deep asset from the enemy kingdom.

After the initial shock, Linda's heart was filled with anger at the man in front of her. She was angry at Adam for killing Ronald and Verna. She was angry at him for not even giving them a chance to fight him.

What was even more infuriating was the fact that he still spoke with the same calm and caring tone as he used to speak when he was Jaime.

"You fucking maniac... why did you..."

Linda was about to share her feelings with Adam. However, it looked like the elf just wanted to be done with his assignment. He disappeared from his position and appeared right behind the injured Linda. The time-element ranker was already on her knees due to her severe injuries, making her an easy target for Adam's attacks.

Swoosh. Zoom. Clang.

A metallic sound was heard as Adam's weapon clashed with an obstacle. Someone else had intervened between Adama and Linda, protecting the time-element ranker with the shield-type artifact.

Adam quickly used his movement spell to create a distance before looking at the newly arrived ranker at the scene. Another LA professor had decided to save Linda— his ex-colleague— Lin Karr.

To Eren, Lin Karr was nothing but an award-winning cockblocker. His cockblocking performance had given the butcher bluebells many times. But that didn't mean that the man didn't have other talents.

Lin Karr was the same man who had led Nina into the Osan Woods' along with the rest of his party. It was he who had found Eren's second crime scene inside the Osan Woods.

Adam raised his eyebrows as he looked at a relaxed-looking Lin Karr. He knew that Arthur had close ties with Lin's parents who had become experts in Seer arrays.

Duke Arthur Renar had made use of Lin Karr from time to time even though the latter was not directly or indirectly serving the Duke.

Lin Karr also used his connections with Arthur to save himself from Isen Osan's wrath. One could say that the relationship between Arthur and Lin's family was based on mutual benefits.

"It is strange finding you here, Lin. But now that you are, STAY HERE FOREVER."

Adam wasn't scared by Lin Karr's sudden arrival. He knew that the guy was not as impressive as his parents. Plus, he needed to wrap up the disturbance in the broadcasting tower fast if he wanted to do his job peacefully.

After all, Lako was counting on Adam to take care of chief moderator Rufus Rodriguez. Therefore, the latter did not have any time to spare to talk with Lin.

Lin was about to say something heroic to Linda after supposedly saving her from a fatal attack. He wanted to say something menacing to Adam as well, which would make him sound cool in Linda's eyes.

After all, Lin really wasn't supposed to be in the broadcast tower. He had only sneaked in here to flirt with Linda. The guy had developed feelings for the time-element ranker after spending such a long time with her in LA. One could even call it an office romance.

Alas, Lin wasn't given the limelight to be viewed as a knight in shining armor by Linda. The elf attacked Lin as soon as he made an appearance. He cursed Adam in his head before engaging in mortal combat with him.

'Damn it. This alcoholic broad will be the death of me.'

Lin cursed Linda as well for making him embroiled in a conspiracy that was above his pay grade.